

## **Study links particulate pollution to low birth weight**

By Kerry Cavanaugh, Staff Writer

Los Angeles Daily News Tues., January 4, 2005

Bolstering concerns about the health hazards of pollution, a study published Monday said babies born in California cities with the dirtiest air weigh less than those born in cleaner communities.

The study, published in the journal *Pediatrics*, joins a growing body of research about the dangers of fine particulate matter -- a microscopic form of soot that has already been linked to increased emergency room visits, more heart attacks and decreased lung function in children.

The findings hit home in Los Angeles, which, along with the Central Valley, has the nation's highest levels of fine particulate matter.

"Here is another reason, another alarm bell for regulators that should spur action; it's our babies who are suffering," said Nidia Bautista of the Coalition for Clean Air, which has pushed for tougher pollution limits on diesel equipment at ports and programs to clean up trucks and train.

Fine particulate matter is made up of microscopic specks and liquid droplets formed from vehicle exhaust, soot from diesel combustion and wood-burning fireplaces, and chemicals from industrial smokestacks.

The bits can carry toxic contaminants into the body and lodge deep in the lungs.

In their study of 18,000 babies born in California in 2000, researchers analyzed the birth weight and level of fine particulate matter pollution near the mother's residence in the preceding nine months.

They found that babies born to mothers in the most polluted areas consistently weighed less -- about 1 ounce less -- than babies born to mothers who lived in clean-air cities.

"You're taking every baby and shifting them down an ounce; that additional ounce could be a big issue for them," said Tracey Woodruff, a senior scientist at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's office of policy and economic innovation, which organized the research.

Researchers could not determine how newborns might be affected by soot, whether the mother's worsened health impacts the baby or whether the pollution is getting directly to the fetus.

A 1-ounce difference doesn't sound like much, and it might not mean much to an individual baby, study authors said. But lower birth weight can be a sign of other health problems in a newborn, and researchers might next turn their attention to studying potential long-term health effects.

## **El Segundo Sues Over LAX Plan**

**City alleges Los Angeles' environmental studies failed to adequately analyze traffic, noise and other effects on nearby communities.**

By Jennifer Oldham

Los Angeles Times, January 4, 2005

The city of El Segundo sued the city of Los Angeles on Monday, claiming that environmental studies completed for a Los Angeles International Airport modernization plan failed to adequately analyze air pollution, traffic, noise and other effects on surrounding communities.

In a 12-page petition, filed in Los Angeles County Superior Court, El Segundo's attorneys argue that in a rush to approve the \$11-billion plan, Los Angeles violated state environmental law.

State law requires airports to complete an environmental impact report, or EIR, with expansion plans to identify measures that will ease the effects on surrounding communities.

"The great quantities of time and money expended by the parties in the LAX Master Plan environmental review process have not resulted in a high-quality, or even an adequate, EIR," the

petition filed by San Francisco-based Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger states. "In fact, the environmental documentation leaves many of the public's concerns unaddressed and questions unanswered."

El Segundo's lawsuit is the first of several expected this week from residents and cities near the world's fifth-busiest airport. Under state law, the parties have until Friday to challenge the plan. The Alliance for a Regional Solution to Airport Congestion, a group that represents residents living around LAX, plans to file suit Thursday. Los Angeles County officials said they would file by Friday.

The city of Inglewood has also threatened to sue.

El Segundo's lawsuit against the Los Angeles City Council, Mayor James K. Hahn, Los Angeles World Airports and the Airport Commission, asks the court to order them to conduct an additional environmental review. The suit also requests that the court bar Los Angeles from starting work until it complies with state environmental law.

The City Council last month overwhelmingly approved Hahn's plan to renovate the airport. The proposal, in two phases, calls for a transit hub, an elevated train and a consolidated rental-car center, along with moving the airport's southernmost runway closer to El Segundo. Airport officials hope to start construction on the runway later this year.

Los Angeles officials said the lawsuit came as no surprise and noted that they are continuing to negotiate with El Segundo to limit annual capacity at LAX to 78.9 million passengers, pay for noise mitigation and traffic improvements, and address how to fix the southern runways.

"The mayor isn't dissuaded by the lawsuit," said Elizabeth Kaltman, a spokeswoman for Hahn. "We all assumed they would preserve their right to sue. The mayor is confident that we will be able to resolve their claims" out of court.

El Segundo officials said the lawsuit's confrontational tone belied a "very cordial and, at this point, friendly" relationship between the cities.

"I'm optimistic," said Kelly McDowell, El Segundo's mayor. "We've been going at it for what seems like a long time, but in this set of discussions compared to the length of time with which we've been dealing with the problem, it's not. We've been talking since last May, but we've been dealing with this for decades."

The Federal Aviation Administration, which must sign off on Hahn's LAX plan and which has worked closely with Los Angeles officials on the environmental studies, said litigation would not force the agency to alter its schedule. The FAA plans to issue a decision before the end of March, said Donn Walker, an agency spokesman.

The lawsuit reiterates long-standing complaints El Segundo has had with the airport planning process, which spanned 10 years and cost Los Angeles \$147 million.

El Segundo has argued repeatedly that Hahn's plan fails to limit annual capacity at LAX to 78.9 million passengers - a figure the mayor promised to stick to when he campaigned for office in 2001.

Because the updated airport's capacity will be far greater than the 78.9 million passengers used in the environmental report, it understates the effect on surrounding communities, the lawsuit argues.

In a "rush" to approve the project, the lawsuit contends, the city made "significant 11th-hour changes" to the proposal and did not conduct additional environmental analysis.

Those alterations included moving the most controversial projects - including a remote check-in facility near the San Diego Freeway and the demolition of Terminals 1, 2 and 3 - to a second phase where they can't proceed without further environmental, traffic and security studies. The lawsuit also challenges one of the major arguments for Hahn's plan: that if the airport isn't modernized, residents will suffer the noise, air pollution and traffic that accompanies growth without the mitigation measures provided in the plan.

Environmental studies for Hahn's plan, the lawsuit contends, also rely on outdated data and fail to analyze effects after the year 2015.

In addition, the 30,000-page EIR is "written in overly complicated technical jargon" and is "well over" the 300-page length that state law suggests, the suit alleges. Los Angeles' airport agency also made it difficult for residents to review the document because it charged \$6,500 for a copy, and because the electronic version was unreliable, the suit charges.

The lawsuit says El Segundo's comments, "supported by substantial evidence and extensive credible expert analysis, have been largely ignored." Instead, it charges that Los Angeles "attempted to bury" El Segundo "in increasingly large mountains of paperwork."

### **Pigs play a part in economics of global warming**

By Charles J. Hanley - The Associated Press  
Stockton Record Mon., Jan. 3, 2005

SANTIAGO, Chile -- Pig manure in Chile will keep neon lights glowing on Tokyo's Ginza in years to come. It's a grand north-south tradeoff to slow global warming: You reduce your "greenhouse gas" emissions so I don't have to cut back on mine.

In this case, a Chilean pork producer is eliminating methane fumes from animal waste and selling the resulting "credits" to Japanese and Canadian utilities, easing requirements that they reduce carbon dioxide emissions from their coal- and oil-burning power plants.

It's one of the biggest deals in a potential multibillion-dollar market, a global exchange a Canadian executive calls "absolutely essential" for meeting targets under the Kyoto Protocol. But some warn that abuses may subvert the spirit of that climate treaty.

Last month in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the annual international climate conference approved an expansion of this Clean Development Mechanism, or CDM, as the exchange is called, and a strengthening of the U.N. office overseeing it.

Carbon dioxide, methane and a few other gases trap heat that otherwise would escape the atmosphere. A scientific consensus, endorsed by a U.N.-sponsored network of climate experts, blames much of the Earth's temperature rise of recent decades on these emissions, and warns it will lead to damaging climate disruptions.

The 1997 Kyoto pact, effective next Feb. 16, sets mandatory targets for industrial nations to reduce emissions by 2012. Although the U.S government rejects Kyoto, other nations are setting emissions quotas for industries that spew out the gases, particularly carbon dioxide, the most common.

The CDM was established on the theory that emission reductions help the climate wherever they occur. It allows northern industries to underwrite reductions in developing countries -- where they're not mandatory -- and get credit for them.

Japan says up to one-third of its required cutbacks may come from foreign sources. Don Wharton, director of sustainable development for Canada's TransAlta utility, said the CDM is essential because there's too little time to install new technologies at home.

"We believe most large Canadian companies will have to rely on offsets (credits) to meet their reduction requirements," he said.

TransAlta and Tokyo Electric Power Co. found a partial answer in pig manure pits in the green valleys south of Santiago.

Industrial pork operations usually collect excrement in pits where it decomposes naturally, emitting methane into the open air. But Chilean food producer AgroSuper, spotting the Kyoto opportunity, installed \$30 million in technology to handle the waste of 100,000 pigs, covering pits with vast plastic sheets and drawing off the methane, some to flare, some to use in generators to power farm operations.

Though less prevalent than carbon dioxide, methane is a more potent greenhouse gas. Each ton of contained methane earns AgroSuper some 20 certified emission reductions or CERs equivalent to 20 tons of carbon dioxide.

The Chilean agribusiness will divide 400,000 CERs per year for nine years between the Japanese and Canadian companies. Wharton estimated this would meet 10 percent of TransAlta's needs for reductions.

A credit currently sells on the new European carbon market for about \$10. But terms of the AgroSuper deal, still awaiting final U.N. approval, were not disclosed.

That carbon price is expected to rise, and big players are jumping into the market. A firm called CO2e (carbon dioxide equivalent), a subsidiary of the New York financial house Cantor Fitzgerald, brokered the AgroSuper deal and is developing another involving Brazilian power plants using sugar cane, a renewable fuel less carbon-heavy than coal or oil. China, meanwhile, is working to qualify more than 500 projects for salable credits.

Environmentalists worry that a flood of questionable projects may win U.N. certification as Kyoto comes into force in 2005. They cite CDM proposals for hydropower dams, for example, saying they're often "business-as-usual" projects that aren't replacing carbon-heavy alternatives, but would have been built without the Kyoto trading mechanism.

"The fact they're getting CDM credits is not helping the climate," said Ben Pearson, Australian founder of a campaign called CDM Watch. He said climate change will be slowed not through "marginal" projects with animal waste, but by addressing "the real issue, which is to fundamentally reform the way we produce and consume energy."

Santiago lawyer Sergio Vives, who helped negotiate the AgroSuper deal, defends it as a real reduction.

"It's quite clear they probably wouldn't have gone ahead with this technology" -- and methane would still rise into the atmosphere -- "without an incentive like the CDM," he said.

The world is taking notice of South America's porcine potential.

A Florida-based firm, AgCert, is installing methane-capture technology at 30 pig farms in Brazil. In one Brazilian state alone, Minas Gerais, 3.4 million pigs produce 7 million tons of waste per year - a lot to work with to keep lights burning in the credits-hungry north.

## **Setting goals for 2005**

[Editorial, Visalia Times-Delta Tues., Jan. 4, 2005](#)

For the past few years, the Times-Delta has identified what we have called a blueprint for the community -issues and problems we believe are important.

Monday, we reviewed our blueprint for 2004. Obviously plenty of work remains to improve air quality, guarantee the welfare of children and reform health care. Some of those issues will reappear on this year's list, with slightly different objectives. Others will find a new place.

When identifying issues of most importance to Visalia and Tulare County, it should be no surprise that growth will touch most of them. Also no surprise: Government agencies are most often called upon for the solutions.

### ***Public sector revival***

Reforming government itself ought to be the community's top priority. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, among others, has taken a shot at streamlining state government, with mixed results. That shouldn't stop our local community.

Both the city and county would be served with a thorough and scrupulous review of their services and procedures. We are especially concerned with Tulare County, which often seems beset by inefficient operation and ineffectiveness, whether the mission is delivering social services, maintaining roads or promoting open government.

Even if everything were running fine, government would be justified in reconsidering the way it does business. Demands are rising. Money is getting tighter. Governing in California will be more challenging in the years ahead. Local governments especially, as those on the low end, must be nimble to change.

### ***Growth at large***

Tulare County is already working on a new general plan update, which is commendable, even though it made little headway in 2004. This year it needs to push forward.

Essential to the process, however, is fitting in its growth with those of cities, especially Visalia and Tulare. Both cities are in building booms. Both have big plans of their own. It's time to stop thinking of those cities as entities apart from the county. The county and cities must work together more than ever.

### ***Preventive health care***

It takes no crystal ball to see that medical care will become more difficult to deliver and more expensive. Both public and private sectors have initiated programs for promoting preventive health in recent years. This needs to become a priority, especially with the young, the old and the needy.

Government especially tends to aim its cures at the back end of a problem. Focusing on the front end could pay real dividends. The private sector also needs to pitch in. No one can afford not to be health conscious. Private companies can be tremendously effective in offering both incentives and education for cost-saving preventive health care.

### ***Improve lives of children***

The above principle is especially true for children. This is far from a new idea: California's "First Five" program recognized it long ago. Yet our communities still allow so many children to succumb to developmental deficiencies at an early age, creating lifelong problems.

*Can 2005 be the year in which no child really is left behind?*

### ***Build for the future***

Visalia has managed just barely to provide for future demands for schools, roads, parks and recreation and public safety, often by forcing the issue. The city's overdue regional sports park is about to break ground. It took a special tax to provide for new fire stations and police services. Visalia Unified School District did pass a school bond, but that only allowed the district to catch up to growth, not get ahead of it.

This year, the community and its citizens need to commit to measures that guarantee Visalia won't be overwhelmed by the growth boom. Growth does more than add houses and people. It creates needs - for classrooms, streets, water and sewer service, jobs, recreation and public safety.

Visalia residents have shown a reluctance in recent years to commit to the resources for some of those things. It has rejected construction bonds three straight times for Visalia Unified and College of the Sequoias. This year the community needs to take up that challenge.

If Visalia wants scenic areas, open space and respites from urban development, it will have to pay for them.

### ***Bring air quality home***

Air quality improvement can't be left only to government. In fact, individual lifestyle changes would make a greater difference in air quality. The community must embrace some grass-roots efforts to Spare the Air, including more days devoted to alternative transportation as commuters and efforts to make public and alternative transportation easier.

We don't expect solutions to all these problems. The mark of a community's viability, though, is that it make progress. We made progress on some of these issues in 2004. We're hoping 2005 is another very good year.

### **Privacy violated**

[Letter to the Editor](#)

[Bakersfield Californian Tues., Jan. 4, 2005](#)

It's an outrage that thermal imagers used without a search warrant were used by the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution District to detect heat in household fireplaces.

The attitude of the Pollution District seems to be -- if the technology is available we'll use it, whether it is constitutional or not.

That is a dangerous attitude. Our privacy rights are under attack by government agencies. These mainly go unchallenged because people don't know their rights, or if they do they don't know how to protect them.

Unfortunately, a legal challenge is the only way to protect privacy rights.

This really means that only the people with a big enough income can afford the costs of a lawsuit.

It used to be "man's home is his castle," and that included the home, the ground below and the air above.

But that doesn't stop agencies from having satellite pictures of every house and building in the county.

Thank heavens we have newspapers that address our privacy rights. Keep up the good work.

-- JANICE GLEASON, Bakersfield

### **Keep the taxes**

[Letter to the Editor](#)

[Bakersfield Californian, Tues., Jan. 4, 2005](#)

Support for another tax on our automobile would be a good way to help clean our air in the valley, if all Californians had to pay. This may not be the case, but some of our neighbors to the north will be exempt.

The same thing happened in the early 1990s when we voted to tax ourselves \$1 to fund roadside call boxes. That tax has grown to \$7 and funds everything our county supervisors can get when the state feels like giving more money to Kern County.

One of the last raises wasn't asked for or earmarked for anything in particular and they didn't have to explain how they spent this money.

If we vote to tax ourselves on this issue, we will no doubt help our air quality, but it should be spelled out in no uncertain terms that it goes for nothing but what it was intended for -- no more open-ended taxes that never end. Since the revenue will be collected by the DMV, they will get a cut of the money. We won't get it all back.

-- T.H. ZOOK, Bakersfield

### **'Tiny little problem'**

[Letter to the Editor](#)

[Fresno Bee Mon., Jan. 3, 2005](#)

Jack Elwood [letter Dec. 28] proposes that the railroads change over from diesel locomotives to electric ones, claiming it is the environmentally sound thing to do.

Such a changeover may not be a bad idea, but there is one teeny, tiny little problem. Where does Mr. Elwood propose to get the electricity to run those trains? Put in nuclear power plants? Perhaps a couple of hydroelectric generation stations? Maybe put on a couple of wind turbines?

Just try to put in anything to generate electricity and these so-called environmentalists will nail your hide to the outhouse wall. First, find a safe, politically correct, economical way to generate power and let it be built. Then worry about the railroads.

And consider the costs involved in replacing all those locomotives. You do not buy them at the 99-cent store. And there is the cost of putting in all the overhead wiring needed to carry the current to the locomotives -- not exactly pocket change.

The railroads carry most of the goods in this country, including food. Try to force something like this and be prepared to pay higher costs for everything.

Charles W. Walker, Kingsburg