

Amtrak releases update on battered passenger found near Truckee

By Sam Gross, Reno Gazette-Journal

An update from national rail carrier Amtrak on Thursday evening answered few questions about its investigation into how one of its passengers ended up severely injured beside train tracks in Truckee.

Aaron Salazar, a 22-year-old college student traveling by rail from Colorado to Oregon, was found battered, burned and unconscious just feet from the train tracks on the east edge of Truckee on May 15.

His family believes he was attacked, a victim of a hate crime because he is gay.

But Amtrak maintains its police force has found “nothing to suggest criminal intent.”

Read the whole story

Robbery at S. Lake Tahoe credit union



Police are
looking for
this man.

Police are looking for a man who on Thursday robbed the Sierra Central Credit Union in South Lake Tahoe.

The crime occurred at 5:30pm May 24.

Officers said the suspect is a white male adult, wearing a fake beard and a black pinstripe suit.

It has not been disclosed if the man left with money, and if so, how much.

Anyone with information is asked to call, 530.542.6100.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

16 contractors caught in South Shore sting

The California Contractors State License Board (CSLB) teamed with the Nevada State Contractors Board (NCSB) on two undercover sting operations, as well as a sweep of job sites in the South Lake Tahoe area that snared 16 unlicensed contractors.

NCSB staff were on-site at CSLB's sting in South Lake Tahoe on May 16. CSLB staff joined NCSB for their sting the following day in Zephyr Cove. Investigators posed as a homeowner and solicited home improvement bids from alleged unlicensed contractors.

In the California sting, 10 people were caught and now face a misdemeanor charge of contracting without a state license. Bids ranged from \$1,100 for tile to \$20,000 for installation of concrete pavers. It is against California law to contract for home improvement or construction jobs valued at \$500 or more for labor and materials combined without a state-issued contractor license. Penalties for first-time unlicensed contracting convictions include up to six months in jail and/or up to \$5,000 in fines.

Eight of the 10 suspects were also given a notice to appear in court for illegal advertising. California contracting law requires unlicensed contractors to state in all advertising that they are not licensed.

Three of the 10 brought workers with them to the sting house and were given stop orders and cited for not having workers' compensation insurance for those workers; two of the 10 could face charge for requesting an illegally large down payment. In California, down payments for home improvement jobs cannot total more than \$1,000 or 10 percent of the contract price, whichever amount is less.

Investigators also swept through 31 jobs sites in the South Lake Tahoe area. The sweep will result in three cases being referred to the El Dorado County District Attorney's Office. Two will be referred for contracting without a license; the third for a worker's compensation insurance violation. Three stop orders and one administrative citation also were issued.

Six people were caught in the Nevada sting. Four were cited for contracting without a license; two of those were also

cited for advertising without a license. Two others were cited only for advertising without a license.

A Nevada state contractor's license is needed for all home improvement jobs that exceed \$1,000 in labor and material, require a building permit, involve plumbing, electrical, heating or air conditioning, or changes the aesthetic appearance or structural components of a building or property grounds.

The two states also have a reciprocity agreement, making it easier for a contractor licensed in one state, to get a contractor's license in the other.

The suspects listed below, who were caught in the California sting, are scheduled to appear on July 18 in El Dorado County Superior Court in South Lake Tahoe.

California Sting Operation

Suspect name City of residence	License classification	Alleged violation(s)
Andrew James Davis Carson City	C-15 Flooring Contractor	Contracting w/o a License Illegal Advertising
Symon Cleonvern Sears Carson City	C-15 Flooring Contractor	Contracting w/o a License Illegal Advertising
Eduardo Martinezf-Medina Sparks	C-54 Tile Contractor	Contracting w/o a License Illegal Advertising

<p>Carlos Romero Sun Valley</p>	<p>C-61/D-6 Concrete Related Services Contractor</p>	<p>Contracting w/o a License Illegal Advertising</p>
<p>Frank Anthony Euronis Reno</p>	<p>C-13 Fencing Contractor</p>	<p>Contracting w/o a License No Workers' Compensation Insurance</p>
<p>Shawn Brown South Lake Tahoe</p>	<p>C-13 Fencing Contractor</p>	<p>Contracting w/o a License</p>
<p>Alberto Ruiz- Lopez Carson City</p>	<p>C-61/D-6 Concrete Related Services Contractor</p>	<p>Contracting w/o a License Illegal Advertising Illegally Large Down Payment No Workers' Compensation Insurance</p>
<p>James Raymond Williams III South Lake Tahoe</p>	<p>C-33 Painting Contractor</p>	<p>Contracting w/o a License Illegal Advertising No Workers' Compensation Insurance</p>
<p>Steven Anthony Nichols South Lake Tahoe</p>	<p>C-61/D-49 Tree Service Contractor</p>	<p>Contracting w/o a License Illegal Advertising</p>

Leo James Pasquarello Sparks	C-61/D-6 Concrete Related Services Contractor	Contracting w/o a License Illegal Advertising Illegally Large Down Payment
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Nevada Sting Operation

Suspect name City of residence	Work class	Alleged violation(s)
Alberto Ruiz-Lopez Carson City	Multiple	Advertising w/o a License
Rigoberto Gonzalez Incline Village	Painting	Contracting w/o a License
Javier Tinoco Incline Village	Painting	Contracting w/o a License
Elmer Vazquez Sparks	Painting	Contracting w/o a License Advertising w/o a License
Steven Rose Carson City	Painting	Advertising w/o a License
Gershon BenChaim Reno/Sparks	Garage Door	Contracting w/o a License Advertising w/o a License

Proposed Squaw-Alpine gondola raises concerns about environmental threats, avalanche devices

By Kathryn Reed

KINGS BEACH – While the proximity to Granite Chief Wilderness Area has been a dominate argument for not building the gondola that would link Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows ski resorts, on Thursday neighbors raised the issue of the proposed avalanche control devices as another concern.

Heather Beckman, senior planner for Placer County, acknowledged at the end of the public comment that the Gazex devices have emerged as an issue.

“It’s definitely something we will be researching and addressing in the final document,” Beckman told the county Planning Commission.

Commissioners on May 24 received an update on the project and took public comment. This was Commissioner Anders Hauge’s first meeting, having been sworn in that day.

Placer County and the U.S. Forest Service (Tahoe National Forest) have the final say over approving the project. Together they have released the EIR and EIS.

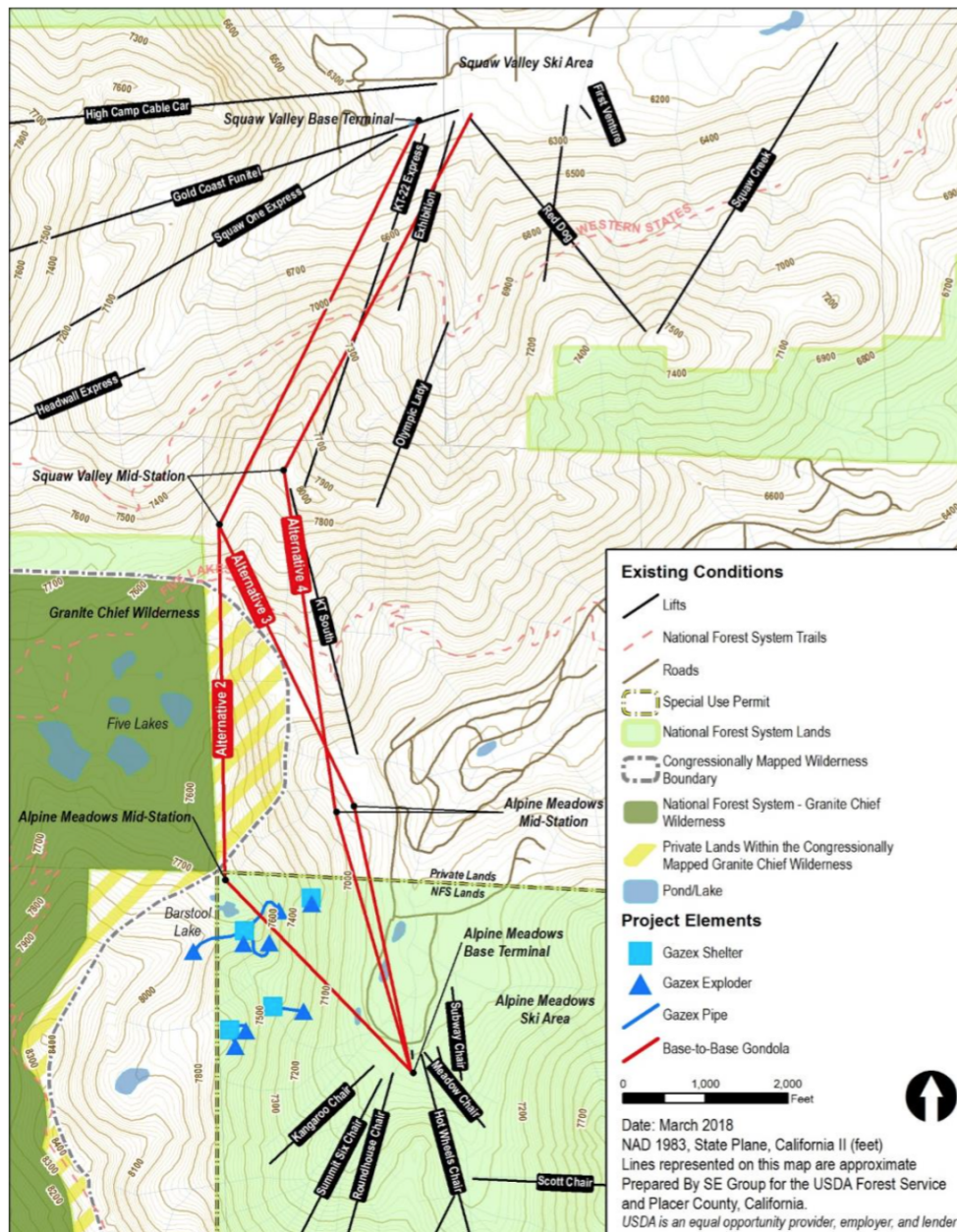


Figure 1: Gondola alternatives; land ownership and designations

Red lines are possible gondola routes from Squaw (top) to Alpine (bottom). Source: Placer County

The eight-person gondola would link the base areas of the two resorts, taking 1,400 passengers an hour in each direction. The ride would take 16 minutes.

Beckman said it will not open new terrain, but will provide better access to some terrain. It will be possible to load/unload at the midstation. The gondola would only be operational during the ski season.

Beckman said the gondola is expected to have a mild impact on skier visits the first year; with a projected increase of 1.4 percent or 12,400 skier visits the first year, then tapering off by year five.

This, according to the county, could equate to an increase of 422 vehicle trips, which will impact Highway 89 the most and the left turn lane onto Alpine Meadows Road.

The ski resort owner wants alternative 2, which is the closest to the Granite Chief Wilderness Area. Alternatives 3 and 4 are farther away and would have fewer environmental impacts.

Nine people spoke during the meeting at North Tahoe Event Center, with most having concerns about the proposed project.

Craig Hamilton lives on Alpine Meadows Road, which is prone to avalanches. The resort is now using Gazex devices to manage that area.

“The shockwave force feels like the house has been hit by a bomb,” Hamilton said. He called it a “terrifying event.”

While he said he loves the idea of the gondola, he and others don't like the Gazex machines that are already visible from the **5 Lakes Trail**. The trail is in the wilderness area, while the machines are not. A wilderness area by definition is not open to machinery, not even mountain bikes are allowed in these federal lands.

A representative from Sierra Watch said his group's main concerns center on the gondola's proximity to the wilderness area, the impact on wildlife – the endangered yellow-legged frog that has been found at Barstool Lake, and intensification of development. The latter is a concern in terms congestion on Highway 89 and the roads leading to the resorts, as well as the plans Troy Caldwell has with his 460-acres.

Part of the gondola infrastructure would be on Caldwell's

property. He has talked about developing some of his land and tying it into one of the midway stations of the gondola.

That is why some people want the powers that be to look at cumulative effects of projects and not each one in a silo.

Ron Cohen, deputy general counsel for Alterra Mountain Company who is also interim COO at Squaw Valley Ski Holdings, was the lone voice in support of the gondola. Alterra is now the parent company of Squaw and Alpine.

“We are trying to address the issues raised by the project,” Cohen told the commissioners. He said his people are working with the environmental community, adding that the company cares about the wilderness area and the endangered yellow-legged frog.

The commissioners had no comments.

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Notes:

- The environmental document is available **online**.
- The deadline to comment is June 11 at 5pm.

Folsom development could impact Tahoe drivers

By Tony Bizjak, Sacramento Bee

The most anticipated new housing community in the Sacramento region goes “vertical” next week south of Highway 50 in Folsom with the construction of model homes, followed by homes for

sale.

Early buyers could be living on the oak-studded hillside by the end of the year, builders say.

The project site is massive at 3,300 acres, just south of the freeway and north of White Rock Road, between Prairie City Road and the El Dorado County line. It will contain nearly 11,000 homes and apartments, three public schools, two fire stations, a police station and 82 acres of office and commercial buildings.

Read the whole story

Nev. recreational pot sales reach \$41M in March

By Wade Tyler Millward, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Move over sagebrush, Nevada may have a new state flower.

Recreational marijuana sales topped \$41 million in March, the largest since legal sales began statewide in July.

That translates into \$7.09 million in tax revenue in March from marijuana, according to a state Department of Taxation release Wednesday.

Read the whole story

NASA launches satellites to track world's water

By Ian James, Desert Sun

For 15 years, two NASA satellites revealed an unprecedented picture of movements in water around the Earth, tracking ice sheets melting, glaciers retreating, oceans rising and groundwater declining as humans drain aquifers.

Now, NASA is carrying on the mission with the next generation of satellites that will monitor changes in the world's water supplies.

The twin satellites soared to orbit on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket that blasted off Tuesday from California's Vandenberg Air Force Base.

[Read the whole story](#)

Mining of 20 'critical' minerals in Nev. could be streamlined

By Gary Martin, Las Vegas Review-Journal

WASHINGTON – The Interior Department has published a list of 35 “critical” minerals – 20 of which are present in Nevada – as part of a Trump administration effort to reduce foreign dependence on resources needed for consumer and military goods.

The list of the 35 critical minerals identified by the U.S. Geological Survey was released by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke last week and will serve as a basis for a final Commerce Department report on the commodities.

President Trump signed an executive order in December directing the U.S. Geological Survey to identify minerals critical to national defense and the economy.

Read the whole story

TRPA confident shoreline plan on solid ground

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Increasing the number of boats on Lake Tahoe and where they can dock once on the water are anticipated outcomes of the shoreline plan that is being considered by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

The Governing Board on May 23 received a presentation about the draft environmental impact statement. Comments are being taken on the document until July 9, with the goal of having a final EIS to the bi-state regulatory board in October.

This all-encompassing document regulates piers, buoys, slips, marinas and ramps.

This is the seventh iteration of the shoreline plan since the early 1990s. Executive Director Joanne Marchetta gave a brief history about the process, explaining why this topic was not part of the original Regional Plan in 1987. At that time studies were still being conducted regarding the impact of

piers on fish habitat.

Lawsuits derailed the 2008 shorezone plan approved by the TRPA. The hope is that by inviting the League to Save Lake Tahoe – one of the litigants in the case – to the table along with a slew of other stakeholders that this latest version will sail through without a lawsuit being filed. The Sierra Club was also part of the lawsuit, but not part of the stakeholders meetings in the last two-plus years.

Based on the comments at Wednesday's meeting, it isn't a sure bet this will be a slam dunk. Nine people spoke, many who were involved in the process up to this point. Those questioning the document represented the California Attorney General's Office, local Sierra Club chapter, and Friends of the West Shore. Impacts on non-motorized users, including those just at the beach, were brought up.

While there has been a 600-foot no wake zone in place for years, seldom has it been enforced. TRPA said increased enforcement is part of the plan. Ensuring all of Emerald Bay is a no-wake zone is another goal.

Staff anticipates the following issues to be controversial in the draft EIS:

- The number and location of new shoreline structures.
- Processes for allocating new shorezone structures.
- Effects of structures and boating on non-motorized water recreation.
- Visual effects of shoreline structures.
- Water and air pollution from boating.
- Effects on public access along the shoreline.

Recognizing that the lake could be at low levels as climate

change takes a stronger hold, officials know there needs to be flexibility with pier construction. This means allowing floating piers so the structures can actually be used instead of people walking under them as was the case during the latest drought.

As it stands today there is essentially a prohibition on new construction of piers.

There would be an 18 percent increase in piers and 24 percent increase in moorings if alternative one is adopted.

Ultimately boating activity is expected to increase 16 percent in the next 20 or so years.

At build out, which is expected to be 2040 at the soonest, the preferred alternative would allow up to 2,116 new moorings (buoys, lifts or public slips), 128 new private piers, 10 new public piers, and two new public boat ramps. Some new and existing buoys could be converted to slips, and vice versa at marinas.

The 2008 plan also called for 128 private piers as well as 1,822 buoys. At that time 768 piers and nearly 4,500 buoys existed.

Darcie Collins, executive director of the League, told the Governing Board her agency supports the draft document, but will be most interested in making sure the mitigation measures will be sufficient. She did not express what has changed for her agency in the last decade. What the League wanted at the time of the lawsuit was better science to prove TRPA's assertions.

It was noted by Adam Lewandowsky with Ascent, the firm that wrote the environmental document, that boat manufacturers don't regulate greenhouse gas emissions. This is an ongoing concern.

On the flip side, this process has brought the marina operators together. They have formed the Lake Tahoe Marina Association, which includes all 14 commercial marinas in the basin. They are behind the preferred alternative and welcome the opportunity to implement to clean marina certificate program.

Notes:

- The environmental document is **online**.
 - Public workshop on June 4, 5:30-7:30pm, TRPA offices, Stateline.
 - Public workshop on June 6, 5:30-7:30pm, North Tahoe Event Center, Kings Beach.
 - Public hearing, June 13, on draft EIS, TRPA offices.
 - July 9, deadline to comment on draft EIS.
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Keyless cars and their carbon monoxide toll

By David Jeans and Majlie De Puy Kamp, New York Times

It seems like a common convenience in a digital age: a car that can be powered on and off with the push of a button, rather than the mechanical turning of a key. But it is a convenience that can have a deadly effect.

On a summer morning last year, Fred Schaub drove his Toyota RAV4 into the garage attached to his Florida home and went

into the house with the wireless key fob, evidently believing the car was shut off. Twenty-nine hours later, he was found dead, overcome with carbon monoxide that flooded his home while he slept.

“After 75 years of driving, my father thought that when he took the key with him when he left the car, the car would be off,” said Schaub’s son, Doug.

Schaub is among more than two dozen people killed by carbon monoxide nationwide since 2006 after a keyless-ignition vehicle was inadvertently left running in a garage. Dozens of others have been injured, some left with brain damage.

Read the whole story