

Wind gusts prompt air warning

By Doane Yawger

Merced Sun-Star Thurs., Oct. 26, 2006

Winds were blustery in Merced County for much of the day Wednesday but did very little damage.

Peak wind gusts of 36 mph were recorded between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. at Merced Municipal Airport and continued in the upper 20s until about 5 p.m., tapering off to 5 mph in the evening hours, according to the National Weather Service.

Strong winds in many parts of the San Joaquin Valley prompted local air-pollution officials to issue a health cautionary statement. The winds kicked up particulate matter 10 microns and smaller, or PM10, which could pose a threat to public health.

RoseMary Parga Duran, associate superintendent of the Merced City School District, said students were advised Wednesday not to run around too much and take it easy, especially those prone to asthma. No wind-related incidents were reported in Merced by elementary and high school officials.

A quick power outage disrupted lunchtime at Don Stowell Elementary School in South Merced but was resolved within a few minutes, Duran said.

Merced city public works crews had to pick up a few tree limbs knocked down by the winds but nothing overwhelming, according to public works official Gordon Gray.

Jeffrey Barlow, lead forecaster for the Hanford-based National Weather Service, said the winds were associated with a cold front that passed through Merced and kept Merced's high temperature at 73 degrees.

No wind-related auto accidents were reported Wednesday by Merced police or California Highway Patrol officers.

Gary Arcemont, a meteorologist for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, said district employees in the field noted blowing dust in several parts of the Valley.

Exposure to particle pollution can cause serious health problems, aggravate lung disease, cause asthma attacks and acute bronchitis, and increase risk of respiratory infections.

In people with heart disease, short-term exposure to particle pollution has been linked to heart attacks and arrhythmias, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Local briefs

Health warning issued for Valley

The Fresno Bee, Thursday, October 26, 2006

Strong winds prompted local air pollution officials to issue a health warning for the central San Joaquin Valley through 10 a.m. today.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District said the winds are kicking up PM10 particulate matter, which are particles 10 microns and smaller. The airborne dust can pose a health threat, said meteorologist Gary Arcemont.

Exposure to particle pollution can cause serious health problems, aggravate lung disease, cause asthma attacks and increase the risk of respiratory infections, according to the Environmental Protection Agency

Wild wind warning

Modesto Bee, Thursday, October 26, 2006

High winds are kicking up dust and pollution throughout the San Joaquin Valley, as seen Wednesday on Carpenter Road above and below, prompting air district officials to issue a health warning. District employees have noted blowing dust in several parts of the valley and urge people to use caution though 10 a.m. today, a San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution District news release said. Depending on where you are, the wind could carry enough dust and dirt to be unhealthy, said Gary Arcemont, a meteorologist for the air district. Exposure to dust and other particle pollution can aggravate lung disease, cause asthma attacks and acute bronchitis, and increase the risk of respiratory infections. People with heart or lung diseases should follow doctors' advice for dealing with unhealthy air when dust is present, the district said.

Older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion.

Oil tax campaign ads filled with misleading claims

In the S.F. Chronicle, Wednesday, October 25, 2006

(AP) -- Evaluations of statements by the Yes on 87 campaign:

_ Proposition 87 is the one thing Californians can do now to clean up the air, help stop the climate crisis and free us from foreign oil.

Fact: There are other steps Californians can take, including driving less, buying more efficient vehicles, homes and appliances, and turning off air conditioners.

_ Proposition 87 will free us from foreign oil thanks to more solar and wind energy produced in California.

Fact: Even if the measure were to achieve its goal of reducing petroleum use by 25 percent, it would not make the state "free from foreign oil." The state imports 40 percent of its oil.

_ Will reduce air pollution that causes asthma, lung disease and cancer.

Fact: Some alternative energy sources, including ethanol, create other pollutants.

Evaluations of statements by the No on 87 campaign:

_ Expect higher prices at the gas pump.

Fact: Oil prices are set on the world market. The initiative would not raise the price of gasoline to any noticeable extent.

_ Lead to more dependence on foreign oil

Fact: Economists critical of this claim predict the measure would reduce oil production in California by 9 percent. But independent energy expert Severin Borenstein, director of the University of California Energy Institute, said that number represents just 0.07 percent of world supply.

_ Would rob public schools of \$1.9 billion and reduce state revenues for critical public safety needs.

Fact: A review by the Legislative Analyst's Office shows the loss of property taxes would not exceed a few million dollars annually and that possible reductions in income taxes would not exceed \$10 million a year. In comparison, the new oil tax would raise up to \$485 million per year, some of which would go to education.

_ Creates a new state bureaucracy with no accountability

Fact: It reorganizes an existing state entity, the California Alternative Energy and Advanced Transportation Financing Authority, which would be governed by a nine-member panel of experts. The program would be subject to audits and annual reports to the governor and Legislature. The agency also would be renamed the California Energy Alternatives Program Authority.

Sources: California Legislative Analyst's Office, the Annenberg Political Fact Check in Washington, D.C., and the University of California Energy Institute at the University of California, Berkeley.

News from the San Joaquin Valley

In the S.F. Chronicle, Thursday, October 26, 2006

VISALIA, Calif. (AP) - Tulare County supervisors have postponed their decision over two proposed dairies that would house thousands of cows near a historic state park.

Dozens of people showed up to the supervisors' meeting Tuesday. Some blasted the planned dairies, saying they would bring air and water pollution, flies and bad odor to an area near Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park.

The county does not care about the mostly Hispanic and black families who live nearby, said Nettie Morrison, a resident who opposes the dairy's location.

"We don't have much, but what we have we're proud of," she said.

Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park was designated in 1976 and about 25,000 people visit each year, park officials said.

Landowner Sam Etchegaray of Visalia applied for the dairy permits in 1998 with plans to build two facilities housing a total of 7,500 milking cows.

Supporters said the dairies would add new jobs and bolster the county's tax base.

The board will have another public hearing Dec. 5.

Calendar of Events

Visalia Times-Delta, Thursday, Oct. 26, 2006

25th annual Norman Sharrer Symposium - Topic is "Is Air Pollution Killing our Hearts?" 6:45 p.m. today at Visalia Fox Theatre, 300 W. Main St., Visalia. Reception 6 p.m. Free admission. Two CME/CEU credits available provided by Kaweah Delta Health Care District. Registration: Nador Saesee, 624-2595 or Cheryl Smit, 624-2133.

Environmental reports for two projects recommended

Lodi planning commission leaves other key development questions unanswered

By Rebecca Adler, Sentinel staff writer
Lodi News Sentinel, Thursday, Oct 26, 2006

With buffer issues still unanswered, the Lodi Planning Commission decided Wednesday to recommend the environmental reports of the Southwest Gateway and Westside projects to the City Council.

Whether to recommend the development agreement, annexations and pre-zoning for the projects were still left unanswered by midnight.

Commissioner Gina Moran had the only vote against the environmental report recommendation. She gave no reason for her vote, but had voiced concerns earlier in the meeting about water usage. In addition to adding a buffer to plans for the Westside Project, the commission had questioned increased traffic, water usage and wastewater discharge at the Oct. 11 meeting.

With so many questions at that time the planning commission had asked to postpone the vote until Nov. 8 to give FCB Homes time to make the requested changes.

But Tom Doucette, president of FCB Homes, asked to have the date moved forward because of a scheduling conflict. He said the request was also made in order to keep the projects on the Nov. 1 Lodi City Council meeting agenda.

Modifications were made to the environmental documents for the project to address commissioners' concerns with traffic, water and [air quality](#).

However, project plans were not changed to reflect the commission's biggest concerns - the agricultural buffer.

FCB Homes asked instead for commissioners to recommend the changes to City Council members, who could then suggest the change if they think it necessary.

"There's the risk that we would add the buffer only to have the City Council ask us to move it again," Doucette said. "We only want to make the changes once instead of changing back and forth."

Doucette said adding an ag buffer would also mean reworking the development agreement between his company and the city because the cost of donating 27 acres as open space would mean forfeiting some portion of the agreement.

He said renegotiating the development agreement could take a number of months and would put his company behind, possibly unnecessarily. The projects have already been delayed a number of times, being continued three times by the planning commission.

The Southwest Gateway and Westside projects would mean annexing a combined 400 acres west of Lower Sacramento Road, on which more than 2,000 homes will be built.

Although the majority of questions from commissioners have been about the Westside Project, the two have a combined environmental report so must be approved simultaneously.

In original plans for the Westside Project, there was a buffer proposed as a drainage basin. But it was changed after studies showed it wouldn't function properly.

FCB Homes also received a request from the Parks and Recreation Department to use parks and open green space as drainage basins in lieu of the buffer because the city is lacking in practice fields.

Steve Dutra, parks superintendent, verified this request at the meeting saying Lodi is behind the curve when it comes to green space available for pick up games and practices. A combined 55 acres of parks have been included in plans for the projects.

As a compromise, Commissioner Tim Mattheis asked to include a traffic mitigation plan, a residential green measures building program and a minimum ag buffer in the commission's recommendation to the council.

The recommendation to the City Council is to move forward with annexation of the two sites and rezoning the areas.

Plans for both projects will go before the planning commission again before development begins.

How to spend transportation funds?

Residents are invited to discuss the needs of the next 28 years and urge priorities.

By Lakiesha McGhee - Bee Staff Writer
Sacramento Bee, Thursday, October 26, 2006

Would you like to see more transit options in your neighborhood, such as a streetcar, more bike paths or freeway expansion? Are you concerned about air quality?

The Sacramento Area Council of Governments and Valley Vision will be hosting workshops throughout the region Nov. 16 to help prioritize how to invest \$36 billion in transportation dollars during the next 28 years.

To be more inclusive, the two agencies will take a different and more technical route to gather public input for its Metropolitan Transportation Plan 2035. "TALL Order: Moving the Region Forward" will include eight interactive workshops, held simultaneously and linked via satellite, said Susan Frazier, chief executive officer of Valley Vision.

"We will have interactive voting in eight locations," Frazier said, adding that a videocast will serve as a central facilitator. "You may be in Placerville, but you can see what the people in Davis are voting for."

Transportation scenarios to be presented at the workshop were the most popular among residents at previous workshops and had performed best according to SACOG models, Frazier said. Participants also will learn the various transportation needs in the region and discuss investments in several large-scale regional projects. Residents are encouraged to register for the workshop at SACOG's Web site, www.sacog.org/mtp/2035, or by calling (916) 325-1634. Dinner and refreshments will be provided, according to a news release.

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan 2035 is a 28-year plan for transportation improvements in the six-county region based on projections for growth in population, housing and jobs, according to the Sacramento Area Council of Governments' Web site. The plan aims to ensure convenient access to jobs, schools, entertainment, recreation and essential services such as banking, medical care and shopping.

Expenditures resulting from the last Metropolitan Transportation Plan 2025 included: \$2.5 billion for state highway improvements, \$3 billion for state highway maintenance, \$2.5 billion for transit improvements, \$5 billion for transit operations, and \$5 billion for local road improvements.

Participants in the upcoming workshop can expect to discuss a range of topics. Items on the agenda include:

- Air quality
- Energy
- Freight movement
- Highway lane pricing and tolls
- Inter-regional transportation
- Linking transportation phasing with land development
- Non-motorized transportation
- Regional activity center access
- River crossings
- Road maintenance
- Senior and disabled mobility
- System retrofits

- Transportation demand management
- Transit expansion
- Transit operations
- Travel behavior
- Urban roadway expansion and high-occupancy vehicle lanes

Frazier said another public forum will be televised live on Channel 3 (KCRA). A studio audience and viewers at home can give input online, by phone or mail.

"It will be the 'American Idol' of transportation," Frazier said, comparing the event with the hit television show where viewers vote for their favorite singer.

A final draft of the plan will be released for public comment in early 2007. The SACOG board of directors is expected to consider the plan for adoption in March, Frazier said.

Pennsylvania keeps green auto emissions standards

By Scott DiSavino

The Washington Post Wed., Oct. 25, 2006

NEW YORK (Reuters) - In a victory for environmentalists, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives has decided to ignore a bill that would have weakened the state's auto-emissions standards.

Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future (PennFuture) said in a release that the House decision on Tuesday not to consider Senate Bill 1025 to kill the Clean Vehicles Program would allow the implementation of the program.

Pennsylvania has adopted stricter, California-style auto emissions standards but not yet implemented them.

The Clean Vehicles Program, originally adopted in 1998 when Republican Tom Ridge was governor, sets tougher emissions standards for new passenger cars and light-duty trucks. Currently, Pennsylvania follows federal emission standards.

"It's clear that there were not enough votes to pass this bad bill," said John Hanger, president and chief executive of public interest group PennFuture, "so the proponents kept it off the floor rather than risk losing."

On September 19, the Environmental Quality Board approved a proposal by Gov. Edward Rendell to change the implementation date of the program from automobiles built in model year 2006 to model year 2008 to give manufacturers more time to comply with the more stringent standards.

Before the Board's action is final, the Independent Regulatory Review Commission must approve the proposal.

In February, however, the state Senate passed Bill 1025, which would kill the Clean Vehicles Program.

After sitting on the Senate bill for months, the House Transportation Committee voted on October 17 to send the bill to the House floor for a vote after a full-page ad paid for by out-of-state special interests appeared in the Harrisburg Patriot-News.

PennFuture said the House leadership then put the bill up for consideration on Tuesday, the last voting day of the House session before the election break.

The House, however, did not vote on the bill on Tuesday.

In Pennsylvania, Republicans control the House and Senate. The governor is a Democrat.

THIS MAY NOT BE THE END

PennFuture warned that the out-of-state special interests, which sources say represent the auto industry, would likely try again to overturn the Clean Vehicles Program.

"We urge the legislative leadership to stand strong ... Don't let this bad bill return ... during the legislature's lame-duck session in late November," Hanger said.

The federal Clean Air Act allows states to choose between the Environmental Protection Agency's emissions standards or the tougher rules used in California.

Nine other states have implemented the California standards: Maine, Massachusetts, New York, Vermont, Connecticut, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Oregon and Washington.

If Pennsylvania rejected the California standards, it would be the first state to adopt the standards and then drop them in favor of the federal guidelines.

Auto emissions contribute about a third of Pennsylvania's smog-producing emissions.

[Fresno Bee columnist, Thursday, October 26, 2006:](#)

GAIL MARSHALL: Measure C stands for collaboration

Collaboration. Collaboration. Collaboration ... I was searching in my dictionary ... Ah, here it is: "To cooperate with enemy invaders."

That's not the definition I was expecting, but it pretty much tells the story of Fresno County's Measure C, the extension of a half-cent transportation tax on the Nov. 7 ballot. This was negotiated by a group of folks who started out seeing each other as opponents, yet wound up being allies for a very good cause.

Wherever you stand on Measure C, we all are in debt to the people who gave their time to create a document that we could praise, criticize, debate and vote on.

As an observer of a community where it often takes years to get people to agree on the simplest things, I couldn't help but wonder how all these "enemy invaders" managed to put aside their swords and take countless hours away from their work and families to create this plan.

How did this happen?

The secret

Mary Savala, representing the League of Women Voters, was one of the co-chairmen. So, what was the secret to getting all those stubborn people to work together?

Savala didn't hesitate: "The realization that you cannot do it by yourself."

We can all learn a lot from that example. Savala's simple statement - that we cannot do it alone - is what ultimately got dozens of people - all with their expertise and their own passionate, conflicting interests - to find common ground on a contentious issue. All but one member of the committee was able to support the final project. That's remarkable.

Did everyone get everything they wanted? Absolutely not. You could double the size of this tax and still have a long list of things you'd swear were absolutely mandatory. If you listen to the critics, you'll hear a common thread - more, more, more. But this much the Measure C group knew for sure: Unless we join together, we will get exactly zero.

The hotter the political season becomes, the more I appreciate the accomplishment of this group of volunteer road warriors.

It's appropriate that Measure C is a transportation tax because this entire notion was a train wreck waiting to happen. Think of it: Business interests versus environmental interests versus small towns versus metropolitan Fresno versus health interests versus politicians versus transit lovers versus tax extremists versus auto lovers versus air quality experts versus Clovis versus Selma versus Reedley versus planners versus visionaries versus old-school stalwarts.

Savala admitted that early on, there was a tendency for people to look at the other side as having horns. All sides had to come to the realization that they wanted this badly enough to swallow the distaste for talking to others.

Supervisors Juan Arambula and Susan Anderson saw the potential for greatness or disaster going in. Measure C was critically important to the community but getting all these folks to work harmoniously would require exceptional skills. So they hired professional mediators to help soften sharp edges, turn down the heat and move the group together. Ultimately, three co-chairmen were selected to make sure everyone felt represented.

They worked through the learning process, got to know and understand each other and became a team of 24 people. The committee set its own ground rules, such as letting everyone have an opportunity to speak once before others speak again. This one was good, too: Silence is implied consent. And because they had made these rules themselves, they enforced them.

Somehow this team of hardy volunteers not only brought themselves together, but assembled an amazingly diverse list of supporters including all the 15 cities in Fresno County, Republicans, Democrats, chambers of commerce, business and labor, nurses, firefighters, state politicians and regular folks.

I heard a funny story once about a little guy who went to summer camp with the Boy Scouts. The leader was teaching a lesson about water safety and asked the children if they had heard of the "buddy system."

"

Yes!" popped up one little scout, "that's when you both drown together."

When it comes to transportation, it's pretty easy to see that if we don't plan ahead, we'll all be drowning in air pollution, projecting a shameful national image that will handicap us economically and breeding traffic jams that will haunt our dreams.

Act now

It's far better to act now to focus on what we want for our community: Thousands of new jobs; millions in matching funds from the state and federal government; clean, safe and efficient buses, trolleys and vans; transportation to accommodate our seniors, agricultural work force and disabled neighbors - better flow for our trains, airplanes and automobiles.

What will pave the way between us and that goal is collaboration. We voters have our turn now. We must all come together to get the challenging two-thirds vote required to pass this measure.

[Letters to the Fresno Bee, Thursday, October 26, 2006:](#)

Private pollution tax

Clean air is the right of all citizens and a publicly owned commodity. In the Valley, private polluting industries tax this commodity to the tune of 1,200 deaths per year and some of the nation's highest asthma rates.

Fresno has not had a representative on the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District board since 1992. During recent legislative sessions, proposals were made to provide Fresno with a permanent member on the board, as well as more proportional representation throughout the San Joaquin Valley (most recently, SB 999, which failed by only three votes in the Assembly).

Unfortunately, the Valley's delegation failed to fight for this proposal, continuing this private tax on the public's health. Some Democrats, such as Assemblywoman Nicole Parra, actively fought the bill that would check this tax and provide a greater degree of proportional representation on the district board.

Such failure by our delegation is shameful. Let's hope that next year, our representatives will lead the fight for proportional representation on the air district board. Doing so would provide an appropriate check on this private tax that takes an unacceptable toll on our health and our children's.

Brian Cohen , Fresno

Our own destiny

Consider the last time the League of Women Voters of Fresno, Sierra Club, Fresno Chamber of Commerce, Americans with Disabilities Act advocates, seniors, labor and many others have agreed on something. They have on Measure C.

I visit Clovis, Firebaugh, Reedley and other areas of this county and I will vote "yes" for Measure C to benefit the residents and visitors of this area. From the four corners of our county, Friant to Reedley, Huron to Firebaugh and Mendota, we all gain much more from Measure C.

Is it a perfect plan? No, but it is our plan. We have local control of how our tax dollars will be spent. This is taxation with representation. I thank those who served on the committee that crafted this plan.

This is about jobs, cleaning our air, leveraging matching funds from government sources and local oversight. Having my family, friends and co-workers driving on safe roads and riding in air-friendly public and school transportation is important to me. Join me in voting "yes" on extending Measure C and take us into the county's next 150 years as a place of ownership of our area's own destiny.

Brad S. Fischer, Fresno

