

LOCAL NEWS

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Niles Canyon work draws protesters

Fremont begins efforts on truck ban it hopes will spare scenic road from future widening projects

By Matthew Artz

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FREMONT — Niles Canyon roadwork protests that began Saturday night are scheduled to continue this week as Caltrans crews cut down trees in preparation for a project to widen and improve Niles Canyon Road.

"I see this as a type of environmental vandalism," Alameda Creek Alliance Director Jeff Miller said.

His group is looking at legal options to stop tree removal along the two-lane highway, a state-designated scenic route that meanders from the Niles district to Interstate 680 near Sunol.

Meanwhile, Fremont officials have begun efforts to ban trucks on Niles Canyon Road, a move they hope will improve safety while eliminating the need for the proposed safety measures, which they fear

will diminish the canyon's beauty. Caltrans has proposed three projects totaling about \$80 million, citing above-average numbers of fatal injury collisions on the road.

The first two Caltrans projects would widen much of Niles Canyon Road, removing more than 400 trees and building more than two miles of retaining walls in order to widen road shoulders, add a center median and soften sharp curves. The third project, scheduled to begin in 2013, would replace Alameda Creek Bridge.

Preliminary work on the first

project began Saturday with the removal of trees in an area about a mile east of Mission Boulevard. More tree removal is scheduled this week, in preparation for the road widening and construction of a left-turn pocket at Palomares Road in spring, Caltrans officials said.

Fremont officials said they had no record of Caltrans notifying them about the first project, and that it's too late to stop it.

However, about a half-dozen protesters drove into the canyon Saturday night as the tree removals began. "We're going to try to be

there every day of the week," said Kimberly Harbin, of Fremont.

The city is trying to stop the second project, scheduled to begin next year, which would result in the removal of many more trees and the installation of more cement retaining walls on a 4.4-mile stretch of the road.

In October, Fremont asked Caltrans for an alternative plan to "improve safety without such intrusive impacts on the scenic character of Niles Canyon."

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Man shot outside Hayward night spot

Police say witnesses are not cooperating; two suspects held pending investigation

By Eric Kurhi

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HAYWARD — A 19-year-old Oakland man was shot once in the stomach outside a Mission Boulevard karaoke bar early Sunday in the most serious of three nightclub-related incidents over the weekend, police said.

Two other people were beaten — one pistol-whipped — in front of the Karaoke Box near Sunset Boulevard around 1:30 a.m., and police arrested two people who were driving away from the scene.

According to Lt. Roger Keener, police found firearms in the vehicle, and the men are being held on weapons charges as investigators determine if there is evidence that they fired the shots. Several shots were fired, he said, possibly from more than one gun.

Witnesses were not being cooperative, Keener said.

The victim's wound is not considered life-threatening.

Shots also rang out early Saturday in the parking lot behind the Me Restaurant and Lounge on B Street in downtown Hayward, police said.

It appears the shots were fired in the air during a skirmish that left one man badly beaten, possibly with a broken nose, shortly before 2 a.m., Keener said. Six people were arrested on suspicion of being drunk in public, and one faces narcotics charges.

Keener said the beaten man was "belligerent and uncooperative" before being taken to a hos-

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HOMAGE TO HAYWARD'S HERITAGE



A GROUP Friday gathers around a 25-foot-by-75-foot mural, painted by San Francisco artist Josh Powell, left, that covers the side of the future location of the Hayward Area Historical Society in Hayward. "Haywards" refers to the original name for the area.

ANDY CHIU/STAFF PHOTOS

Traffic stops yield arrests on weapon, drug charges

'Good, proactive police work ... made our streets safer,' spokesman says

By Chris De Benedetto

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SAN LEANDRO — Officers arrested several men and two minors over the weekend after making three traffic stops in a 30-hour period and finding that each vehicle was carrying guns and marijuana, police said.

"It was good, proactive police work done by our officers that made our streets safer," Lt. Jeff Tudor said.

The first incident occurred around 7:15 p.m. Saturday, when an officer stopped a 1999 BMW in the intersection of Bancroft and Durant avenues on suspicion of vehicle-code violations — having tinted windows and no license plates, Tudor said.

The strong smell of marijuana prompted the officer to search the car, where he found a .22 caliber semi-automatic handgun and a small amount of marijuana, Tudor said.

The officer arrested the driver, Jaffar Jackson, 33, San Francisco, on suspicion of one count of possession of a loaded firearm and one count of possession of a concealed firearm, police said.

His two passengers were not arrested. Less than six hours later, officers stopped another vehicle, a 1993 Honda Civic, around 1 a.m. Sunday, at the intersection of Hesperian and Lewelling boulevards.

As the officers came to a stop, they spotted the car's occupants moving around in the car, Tudor said. After searching the car, the officers found a loaded .380 caliber handgun and a small amount of marijuana, he said.

Officers then arrested two 20-year-old men — driver Julio Perez, of Oakland, and passenger Christian Del Toro, of Hayward — on suspicion of possession of a loaded firearm and possession of a concealed firearm, police said.

Two passengers — both 16-year-olds from Oakland — also were arrested and sent to Alameda County Juvenile Hall, Tudor said.

The third gun-related traffic

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Mountain road no place for snow play

Q: I read the comments from the person upset at not being able to drive up to the top of Mount Hamilton when it snows. Let her know that this road is very hairy when it snows. I used to drive a tow truck, and we'd get calls for cars off the side in perfect weather. Could you imagine thousands of drivers who have never driven in the snow along with those who pull over to play in the snow on such a narrow road? Can we say disaster?



GARY RICHARDS
MR. ROADSHOW

A very narrow road with few turnouts, Mount Hamilton cannot safely accommodate the high volumes of traffic associated with snow play.

Negative impact on scientific research. Parked cars create traffic jams that can significantly impact astronomers' timely access to telescopes.

All parking spaces atop Mount Hamilton are on observatory property. Snow play parking often prevents visitors who drove up Mount Hamilton to tour the observatory from doing so.

There are state and county parks along the Diablo Range that are designed for and can better accommodate snow play.

John Wareham
deputy director
Lick Observatory

A: And ...

Q: Thank you for sharing with your readers some of the reasons why Mount Hamilton is not a good destination for snow play. I will share a few more:

Nearest paramedic response in winter is from San Jose, and traffic jams create havoc for ambulances on Mount Hamilton Road.

Little or no cell phone coverage. Roadside emergency call boxes are no longer functional.

A: The top seven miles of Mount Hamilton are on Lick Observatory property, and only emergency parking is permitted along this section. New signs are being installed along that stretch that say in big letters: "SNOW PLAY PARKING PROHIBITED."

Q: I was in the comfort of my office the other day, watching the rain outside, thinking it must be nasty in the Sierra. So

I pop over to www.magnifye.com and see that the electronic messages along Interstate 80 say: "CHAIN CONTROL 4 MILES AHEAD TRUCKS MAXIMUM TURNING ALL SINGLE DRIVE COMBINATIONS" at Gold Run. Does this mean that trucks must have maximum chains and that all single-drive non-4x4 vehicles were being turned around?

Tom Geary
San Mateo

A: Pretty indecipherable, huh? The sign means: Chains will be required four miles ahead. Big rigs must install maximum chains (chains on more than one tire per axle). All big rigs with single axles pulling a dual trailer combination are being turned around and will not be able to proceed over the mountain.

Q: Gary, remind your readers that when wipers go on, lights go on. I drove back from San Francisco in a driving rain, and it's tough to spot gray cars until it's a rainstorm. I'm not saying it was bad, but there was a guy gathering up animals two by two and loading up an ark.

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