

[Bakersfield Californian Commentary, Tuesday, Sept. 29, 2009:](#)

## **Next up for the air district: reducing lone-occupant cars in daily commute**

Central Valley businesses have been an integral part of the air basin's progress toward meeting critical air-quality mandates and improving the quality of life for all valley residents through cleaner air. The investments in time, organization and significant sums of money by valley business and industry continue to be crucial in our ongoing mission to meet tight air-quality deadlines.

An important regulation that addresses a significant part of the valley's air-pollution problem is taking shape, and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District needs the input and involvement of the business community to make it the most effective, most feasible regulation possible. Unlike past regulations that were primarily aimed at stationary sources of air pollution, this new regulation will also apply to other employers and is aimed at compelling all of us, as individuals, to take part in the fight against air pollution.

Rule 9410 (Employer Based Trip Reduction) is a landmark new rule that targets daily commutes. Each workday, thousands of valley commuters hit the road on their trek to their workplaces. In many cases, they travel alone, one person per car.

A U.S. Department of Transportation study in 2001 determined that nationwide, private vehicle use accounts for 92 percent of all work commutes. This nationwide trend is also a significant factor in the valley's struggle for clean air, as vehicle use is the largest single source of nitrogen oxides, a pollutant that contributes to ozone and fine particulate matter, known as PM 2.5.

Rule 9410, scheduled to be adopted in December, will not only reduce these emissions but also give valley employers with at least 100 employees the opportunity to help their work forces make such changes. Reducing the number of single-occupancy vehicles in work commutes has advantages for air quality, employees and employers, as well. It results in:

- Improved air quality and reduced greenhouse gas emissions;
- Decreased congestion;
- Economic savings on gas, parking fees and vehicle wear and tear;
- Reduced need for employee parking.

Employers can put policies and programs in place to assist their employees in making changes to their commuting patterns through many feasible, no-cost or low-cost options. They include promoting the use of public transit and bicycle-commuting, carpool matching through local rideshare agencies, alternative work scheduling such as flexible schedules and telecommuting, and on-site features such as bike racks, dry cleaning pick-up and drop-off, and weekly lunch delivery service and vending machines. Besides giving employees ways to reduce their need to travel off-site during the workday, these options are valuable benefits that are attractive to your work force.

The Air District invites valley businesses to become Healthy Air Living Partners, a free program that offers employers useful tools and resources to make clean-air choices at their work sites.

Many valley businesses have already led the way in innovative measures aimed at reducing vehicle trips, both pertaining to their workforce and to their daily operations. They share their tips and strategies, as well as their success stories, at [healthyairliving.com](http://healthyairliving.com).

The air district encourages any valley business that needs more information or would like to review and comment on this upcoming regulation to visit [www.valleyair.org/tripreduction.htm](http://www.valleyair.org/tripreduction.htm). The next public workshop on this rule is scheduled for late October.

*Sayed Sadredin is executive director and air pollution control officer for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.*

## **Merced City Council approves Wal-Mart distribution center**

**The vote was 6-1 in favor of the center.**

By Scott Jason

Merced Sun-Star, Tuesday, September 29, 2009

Capping four years of debate, six hours of public input and dozens of technical studies, the Merced City Council voted Monday to let Wal-Mart build a massive distribution center.

Five council members -- Jim Sanders, Joe Cortez, Michele Gabriault-Acosta, Noah Lor, Bill Spriggs -- and Mayor Ellie Wooten voted in support. Mayor Pro Tem John Carlisle voted in opposition.

"Our largest health issue isn't [air quality or asthma](#)," Spriggs said, his voice growing thick with emotion. "Our largest health problem is poverty."

Several audience members in the packed council chambers applauded after the vote.

Carl Pollard shouted, "Yes -- hallelujah!"

The turnout wasn't as large as predicted. The council chambers were barely full and the overflow areas were empty. Supporters outnumbered opponents by a 2-1 margin.

The vote laid to rest the council's role in a project that, depending on who's speaking, will either begin Merced's economic recovery or lead to the environmental ruin of southeast Merced.

Wal-Mart proposed in 2005 building a 1.2 million square foot distribution center that will serve 49 existing stores when it opens and have the capacity to serve dozens more. It pledges to create 900 full-time jobs with an average wage of \$17.50.

Supporters see this as a clear reason the project is crucial to improving Merced's economic health.

Opponents charge that Wal-Mart's trucks along with ones from the third-party firms it works with will make Merced's bad air worse and clog up the roads. They question the wage and job figures.

Carlisle said it was clear the project would be approved and hoped his vote would remind Wal-Mart to keep its promises and know not everyone supported its center. He complained there was wiggle room in what Wal-Mart has to do to offset the project's impacts.

"It concerns me considerably," he noted.

Spriggs totaled the number of jobs lost in the past two years: 1,321.

"How in good conscience can any of us sit up here in this economy and tell people they don't have the opportunity to apply for a job?" he asked.

With the project approved, the focus shifts to whether opponents will file a lawsuit to delay the project.

Officials with the three chambers of commerce, the Merced Boosters and the Merced County Jobs Coalition held a news conference before the meeting to ask Wal-Mart opponent Merced Alliance for Responsible Growth to keep the project out of the court system.

"By doing the right thing, you will ensure MARG's legacy and place in our community as an organization that advocates responsible planning and not one that was persuaded by out of town interest groups determined to defy popular public opinion and deny our community hope for a more prosperous future," Merced County Jobs Coalition President Doug Fluetsch said, reading from a letter sent to MARG.

MARG chairman Tom Grave hadn't seen the letter until contacted by the Sun-Star in the afternoon.

"They're doing their job and it's a nice letter," Grave said, "but we're not going to back down."

After the meeting MARG co-chairman Kyle Stockard said the group would meet with its attorneys next week and decide whether to pursue legal challenges.

He remained skeptical about the project's touted benefits.

"This (center) will never be what they promised," he said. "I don't think it will be the salvation."

Wal-Mart spokesman Aaron Rios said he was pleased with the council's decision.

"We're committed to bringing quality jobs to Merced," Rios said.

Without any legal challenges construction could begin as soon as 90 days. Much depends on how quickly city staff processes the paperwork.

Supporters worry a legal challenge could delay the project by as much as two years.

Wal-Mart said 600 construction workers will be needed to build the complex, which will be on 230 acres between Childs and Gerard avenues. Construction is estimated to last about 18 months.

## **Temperature to drop today**

Staff reports

Fresno Bee, Tuesday, Sept, 29, 2009

Relief from the Valley heat wave is finally here.

Today's expected high of 79 in Fresno would be a 19-degree drop from Monday's high of 98, said David Spector, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Hanford.

However, Valley residents are in for a bit of a roller-coaster ride with daytime highs through the weekend.

A high of 75 in Fresno is forecast for Wednesday, before the temperature is expected to climb back up to 82 on Thursday and 86 on Friday. Highs will remain in the mid-80s on Saturday and then tumble to near 70 on Sunday.

The only chance for rain in the region for the next week will be in Yosemite National Park, Spector said. A 20 percent chance is possible in the park tonight.

Overnight lows on the Valley floor will be near 50 tonight and rise to the mid- to high 50s by the weekend.

Air quality in Valley counties will be moderate today, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District reported.

## **Federal Stimulus Dollars Put to Work**

### **Visalia Begins Transit Center Expansion**

By Rick Elkins

Valley Voice Newspaper Tues. Sept. 29, 2009

*Visalia* - Work on Visalia's first stimulus-funded project was officially begun last week with the groundbreaking on the expansion of the city's transit center at Bridge Avenue and Center Street.

"It's been a fun and exciting road to get here," began City Transit Director Monty Cox Friday. He noted how the city was given \$2.66 million in federal stimulus funding for the project.

The city filed for the funding late last year and learned earlier this year that it was to get the money for the transit center expansion. Fortunately, the contract for the project came in nearly a million dollars under bid, allowing the city to use the leftover federal dollars for improvements to the city's transit maintenance facility.

"We've been given permission to amend our grant to include the other facility," said Cox, who added that project will run about \$3 million and the city is looking for other funding sources to make up the \$2 million difference.

The transit center expansion will add two more bus lanes on the south side of the transit center and provide 12 new bus stops, giving the city 28 at the center. Cox hopes the project can be completed in less than four months, opening in time for the holiday season.

The expansion will also add new shelters, covered walkways, a public plaza, fountains and street lighting, solar-powered high-efficiency site lighting, storm drainage cleansing at bus lanes and ground water recharging for pedestrian after storm water. Offsite improvements will include widening of Santa Fe, new sidewalks, curb ramps and increased corner radius, providing a gateway entrance into downtown Visalia.

The Transit Center serves as the connecting point between the Visalia City Coach, Dial-A-Ride, Visalia Towne Trolley, Tulare County Transit, Tulare City Transit, Kings Area Rural Transit, Sequoia Shuttle, Orange Belt Stages, Greyhound and the Amtrak bus. In addition, several commercial bus services use the facility

Mayor Jesus Gamboa praised city staff for getting projects "shovel ready" in order for the city to apply for stimulus dollars. The feds required projects be ready to go in order to fund them and he noted that the city has been allocated nearly \$12 million already, "and we're not done yet."

Assistant City Manager Mike Olmos said the next large city project paid for with stimulus money to get started will be the improvements to the Ben Maddox Way crossing over Highway 198.

He too noted the favorable bidding process, saying that "projects are coming in at 50-60 percent of engineer's estimate." He said bids for the Ben Maddox project should go out before the end of the year.

Cox said in spite of the rate hike the city imposed this summer, ridership of the city's transit system is strong and he expects about a 5 percent increase this year.

"The think what's helping that is the basic services we provide," he said, noting that more routes have been added this year, including two on Saturday in the northeast section of town.

### **What's that smell in west Garden Grove?**

Residents want foul odor from composting plant at Los Alamitos base gone. Base officials say they're working on it.

By Deepa Bharath

The Orange County Register, Monday, September 28, 2009

GARDEN GROVE – For several months, residents in west Garden Grove have wondered about the "smell," especially when it was breezy.

"It smelled like a city dump," said Tony Flores, president of the West Garden Grove Residents Association.

But the perturbing fact was that there was no city dump anywhere near that neighborhood. So where was the stench coming from?

A few neighbors got together and did the research. They found the answer. The stench was wafting in from the large-scale green waste recycling project at the Los Alamitos Joint Forces Training Base, Flores said.

"We found out that it's just compost," he said. "But it still has a foul odor and it is affecting our quality of life. We don't want to experience this for the next four or five years."

The base kicked off a five-year pilot program to test transporting green waste for composting in May. The program is projected to save the base \$1 million in landscaping and water usage costs, said Laura Herzog, spokeswoman for the base. The money will be used for the base's training and operational needs, she said.

The composting project also has drawn concerns from Seal Beach and Los Alamitos residents who were worried about traffic and environmental effects.

The complaint from Garden Grove residents about the odor is recent, Herzog said. Base officials are already making changes to eliminate the smell or minimize it as much as possible, she said.

"We've made changes in the operations of the compost process such as reducing the compost pile sizes, turning the compost more frequently and covering the compost during off hours of operation," she said.

These measures will eliminate any odor that is being carried by the wind to Garden Grove, Herzog said.

City staff members visited the base last week to look at the composting operations, said Albert Holmon, environmental and streets manager for the city.

"Their plan is to halt all new raw product coming in for composting and neutralize the odor that's coming out of there right now," he said.

Holmon said that should be accomplished by the end of this week.

The base is also working with the Orange County Health Care Agency and the South Coast Air Quality Management District to address environmental and health concerns, he said.

Flores said he and his neighbors hope the smelly situation is controlled soon.

"People are not happy," he said. "I've been getting phone calls, e-mails and people come knocking on my door to talk about it. We just want that smell gone."

## **AC Transit seeks funding switch to reduce service cuts**

By Denis Cuff

In the Contra Costa Times & Tri-Valley Herald, Tuesday, September 29, 2009

AC Transit board members will seek permission to reallocate \$35 million in federal money from its bus rapid transit plan and use it to minimize cuts in regular bus service.

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission, a Bay Area agency, will study and then rule on the request. "We don't have an answer yet," Randy Rentschler, an MTC spokesman, said Monday.

The money is current earmarked for developing a service for buses to run every few minutes apart in bus-only lanes on a 17-mile route connecting downtown Oakland, Berkeley and San Leandro.

The Alameda Contra Costa Transit District Board, however, agreed Friday night to pursue a proposal to redirect the \$35 million in federal Congestion Management and Air Quality Improvement funds for use on operating regular bus service. AC has proposed a 15 percent bus service cut that would be less severe if AC can reallocate the money.

Although federal rules require the congestion management dollars be spent on new or expanded service, AC Transit managers assert they would use the money on new bus routes developed in the process of cutting back and reorganizing bus service.

Meanwhile, the AC board will holds its last public hearing on proposed bus services cuts 6 p.m. Wednesday at the California School for the Blind theater, 500 Walnut Ave., Fremont.

## **Schwarzenegger hosts climate summit this week**

By Kevin Yamamura

Sacramento Bee, Tuesday, September 29, 2009

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger declared in his second inaugural address that California was both a "nation-state" and a "good and global commonwealth."

To that effect, Schwarzenegger will host his second annual international climate summit this week in Los Angeles, which organizers have billed as a precursor to United Nations talks in December to establish new worldwide emissions targets.

In a second term largely defined by the state's budgetary problems, the governor has staked much of his legacy on signing 2006 legislation committing California to reduce its greenhouse gases 25 percent by 2020.

Schwarzenegger won international attention for that law, in no small part because the governor was seen as an environmental Republican counterweight to President George W. Bush on greenhouse-gas restrictions.

A new Democratic president and a congressional effort to pass an emissions cap-and-trade plan could eventually overshadow California's efforts on the issue. And only nations can negotiate U.N. agreements on climate change restrictions.

But Schwarzenegger still believes that "subnational" governments such as states and provinces play a substantial role.

"The whole notion of subnationals convening is that states and cities can make agreements where nations are reluctant for one reason or another," said Dan Pellissier, Schwarzenegger's deputy Cabinet secretary. "Subnational groups can agree to work together to the extent possible without having to wait for national bodies to make commitments."

The Governors' Global Climate Summit 2 will have four days of events, including speeches from Schwarzenegger, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and six other U.S. governors. All told, leaders from more than 70 states, provinces and countries are expected to attend.

Schwarzenegger wants subnational leaders to sign a joint statement declaring their commitment to reducing greenhouse gases through various means. Since states cannot change U.N. agreements, California is also working with African nations to submit language at the Copenhagen talks addressing how states and provinces can participate in emissions reductions, Pellissier said.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson is scheduled to speak at Wednesday's official opening ceremony. That marks a change from a year ago, when Schwarzenegger battled Bush's EPA administrator in pursuit of a waiver that would allow California and other states to regulate vehicle greenhouse-gas emissions. The Obama administration has since granted the waiver.

"California's role in global warming policy has changed from being one of challenging the federal government to more of a partnership with the Obama administration," said Bill Magavern, director of Sierra Club California. "When Bush was president, it was important for California to show it is possible for governments to take action to curb greenhouse gases."

Environmentalists say that even with a friendlier White House in place, California and other states can play a significant role by experimenting with stricter climate change policies. They suggest Congress, which is focused on health care legislation, may not pass an emissions cap-and-trade bill this year.

"This is a very important laboratory for the world," said V. John White, an environmental lobbyist.

But California businesses, which opposed the state's greenhouse-gas reduction measures three years ago in Assembly Bill 32, say they prefer that California allow the federal government to install regulations rather than each state pursuing its own path. They say a patchwork of subnational regulations will hurt businesses in California.

"AB 32 certainly placed California as a leader in reducing greenhouse gases, but a lot has changed in the last three years," said Shelly Sullivan, spokeswoman for the AB 32 Implementation Group, which represents businesses and taxpayer associations. "California's economy has soured, unemployment has risen. ... But most importantly, the federal government has embarked on a global warming strategy. Continuing to pursue California-only

## **Pacifica looks to cut emissions with Climate Action Plan**

By Julia Scott, San Mateo County Times

In the Contra Costa Times & Tri-Valley Herald, Tuesday, September 29, 2009

PACIFICA — An inventory of greenhouse gas emissions has challenged the city's reputation as a "green" entity, but leaders are poised to reclaim the label by committing to actions that will sharply reduce emissions of carbon dioxide.

At its meeting Monday night, the Pacifica City Council was expected to review a greenhouse gas emissions inventory that reflects city operations in 2005 and take the first steps in creating a Climate Action Plan that will recommend how the city — and residents — can cut back on harmful emissions.

The city's own government operations inventory follows a community emissions inventory released in June by a group of Pacifica residents affiliated with the Sierra Club Loma Prieta chapter's Cool Cities campaign.

Both the city inventory and the community-focused report, which looked at the practices of businesses and residents, cite electricity consumption as a leading source of carbon dioxide emissions, but that's where the similarities end. The city operations report singles out electricity used to power city buildings and especially the local wastewater treatment plant as the main source of emissions, accounting for 39 percent, or 1,956 metric tons, in 2005. Methane emissions associated with decomposing trash trapped inside a now-defunct landfill accounted for another 33 percent of emissions.

When it comes to Pacifica's neighborhoods, residents in the bedroom community depend on car travel for their daily commutes, releasing an estimated 86,204 tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere each year. Air travel is another major contributor, although Pacifica's share of airplane emissions is an estimate based on the number of miles Americans flew in 2005.

The local population has barely increased in recent years, but electricity consumption has; residential electricity use shot up by 7.7 percent from 2003 to 2007, suggesting Pacificans are not conserving energy as they could be.

City operations account for just 3 percent of Pacifica's overall greenhouse gas emissions, so the new Climate Action Plan will account for both the city and the community. Any changes the city adopts as a result of that process will be rolled into its general plan.

Thanks to the Cool Cities campaign, 23 of 35 cities in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties have adopted the U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement, which calls on cities to commit to emissions-reduction targets in line with the Kyoto Protocol: 7 percent below 1990 levels by 2012. Since Pacifica does not have enough data to calculate its emissions in 1990, it may choose a different goal, such as a 30 percent reduction in emissions below 2005 levels by 2020.

Julio Magalhaes, coordinator of the global warming program for the local chapter of the Sierra Club, said Pacifica is "ahead of the curve" in moving forward with a Climate Action Plan soon after the inventory process. Many cities in San Mateo County have completed local emissions inventories without a follow-up, he said.

"It's great to do an inventory and set a target, but if you want to actually reduce your carbon footprint, you have to have a plan," Magalhaes said.

Pacifica City Manager Steve Rhodes said it is too soon to predict what sort of plan will emerge from the task force the city plans to appoint to make recommendations for the Climate Action

Plan, but it will almost certainly turn a spotlight on energy consumption in homes, businesses and at city facilities.

"What they're saying is the biggest (emissions) reductions can be had by reducing our energy usage," Rhodes said.

A to-do list of energy-saving suggestions in the city-based inventory report appear simple enough, he said, such as installing LED streetlights and energy-efficient equipment in city offices. Other recommendations have already found footing in Pacifica, such as crafting a "green building" construction ordinance — the city hopes to have that ready by the spring.

And the city has mounted an expensive solar panel array on the wastewater treatment plant, saving \$100,000 worth of energy bills each year.

Other problems may prove more intractable, such as commute-based pollution. The city operations inventory found that 88 percent of city of Pacifica employees drive to work alone in their cars, even though the vast majority live within eight miles of work. The report suggests carpool incentives or another form of subsidized transportation.

"A lot of these things are costly to do, and we've not had the funds to move those things forward at the same rate as other cities have," Rhodes said. "There's not been a coordinated effort and that's what we're moving towards."

## **California's 'green' ink-cartridge recycling fails to cut pollution, or costs**

By Tom Knudson

Sacramento Bee, Monday, September 28, 2009

On paper, the recycling program was touted as a bold step toward California's green, climate-friendly future.

A mountain of plastic and metal would be diverted from landfills. Greenhouse gas emissions would tumble. And one of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's climate change goals — trimming power use in state buildings by 20 percent — would nudge closer to reality as agencies snapped up new, more efficient office printers.

That is what state and Hewlett-Packard officials said last year when they joined forces to ship used HP printer ink cartridges from state offices to Virginia to be ground up and recycled into auto parts, serving trays, clothes hangers and other products.

But a Bee investigation, based on more than 100 pages of e-mails and other records, has found that 17 months after it was created, the program has delivered few if any of its promised climate benefits.

Almost from the start it ran into opposition from the state's purchasing specialists at the Department of General Services, who were not consulted about it and who — once they started asking questions — turned up other concerns, including allegations of unfair competition and ink waste.

They also favored reusing cartridges by refilling them at local businesses, a process known as remanufacturing.

"It is to HP's advantage to get as many remanufacturable cartridges off the market as possible," Robert Tetz, manager of the department's environmentally preferable purchasing program, said in an e-mail to his boss last year. "I don't believe that this partnership arrangement passes the smell test."

The recycling plan is one of many purportedly eco-friendly initiatives launched in California, a state that portrays itself as a green-minded model for the world. But Scot Case, who investigates green marketing claims, said the state HP plan is the wrong choice for the environment.

"It is completely ridiculous to ship a product from California to Virginia to be reground when you could refill those cartridges in California and reuse them," said Case, vice president of

TerraChoice Environmental Marketing, which places the green "EcoLogo" label on thousands of consumer products – but not on new printer cartridges.

"You would use fewer resources," Case said. "And you would create significantly less global warming impacts."

For their part, most DGS employees are not free to speak to The Bee. "We have a policy that we have high-level spokespeople ... respond to questions," said Jeffrey Young, the agency's deputy director of public affairs.

And Tetz, the green purchasing manager, has been ordered to clam up. "Bob, per my voicemail, I need you to stand down on any communication with Mr. Knudson. Call me ..." Jim Butler, DGS' chief procurement officer, said in an e-mail.

But their views come through clearly in electronic correspondence.

"The bottom line is that it is environmentally preferable and fiscally prudent to buy remanufactured toner cartridges for state laser printers from California small businesses," wrote Ben Martin, an engineering branch manager at DGS, in an e-mail to a colleague.

Targeting a river of waste

Printer cartridges are a mainstay of the modern office – and a vexing waste problem. One 2007 industry report estimated 46 percent of the larger kind, known as laser jet cartridges, and 84 percent of the smaller inkjet cartridges are dumped in landfills after one use. A follow-up study, commissioned by HP, found 34 percent of the company's laser jet cartridges and 78 percent of its inkjets end up in landfills after one use.

The state-HP recycling effort was aimed at shrinking that river of waste by diverting up to 100 tons of spent state cartridges from landfills every year. But state and HP officials said it would have an additional benefit, striking a blow against climate change by curbing greenhouse gas emissions by 500 tons annually.

Here's how it was supposed to work: For every HP cartridge purchased and recycled, state agencies would earn points toward buying new, more energy-efficient HP printers. Top officials said that would trim power use and slice pollution.

[Merced Sun-Star, Letter to the Editor, Tuesday, September 9, 2009](#)

### **Letter: Setting record straight**

Editor: I am a member of the steering committee of the Merced/Mariposa County Asthma Coalition -- a community-based organization dedicated to "controlling asthma through awareness and education."

I would to thank Duane Andrews for bringing our organization to the community's attention in his letter to the editor on Friday.

However, I would like to correct the assertion that the Asthma Coalition is a taxpayer-funded organization. This is not the case -- indeed more than 96 percent of the coalition's income is received from private foundations and local residents, with less than 4 percent coming from government organizations.

Specifically, the Asthma Coalition received a [grant from the Valley Air District](#) to provide local schools with new air quality flags free of charge. These flags help children, parents and teachers understand when it is safe for them to enjoy outdoor activities.

I would like to invite Mr. Andrews, and any interested member of the public, to our next coalition meeting on Oct. 20. There he will receive a copy of our financial report, which is handed out at every meeting and includes details of the sources of the funds, and how they are being spent.

For meeting information visit: [www.mmccac.org](http://www.mmccac.org).

ALLYSON HOLMAN, Merced

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Monday, Sept. 28, 2009:](#)

## **Benefits of gas tax**

Thomas Friedman got it mostly right in his column of Sept. 24. He is absolutely correct about America's profligate consumption of imported petroleum and the huge social, economic and political costs we incur because we are unwilling to tax gasoline and diesel fuel the way virtually all of Europe does.

How might we benefit from a tax on gasoline? We could support a national high-speed rail network. Gas-tax nations Germany, France, Britain and Japan have had fast trains for decades, subsidized by gasoline taxes.

We could anticipate a strong market for small, fuel-efficient cars that emit less pollution, reducing the medical cost of treating respiratory diseases. We would see more people using alternative transportation such as walking and riding bicycles, which in turn might help with our obesity epidemic and related medical expenses. We might be able to use some of the thousands of acres now devoted to parking lots for more economically productive uses.

We all pay a lot of money in indirect costs related to petroleum consumption. We might actually end up saving money if gasoline were taxed more heavily. One thing is certain, though. Our quality of life would certainly improve.

*Stephen Lewis. Fresno*