

Bicyclists take to Fresno streets

Staff reports

The Fresno Bee, Wed., May 13, 2009

About 100 people rode bicycles Wednesday from Manchester Center on Blackstone Avenue to Milano Restaurant on the Fulton Mall as part of the eighth annual downtown ride during Bike Month.

Sponsored by the Fresno County Bicycle Coalition, the ride promotes safe use of bikes as a means of exercise and transportation.

Bicycling also helps with air cleanup, according to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. District officials held a free raffle for an electric lawn mower.

Bike Month activities continue today with the fourth annual Bike to Work Corporate Challenge.

Around the Region – Modesto

Merced Sun-Star Wed., May 13, 2009

• BIKE-TO-WORK DAY

WHEN: Thursday, 6:30 to 8:30 a.m.

WHERE: Tenth Street Plaza

INFO: The event is a community effort to promote bike commuting as a viable effort to improve air quality in the valley. Bicyclists will commute to downtown Modesto, being escorted by officers from the Police Department Bicycle Patrol. Cyclists will receive a free continental breakfast, and the first 125 commuters will receive a free T-shirt and bicycle incentives. All-day secured bicycle parking is available. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District encourages people to reduce emissions by making changes in their daily lives, and biking to work is one of those. For more information, call 571-5193 or 529-9303. For information about the Healthy Air Living program, go to healthyairliving.com or call 559-230-6000.

Meeting on new emission rules

By Elsa Mejia, staff writer

Madera Tribune, Wednesday, May 13, 2009

A Porterville-based trucking company employee will speak at the Greater Madera County Industrial Association meeting at 7 a.m. today in the Madera Municipal Golf Course.

Charlie Simpson, truck leasing manager for E.M. Tharp Inc., will talk about the impact of new rules for California truck emissions.

E.M. Tharp is a transportation company with locations in Fresno, Porterville and Bakersfield and includes a Peterbilt franchise for Madera, Fresno, Kern, Kings and Tulare counties. Other companies under E.M. Tharp include American Truck Parts, Viking Trailer, DEPO, Mitsubishi Forklifts, EZ Go and Kroeger Equipment and Supply.

Those involved in manufacturing and industry are welcomed at the meeting, said GMCIA member Shirley Driggs.

Note: The above article was shortened from its published form in The Madera Tribune newspaper.

Commute, don't pollute: As Bike to Work Week kicks off, some are way ahead of the curve

By Cassandra Spratling, Detroit Free Press

In Vida en el Valle Thurs., May 14, 2009

DETROIT -- It's almost time for Sally Palaian to head to work. She grabs her bags - one with her Franklin planner, journal and other paperwork needed for her job as a clinical psychologist, and the other containing her lunch, makeup and clothes.

She puts them into panniers - bags that attach to her bike - hops on and pedals 7.5 miles from her Royal Oak, Mich., home to her office in Bingham Farms, Mich.

"I do it because I love biking and I love being outside," says Palaian, 51. "It's not just about saving gas; it makes me feel good. I like getting in my workout while I'm getting to work. I get to work and feel like I've already been productive."

Palaian is at the fore of two initiatives that aim to get people to work without a vehicle. It's the start of National Bike to Work Week, which culminates in Bike to Work Day on Friday.

"Less pollution and less traffic is certain to be a good thing for our environment," says Iris Steinberg, a spokeswoman for the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, which issued a challenge encouraging environmentally friendly commuting options - like public transportation, carpooling, walking, biking or telecommuting.

According to 2007 Census figures, 85 percent of people living in southeastern Michigan reported that they got to work by driving alone, while 8 percent said they carpooled, 2 percent walked and 2 percent took public transportation. The remaining 1 percent use taxis, bicycles or motorcycles. By hosting initiatives like the challenge, SEMCOG hopes to have a positive impact on those numbers.

"We don't just clean up the environment by writing laws," says Chuck Hersey, environmental program manager at the council. "Things are getting better because we are doing our part."

But there is a community of cyclists like Palaian who don't need the extra push.

Brian Kozeliski, 38, bikes to work year-round, almost 19 miles each way, from his home in Rochester, Mich., to his job as a portfolio manager in Birmingham, Mich.

"I have a mountain bike with steel-studded tires for the winter," he says, explaining how he manages Michigan's snow and ice.

It usually takes Kozeliski about 40 minutes to drive, compared to an hour to bike, he says. But during the summer - when there's lots of road construction - it takes him about the same amount of time or less to bike because he's not sitting in traffic.

"Biking is a lot less stressful," he says, adding that it also reduces wear and tear on his car in addition to saving him about \$4 a day in gasoline.

It's not all smooth pedaling for those who bike to work. Palaian changes clothes in an office in the suite where she works and stores her bike in another office. She keeps a pair of shoes and a few extra pieces of clothing at the office, just in case she forgets something.

Says Palaian: "When I bike, I have to plan my day to make sure I don't need a car. It's a little bit inconvenient because I can't just turn around and go back home if I forget something."

BIKING ADVICE

- Always wear a helmet.
- Wear bright clothing.
- If riding in the dark, wear reflective clothing and have lights front and back.

- Follow the same rules of the road as motorized vehicles.
- Use proper hand signals to indicate plans to turn.
- Before riding into an intersection where there is a car, make eye contact with the driver.
- Avoid major roads.
- Find a safe route, utilizing less-traveled roads and roads with smooth, clean pavement.
- Be sure your bike is in working order and tires are adequately inflated.
- Carry a pump, money, ID and repair kit

First hybrid taxicabs hit Los Angeles streets today

By Rick Orlov, Staff Writer

L.A. Daily News, Thursday, May 14, 2009

The first hybrid taxicabs hit the streets of Los Angeles today, when Bell Cab introduced two bright green models of the low-polluting vehicles to its fleet.

"This is an important first step in reducing pollution and improving air quality," said Councilwoman Wendy Greuel, who chairs the City Council's Transportation Committee.

The average taxicab produces nearly 37 pounds of smog and 42 tons of greenhouse gases a year, experts say, while the hybrids generate just 4 pounds.

Michael Canin, general manager of Bell Cab, said challenged other taxicab companies to add low-pollution vehicles to their fleets. Los Angeles has 2,303 licensed cabs.

Greuel said the city will be looking at ways to encourage the companies to voluntarily add the hybrids as part of their franchise agreements with the city.

PG&E signs solar deal to light 530,000 homes

By Jason Dearen, Associated Press Writer

In the Contra Costa Times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Thursday, May 14, 2009

SAN FRANCISCO—California utility Pacific Gas and Electric Co. has signed new solar contracts that are expected to produce enough electricity to power about 530,000 homes during peak hours.

PG&E said Wednesday its partnership with Oakland-based BrightSource Energy is the nation's largest solar deal, and would produce a record total of 1,310 megawatts of solar thermal power. The deal includes seven solar projects, the first of which is slated to begin producing power in 2012.

The plans still require review and approval by the California Public Utilities Commission. A spokeswoman there said there was no timeline for when the commission would vote on the plans.

If the commission approves the projects, all seven of the solar thermal plants could be up and running by 2017, said Keely Wachs, a spokesman for BrightSource. The plants will be located in California's Mojave Desert, and Arizona and Nevada.

BrightSource's solar thermal plants use mirrors to reflect sunlight, which heats water stored in boilers. The steam from the boilers turns turbines that generate electricity, which is then sent by power lines to homes and businesses.

PG&E provides power to 15 million customers in northern and central California. The power produced by the solar thermal plants would reach the most customers during peak hours—noon to 7 p.m.

Demand for electricity is especially high during peak hours in summer months, when people use air conditioning.

"We can harness the sun's energy to meet our customers' power requirements when they need it most—during hot summer days," said John Conway, senior vice president of energy supply for PG&E.

In February, BrightSource also signed a deal with Southern California Edison to produce 1,300 megawatts of solar power over the next seven years. In March, it announced a deal with Nevada developer Harvey Whittemore for a solar thermal plant to be built in Coyote Springs. Wachs said 400 of the 1,310 megawatts for PG&E will come from the Nevada site.

BrightSource now has a total of 2,610 megawatts of solar thermal power under contract, the most of any company in the nation.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger called the deal an important step toward achieving the state's renewable energy goals.

"This announcement serves as more evidence that reliable, renewable and pollution-free technology is here to stay and sunshine will eventually power hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses across our golden state," he said in a statement.

PG&E expands solar energy deal

By E. Fletcher, staff writer
Sacramento Bee, Thursday, May. 14, 2009

Pacific Gas and Electric announced Wednesday it plans to go to the desert to meet a large share of its future energy needs.

Under the agreement with Oakland-based BrightSource Energy Inc., PG&E will buy 1,310 megawatts of solar thermal power from seven plants.

The value of the deal was not disclosed.

The agreement supersedes an earlier agreement to purchase 900 megawatts of power from BrightSource.

The first of the plants – a 110-megawatt facility – is to be built in the Mojave Desert town of Ivanpah. It's expected to be operational in 2012. The second facility is expected to be built in western Nevada, 53 miles north of Las Vegas.

According to PG&E, the seven plants are expected to produce 3,666 gigawatt-hours of power annually, enough to power 530,000 homes.

State power providers are under state pressure to replace existing "dirty" sources of power with renewable sources such as wind and solar.

Current law requires that 20 percent of energy generation in California come from clean sources by the end of 2010.

State lawmakers are expected to increase the requirement to 33 percent by 2020.

"Through these agreements with BrightSource, we can harness the sun's energy to meet our customers' power requirements when they need it most – during hot summer days," said John Conway, a PG&E senior vice president.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger applauded the deal.

"Every megawatt of renewable energy added in California moves us farther down the path toward meeting our aggressive long-term energy and climate change goals," Schwarzenegger said in a statement.

Keely Wachs, a spokesman for BrightSource, said plants built in the short-term would not need major expansion of the grid, but longer-term plans will require new transmission lines and towers.

Lodi City Council approves Wal-Mart Supercenter proposal

Vote was 3-2; issue likely far from resolved

By Daniel Thigpen, staff writer

(Stockton) Record, Thursday, May 14, 2009

LODI – A developer got his second approval in four years to build a Wal-Mart Supercenter in west Lodi late Wednesday, but the matter is likely far from over.

After a four-hour public hearing, a divided City Council voted 3-2 to approve plans for a 40-acre shopping center, to be anchored by a 216,710-square-foot Supercenter, at the corner of Lower Sacramento Road and Kettleman Lane.

The proposal has volleyed between city leaders for months, and Wednesday the council considered an appeal of the project after the city Planning Commission last month deadlocked 3-3 on the matter, effectively rejecting it.

Even with the approval Wednesday, the project still must go back before the San Joaquin County judge who overturned the city's previous 2005 approval of the development proposal.

And many city leaders already have said they expect a new court battle to commence in the coming months.

Emissions cap support waves among key Democrats

Jennifer A. Dlouhy, Hearst Newspapers

In the S.F. Chronicle, Thursday, May 14, 2009

Washington - -- Democratic leaders pushing a cap on greenhouse gas emissions were working Wednesday to appease key lawmakers who want to ease the financial burden that the climate change plan would impose on consumers and refiners.

Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Los Angeles, who plans to formally introduce his climate change bill today, said that with a new deal reached late Tuesday, he expects to have enough votes on his 59-member House Energy and Commerce Committee to get the bill approved by the panel next week.

But Waxman spent much of Wednesday huddling with wavering Democratic lawmakers on the panel to shore up support for the measure. The skeptics included Texas Democrats Gene Green and Charles Gonzalez, who want concessions for refiners in the Lone Star State, and Rep. G.K. Butterfield, D-N.C., who wants tax relief for low-income households to defray expected higher energy costs.

The cornerstone of the bill is a plan to cap carbon-dioxide emissions blamed for contributing to global warming. Under the compromise, greenhouse gas emissions would be capped at 17 percent below 2005 levels in 2020 - a looser standard than the 20 percent reduction Waxman had

originally sought. That proposed cap is more rigorous than the 14 percent goal President Obama has sought or the 6 percent target advocated by some committee Democrats.

To exceed the limits, power plants, refiners, manufacturers and other industries would have to buy emissions allowances on a new carbon market. But after weeks of negotiations, committee Democrats have agreed to give away 35 percent of the allowances to electric utilities, 15 percent to trade-sensitive industries such as timber and steel manufacturing and a small number to the auto industry.

Still undecided was the question of how many allowances should be given to refiners, with the final number likely to rest somewhere between 1 and 5 percent. Green, the unofficial leader of a group of oil-patch Democrats on the Energy and Commerce Committee, was pushing the higher number.

"I want to vote for something that (limits carbon-dioxide emissions) but does it in a way that is reasonable," Green said. "There's some flexibility" in the allowance allocation, Green said, "but 1 percent is not in the ball park."

After meeting with Waxman and Rep. Ed Markey, D-Mass., Gonzalez said he was "feeling really good" that he would get enough concessions for refiners and would vote for the legislation.

Other committee Democrats were less optimistic. Rep. Bart Stupak, D-Mich., said he would vote against the legislation without significant changes, including tightened regulation of the new carbon allowance market.

Spanish study shows cocaine in the air in 2 cities

By Ciaran Giles, Associated Press Writer

In the Contra Costa Times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Thursday, May 14, 2009

MADRID—Air pollution has long been a fact of life in Spanish cities, but scientists now say it is not just smog that chokes people as they walk to work or stroll through the park. A new study has found the air in Madrid and Barcelona is also laced with at least five drugs—most prominently cocaine.

The Superior Council of Scientific Investigations, a government institute, said on its Web site Thursday that in addition to cocaine, they found trace amounts of amphetamines, opiates, cannabinoids and lysergic acid—a relative of LSD—in two air-quality control stations, one in each city.

But it said there was no reason for alarm.

"Not even if we lived for a thousand years would we consume the equivalent of a dose of cocaine by breathing this air," scientist Miren Lopez de Alda said in a statement.

The scientific group stressed that "in no case should these levels be considered representative of the air in the two cities." It said the tests were done in areas where drugs were likely to be consumed.

In Madrid, the test site was close to a ruined building believed to be frequented by drug dealers. And in both Madrid and Barcelona, the studies were carried out close to universities.

The group said the study showed higher concentrations of the components on weekends, suggesting that drug consumption was up in these periods.

The research found cocaine in concentrations ranging between 29 and 850 picogram per cubic meter of air. A picogram is one-trillionth of a gram.

Mar Viana, another researcher who worked on the project, said the levels were far higher than those found in similar studies in Europe. She said one study in Rome and Taranto in 2007 revealed cocaine levels of 100 picograms per cubic meter.

According to the U.S. State Department, Spain is Europe's largest consumer of cocaine and hashish. It is also a major transit point for narcotics shipments from South and Central America as well as Africa.

The scientists detected the drug by placing quartz microfiber filters in the air-testing stations. They said the method was new and could help in measuring drug use in towns and cities in a fast and anonymous way.

The group said the findings would be published in the U.S. journal Analytical Chemistry.

[Letter to the Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, May 14, 2009:](#)

Bike to work on Friday

It's another May day, which means beautiful weather, backyard barbecues and bike month. If you didn't know it, May 15 is National Bike to Work Day.

Just because the gas prices are not as crazy as they were around this time last year doesn't mean there aren't plenty of other reasons to get out on your bike and ride.

What better way to enjoy the weather but to be on the Kern River Parkway early in the morning or riding the quiet streets of Bakersfield on your way to work? Not only are you getting some needed exercise first thing in the morning but it's lots of fun too.

Another reason to use pedal power instead of fossil fuel power, of course. is the environment; you won't leave a carbon footprint riding a bike.

The best thing about riding to work is the fun, but your doctor would say it's the health benefits. Exercise reduces risk of coronary heart disease, stroke and other chronic diseases; and improves quality of life for people of all ages. Additionally, regular exercise provides a myriad of health benefits for both men and women including a more positive mental outlook and increased energy levels. Plus, you can burn up to 1,000 calories on a one-hour ride.

Make your bicycle part of your everyday transportation, starting on Bike to Work Day.

Cindy Parra, Bakersfield

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses consumers might possibly receive \\$4,500 in assistance to trade in their vehicles that consume a lot of gasoline for cleaner, efficient vehicles. For more information on this Spanish clip, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Estudian dar ayuda para autos eficientes

By David Lightman, MCT

El Nuevo Herald, Thursday, May 14, 2009

Los consumidores podrían recibir hasta \$4,500 cada uno para ayudar a sustituir viejos vehículos que consumen gran cantidad de gasolina bajo un plan que ha ganado sólido respaldo de la Casa Blanca y de los líderes del Congreso.

El movimiento llamado "dinero por autos viejos" ha demostrado ser tan fuerte que el líder de la mayoría en el Senado Harry Reid, demócrata por Nevada, considera seriamente convertirlo en parte del proyecto de gastos de emergencia de las guerras de Irak y Afganistán.

Se espera que la Cámara vote sobre la medida para financiar la guerra antes de mañana, probablemente sin incluir el "dinero por autos viejos", que el Senado piensa agregar la semana entrante cuando debata la legislación.

El 'dinero por autos viejos' es de veras importante", indicó Reid.

El presidente Barack Obama ha sumado su voz al coro. Después que los demócratas de la Cámara describieron el plan en una reunión en la Casa Blanca la semana pasada, "el Presidente elogió a los miembros por respaldar un plan que ayudaría a la industria automotriz del país, y le daría a los estadounidenses automóviles más limpios", dijo Robert Gibbs, secretario de prensa de la Casa Blanca.

El plan permitiría a los consumidores cambiar sus viejos vehículos que consumen mucha gasolina y obtener vales hasta por \$4,500 para ayudarles a costear vehículos más eficientes.

La senadora Debbie Stabenow, demócrata por Michigan, e importantes demócratas de la Cámara están cabildeando a favor del plan. El proyecto permitiría cambiar un auto viejo --si bien el término "viejo" no se ha definido-- que hace 18 millas o menos por galón, por uno nuevo cuyo rendimiento sea al menos 22 millas por galón. Si el rendimiento del nuevo auto fuera cuatro millas por galón o mejor, el vale del consumidor podría ser de \$3,500. Si la mejora es de al menos 10 millas por galón, entonces el vale podría ser de \$4,500.

Para camiones ligeros, los viejos vehículos deben hacer menos de 18 millas por hora. Si el nuevo camión o todoterreno hace dos millas por galón más, el vale podría tener un valor de \$3,500, y aumentaría a \$4,500 si el rendimiento mejora en cinco millas. Se piensa otorgar otros incentivos a camiones más grandes y a camiones para trabajos pesados.

Los partidarios estiman que el programa, que podría estar en vigor durante un año, podría impulsar las ventas de autos y camiones.

Sin embargo, no a todo el mundo le entusiasma la idea:

- El costo se estima entre \$3 y \$4,000 millones. Los que apoyan el plan quieren que Obama utilice el dinero del estímulo económico, y si falta dinero adicional, éste podría venir de un proyecto de ley de gastos para la guerra.
- La eficiencia del combustible. Un influyente grupo de legisladores quiere enfatizar más el ahorro de combustible, lo cual podría tener importancia a la hora de dar forma a la legislación final.

"Los conceptos de los diferentes enfoques son los mismos, pero algunos de nosotros tenemos objetivos distintos", dijo la senadora Dianne Feinstein, demócrata por California. Feinstein criticó el planteamiento de los demócratas de la Cámara y de Stabenow, y dijo que estaba demasiado inclinado a ayudar a la industria automotriz.

"Lo que el plan significa esencialmente es que vehículos en perfecto estado podrían ser convertidos en chatarra para que otros vehículos que ahorran más gasolina puedan comprarse", dijo Feinstein.