

## **Everybody's Highway**

*LA Times Editorial July 7, 2004*

Representatives from California and other Western states in the same room without the boxing gloves coming out? It has happened a handful of times in recent months on two important regional issues: power and transportation. This is all to the good and will give Western states a bigger voice in Congress if the state-level cooperation filters upward.

Other Western states, less populated and more conservative, always have had trouble dealing with California. Even within California, "it's always a family feud," said Steven P. Erie, a professor of political science at UC San Diego. "The region has to overcome this fragmentation of interests" to solve common problems, Erie said.

Eighteen states from the nation's western half, including California, Texas and Washington, agreed in late June to set aside the usual differences between energy producers and users to develop 30,000 megawatts of clean energy by 2015, as well as to cooperate on badly needed electric transmission line improvements.

Public works officials from California, Oregon and Washington also are coming together over Interstate 5, the troubled transportation corridor that serves as the backbone for the economy of the Western U.S. As Times staff writer Dan Weikel reported Monday, the increasing traffic bottlenecks along the 1,381-mile highway no longer can be viewed as local problems because they quickly lead to regional economic pain.

When state inspectors closed a highway bridge over the Umpqua River in Oregon in 2001 for urgent repairs, the resulting detours by 2,000 big rigs a day pushed up the cost of shipping lumber, produce, fuel and even Red Cross blood by as much as \$200 per truck.

Delays and extreme congestion plague the worn-out highway, which crosses three states and links the United States with Mexico and Canada, yet no joint construction and maintenance plan exists.

The fledgling West Coast Corridor Coalition still has no budget, and it faces competition for federal funds from older transportation corridor groups. At least with a neutral forum to share mutual concerns, the needed plan has begun to take shape.

If the newfound spirit of cooperation on transportation and energy produces results, there are plenty of other issues begging for regional attention. From dealing with illegal immigration to protecting the environment and public lands, a common front would cross political boundaries and pry loose federal dollars that otherwise go to states with a longer history of linking arms.

## **MID plant raises alarm**

*Letter to the Editor*

*Modesto Bee July 3, 2004*

Are Riponites aware of the approval for the Modesto Irrigation District's power plant? I live less than 1,000 feet from the chosen site and am very concerned about the noise this plant will generate. Ripon does not have a noise ordinance, so enforcement of noise problems is a huge issue to me, and should be to other Ripon residents, since the plant is projected to add to the already excessive noise.

The MID applied for a "peaker plant," telling us at the first meeting that it would only run during peak summer heat, "probably four or five weeks a year." But they licensed it for 8,760 hours (seven days a week, 24 hours a day). I believe it will operate as a full-time power plant in a very short time.

The commission voted to approve the MID application and have staff try to negotiate some mitigation after the fact. How can they vote yes on an unknown?

Someone, please appeal this ludicrous vote. Contact city officials before it's too late.

PAM KAEFER  
Ripon

### **MID plant adds pollution**

*Letter to the Editor*

*Modesto Bee July 3, 2004*

Our valley air is dirty, and needs cleaning up. We don't need to go the opposite direction. The Ripon Planning Commission just approved a Modesto Irrigation District plant that would put out the equivalent particulate matter of more than 40,000 cars. The toxic particles emitted from this plant are so fine that they get past the body's defenses, crossing into your bloodstream like a gas. They cause lung and heart disease and increased death rates.

The MID claims it need not mitigate the noise, which in some residential zones will be four times the level that interferes with sleep. They claim purchasing paper credits from sources far away that shut down more than a decade ago is sufficient to offset their pollution. They won't be offsetting a single particle. The pollution from their plant will be added to the existing dirty air outside, plain and simple.

This is an outrage. The plant should either be denied outright or the proponents should find active local sources to shut down or improve to allow for their increased pollution.

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