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JUSTIN M. BOWEN / LAS VEGAS SUN

Traffic heads west Friday on U.S. 93 in Boulder City. Its mayor says the town can't take the kind of congestion expected during a road-widening project.

TRAFFIC

Boulder City tries to pass the truck back to Arizona

By DYLAN SCOTT AND KYLE HANSEN, *Las Vegas Sun*

Authorities banned truck traffic on Hoover Dam after the 9/11 attacks, and the federal government hustled to build the pricey and photogenic Mike O'Callaghan-Pat Tillman Memorial Bridge. Trucks are able to take the bridge over the Colorado River as they head to Las Vegas, avoiding frustrating detours through Bullhead City, Ariz., and saving time and fuel costs. But just four months after the bridge opened, Boulder City officials want it closed to trucks because their town can't handle the traffic. The Nevada Transportation Department has announced it will widen U.S. 93 through Boulder City to address the traffic jams, but until that day comes, the city wants the trucks to return to Bullhead City, 80 miles south. Bullhead City officials' response: Uh-uh. No way, buddy. We took the traffic hit for years, and we're done being nice.

Enter the federal government, where all heads are turning for a solution.

The Federal Highway Administration is stuck in the middle as Boulder City and Bullhead City — with the Nevada and Arizona transportation departments backing their respective residents — plead their cases over the heavy truck traffic on U.S. 93.

The plan was always to bring trucks across the bridge and through Boulder City when coming to Las Vegas. In preparation for the bridge's opening, Arizona has spent almost \$500 million widening parts of U.S. 93 to four lanes.

On Nevada's side, though,

little work was done. Transportation officials hoped to find state and federal money for the Boulder City bypass, which would take truck traffic around the city, but that project could be decades away because of Nevada's tight finances.

U.S. 93 narrows to two lanes within Boulder City, and hundreds of trucks are pouring through the city each day since the bypass bridge opened in late October.

Last month, the Nevada Transportation Department announced plans to widen U.S. 93 to four lanes in Boulder City — a \$10 million to \$15 million project [See Trucks, Page 2]

WHAT THE BRIDGE HAS BROUGHT

According to the Nevada Transportation Department, traffic on U.S. 93 between Boulder City and Hoover Dam increased this January compared with January 2010 by more than 3,000 vehicles per day, while traffic on U.S. 95 through Searchlight dropped 23 percent.

JAMS SLOW AS MOLASSES

The state plans to widen U.S. 93 from two to four lanes — which is expected to be completed by Thanksgiving — but during the four or five months when construction would take place, the truck traffic without a detour could be unbearable, Boulder City's mayor says.

FEDERAL MEDIATION COMING?

Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., wrote to the Federal Highway Administration asking to "find a solution to accommodate the needs of Boulder City as well as the freight industry." The agency has not yet received an application for the detour.

SIX QUESTIONS: VICTOR CHALTIEL

Newcomer to politics says Las Vegas should be run as a business would be

By DELEN GOLDBERG
Las Vegas Sun

Victor Chaltiel was largely unknown before he filed to run for mayor.

Television commercials — "Victor for Las Vegas" — and public appearances have changed that. Now he's considered a contender because of his substantial financial resources.

Born in Tunisia, Chaltiel grew up poor in France but excelled in school. He attended a prestigious Paris university before coming to the United States 38 years ago to attend Harvard Business School.

He has lived in Las Vegas with his



Victor Chaltiel Television ads have introduced the businessman to community.

wife, Toni, for 14 years. Their three children were born here.

Chaltiel climbed the corporate ladder at Baxter International, a medical product and service com-

pany, then ran several Fortune 500 health care companies. He now heads a venture capital fund and is founder and chairman of HealthDataInsights Inc., which specializes in reducing health care costs by fighting fraud and waste.

Why get involved in politics?

It's my last big mitzvah (good deed) in my life. I'm not looking for personal gain. I want to give back. I want to create jobs.

Vegas was exciting, it was good. Now today, it is very different. You can't have the same approach you had five years ago — drinking gin [See Chaltiel, Page 3]

HIGHER ED: FIRST PERSON

For professor, threatened cuts are demoralizing

By LYNN COMELLA
Special to the Sun

Should the Nevada System of Higher Education's Board of Regents declare a state of financial exigency as a way of dealing with Gov. Brian Sandoval's draconian cuts to higher education, I could be one of hundreds of professors at UNLV who would lose their jobs. My research profile (ranked "excellent" by my peers), teaching accomplishments (also ranked "excellent") and service to the university (again, "excellent") would amount to nothing. UNLV would be forced to eat its own in a perverse form of cannibalism, and I would become a faceless, nameless, cost-saving measure totaling \$63,440. [See UNLV, Page 3]

FALLEN U.S. TROOPS

Since the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, 1,477 American troops have died supporting Operation Enduring Freedom. The latest identifications reported by the military:

Army Spc. Brian Tabada, 21, of Las Vegas, died Sunday in Konar Province, Afghanistan, of wounds suffered when insurgents attacked his unit using small-arms fire and a rocket-propelled grenade. He was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell, Ky.

Army Sgt. Kristopher J. Gould, 25, of Saginaw, Mich., died Sunday in Ghazni Province, Afghanistan, of wounds suffered when insurgents attacked his unit using an explosive. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Fort Knox, Ky.

Army Pfc. David R. Fahey Jr., 23, of Norwalk, Conn., died Monday in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, of wounds suffered when insurgents attacked his unit using an explosive. He was assigned to the 504th Military Police Battalion, 42nd Military Police Brigade, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.



Face to Face
WITH JON RALSTON

ON TODAY'S 'FACE TO FACE'

Education reform, Wynn style

When Elaine Wynn speaks, people listen. Did Wynn get the attention of lawmakers when she pitched her plan for education reform? We'll ask her about that and much more.

WHEN TO WATCH

Broadcast times

"Face to Face" airs live at 6:30 p.m. on NBC affiliates throughout the state: KSNV Channel 3 in Las Vegas, KRNK Channel 4 in Reno and KENV Channel 10 in Elko.

We are the Las Vegas Sun...

Las Vegas' independent newspaper voice

Because we are a newspaper delivered with the Las Vegas Review-Journal, the perception could be that we are all the same newspaper. Nothing could be further from the truth. The editorial material in our newspaper is prepared independently from the R-J.

The Sun's news staff and the news staff of the R-J compete. The two papers have very different editorial philosophies.

The Sun is locally owned by the Greenspun family of Las Vegas and has been a separate voice in the community since 1950.

The business functions of the two papers are combined and operated under a JOA (Joint Operating Agreement), which is a U.S. Justice Department-approved method of maintaining competitive, distinct voices in newspaper markets.

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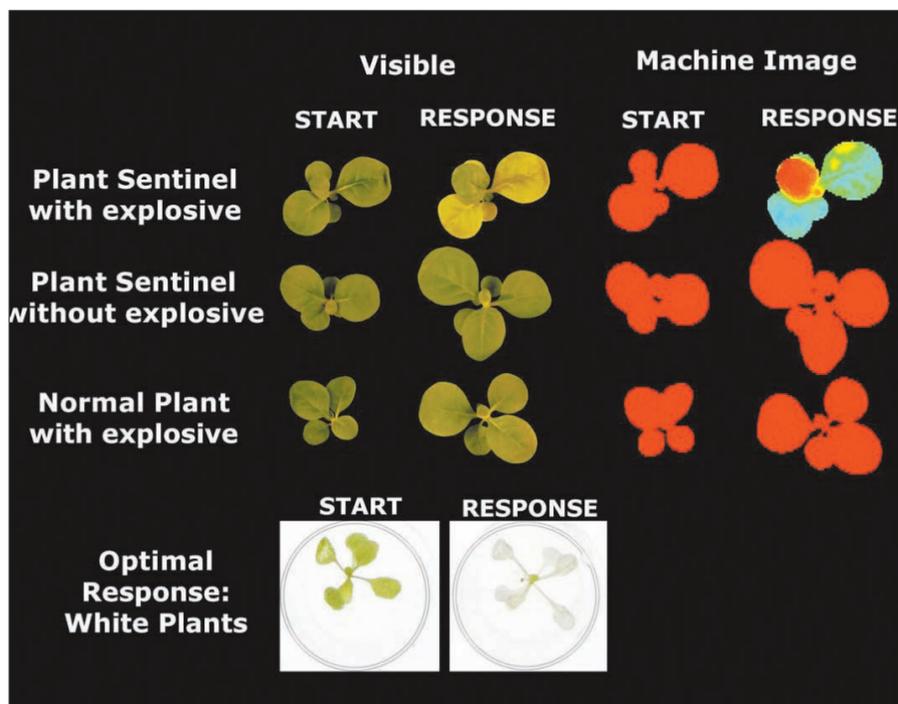
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SCIENCE

Bomb-sniffing plants may be next weapon in U.S. arsenal



THE NEW YORK TIMES

This graphic shows the change in color of plants in development that are exposed to traces of TNT.

By **KIRK JOHNSON**
New York Times News Service

DENVER — Could airport security gardens be the wave of the future? ("Please have photo ID and boarding pass ready and walk past the rhododendrons.") How about a defensive line of bomb-sniffing tulips in New York's Central Park, or at the local shopping mall's indoor waterfall, or lining the streets of Baghdad?

Researchers at Colorado State University said recently they had created the platform for just such a plant-kingdom early warning system: Plants that subtly change color when exposed to minute amounts of TNT in the air.

They are redesigned to drain off chlorophyll — the stuff that makes them green — from leaves, blanching to white when bomb materials are detected.

"It had to be simple, something your mom could recognize," said June Medford, a

professor of biology at Colorado State, referring to the idea of linking a plant's chemical response to its color, visible to the naked eye.

The research, published in the peer-reviewed online science journal PLoS One, and financed mostly by the Defense and Homeland Security departments, said that plants are suited by evolution to chemical analysis of their environment, in detecting pests, for example.

Plants in the lab, when modified to sense TNT, the most commonly used explosive, reacted to levels one one-hundredth of anything a bomb-sniffing dog could muster, the paper said.

The trick, still in refinement, is how to make sure the plant's signal is clear enough and fast enough to be of use.

"Right now, response time is in the order of hours," said Linda Chrisey, a program manager at the naval research office, which hopes to use the

technology to help protect troops from explosives.

Practical application, she said, requires a signal within minutes, and a natural reset system back to healthy green in short order.

Medford said she thought both goals were attainable, perhaps within three years — the goal that military backers are pushing for, she said — but more likely in five to seven years.

One scientist who read the scientific paper and was not involved in the project said he was concerned that the difference between all-clear green and TNT-detected white might be too subtle or subject to false inputs.

"What you want is something that is extreme on-and-off and reliable, and I don't think they're there yet," said Sean R. Cutler, an associate professor of plant cell biology at the University of California, Riverside. "It's a very interesting work-in-progress."

TRUCKS, FROM PAGE 1:

WIDENING OF U.S. 93 LIKELY TO TAKE UNTIL NOVEMBER

with a tentative completion date of Thanksgiving. Boulder City Mayor Roger Tobler has insisted truck traffic be rerouted through Bullhead City and Laughlin again until the widening of U.S. 93 is done.

Bullhead City Mayor Jack Hakim approached his state's Transportation Department during a meeting two weeks ago, asking members to oppose re-establishing the detour through his city. Although trucks took that route after 9/11, Hakim said six accidents occurred involving commercial rigs, two of which closed Laughlin Bridge for nearly 12 hours. None was fatal.

Hakim showed pictures of those accidents to officials. He said he sympathizes with Boulder City's problem, but that doesn't mean he's willing to risk the further traffic influx.

"Something should have been done ... That bridge was built for that specific purpose, to handle the traffic — what was it for then?" he said. "You start bringing these trucks here again, it's going to be a nightmare."

Tobler has criticized the state and federal agencies for lack of preparation before the bridge opened. In September, the Boulder City Council approved a symbolic ordinance, urging federal transportation authorities to remove U.S. 93 from the official Canada-to-Mexico trucking route.

Tobler also said he doesn't blame Hakim for standing up for his constituents, but the Boulder City mayor "can't give him what he wants."

"It doesn't shut their city down like it does ours with this traffic. It comes right through the heart of our town," Tobler said.

U.S. 93 is a major corridor for visitors flowing into the Las Vegas Valley from the east. According to the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada, drivers from Arizona account for 9 percent of all guests and more than \$1 billion in annual spending.

Traffic on U.S. 95 in Searchlight — the former route — was down 23 percent in January compared with January 2010, according to the Nevada Transportation Department. Volume on U.S. 93 between Boulder City and Hoover Dam increased 32 percent, more than 3,000 extra vehicles a day, this January compared with last.

Sen. Harry Reid sent a letter in October to Federal Highway Administrator Victor Mendez asking him to "find a solution to accommodate the needs of Boulder City as well as the freight industry."

Doug Hecox, a spokesman for the highway administration, said he couldn't comment on the specifics of the U.S. 93 situation until his agency receives an application asking for the detour.

Jacob Snow, general manager of the Regional Transportation Commission, said he would forward the application to the department within 30 days.

Timothy Tait, assistant communications director for the Arizona Transportation Department, said the agency

"shares concerns" with Bullhead City about rerouting traffic. He declined to comment further.

Nevada Transportation Director Susan Martinovich said she isn't sure how successful its application would be. She'll see her Arizona counterpart, John Halikowski, this week at a meeting in Washington and said the two would "look at what is the best approach" for both cities and states.

When Nevada announced its plan to widen U.S. 93 in Boulder City, officials said they would use only state funding to add four lanes where traffic bottlenecks near Buchanan Boulevard. Tobler has said that widening the road is only a temporary solution until funding can be found for the Boulder City bypass.

That plan has been incorporated into the Interstate 11 project, which would connect Las Vegas and Phoenix. Officials have said funding for I-11, likely in the billions of dollars, won't be available for years.

Work on widening U.S. 93 could make traffic worse in Boulder City, making the detour for truck traffic even more important, Tobler said.

"We can't have the trucks coming through while we're doing this kind of construction," he said.

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