

Second Front Page

Valley Voice Newspaper, Monday, October 27, 2008

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District approved regulations that will increase the number of no-burn days in the winter in the Valley. The rule, which takes effect Nov. 1, affects fireplaces and wood stoves. The new rule also lifts the exemption to the no-burn rule for residences at higher elevations. It is expected to greatly increase the number of no-burn days in the winter

UC Merced prof. gets air board seat

Fresno resident teaches chemistry, biochemistry

By E.J. Schultz

Merced Sun-Star and other papers, Saturday, October 25, 2008

SACRAMENTO -- Pleasing clean-air activists, Gov. Schwarzenegger on Friday appointed a science professor from Fresno to the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District board.

Henry Forman, a 61-year-old Democrat, is a professor of chemistry and biochemistry at UC Merced. He was the favored choice of environmentalists, who have frequently clashed with the board, an influential agency that sets smog rules in the eight-county region.

"I think his commitment to science and objectivity is going to be really great for that board," said Nidia Bautista, of the Coalition for Clean Air.

A top farm leader also gave him a good review.

"He doesn't make irrational decisions quickly without facts," said Manuel Cunha Jr., president of the Nisei Farmers League in Fresno. He is "not a person that sides immediately with the environmentalists," Cunha added.

Forman holds a Ph.D. in biochemistry from Columbia University. He came to the Valley in 2003 after serving as chairman of the department of environmental health sciences at the University of Alabama, Birmingham. He has also worked at the University of Southern California and the University of Pennsylvania.

Forman fills one of four board positions created by legislation the Republican governor signed last year to increase the board's size to 15 members from 11.

The expansion, pushed by environmentalists, adds two city appointees and two health experts to the board, which has been dominated by county appointees.

The other health slot was filled earlier this year with the appointment of Fresno cardiologist John Telles, also a Democrat. The two new city appointees have not been made.

Scientist appointed to air district board

Bakersfield Californian, Friday, October 24, 2008

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger appointed Fresno resident and University of California, Merced chemistry professor Henry Forman to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District Governing Board on Friday. Forman, 61, is a founding faculty member of UC Merced's School of Natural Sciences, where he has taught since 2003. He was previously a professor at the University of Alabama, Birmingham and at the University of Southern California.

Under state legislation passed last year, the air district's governing board was expanded from 11 to 15 members. The four new seats were to be filled by a doctor and a scientist, appointed by the governor, and two representatives from valley cities. Forman's selection completes the governor's appointments. In April, Schwarzenegger appointed Fresno cardiologist John Telles to the board. However, the two new seats for city representatives remain empty. A third city seat is also vacant following the May resignation of former Arvin Councilwoman Raji Brar.

Most cities can do much more to stop auto-reliant sprawl

By Garth Stapley and Michael R. Shea
Modesto Bee, Sunday, October 26, 2008

Across the San Joaquin Valley, one of California's fastest-growing regions, cities on average are doing about half of what they might to encourage smart growth.

Fifty-six of the valley's 60 cities achieved smart growth scores of less than 70 percent, according to a comprehensive planning audit developed and conducted by The Modesto Bee in cooperation with the Great Valley Center and a class of California State University, Stanislaus, pollsters.

The resulting scorecard is designed to help people gauge whether their leaders are serious about improving communities and boosting contentment through thoughtful planning, or merely paying lip service.

Smart growth brings jobs closer to homes, promotes health and curbs pollution, experts say. And people generally are happier walking on tree-shaded streets to lush parks or shops in a village square than isolated in sprawling, drab subdivisions on the edge of town.

"A survey is a snapshot," Carol Whiteside, president emeritus of the Great Valley Center, said of the collaborative effort, nearly two years in the making. "It gives us kind of a big-picture

look and allows us to find places where we want to go deeper."

Planners and top administrators in the valley's eight counties and 60 cities provided data in late 2007 and early 2008 for the survey.

Notable findings:

Size doesn't seem to matter. The highest-scoring cities feature a mix of the valley's very smallest (Sanger, Dos Palos) and largest (Fresno, Modesto and Bakersfield).

Many cities are conscious about the fees they charge developers. Among nine smart growth sections, cities valleywide scored best in the category measuring whether they charge adequate fees and update them regularly, although even the best cities earned less than 90 percent.

On average, cities' design and public outreach leave much to be desired.

Whether good planning rubs off on neighbors is debatable.

Of the valley's 60 cities, the three highest-scoring -- Oakdale, Patterson and Turlock -- are in Stanislaus County, and the county seat, Modesto, tied for seventh place. Overall, Stanislaus County cities scored an average of 66.19 percent -- significantly ahead of cities in runner-up Madera County, with 57.88 percent.

Tulare's progressive streak

But cities from five other counties also made the Top 10 list, with representation from Kings (Hanford, fourth), Kern (Bakersfield, tied for fifth), Merced (Dos Palos, tied for fifth), Tulare (Dinuba, tied for seventh) and Fresno counties (Fresno, ninth and Sanger, 10th). San Joaquin and Madera counties had no city in the Top 10.

That Stanislaus County has four cities in the valley's Top 10 has little correlation with the county's own performance, however. Stanislaus placed fifth among eight counties.

Radically progressive policies adopted by forward-thinking Tulare County leaders three decades ago helped land that agency first among the eight counties. But critics say current leadership is showing signs of dismantling some of the most significant smart growth rules.

Smart growth scorecards have been used to measure planning policies in several regions across the United States, including the Bay Area. They provide "a better understanding of how the rules on the books can deliver" more livable communities, said Tim Torma, policy analyst with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Dumb growth, or traditional urban sprawl, typically features an outward-growing mass of cookie-cutter subdivisions gobbling farmland on a city's fringe. Residents rely on automobiles for trips to generic strip malls and jobs in distant places.

Experts say such growth patterns contribute to the nation's health problems by robbing people of exercise. And driving more causes air pollution, breathing disorders and climate-changing greenhouse gases.

"As air quality gets worse, the climate heats up and people become increasingly obese because they're spending more time in the car," said Judy Corbett, founder of the Local Government Commission in Sacramento. "That leads to asthma, diabetes and heart disease. Socially, we're becoming isolated from one another, spending so much time in the car rather than out in the community."

Homes near shops, offices

Smart growth principles embrace walking, bicycling and transit by incorporating a compact mix of affordable and upscale homes with stores and offices in carefully planned villages.

Ripon earned a perfect score in the survey's development category.

Benjamin Powell, 47, four years ago moved from a small Ceres rental to an attractive two-story house he bought on a truck driver's salary in Ripon, nestled among custom homes in a quiet neighborhood. The city is among few in the valley requiring developers to offer below-market prices on some units in every new subdivision.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime deal," Powell said. "We're paying less than \$900 (a month) for mortgage, insurance and everything included."

Recycling downtowns, by better using services already in place, makes more sense than building redundant infrastructure in outlying areas, supporters say -- and brings some sanity to everyone's taxes.

After some five decades of encouraging auto-reliant growth, state leaders are reversing course, passing laws linking land use to health and climate change with Assembly Bill 32 and Senate Bill 375. The latter would give money to local agencies that facilitate growth close to transit centers, bringing jobs and homes closer together.

Standards shape the future

Many valley leaders have tried inserting smart growth pillars into local policies, which vary widely even among neighbors -- with varying success.

Oakdale owes its No. 1 ranking to leaders' refusal to buckle on high design, parks and farmland protection standards, despite incredible pressure from builders in boom times earlier this decade.

Patterson, whose unique downtown layout generally is well-regarded among experts, in recent years welcomed a spate of generic subdivisions on its fringe while far outpacing most other valley cities in rampant growth. But newer smart growth policies, including some requiring a healthy mix of affordable housing, should position the No. 2 city for a brighter tomorrow.

Among the newer developments in Patterson is Las Palmas Place, an affordable housing community for seniors.

"A lot (of us) couldn't afford what few apartments they have in town," said resident Murtie Coggins, 63. "If you're lucky enough to get in here, you thank your lucky stars."

Patterson planners made sure Las Palmas Place is close to stores, restaurants and services.

"We just walk across the street and they're right there," said Bea-trice Basaldua, 86.

The survey relies heavily on sustainable policies because they provide the framework that makes smart growth possible. Not measured is on-the-ground reality, theoretically resulting from policy.

But reality also depends on the political will of leaders, who have broad control to ignore or uphold policy.

Readers, then, won't see reflected in these rankings the damage done by a rash of foreclosures in some highly ranked cities, including Patterson, Modesto and Newman. Neither is it apparent by its low affordability ranking that remote Avenal, a tiny city in small Kings County, has an abundance of affordable homes; its leaders haven't seen a need, so they haven't adopted such policy.

Other cities' rankings may be skewed because a representative, despite repeated requests, failed to answer all questions. For example, Stockton, with an impressive downtown renaissance and progressive reputation, stopped the audit before finishing significant portions and ended up 59th of 60.

Institutions behind previous surveys in other areas said planning audits proved to be worth the effort because they spark public dialogue and provide a flashpoint for government accountability.

The Greenbelt Alliance's 2006 award-winning Bay Area Smart Growth Scorecard "infused a sense of healthy competition on something we should all be working on," said Elizabeth Stampe, the group's communications director.

"It shined a light at how decisions we're making are affecting the entire Bay Area and everyone who lives here," she continued. "It helped local leaders -- planners, mayors, council members, supervisors -- learn how they could do better by adopting reasonable policies that other agencies already are doing."

The Bay Area's survey, like the valley's, produced lower scores than expected, Stampe said -- but gives leaders a tool for suggesting where they might seek change. "It's really valuable to have a quantitative illustration," she said.

Whiteside said scorecards also provide baseline data for future studies. A second look at the valley's policies in a couple of years would show whether we're learning and moving forward, she said.

"A survey gives us an overview of the general trends and the ability to compare ourselves against other places, both in the region and throughout the state and nation," Whiteside said. "If we don't like what we see, the point is to have a chance to go back and change it."

A peak at a power plant

By Press Staff

Tracy Press, Saturday, October 25, 2008

Owners of the Tracy Peaker Plant on Thursday afternoon gave the public, city leaders and a group of state energy commissioners a tour of the plant to talk about their goal to nearly double the energy output to 314 megawatts.

The tour came during a recess from GWF Power System's first public hearing after the California Energy Commission started its yearlong review in response to the company's request to expand into a full-fledged power plant.

The plant would double the energy it generates by adding a steam-powered turbine and upping the number of hours it runs from a couple hundred to as many as 8,000 a year, depending on demand.

That would increase the plant's air pollution from a couple tons annually to at least 90 tons of nitrogen oxide.

GWF president Doug Wheeler led the quick tour around the plant and explained to the group of about 60 the way the plant works now and how it would work with an added turbine.

The Tusos, a Tracy family that owns a swath of land next-door to the plant southwest of town, raised concerns about the proposed height of the planned smokestacks.

"There's no hiding that fact that they would be huge structures," Wheeler said.

But the company would likely plant trees to obscure the view. Existing smokestacks tower 110 feet. After construction, they'd rise another 30 feet.

Wheeler fielded questions about water use, energy efficiency and the aesthetics of the planned 16.4-acre plant.

On the way back to City Hall, for the second half of the hearing, Wheeler pointed out the 200-acre swath of land locals call the antenna farm, land GWF Energy is eyeing as a possible extension of the power plant. The city voted earlier this month to negotiate with GFW to build solar panels on the Schulte Road land, but needs to rework an agreement with a federal agency before that could happen.

The power plant expects to be able to start construction in 18 months, depending on the exhaustive review by energy commissioners, which requires lots of public input before a final decision is made.

Local agencies offer public transit promotion

By Philip Hoover - San Mateo County Times
Tri-Valley Herald, Friday, October 24, 2008

As high gas prices and road congestion continue to sap commuters' money and patience, Peninsula residents are ditching their cars in record numbers.

But for folks who have yet to make the switch, the Peninsula Traffic Congestion Relief Alliance is providing incentives to take public transit for commuters interested in saving time, money and the environment.

The alliance, which is funded by local and regional government agencies, is promoting the "I'm Pumped for Transit" challenge this week.

Starting Monday, county residents who pledge to take public transportation just once during the week will be eligible to win an array of prizes, including an iPod and a luxury hotel stay.

"Through this program, commuters have the opportunity to get out of their car, save money on gas and reduce traffic congestion, which will result in improving our air quality," said Christine Maley-Grubl, executive director of the organization. "We're really trying to find fun ways to generate awareness of taking transit as an alternative to driving."

The alliance has long provided other incentive programs, such as offering free transit tickets and awarding carpool participants with a \$60 gas card. Visitors to the organization's Web site can check the damage commuting by car inflicts on their wallet and the planet by calculating their commute cost and vehicle emissions.

Increased public awareness of vehicle emissions and daunting gas prices have prompted more commuters to leave their keys at home and hop on public transit, according to local transit advocates.

The number of Caltrain and SamTrans passengers in particular has risen due to skyrocketing gas prices, said Christine Dunn, spokeswoman for the San Mateo County Transit District.

"We've seen an increase all across the board," she said. "We're looking at the highest ridership in public transit in 50 years."

Between 2007 and 2008, SamTrans upped its passengers by more than 4 percent, while Caltrain ridership increased by more than 13 percent, according to a recent district staff report.

Maley-Grubl is optimistic that the increase in transit passengers will hold steady in coming years. "When (gas prices) drop, we hope (people will) continue to use it once and a while rather than drive," she said.

Commuters tapping into county's vanpool program

By Eiji Yamashita

Hanford Sentinel, Monday, October 27, 2008

Tired of the astronomical prices at the gas pump, Aaron Luoma took matters into his own hands this summer. Luoma, an administrator at Corcoran High School, sent out an e-mail to colleagues who he knew live in Hanford, tossing up an idea of vanpooling -- something many correctional officers in the community had been doing for quite some time. As soon as he approached them, "quite a few" fuel-conscious colleagues jumped at the opportunity, Luoma says. "I live in Hanford and work in Corcoran. There are several teachers and staff members who are like me. It seemed such a waste for each person to drive to Corcoran everyday," Luoma said.

So he organized a vanpool through the help of a regional transportation agency.

"I was spending \$400 a month on gas," said Luoma, who drives a Toyota Sequoia, a full-size SUV.

Thirteen people have signed up to his van. About eight of them share the ride each day, Luoma said.

It's definitely paying off for Luoma.

During the last two months, Luoma says he has spent \$62 a month in vanpooling to commute the 40-mile round-trip five days a week. "That's less than I spend for one tank of gas," Luoma said.

Across the King County region, the lingering impact of higher gas prices is forcing residents to rethink the way they get to and from work. As the cost of gas topped \$4 a gallon for regular gas in the Valley this summer, the dip that prices have taken since seems to have little effect on motorists who remember the far lower prices of just a few years ago still too well.

Kings County Area Public Transit Agency Executive Director Ron Hughes said the new interest in his agency's vanpool program correlates with the meteoric rise in gas price seen earlier this year.

"During the last four-five months, we've been buying 10-15 vans a month," Hughes said.

Though little publicized, the KCAPTA vanpool program is booming -- mostly by word of mouth. In fact, it's huge.

Today, the some 400 vans issued by the agency meander through the five-county area spanning from Kern to Madera counties.

"It's a well-kept secret," Hughes says.

In the absence of a conventional metropolitan public transportation such as subways and time-efficient bus services, the vanpool program may be offering a key option that helps take a bite off their gas bills and help the environment.

The agency says the cost saving to society achieved by its vanpool program is staggering.

In 2007, vanpool vehicles were responsible for eliminating 373,500 vehicle commuting trips, reducing 176 tons of car emissions from the atmosphere, saving a total of \$54.7 million in societal costs by saving money for the riders and avoiding fatalities and injuries, according to data provided by the KCAPTA.

"We need to clean up the air and clear our highways. The only viable program out there is a vanpool type of project where people share a ride and travel to work," Hughes said. "We're all

concerned about the air. We're all concerned about congestion. But what are we doing about it? The easiest solution is take 11 cars off the road and put these people in a van. We've done that 400 times."

Here's how the vanpool program works:

Let's say you are commuting to Fresno from Hanford five times a day and have at least eight people you can vanpool with. That's a commute averaging 84 miles a day, or 1,680 miles a month.

The total monthly cost for leasing a van -- including fuel, maintenance and even a vehicle wash -- is \$1,291. For nine riders, the cost would be \$143 a month per person. But Kings County throws in a \$35-a-month voucher for vanpoolers for a year, so the per-person cost is \$108 for the first year.

State employees can claim up to \$65 a month, so their costs are \$43 per person. Federal employees, who can claim up to \$115 a month, won't pay a dime in that scenario.

Dee Lovette, who vanpools to the Pleasant Valley Prison in Coalinga with 14 other people from Lemoore, gets a similar benefit.

Her monthly share of the cost was \$116 for October, but she gets a \$65 reimbursement from the state for vanpooling. So her out-of-pocket cost for the month is \$51, said the personnel supervisor at the prison. Lemoore to Coalinga is a 40-minute commute each way and 80-miles round-trip -- a commute that would probably cost a compact car driver about \$250 a month at today's gas prices.

"It's a substantial saving for me because what we pay every month is how much an average person pays to fill up a car," Lovette said. "We do take fuel into consideration, but we don't have to worry about maintenance or pick-up and drop-off.. It's comfortable, clean and reliable."

Lovette, who has vanpooled to work for six years, said she was among the second group of prison employees to organize a van pool.

Today, there are at least six vans taking people between Lemoore to Coalinga throughout the day, she said.

The history of the vanpool program here goes back to the tragic 1999 farmworker van accident, which killed 13 farmworkers near the rural Fresno County town of Five Points. The crash prompted federal lawmakers to pass a law to provide funding to create safe and affordable transportation for farmworkers -- hence the birth of the KCAPTA.

With the federal funding, the agency launched the Agricultural Industries Transportation Services in 2002 with 123 new vans.

Around the same time, the vanpool program for other commuters was launched in response to a request by Corcoran State Prison employees who commuted from Visalia, Hughes said. This program for regular commuters has since enjoyed a rapid, steady growth.

"We started with one van and went through a rapid growth, and we plateaued for a while when the gas was about \$3 a gallon. Then we took off again when the gas price started climbing this year," Hughes said.

Today, a wide range of commuters in and outside Kings County are participating in the KCAPTA's vanpool program. Besides groups that commute to the Lemoore base, downtown Fresno and 10 prisons scattered around the Valley, there are groups using the vans in such remote places as Taft and Salinas Valley, Hughes said.

California air regulators target big-rig pollution

In the S.F. Chronicle, L.A. Daily news and other papers, Saturday, October 25, 2008

Los Angeles, CA (AP) --California's Air Resources board released draft rules on Friday aimed at curbing pollution from the more than 1 million trucks that shuttle goods along state roads.

The air board will vote Dec. 11 on whether to adopt two rules, which would address diesel emissions that contribute to asthma, cancer and heart disease.

The first would force California trucks and big rigs crossing the state to install filters or upgrade their engines to reduce particulate pollution, while the second would require the use of existing technology to reduce greenhouse gases. The rules are scheduled to take effect 2010.

Diesel truck transport from the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles and the state's agricultural industry in the [San Joaquin Valley](#) is the second largest source of nitrogen oxide emissions and toxic particulates.

While Southern California ports recently banned older trucks, San Joaquin Valley and Los Angeles areas cannot meet federal air quality standards without stricter truck emission rules, air officials said.

Truckers and agribusiness interests have argued it is too expensive for truckers to invest the money in clean vehicles when gas prices are high and the economy is weakening.

But Air Resources Board chairwoman Mary Nichols said the state is offering industry more than \$1 billion in loans and grants to help defray the costs. Nichols said the rules would "improve both public health and the economy, especially when you account for the reduced health care costs thanks to fewer hospital visits, mortalities and work days lost caused by exposure to big-rig diesel exhaust."

New California rules target big-rig pollution

The draft measures from the state Air Resources Board would affect more than 1 million heavy-duty diesel trucks. They are scheduled to take effect in 2010.

By Margot Roosevelt

L.A. Times, Saturday, October 25, 2008

California's Air Resources Board on Friday released long-awaited draft rules to clean up big-rig pollution that can aggravate asthma, cancer and heart disease.

The statewide rules, which are scheduled to take effect in 2010, would apply to more than 1 million heavy-duty diesel trucks, many of which transport merchandise from the ports of L.A. and Long Beach.

Diesel truck transport is the state's largest source of smog-forming nitrogen oxide emissions and toxic particulates.

Southern California ports recently banned the dirtiest older trucks. But the [San Joaquin Valley](#) and Los Angeles areas are violating federal air quality standards, which cannot be met without stricter overall truck emission rules, air officials say.

Truckers and agribusiness interests have tried to soften the regulations, saying it is too expensive for truckers to invest in clean vehicles at a time of economic woes.

The air board is scheduled to vote Dec. 11 on whether to adopt two broader rules that would affect all big rigs crossing the state. One would force truckers to install filters or upgrade their engines, and another would require using existing technology to reduce planet-warming greenhouse gases.

State proposes strict air rules for big rigs

By Jim Downing

Sacramento Bee, Saturday, October 26, 2008

State officials on Friday released a toughest-in-the-nation plan to cut emissions of air pollutants from the roughly 1 million heavy-duty diesel trucks that travel California's roads.

The rules proposed by the state Air Resources Board would require older big rigs to be fitted with particle-trapping exhaust filters by 2014 and low-emission engines by 2020. In addition, aerodynamic fairings and low-rolling-resistance tires would be required on long-haul trucks to improve fuel efficiency.

The changes would help California meet air-quality standards set by federal regulators, as well as the state's own greenhouse-gas targets.

Emissions from diesel engines are carcinogenic and can worsen asthma and other respiratory and cardiovascular ailments. The agency estimates the regulations will cost trucking companies roughly \$5.5 billion and will prevent 9,400 premature deaths.

Trucking groups generally object to the cost of the proposed retrofits, which would begin to take effect in 2011. The industry is currently reeling from high fuel prices and the weak economy.

Exhaust filters cost \$10,000 or more, new engines several times that, and a new truck well over \$100,000.

To some degree, companies that replace their trucks regularly will automatically meet the standards, because new truck engines are required under federal rules to have emissions controls.

Karen Khangoora, vice president of Sacramento's KTX Inc., a long-haul operator with 50 trucks, said the regulations probably wouldn't cost her company much. KTX typically buys new trucks and sells them after six or seven years of use, she said, so after several years the fleet will have new, cleaner engines by default.

But trucks sold off by companies like KTX often stay on the roads for decades – and the many operators that depend on those older models will be forced to retrofit.

About \$1 billion in state grants and loans are available to defray those costs. Small trucking companies would get more time to comply with the regulations than large fleets.

The air board is scheduled to take a final vote on the proposal at its meeting in Sacramento Dec. 11-12.

The regulations will cover all heavy trucks on the state's roads – including those that are licensed elsewhere but haul goods into California.

Governor helps throw switch on local solar project

By Stacey Shepard, Californian staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Friday, October 24, 2008

The first solar thermal power plant built in California in two decades went online in Kern County today.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, second from left, walks into the new Kimberlina Solar Energy Plant, north of Bakersfield Thursday along with Ausra's CEO, president and chairman, Bob Fishman, U.S. Rep. Kevin McCarthy and U.S. Rep. Jim Costa, right.

In a ceremony attended by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Ausra Inc., a Palo Alto-based solar developer, launched a 5 megawatt solar plant on a 20-acre site along Highway 99 about 10 miles north of Bakersfield.

"Today we celebrate clean energy, new jobs and a bright future for California," Schwarzenegger said. "This state-of-the-art project is the first of its kind in America."

Ausra executives said the plant is powered by the latest solar technology and will serve as a model for a much larger plant in San Luis Obispo County that will supply energy to Pacific Gas and Electric.

Energy from the Bakersfield plant goes to the power grid and is expected to produce enough electricity to supply 3,500 homes. It's a demonstration project.

"We're showing (solar energy) is real, it works and is now reliably supplying power to California," said Robert Morgan, Ausra's executive vice president.

The plant cost roughly \$15 million and was privately financed, company officials said. It consists of 30 rows of 1,200-foot mirrors that reflect sunlight onto tubes of water overhead. The heated water generates steam that turns a turbine to create electricity.

Port Authority to Let Commuters Buy Emissions Credits

By Ken Belson

N. Y. Times, Friday, October 24, 2008

Drivers who commute by car between New York and New Jersey can assuage their guilt by buying credits from the Authority of New York and New Jersey to offset their vehicles' carbon emissions.

At a board meeting on Thursday, the Port Authority announced that it had approved a measure to pay five companies a total of \$2.5 million to set up a carbon offset program for the agency.

A Web site where drivers and airline passengers can buy credits to offset carbon emissions they create will be activated in early 2009.

Money from the carbon-offset credits is typically used to plant trees, build windmills, install solar panels and take other measures that may help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The announcement came six months after the agency said it would establish an offset program, the first of its kind in the United States by a toll-collecting agency.

The program is part of the Port Authority's plan to become carbon neutral by 2010. The agency also wants to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions it generates by 80 percent by 2050.

"We're deeply committed to being in the national forefront in developing environmentally sustainable practices at our airports, seaports, tunnels and bridges," Anthony R. Coscia, the chairman of the Port Authority, said in a statement.

To meet its carbon emission targets, the Port Authority will make Stewart International Airport in Orange County, N.Y., a "carbon-negative" airport, install energy-efficient L.E.D. lighting at the Holland Tunnel and the George Washington Bridge, build a geothermal-powered building at Kennedy International Airport and spend \$60 million to buy and preserve environmentally sensitive land for public use.

Europe Forcing Airlines to Buy Emissions Permits

By James Kanter

N.Y. Times, Friday, October 24, 2008

BRUSSELS — European Union governments gave formal approval Friday to a potentially costly system of capping greenhouse gases from any airline flying into or out of the trade bloc — just as the airline industry reported new evidence of the impact of a worsening economy.

Airline chiefs immediately criticized the decision, saying it would cost the industry at least 3.5 billion euros (\$4.4 billion) each year to comply. The Europeans are “acting in a bubble — even in the middle of a global economic crisis,” said Giovanni Bisignani, the director general of the International Air Transport Association.

European justice ministers meeting in Luxembourg approved the greenhouse gas measures, which oblige airlines, regardless of nationality, that land or take off from an airport in the European Union to join the emissions trading system starting on Jan. 1, 2012.

The system, created in 2005, already includes heavy industries like cement makers and electricity generators in Europe.

Industries have complained bitterly about the costs of complying with the system, especially as the global economic situation has worsened. Many airlines also have fought hard to avoid inclusion in the system, saying they can ill afford the extra costs after a period of record high fuel costs.

The United States has also harshly criticized efforts to apply the rules to American-based carriers, maintaining the rules may violate international aviation agreements.

Friday’s decision was expected, however, after European governments reached a political agreement with the European Parliament in June.

The International Air Transport Association has reported that global airline passenger traffic fell 2.9 percent in September, compared with a year earlier. It was the first monthly drop since the outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome in 2003.

A drop in air freight of 7.7 percent was the first since the market for technology stocks crashed in 2001, the transport association said.

In another sign of gloom in the industry, Europe’s largest airline, Air France-KLM, warned that its earnings would suffer as a result of the financial crisis, sending its shares down sharply.

The airline said it was struggling to reach a full-year goal of 1 billion euros in operating profit for the 12 months through March 2009. Air France-KLM vowed to curb capacity and freeze costs, but said that it would “remain comfortably in profit as long as market conditions do not deteriorate any further.”

The inclusion of aviation in the carbon trading system will raise costs for airlines, which pay for a portion of their emissions permits to comply. The system also will raise costs for passengers if airlines, as expected, pass on the costs by raising ticket prices.

European Union climate officials say it is vital to regulate greenhouse gases from aviation because the sector is growing so quickly.

Low-cost carriers like Ryanair, based in Ireland, have made short hops by air accessible for many more Europeans. Even so, the measures approved on Friday include special provisions that could ease the rules on start-up airlines in faster-growing economies within the union, like those in Eastern Europe.

New airlines or airlines growing at more than 18 percent annually would be eligible for a one-time limited supply of additional free permits. That measure would ensure that countries “with initially

very low but increasing mobility rates are not penalized by the scheme," European Union governments said in a statement.

The airline industry says its gases represent a small fraction of greenhouse gas emissions and that the European measures will be ineffective without a global agreement. Environmentalists say the effect of vapor and emissions from jet engines at altitude could magnify their effect on the climate.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Monday, October 27, 2008:](#)

**Valley air board now has a scientist in one of its seats
Appointment should add expertise in health issues.**

A crucial appointment to the board that governs the Valley's air district has been made by the governor. Henry Forman, a professor of chemistry and biochemistry at UC Merced, will fill the spot reserved for a scientist on the board.

The scientist position is one of four new seats authorized by legislation last year to expand the board of the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District.

Originally, the board had 11 members. Eight of them were sitting supervisors from the eight counties that make up the air district; three were members of city councils in the district. The county supervisors have often leaned toward serving the interests of business and agriculture, which aren't always supporters of aggressive efforts to clean the air.

Senate Bill 719 addressed that by adding seats for a doctor and a scientist with expertise in air pollution and health issues that arise from it. In April, the governor appointed Dr. John Telles, a Fresno cardiologist, filling the spot reserved for a doctor.

Now Forman has been named to the scientist post, and he seems an excellent choice. The 61-year-old is a founding faculty member at UC Merced, and his research focuses on the ways lungs react to and protect themselves from lung diseases, including asthma, cystic fibrosis and damage from pollutants. He earned his Ph.D in biochemistry from Columbia University.

In addition to the seats for a doctor and scientist, the board will add two more city council members, for a total of five, under separate legislation passed this year. That will address an earlier anomaly that saw Fresno, Bakersfield and Stockton -- the three largest cities in the district, often without a representative on the board.

The expansion of the air board did not come without a struggle, but it now appears the effort is paying off. Telles has forced a more rigorous and skeptical approach to the board's work, and we hope the addition of Forman will continue that useful trend.

Much good work has been done to clean up the Valley's air, but there is a great more left to do before we can truly call our air clean.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Sunday, October 26, 2008:](#)

**Emissions plan needs full debate
Reducing greenhouse gases in state will be difficult, but we must make the effort.**

California took the next step in an ambitious plan to drastically reduce its production of greenhouse gases when the state air board released a draft plan recently. It will take several years to work out the details of the plan, but it's something Californians should begin thinking about right now.

The new rules that eventually emerge from the planning process will touch virtually every part of our lives, from the way our cities are planned, to the sort of transportation choices we have, to the jobs that will employ future generations.

The larger goal of the California Air Resources Board's so-called "scoping plan" is to reduce the state's greenhouse gas emissions -- those blamed for the shrinking of the protective ozone layer - - to 1990 levels by 2020. Along the way, it's expected that new technologies will spawn new jobs - - so-called "green jobs" -- and that reduced emissions will lead to other savings in energy costs, improved air quality and concomitant improvements in the health of the state's residents.

The magnitude of this effort can't be overstated. It amounts to reducing annual greenhouse gas emissions by a whopping 4 tons per person. That will call for a massive shift from using fossil fuels to renewable, non-polluting energy sources. That means new, cleaner vehicles. It means whole new industries to produce cleaner energy.

It also means imposing a cap-and-trade system to allow larger polluters such as oil companies and power plants to purchase offsetting pollution credits to balance their own production of pollutants. It's a controversial plan that is sure to be at the center of the coming debate.

Perhaps not surprisingly, most environmentalists hailed the plan, though many would like to see even higher standards and tougher limits on pollution. Likewise, many business and industry groups are leery of the plan, concerned that its implementation will prove too costly for the state's economy to sustain, particularly now, when times are bad.

The concerns of both groups -- and all Californians -- must be addressed in the months ahead. The scoping plan is the product of a lengthy process in which CARB gathered some 40,000 comments since the first draft of the coping plan was released in June. The CARB board will get the plan in December to approve, reject or revise. Once it's approved, CARB staff will begin writing the specific regulations for reducing greenhouse gases. That's when the contention will truly begin.

But that laborious process will be well worth the trouble if we end up with a set of rules that make sense for the future. We must address greenhouse gas emissions. California has taken a national and worldwide lead in that effort since the adoption of AB 32, the state's landmark Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006.

AB 32 imposed requirements that CARB must follow throughout this process. It must consider a wide range of factors in making the new rules, including impact on the economy, environment and public health; the reliability of energy sources; existing environmental protections; and making sure that low-income communities don't bear the brunt of the burdens.

That's a tall order, but we're confident that we can have an aggressive and effective program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while preserving and even growing the state's economy. The devil's in the details, and that's why the process bears close attention from all of us, starting right now.

[Bakersfield Californian, Editorial, Sunday, October 26, 2008:](#)

Safety not traded for dollars

After two years of effort and many costly studies, Kern County supervisors last week approved plans to expand the Big West of California refinery.

The contentious route this expansion has followed is testimony that the system works maybe not always, but certainly in this case. Public concerns can be heard and elected leaders can make decisions that address safety and environmental threats, while promoting economic development.

Now surrounded by homes, businesses, stores and schools, the decades-old refinery on Rosedale Highway once faced closure. The potential loss of the fuel it produced and the jobs it provided sent local, state and federal leaders scurrying for a new owner.

Big West Oil LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Utah-based Flying J Inc., became that new owner. It arrived with big plans to expand a \$700 million project to nearly double the refinery's gasoline and diesel output.

But Big West's initial plans called for the use of highly toxic hydrofluoric acid. After a public outcry, the company agreed to use modified hydrofluoric acid. But even that would be deadly if vapors escaped.

Working with independent consultants, county officials developed an alternative that eliminated the use of hydrofluoric acid in the production of gas or diesel. County officials now hope the expansion actually will make the refinery safer.

The existing refinery operation is allowed "by right," meaning the property is properly zoned and additional county permits are not required. The zoning reflects an earlier day decades ago when the refinery was located on the outskirts of town.

But land-use decisions by earlier boards of supervisors allowed urban development to dangerously encroach on the refinery.

Big West's expansion plans provided county officials an opportunity to revisit the refinery's operation. New permits were needed, opening the door to require additional safety measures.

Restrictions on the types of chemicals used in the refining process, as well as the installation of monitoring systems are two of these requirements, as are auditing and reporting requirements for leaks and emergencies.

Supervisors were under intense pressure to approve the refinery's expansion. An extensive advertising campaign promoted community support for the project stressing the need for the jobs it would bring and other economic benefits.

Big West says the expansion will create 100 new permanent jobs, 700 temporary construction jobs, an additional \$1.4 billion in economic annual output, more than 1,000 indirect jobs and new tax revenue for local government coffers.

That's a lot of incentive to rubber-stamp a project in these tough economic times.

But Kern County officials, including elected members of the Board of Supervisors, remained firm that the expansion would not be at the expense of the community's safety.

In the end, supervisors approved a project that balanced economic and safety concerns.

[Bakersfield Californian, Commentary, Saturday, October 25, 2008:](#)

Californians need high-speed rail

If ever there was a time to support construction of a high-speed train system, it is now. Proposition 1A is right right now for California.

The high-speed train system is a long-term investment that will reduce the road and airport congestion that slows our lives. And it will curb dangerous greenhouse gas emissions and save millions of barrels of oil per year.

Plus, as our economy struggles, the high-speed train system will provide an important boost, creating jobs, when Californians need them most. Statewide, 160,000 jobs will be created during construction. Some 450,000 permanent jobs will be generated when the system is complete. In the Central Valley alone, that will mean 130,000 jobs.

A state, private and federal partnership will pay for the high-speed train. As a result, every construction dollar from the \$9.95 billion bond will attract at least two added dollars from other sources.

Last week, President Bush signed HR 2095, which includes billions of federal dollars for high-speed rail for which California could qualify.

Taxpayers are protected. No state bond construction money will be committed until the federal and private matching funds are obtained. If the matching funds are not raised, the state bond construction money will simply not be spent.

Prop. 1A is supported by a diverse statewide coalition, including business groups like the Kern Taxpayers Association, and labor organizations, including the California Labor Federation.

They know doing nothing bears a huge cost.

For example, freeway and airport congestion costs Californians some \$20 billion per year in lost time and wasted fuel. UC Merced economist Shawn Kantor estimates the high-speed train system would save Central Valley residents up to \$3 billion annually through reduced traffic congestion. His study also indicates that new jobs created by the high-speed train would help increase Central Valley taxable income by up to \$48 billion per year.

A decade of study forecasts tens of millions of Californians will use high-speed trains for long distance and regional travel, relieving pressure on roads and airports. The same added capacity in new freeways or airports would cost more than \$82 billion nearly double the high-speed train system.

All-electric, high-speed trains use one-third the energy per mile of planes and one-fifth the energy of cars and will annually eliminate nearly 12.7 billion pounds of the greenhouse gas emissions that cause global warming. That's equivalent to removing more than one million vehicles from our roads annually.

With our transportation needs looming and our economy struggling, the real question is: How can we afford not to approve Prop 1A?

Prop. 1A is a forward-thinking, long-term investment in California's future, like the water project and university system once were. And the investment in our communities and the hundreds of thousands of new jobs will be important stimuli as our economy works to get back on its feet.

Proposition 1A, the High-Speed Train is right on time. Vote Yes.

Rep. Jim Costa, D-Fresno, represents the 20th Congressional District, which includes Kern County.

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Saturday, October 25, 2008:](#)

Bad air at the fair

My family and I recently woke up from a night at the Kern County Fair. It seemed like a good crowd. In addition, a large police presence looked like it deterred the criminal element. One thing is still bothering me, physically, from being at the fair, though. The amount of airborne dust and dirt that permeated the rides and attractions area has left us physically ill.

If the state and county take measures to improve our air quality, like making farmers continually water their dirt roads to keep dust from becoming airborne, then I wonder what measures are taken for an event like the fair. The way I felt the morning after going to the fair -- chest hurting, breathing problems, coupled with the clothes we wore saturated with dust and dirt -- it seems like there are no measures in place for events such as this one.

JASON ANDREWS, Bakersfield

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses new rules against air pollution of diesel trucks will be taken to the voting polls. For more information on this and other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Llevarán a votación nuevas reglas contra la contaminación de camiones en California

Manuel Ocaño
Noticier Latino
Radio Bilingüe, Monday, October 27, 2008

La Oficina de Recursos del Aire de California informó que en diciembre llevará a votación de su consejo una serie de nuevas reglas para reducir la contaminación que causan los camiones de carga comercial en el estado.

Las medidas que apruebe esa autoridad contra la contaminación deberán aplicarse desde el primero de enero del 2010, e incluirán a camiones de otros estados que circulen por California.

Entre otras propuestas comentadas están las de imponer cambios de maquinaria vieja que usa diesel, instalar filtros y aplicar neva tecnología contra emisiones de gases que causan el sobrecalentamiento de la tierra.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses EPA reduces the level of lead in the air.](#)

Reduce la EPA niveles permitidos de plomo en el aire

Noticiero Latino
Radio Bilingüe, Thursday, October 23, 2008

La Agencia federal de Protección Ambiental redujo a .15 microgramos por metro cúbico de aire el nuevo nivel permitido para el plomo en Estados Unidos.

Es la primera vez que la EPA reduce los niveles permitidos de plomo en el aire desde 1978.

Más notable sin embargo es el hecho de que esta vez las autoridades ambientales redujeron los niveles autorizados a sólo la décima parte de lo que antes se permitía.

El administrador de la EPA, Stephen Johnson dijo que las nuevas medidas protegerán de los daños que ocasiona el plomo a las siguientes generaciones de estadounidenses.