

Arnold's flex fleet lacked muscle

Hearings called on ethanol deficit

BY KIMBERLY KINDY, San Jose Mercury News
L.A. Daily News and Tri-Valley Herald, July 10, 2007

SACRAMENTO — Two state Senate committees on Monday scheduled an investigative hearing to examine why Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's administration purchased a new fleet of large sedans and trucks — touting them as green machines — but for two years filled them with regular gas, spewing more pollution into the air than many cars in the old fleet.

A joint hearing, by the Senate Governmental Organization Committee and the Senate Committee on Air Quality, is set for Aug. 15. It was called in response to a Mercury News investigation that showed that state officials purchased 1,138 "flex-fuel" vehicles, promising they would help California kick its dependence on petroleum.

The fuel needed to transform the vehicles into clean-driving machines is a high-grade blend of ethanol. The problem: Not a single ethanol station is available to the fleet.

"This seems to be a pattern," said Sen. Dean Florez, chairman of the Governmental Organization Committee. "The governor loves to take the time to pose and talk about the greening of California but very little gets done in terms of doing the hard work."

Florez said that in addition to the alternative-fuel fleet, the hearing will look at the state's failure to meet

a Jan. 1, 2007, deadline to install solar-energy equipment in state buildings and garages. The law applies to all construction that started on or before Jan. 1, 2003.

The Legislature is considering AB 532, which would extend the deadline by two years. It's unclear how many buildings and garages are out of compliance with the law.

The Department of General Services is responsible for environmental policies and laws for the state's fleet and its buildings.

Linda Adams, secretary for the California Environmental Protection Agency, defended the department's and Schwarzenegger's record on both programs.

"Those cars will be in the fleet for numerous years to come and we hope the fuel will be available in the near future. We feel it's appropriate to make those investments now," Adams said. "I do believe the Department of General Services is moving aggressively and I know the governor appreciates Sen. Florez's interest in ensuring that the state's fleet and buildings are green."

Adams said she doesn't know how many buildings are in compliance with the solar law, but said General Services had made measurable gains. In 2006, the department installed 3.2 megawatts of solar power in state buildings, which reduced annual greenhouse gases by 2,725 tons. That's the equivalent of removing about 740 passenger cars from the road.

Florez said committee members will expect to learn at the hearing why the failures happened and be provided with specific plans for how they'll be remedied in the near future.

After July 4, valley air worsened to historic 'unhealthy' levels

The Associated Press

Contra Costa Times, Merced Sun-Star and other papers, July 10, 2007

FRESNO, Calif.—Air quality in the San Joaquin Valley reached unusually unhealthy levels last week, thanks to a combination of triple-digit heat, high ozone levels and Fourth of July firecrackers, officials said Monday.

The valley, which stretches 240 miles from Stockton to Bakersfield, is one of the dirtiest air basins in the nation.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency tracks air pollution through two main standards: one for airborne particles of dust and soot, and another for ozone, the main ingredient in smog that's sealed in as temperatures rise.

Last Thursday, the amount of particulate matter and ozone in parts of the valley reached levels considered "unhealthy" for all people, said Gary Arcemont, a meteorologist with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. That is the first time since 1999 that areas in the district's territory have met the unhealthy mark for both kinds of pollution on the same day, he said.

In Fresno County, lingering smoke from fireworks pushed the amount of particulate matter in the air to almost ten times what's present on a typical summer day, Arcemont said.

Farther south in Kern County, the amount of ozone reached the same "unhealthy" level set by federal standards, he said.

Air quality in the region has improved as temperatures have dropped slightly in recent days, but can still threaten people with sensitive conditions such as asthma, lung disorders and heart disease, he said.

Cleaner locomotive starts its port duty

The engines burn 30% less fuel than the old ones and will cut smog-forming nitrous oxides by about 46% -- or about 163 tons -- each year.

By Louis Sahagun, Times Staff Writer
L.A. Times, July 10, 2007

Jeff Robinson settled into the driver's seat of his new, low-emission locomotive Monday, released the air brakes and moved a throttle lever, making the engine roar and his train rumble forward with 9,000 tons of imported goods in tow.

The locomotive could easily have been mistaken for a 1950s model, given its vintage shiny black-and-silver zebra-stripe paint job. But under the hood, according to its owners and air-quality officials, was an example of cutting-edge diesel-electric technology: a V-12, 2,000-horsepower machine that dramatically cuts unhealthful emissions.

Moving about 10 mph while occasionally slowing down for track switches and light signals, Robinson maneuvered the train through the seaport complex.

It took Robinson only a few minutes to haul his load from one terminal to another less than a mile away.

That's the task of a short-line railroad like his Pacific Harbor Line at the Los Angeles-Long Beach port complex.

Its mission is to switch carloads of imported goods onto tracks for Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway and Union Pacific, which then transport the goods throughout the U.S.

Pacific Harbor aims to replace its entire fleet of grimy 50-year-old locomotives with 16 custom-built, low-emission machines, which operate on ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel and exceed the Environmental Protection Agency's standards for air pollutant reduction.

Each new locomotive costs about \$1.3 million.

The locomotives burn 30% less fuel than the old ones and will cut smog-forming nitrous oxides by about 46% — or about 163 tons — each year, officials said. They will also reduce harmful diesel particulates by about 70% — or about three tons — each year.

"Even the old locomotives at their worst are better than the alternative, trucks, at their best," said Andrew Fox, president of Pacific Harbor Line.

By January, Pacific Harbor will have one of the lowest average emissions profiles of any railroad in the United States, according to port authorities, who lauded the move as an important step under their 2006 Clean Air Action Plan to reduce harmful harbor air pollutants by 50% within five years.

Pacific Harbor currently has four of the locomotives in service on its 60 miles of busy tracks that crisscross the 7,500-acre port complex.

The rest will be phased in at a rate of two per month.

The company also has ordered three locomotives of an even newer, cleaner design.

Under terms of an industry-ports partnership, the roughly \$23-million cost of the fleet is being shared by Pacific Harbor, which has spent \$10 million on the project, and the ports, which have provided \$5 million each. Additional funds are coming from the California Air Resources Board and the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

"This is a big deal for the ports," said Geraldine Knatz, executive director of the Port of Los Angeles.

"It sets the bar for what we expect in terms of dock usage and rail activity, and is just one more piece of evidence of how we are putting our money where our mouth is in terms of greening port operations."

Unlike so-called road locomotives, which traverse the nation's railways at speeds of up to 70 mph, Pacific Harbor's trains rarely exceed 25 mph. However, Pacific Harbor's specialty — railroad switching within the port complex — involves substantial work for crews because of all the starting and stopping, and the resulting idling is a significant source of emissions.

The new locomotives automatically shut down if they are stopped for more than about 15 minutes, and are three times more powerful than the first diesel-electric switch engines introduced in the 1930s, according to Fox, a lifelong train enthusiast.

Paul Withers, publisher of Diesel Era magazine, said Pacific Harbor's decision to renovate its fleet was not surprising.

"In a place like Southern California, where air pollution is such a big deal, the handwriting was on the wall," Withers said. "They'd have to do it eventually. That they took the initiative to do it now is a good example for the industry."

In the meantime, Pacific Harbor's train operators have been breaking in the locomotives that, one conductor said, "take some getting used to."

"They run all right, although they take a little longer to power up than the old diesels," said conductor Jason Bengel.

"On the other hand, I don't see as much smoke coming out of the engines as I used to."

Motorists may ante up \$24 for Valley air cleanup

By Hank Shaw, Capitol Bureau Chief
Stockton Record, Tuesday, July 10, 2007

SACRAMENTO - Central Valley motorists could be asked to pay an extra \$24 per year to help clean up the region's air under a bill that passed a legislative panel Monday.

The same panel also jettisoned a link between that bill and one sponsored by state Sen. Michael Machado, D-Linden, that would make the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District Board more reflective of the rapidly urbanizing Valley.

Both measures are intended to improve conditions in the Central Valley, which has some of the nation's worst air quality. Asthma is rampant, and pollution-related respiratory problems are connected with 1,000 deaths here each year.

The clean-air bill passed the Assembly Natural Resources Committee and heads to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, where Machado's bill is now. They are not expected to be debated again until August.

Valley drivers pay \$6 on their vehicle license fee to help the San Joaquin air board fund clean-air programs, such as one in which the district pays cash to owners of smog-belching jalopies to replace them with cleaner cars.

The bill sponsored by Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter, would not automatically increase the fee but would give the district the power to do so itself. The district supports the measure, according to its lobbyist, Paul Yoder.

Unlinking the two proposals negated a legislative maneuver Machado and Florez had hoped would ease passage of both.

Machado said linking the bills also would have helped convince his skeptical colleagues that the San Joaquin air board would do something constructive with any state bond money sent its way. Its "backward reputation" has hindered that thus far, Machado said.

Assemblywoman Lois Wolk, D-Davis, suggested the unlinking, noting that earlier versions of Machado's bill had failed. Florez said he wanted his bill to clear the Natural Resources Committee and accepted Wolk's amendment.

Wolk is running to replace the termed-out Machado.

"Sen. Florez did what he had to do, but I am disappointed with the outcome," Machado said. "We'll keep fighting for this, though."

Yoder said the district will keep fighting to kill Machado's bill.

"The district is fundamentally opposed to nonelected members," he said. "It really is that simple. It will not do anything materially to clean the air in the Valley."

Yoder is correct, but Machado said his goal for his bill is to weaken the grip rural, industry-friendly elected officials have had on the district by allocating more members to large cities such as Stockton and by adding two governor-appointed air-related professionals, such as a respiratory doctor or an air-quality scientist.

Machado said the eight county supervisors who sit on the board "fear any input that would enlighten their decision-making process."

Machado has tried to pass this bill for years, but it has faced deep opposition from local officials and the bulk of the Valley's delegation. Only Florez and Fresno Assemblyman Juan Arambula have supported the measure.

More details of the bills, SB719 and SB240, are at www.leginfo.ca.gov.

County in 2050 to be largely Hispanic **Total population in Tulare County to reach 1 million**

By Jed Chernabaeff, Staff writer

Visalia Times-Delta, Tuesday, July 10, 2007

Tulare County's population will exceed 1 million by 2050, according to projections released Monday by the California Department of Finance.

More than 70 percent will be Hispanic, officials project.

California is projected to have 59.5 million residents at the mid-century mark -- nearly 22 million more than today. Hispanics will make up 52 percent of the state's population, up from 36 percent currently.

Whites, now 43 percent of the population, will represent 26 percent in 2050, according to projections. Meanwhile, Asians' share of the population will grow by 1 percentage point, to 13 percent, and the percentage of blacks will decline from 6 percent to 5 percent, according to the department.

Tulare County's Hispanics would outnumber whites by more than a 3-to-1 margin, according to the state numbers.

Fifty-year population projections are revised by the Department of Finance every three to five years. In 2004, the department forecast that Tulare County's population would reach 867,482 by 2050.

The updated figure: 1,026,755.

Tulare County officials say the projected surge in population underscores the importance of planning for the county's future. Each city in the county is in the process of updating its general plan, a blueprint of how to make future land-use and resource decisions. General plans also address infrastructure, housing, agriculture, safety and scenic landscapes.

Scott Cochran, a senior regional planner for the Tulare County Association of Governments, said another document -- the Tulare County Blueprint -- addresses long-range issues. Public input regarding the document will be included in a San Joaquin Valley Blueprint, which covers long-range planning issues from San Joaquin to Kern counties.

Among the needs identified by members of the Tulare County public:

- [Clean air](#)
- Higher education
- Efficient use of land
- Clean cities
- Energy- and water-use efficiency

Cochran said the swelling population projections from the Department of Finance should prompt San Joaquin Valley officials to step up their planning efforts.

"I think the population projection adds more clout to the blueprint," Cochran said. "We need this to compete with other parts of the state."

County offers heat safety tips

Visalia Times-Delta, Tuesday, July 10, 2007

The Tulare County Health and Human Services Department is offering several tips on how to beat the summer heat for those with chronic health conditions.

Extreme temperatures and poor air quality can aggravate the symptoms of heart disease, diabetes, asthma and other lung conditions, the health department said.

The health department recommends staying indoors, limiting indoor and outdoor activities, drinking plenty of fluids and remaining in cool areas. Seek medical care if symptoms of heavy sweating, cramps, weakness, dizziness or rapid heart rate develop, health officials said.

For more information on how to prepare for the heat and where to find a cooling center, visit the department's Web site at www.tularehhsa.org.

Refinery appeals emission decision

Refinery wants more time to comply with emission regulations

BY KEVIN GERRITY, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, July 10 2007

Big West of California is appealing a decision made in late June that would require the Rosedale Highway refinery to comply with a new emission regulation.

On June 29, Big West asked a hearing board at the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District for a temporary exemption concerning the release and testing of the pollutant nitrogen oxides, or NOX, for one of its heating units, according to Melinda Hicks, an environmental engineer with Big West.

Big West needed a majority of the votes from the five-member board, but one member was late to the hearing and another could not attend, said Brenda Turner, public information officer with the air pollution control district.

Turner said Big West received favorable votes from two of the three remaining members, one short of a majority. So the request was denied.

The air district staff had already advised the board to deny Big West, Turner said.

Big West will get a chance to appeal the decision Aug. 8.

"NOX is the primary precursor of ozone," Turner said. "We are getting much more stringent with all NOX emissions, wherever possible."

One group called Environmental Defense reported that cars and trucks and other vehicles in addition to electric utilities and industrial boilers produce most of the NOX emissions.

The group estimated that NOX emissions cost society billions of dollars every year in illnesses and deaths.

During the hearing, Hicks said, Big West wanted to keep operating a unit that heated crude and met an old emission regulation of 30 parts per million.

At that level, Hicks said the NOX emissions from the heater posed no threat.

The refinery hoped to compensate for that level by lowering NOX emissions on other machines, Hicks said.

Turner said Big West had shown that it was making an effort to update the heating unit, but air district staff did not think the refinery was moving quickly enough.

The new regulation, which became effective July 1, limits NOX emissions to five parts per million, Hicks said.

The refinery also asked the air board for a delay on testing the heating unit because the results of 30 parts per million would violate the new regulation.

In short, Hicks said, Big West wanted more time to comply with the regulation.

The refinery based its request for an appeal on the absence at the earlier hearing of one of its experts and a board member, Hicks said.

Panel hears Hunters Point dust issue

New demands from community to halt condos at shipyard

Robert Selna, Chronicle Staff Writer
S.F. Chronicle, Tuesday, July 10, 2007

Community leaders reiterated demands Monday that the city halt a condo development at the Hunters Point Shipyard and test nearby residents exposed to asbestos-laden construction dust.

At a hearing called by the Board of Supervisors Land Use Committee to address community concerns, city public health officials said the city imposed the highest standards possible to control dust and has conducted extensive studies showing the area is safe. Department of Public Health Director Dr. Mitch Katz said no medical test could effectively determine the affects of exposure to low-levels of naturally-occurring asbestos in the construction dust.

Neighborhood leaders were not appeased.

"We are asking for a work stoppage until we can test the community that borders the development," said Nation of Islam Minister Christopher Muhammad, who runs a small private school in the area. "We need testing by people the community can trust ... this community does not trust the Public Health Department."

Muhammad accused the department of environmental racism because officials have failed to punish the shipyard developer, Lennar Corp., even though the company was cited for failing to control construction dust on several occasions, and last year the company reported that air monitors were malfunctioning most of last summer.

Muhammad said that some medical professionals believe that testing could show the kinds of toxic chemicals or asbestos residents might have ingested or inhaled.

At a meeting May 8, Land Use Committee members unanimously approved a preliminary development plan for the possibility of a 49ers stadium at the shipyard, where community members complained about the dust problem. At the time, supervisors chastised Lennar for not doing enough to contain dust.

The shipyard site is prime real estate for development. Lennar is building a 500-acre development with 1,600 homes, parks, commercial buildings -- and a stadium, if the 49ers decide they want to stay in San Francisco and not move to Santa Clara.

Much of the shipyard is badly polluted and the area is listed as a Superfund site, but the parcel where the condo construction is underway was formerly used as housing and is not contaminated by man-made toxins.

Asbestos, a naturally-occurring fibrous mineral, is present in the bedrock of most of the shipyard and is churned up when the earth is chipped and graded for construction.

The dust problem, and Lennar's conduct, is the subject of a lawsuit by two former employees, who claim they were subjected to racial discrimination and retaliation after they spoke out about the construction dust.

Lennar has denied the claims and said that the company has gone to great lengths to protect the public health.

But on June 20, Supervisor Chris Daly introduced a resolution asking the Department of Public Health to halt Lennar's work and calling for an independent evaluation of the health effects of construction on residents.

The Land Use Committee could make a similar recommendation.

Golf resort not up to par ecologically, report says

Ridge at Trinitas touted as PGA tournament site

By Dana Nichols

Stockton Record, Tuesday, July 10, 2007

WALLACE - A resort development that industry insiders say could bring PGA tournament-level golf to 280 acres of rolling ranch land here also would bring traffic, [air pollution](#) and the risk of depleting the local groundwater table, according to a draft environmental report.

A 45-day public comment period on the report on The Ridge at Trinitas begins today. The massive two-volume report details a long list of measures that will require resort developer and owner Mike Nemee to do everything from protecting against the loss of Swainson's hawk habitat to widening Ospital Road.

Nemee said he's happy to do his part to improve the roads near his resort, and he'll use [low-polluting](#) electric golf carts. He also said wells he's drilled have been producing 500 gallons per minute, indicating there appears to be plenty of water for the project.

The Ridge at Trinitas

The report

Copies of the draft environmental impact report for The Ridge at Trinitas are available for review at the Calaveras County Planning Department, 891 Mountain Ranch Road, San Andreas. Call (209) 754-6394 for an appointment. County officials say they also will post the report online at www.co.calaveras.ca.us/.

Public hearing

The Calaveras County Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on the subdivision map, use permit and zoning change for The Ridge at Trinitas project 9 a.m. Sept. 20 in the Board of Supervisors Chambers, 891 Mountain Ranch Road, San Andreas.

One point of contention is what is not in the draft environmental impact report: the links, greens, concrete pathways, bridges and landscaping of the golf course itself. The course was largely complete by the time work began on the report in 2005, and county officials determined it was an "existing condition."

Some environmentalists and neighbors disagree. Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center has asked the county to require the project also to make up for habitat loss caused by construction of the 95 acres of golf course within the property.

Calaveras County Community Development Director Stephanie Moreno said in April county officials allowed Nemee to build the golf course without considering the environmental effects.

"He is doing a use that is not permitted in ag preserve land and therefore would have triggered some environmental review if we did it the way we would do it now," said Moreno, who was hired in 2006 to improve the operation of the county's Building and Planning departments.

The California Department of Conservation said in a letter that it would investigate whether the golf course was built illegally while the land Nemee owns was considered an agricultural preserve under the Williamson Act, which gives tax breaks to landowners in exchange for keeping their land in agricultural production.

The Trinitas property produces olives and also has been a working cattle ranch.

County and state officials said the Williamson Act contracts for Trinitas expired in 2006, but Nemee says they expired in 2005 - before he planted turf and made other changes that converted the former grazing land to a golf course.

"The environmentalists ought to be clapping, because now we are going to be designated 90 percent open space," Nemeo said. "We built the whole golf course, and I think we took out eight or nine trees. We didn't require massive grading to make it work."

According to the draft environmental impact report, construction on Nemeo's course began in 2001. Complaints from neighbors and conflicting statements from county officials began that same year.

The draft report and Nemeo say county officials told him in 2001 that it was acceptable for him to build a private-use golf course on agricultural preserve land. But at least one county official - planner Dan Hendrycks - wrote Nemeo a letter in August 2001 saying it was illegal.

[Visalia Times-Delta, Editorial, Tuesday, July 10, 2007:](#)

Ethanol is sword with two edges

Solutions for achieving energy independence have become the philosopher's stones of the modern age: elusive, visionary, almost imaginary, and they all come with strings attached.

Coal oil ... exploration ... solar power ... wind power ... electric cells ... hybrid engines ... ethanol ... hydrogen fuel cells ... oh, and conservation.

Our society is certain of only one thing: We are in desperate need of energy solutions.

Ethanol is the hot property of the moment, attracting investment like Internet stocks during the Silicon Valley boom. For the time being, some of that faith appears to be justified.

But as a report in the Times-Delta last weekend showed, ethanol is no magic bullet. It can be grown as fast as corn, but ethanol burning creates its own problems for air quality: Some scientists say it increases smog caused by ozone.

They fear that widespread use will increase the number of ozone-related deaths.

Like solar power, wind power and biomass, ethanol is an innovation that we should try out, use for its strengths, but not be dependent upon.

This presents a dilemma for Tulare County, which has the space and climate to produce ethanol in abundance, but is among the most smog-infested areas in the nation. Ethanol could be our salvation on the one hand and literally our executioner on the other.

The lesson of ethanol seems to be that solutions to our energy dependence cannot rely on one thing. They must include a number of elements, both the high-tech and the old-fashioned.

Ethanol is an alcohol produced from biomass, usually corn or sugar cane. It increases the octane level of gasoline by raising the concentration of oxygen. It is already in widespread use in California, having replaced MBTE as a gas additive in 1999 because of the concern of MBTE's contamination of groundwater.

California has recently approved the increase of ethanol in gas from 5.7 to 10 percent. That probably won't be noticed by consumers. Another version of gasoline, E85, with 15 percent ethanol, saves more gasoline. It is not widely available in California, but is catching on in the Midwest.

Ethanol is not likely to replace gasoline as a fuel. It is not as efficient as gasoline. More of it must be burned to create the same amount of energy. The byproducts from ethanol burning can increase smog.

Internal combustion engines, principally those in cars and trucks, are already the main source of air pollution. It would not make sense to replace one smog-producing fuel with a less efficient, smog-producing fuel.

The San Joaquin Valley could be a major center for ethanol production, and indeed, ethanol plants are sprouting up in the Valley. Are we trading one polluting fuel for another?

Ethanol is not likely to become a permanent, long-term solution to our energy problems.

By itself, ethanol is no substitute for gasoline. But its use can relieve shortages until more permanent solutions are found. We can learn from its application, use what fits and discard what doesn't.

New energy sources ought to remain a priority for the nation, and the use of ethanol and other near-term solutions will continue to find a place in our overall energy picture. They should not be considered replacements by themselves, any more than ethanol is a replacement for gasoline.

For now, ethanol production is a benefit to the Valley, where high-tech industries are in short supply. Having innovative energy businesses in our midst should help encourage further exploration of energy alternatives.

We live in an area where the environment is of such importance that energy innovation ought to be a natural fit. The more diverse that innovation becomes, the more likely our energy shortages will be addressed with multiple solutions.

[Bakersfield Californian, Commentary, Tuesday, July 10 2007:](#)

Green buildings have costs, benefits

The Leadership in Energy Environment Design "green building rating system" developed by the U.S. Green Building Council promotes a whole-building approach to sustainability. Five areas of human and environmental health, plus innovation and design process are addressed.

Since 1994, LEED has been continuously refined and updated. Four levels of certification are available on an ever-increasing cost level of compliance.

A recent Community Voices letter encouraged the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District to build a "green" office building as a "statement." A comparison of the energy costs between the new Kern Schools Federal Credit Building and the "California Triangle" was used to illustrate the energy savings of building "green."

The two buildings compared by the author don't have much in common, other than their size, to allow meaningful evaluation. One building is new, the other is 25 years old. One is for a private client and their office space program, the other is developer-financed, and is a shell and tenant improvement project.

One is required to adhere to current Title 24 energy regulations, the other was not. A more valid comparison between contemporaneous buildings would be more informative.

Typical comments about green building point to mostly indifference on the public's and professional's perceptions of the value of sustainability.

One reason may be the scarcity of cost comparison data.

The added costs of building "green" need to be weighed against tax incentives and lower operating costs. The challenge is to select the right mix of elements for the best financial performance of the building. When a client is being forced out of a space and rents are projected to double, a hard look at building "green" is prudent.

Whether or not certification is achieved on a new building, several low-cost elements can be incorporated.

Minimizing east-west windows, natural daylighting, using compact fluorescent lighting, using lower maintenance materials, xeriscape or geoscape planting, drip irrigation, light colored roof surfaces, low-E windows, extra insulation, covered entries and low-flow water fixtures are all great examples of no or lower cost solutions to attain some sustainability.

Reducing construction waste by modular design, downsizing mechanical equipment, tankless water heating, minimizing ozone-depleting substances, using natural building materials, and incorporating automation control systems are additional items for consideration that carry cost implications.

The architect is the green team manager, designing to create a building that maximizes benefits and minimizes cost, and directing the parties toward that goal. The builder is the green team quarterback, assembling the most knowledgeable team players (supplier and subcontractors) and advising the owner of the costs and benefits of each selection.

The owner makes the decisions that affect the budget and whether or not the building to be constructed fits within the cost parameters desired.

Only with full communication between the parties can a successful end result occur. Whether the solution becomes a "statement" or not the importance of designing to the client's budget is foremost.

Warren E. Pechin is president of Pechin & Associates Architect in Bakersfield. He is a past president of the Golden Empire Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

[Visalia Times-Delta, Letter to the Editor, Tuesday, July 10, 2007:](#)

Fireworks should not be allowed in the Valley

What in the world is this city thinking allowing the sale of fireworks? You cannot even breath outside my home tonight due to individuals setting off fireworks. My lungs hurt even walking outside for two minutes. You have articles saying that the fireworks lower the air quality. Why do they continue to allow the sale of such products? We have a very nice fireworks display at the bowl every year, and even if you don't want to go and sit in the bleachers there are lots of spots around town that you can still see the display. City fathers, get a clue. It is time for the fundraisers to find something else to sell.

MONEKA SIMMONS, Visalia

[Sacramento Bee, Commentary, Tuesday, July 10, 2007](#)

Dan Walters: Big growth generates big conflict

By Dan Walters - Bee Staff Writer

Lord James Bryce, Great Britain's ambassador to the United States, in 1909 visited California, which then had scarcely 2 million residents, and offered this prophetic observation:

"What will happen when California is filled by 50 millions of people and its valuation is five times what it is now? There will be more people -- as many as the country can support -- and the real question will be not about making more wealth or having more people, but whether the people will then be happier or better than they have been hitherto or are at this moment."

By happenstance, the current British ambassador to the United States, Sir David Manning, visited the state Capitol on Monday, just as state demographers were issuing new population projections indicating that Lord Bryce's 98-year-old question is even more pertinent now.

The Department of Finance report offers these demographic observations over the next 43 years:

- The 2010 census should count more than 39 million Californians, and the population should surpass 44 million by 2020 and 49 million by 2030, hit 50 million by 2032 and approach 60 million by 2050.
- Non-Latino whites are still the largest ethnic group, but in about a decade, Latinos will become the biggest group, and by 2042 will be an absolute majority. By 2050, too, the white population, which is now just under 50 percent of California's total, will have dropped below 30 percent.

The numbers are impressive, but underlying them are powerful demographic and economic trends that pose difficult, perhaps unsolvable, political issues.

Most obviously, more bodies mean more demand for everything, from housing and transportation to schools and water. As California's population expands by 75 percent between 2000 and 2050, the pressure on relatively finite resources of land and water will increase dramatically.

We are already experiencing conflicts from our relentless growth, such as the one between retaining our position as a global trade crossroads and dealing with the traffic and air quality impacts that trade creates. Another example is the three-sided one that pits building enough housing for millions of new families against Californians' inborn preference for single-family detached homes and maintaining agricultural output.

And then there are the human conflicts. Our growth is driven by immigration and high birth rates among immigrant families, which makes California the globe's most culturally complex society with myriad points of friction (illegal immigration, affirmative action and bilingual education among them). And yet, we need infusions of young immigrants to provide workers for an expanding economy, fill government coffers and meet the needs of a rapidly aging white population.

As population expands and conflicts multiply, an overarching question is whether government as practiced in California is capable of dealing with the consequences.

While transportation, land use, water demand and air quality are merely facets of the same conundrum, authority over those and other growth impacts has, if anything, become increasingly dissipated among single-purpose political agencies. The conflict and confusion over timber-thinning in the Lake Tahoe basin, which contributed to the recent devastating fire that destroyed hundreds of homes, is one stark example of that multijurisdictional dissonance.

Population growth and social complexity may warrant powerful, multipurpose regional and state agencies, but a bigger-is-better approach to governance clashes with our notions of localized decision making and ballot box government and the much-cherished "checks and balances" that purposely make rapid response difficult.

Lord Bryce was, indeed, prophetic.

[Tri-Valley Herald Editorial, Tuesday, July 10, 2007](#)

FasTrak lane experiment not very likely to succeed

July 6

It almost seems anticlimactic, but on Monday another grand experiment in behavioral science began on the San Mateo Bridge.

The subjects of this experiment, we commuters, will be forced to wait in long lines to pay \$4 cash tolls because the toll plaza will have two fewer cash lanes.

At the same time, the other rats in this maze — those with FasTrak electronic toll tags — will get to blow past the lanes of waiting cash payers. We few, proud transponder rats will hear reassuring little beeps coming from little plastic boxes on our windshields while reading "ETC OK" on the message board as we exit the toll booth. I think it stands for Ecumenical Tithe Conditioning.

The problem is what to do with the bad rats. I'm sure some of them will go through the maze several times and then scurry off to Costco or Safeway and buy their toll tags and become beep-worthy rats.

There are other possible complications, however.

Some of the rats may resent waiting in line and become agitated, especially if they know that if they get the toll tags, they could expect no more monetary reward than a temporary offer of \$10 in free tolls (through Aug. 31). Luckily, they probably don't know that \$17.5 million in tolls were collected on the bridge in the fiscal year that ended last summer.

They may also cause the good rats to become agitated, when the lines they form to pay cash back up so far that the good rats with FasTrak are also forced to wait.

That isn't as likely to happen as it once was, because the congestion scientists at the Bay Area Toll Authority and Caltrans, as part of this FasTrak conditioning experiment, have extended the FasTrak-only lane about 2,000 feet.

The change is based on the theory that a certain low level of pain will change behavior.

To quote the BATA spokesman Randy Rentschler, egregiously out of context, "You kind of focus the pain in one small segment rather than stringing it out for a long period of time."

If you pay cash, you will be the recipient of that pain.

Now I'm told by the good folks at BATA that the pain will be regulated by toll booths that can be switched back to cash for weekends and such, when out-of-towners can't be expected to be properly conditioned.

If the experiment goes well (and even if it doesn't), the lane shifts will take place on five of the six other bridges the authority controls. On the new Benicia Bridge, opening later this year, there will be "open road tolling," which means FasTrak users can zoom through at the normal 80, er, 65 mph that they normally drive.

End of the line for budget fight

July 5

A press release reminded me today that the fight over public transit, er, transportation, funding is still raging in Sacramento:

A group of 43 Alameda and Contra Costa county elected officials today sent a letter to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger urging him to restore \$1.3 billion in transit funds in this year's state budget. The letter includes strong objections to proposed public transit funding cuts that would adversely impact East Bay residents, regional air quality, and the local economy.

That's all very touching, but according to the governor's Finance Department, a bunch of crap.

From their perspective, there's no budget cut.

I mean, I can see arguing semantics over a few lousy million bucks. But \$1.3 billion? How could 43 of the East Bay's finest officials have gotten it so wrong?

Two reasons. One, according to the gov's money men, is that the shift in funding was only to other types of transportation programs. The account that the gov is accused of raiding is not for transit, they argue, it's for transportation. That means it's perfectly OK to use it for school busing and transporting clients of state services for the disabled.

There's also paying off old debts, but those were for transportation-related expenditures, so even many in the legislature seem resigned to that use.

The second reason is that even if one corners them into conceding that the money from the so-called spillover fund, which comes from gasoline sales taxes that outpace sales taxes on other goods, (take a breath here) transit agencies would only be losing about 2 percent of their operating subsidy.

On the first point, our transit advocates tell the governor that now, with all his concern about global warming, is a great time to allow transit to get the boost that funding rules dictate. On the second point, they quibble over the amount and say it's necessary to preserve service and attract new riders.

The bottom line that the governor and legislative negotiators must wrestle with is how to pay for all their favorite programs — transit included — without going too deeply into debt.

With a \$.8 billion chunk of spillover money designated for public transportation, it's probable that their agreement will find a way to appease the transit backers and still siphon a few hundred million for other worthy projects.

[Tracy Press Editorial, Monday, July 9, 2007](#)

Keep dollars flowing; back Altamont route

One appropriation in the state budget might determine whether California will go ahead with its 200-mph, \$40 billion bullet train.

The High Speed Rail Authority says it needs \$103 million for detailed engineering work and the purchase of land for the rail right-of-way. Offering just \$5.3 million for a skeletal staff, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger wants to mothball the high-speed rail project until there are less pressing issues elsewhere. In between is the Legislature. The Assembly's offer is \$50 million; the Senate, \$40 million, or about what's already been spent on the project.

We'd like to see enough money allocated to keep the project on track so Californians can be assured that this modern train system, built by public and private funds, will be completed on time after given the green light.

Much is at stake: The 700-mile system would be built in phases and would link the state's major cities: San Diego, Los Angeles, San Jose, Oakland and San Francisco. The route would be from San Diego, through Anaheim, to Los Angeles and out to Riverside County before heading through the San Joaquin Valley. Still undecided is the route to San Francisco. One proposed path is through Pacheco Pass to San Jose with branches to Oakland and San Francisco. The other idea is to go through the Altamont Pass with routes to San Jose, Oakland and across the bay to San Francisco.

Besides slashing hours of travel to the state's bigger cities with stops in between, the project would [reduce air pollution](#) by substituting electric trains for gasoline and diesel-powered vehicles.

There is a 50/50 chance Tracy would be a stop on the line. Environmental studies have been completed on the competing approaches to the Bay Area. An approach to the Bay Area over the Altamont Pass would cost \$12.7 billion, compared to \$12.4 billion through Pacheco Pass. However, the annual maintenance and operations costs of the Altamont Pass route would be 7 percent less than Pacheco Pass. Going between San Francisco and Los Angeles, the Altamont route would be two minutes faster — at two hours, 36 minutes — than Pacheco Pass. Perhaps the most important difference is that the Pacheco Pass alignment would consume about 400 more acres of farmland than the Altamont Pass route.

We urge the High Speed Rail Authority, with sufficient state funding, to support the overall less expensive and more land-sensitive Altamont Pass route.