

Dairy pollution data questioned

Air district not using sound science to reach numbers, critics say

By SARAH RUBY, Californian staff writer

[Bakersfield Californian, Monday, Aug. 1, 2005](#)

The dairy air pollution debate comes down to vinegar.

Dairy cows live on the stuff, which is produced in their 50-gallon stomachs as they chew and rechew. Scientists aren't sure exactly how much of it escapes the cow and becomes air pollution, but regulators can't wait for them to find out. A lawsuit settlement with the dairy industry requires the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District to announce today the amount of smog-forming pollution -- known as volatile organic compounds -- dairy cows produce.

Vinegar is one of those compounds, and regulators say it and similar compounds make up more than a third of all smog-forming VOCs from dairy cows. At least another third is made up of vinegar-like compounds that waft from lagoons -- standing pools of manure and water -- and other dairy operations, according to the district.

Under those assumptions, each dairy cow produces 20.6 VOCs per year. Seventy-five percent of that number is based on preliminary measurements of a set of VOCs known as volatile fatty acids -- a fancy term for vinegar and other compounds.

If the district is correct, dairies are the biggest source of VOCs in the San Joaquin Valley. Bigger than cars and trucks. The district and other agencies will use the number released today to figure out how to regulate new and existing dairies.

The air district's methods have many supporters -- and those who think they're too conservative -- but the animal researchers who wrote the science are not among them.

"Everyone is shouting for science-based regulations -- the problem is, the science is not there," said University of California's Dr. Frank Mitloehner, whose work examining cows in air-tight chambers is relied upon heavily by the district. "We are working on it."

His vinegar calculations were never meant to be definitive, he said. He's asked that regulators consider new data from his study, which could cut the district's total estimated amount of pollution by roughly a third.

To do otherwise is "scientifically invalid," he said in a letter to the district. He's asked that the agency write his protests into the final document if it won't stop using the disputed evidence.

"I don't care if the numbers are high or low," he said. "I care if the numbers are right or wrong."

Valley air officials are reducing their number by a pound or two, said district staff, but the adjustment has nothing to do with the vinegar debate, said Rick McVaigh, the district's director of compliance. The "number could change either way with further research," he said, but, for now, regulators feel they're in the ballpark.

Charles Krauter, a professor at Fresno State, is comfortable with the way his research was used, but disagrees with the vinegar and volatile fatty acid calculation, which is 75 percent of the district's number. The district discounted a study that disagreed with Mitloehner's cow bubble findings, and he questions aspects of both. Only further research will settle this and other loose ends, he said, and the scientific community needs two years to get it done. "The regulatory process isn't waiting that long," Krauter said.

There's also the issue of whether vinegar and other compounds like it are as bad for the air as they're made out to be. These gases are "normal things you would expect to find in the food chain," Krauter said. They don't react to form ozone as readily as other chemicals found in nature, but they are potent enough to be regulated.

The potential for dairies to pollute the air and water has become a hot political issue because many Southern California dairies are moving to Kern, having been squeezed out by housing development. Kern now has 297,000 dairy cattle, with an additional 14,900 waiting for their new homes to be built. The herd

could swell to nearly 500,000 cows if 19 dairies are allowed to move in, a decision facing county supervisors once an 18-month environmental study is complete.

Air district looks to filter wineries

VANESSA GREGORY, Californian staff writer
[Bakersfield Californian, Sunday, July 31, 2005](#)

A glass of red wine might ward off heart disease, but the Central Valley wineries making that merlot may also create lung-damaging air pollution. The culprit, say staffers at the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, is ethanol, the main alcohol in wine, some of which escapes as a gas during fermentation.

"The problem is that it helps to create ozone in the San Joaquin Valley, one of the two major pollutants that we have a problem with," said Scott Nester, director of planning for the air district.

So district staff is drafting a rule that would require the biggest of the valley's more than 100 wineries to install pollution control devices that would trap ethanol vapors.

Nester thinks the rule would be the first of its kind in the country, a fact that has failed to convince winemakers that it's a good idea.

"Ethanol emissions in the Central Valley are a problem," said Mike Falasco, a spokesman for the Wine Institute, a California wine industry advocacy group. "The question comes down to: Are the wineries producing significant amounts of ethanol to contribute to the problem?"

2 billion-plus bottles a year

San Joaquin Valley wineries certainly produce significant amounts of wine.

"When we think about wine fermentation, most of us immediately gravitate towards the concept of Napa," said Dan Barber, the air district's lead on the proposed rule. "We think of this nice little wooden barrel of wine: It's fun, it's pleasant.

"In the San Joaquin Valley, we are talking about a 100- to 200,000-gallon stainless steel tank," Barber said.

Those tanks make about 2.24 billion bottles of wine each year, or about 70 percent of the state's production, according to the Wine Institute.

"The wineries of the San Joaquin Valley are a linchpin to the valley's economy," Falasco said. "They employ thousands of workers in the wineries alone, not including those working in the fields."

The total economic benefit to the San Joaquin Valley is estimated at \$11 billion per year, according to the Wine Institute.

E & J Gallo Winery, which calls itself the largest winery in the United States, is rooted in the valley. Its Modesto winery employs 3,000.

Gallo would fall under the proposed rule, along with 15 to 17 other large wineries, including two in Kern County.

From grapes to ozone

Ethanol, the chemical compound that worries the air district staff, exists wherever grapes ferment.

Fermentation works like this: Yeast on the skins of grapes, as well as extra yeast added by winemakers, converts grape juice sugars to ethanol.

The process is what separates wine from grape juice, both by adding alcohol and changing flavor.

Ethanol is fine to drink. It makes up 10 percent to 14 percent of any given bottle of wine.

But ethanol gas is a volatile organic compound, one of a number of carbon-containing chemicals that can react in the sunlight to form ozone.

Inhaling high levels of ozone day after day can cause permanent lung damage -- especially in the developing lungs of children, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

"It is something that most people should be worried about," said Josette Merced Bello, CEO of the American Lung Association of Central California. "Anything that inhibits their lung function is likely to affect their health."

Last year, ozone levels in the San Joaquin Valley soared above the federal eight-hour standard on 109 days, according to the California Air Resources Board.

Ethanol emission from wineries reach its peak during late summer and early fall, right when regional ozone levels are at their worst, Nester said.

'Horribly expensive'

The idea that wineries add to poor air quality is about 20 years old.

Ken Fugelsang, a Fresno State enology professor, put ethanol-trapping devices on wine tanks for a 1987 study supported by the California Air Resources Board and the Wine Institute.

He found that wineries "could dramatically reduce emissions," but that trapping the vapors was costly.

That's what wineries object to most.

"It's absolutely horribly expensive," said Guy Ruhland, winery manager at Heck Cellars in Arvin. Owned by Korbel, Heck Cellars is one of two Kern County wineries that would likely be affected by the rule.

McFarland's ASV Wines, which may also fall under the rule, did not return repeated calls for comment.

Ruhland said he tries to buy grapes from local farms to go into the 1.8 million bottles of table wine and brandy that Heck Cellars makes each year.

"If they put a severe economic hardship on me, I don't know where they think all of those grapes are going," Ruhland said.

San Joaquin Valley wineries mainly produce affordable wines that compete in a global market, Falasco said, with their bottles sitting on the grocery shelf next to cheap Australian choices.

"This may not be the straw that breaks the camel's back, but you're just going to make it harder for them to be competitive," Falasco said.

The air district conceded that this regulation would be more expensive than similar rules for other industries.

But winemaking, Nester said, is one of the last unregulated industries.

Oil refineries, bakeries, gas stations, auto refinishing shops and dry cleaners all have to comply with volatile organic compound emission rules.

"When you buy a gallon of Sherwin Williams, or whatever house paint you use, that gallon of paint is regulated," Nester said.

"All the easy stuff has been picked already," he said.

Chasing cleaner air

Roger Boulton, a UC Davis professor of enology and chemical engineering, devised a method for estimating winery emissions in the 1980s. He doubts regulating wineries will improve air quality.

But Boulton said it's unclear how much ethanol reacts to form ozone.

The main polluters, he said, are cars.

But the air district only has authority to regulate stationary sources.

"When are a million people going to agree that maybe what they're doing with their cars is causing the problem?" Boulton asked. "We all want to blame it on something else."

"It's the only thing they can chase because it's the only thing they've been given permission to chase," Boulton said of the proposed winery rule.

What's 'significant'?

As for the significance of winery emissions, the Environmental Protection Agency considers any facility in a poor air quality region that emits more than 10 tons per year of a given pollutant to be a significant source.

The air district rule would only affect wineries emitting 10 or more tons of ethanol. The rule would also be limited to red wine, which emits more ethanol because it ferments at a higher temperature than white.

The air district's governing board should decide on the rule by the end of the year, Nester said. If passed, wineries would have two years to comply.

Utilities coax use of electric engines

Farmers who stop using diesel given lower rates

By Jennifer M. Fitzenberger / Bee Capitol Bureau
[Fresno Bee, Monday, August 1, 2005](#)

SACRAMENTO -- Pacific Gas & Electric Co. and Southern California Edison today will begin offering lower rates to farmers who trade their dirty diesel engines for electric models.

The new program is designed to reduce air pollution while giving growers an affordable alternative to diesel engines, used primarily to pump water for crop irrigation.

Diesel engines emit tiny specks of soot and chemicals that help form pollution. Electric engines are much cleaner.

Farmers in PG&E's service area who join the program will receive a rate that is 20% less than what the utility currently charges its agricultural customers. Edison is offering a rate discounted by 12.5%.

Growers with older diesel engines larger than 50 horsepower qualify for the program. To participate, they must get rid of their diesel engines.

Michael Boccadoro, executive director of the Agricultural Energy Consumers Association, said the program gives growers a choice at a time when they're facing new air-pollution rules. Some farmers must apply for permits and switch out their older diesel engines.

Many growers are interested in the new utility program, Boccadoro said.

"It provides an excellent opportunity for farmers to put themselves in a better position from an environmental compliance standpoint for the long term," Boccadoro said.

Under the program, the utilities will help farmers pay for lines connecting motors to the power source.

In all, PG&E will pay a maximum of \$27.5 million and Edison will pay \$9.2 million.

Christy Dennis, a spokeswoman for PG&E, said the utility should be able to accommodate 1,200 to 1,400 pumps.

It's unclear how many pumps Edison can handle. About 4,500 diesel irrigation pumps exist in the San Joaquin Valley.

"It is on a first-come, first-serve basis," Dennis said.

Farmers have two years to enroll in the program, which will last 10 years.

The rate will increase by 1.5% each year, providing growers with predictable electricity bills.

How to apply

PG&E - Call (800) 468-4743 or check out www.pge.com/agice
Edison - Call (800) 990-7788

Bus riders get a free lift

By Scott Pesznecker

[Merced Sun-Star, Monday, August 1, 2005](#)

For the next three months, people can ride The Bus without paying a dime.

Merced County Transit is offering free fares on all fixed routes to promote the state's "Spare the Air" program, which encourages people to limit driving when smog is at its worst.

The program will help people like 20-year-old Veronica Sanchez, who rides The Bus from downtown Merced each day to get to her baby-sitting appointments. She usually spends about \$50 of her \$550 monthly income on bus fares.

"I think I'm going to save lots of money," Sanchez said Friday as she walked down Main Street toward her bus stop.

During normal months, bus fares cost between \$1 and \$3, depending on where riders are going. A regular monthly bus pass costs \$40.

Merced County Transit will pay for the free rides with a \$220,000 federal grant.

Transit officials hope the free rides will help hook more people on The Bus. The system has been beefed up with new routes and additional buses countywide, Assistant Transportation Manager Larnold Jones said.

Jones is hoping for a permanent 10-percent increase in ridership after the three-month period ends.

"We want people to get on the bus, try it out and see if they like it," Jones said. "Our whole goal is to get people on the bus and see if it's a viable way to get around."

Meanwhile, San Joaquin Air Quality Management District spokeswoman Janelle Schneider praised the free rides as a good way to cut down on air pollution.

The pollutant ozone, which occurs as a chemical reaction for vehicle exhaust and heat, could be reduced if more people used public transportation, she said.

"Anything that gives people an alternative to driving alone in a car, I think it's a step in the right direction," Schneider said.

Report: S.J. growth potential strong But low wages, high land costs pose challenges

[The Record, Saturday, July 30, 2005](#)

San Joaquin County, with strong geographic and transportation assets, holds great potential for healthy growth. But to secure a vibrant future, area government and business leaders must contend with increasing land and development costs, underachieving public schools, wages that lag housing costs, inadequate water supplies and many other issues

So says a new community assessment from Angelou Economics. The report is a lead-up to an economic development master plan expected from the Austin, Texas, research firm next month.

"The story here is that San Joaquin understands that big change is happening and that a proactive, organized response to that change is what the community needs," Angelou Vice President Chris Engle said Friday.

"The county's location as a place for doing business is perhaps its greatest asset," said the assessment, released this week.

The expanding Bay Area economy and Bay Area residents drawn by lower housing prices have fueled growth in San Joaquin County over the past few years. Blessed by major freeways, railroad hubs, Stockton Metropolitan Airport and the Port of Stockton, the county has particularly enjoyed a boom in new distribution, warehousing and transportation-related activities.

As land and housing prices have risen, however, those logistical businesses have grown less attractive, especially since they generate relatively few jobs and pay lower wages, said the assessment, which was commissioned by the San Joaquin Partnership.

"There's the recognition that they're not the best jobs, per se, especially in jobs per acre as land values increase," said Sean Snaith, director of the Business Forecasting Center at University of the Pacific.

Among other challenges to San Joaquin County economic future:

- Underperforming public schools: San Joaquin County underperforms California and neighboring counties in SAT scores.
- **Smoggy air:** Poor air quality will result in less state support for development, as well as higher costs to developers and businesses.
- Low wages: Wages and per capita income cannot support increasing area housing prices and the related cost of living.
- Limited private capital: While there are a number of banks active in the county, their traditional, collateral-based lending won't supply the venture capital needed to attract and develop fledgling and startup high-technology firms.
- Business development among minority communities is lacking: Despite the county's diverse populace, minority communities have little business or political clout.
- Lack of water: Demand for water is high, but so are costs, and there is little extra capacity to support new development, as well as meet existing needs.
- Debate over development vs. agricultural preservation creates uncertainty.
- The county's young professional population is declining.
- Rising housing prices are putting homeownership increasingly out of reach.
- Crime and a lack of "curb appeal": These factors are a drag on efforts to recruit businesses and skilled workers to the area.

After reviewing the assessment, Snaith said it probably holds few surprises to anyone familiar with the county's economy and its issues.

"By and large, I think it reaffirms what the city of Stockton and the San Joaquin Partnership have been doing in terms of economic development, but sometimes it's nice for someone from the outside to tell you," he said.

Snaith said he recognized the lack of venture capital financing and that San Joaquin County lacks the kind of amenities that can draw and hold young professionals.

"We've talked about the need to establish some sort of center for innovation," he said. It might be some sort of incubator for college students who have ideas they might be able to turn into a business and a place for potential investors to focus their hunt for opportunities.

That would be a change from the ongoing pursuit of companies from outside the county, Snaith suggested.

Solo in a Hybrid? Merge Left

Congress OKs opening carpool lanes to fuel misers and \$23 billion for state road projects

By Dan Weikel and Amanda Covarrubias, Times Staff Writers

[L.A. Times, Saturday, July 30, 2005](#)

Motorists who drive solo in fuel-efficient hybrid vehicles will gain access to carpool lanes in California under a massive transportation bill approved by Congress on Friday that includes billions of dollars for projects statewide.

The \$286.5-billion bill, the first major transportation funding measure since 1998, cleared the House and Senate by large bipartisan votes. California will receive roughly \$23 billion for highway projects - a return of about 92 cents for every dollar in gas taxes the state sends to Washington.

By granting carpool privileges to fuel-efficient hybrids across the nation, the spending bill authorizes

California to implement legislation that has been on hold since Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed it eight months ago.

The federal government gets a say in who can use carpool lanes because it provides most of the money to build them.

"The federal transportation bill is a great victory for California," Schwarzenegger said. "The legislation contains much-needed funding that complements state and local efforts to improve our transportation system.

The California law, which expires in 2008, grants carpool access to hybrids that are the cleanest running in their class and get at least 45 miles to the gallon. Smaller hybrids such as the Toyota Prius and Honda Insight qualify, while larger SUV models might not.

Hybrid owners must obtain a special sticker from the Department of Motor Vehicles before using carpool lanes.

Supporters of the change believe it will encourage the use of the energy-efficient vehicles and reduce reliance on foreign oil. But critics, including some traffic engineers, fear the new rules will clog carpool lanes without providing much benefit. They note that sales of hybrids are already brisk without added incentives.

Randall Halcomb, co-editor of Autoblog.com, an automotive consumer website, has been critical of efforts to ease carpool restrictions to accommodate more hybrids, which, he said, might not be any more fuel efficient than a conventional car.

"You can have one person in a hybrid and two people in a regular car that gets 30 miles per gallon, and essentially they have the same fuel efficiency," Halcomb said. "In many cases, this kind of law is a knee-jerk reaction to give the appearance of greenness. But you're no better off than driving a regular economy car."

There are about 20,000 hybrid owners in California, which has 40% of the nation's carpool lanes. The vehicles use small internal-combustion engines in combination with electric motors to increase gas mileage and reduce air pollution.

At the Toyota dealership in Glendale, salesman Jesse Rivas was thrilled that the new law was passed, saying it would spur even more sales of the fast-selling Prius, which is officially rated at 60 miles per gallon on city streets, though actual fuel mileage is generally lower. The popular electric-gas cars range from \$22,000 to \$26,000.

"We've all been waiting for this," Rivas said. "With gas and the economy the way it is, people want a break."

Nearby, Leah Buturain and her husband, Ed Schneider, of Los Feliz were shopping for a hybrid. News of Congress' action bolstered their desire for a car.

"The whole point is not to burn more oil," Buturain said. "Look at what we're doing to the ozone layer. Our generation is so shortsighted about our grandkids' kids. We can't wait any longer to do something about it."

But at the Honda dealership in Van Nuys, customer Robert Nava of North Hollywood said the new privilege was not enough of an incentive for him to get a hybrid.

He was looking to buy a gas-burning Accord, even after it was pointed out to him that the model comes in a hybrid.

"I don't like those kind of cars," Nava said, shaking his head. "Not the style ... or anything."

The carpool lane privileges were sought by Reps. Brad Sherman (D-Sherman Oaks) and Darrell Issa (R-Vista) as well as Sens. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and George Allen (R-Va.).

"This is a major step forward in our efforts to encourage lower fuel consumption by providing an incentive for drivers to use hybrid, fuel-efficient vehicles," Feinstein said.

The federal hybrid provision applies nationwide and requires the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to define what an energy-efficient, low-emissions hybrid vehicle is within 180 days.

The definition would force California to change its law only if the federal mileage requirements are higher than the state's. Officials don't believe the carpool lanes will be opened to hybrids until after the EPA completes its work.

Sherman said the federal parameters could be set lower for other states to accommodate lower-mileage hybrids such as sport utility vehicles and trucks.

Besides California, Virginia is the only other state to grant carpool access to solo motorists in hybrid vehicles.

"We need to give hybrids a push, and we need to encourage manufacturers to retool and make more of them," Sherman said. "Nothing will do this faster than having a high demand for hybrids."

In addition to fuel efficiency, Assemblywoman Fran Pavley, (D-Agoura Hills), one of the sponsors of the state law, said it was important to require that hybrid cars in carpool lanes meet the highest emissions standards.

But, she said, the federal legislation is silent on that issue. Pavley and other lawmakers are awaiting an interpretation from the EPA to make sure they can require that hybrids using high occupancy vehicle lanes meet "partial zero emissions" standards.

"The air emission standards are very important," Pavley said Friday. "We wouldn't want a hybrid that gets 45 miles a gallon but has higher emissions to be out there. It's more important to encourage those cars to operate at the cleanest emission levels."

The transportation bill took nearly two years to complete because of a dispute between members of Congress eager to deliver public works to their districts and President Bush, who sought to hold down spending.

Although the final price tag was \$2.5 billion more than he wanted, Bush is expected to sign the bill, which is packed with funding for more than 6,000 projects.

The authorization bill will fund more than 350 transportation projects in California.

Among other things, Congress has earmarked about \$150 million to improve railroad corridors in the Los Angeles area, \$58 million to strengthen the Golden Gate Bridge and \$15.8 million to study the feasibility of a new transportation corridor - possibly a tunnel under the Cleveland National Forest - between the Inland Empire and Orange County.

In Los Angeles County, the bill will provide \$130 million to add carpool lanes on the San Diego Freeway through Sepulveda Pass, \$9 million for a new connector between the Golden State and Antelope Valley freeways and \$9.6 million for offramp improvements on the Pomona Freeway.

More than \$5 million is being set aside for projects related to the long-fought extension of the Long Beach Freeway in the South Pasadena area. The money will go to examine the feasibility of building a tunnel to extend the freeway and reduce traffic congestion in the area where the freeway now ends.

In Orange County, Fullerton will receive about \$13 million to build a railroad overpass on State College Boulevard. Placentia will receive about \$37.5 million to improve a railroad corridor through town. An additional \$5.2 million has been made available for new interchanges and carpool lanes on the Garden Grove Freeway.

Elsewhere around Southern California, San Bernardino County will receive about \$20 million to improve roads and highways around the former Norton Air Force Base.

In addition, the bill allocates \$9 million to build an access tunnel to the North Island Naval Air Station in San Diego.

Riverside County will receive \$8 million for a new interchange on Interstate 15 at Cajalco Road.

Even if Bush signs the bill, Congress will need to appropriate the money for the projects.

California's gains

Highlights from the federal transportation bill:

- \$2.4 million to study the feasibility of building a tunnel to extend the Long Beach Freeway through the South Pasadena area.
- \$2.8 million to reduce congestion in the area where the Long Beach Freeway now ends.
- \$15.8 million to study a possible tunnel between Orange County and Riverside County.
- \$125 million for the Alameda Corridor East, a freight train corridor through the San Gabriel Valley and Inland Empire.
- \$58.8 million to retrofit the Golden Gate Bridge to withstand an earthquake of magnitude 8.3.

Source: U.S. congressional offices

Times staff writer Richard Simon in Washington contributed to this report.

State officials not sure fed bill allows carpool exemption

The Associated Press

[in the S.F. Chronicle, Fresno Bee and other papers, Saturday, July 30, 2005](#)

SACRAMENTO (AP) - State officials say they aren't sure that the transportation bill approved by Congress on Friday includes language that will allow high-mileage, low-polluting hybrid vehicles to use carpool lanes with only one occupant.

"The bottom line is we frankly don't know yet," said Jerry Martin, a spokesman for the California Air Resources Board.

A bill approved by the Legislature last year allows up to 75,000 hybrids that get at least 45 miles per gallon and are low-polluting to get windshield stickers from the Department of Motor Vehicles allowing them to use carpool lanes with fewer than the required occupants.

But the state also needs congressional approval to implement the bill.

The federal legislation does include language allowing hybrids that meet the 45-mpg standard to use carpool lanes, but it's not clear if it also authorizes California to require the hybrids to meet specific pollution standards, officials say.

Most carpool lanes require vehicles to have at least two occupants but some require at least three.

Martin said ARB attorneys are reviewing the bill and conferring with federal transportation officials to see if it allows California to go ahead with the hybrid exemption.

The author of the bill, Assemblywoman Fran Pavley, D-Agoura Hills, introduced the legislation to encourage motorists to buy more hybrids to save on fuel and help clear the air.

Information from: The Sacramento Bee, <http://www.sacbee.com>.

LAX Expansion Will Raise Cancer Risk, Study Finds

By Jennifer Oldham, Times Staff Writer

[L.A. Times, Monday, August 1, 2005](#)

Moving the southernmost runway at Los Angeles International Airport 55 feet for safety reasons will expose nearby residents to increased cancer risk and noise over an eight-month period during construction, according to an environmental impact report to be released today.

Closing the runway during the work will force officials to redistribute flights among LAX's three other runways, requiring aircraft to taxi greater distances and idle longer - increasing harmful emissions, according to the 1,370-page study.

Changing landing and takeoff patterns will also subject residents in Los Angeles, Inglewood and

Westchester to more noise, classroom disturbances and sleep disruptions, concluded the report, completed by an architectural and engineering firm for the city's airport agency.

Traffic generated by construction isn't expected to markedly affect communities, the study said, because trucks will operate during off-peak hours and be directed away from residential streets to freeways.

The study, required under state law, provides an early look at problems to be faced by communities that surround LAX. Shifting the runway south - scheduled to start next year and take 26 months -- is the first in a series of major projects planned to update the aging facility in the next decade.

Repositioning the 11,096-foot runway and building a new taxiway is a massive undertaking that will require workers to remove the old runway and install 600,000 square yards of 19-inch thick concrete - enough to build more than 40 miles of two-lane road.

It will also require contractors to haul 225 million tons of dirt from the site.

Airport officials have argued for years that they must move the runway closer to tiny El Segundo and install a taxiway in between the two runways on the airport's south side to reduce the possibility of collisions between aircraft.

About 80% of runway safety violations at LAX occur on those runways, because pilots who land on the southernmost one must traverse a series of taxiways and cross another runway before they reach the terminal.

"This project is about increasing the margin of safety for everyone using the airport, as well as the airport's neighbors," Paul Haney, a spokesman for Los Angeles World Airports, the city's airport agency, said Sunday.

"There is no way to gain the needed increase in the margin of safety without construction activity. We're committed to do everything feasible to compress the length of the construction project and to mitigate its impacts."

The amount of increased noise and air pollution that will result from moving the runway could come as a surprise to many living in the area.

"I don't think people have really considered this, and it's kind of tough to conceptualize from our point of view," Kelly McDowell, mayor of El Segundo, said Sunday.

The city of El Segundo is one of several airport-area municipalities that have challenged Los Angeles' \$11-billion LAX modernization plan in court, claiming environmental studies for the entire proposal understate the effects of noise, pollution and traffic.

It's unclear if construction on the south runway could begin before the lawsuit is resolved. The next hearing is scheduled on Oct. 14 in Riverside County Superior Court.

The entire modernization plan would dramatically rework LAX. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa has said he approves of the most popular projects in the plan, including moving the south runway, but wants to eliminate its most controversial elements, including a passenger check-in center near the 405 Freeway.

Most residents and legislators interviewed about the environmental impact study, completed by Kansas City, Mo.-based architecture and engineering company HNTB, said they hadn't received the report and couldn't comment on its contents. But they did express concern about the short-term effects of construction on the south runway on their quality of life.

"I know there will be some very upset people," said Denny Schneider, who sits on the board of the Westchester Neighbors Assn. "I, at least, have soundproofing. I put it in - I can afford it. I have neighbors that can't."

Construction on LAX's south runway is likely to expose several thousand residents to more noise, the study found. Six schools will experience higher noise levels during the eight-month period, it concluded.

Quantifying health risks is more complicated. If residents were exposed to air pollution that will result from construction for a period of 70 years, there could be a risk of 19 additional cancer cases per million people, according to the report.

Airport officials said it's important to note that air pollution and noise effects shown in the study result not only from construction but also from recent increases in operations at LAX.

The effects are greater because, to determine how the project would affect surrounding communities, consultants compared aircraft operations in 2005 with the number of operations the airport served in 2003.

That year, air traffic was down markedly after carriers pulled flights following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the Iraq war and an outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome. This year, operations are rebounding and are expected to hit record levels in 2006.

[Fresno Bee, Editorial, Monday, August 1, 2005:](#)

A thin veneer

Administration's global-warming policy doesn't run very deep

In short, it's about what you'd expect from an administration that knows little and cares even less about the environment.

Think about this as you swelter under the Valley's brown skies:

The Bush administration announced a bold alliance against global warming Thursday. It is strictly voluntary. It has no goals, targets or timetables. And it duplicates existing and ineffective arrangements with each of the other five nations in the group. In short, it's about what you'd expect from an administration that knows little and cares even less about the environment.

The United States, Australia, Japan, South Korea, China and India are the members of the mighty new coalition. The U.S. was already pursuing bilateral agreements with each of the six nations. It has such agreements in place with some 18 North and South American, African and other Asian nations, as well as with the European Union. The focus of the agreements is to develop and share energy technology that will reduce the amount of so-called "greenhouse gases" associated with global warming.

That's the Bush administration's answer to the Kyoto Protocol, which it refuses to sign. The White House position on Kyoto is that the U.S. will do anything necessary to reduce the dangerous emissions -- but only if it causes no economic impact on this country. Some dislocation is inevitable under the Kyoto treaty, at least in the short term, so U.S. participation is neatly and effectively ruled out.

The president is enamored of technological fixes for global warming, and they do have an important place in the effort. The president believes in them so profoundly that he cut the funding for his own Climate Change Technology Program by \$124 million in his latest budget request. Now there's an aggressive approach.

It gets worse: On the eve of a final vote in Congress on the energy bill, the Environmental Protection Agency decided to hold back a report that says the fuel efficiency of vehicles on American roads has fallen back to the levels of the late 1980s. We're going backward, not forward -- but let's not let that fact affect decisions on important legislation.

The Bush administration fought mightily -- we wonder why it thought it had to struggle so hard in this Congress -- to prevent any tightening of the Corporate Average Fuel Economy standards. Something worked: The energy bill makes no reference to fuel efficiency, declining or otherwise.

Simultaneously, the administration and congressional leaders successfully kept mandates for renewable energy from staining the legislation.

So cars burn more gas, alternative energy doesn't get explored and global warming is addressed solely as a profit-and-loss issue. We don't know precisely what to call that, but it isn't progress, and it isn't good news.

[Tulare Advance-Register, Editorial, Saturday, July 30, 2005:](#)

Public can direct county's future

Tulare County's general plan update is taking firmer shape. Opportunity for residents to get involved in shaping the county's future are becoming more defined.

In the next couple of months, proposals for directing the county's growth will be presented to the county's Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. County staff will draw up a draft for revising the general plan. Then the public will have the opportunity to comment and provide input on the process.

For those who want to become involved in directing the county's future development, this is the time to jump in.

After a series of community meetings and months of gathering technical data, county planners have developed three land-use scenarios. From those scenarios will emerge the principles upon which the county will build its future general plan, which is a kind of blueprint for county development.

The initial set of conceptual land use scenarios included three land-use concepts: City Centered Growth, Community Oriented Growth and Proportional Growth. They have changed. Three scenarios now are:

City Centered: Essentially the same as the original concept, to direct most new growth to existing cities.

Transportation Corridor: This would direct a greater proportion of new growth to cities, both incorporated and unincorporated, along state Highways 99 and 65.

Rural Communities: This would direct a greater proportion of new growth into unincorporated communities.

The three land-use alternatives are still conceptual in nature. Their purpose is to illustrate three alternative scenarios for future growth in order to frame a discussion with the public, Technical Advisory Committee, Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors concerning the preferred pattern of future growth.

This preferred concept may be one of the three concepts or it may be a hybrid that combines features of two or more alternatives. The preferred concept developed during the review of this report will serve as the basis for the development of the general plan and associated environmental impact report.

This is where the public comes in: People have the opportunity to comment on which alternative they prefer and what elements they want included.

The following is a review of the characteristics of the three alternatives and what the county needs to do to make them work.

CITY CENTERED ALTERNATIVE

The City Centered Alternative assumes that cities will accept additional population by increasing density and developing adjacent land. The cities will also continue to provide sites for urban commercial services and industry.

Key advantages for this scenario include protecting agricultural land and maintaining the rural character of the county. It also can be more readily supported by a regional transit system.

The City Centered Alternative emphasizes growth in the eight incorporated cities of Tulare County: Dinuba, Exeter, Farmersville, Lindsay, Porterville, Tulare, Visalia, Woodlake.

- 15 percent of new population is directed to 20 unincorporated communities.
- 80 percent of new population growth is directed to incorporated cities.
- 5 percent of new population is directed to other unincorporated areas (rural areas).
- Economic development

Concentrates new commercial development in cities.

Concentrates new employment growth in cities, where there is infrastructure and a work force.

Strengthens the competitive position of the larger cities.

Provides only limited job growth in unincorporated communities.

- Land use

Results in substantial agricultural land conversion within city urban area boundaries.

Reduces the encroachment of low-density rural residential development on agricultural lands, foothills and Sierra gateway communities.

- Infrastructure

Takes advantage of the existing well-developed infrastructure systems of the cities.

Requires only modest infrastructure improvements in unincorporated communities.

May limit ability of some communities to upgrade infrastructure.

- Natural resources

Results in [lower air pollution emissions](#) because of less travel between communities.

Concentrates growth on cities with well-established water/wastewater systems.

Higher density in cities may reduce overall pressure on prime agricultural land conversion.

- Policy commitments

Cities accept significant growth and accommodate it through infill development, higher densities and transportation infrastructure.

County limits rural residential development.

TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS ALTERNATIVE

The Transportation Corridors Alternative assumes that cities and communities along highways 99 and 65 will accept additional population by increasing the density and developing contiguous land within their urban development boundary or urban area boundary.

These communities and cities would also continue to provide sites for urban commercial services and industry. Better housing, services and infrastructure would be developed for rural communities.

Key advantages for this scenario include the use of existing transportation routes and maintaining the rural character of the county.

The distribution of future growth under this alternative is as follows:

- 25 percent of new population is directed to the county's 20 unincorporated communities. Of this amount, 80 percent is allocated to the eight communities located on highways 99 and 65: Ducor, Earlimart, Goshen, Pixley, Strathmore, Terra Bella, Tipton and Traver.
- 70 percent of new population growth is directed to incorporated cities.
- 5 percent of new population directed to other unincorporated areas (rural areas).
- Economic development
- Results in the need for more commercial development and job growth in the unincorporated communities.
- Provides for job growth in unincorporated communities.
- Land use

Results in conversion of more prime agricultural land along the highway corridors of 99 and 65.

Requires the expansion of urban boundaries in Goshen, Richgrove, Strathmore, Terra Bella, Tipton and Traver.

- Infrastructure

Takes advantage of existing highways.

Takes advantage of existing water or sewer capacity in the communities of Earlimart, Goshen, Pixley and Tipton.

Would require significant infrastructure investment in Ducor, Strathmore, Terra Bella and Traver.

- Natural resources

Results in [higher air pollution emissions](#) from more inter-city travel.

Lower density in communities may increase overall pressure on prime ag land conversion.

- Policy commitments

County limits rural residential development and concentrates unincorporated growth in communities.

County commits to providing higher levels of services in eight transportation corridor communities.

RURAL COMMUNITIES ALTERNATIVE

The Rural Communities Alternative emphasizes growth in the 11 unincorporated communities that have or are expected to soon have an adopted Redevelopment Project Area and Community Plan.

Key advantages for this scenario include the use of existing infrastructure, services and community cooperation while protecting agricultural lands and maintaining the rural character of the county.

It also can be more readily supported by existing infrastructure, roadways, and community cooperation.

The distribution of future growth under this alternative is as follows:

- 25 percent of new population is directed to the 20 unincorporated communities.
- 70 percent of new population growth is directed to incorporated cities.
- 5 percent of new population is directed to rural areas.
- Economic development

Results in the need for more commercial development in the unincorporated communities.

Provides for job growth in unincorporated communities.

- Land use

Results in conversion of more prime agricultural land around the 11 unincorporated communities.

Requires the expansion of urban boundaries in Goshen, Ivanhoe and Richgrove.

- Infrastructure

Takes advantage of existing water or sewer capacity in Earlimart, Goshen, Ivanhoe, Pixley and Poplar.

Would require infrastructure investment in Cutler-Orosi, Ducor, Richgrove, Terra Bella and Traver.

Continues to use existing infrastructure in cities.

- Natural resources

Results in [higher air pollution emissions](#) because of more travel between communities.

Lower density in communities may increase overall pressure on prime agricultural land conversion.

- Policy commitments

County limits rural residential development and concentrates unincorporated growth in communities.

County commits to providing significant infrastructure improvements in the 11 communities with redevelopment agencies and plans. Unincorporated communities provide for more commercial development.

County provides for more job growth in unincorporated communities.

[Fresno Bee, Commentary, Saturday, July 30, 2005:](#)

Fresno has problems, but we work on them

By Ruth Rosborough-Larocca

We live in Columbus (metropolitan population 1 million) -- capital of the state of Ohio ("Mother of Presidents.") Local environmentalists know it as the fifth most-polluted city in the nation, and it has no train service.

Nobody seems to care. In 1956, Columbans saw 42 passenger trains roll through daily. Few have thought about it since April of 1976, when the last train pulled out for Kansas City.

"Take a train, when I can drive my car or fly?"

See, we have this extensive, intricate highway system (after all, we're the state capital!). Talk about Californians worshiping their cars. Ohioans are too sensible for anything like that, The Columbus Dispatch will tell you! (The Dispatch doesn't print stories that might tarnish our self-image.)

And air pollution?

Fresnans look up at the dirty yellow film across the sky and say, "real pollution today!"

The Dispatch has this tiny chart somewhere in the weather page, which you only see if you're really looking for it. Run a front-page story or a strong editorial about worsening pollution? (Ohio's utilities are coal-fueled.) Realistic comments on dramatic traffic jams? Nah. The Dispatch trumpets "Columbus, the only city in Ohio that's 'growing,'" (growth being political magic from coast to coast). We have problems with water (rationing in "dry" years); fine farmland paved by "developers;" underfunded, overcrowded city schools - ain't "progress" grand?

And no rails, "lite" or heavy.

Call Amtrak; "I need a train to Cleveland."

Answer: "You go by bus."

"What about Toledo?"

"By bus."

"Cincinnati?"

By this time, the Amtrak guy is sympathetic. "Ma'am, I'm sorry, but you get to Cincinnati by bus ... It's a nice ride..."

The once-handsome Union Station was torn down in '76. It used to be about three blocks from the present Nationwide Arena District where I'm sitting now, having a cappuccino in Starbucks. And a huge freight train is passing slowly through. Its diesel engines will be spewing junk into our air for 10 minutes, polluting the 18,000-seat state-of-the-art stadium, office buildings (Columbus has the best commercial complexes I've seen anywhere), a remarkable hotel, "Short North" - the city's answer to the Tower District.

Trains left station

And no train service to anywhere, once-fine tracks sold for scrap or abandoned. And all those outdated, overcrowded 1950s-style highways. Endless, shallow vats of ozone and particulates, which make this lovely city a serious contender in the national pollution sweepstakes.

It's a sunny summer day with a pleasant breeze and that faint yellowish haze across a once-blue sky. Columbus is moving imperceptibly, as Fresno did, from azure skies and pure water to becoming a statistic ("Oh, we have the third-worst water in Ohio!" a friend told us).

One thing which adds to the fun here is the climate. Being in the north end of the Ohio River Valley, Columbus is damp, damp, damp. And boy, does that stuff collect pollutants! The Dispatch reports "fog!" We know smog when we see it.

In Fresno, a generation of young adults have never seen a real Valley summer sky. Here we still have some clear days, and limp reporting doesn't help.

In Fresno? Pollution is unavoidable in the press, in boardrooms and bedrooms. "How bad is it today, honey?" Fresno has an old-fashioned newspaper which sounds alarms when things are bad and rings bells when they're good, and will offend politicians and their appointees when necessary.

We have the "Dispatch," a word which means "urgent message" or "to kill," as in, "Paw dispatched that mean old rooster." I asked their newsroom why Columbus has neither train service nor station? Nobody knew. And they're nice people.

Fresno is at war with air pollution. Fresno has preserved and enlarged its fine railway station; you can get to Vancouver or New York City by train from the "Capital of the Central Valley."

And Fresnans are demanding intelligent light-rail intra-city service.

Many good things

Sure, there are a lot of good things about Columbus; actually, most of our problems are the result of years, decades of one-party rule - my Republicans, of course, although Ohio is a blue state. Don't believe the 2004 election results.

There's a lesson here for California. You can be a red state or a blue state, but it's best to keep the incumbents, whoever they are, nervous!

I read The Bee online daily - letters to the editor first. I remember the train station and wonderful rides up to Sacramento, and, Fresno, I miss you in spite of your air.

Ruth Rosborough-Larocca of Columbus is a freelance writer and a former Fresnan.

[Modesto Bee, Commentary, Sunday, July 31, 2005:](#)

Shedding the BAT image after four years in valley

By DOROTHY WESTPHAL

In 2001, I moved to Stanislaus County after a lifetime in the Bay Area. One of the first things I learned was a new acronym: BAT. I soon discovered this stood for "Bay Area Transplant," and it carried negative connotations.

BATs, it seemed, were responsible for every ill that has befallen the area in the last 10 years. BATs have driven up real estate prices (did home sellers complain?), clogged the streets (were they wide enough before?), and polluted the clean country air (do our BAT cars produce more smog than local ones?)

I did not increase the number of houses here or contract for one of those cheek-by-jowl monster houses that mimic the ugliest of the Bay Area; I moved into a house that had stood proudly on a lovely knoll for decades before I ever dreamed of migrating.

The Modesto area is not alone in its concern. Years ago, we bewailed the disappearance of orchards in the Santa Clara Valley, AKA the "Valley of Heart's Delight," under miles of tract houses. Resentment grew against the flood of new people who called California the promised land. But on an individual basis, we welcomed new residents as friends.

When I started looking at the Central Valley, I did the modern thing — I searched the internet for my ideal town: not too large or too small and enough space to stretch. Certain things had to be there, or nearby: a doughnut shop, bookstore, music store, fabric store.

From my list of possibilities, only seven or eight communities made the final cut for my field trip to look over the possibilities.

I planned a couple of days, starting with my northernmost city, Elk Grove. That didn't take long.

Then south on 99, sometimes taking side roads, stopping in each town to chat and drive around.

Nothing stood out until I drove into Oakdale.

There was something about the town — I felt I had been there before, and often. In a couple of stores and the post office, I was struck by people's friendliness and helpfulness. What a change from the indifference or outright rudeness I had grown accustomed to. (Have you been to the Bay Area lately?) I would later learn that these qualities were characteristic of the whole area, not just Oakdale.

Any remaining doubt vanished as I drove down Oakdale's main drag. I had been unsuccessfully searching for a particular style of furniture that I liked, and as I drove past Bordona's furniture store, I saw a display of "my" furniture in the front window. When I later found my perfect house and submitted an offer, I stopped on the way home to place an order, without even waiting to see if my offer would be accepted.

I now feel I have been here forever. Wonderful new friends have come my way during the last four years, and I think my identity as a BAT is starting to fade away.

But for now, I can at least hope that those who know me will not refer to me as the proverbial "BAT out of Hell" but will instead favor the kinder, gentler "BAT out of Heaven."

[Lodi News Sentinel, Letter to the Editor, Monday, Aug. 1, 2005:](#)

Make public transportation attractive

I have been reading a lot lately about the need to reduce emissions which cause smog, the high price of gasoline, the attempts to improve train service from here to the Bay Area, and the plans and hopes to entice tourists and visitors to Lodi in order to help the local economy. There have also been a number of stories about not enough use of local bus service.

I know people in the United States, including me, like the independence of their own cars in order to go when and where they please, but it seems to me that we will have to trim that independence a bit for the greater good.

Having traveled to and around England several times, I can attest to the ease with which one can get around on public transportation: trains, buses, the underground in London, and boats up and down the Thames river. Recent news, of course, adds a caveat to these travel methods over there, and the possibility of the same over here, but not, I think, in Lodi.

Nevertheless, to get to the point in Lodi, if more use of public buses is desired, why not make this a little easier and more attractive to the public by making waiting for a bus less than an ordeal by weather?

I know the city is short of funds, but surely each major service club and other organization in the city, or a neighborhood group, could support building one bus stop somewhere in town. A central coordinating city person or office could facilitate the mass purchase of materials to cut costs. The bus shelters don't have to be fancy; just a bench, a top for shade and a surround on three sides that is made of a see-through material so that bus drivers and would-be passengers can see each other. The shelters don't have to be all alike, either; just something that the donor group would be pleased to put its name on.

I am sure that senior citizens who have to lug groceries because they can no longer drive, or parents with small children, or anyone who has to depend on the bus to go to and from medical treatments would be glad of a sheltered place to sit and wait for public transportation.

We need to make lovable Lodi a bit more livable for a large number of its citizens.

Gwin Mitchell Paden, Lodi