

► **AKERS**

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lanes at will, which the new access points should help decrease.

Despite the never-ending complaints about the HOV lane system, the lanes will prove more and more useful with the rapid growth of the valley and the impending move of the Raiders to Allegiant Stadium, which sits next to I-15. The \$200 million Tropicana Interchange project, which is slated to be complete in 2023, will improve the system even more by adding HOV ramps to and from the Harmon Avenue bridge.

Although it's unlikely the 24/7 regulations tied to the HOV lanes will change, any other kinks in the carpool lane system will eventually be worked out by NDOT and airing concerns to the state will help identify those.

The state transportation department is also looking at possibly addressing other aspects, like a long stretch of I-15 between Charleston and Sahara that has two HOV lanes near the Neon Gateway.

So, even though NDOT Director Kristina Swallow said the lanes wouldn't be modified for three years, when a problem was blatantly evident the state jumped into action.

► **Lyft ride credits**

In an effort to cut down on impaired driving, the Las Vegas Coalition for Zero Fatalities is pledging \$300,000 in free Lyft ride credits for holidays throughout 2020.

The coalition will disburse \$20,000 for New Year's Eve so revelers can celebrate and ride smart.

New and existing users can receive up to \$5 off two rides in the Las Vegas Valley with code "LASNYE" from Dec. 31 at 10 a.m. through Jan. 1 at 4 p.m., while supplies last.

In its third year of operations the Zero Fatalities coalition's push to curb impaired driving appears to be paying off, according to Andrew Bennett, Zero Fatalities spokesman.

"Preliminary numbers show a 55 percent decrease in year over year impaired-related fatalities," Bennett said. "These are some of the lowest numbers we have seen in years and we hope with the expanding presence of the coalition that these numbers will continue to decrease."

Additionally, passengers can utilize public transit as a smart ride alternative to supplement their transportation plans, as the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada will offer free rides on all 39 fixed transit routes from 6 p.m. on New Year's Eve until 9 a.m. on New Year's Day.

"With so many accessible and reliable transportation alternatives, there are no excuses for driving impaired," said Louisa Choi, general manager for Lyft Nevada. "Let's not only celebrate the start of a new decade but also celebrate zero fatalities."

Send questions and comments to roadwarrior@reviewjournal.com. Please include your phone number. Follow @mickakers on Twitter.

‘ It’s not just the brown face. ... The images on these faces are quality. They are what I want to represent. ’

Roxanne Givens



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Roxanne Givens looks over the Christmas tree Wednesday. A native of Minneapolis, she has lived in Las Vegas for about five years.

► **CHRISTMAS**

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ference. Among the Christmas decorations that cheer nearly every room of Roxanne's Las Vegas home, the Santa Clauses, angels, nativity scenes and cherubs mostly have identities like that of the members of her own family, who are African-American.

Givens started diversifying her collection in about the late '90s. Until then, about the only dark face to appear in Christmas imagery was the wise man Balthazar, said to have been the king of Arabia. She was thinking about creating her own designs when she began to notice blown-glass ornaments by the high-end collectible company Christopher Radko that showed, as Givens says, "brown people." Soon, she was looking for more.

"They're hard to come by when you're looking for something a little more diverse," she said.

But she felt strongly about branching out.

"I just think it would be an exciting moment if we could see ourselves in our decorations," she said. "You go to the mall, and you see a mainstream Santa."

Givens, who lived in Minneapolis until about five years ago, remembers the widespread excitement when a Minneapolis shopping mall got its first African-American Santa.

"It's so important," she said. "It's just eye-opening if you haven't seen something like this."

As her collection grew, she found a lot of kindred spirits.

"The more people who were exposed to it, the more there were who wanted it," she said.

At the time, Givens was a housing developer and property manager. Working with architects had sharpened her own design skills. Her mission eventually led to a business, the now-closed Ethnichome.com, a design and decor site.

"With an ethnic twist," Givens said, "whatever that would be," including not only Afro-centric but also Asian and Latin cultural elements. Part of her business was helping a client, such as a bank, reflect the communities in which its facilities were located.



The Christmas decorations at Roxanne Givens' home include a miniature village and figurines.

Along the way, she discovered that Kurt S. Adler had introduced multicultural designs. She also got a lot of samples, "and sometimes they were brown."

There were some surprising finds, such as the pillar candle with a relief of an African-American choir.

"Who would have ever thought we'd find Victorian brown folks?" Givens said.

Some of them now populate her Victorian holiday village.

Always, she was meticulous in her choices, eschewing the cliché.

"It's not just the brown face," Givens said. "The images on these faces are quality. They are what I want to represent."

The 2009 death of her older daughter Brittany destroyed Givens' Christmas enthusiasm for some time. And she clearly misses sharing the tradition with her mother, who died a few years ago. But she has carried on.

"I feel a burst of joy," she said, "because this is the second year I've done it."

Givens' show of Christmas spirit begins at the entry to her home.

"Wreaths are a welcoming element," she said. "I like to start the design at the front door and carry it all the way

through."

The wreath on the door bears a brown-skinned angel. The Victorian village fills a long table in the living room, and an African-American nativity scene graces the family room. There are brown-skinned Santas on plates on the kitchen table, in the form of a cookie jar in the kitchen and in figures around the house.

The centerpiece, though, is the Christmas tree in the living room, which is covered with ornaments, many of them Radko, some from her mother's collection. But Givens points out that the tree's ornaments are culturally inclusive, with white-faced Santas and all manner of neutral characters such as Winnie the Pooh, Brittany's favorite.

"Most of it relates to the family," she said.

As she points out favorites, her enthusiasm reflects the proverbial child on Christmas morning.

"The fun, the pleasure," she said, "comes from the desire to expose them to others."

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► **CRASH**

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Highway Patrol's Southern Command received 443 calls regarding wrong-way drivers, and as of Dec. 12, the agency had received 384 reports for this year.

About 9:55 p.m. Dec. 5, an Oldsmobile going north in the southbound lanes of I-15 crashed head-on into a Chevrolet van just north of Primm, the Highway Patrol said. Frank Thomas, 42, of Jean, was killed, along with John Camilo, 51, of Valley Village, California.

On Dec. 3, Henderson resident Frank Magliarditi, 39, was killed when the vehicle he was driving south in the northbound lanes of

I-15 slammed into a semitrailer.

In November, Ericka Avila, 27, had a blood-alcohol level of more than three times the legal limit when she was killed in a wrong-way freeway crash, the Clark County coroner's office has said.

Avila was driving the wrong way about 3:30 a.m. Nov. 14 on I-15 near Cheyenne Avenue when her car hit another head-on, causing a chain reaction involving multiple vehicles.

Avila died at the scene.

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The driver of this car was killed in a wrong-way crash Saturday in the northbound lanes of Interstate 15 near Jean.

Nevada Highway Patrol