

## **Fresno sets plan for bikes**

### **City Council approves hundreds of miles of bikeways but no funding.**

By Jim Davis

The Fresno Bee

*(Published Tuesday, December 16, 2003, 5:54 AM)*

Hundreds of miles of new bikeways will crisscross Fresno, allowing bicyclists to ride to work, school and shopping, according to a new plan approved by the Fresno City Council.

The ambitious plan provides no money but gives a road map for the city to build bikeways along the city's major roads over the next 20 years.

"I feel like this is a breath of fresh air, literally," said Theresia Rogerson, chairwoman of the Fresno County Bicycle Coalition.

The plan -- approved 6-1 last week -- is the first substantial look at bicycle transportation in the city since the mid-1970s.

City officials say they hope to pay for the network of bikeways with grants and city transportation dollars.

"People should be allowed to travel by bicycle in Fresno," Council Member Brad Castillo said. "We should be more accommodating and not put up roadblocks."

Council Member Mike Dages cast the lone vote against the plan, worrying that bike lanes mean the loss of curbside parking for businesses and homes.

"It doesn't seem to be business friendly," Dages said. "It seems to be anti-business."

The plan was developed over the past year by city staffers with the help of a citizen advisory committee composed of bicycle-advocacy groups and other interested people.

The plan ranks areas of the city for proposed bike lanes over the next several years. The top-ranked areas include stretches of First Street and Ashlan and Palm avenues.

Planning Director Nick Yovino said the plan will help the city compete for grants to build lanes and pathways: "Many times you cannot apply unless you have a plan in place."

Council Member Jerry Duncan said he recently bought a bicycle and learned firsthand what it's like to ride on Fresno streets.

"One of the most terrifying things that I've done is ride on the city's streets," Duncan said. "We've got a problem here."

According to the plan, about 1,435 people use bicycles to commute to work in the Fresno area. That is about three-tenths of 1% of the city's population of 479,539, including county islands.

The percentage of bicyclists goes up to 1% if children who ride to school and adults who ride for recreation are included.

The city believes that number will grow to 2% over the next five to 10 years with the expansion of city bikeways and lanes, a desire by residents to improve air quality, and public and private incentives to reduce traffic congestion.

Rogerson, who moved to Fresno from the Bay Area five years ago and doesn't own a car, said that she already is seeing more people using bikes on city streets.

But, while the city has added 86 miles of bike lanes over the past few years, there are still too many areas without proper facilities for bicyclists, Rogerson said.

"There's a lot of stop and go in our network," Rogerson said. The city needs to make bicycling routes safe and convenient for riders, she added.

The city will do that by adding bike lanes -- marked lanes for bicycles on city streets -- paths and trails.

Dages is concerned that businesses and homes will be hurt by the addition of bike lanes. He pointed to a day-care business in his district that lost customers after the city installed bike lanes last year that took away street parking.

Dages said he's not against bike lanes, but there are older parts of the city that were never designed for them.

Rogerson, who serves on a bicycle-advisory committee, agrees there are cases where bikeways cannot be installed for a number of reasons, including safety or cost.

She said the city should work with homeowners and business people, saying there are solutions that people may not recognize. She said [the community needs to improve air quality, and making it easier for bicyclists is one way to do that.](#)

"Is it worth it to really appease [the business owner] at the moment or think about the long-term health of the entire community?" Rogerson said. "Those are difficult issues and we're going to have to work them out issue by issue."

The reporter can be reached at [jmdavis@fresnobee.com](mailto:jmdavis@fresnobee.com) or 441-6171

### **Oil firms must pay for risk to water**

Bakersfield Californian, The (CA)

VIC POLLARD, Californian Sacramento Bureau; email:

[vpollard@bakersfield.com](mailto:vpollard@bakersfield.com)

December 16, 2003

Section: Local, Page: b1

The small city of Dinuba, where pollution from the gasoline additive MTBE threatens the drinking water supply, has won a \$6.4 million settlement from several oil companies, including Kern Oil & Refining Co. It is the latest in a series of multi-million-dollar assessments against oil companies and refiners over contamination by the chemical methyl tertiary butyl ether.

The chemical, added to gasoline in California over the past decade to help clean the air, can make water taste and smell bad. It also is a suspected carcinogen.

As a result, it is being phased out of the state's gasoline supply, but many wells and lakes remain contaminated by leaks of gasoline containing MTBE.

In Kern County, the most-well known cases include the contamination of the town well in the small mountain community of Glennville and a large plume of tainted water under the Shell refinery on Rosedale Highway in Bakersfield.

Dinuba, about 20 miles southeast of Fresno, has had to shut down one of its drinking water wells and others are threatened by MTBE that leaked from a distribution facility and a service station, said Deputy City Manager Dan Meinert.

In the settlement announced Monday, the oil companies agreed to clean up the contaminated ground water at their expense if possible.

If they can't, they agreed to provide drinking water for the city from other sources, according to the city's law firm, Miller & Sawyer of Sacramento.

Kern Oil & Refining Co.'s share of the settlement is \$1 million, the attorneys said.

Officials of the independent company, which produces gasoline and diesel fuel at its Lamont refinery, did not respond to a request for comment.

Other companies contributing to the settlement are Exxon, Shell, Texaco (now ChevronTexaco), Ultramar, Unocal and Lyondell Chemical Co.

Similar settlements have been reached in cases of major MTBE pollution in Santa Monica and South Lake Tahoe.

## **Vanpool's driver raves about money saved**

### **S.J. group proud of pollution saving service**

**By Alex Gronke**

(Published in the Stockton Record - Saturday, December 13, 2003)

Deborah Anderson figures she has saved \$5,000 this year just on gasoline by driving a van packed with a dozen other commuters between their homes in the Tracy area and jobs in Oakland.

Anderson, a state employee, has never calculated what she has saved on wear and tear on her truck by leaving it in her garage and driving the van instead. But given the cost of tune ups, oil changes and new tires, the figure is likely close to another \$5,000.

Anderson is one of about 1,500 San Joaquin County residents who commute between homes in the Central Valley and jobs in the Bay Area using vanpool programs.

At a monthly cost of about \$120 to \$150 per passenger, vanpools represent an alternative to driving alone to points across the Altamont.

Every weekday morning, Anderson and her fellow commuters rendezvous in the parking lot at the shopping center on the southwest corner of Corral Hollow Road and West 11th Street. The van leaves sharply at 5:45. Anderson is the driver.

The van makes three stops in Oakland, delivering the commuters to within steps of their ultimate destinations. The same passengers make the return trip together, arriving back at the parking lot around 5 p.m.

Anderson leases the van from VPSI, a Michigan-based company with 26 years of experience leasing vans to groups of people who have organized themselves into vanpools.

At night, the van goes home with Anderson. She keeps it full of gas, and she keeps it clean. The leasing company pays for maintenance and liability insurance.

Anderson, who has lived in Tracy for one year, said she couldn't imagine commuting any other way.

While Anderson happily calculates the cash she has in her pocket because of the vanpool, San Joaquin County Council of Governments' Commute Connection tallies up how many pounds of pollution vanpools such as Anderson's keep out of the atmosphere.

Commute Connection estimates that nearly 3.7 million pounds of pollution was never created between the summer 2002 and the summer 2003 because of San Joaquin County residents using vanpools, carpools, the Altamont Commuter Express and telecommuting.

The Commute Connection acts as a producer for vanpools. It finds people with similar schedules working close to each other in the Bay Area, and helps them organize a vanpool.

Anderson said that the riders in her vanpool have grown friendly with each other over the course of their shared commute. But she said mornings in the van are still fairly quiet. "Everybody talks for 15 minutes," Anderson said. "And then they fall asleep."

[Madera Tribune editorial, Dec. 11, 2003:](#)

### **Cheers for the Farm Bureau**

California Farm Bureau Members have ended their annual meeting in Long Beach, and as usual they pondered the many issues facing farmers, from air quality, to food safety, to international trade.

The Farm Bureau and its members constitute virtually the only organization, short of the state Legislature, which is called on to deal with so many varied concerns.

And as the numbers of farmers decrease, they are expected to take on ever more responsibility for everything from homeland security to water conservation.

Farmers are sometimes criticized for not accepting immediately every new idea that comes along, especially when those ideas come from city folks.

For example, farmers in our Valley are being held accountable for a certain amount air pollution, but you have to remember that the air was much better when the farmers had it just to themselves and there weren't so many other people living here and driving through.

Farmers work to provide an abundant and inexpensive food supply, then are criticized for the practices they use to grow that food. For example, millions eat well and cheaply because of irrigation, but then turn around and gripe because they can't get cheap water for new golf courses and swimming pools.

Thank goodness for the Farm Bureau, which supports farmers in their efforts to stay in business, and clothe and feed the rest of us.