

Hybrid buses to help ease Valley smog

By Aaron Swarts, Staff Writer

Inside Bay Area, Thursday, August 03, 2006

STOCKTON — With the backdrop of a Middle East conflict that is sure to keep gas prices on the current stratospheric trajectory, the San Joaquin Regional Transit District demonstrated on Wednesday why public transportation is a forward-thinking business.

During a special ceremony in front of the downtown arena, RTD officials unveiled six hybrid buses powered by the cutting edge "General Motors' diesel-electric hybrid propulsion system."

"These hybrid buses will help San Joaquin RTD fulfill its commitment to significantly minimize air emissions, which in turn reduces the environmental impact to our region's land and water," said Donna Kelsay, RTD's chief executive officer.

Transit buses powered by the advanced hybrid propulsion technology deliver significantly better fuel economy than traditional buses and produce up to 60 percent fewer oxides of nitrogen emission and 90 percent fewer particulate, hydrocarbon and carbon monoxide emissions than standard buses.

"And they are often just as quiet as a passenger car," said Bobby Kuhn, RTD's director of maintenance.

Since 2004, more than 475 GMhybrid-powered buses have been delivered to 38 communities in the U.S. and Canada. The estimated annual combined fuel savings for the buses is 700,000 gallons.

The San Joaquin RTD began flirting with hybrid technology in 2001, before roadside bombings and suicide attacks became part of the daily news and an indicator of future fuel prices.

In 2004 the RTD purchased its first two hybrid buses for its fleet, and were thrilled with the results.

From there RTD officials put together a "purchasing consortium" with other transit agencies to reduce per-vehicle costs through mass ordering. The consortium plans to purchase 157 of the hybrid buses, including 50 for San Joaquin County.

The partnership knocks off more than \$50,000 on each of the \$500,000 buses.

"This is an agency vision, and we believe in what we are doing," Kelsay said. "I think we are going to be very pleased with the results."

Kelsay said the fuel savings would not translate to lower ticket prices, noting that riders only shoulder 20 percent of the cost to operate the system. She did say that the saving would help to "keep prices at their current level" for San Joaquin passengers.

The new hybrid buses are manufactured by the Gillig Corp. of Hayward, the first company to integrate this technology into a transit bus. Gillig was founded 116 years ago in San Francisco and today is a major supplier of transit buses in North America.

For more information on RTD hybrid buses visit them on the Web at <http://www.sanjoaquinRTD.com/hybrid>.

Hayward may get more bus service

Union City Transit looks to expand routes to increase ridership

By Matthew Artz, Staff Writer

Inside Bay Area, Thursday, August 03, 2006

UNION CITY — Union City Transit riders soon may be able to take a bus to Hayward and Fremont.

City Council members seemed open to expanding bus service beyond city limits on Tuesday during a public workshop with consultants hired to boost ridership for the ailing transit agency.

From 2001 to 2005, Union City Transit — the only city-run bus service in the East Bay — lost 32 percent of its passengers, while increasing fares from \$1 to \$1.50. But ridership appears to have risen about 5 percent last fiscal year.

Transit consulting firm Nelson Nygaard recommends against wholesale changes. Its initial recommendations are to:

- Eliminate unproductive segments of routes to help pay for expanding service into neighboring cities.

- Use smaller, more fuel-efficient buses on routes through residential neighborhoods.

- Restore service to Union City Boulevard.

- Improve marketing, especially to Asian residents, who compose 43 percent of the city's population and might not be able to read the agency's English brochures.

"Your ridership does not penetrate the ethnic communities as much as you would like," consultant Bonnie Nelson told the council. After more studies, she is scheduled to submit final recommendations in October.

Union City is rough terrain for a public bus service, the consultants found. Eighty-five percent of residents have access to cars, many of the new developments — home to transit-dependent children — have cul-de-sacs and other barriers to buses, and 84 percent commute outside the city where the buses don't run.

To attract more passengers, city leaders will explore extending routes to places such as Chabot College, California State University, East Bay, in Hayward and Washington hospital in Fremont, possibly at the expense of route segments that meander through residential neighborhoods.

Mayor Mark Green suggested placing bus stops closer to the new low-income housing development on Mission Boulevard and the future gymnasium on Union City Boulevard, as well as designating a reduced-fare day.

During Spare the Air Days this year, ridership on Union City buses jumped 34 percent — one of the biggest increases in the Bay Area, transit manager Wilson Lee said.

Union City runs four routes. Routes 1 and 2 connect the eastern and western parts of the city and carry 80 percent of the system's riders. Routes 3 and 4 circulate through neighborhoods, linking them to transit hubs, such as Union Landing and BART.

When compared with six other Bay Area municipal bus systems, Union City Transit ranked among the best at controlling costs but among the worst in use and farebox revenue, according to Nelson. She cautioned that Union City Transit, unlike many other municipal services, has to compete against a regional bus system, AC Transit.

With just 10 direct passenger trips per hour of service, Union City Transit ranked last in productivity.

Council members and the public showed no interest in overhauling the agency. Councilwoman Carol Dutra-Vernaci suggested offering youth passes that would make rides competitive with AC Transit.

Several Sikhs asked that buses serve the Sikh temple in north Fremont, an idea the mayor endorsed.

California Fights Filth of Its Ports

By John Pomfret, Staff Writer

Washington Post

Thursday, August 3, 2006; A03

LONG BEACH, Calif. -- In the first effort of its kind in the nation, the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles are about to launch a \$2 billion campaign to clean up the ships, trucks, cranes and locomotives that ply and pollute the waterfronts in country's busiest ports.

The two ports are among the biggest polluters in a region known for some of the nation's dirtiest air. Federal officials say that unless something is done, the pollution at those ports and many others across the nation will drastically worsen. The Environmental Protection Agency is predicting that by 2030, smog-causing nitrogen oxide emissions and particulate matter from ships and other commercial vessels will have doubled their current levels.

The California proposal, expected to be formally adopted next month, aims to reduce particulate matter by 81 percent and nitrogen oxides by 62 percent in five years. The plan includes a program costing several hundred million dollars to replace or retrofit the 16,300 trucks that service the ports on a regular basis and an aggressive attempt to force international shipping companies to switch to cleaner fuels, slow down as they enter the harbor and retrofit their ships so that they can be powered by electricity when unloading.

Environmentalists and government officials say the cleanup program underscores that, while California may have lost national prominence in areas including education, prison reform and transportation infrastructure, it remains the leader in environmental issues. They said that leadership was on display earlier this week when British Prime Minister Tony Blair visited the Long Beach port and met with Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) and leading industrialists to discuss joint efforts to reduce global warming.

"California historically has been the laboratory from which others learn," said Bill Becker, executive director of the State and Territorial Air Pollution Program Administrators. "It started regulating cars in the 1960s. Now while the rest of the country is sitting idly by, its ports are taking appropriate steps as well."

Combined, the Long Beach and Los Angeles ports are the biggest in the nation and among the top five in the world, occupying more than 60 miles of waterfront along the dirty waters of San Pedro Bay. The places are vast, dotted with mountains of 40-foot cargo containers, gangly 300-foot tall cranes, oceangoing ships, and warehouses stretching into the Southern California smog. Each year, more than 40 percent of all containerized trade in the nation -- valued at more than \$300 billion -- flows through these ports, filling Wal-Marts and other big-box stores across the land. An engine to Southern California's growth, the ports generate more jobs -- 500,000 -- than Hollywood's movie industry. The longshoremen who work the ports have some of the highest-paying blue-collar jobs in the nation, averaging more than \$120,000 a year.

In recent years, as trade with Asia, especially China, has boomed, so has activity in the ports. In 1990, the two ports handled the equivalent of 3 million 20-foot containers. This year, they will process more than 16 million, according to Art Wong, a spokesman for the Long Beach facility. S. David Freeman, chairman of the powerful Los Angeles Harbor Commission, estimated that traffic will double by 2020.

The problem, Freeman said in an interview, is that if the ports hope to handle that increased cargo, they will have to grow. But each time the ports -- located in a region that is home to more than 14 million people with no shortage of active environmental and neighborhood associations -- have put forward a plan to grow, they are sued. And increasingly they lose.

In 2001, for example, a lawsuit by the National Resources Defense Council blocked the Los Angeles port from constructing a 174-acre terminal for the China Shipping Holding Co. because the port did not conduct an environmental impact study. The resulting judgment forced the port to conduct the study and pay \$50 million in environmental mitigation measures.

"We realized it was either clean up the air or lose business," Freeman said in an interview. "The time for yakking is over. The only way we're going to remain competitive is by growing and cleaning up the air at the same time."

Another problem was that for decades, the Los Angeles and Long Beach ports barely talked. They were intense competitors, and the commissions that run the ports had not held a joint

session since 1929. But that situation began to change with the election of Antonio Villaraigosa as mayor of Los Angeles in 2005. Villaraigosa appointed Freeman to head the L.A. port, and the 80-year-old tough-talking former head of the Tennessee Valley Authority set about improving ties with Long Beach. Freeman hired the former No. 2 official of the Long Beach port, Geraldine Knatz, as executive director. Knatz has been a "genius," Freeman said, in improving ties.

Still, the job of cleaning up the ports will be daunting, Freeman said. In the Los Angeles area, oceangoing ships, harbor tugs and commercial boats regularly emit many times more smog-forming pollutants than all the power plants in the region. On a daily basis, the Los Angeles port spews more nitrogen oxide, 32 tons, and more particulate matter, 1.8 tons, than half a million cars, a typical refinery and power plant combined.

"The L.A. ports are like a toxic Superfund site when it comes to the public health threat," said Frank O'Donnell, president of Clean Air Watch, a D.C.-based environmental group. "It is one of the single largest sources of pollution in all of Southern California."

The most difficult part of the equation, port officials estimate, will be cleaning up the tens of thousands of trucks that ply the port every day. They alone are believed responsible for 40 percent of the nitrogen oxide pollution and 31 percent of the particulate matter emissions from the ports. Most of the trucks are older, dirtier short-haul vehicles that travel between the port and the hundreds of distribution centers that line the region's highways. Persuading drivers to switch to cleaner, newer vehicles will be an expensive proposition, even if much of the job is subsidized by the ports themselves, said Thomas Jelenic, an environmental specialist at the Long Beach port.

Heather Tomley, another Long Beach port official, said: "We want to get a huge turnover from these trucks in a short period of time. But we are still working out how to pay for it."

Other aspects of the plan have shippers worried. For one, they said some of the technology being touted -- including a scrubber that can be attached to a ship's smokestack -- is still in the planning stage. Secondly, some of the plan's goals appear unrealistic. For example, Long Beach wants to force ships to go "cold iron" -- a Navy term for using electricity instead of burning diesel while dockside. But the port lacks the infrastructure to support large-scale electrification.

"We see multiple government jurisdictions moving forward with proposals that often conflict with one another, so when you're engaged in international and interstate commerce it often becomes difficult to figure out who's on first," said John McLaurin, president of the Pacific Merchant Shipping Association.

Shippers have also questioned the tactics for forcing change. Under the proposed plan, each time shippers request upgrades in their terminals, the ports will demand that they improve the environment in return. "The lease will be our primary mechanism to force change," Jelenic said. Already two shipping lines have accepted revised leases that require their vessels to go cold iron, he said.

But McLaurin said that requirement may prompt shippers to leave the L.A.-Long Beach area and look for less green harbors in Mexico and Canada.

That prospect does not bother port commission chief Freeman.

"All the ports up and down the West Coast realize that green is the only way to go. They are beginning to change, too. And if people want to move to Mexico, that's fine with me," he said. "Sooner or later, though, they'll be back. They want access to the U.S. market, they're ultimately going to have to come through us. We're the biggest on the block."

Summer Nights Heating Up, Scientists Say

By Seth Borenstein, AP science writer

In the Washington Post and L.A. Times, Thursday, August 3, 2006

WASHINGTON (AP) -- America in recent years has been sweltering through three times more than its normal share of extra-hot summer nights, government weather records show. And that is a particularly dangerous trend.

During heat waves, like the one that now has a grip on much of the East, one of the major causes of heat deaths is the lack of night cooling that would normally allow a stressed body to recover, scientists say.

Some scientists say the trend is a sign of manmade global warming.

A top federal research meteorologist said he "almost fell out of my chair" when he looked over U.S. night minimum temperature records over the past 96 years and saw the skyrocketing trend of hot summer nights.

From 2001 to 2005, on average nearly 30 percent of the nation had "much above normal" average summertime minimum temperatures, according to the National Climatic Data in Asheville, N.C.

By definition, "much above normal" means low temperatures that are in the highest 10 percent on record. On any given year about 10 percent of the country should have "much above normal" summer-night lows.

Yet in both 2005 and 2003, 36 percent of the nation had much above normal summer minimums. In 2002 it was 37 percent. While the highest-ever figure was in the middle of America's brutal Dust Bowl, when 41 percent of the nation had much above normal summer-night temperatures, the rolling five-year average of 2001-05 is a record - by far.

Figures from this year's sweltering summer have not been tabulated yet, but they are expected to be just as high as recent years.

And it is not just the last five years. Each of the past eight years has been far above the normal 10 percent. During the past decade, 23 percent of the nation has had hot summer nights. During the past 15 years, that average has been 20 percent. By comparison, from 1964 to 1968 only 2 percent of the country on average had abnormally hot nights.

"This is unbelievable," said National Climatic Data Center research meteorologist Richard Heim. "Something strange has happened in the last 10 to 15 years on the minimums."

But it is not surprising because climate models, used to forecast global warming, have been predicting this trend for more than 20 years, said Jerry Mahlman, a climate scientist at National Center for Atmospheric Research and a top federal climate modeler.

It is a telltale sign of global warming, Mahlman said: "The smoking gun is still smoking; it's not shooting people yet."

One reason global warming is suspected in summer-night temperatures is that daytime air pollution slightly counteracts warming but is not as prevalent at night, said Bill Chameides, a climate scientist for the advocacy group Environmental Defense.

The records for summer-night low temperatures are part of a U.S. Climate Extremes Index developed by the National Climatic Data Center. Last year, in large part because of record hurricane activity, saw the most extreme weather in the United States since 1910.

State officials push for better hybrid cars
Drive to get automakers to hit next frontier: over 100 mpg

By Douglas Fischer, Staff Writer
Inside Bay Area, Thursday, August 03, 2006

SAN FRANCISCO — The concept sounds like a no-brainer for the Bay Area, given the number of gasoline-electric hybrid automobiles on the road.

But the idea came from Texas:

Push automakers to develop hybrid vehicles that churn out 100 miles to the gallon or more, and watch energy imports and greenhouse gas emissions drop off.

Last summer, Austin city leaders and their local utility, Austin Energy, launched such an effort, with the utility providing \$1 million in seed money for the purchase of next-generation hybrids. Wednesday, state and regional leaders committed the Bay Area to the program, dubbed "Plug-in Bay Area."

Terry Tamminen, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's senior adviser on science and the environment, offered the state's endorsement.

Jack Broadbent, top executive of the Bay Area's air district, said advances driving the next generation of hybrids represents "an important technology that needs to get out there in the public's hands."

The first goal, organizers said Wednesday, is to get manufacturers to accelerate development of 100-mpg hybrids. Plug-in Bay Area's supporters hope to persuade government agencies to use the considerable pressure of fleet purchases to steer the technology forward.

Hybrids today — such as the Toyota Prius — use a gasoline engine to supplement the electric motor and recharge the car's batteries. The next generation, often called "plug-in hybrids," are expected to contain beefier batteries and a plug, giving drivers the option of bypassing the gasoline engine entirely and recharging batteries via a standard electrical outlet.

Today's hybrids typically get from 40 to 50 miles per gallon, about 20 percent more than they would obtain without hybridization. A plug-in hybrid, supporters maintain, can easily top 100 mpg and offer tremendous potential in reducing fuel consumption and air pollution.

It could also provide a boon to electric utilities looking to sell off-peak power: A typical plug-in hybrid owner would drive the car all day, return home in the evening and plug it in, drawing power at the exact time a utility would like to sell it.

"You will never know the difference when you drive a plug-in hybrid," said Bob Graham of the Electric Power Research Institute, one of the program's backers. "You could put a plug-in hybrid in your pickup, your SUV, your minivan and drive it and never notice the difference.

"It is just a road map to using electric-drive technology to reduce emissions."

The hitch is battery technology. Durability is a chief concern, said Irv Miller, spokesman for Toyota Motor Sales Inc., the nation's leading seller of hybrid cars. Cost is another.

"Toyota is looking very seriously at the issue," said Miller. "But the battery technology right now doesn't support moving forward. We just don't feel confident bringing the batteries to market."

Those spreading the gospel of plug-in hybrids Wednesday hope that, as volume builds, costs drop and durability concerns fade, plug-in hybrids will quickly filter into the mass market.

Maybe so. Toyota's Miller recalled how a similar sense of hope and promise swept the activist community when automakers, in response to an all-but-rescinded California mandate, rolled out electric vehicles in the 1990s.

"Those folks didn't emerge as purchasers or leasees," Miller cautioned. "And for the technology to survive and propagate, you need to translate emotion and energy into a market."

Anti-smog 'bonnet' lays track for clean air

Union Pacific helps demonstrate new device that scrubs air-polluting soot from locomotive smokestacks

By Chris Bowman -- Bee Staff Writer
Sacramento Bee, Thursday, August 03, 2006

Smog fighters on Wednesday demonstrated a new, supersized weapon to subdue one of the biggest and dirtiest offenders left standing on the battlefield: the idling locomotive.

Politicians and smog regulators with earplugs gathered in Roseville alongside a rumbling Union Pacific locomotive as a giant mechanical "bonnet" descended on the engine's smokestack and suctioned the dark brown exhaust through treatments that rendered the gases visibly clean.

"What you witnessed was the first demonstration of its kind in the country," said Tom Christofk, Placer County's air pollution control officer, who is credited as the brainchild of the apparatus.

The Advanced Locomotive Emission Control System scrubs the diesel exhaust clean of all but 1 percent of the hazardous sulfur dioxide and particulate matter, or soot, according to its developer, Advanced Cleanup Technologies Inc. of Colton.

The emission control system also removes nearly as much of the nitrogen oxides, the smog-forming gas that chronically drifts from the Sacramento area in violation of national clean-air standards, according to the company.

The train yard is the single largest generator of diesel exhaust in the six-county Sacramento region, according to a groundbreaking state Air Resources Board study released in 2004.

The plume of locomotive soot extends about 100 square miles -- encompassing most of Roseville, all of Citrus Heights and all of Antelope -- and raising the cancer risk for an estimated 165,000 residents, the study found.

More than 70 cargo trains a day stop or pass through the 52-track, 6-mile-long railyard in the heart of Roseville.

"This is a gift of clean air," Roseville Mayor Gina Garbolino said at Wednesday's demonstration.

Union Pacific, however, has yet to decide whether to permanently install the system at the Roseville yard, the railroad's largest hub on the West Coast.

The chief question is whether train traffic will be significantly slowed by the system, which can suck exhaust from up to eight locomotives at a time as they line up to be serviced, said Ruben Garcia, president of the technology company.

The demonstration apparatus will be dismantled later this year after the railroad conducts a series of tests, Garcia said.

The Port of Long Beach is lined up to buy the \$6 million system pending the results of the Roseville tests, Garcia said.

The system would be installed at a berth where it can service up to five freighters at a time, he said.

Oakland port officials also are interested in installing the device on switchers servicing the cargo unloaded from ships, said Harold Jones, the port's deputy executive director.

"We're looking at ways to green it up," said Jones, who attended the demonstration.

Trains and ships are among the last engines of commerce to be touched by the 36-year-old U.S. Clean Air Act.

Virtually everything else with an exhaust vent or pipe has been modified for the sake of healthier air, while locomotives, marine vessels and airplanes keep writing brown signatures in the sky.

Most locomotive switchers in the Roseville yard were built between 1972 and 1982, according to Union Pacific's inventory.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency didn't require cleaner-burning locomotives until 1998.

Following the release of the Roseville yard pollution study in 2004, Union Pacific made a pact with the Placer County air district to cut the diesel exhaust at least 10 percent by 2008.

Though the agreement is not legally binding, Christofk said the company is on track.

The air district set up air samplers in and around the yard to monitor the progress.

Union Pacific, which modernized and expanded the Roseville yard after its 1996 merger with Southern Pacific Lines, has a \$6 million monthly payroll of 1,200 employees at the yard.

Intense Heat Begets Intense Smog

As July temperatures soared, the number of unhealthy days did too from coast to coast. Southern California had the worst air quality.

By Janet Wilson, staff writer

L..A Times, Thursday, August 3, 2006

July's scorching heat wave created a "blanket of smog" from California to Maine, with the number of unhealthy days up from last year in 38 states, according to data compiled by a watchdog group.

Public health standards for ozone smog were exceeded more than 1,000 times at official air pollution monitors last month, according to Clean Air Watch. The trend could continue this week with record-breaking temperatures in many parts of the country.

"California by far has had the worst air quality. But we are even seeing problems at some unusual places — a lot in Colorado, some in Washington state and Oregon, even Martha's Vineyard," said Frank O'Donnell, president of Clean Air Watch, which had volunteers review government data.

Southern California once again had the highest smog levels in the nation. The worst single day — an average of 142 parts per billion — was July 25 at Crestline in the San Bernardino Mountains. The worst single hour, at 175 ppb, was on July 22 in Glendora.

The federal government has set safe limits at 85 ppb; California has a tougher standard of 70 ppb. Above those levels, senior citizens, infants, asthma sufferers and others can experience serious health problems, according to scientific studies.

"This is not a freak thing. This is a horrifically hot summer ... and it's hazardous to your health," said William Becker, executive director of a national association of local air quality officials. "The conditions for creating smog and unhealthy air are extremely ripe ... and it's vitally important EPA take swift and aggressive actions, including regulating locomotives and marine vessels ... which in the next 10 or 15 years are going to be the predominant source of smog."

Air quality advocates said the heat wave was perfect for producing peak smog levels, and they warned that reductions in smog in past decades could be eroded by global warming.

Ozone is a colorless pollutant formed when heat and sunlight "cook" nitrogen oxide and volatile organic compounds from vehicles and industrial sources.

"Long-term we have made improvements ... but this heat wave and the accompanying smog is a very graphic reminder that we still have a significant problem," O'Donnell said. "Unless we start getting serious about global warming, predicted temperature increases in global temperatures could mean continued smog problems in the future. And that will mean more asthma attacks, disease and death." EPA spokesman John Millett did not dispute the survey findings, although he noted that the group analyzed raw data from government monitors that still needed to be verified.

"We've had some awful, hot weather," he said, with conditions "some of the worst we've seen for the formation of ozone in a number of years."

But Millett said, "If we'd experienced these same conditions 10 years ago, we would be having much more severe air quality problems.... Ozone pollution concentrations have declined about 20% since 1980" due to regulation of power plants, car fuel and other measures.

He said even if temperatures continued to rise in coming years, new programs to control emissions from diesel trucks and farming equipment, and requiring cleaner diesel fuel would help reduce smog levels further.

He said a new rule to regulate marine vessels and locomotives was expected by year's end, and added that technological challenges in developing equipment had delayed its implementation.

Sam Atwood, spokesman for the South Coast Air Quality Management District, said the agency needed as much help as possible from the federal government to reach legal smog levels by a 2021 deadline.

He said Crestline often experiences the state's highest smog levels because it catches ozone from across the Los Angeles Basin as it is blown inland by marine breezes and trapped by the mountains.

Glendora, he said, "is a bit more of a throwback." He noted that the city had high smog levels in the 1990s, but since fuels had been improved, it usually took longer for fumes to swirl through hot air to form smog — meaning smog now usually develops farther inland. He said he didn't know why the city would have had the highest hourly reading last month.

Other major metropolitan areas with high smog days included New York; Philadelphia; Washington; Baltimore; Atlanta; Denver; Dallas; Houston; Salt Lake City; San Diego; Sacramento; St. Louis; New Haven, Conn.; Chattanooga, Tenn.; and Baton Rouge, La.

[Letter to the Editor in the Modesto Bee online, August 3, 2006](#)

We must educate ourselves

In response to "Global warming's cause is clear" (July 27, Letters): He stated that "the media must educate us" about global warming. The responsibility for education is ours.

The writer also stated that we should ban gas-powered lawn mowers and blowers. This would indicate he favors electricity as a power source. This will not inhibit release of carbon dioxide. Most electricity generation uses fossil fuels. The only source of adequate generating capacity without fossil fuel combustion is nuclear power. This would require an agreement on storing nuclear waste.

As for "An Inconvenient Truth," we must remember that, politically, a crisis is much more effective at getting attention than in providing information. Global warming has been occurring since the last ice age. Let us not begin drastic solutions until we are reasonably certain of the problem and our ability to influence the outcome. Rather than attempting to change the trend, we should develop ways to deal with the results.

M.R. RILEY, Modesto

Note: The following clip discusses a Public Policy Institute survey which states that Latinos have a greater concern about global warming and its effects on human health. If you need more information contact Maricela at ext. 5849.

El sobrecalentamiento terrestre comienza a ser preocupación de los latinos

En una encuesta reciente el 63% de los latinos dijo que su ambiente se deterioró en la última década, en contraste con el 44% de los angloamericanos

Aire Libre, Fresno CA

Radio Bilingüe, Thursday, August 3, 2006

Los latinos son el grupo étnico de California que más se preocupa por el sobrecalentamiento de la tierra y su efecto en la salud humana, de acuerdo con una encuesta del Instituto de Política Pública.

El 53 por ciento de los latinos y la casi la mitad de los afro americanos (49%) dijeron que el sobrecalentamiento terrestre está entre sus mayores preocupaciones. Esos temas sólo son preocupantes para poco más de la tercera parte de los angloamericanos (36%) y el 24 por ciento de los asiáticos.

Un 63% de los latinos dijo que su ambiente se deterioró en la última década, en contraste con el 44% de los angloamericanos.

La encuesta se lleva cabo en el marco de más de 75 muertes por una reciente ola de calor en California.

(story about Delano town hall meeting)

Cómo limpiar el aire atrae diferentes sugerencias

Por Juan Esparza Loera

Vida en el Valle, Wednesday, August 2, 2006

DELANO -- Florentina Olvera, quién ha vivido en Wasco durante 30 años, tiene cuatro hijos y todos ellos sufren de asma.

Cuando trata de pensar sobre la causa, ella cree que ella no tiene que buscar lejos.

"Siguen trayendo más lecherías que contaminan el aire," dijo Olvera en una conferencia de prensa el miércoles pasado antes de que el Distrito de Control de la Contaminación del Aire en el Valle de San Joaquín, llevara a cabo la segunda de seis audiencias públicas con espacio de tres días para conseguir sugerencias sobre cómo limpiar el aire del área.

"Ellos tienen que hacerlo por los niños," dijo Olvera.

Aunque la gente puede estar en desacuerdo sobre cómo remover al Valle de la lista de los condados con el aire más sucio del país, hay un acuerdo en general: El aire tiene que limpiarse.

"Nuestro más grande desafío es nuestra geografía, nuestra topografía y las condiciones climáticas," dijo el director ejecutivo del distrito Seyed Sadredin. "El Valle es un tazón con altas montañas. El calor cocina (el aire) y no le permite salir del Valle. No tenemos control sobre eso."

Sadredin comenta que aunque el área de Los Ángeles tiene diez veces más la población por milla cuadrada que el Valle -- y la de San Francisco es seis veces mayor -- su calidad del aire es mejor "porque ellos tienen la brisa del mar que empuja el aire sucio fuera del área."

Otro obstáculo, dijo Sadredin, es que el distrito tiene jurisdicción sobre solo el 30 por ciento de las causas de la contaminación en el aire. El resto es controlado por los gobiernos estatales y federales.

A pesar de los obstáculos, el aire del Valle se ha aclarado durante los últimos cinco años, según informó Sadredin.

Para el 2013 el distrito debe de reducir 400 toneladas de contaminantes de que lleguen al aire a diario o se enfrentará a sanciones federales, la cuales pueden significar la pérdida de fondos para carreteras.

Se le dijo a los participantes en la reunión que el eliminar todo el tráfico vehicular, o deshacerse de la agricultura, en sí mismo no sería suficiente para reducir la contaminación para la fecha límite.

Los críticos alegan que el distrito del aire no ha adoptado un papel lo suficientemente agresivo para limpiar el aire de la región.

"No se hará pasándole el problema a alguien más, ni confrontando el problema sin tomar una decisión fuerte," dijo Arturo S. Rodríguez, presidente del Sindicato de Campesinos (UFW), en una conferencia de prensa en Delano. "Esto es inaceptable. Tenemos que tomar acción."

Kevin Hall, el director de calidad del aire del Capítulo Tehipite del Sierra Club, fue mucho más franco en una conferencia de prensa el siguiente día en Fresno.

"Por demasiado tiempo ellos han estado señalando con el dedo a las fuentes estatales y federales," dijo Hall. "Las únicas reducciones han surgido por fuentes reguladas por el gobierno estatal y federal. Ellos (el distrito) están fallando en hacer su trabajo."

El Senador estatal Dean Flórez, demócrata de Shafter, quién sirve como director del Comité Selecto en Calidad del Aire, tiene planes de hacer audiencias con las recomendaciones propuestas por el distrito las cuales se deben entregar el mes entrante.

"Vamos a hacer muchas preguntas difíciles," dijo Flórez, quién duda que el distrito haya sido lo suficientemente duro con los contaminantes. "Ellos tienen el dinero para hacer más. Yo creo que ellos están pidiendo una habilidad explícita para hacer más. Hasta que la mesa directiva, pienso yo, tome mejores decisiones sobre reglamentos más estrictos, a mí me gusta donde están ahora."

El comentario público, la mayoría de ellos latinos, fueron quejas sobre el crecimiento de las lecherías en las áreas rurales.

"Yo veo lecherías muy pequeñas, muy chicas a un lado de la carretera. Puedo respirar y olerlas," dijo Gustavo Aguirre de Bakersfield en la audiencia de Delano. "Ellos no están haciendo lo suficiente para controlar la contaminación."

Josefina Flores de Delano, quién tiene tres nietos con asma, se niega a creer que el aire haya mejorado. "Es peor que antes, y nuestros niños están sufriendo," dijo ella.

"Dejen de señalar con el dedo y hagan algo con las lecherías," dijo la abogada Alegría de la Cruz.

"Ellos tienen que poner sus pies en el fuego porque nuestros niños están sufriendo," dijo la residente de Alpaugh Rosa Astorga, quién tiene tres de sus cuatro hijos sufriendo de asma.

Kevin Abernathy representante de las lecherías, el último de los 21 discursantes en la audiencia de Delano, dijo que el público tiene "muchas ideas erróneas" sobre la industria.

"Cada vaca lactando en California contribuye con \$7,339 a su economía local. Pero, todos podemos hacer mucho más de lo que estamos haciendo ahora mismo," dijo Abernathy, quién maneja un auto Zion eficiente en combustible, lo que él llama un "refrigerador sobre ruedas."

La Asambleísta Nicole M. Parra, demócrata de Hanford, en una entrevista el jueves, dijo que las lecherías nuevas han cumplido con las reglas.

"Es tecnología mucho mejor," dijo Parra, quién expresó que los residentes del Valle necesitan cambiar sus hábitos de manejar, un método al que Flórez hizo eco.

En Fresno, el testimonio público se centra en lo que se puede hacer, como prohibir el equipo de jardinería que usa gasolina, crear calles sólo para bicicletas y extender el transporte público.

Manuel Cunha, presidente de Nisei Farmers League, dijo que la agricultura ha hecho su parte al eliminar los contaminantes motores y al tomar otras medidas para reducir la contaminación.

"Si queremos ser rehenes de extranjeros, deshagámonos de la agricultura," dijo él en Fresno, añadiendo que la comida no sería tan segura si fuera importada.

En una reunión llevada a cabo en Huron el jueves pasado, el agricultor Randy Radoicich dijo "Existe la percepción de que a los agricultores no les interesa. Los agricultores tienen que vivir en esta tierra y respirar el aire."

(story about the fight against bad air, including pesticides, in the Valley)

La batalla contra el aire sucio

Por Juan Esparza Loera / Vida en el Valle

Wednesday, August 2, 2006

PARLIER — Yolanda Zapata, quién se mudó a esta ciudad hace seis años porque la renta de su apartamento era más barata que en Kingsburg donde vivió durante 15 años, no está a punto de tomar decisiones en cuanto a cómo le afecta el aire que está entre los más sucios del país.

La ama de casa de 45 años de edad aspira hasta tres veces al día. Tira la basura hasta dos veces al día. Sus baños se lavan dos veces al día. Ella se niega a usar la lavadora de trastes y lava los trastes a mano "porque quedan más limpios." Zapata hasta pasa la aspiradora por encima de su cama para recoger el polvo. Si ella encuentra humedad en su refrigerador, cosa que ocurrió recientemente, esto le sirve de recordatorio de que tiene que permanecer vigilante.

"Todo tiene que estar limpio," dijo ella.

A pesar de todas esas medidas, ella está luchando una batalla perdida contra la contaminación del aire. Su hija menor, Samantha, de 6 años de edad, desarrolló asma. Sus otros hijos, que están entre las edades de 13 y 24 años, han tenido dolores de cabeza y a veces dificultad para respirar.

"Yo he notado muchas cosas diferentes desde que nos mudamos a este lugar," dijo Zapata, a quién le gustaría regresar a Kingsburg pero no puede porque la renta es más cara. Su esposo, Tony Zapata Jr., es un trabajador agrícola incapacitado.

Cuando ella camina a la tienda en un día caluroso, Zapata a veces no puede respirar. Ella también sufre de alergias, algo que es tan común para los residentes del Valle como la neblina en el invierno y el calor del verano.

Zapata está preocupada porque sus vecinos tienen las mismas enfermedades por el aire sucio, lo cual se culpa por la alta cantidad de casos de asma. Hace algunos años, un farmacéutico en la feria de la salud que se hizo en la Preparatoria Parlier se quejó de que se le acabaron los inhaladores y la medicina para la gente que sufre de asma.

Las familias de todo el Valle de San Joaquín se han quejado de lo sucio del aire y de la conexión que tiene con el asma y con otras enfermedades respiratorias que sufren sus hijos, pero Parlier parece ser el epicentro porque está cuesta abajo de Fresno y el movimiento de aire deja la mayoría de los contaminantes en la ciudad de 10,000 habitantes.

El año pasado, la Escuela Primaria Ben Benavidez anunció un programa en el que se izaría una bandera de diferente color para alertar a los padres de familia sobre la calidad del aire. Una bandera de color verde significa que la calidad del aire es saludable; una roja significa que los niños deben quedarse adentro; y una de color anaranjado significa que el aire no es saludable para los niños que sufren de problemas respiratorios.

Este año, el Departamento de Regulación de Pesticidas está monitoreando el uso de los pesticidas para identificar los riesgos en los niños de la ciudad.

Hasta ahora, los residentes y las organizaciones en Parlier no han hecho mucho para presentar respuestas a la contaminación del aire. El Senador estatal Dean Flórez, demócrata de Shafter, quién es el representante del área, cree que los residentes de Parlier no están conectados con sus funcionarios electos.

Zapata, a través de una organización no lucrativa, La Unión del Pueblo Entero (LUPE), quiere cambiar eso.

Si los residentes de Fresno como Mario Talavera, miembro de la organización Latinos Unidos Conscientes al Ambiente (LUCA); o, Margarita Guzmán de Comité Asma pueden participar en la comunidad para conseguir que los funcionarios públicos comprendan el impacto que tiene el aire sucio del área en la comunidad, Zapata se imagina que ella puede hacer su propia labor.

LUCA y el Comité Asma fueron iniciados debido a que los residentes sienten que no se le está dando atención a una preocupación específica en la comunidad predominantemente de habla hispana. Guzmán — quién al igual que Zapata, se asegura de que su casa esté libre de polvo y suciedad — está circulando peticiones donde se le pide a los funcionarios de la ciudad que pongan drenaje y banquetas en el suroeste de Fresno con la esperanza de que se reduzca el polvo y la suciedad.

Talavera trabaja con otros padres de familia de LUCA, un grupo asociado con Cornerstone Church, para educar a los padres de familia sobre cómo presionar a los funcionarios electos para que ayuden.

Parlier es una comunidad donde los residentes se sienten más cerca al sistema escolar y las organizaciones comunitarias como LUPE, una organización no lucrativa parte del Sindicato de Trabajadores Unidos del Campo. (Flórez está considerando lanzar programas que hagan equipos entre los padres de familia con la escuela para entregar información sobre el impacto de la contaminación del aire.

Primero, Zapata quiere asegurarse de que la gente esté educada sobre lo que causa el asma. Una amiga le dijo que ella quiere que sus hijos estén alejados de los que tienen asma porque es contagiosa. "No permiten que sus hijos tomen del mismo vaso," dijo ella.

"La mayoría de la gente quizá no comprenda lo que está pasando," dijo Zapata quién tiene planes de pedirle a LUPE que lleve a cabo reuniones comunitarias y para presionar al Distrito de Control del Aire del Valle de San Joaquín para que escuche a los residentes de Parlier.

"Mucha gente no sabe qué les está pasando a sus hijos," dijo Zapata. "Yo les digo que lleven a revisar a sus hijos. Yo trato de hablar con cuantos sea posible."

La contaminación del aire, dijo Talavera, tiene más impacto en la gente de clase trabajadora.

"Todos los cuatro de mis hijos tienen asma. Cuando uno no tiene que ir al hospital, es el otro el que tiene que ir," dijo él. "Yo pierdo de trabajar y eso hace difícil que uno logre el Sueño Americano. Es un impacto económico." Zapata tiene planes de reunirse dentro de poco con los encargados de LUPE para elaborar un plan de acción.

El apoyo para este reporte vino del programa de compañeros en justicia ambiental financiado por la fundación Williams & Flora Hewlett.