

Visalia's Lane appointed to local air board

The Business Journal, Tues., April 6, 2010

Visalia City Councilmember Mike Lane has been appointed to a three-year term on the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District Governing Board.

Lane is a management analyst for Visalia-based community nonprofit Self-Help Enterprises. He was elected to the Visalia City Council last year and also serves on the board of directors for the Tulare-Kings Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. He's also on the Visalia Chamber of Commerce Government Affairs Council. Previously, he was trustee of the Visalia Unified School District, holding the title of board president in 2004.

"We welcome new Board Member Lane, and believe his very diverse background will bring a valuable voice on the Board," said Seyed Sadredin, the district's executive director, in a statement.

"We can attain healthy air and a healthy economy at the same time, and I am committed to pursuing both of these goals," Lane said in a statement. "I am grateful for the opportunity to serve on the Governing Board and will work diligently to improve the quality of life for the residents of the San Joaquin Valley."

The governing board meets on the third Thursday of each month and is comprised of 15 seats — one from each of the district's eight counties, five city representatives and two appointed by the governor. The board directs district staff and must authorize any regulations and plans developed by the district to meet health-based air-quality standards in the local air basin, which covers eight Central California counties.

Visalia City Councilman Lane named to Valley air board

By Teresa Douglass

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Wed., April 7, 2010

Visalia City Councilman Mike Lane has been appointed to serve a three-year term on the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District governing board, the board announced Tuesday.

As an air board member, Lane said he will deal with stationary sources of pollution such as agriculture, construction and manufacturing.

"The key is to do cost-benefit analysis to clean up the air without hampering businesses," he said.

He said he wants the district's budget process to be transparent.

He said he will investigate how funds are being spent and whether efforts are successful at making air cleaner in the Valley.

The district monitors air quality in Tulare, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings and portions of Kern counties — totaling 25,000 square miles with 3.8 million residents.

Lane was elected to the Visalia City Council in 2009. Previously, he served on the Visalia Unified School Board.

He is a management analyst for Self-Help Enterprises, a Visalia-based nonprofit housing and community development organization.

Tulare County Board of Supervisors told of rules that may cut Valley workers' drives

By David Castellon

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Wed., April 7, 2010

About 1,800 Valley employers, including Tulare County government, soon will be notified of regulations intended to reduce employees' driving miles.

The rules — called eTRIP rules — go into effect Jan. 1, 2014, for some businesses that employ 100 or more workers. It's part of an effort to meet 2024 air-quality goals set for eight Central Valley counties by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Affected employers may choose from among 80 recommended methods of reducing the driving done by workers.

Each method is worth a certain number of points, and businesses may accumulate as many as 65.

Methods include:

- Installing bike racks.
- Having on-site ATM machines or food vending machines.
- Selling stamps on-site
- Arranging for lunch deliveries.
- Providing fitness facilities.
- Operating ride-share programs.
- Offering public-transportation discount passes.

Affected employers will need only a portion their pollution-reduction methods in place at the start of 2012, Jessica Fierro, a senior air quality specialist for the San Joaquin Air Pollution Control District, told the Tulare County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday.

They'll have three years to implement the rest, Fierro said. Because the number of people working at a particular facility will play a role in the points process, she said, not all county agencies will be affected by the regulations. Certain employees — including emergency personnel, seasonal workers and those who work less than 32 hours a week — also are exempt.

Others affected

Other Tulare County businesses and city governments that will be affected have not been identified, said Jaime Holt, chief communications officer for the pollution control district.

Employers must register by July 1 and submit the trip-reduction methods they plan to observe by Sept. 1, 2011. Fines for failure to comply are possible, officials said, but the district will operate a "mutual settlement process" to bring employers into compliance.

GET unveils new natural-gas powered buses

By Courtenay Edelhart, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Wed., April 7, 2010

Golden Empire Transit District on Tuesday unveiled the newest additions to the city's bus fleet, 27 natural gas-powered buses in a new color scheme meant to evoke the Bakersfield horizon.

The district has 27 new turquoise blue, green and yellow buses in-hand already, and anticipates delivery of five more "shortly," said GET Chief Executive Officer Karen King.

The entire \$16 million cost of the 32 new buses was paid for with state and federal grants, King said.

"We've had this in the works for a while," she said. "Getting a new fleet is an opportunity. It conveys the message that we are a vibrant, responsive transit district ready to meet the needs of a growing community."

Operating a compressed natural gas-powered bus is the equivalent of taking 17 to 33 passenger cars off the road, according to the Coalition for Clean Air. Exhaust from heavy-duty diesel engines contains between 100 and 200 times more small particles than gasoline engine exhaust.

Just before joining GET employees and board members cutting a giant red ribbon with oversized scissors, Mayor Harvey Hall praised the cheerful color scheme, the first update in more than 20 years.

"As we stand here on a good Bakersfield day with sunshine and blue skies, we can see ... we have behind us a bus that says, 'We are green, we have sunshine, and we have blue skies,'" he said.

The new buses are turquoise with a strip of green on the bottom anchored by a sunburst. Older buses are white with a red GET logo on the bottom.

Prior to the addition of the new buses, the city had 81 buses in its fleet.

Seventeen of the new buses replace aging vehicles that were taken out of service. The remaining new buses expand the city's fleet by 10 for a total of 91.

Anne Schoolcraft, Ride Share coordinator for Kern Council of Governments, said she hopes the clean-powered new buses will inspire more people to use public transportation and other alternate methods of commuting.

"This is wonderful for our community," she said. "Even if it's just one day a week, it's such a savings in terms of your wallet, exercise and air quality."

[Tracy Press, Guest Commentary, Wed., April 7, 2010:](#)

Town Crier: Power plant expansion makes car switch seem pointless

By Brian Williams

Opening my semiweekly edition of the Tracy Press recently, I was greeted with the headline that the city of Tracy not only will receive several hundred thousand dollars to help offset the current budget deficit, but will be the recipient of a new eco-friendly solar farm to help power the new natural-gas-burning Tracy Peaker Plant.

Knowing the dire financial reality Tracy is facing, reading about a possible influx of cash appeared to be great news. Between the money the city plans to collect from the unfortunate injury and illness victims who utilize our fire department's emergency service personnel as well as the hundreds of thousands of dollars received from this solar farm, we should be on our way toward fiscal recovery.

In addition to the financial benefits, we also learned that Tracy would benefit from a new state-of-the-art solar farm poised to deliver "green" energy that will help drive the power plant's new turbines. I immediately imagined the smiles taking their places on many a Toyota Prius owner, as thoughts of a green tomorrow in Tracy danced through their heads.

As I finished my paper and morning coffee, I loaded my daughter into our midsized SUV for her ride to school, and for a moment I was struck with a sense of guilt. On one hand, my city was taking what appeared to be a green step forward with the approval of — from all indications — a more environmentally friendly power plant and corresponding solar farm, while I was shuffling my daughter around in an ozone-depleting SUV.

Some 30 miles into my 60-mile drive to work, I had to wonder just how was I contributing to the global warming crisis Al Gore had previously warned us all about.

How could I explain to my daughter if the polar bears no longer had the vast stretches of ice they required to hunt their food? Or what about the fate of the penguins and their annual march to their icy breeding grounds? No one wants to be responsible for death of the planet based on selfish choices made at the auto dealership.

Later in the day, I decided to do a little research on just how much my choice in vehicles contributes to the greenhouse gases that plague our atmosphere. Web site after Web site provided the sad data. It appeared that my soccer team shuttle was emitting about 160 pounds of smog and some 10 tons of greenhouse gases a year. I compared this to a standard four-cylinder imported sedan that produces 115 pounds of smog and only 7 tons of greenhouse gases annually.

My next challenge was trying to understand what that all meant. Pounds of smog and tons of gases — that sounded horrible. Sadly, it must be true. I was killing the planet. The glaciers were melting, the sea was rising, the polar bears were starving and penguins were without a march.

Weighted down with the guilt of a dying planet on my back, I wondered if I, too, should become a Prius owner. How many under-14 girls soccer players — or, better yet, how many bags of unnecessary impulse purchases from Marshalls — would a Prius hold? I wondered as I drove home that evening.

Glancing to my left as I passed the new Kimball High School, I looked over at the site of the soon-to-be-expanded power plant. I had to wonder — just how many pounds of smog and tons of gases were in that huge plume of smoke blowing toward the school and over our town?

I imagine that manmade cloud drifting in the breeze isn't helping keep the polar bears alive.

In fact, it turns out that this new “eco-friendly” power plant will produce 60 percent less smog and greenhouse gases per megawatt generated than the current power plant it’s replacing. You can almost hear the penguins stomping their little feet in excitement.

However, while the new improved plant will produce fewer emissions per megawatt, the number of hours the plant will run will be going from about 100 hours a year to 7,000 hours a year. Even with the substantial per-megawatt savings, we will be subjected to 53 times the pollution already being spewed over our city.

Reading that the new eco-friendly natural gas burning power plant will expel 180,000 pounds of smog and 1 million tons of greenhouse gases a year, I had to pause.

Suddenly, my 160 pounds of SUV-created smog seemed pretty insignificant, when compared to our new power plant that will send out 180,000 pounds a year. I imagined the growing silence of the no longer dancing penguins as I tried to digest the thought of what 1 million annual metric tons of greenhouse gases contributes to Earth’s warming.

How many SUVs — at 10 tons of greenhouse gases per year — would have to be replaced by a hybrid Prius to make up for 1 million metric tons of emissions from one power plant?

Pulling into my garage, I felt a bit more at ease knowing that, if I had to explain to my daughter that the polar bears were dying off due to manmade global warming, I at least felt better knowing it wouldn’t be because of my choice in vehicles. We could replace every vehicle in Tracy with a low-emissions hybrid, but with this new power plant’s emissions, we would still be subjected to tens of thousands of tons of greenhouse gases more than we are today.

Perhaps the responsibility of saving the planet should not fall on the shoulders of one’s choice in transportation? Maybe it’s time to re-evaluate our concerns about the only environmentally friendly option to deliver electricity that will meet the nation’s demand.

For all of our focus on the cars we drive, the fireplaces we light and lawnmowers we push, are we losing sight of the decisions that really matter to our planet? Decisions like continuing to rely on burning fossil fuels to generate our power?

As many well-meaning eco-conscious Prius drivers smile at the news of our new “eco-friendly” power plant, many others may ask themselves when they look up into the smog above our town, “What’s the point?”

Brian Williams has been a Tracy resident since 1993 and is a husband, a father and a supervisor in the telecommunications industry.

[Fresno Bee Earth Blog, Wed., April 7, 2010:](#)

Visalian named to air board

By Mark Grossi

Visalia City Councilmember Mike Lane has been appointed to a three-year term on the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District governing board.

He was appointed by the Valleywide Special Cities Selection Committee, which picks the five city representatives on the district board.

The board meets on the third Thursday of each month and is comprised of 15 seats: one from each of the District's eight counties; five city representatives; and two appointed by the governor.

Lane, a Visalia native, is a management analyst for Self-Help Enterprises, the Visalia-based, nonprofit, housing and community development organization. He was elected to the Visalia City Council in 2009 and serves on the board of directors for the Tulare-Kings Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.