

## **Local air board launches greenhouse gas fight**

BY STACEY SHEPARD, Californian staff writer  
Bakersfield Californian, Friday, Aug. 22, 2008

Local air regulators decided Thursday to take their own steps to deal with greenhouse gases in the San Joaquin Valley until statewide regulations are developed.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District board approved a plan that calls for guidelines for local land-use agencies that permit new facilities that emit the harmful gases. The plan will also look at ways to develop a local carbon credit bank to encourage existing businesses to make early reductions.

Industries identified as major sources of greenhouse gases are some of the same ones already heavily regulated for ozone and particulate pollution: cement factories, refineries, power and cogeneration plants, dairies and landfills.

Air districts are not required to regulate greenhouse gases under the state's Global Warming Solutions Act, which aims to reduce California's greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. The California Air Resources Board is charged with developing those regulations by 2011.

But district officials said local action is needed in the meantime due to the threat of permitting agencies and project developers being sued by environmental groups and California Attorney General Jerry Brown who want greenhouse gases reductions to happen now.

"We're a target for litigation," said air district attorney Phil Jay. "It would be nice to have some standards to follow rather than this hit-and-miss situation."

In early 2007, the attorney general sued and reached a settlement with San Bernardino County that required the county to include in its general plan ways to mitigate greenhouse gases created by future growth. Since then, Brown's office has intervened in the permitting process for a host of developments around the state demanding similar mitigations.

In Kern County, his office has required better greenhouse gas mitigations on a planned corn ethanol plant and it also got involved with Big West of California's plans to reduce emissions from the proposed expansion of its Bakersfield oil refinery.

Brown has also emphasized the air district's need to better control methane emissions from the valley's fast-growing dairy industry.

Methane, emitted by cows and their manure, is an especially potent greenhouse gas that's 21 times more effective at trapping heat than carbon dioxide, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

In a January letter to the district, Brown's office said half of the state's methane emissions come from livestock and the San Joaquin Valley is home to 83 percent of the state's dairy cows.

"We do have de facto regulation now from the attorney general that's causing a lot of uncertainty for development we need in the valley for jobs, industry, housing," said Air District Governing Board member and Kern County Supervisor Ray Watson.

Watson and the rest of the board voted unanimously for the district to move forward with the plan.

Workshops will be held in coming months to get input from industry and the public on the district's approach. Specific proposals and recommendations will be made to the governing board next summer.

## **Fresno Co. goes for the green**

By Kerri Ginis / The Fresno Bee  
Friday, Aug. 22, 2008

Fresno County is trying to do its part to protect the environment by encouraging more of its 7,000 employees to car-pool to work, conserve electricity and recycle aluminum cans and plastic water bottles.

On Thursday, the county held a "Go Green Fresno County" event -- kicking off a new package of environmental policies that strive to reduce air pollution, limit traffic congestion and decrease energy consumption.

More than 1,000 employees attended the kickoff. The county set up booths for employees to learn more about what they can do to protect the environment.

Judy Dlugonski, a secretary in the Public Defender's Office, said she has recently noticed more of her co-workers making an effort to recycle and conserve energy.

"This is a real hot topic right now," she said. "A lot of us are interested in applying more of these things at work."

Each employee received a green cloth grocery bag containing an energy-efficient light bulb and a reusable water bottle. The county also raffled off two bikes and two scooters. But officials made sure it was a paperless raffle by using computers to enter employee names.

"This is a great event, but it's just the start," said Board of Supervisors Chairman Henry Perea, who along with Supervisor Judy Case spearheaded the county effort. "We're in the process of changing the county mindset."

Fresno County is not the first to tackle this issue. Nearly two-thirds of cities and counties in the state -- including the city of Fresno -- have already put similar policies in place, said Cara Martinson, a legislative analyst with the California State Association of Counties.

"There's been a tremendous groundswell in light of the public awareness of the issue," Martinson said. "I think what a lot of county governments have been doing is seeing what resources they consume and what they can do to cut back."

The next step for Fresno County is to put recycling bins in every county department, Perea said.

Many employees say they also are trying to car-pool to work more. Others -- particularly those who commute from the South Valley -- are using van pools. Temo Ortiz, who works for a van-pool program, said he knows of at least 40 to 50 county employees who use the service.

Thursday's event -- which included a free lunch for all employees -- was paid for by sponsors, including Table Mountain Rancheria and Granville Homes. Granville even brought an electric car for employees to check out.

"This really has got us more motivated," said Silvia Rodriguez, an accountant for the county. "I think it's awesome to get everyone together and share the resources that are available."

## **Around the Region**

### **CURIOUS ABOUT SCIENCE?**

Modesto Bee, Tuesday, August 19, 2008

When: Thursdays, 1-1:50 p.m.

Where: Modesto Junior College East Campus, Forum 110

Info: The Modesto Junior College Science, Mathematics and Engineering Division will offer a series of public sessions this fall. Themes are on topics such as global warming, nutrition and health, and other "science that matters" subjects. The sessions are free and open to the public. The speakers are MJC biologist Richard Anderson: "Antarctica: Life in an Ice Age: How Has It Changed?" (Sept. 4); and Anthony Presto, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District: "Monitoring and Cleaning Our Air" (Sept. 11). For more information, call Anderson at 575-6293.

## **LA port's truck plan gets boost from 2 big haulers**

The Associated Press

In the SF Chronicle, Bakersfield Californian, Merced Sun-Star and other papers, Friday, Aug. 22, 2008

LOS ANGELES -- A plan to clean up the air around the twin ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach got a boost Thursday when two large members of the trucking association that sued to stop the plan agreed to participate in the program.

The American Trucking Associations filed a federal lawsuit last month against both cities after reviewing a truck replacement plan that would force thousands of independent truckers who work at the port to eventually become employees of trucking companies.

The group, which represents 37,000 trucking companies, had no immediate comment after learning that two Phoenix-based ATA haulers signed onto the program.

Some California trucking companies were upset that any member would sign up for a plan that could put them out of business.

"I'm taken aback," Michael Lightman, owner of Long Beach-based Great Freight Inc., told the Los Angeles Times. "Now, they are going to out-of-state companies rather than dealing with California trucking businesses that have been hauling cargo in and out of the ports for the past 25 to 30 years."

Both cities passed plans earlier this year aimed at reducing truck pollution at the nation's busiest cargo container complex by as much as 80 percent. The plans would require trucks to meet tougher 2007 federal emissions standards by 2012, along with a \$35 cargo fee to pay for the newer, cleaner-running trucks.

The ATA has said it does not oppose efforts to clean up the air but is concerned that other measures in the plans violate federal laws by unfairly regulating prices, routes and services.

The haulers that signed onto the program include Swift Transportation Co., which has 37 major terminals in 26 states and Mexico; and Knight Transportation Inc., which has 2008 model trucks on nearly half its fleet.

"These are both well-known, national trucking companies. They are very serious players," said Paul Bingham, managing director of trade and transportation markets for economic research firm Global Insight.

The Arizona companies said that the letters of intent made sense because both already had customers who moved goods through the ports and had expressed concerns about their ability to get their products delivered promptly.

"We have 1,400 trucks equipped with the newest diesel technology. The ports have a need for clean trucks and we have customers that need that service," said Kevin Knight, chief executive of Knight Transportation. "I think it's a good fit."

## **Clean San Pedro Bay goal of ports**

By Art Marroquin Staff Writer

LA Daily News, Thursday, August 21, 2008

The ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach this week officially launched their joint Water Resources Action Plan, which aims to clean up the murky San Pedro Bay.

The WRAP program calls for examining upstream sources of pollution that are washed from the Dominguez Watershed and the Los Angeles River.

Port officials are scheduled to explain the program during a public meeting at 1 p.m. Sept. 17 at the Port of Los Angeles administration building, 425 S. Palos Verdes St., San Pedro.

"We've made terrific progress in cleaning the air through a collaborative approach, so it was only natural that we'd also take the same approach in working together to improve the quality of water in San Pedro Bay," said Geraldine Knatz, executive director of the Port of L.A.

Efforts to dredge channels and monitor pollution levels have improved water quality at the port over the past 40 years, but problems remain with inflows of polluted storm water, vessel discharges and port tenant operations.

Port officials said they hope that a regional collaboration will bolster ongoing efforts to clean the bay.

Many of the yet-to-be-determined measures will be incorporated into future expansion and construction projects at the ports.

The Port of Los Angeles has laid the framework for the WRAP program for most of the year and successfully managed to recruit the neighboring Port of Long Beach to join in, according to officials.

"This additional program will provide a framework through which we can work with regulatory agencies, our neighboring port and other partners to ensure that water quality continues to improve in the harbor," said Richard Steinke, executive director of the Port of Long Beach.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Friday, Aug. 22, 2008:](#)

## **County launches green effort**

### **Actions can lead to more efficient use of taxpayer dollars.**

Fresno County has officially launched an ambitious effort to ease the impact of county operations on the environment. It's more than a laudable goal; it's an imperative for all of us who live in the Valley.

"Go Green Fresno County" had its kickoff Thursday, with more than 1,000 county employees gathering in the ballroom of the downtown Fresno County Plaza. They had a chance to visit booths set up to help them learn all the ways they can save energy, work for better air quality, conserve resources and save the taxpayers money while doing it.

Fresno County joins most cities and counties in California in making this effort. It's important because the county, with some 7,000 employees, is one of the largest employers in the Valley. Improvements arising out of "Go Green" could have a significant positive effect on the region's environment.

Such programs also help build an ethic of environmental awareness and responsibility that spreads far beyond the workplace. Employees' families, friends and neighbors can eventually be brought into the effort.

The Fresno County program has seven components: Power Green and Build Green address the need for energy conservation, especially in construction. County facilities will be held to higher standards of energy efficiency, and conservation in private construction will be pushed.

Commute Green will offer incentives for employees who use car pools or van pools, such as free parking. Purchase Green will set environmental standards for county procurement practices.

Operate Green and Work Green will focus on replacing vehicles with more efficient models, conserving water, recycling and reducing waste

Share Green will be the program used to spread the word -- and deeds -- beyond the confines of county operations, to private citizens, businesses and other organizations.

There are those who will belittle such efforts as marginal or ineffective. They're wrong. Taken separately, each of the changes the county is imposing on itself may not do very much for the environment, or save very much money. But the cumulative effect of many such pieces can be significant, and thus very much worth doing. And it could all add up to much more efficient use of taxpayer dollars.

Some of these measures are thrust upon the county -- and the rest of us -- out of necessity. Energy costs can best be moderated by conservation and the effort to create alternatives to fossil fuels. Recycling slows the pace at which we consume resources. Cleaning up our air will save both lives and money. Wise use of water stretches our supplies. We have to find new ways of doing things, and "Go Green" is a good start.

[Merced Sun-Star, Opinion, Friday, Aug. 22, 2008:](#)

## **Our View: Has Merced outgrown rail?**

### **Undercrossing on G and 23rd streets could create more traffic problems once it's finished.**

The traffic mess two weeks ago caused by a stopped freight train is only the latest incident in Merced's long history of frustrations with the railroad.

The good news -- that state funding may allow an undercrossing at G Street at 23rd Street to open by 2011 -- would be better if there were also plans in place for similar measures at Merced's other thoroughfares.

While we applaud the steps that have been taken to move this necessary project forward, we can't help but worry about the traffic load that will be diverted to G Street once the underpass is complete.

The city will find out next week if it will receive \$9 million in state funding -- half the cost of construction.

If Merced wins the money, work would begin in 2010, with the project completed the following year. It should be obvious that when the roadway is reopened, drivers seeking an unimpeded route will flock to G Street. The traffic volume on this road will reach annoying levels, to say the least.

Since 2005, the city has received 229 complaints through its Web site about traffic delays caused by the railroad. The delays add up to nearly 42 hours -- think of all the air pollution caused by idling vehicles. (To read the complaints, visit [www.mercedsunstar.com/opinion](http://www.mercedsunstar.com/opinion))

The G Street underpass is a good quick fix, but it certainly isn't the final answer.

In an ideal Merced, the tracks would be moved outside city limits, but we understand such an undertaking is unrealistic because of the phenomenal costs involved.

So, considering the amount of time that it has taken just to get an underpass on G Street, planning needs to begin now for additional underpasses at M Street, R Street, Highway 59 and eventually a crossing at Parsons Avenue.

This isn't something the city can tackle on its own. We'll need financial help from regional agencies and legislators. There should also be more incentive placed on the railroad -- in this case, BNSF -- to kick in additional funding when operations impact a city's ability to function.

Merced city staffers have surveyed the amount of time wasted by emergency vehicles waiting for a train to pass. Spokesman Mike Conway said the city estimates that police, firefighters and ambulance drivers spend up to two hours each day waiting at the railroad tracks.

"If the timing gets ugly and you're the person being transported in an ambulance, five minutes can make a difference," Conway said, adding that the city also has documented cases of emergency police backup being held up by the trains.

This is unacceptable.

Merced, like most Central Valley towns, may have grown up around the railroad, but that shouldn't mean we're perpetually handicapped by it.

[Tri-Valley Herald, Commentary, Friday, Aug. 22, 2008:](#)

### **Is it worth accepting traffic congestion in Alameda?**

By John Knox White, Columnist

You've been warned. Seriously. (Stick with me here, it's going to get boring for a few.) Two weeks ago, the city released the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the General Plan Transportation Element Update (TMP). (Don't ask about the acronym, I have a word limit.) If that sentence isn't enough to make you want to move on to the next article or the letters to the editor, I'm a little concerned for your sanity.

Nap-inducing as it sounds, this is a big deal. The Transportation Element is the section of the General Plan that lays out how we plan for traffic traveling around our city's roadways.

To step back a little, it's important to understand a couple of things about EIRs. They are often misunderstood, or attributed with special powers they do not in fact have.

First, EIRs are analysis and disclosure documents, and as such they look at the impact of large projects on various aspects of the environment (air quality, water quality, etc.). They do not approve or deny a project, and the acceptance of an EIR does not require the acceptance of the proposal it analyzes. It simply means that the EIR has done an adequate job of disclosing the impacts.

Second, EIRs do not require that all impacts be mitigated. They allow the city to identify when a mitigation for an impact will not work.

So back to the TMP EIR. The TMP is the project I mentioned last month, the result of many public meetings during the

course of many years. At its core, the TMP is an update to the city's existing General Plan, but it adds new goals concerning the planning of our roadways. These goals include livability and walkability.

Is the TMP an anti-automobile document? Hardly. But it does try to strike a balance between accommodating more and more traffic and preserving the livability of city neighborhoods.

So what is the big issue? Within the TMP are seven policies that change the way that the city views transportation mitigation in future EIRs. At its core, it says that we will not continue to add more lanes to Alameda roads in an attempt to accommodate increases in traffic.

Instead, it specifically states that future projects will spend money on transportation solutions (called TDM) to reduce the number of automobile trips generated by projects. Things like free shuttles, increases in transit service, etc.

Alameda Landing is the first example of this approach being applied. The project will be contributing more than \$400,000 to the city every year, adjusted for inflation, in order to provide such services.

The TMP also states that if after TDM measures have been applied congestion still exists, we aren't going to try to increase the number or size of our roadways to accommodate it. Sounds scary, except that under the existing General Plan there is no guarantee this wouldn't be the case.

Ask yourself this: With all the traffic mitigations that have accompanied the projects that have been built in the last 15 years, has your travel time gone down? The answer is most likely no. And the reason is that while mitigations may have reduced the congestion at a single intersection, all the traffic has just moved on down to the next intersection and bogged down.

So what does this mean? First, it is good to note that congestion on Alameda streets is a limited affair. It happens for short periods in the morning and afternoon. For 23 hours a day, congestion at Alameda intersections is and will remain at "acceptable" levels as defined by our exiting 20-year-old General Plan.

The big question is this: Is it worth accepting possible congestion for 45 to 60 minutes a day at fewer than 10 intersections throughout the city to have fewer cars traveling through our neighborhoods? The EIR finds proposed changes contained in the TMP will result in fewer miles traveled by automobiles in our city. The analysis is NOT based on the assumption that everyone will ride the bus or bike, and it assumes the same percentage of people driving last summer will be the same percentage driving in 20 years.

But if we say we aren't going to mitigate congestion at certain intersections, doesn't that just mean that projects will be approved easily? Actually, it's the opposite. By stating we aren't going to build our way out of traffic impacts without reducing car trips, the EIRs for future development projects will specifically state that those projects will result in congestion. Period. Decision makers on the council will then have to accept or deny a proposal based on this more accurate finding.

The Planning Board and Transportation Commission will be holding a joint hearing on the issue at 7 p.m. Monday. Come tell the city what you think. If you're not able to make it, you can submit written comments to the Planning Department until Sept. 22.

*John Knox White is chairman of the Alameda Transportation Commission and TravelChoice program director for the Transportation and Land Use Coalition.*

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Friday, Aug. 22, 2008:](#)

### **'The right balance'**

I take great exception to the Aug. 18 editorial on environmentalism. Since when are the environment and endangered species more important than human life and need? We have gone overboard. All species feed on lower ones -- from fish to animals to humans.

Many species have disappeared in the past without any human presence. Today the news indicates evidence of huge global warming in the ages before man even appeared. Was that also due to us?

Drilling off shore and in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge does not mean we will destroy the environment. Nuclear power has proven itself over the years. Please, let's approach these issues sensibly and find the right balance for all concerned.

*Terry Holland, Fresno*

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses independent truck drivers are left without funds to comply with new regulations. For more information on this and other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at (559) 230-5851.

### **Camioneros independientes sin dinero para cumplir ley ambiental**

Manuel Ocaño

Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Wednesday, August 20, 2008

Organizaciones de camioneros independientes, en su mayoría inmigrantes, y grupos de derechos humanos protestaron en el puerto de Long Beach, California por un reglamento que los obliga a cambiar motores de camiones que consumen diesel por otros menos contaminantes.

Los grupos advirtieron que muchos de los camioneros independientes son inmigrantes que usan sus camiones como pequeñas empresas, muchas veces familiares, y que carecen de recursos para cambiar motores.

Los choferes aseguraron que desean reducir la contaminación pero dijeron que incluso si obtuvieran un préstamo oficial, tendrían que hacer pagos mensuales de entre 500 y mil dólares sin saber si habrá meses con escaso trabajo.

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses a federal court determines that EPA overstepped their authority when they refused state plans.

### **Determina tribunal que EPA sobrepasó su autoridad al negar planes estatales**

Manuel Ocaño

Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Thursday, August 21, 2008

Una Corte de Apelaciones en la capital nacional determinó que la Agencia federal de Protección Ambiental (EPA, por sus siglas en inglés) sobre limitó su autoridad al negar a gobiernos estatales y locales permisos para implementar sus propios planes de calidad del aire.

La corte dijo que esos permisos deben ser autorizados para cubrir necesidades que la EPA ha dejado de satisfacer.

La decisión de un panel de tres jueces puede todavía revisarse. La demanda contra la EPA la interpuso una coalición de grupos que representó el Sierra Club.