

Judge to rule on air lawsuit

Automaker challenge of emission standards unfounded, state says

by John Ellis - The Fresno Bee

in the Modesto Bee, Monday, Sept. 18, Fresno Bee, Saturday, Sept. 16, 2006

State officials have asked a federal judge to throw out a lawsuit by the automobile industry challenging new state emissions standards that would be the toughest in the nation.

After more than two hours of arguments Friday, U.S. District Court Judge Anthony W. Ishii said he would rule later.

If he rules against the state, the case is likely to go to trial in January — and its outcome would have national implications.

Already, 10 states have adopted California's new standards, and nine states in the Pacific Northwest and Northeast, as well as New York City, have filed briefs on the state's behalf.

The state regulations, scheduled to take effect with the 2009 model year, would set emission standards for greenhouse gases, which many scientists believe contribute to global warming. The regulations are expected to cut exhaust emissions 25 percent in cars and light trucks and 18 percent in larger trucks and sport utility vehicles.

"This is an incredibly important issue," Deputy Attorney General Marc Melnick told Ishii.

The state Air Resources Board approved the rules two years ago; they stemmed from legislation signed in 2002 by then-Gov. Davis.

In December 2004, more than a dozen San Joaquin Valley auto dealers — including Central Valley Chrysler-Jeep of Modesto — joined DaimlerChrysler Corp., General Motors, the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers and others in filing the lawsuit.

At issue is whether California has the right under the federal Clean Air Act to regulate greenhouse gases through tailpipe emissions.

Under the act, only California is allowed to set emissions rules stricter than national standards but must obtain a waiver from the federal Environmental Protection Agency. That has not happened. Other states, in turn, can opt for California's standards.

Washington, D.C., attorney Andrew Clubok, representing the plaintiffs, told Ishii that California's new rules are fuel-economy standards, which only the federal government can set.

"California thinks it's better to lead by example, even if it interferes with the position of the federal government," Clubok said.

He also said the federal Energy Policy and Conservation Act gives the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration the exclusive ability to set mileage regulations.

Clubok told Ishii the regulations would lead to a loss of jobs and the elimination of certain types of vehicles from the states that adopt the standard. He said it would increase highway fatalities and pollution.

He also said the valley would be hit especially hard because heavy-duty trucks needed in agriculture and related industries no longer would be available or would be much more expensive.

Automakers say the rules will increase vehicle prices at least \$3,000 as soon as they take effect. The air board estimates the increase at no more than \$1,000 by 2016, spokesman Jerry Martin said, a cost that savings in other areas would more than offset.

By contrast, Clubok said, the only stated benefit from California is a reduction in global warming, but even that claim, he said, would be disproved at trial.

Melnick, who called Clubok's statements a "parade of horrors" meant to frighten the public, said if the regulations are adopted, the industry can take action in state court.

David Doniger, a Washington, D.C.-based attorney for the National Resources Defense Council, which has joined the state in defending the regulations, said the industry should make its arguments to the EPA when the state seeks the waiver to implement the regulations.

Air District issues wind warning

Modesto Bee, Friday, September 15, 2006

Air pollution levels could climb through today across the San Joaquin Valley, prompting air pollution officials to issue a health warning. Moderately strong to gusty winds are expected to kick up dirt throughout the valley, a San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution District news release said. Soil that is dried out from the hot summer can blow around easily, forming air pollution and presenting potential health problems. "It would be nice if the wind came in a little slower because it would actually help mix the air and reduce pollution levels. But it's coming in strong, creating dust problems," meteorologist Shawn Ferreira said in the release. Exposure to dust and other particle pollution can aggravate lung disease, cause asthma attacks and acute bronchitis, and increase risk of respiratory infections. People with heart or lung diseases should follow doctors' advice for dealing with periods of unhealthy air quality when dust is present, the district said. Older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion. On the Net: For updated air quality information, go to www.valleyair.org/aqinfo/aqdataidx.htm.

Gusty winds to blast Valley

Cooler weather, more dust and pollution predicted

By Greg Ubbelohde, Staff writer

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Friday, Sept. 15, 2006

Visalia-area residents endured a sudden change in weather Thursday night that promises to last all day today and carry through most of the weekend.

Hot, calm weather was replaced by gusty winds that pushed into the area, preceding a cold front that promised to drop high temperatures into the mid-70s for the first time in months, forecasts say.

High winds are expected to continue kicking up dust throughout Tulare County today, prompting air-pollution officials to issue a statement of caution to the public, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District announced in a statement Thursday.

Air movement, in general, is good because it tends to scatter existing pollution levels, but it becomes a problem if the winds are too strong, said meteorologist Shawn Ferreira.

"We're seeing it all over the place," said Ferreira. "It would be nice if the wind came in a little slower because it would actually help mix the air and reduce pollution levels."

Exposure to dust and other air pollution from high-moving wind can cause serious health problems that include aggravating lung disease, increased asthma attacks and bring on acute bronchitis, as well as increasing the risk of respiratory infections, the advisory said.

Residents affected should stay indoors today. Also, people with heart or lung disease should follow doctor's advice when dealing with unhealthy air quality.

In addition, residents have to be extra cautious to not start fires that can spread rapidly in the dry, windy conditions.

Capt. Scott Smith of the Visalia Fire Department said one of the biggest reasons fires happen in high winds has nothing to do with behavior at all - but with trees.

"The wind blows trees into power lines," Smith said.

Temperatures dip

Along with the wind, temperatures will drop, said Jim Bagnall, meteorologist for the National Weather Service. He said this is due to a cold front that moved through Merced on Thursday.

"They've already knocked a good 15 degrees off of their temp since yesterday," Bagnall said.

The cold front will move through creating temperatures that hang around 75 degrees for the weekend. Although temperatures will go up to around 89 degrees next week, this cold front is the start of the seasonal pattern change, Bagnall said.

"It's on its way - knocking on the door even as we speak," Bagnall said.

Over the next 45 days, there will be a roller-coaster of cold fronts coming through the area. Each will gradually leave cooler air in the valley until the end of October, when the area will see regular highs of 75 degrees, Bagnall said.

Windy conditions wreak havoc on air quality in Valley.

By Jim Guy

The Fresno Bee, Friday, September 15, 2006

A cold front moving down California is bringing the central San Joaquin Valley a preview of fall weather, but it won't last long, the National Weather Service says.

The front arrived swiftly Thursday afternoon, darkening Valley skies and worrying some Toby Keith fans at Chukchansi Park (formerly Grizzlies Stadium) that it might rain on their concert, but there was never any danger of that. Meteorologist Michael Bingham said the front is all bluster — gusty winds and a few clouds.

"But that's it ... no rain at all," he said, except possibly high up at the crest of the Sierra Nevada.

The winds are kicking up dust, though. Visibility was cut to just a little more than a mile near Hanford on Thursday, and motorists were warned to watch for blowing dust on Interstate 5 and Highway 99.

The dust is bad news for air quality. Officials with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District issued a Valley-wide warning that air pollution levels might climb today.

"We're seeing it all over the place," said meteorologist Shawn Ferreira. "It would be nice if the wind came in a little slower because it would actually help mix the air and reduce pollution levels. But it's coming in strong, creating dust problems."

Residents in affected areas are advised to use caution today. People with heart or lung diseases should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of unhealthy air quality when dust is present.

Wind speed is expected to be between 10 and 20 mph today, and temperatures will be well below normal. Highs are expected to be 74 in Merced, 77 in Fresno and 79 in Visalia.

The winds will slow Saturday, and temperatures will begin to move higher, said meteorologist Bingham. By early next week, they should be back to normal.

"It happens in September," he said. "You get these dry fronts going through and cooling you off for a few days."

The cooling trend will also be felt in the Sierra, he said, with temperatures 10 to 15 degrees below normal today. But he said the warming trend will move in faster, with temperatures back to normal probably by Sunday.

Dust warning throughout Valley

Stockton Record, Friday, September 15, 2006

STOCKTON - High winds may kick up dust throughout the San Joaquin Valley today, potentially causing serious health problems, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District said Thursday.

Dust can aggravate lung disease, cause asthma attacks and acute bronchitis, as well as increase the risk of respiratory infections.

A dry cold front moving in from the north was expected to bring moderately strong to gusty winds through the day. That will stir the soil long dried out from the hot summer sun.

Older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure to the dust, including strenuous activities, and air pollution, officials said. Those with heart or lung ailments might wish to consult a doctor.

Microscopic bits of air pollution seem to reduce rainfall

by Ian Hoffman

Tri-Valley Herald, Sunday, Sept. 17, 2006

SACRAMENTO — Scientists say bits of air pollution as small as a thousandth of a hair's width appear to be reducing rain and snowfall in the Sierra, Cascades and Rockies, potentially adding to threats of water shortages tied to global warming.

Three years ago, Israeli cloud physicist Daniel Rosenfeld saw clues in data from a NASA satellite that tiny airborne grime released by everything from diesel trucks to cattle was affecting clouds and precipitation downwind of cities.

Now other scientists are finding the same phenomenon worldwide, from France to South Africa, and have witnessed the effects in flights over Sacramento, San Francisco, Oakland and the Sierra foothills.

Rosenfeld and colleagues are finding that polluted clouds drop 10 to 25 percent less rain and snow on mountains nearest to the Bay Area, Seattle, Salt Lake City, Tucson and Denver.

In the rest of Northern California, where the air is clean, there is no suppression of rain and snow in the nearest mountains, he said Thursday at the California Energy Commission's third annual conference on climate change.

"We've established that the amount of precipitation can change with what we put in the clouds," said Rosenfeld, chairman of the atmospheric sciences program at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

A few years ago, state officials considered a pollution impact on water supplies dubious. But those doubts are fading as the evidence mounts.

"I'm more and more convinced," said Guido Franco, a climate research manager at the state energy commission who funded the closer examination of clouds over the Bay Area. Scientists say global warming already is shrinking the usual winter snowfall season and hastening snowmelt in the Sierra. That snow supplies most of California's water for farms and cities. As emissions of greenhouse gases rise and California warms, the Northern Sierra will warm more than most of the state, and computer simulations show as much as 80 percent of that snowpack vanishing by the end of the century.

So far, said Franco, those computer simulations don't account for thinner rain and snowfall related to air pollution. That raises the possibility of saving water in California and other Western cities by cleaning up the air.

"In theory," Franco said, "we might be talking about a mitigation strategy" for global warming. In legislation over the last two years, state lawmakers are forcing automakers to make cars sold in California burn 30 percent less fuel and have committed the state to lower emissions of greenhouse gases overall. Those changes are likely to be accompanied by lower emissions of traditional air pollutants such as ammonia and soot.

The smallest particles are free from regulation. State and federal clean-air rules limit emissions of grime as small as 2.5 microns, but not the specks and droplets of pollution 100 times smaller that fill the air above California cities. Scientists detected them in specially equipped planes flying over the Bay and other urban areas.

"When you go from the Golden Gate across the Bay, they jump to high concentrations as soon as you cross the coast of Oakland," Rosenfeld said, and the pollution stays high in flights over cattle ranches of the Central Valley.

Those bits of pollution become seeds for cloud droplets that are so small that they don't readily fall as rain or freeze into snowflakes.

"This matters as much to the health of the clouds as to our own health," said Rosenfeld. "I think the day will come when sub-micron aerosols are monitored and regulated."

Dispute persists over trees as polluter

BY SARAH RUBY, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Monday, Sept. 17, 2006

Politicians won't touch it, air regulators hate to admit it and tree advocates would rather not discuss it, but here's the ugly truth: Plants are a thriving source of air pollution.

Tree emissions dwarf what comes from dairy cows. Dairies are pegged as major polluters, but plants out-emit dairies by more than 30-to-1 statewide. California's trees release some 2,000 tons of smog-forming gases daily. Dairies produce 60 tons each day.

All of it is harmless until fumes from automobiles and other engines mix in, creating summer smog.

Because trees also have benefits, such as sucking up carbon dioxide and providing shade, researchers haven't figured out whether they are overall good or bad for pollution.

Nevertheless - due in part to jurisdiction and politics - dairies, not trees, are a primary target of regional air regulators.

No joke

“(Former President) Reagan got laughed at for talking about (tree emissions) 30 years ago and a lot of people are afraid to talk about it now,” said J.P. Cativiela, a spokesman for the dairy industry group Community Alliance for Responsible Environmental Stewardship.

That’s not to say dairies shouldn’t be regulated, he said, but “sometimes we can get a little bit ridiculous when we think about pollution sources.”

In the San Joaquin Valley, where dairies are concentrated, plants out-emit dairy cows by more than five to one.

“Industry does bring this up,” said Stephen Shaw, an air quality specialist with the regional air authority known as the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. But regulators “consider natural resources something we can’t do anything about,” he said.

The district can control emissions from dairy cows, wineries, refineries and other non-vehicular sources. Models show reductions in these sectors help air quality despite what’s released by plants, district staffers say.

Business advocates often bristle at being the focus of air police. New rules can mean big money.

Existing dairies dodged expensive equipment this summer, largely because regulators’ understanding of dairy emissions changes with each new study. Until more research is done, dairies are allowed to make procedural changes to reduce emissions rather than invest in new equipment.

Was Reagan right?

Plant emissions shed light on Ronald Reagan’s infamous observation that trees pollute more than cars on the road. His statement dabbles in fact - plants outdo motor vehicles when it comes to one specific emission variety - but the larger picture is more complicated.

Automobiles, power plants and engines produce a range of pollutants, one of which sullies the air year-round. Some of them are toxic in themselves, but they also mix with benign gases to form pollution.

On the other hand, raw automobile emissions also “quench” certain kinds of pollution, said Don Hunsaker, a supervisor at the valley air district. It’s another paradox of air chemistry, he said.

“People throw their hands up and say ... why even bother,” he said. But “the problem’s too big. It’s a matter of working harder to (meet) the standards.”

The notion of plants as polluters has “really hurt” local efforts to encourage tree planting, said Dana Karcher, executive director of the Tree Foundation of Kern.

Trees absorb pollution, she said. Their shade creates a cooling effect, which keeps polluting gases from evaporating and slows down smog’s chemical reaction. A well-placed tree can also minimize the need for air conditioning fueled by polluting power plants.

“A shaded street or parking lot does more for air quality than micromanaging oak (trees),” she said.

The Center for Urban Forest Research in Davis is trying to quantify the benefit of trees. The think tank, which is affiliated with the U.S. Forest Service, is studying Sacramento’s canopy to figure out its net effect on air quality.

“There’s all sorts of ifs, ands or buts” when it comes to trees and air pollution, said Jim Simpson, a meteorologist with the center.

Tree species ooze emissions at vastly different rates, and whether those emissions contribute to smog depends on climate and the mix of pollutants already in the air.

With the right mix of trees in the right place, “I think they can be a net benefit,” Simpson said.

In the benefit column, Sacramento's 6 million trees remove about 1,000 tons of pollutants from the air each year, according to the center's research.

Trees do absorb carbon dioxide, but when trees die and decompose they release it again. The real carbon dioxide reduction is in prevention; Sacramento's shade reduces energy use, keeping 83,000 tons of carbon dioxide from being released from power plants.

The detriment column is still a work in progress, Simpson said. State data show plants in Sacramento County produce about 10 tons of emissions each day.

The forest for the trees

The city of Bakersfield doesn't account for air quality when it advises developers and residents on the kinds of trees to plant. Some trees that do best in Bakersfield's climate, such as oak and sycamore varieties, are also active emitters.

"When we start picking on our greenery, I don't know where we're going to go then," said Pat Denney, who supervises the city's tree maintenance crews.

The city no longer employs an urban forester to oversee the mix of trees in Bakersfield. The city is in the process of counting up its trees, but the inventory will be used to track tree maintenance rather than plan future tree planting.

If someone were planning Bakersfield's trees with regard to pollution, he or she should try to achieve a mix, said Greg McPherson, director of the Center for Urban Forest Research.

"It doesn't mean you don't plant native oak," he said. You just make sure "you're not kind of blindly planting trees that may in fact be high emitters."

In other words, the botanical bouquet needs to be managed - something long sought by Karcher and other tree advocates. They want the city to write a long-range plan for its trees, one that could address pollution and the value of shade.

"If you have a plan, the rest ... will follow," Karcher said.

Campaigner in chief

Written by John Upton

Tracy Press, Mon., Sept. 18, Lodi News Sentinel, Sat., Sept. 16, 2006

President Bush will continue making the rounds for Republican campaigners when he makes a trip to Stockton to stump for Rep. Richard Pombo.

President Bush will take a break from conducting his war against terror to visit Stockton on Oct. 3 to raise campaign cash for Rep. Richard Pombo, R-Tracy.

Pombo campaign consultant Wayne Johnson said it's normal for incumbent presidents and vice presidents to help candidates raise funds.

"It takes money to run campaigns," said Johnson, who said Bush would appear at a breakfast fundraiser.

The breakfast is expected to be at the Stockton Memorial Civic Auditorium.

Local fundraisers by Vice President Dick Cheney, Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert and House Majority Leader John Boehner have helped Pombo raise more than \$2.5 million this election cycle.

The money has helped Pombo fend off an expensive, frenzied attack by primary opponent Pete McCloskey, Democratic candidate Jerry McNerney and a range of activist groups, including

MoveOn.org, Defenders of Wildlife and the Sierra Club, in the race for the 11th Congressional District.

Pombo has been targeted for his close ties to convicted felon and former lobbyist Jack Abramoff and indicted former House Majority Leader Tom DeLay, but David Karol, a political science professor at University of California, Berkeley, said McNerney doesn't have enough money or visibility to make the scandals stick.

"I don't think it really helps Pombo to be seen with the president. ... I think what Bush can offer him at this point is help in fundraising," said Karol, who said Pombo remains the favorite in the race despite Bush's unpopularity across the country. A Sept. 7 Gallup poll found 39 percent of Americans approve of Bush's performance, while 56 percent disapprove.

Bush picked up 3 percent more votes in 2004 in the 11th District than his national average. Sierra Club spokesman Eric Antebi said Bush counted on Pombo, as chairman of the House Resources Committee, to support or turn a blind eye to oil-industry friendly policies on oil drilling and [air pollution](#).

"Pombo joined Bush in trying to allow oil companies to drill in special places like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and protected the coastline while weakening the rules that protect our waterways from drilling pollution," Antebi said. "And like Bush, Pombo's campaigns have gotten a big boost from oil industry contributions."

Pombo previously said that he wants to create more American jobs and wean the United States from foreign energy supplies by increasing domestic production.

Pombo supports Bush's commitment to keeping U.S. forces in Iraq — which, according to various government reports, had no weapons of mass destruction or links to al-Qaida when it was invaded — saying that an early withdrawal would be a disaster. At least 2,676 U.S. soldiers, including five soldiers from Tracy, have died in the war. Iraq Body Count has documented more than 43,000 Iraqi deaths, but no such government statistics are available.

Defenders of Wildlife and MoveOn.org organizer Ed Yoon said he would greet Bush with a protest, but South San Joaquin County Republican President Frank Aquila said the president will be welcomed by much of the community.

"I'm sure they'll go ahead and bus the protestors in, but any time the president comes — whether Republican or Democrat — you've got to honor that position, and I think the fact that President Bush is going to be here is absolutely outstanding."

McNerney's camp seemed unfazed by Bush's upcoming visit.

"If I were Pombo, I'd probably be stoked that Bush is coming out, because even George Bush is more popular than the Congress," said McNerney spokesman Rob Coughlan.

The visit was announced at a difficult time for the Republican Party, which is facing a pre-election backlash over the federal government's handling of the war in Iraq, Hurricane Katrina and oil prices.

Despite Pombo's formidable campaign war chest, the National Republican Congressional Committee spent more than \$55,000 helping Pombo this year.

Committee spokesman Jonathon Collegio said \$38,475 was spent a little more than a week ago on a mailer that attacks McNerney's tax policies.

"The (Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee) has targeted Richard Pombo, and the (National Republican Congressional Committee) wanted to level the playing field," Collegio said. A spokeswoman for the Democratic committee said Bush's visit is a sign that Pombo is in trouble. "National Republicans are spending money, and they're sending Bush in to raise money for Pombo because they know that his record of using his seat for personal enrichment makes him vulnerable and an unappealing choice for Californian voters," Kate Bedingfield said.

Pennsylvania poised to follow Calif.'s stricter car pollution rules

By MARC LEVY, - Associated Press Writer

in the Modesto Bee, Mon., Sept. 18, Sacramento Bee, San Francisco Chronicle & Bakersfield Californian Sun., Sept. 17, 2006

Pennsylvania is poised to adopt pollution standards that would require new cars to be cleaner-burning a year from now - and put the state in lockstep with California's efforts to impose even more stringent requirements by 2009.

Smog-reduction rules expected to be adopted for the 2008 model year would have little or no impact on the price of cars or the way they drive, state and industry officials say.

But more stringent greenhouse-gas reductions being sought by California on 2009 model-year cars would result in higher car prices, though advocates and opponents disagree about the amount. Automakers also say the greenhouse-gas standard, now the subject of litigation, would force them to make smaller cars with less horsepower.

The Environmental Quality Board is set to vote Tuesday, while the Independent Regulatory Review Commission would have 30 days to accept or reject the decision. Rendell and state lawmakers have appointees on both boards.

Rendell's top environmental protection official, Kathleen A. McGinty, said Pennsylvania needs to cut vehicle pollution to help the majority of the state's counties meet federal air quality standards.

The alternative is forcing expensive pollution cutbacks onto the state's heavy industries and power plants or losing federal highway dollars, McGinty said. If Pennsylvania adopts California's pollution standard, and California's greenhouse-gas rule survives the legal challenge, new cars will get better mileage - offsetting any sticker-price increases, she said.

"The evidence points to customers realizing a savings," McGinty said.

Nine other states, including New York and New Jersey, now follow the California standard. California is able to set its own rules - which states have the option of choosing over the federal government's less stringent standards - because it began regulating vehicle pollution before the federal government.

At Feduke Ford in Vestal, N.Y., sales manager Peter McEvoy said customers have not noticed any difference since New York began enforcing the tougher smog standard that Pennsylvania is considering.

"In fact, we often sell vehicles to customers in Pennsylvania with the lower emissions equipment on it," he said.

For now, California's pollution standard means cars must produce less smog-forming nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds, as well as less cancer-causing benzene.

California regulators are locked in a legal battle with automakers over the state's efforts to enforce what would be the world's most stringent rules on greenhouse-gas emissions from cars.

If the California Air Resources Board wins the case, 2009 model-year vehicles that are sold to residents of that state - as well as other states that follow California's rules - would have to produce, on average, 22 percent less tailpipe exhaust.

Heat-trapping greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, are believed by most scientists to contribute to global warming. Reductions in exhaust would also have a side benefit, California regulators say: They would make cars more fuel-efficient.

But automakers and some industry analysts say such a greenhouse-gas standard would mean building smaller cars with smaller engines and more lightweight materials like plastic and aluminum.

"It wouldn't be able to haul as much, it wouldn't be able to tow as much, it wouldn't have the same passenger space, it wouldn't have the same horsepower," said Charles Territo, a spokesman for the Washington, D.C.-based Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, which speaks for nine major foreign and domestic automakers, including Ford Motor Co. and General Motors Corp.

Territo said sticker prices could be forced up by \$3,000. Car companies "would have a very difficult time selling that vehicle to consumers," he said.

In their lawsuit, automakers contend that California's greenhouse-gas standard would not regulate pollution, but fuel economy - which is the sole responsibility of the federal government. The case is set to go to trial in January in federal court in Fresno, Calif.

The California Air Resources Board argues that reducing gases that contribute to global warming will yield health benefits and that the requirement should only increase car costs by about \$1,000. Only a handful of models currently meet the standard, including gas-electric hybrids.

Some Pennsylvania lawmakers have raised doubts about the wisdom of following standards set in California, and say the Rendell administration is overestimating any air-quality benefit.

Some also question whether higher car prices will prompt motorists to drive their older cars longer, thereby reducing the benefit of the tougher greenhouse-gas standard.

"If these vehicles cost more, people are going to keep their old vehicles more and that slows down fleet turnover," said Patrick Henderson, an aide to state Sen. Mary Jo White, the Venango County Republican who chairs the chamber's Environmental Resources and Energy Committee.

Carless in Sacramento

Could you live without an automobile? Meet folks who are getting around just fine

By Cynthia Hubert - Bee Staff Writer

Sacramento Bee, Sunday, September 17, 2006

Elia Bassin is 24 years old, gainfully employed -- and carless.

It's not that Bassin can't afford to drive. On the contrary, he figures he's better off financially and otherwise because he ditched his car.

High gas prices and insurance payments. Suffocating traffic. Competitive parking. None of these things faze Bassin, because for the past year he has traveled almost exclusively by bicycle, with assists from the city bus, light rail and Amtrak.

"For me, it's the most liberating thing ever," says Bassin, a Sacramento County planner who lives in midtown, just a couple of miles from his office. "Even if driving a car is faster, it's far more aggravating than cycling or walking. I would rather spend twice as much time getting somewhere by bike than sit in traffic. And I'm definitely saving a lot of money."

People who choose not to drive may once have been considered freakish, but today "it's becoming kind of a cool thing to do," says Bassin.

For whatever reason, the car-free lifestyle does appear to be catching on.

There are car-free magazines, car-free chat rooms and car-free networks. The car-free crowd has its own Web sites, newsletters and clubs. A new book, "How To Live Well Without Owning a Car" (Ten Speed Press, \$12.95, 216 pages), is getting national attention.

Every day, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, about 6 million American adults commute to and from work without stepping into a car. In a recent Gallup poll, about half of Americans said they have cut back significantly on the amount they drive because of gas prices.

Living without a car in Sacramento is obviously more challenging than in places such as San Francisco or New York, which are designed for walking and commuting by public transit. But believe it or not, people are going carless every day in the capital city.

According to the Census Bureau, about 9 percent of Sacramento residents commute without benefit of a car. That places the city in fifth place among California's larger burghs, behind San Francisco, Oakland, Santa Ana and Long Beach.

The key to living well sans car, Bassin says, is having a home or apartment near work, restaurants, grocery stores and recreational areas. For him and many others, midtown and downtown are good fits. Bassin does have a motorcycle, which he uses for trips such as an upcoming doctor's appointment in Roseville. "It gets about 65 miles per gallon," he notes.

"My new life goal," Bassin says, "is to never again own a car."

Erin Reschke plans to stay car-free for a while, too, at least as long as she's living in Sacramento. For Reschke, the moment of truth came when she crashed her Pontiac Grand Prix about six months ago. She lives and works in midtown and is concerned about the environment and the nation's dependence on oil, so she decided it was the perfect time to stop driving. "My life really hasn't changed at all," she says.

Reschke, who is 24 and teaches bike safety courses, uses a special carrier to haul groceries and other heavy items. Her employer, an architectural firm, provides secure parking for her bike and even gives her a \$50 monthly incentive for not bringing a car to work.

"I had so many hassles with my car: having to move it for street cleaning, finding a place to park, all of the fees and expenses," she says. "All of those hassles are gone."

Reschke says she's not sure why more people don't abandon the driving life.

"Hardly anyone I know really enjoys owning a car," she says. "But they're just not confident enough to let it go."

Owen Howlett hasn't let it go completely, but he's close. Call him "car lite."

On weekdays, Howlett, who is 32 and lives near the UC Davis Medical Center off Stockton Boulevard, rides his bike to work at a research firm in Fair Oaks. But he also has a silver Volkswagen Beetle that he uses for errands and recreation.

"I'm not doing this to make any kind of political statement," says Howlett. "I just see riding my bike to work as the best and most pleasurable option for me. Why would you want to go to work in a car? You get no exercise, you're spending a whole lot of money and you're [polluting the air.](#)"

If the weather is particularly foul, he confesses, he takes the Beetle. But most days he's content with riding to work in shorts and a T-shirt, then changing into office clothing.

"When I cycle to work, I get to see things along the way that I wouldn't get to see otherwise," he says. "This morning I saw a doe and a fawn, and I was able to stop and check them out."

Even a suburbanite can survive without driving. Charles McCann is living proof of it.

It helps that McCann, 30, lives three miles from his job at Intel in Folsom, and within walking distance of favorite eateries and pubs, as well as the bike trail, the library and a light rail stop. "It's all about location, location, location," he says.

When he wants to join friends for dinner in Sacramento, he hops on the light rail train. The train also takes him to a bus stop that will deliver him to the airport. But he has to find other ways of getting home in the evenings, since light rail to Folsom doesn't run at night.

"I get a lot of questions," McCann says of his car-free choice. "How do you date? How do you get to work? Don't you really wish you had a car?"

"In this country we've been conditioned to the idea of driving everywhere. But living without a car is not that hard. It's just different."

According to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, Americans spend about 17 percent of their annual income on car ownership and operating expenses. Without a vehicle, McCann figures he's saving \$650 to \$700 per month, allowing him to clear his debt, put the maximum amount in his 401(k) plan and go out to eat on a regular basis.

"That's great motivation," he says.

Chris Balish also gets by without a car. And if he can do it, it's fair to say that almost anyone can. After all, Balish, author of the book about living the car-free life, lives without an automobile in Los Angeles, the epicenter of car culture.

"I get all over the greater L.A. area by combining biking and public transit," he says. His main motivation? He figures he's saving more than \$10,000 per year in car payments, insurance, gas and maintenance.

After four years of life without a car, "I'm 100 percent free of debt," he brags. A broadcast journalist, Balish has saved so much money that he's taking a couple of years off to work on books and to travel. Cycling has kept him physically fit, and he feels good about doing his share to curb air pollution and traffic congestion. Commuting by train or bus also is less stressful and more productive, he says, as he can read or work while he rides.

Granted, Balish is a healthy, 30-something single guy without children. He acknowledges that the car-free lifestyle is more challenging for parents with young kids, disabled people and folks whose livelihoods depend on driving, such as salespeople with far-flung territories to cover.

The key to navigating Los Angeles without a car? Balish lives close to transit hubs, plans ahead for trips to places such as the Staples Center, museums and Dodger Stadium, and does his errands and shopping close to home. Dating is often a picnic on the beach or a bike ride. For weekend trips, Balish occasionally rents cars, and once in a while he imposes on friends to take him places that are not easily accessible by bike or public transit.

"It definitely takes a little longer for me to get around than it did when I had a car," he says, "and in the early days, before I figured things out, I did get stranded a few times." Naturally, he gets sweaty when he cycles, and he sometimes has to carry a change of clothes. Once, he arrived at an important interview soaking wet after getting caught in a rainstorm.

"There's a learning curve and you're going to make mistakes," says Balish, who stopped driving when he lived in St. Louis and sold his gas-guzzling SUV. "But when you consider all of the benefits, it's definitely worth it."

California defends rules on auto emissions of greenhouse gases

By SAMANTHA YOUNG, - Associated Press Writer

in the Tri-Valley Herald, Sat., Sept. 16, Sacramento Bee, Fresno Bee & S.F. Chronicle, Fri., Sept. 15, 2006

California should be permitted to enact the world's toughest vehicle-emission standards as part of its effort to combat global warming, a state attorney told a federal judge Friday.

"Congress wanted California to be an innovator," California Deputy Attorney General Mark Melnick argued in U.S. District Court in defense of regulations seeking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from automobiles.

At issue are tailpipe emission standards for greenhouse gases approved in 2004 by the California Air Resources Board. The rules are designed to cut polluting exhaust from cars and light trucks by 25 percent and from sport utility vehicles by 18 percent.

A coalition of automakers is challenging the rules as a de-facto mandate on fuel-economy standards, which can be set only by the federal government.

"The so-called carbon dioxide, greenhouse gas emissions standards, or whatever label California puts on its standards, are in fact fuel-economy standards," said Andrew Clubok, an attorney representing the lawsuit's main plaintiff, Central Valley Chrysler-Jeep Inc. "The only way to reduce carbon dioxide is to increase fuel economy."

Some European countries and Japan already have higher fuel-efficiency standards than the United States. But automakers say those stricter benchmarks can be met because drivers in those countries have smaller cars with manual transmissions, both of which use less gas. They said the technology does not yet exist or cannot be applied practically to the larger vehicles generally used in the U.S.

In addition, Clubok argued that the California regulation would "massively" increase the cost of vehicles, eliminate some types of trucks used by farmers, lead to more highway fatalities and cause more air pollution. He said drivers of fuel-efficient cars often drive more, spewing other non-regulated pollutants into the air.

A decision in the case could have national implications. Ten other states have adopted the stricter California standard, which caps greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles beginning in 2009. The state attorney general's office has urged U.S. District Court Judge Anthony Ishii to rule immediately, while automakers want to proceed to a trial that is scheduled to start Jan. 30. Ishii took more than two hours of arguments Friday and said he would take the state's motion under submission.

California's attempt to limit tailpipe emissions is a key component of a broader state effort to reduce its emissions of gases that contribute to global warming. The state wants to cut the amount of such gases to 1990 levels by 2020.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is expected to sign a bill later this month that would take another key step toward that goal. That legislation would force factories, power plants and refineries to cut their emissions of greenhouse gases, a move opposed by many business groups.

The projected reduction in vehicle emissions accounts for about one third of the state's strategy, said Linda Adams, secretary of the California Environmental Protection Agency. If the court rejects the state's tailpipe emissions, the factory regulations might need to be delayed by the governor, she said during negotiations last month on the bill.

California has special authority under the Clean Air Act to set its own vehicle pollution standards because it began regulating air pollution before the federal government did. It must get a waiver from the Environmental Protection Agency before setting new requirements and has an application pending with the agency.

Other states can adopt either the federal standards or California's rules. Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington have adopted the California emission requirements that are now being challenged. During Friday's hearing, attorneys for the state countered the arguments by automakers linking tailpipe emissions with fuel standards.

They said California's rules simply restrict greenhouse gas emissions, a goal that can be achieved through new technology or the use of alternative fuels.

Attorneys for Chrysler-Jeep and the Association of International Automobile Manufacturers argued that California is prohibited from enacting its emission standards under the federal Energy Policy and Conservation Act.

That 1975 law gives the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration the exclusive ability to set national gas mileage rules. The automakers contend California is trying to do that on its own through the regulations on tailpipe emissions.

In March, the agency concluded that new national gas mileage rules for light trucks would pre-empt any state emissions standards under the Energy Act, dealing a blow to the state's defense. The manufacturer's association represents the world's largest car companies: BMW Group, DaimlerChrysler AG, Ford Motor Co., General Motors Corp., Honda, Hyundai, Mitsubishi Motors, Mazda, Nissan, Porsche, Volkswagen and Toyota Motor Co.

Melnick, the deputy attorney general, dismissed the automakers' interpretation of the Energy Act. He said it requires the agency to take into account "other motor vehicle standards" - such as California's - when making regulations that apply nationwide. "What one must consider, one can't pre-empt," Melnick said.

In addition to the fuel economy issue, automakers have challenged California's authority to set greenhouse gas rules on its own. They say such action violates laws related to competition, interstate commerce and foreign policy.

The auto regulations stem from legislation authored by Assemblywoman Fran Pavley, D-Agoura Hills, and signed into law by former Gov. Gray Davis in 2002. The air board spent two years devising the regulations.

The auto industry sued in December 2004, three months after the board adopted the standards. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has supported the law.

Small steps can help fight global warming

By Mike Lee

San Diego Tribune, Friday, September 15, 2006

Global warming is starting to get personal in San Diego County.

As dire omens about climate change grab the public's attention, efforts are ramping up across the region to deal with a threat that until recent months failed to capture much interest outside scientific circles.

The underlying theme is that relatively small actions – for instance, driving less and designing low-energy buildings – can make a big difference if enough people adopt them.

“A whole bunch of initiatives . . . are beginning to show people there are different ways that we can approach this problem,” said Naomi Oreskes, a UCSD professor who studies the history of science.

“This should have happened quite a few years ago,” she said.

Credit for the newfound interest in global warming commonly is given to the Al Gore movie “An Inconvenient Truth” and weather phenomena such as Hurricane Katrina. Even this summer's California heat wave played a role.

“It's just becoming harder and harder to ignore,” said Pedro Morillas, citizen outreach director for Environment California in San Diego.

What can be done

How to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in San Diego:

Increase recycling from apartments, condos and construction projects.

Plant more shade trees.

Reduce fuel consumption by city vehicles.

Purchase products that are made with environmentally friendly processes.

Use more energy from renewable sources.

Source: City of San Diego Climate Protection Plan, July 2005

The environmental advocacy group yesterday released a report that said the first seven months of 2006 were the warmest such period in the continental United States since measurements began.

The average temperature was 55.3 degrees during that period, 3.2 degrees above the 20th-century average, it said.

Last year was the warmest year in more than a century, according to NASA.

Scientists link the cause to a dramatic rise in the amount of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, in the atmosphere. These gases, released by fossil-fuel burning and other sources, trap Earth's heat.

Scientific journals regularly report new climate change fallout, from melting glaciers to rain forests dying.

In California, one long-term threat is for rising sea levels to cause flooding and major erosion of the coastline.

Such possibilities prompted the San Diego City Council on Wednesday to dust off a 2005 Climate Protection Action Plan that aims to curb greenhouse gas emissions.

It listed public-sector actions, such as trimming fuel consumption by city vehicles, but said residents and businesses need to help.

The Natural Resources and Culture Committee sent the report to the city's independent budget analyst for review.

Just a few weeks earlier, City Attorney Michael Aguirre released his "call to action" for San Diego to reduce global warming and prepare for its effects. The same day, the state Legislature passed a bill to curb California's greenhouse gas emissions. The governor is expected to sign it.

In the meantime, apprehension is spreading.

Water agencies, including the County Water Authority, are warning about a future with a smaller winter snowpack, which means a greater need for water conservation.

Water managers in Western states are looking at climate predictions and saying, "Maybe we better start thinking a little more seriously about the long-range impacts of global warming on the water supply," said Water Authority spokesman John Liarakos.

In addition, fire experts are increasingly worried about what higher temperatures mean for wildfires in California and elsewhere.

The Association for Fire Ecology, an international group of land managers and academics, will meet in San Diego this fall to address what it calls an increase in extreme blazes.

"Under future drought and high-heat scenarios, fires may become larger more quickly and be more difficult to manage," said an association document, the San Diego Declaration on Climate Change.

Numerous other groups are trying to change the future in ways large and small.

For instance, Children's Museum San Diego is erecting a building with a ventilation system that relies on breezes instead of power sources that emit greenhouse gases as they warm and cool the air.

A key player in the project was Paul Linden, the chairman of the Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering Department at UCSD. To help with the design, he modeled air currents in downtown San Diego, said Rex Graham, spokesman for UCSD's Jacobs School of Engineering.

“At the heart of this is a real sense of urgency to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases,” Graham said.

In Gamble, Calif. Tries to Curb Greenhouse Gases

By FELICITY BARRINGER

New York Times, Friday, September 15, 2006

SACRAMENTO — In the Rocky Mountain States and the fast-growing desert Southwest, more than 20 power plants, designed to burn coal that is plentiful and cheap, are on the drawing boards. Much of the power, their owners expected, would be destined for the people of California. But such plants would also be among the country's most potent producers of carbon dioxide, the king of gases linked to global warming. So California has just delivered a new message to these energy suppliers: If you cannot produce power with the lowest possible emissions of these greenhouse gases, we are not interested.

“When your biggest customer says, ‘I ain't buying,’ you rethink,” said Hal Harvey, the environment program director at the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, in Menlo Park, Calif. “When you have 38 million customers you don't have access to, you rethink. Selling to Phoenix is nice. Las Vegas is nice. But they aren't California.”

California's decision to impose stringent demands on suppliers even outside its borders, broadened by the Legislature on Aug. 31 and awaiting the governor's signature, is but one example of the state's wide-ranging effort to remake its energy future.

The Democratic-controlled legislature and the Republican governor also agreed at that time on legislation to reduce industrial carbon dioxide emissions by 25 percent by 2020, a measure that affects not only power plants but also other large producers of carbon dioxide, including oil refineries and cement plants.

The state's aim is to reduce emissions of climate-changing gases produced by burning coal, oil and gas. Other states, particularly New York, are moving in some of the same directions, but no state is moving as aggressively on as many fronts. No state has been at it longer. No state is putting more at risk.

Whether all this is visionary or deluded depends on one's perspective. This is the state that in the early 1970's jump-started the worldwide adoption of catalytic converters, the devices that neutralize most smog-forming chemicals emitted by tailpipes. This is the state whose per capita energy consumption has been almost flat for 30 years, even as per capita consumption has risen 50 percent nationally.

Taking on global warming is a tougher challenge. Though California was second in the nation only to Texas in emissions of carbon dioxide in 2001, and 12th in the world, it produced just 2.5 percent of the world's total. At best, business leaders asked in a legislative hearing, what difference could California's cuts make? And at what cost?

California, in fact, is making a huge bet: that it can reduce emissions without wrecking its economy, and therefore inspire other states — and countries — to follow its example on slowing climate change.

Initiatives addressing climate change are everywhere in California, pushed by legislators, by regulators, by cities, by foundations, by businesses and by investors.

Four years ago, California became the first state to seek to regulate emissions of carbon dioxide from automobile tailpipes. Car dealers and carmakers are challenging the law in federal court.

In late August, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed a measure requiring builders to offer home buyers roofs with tiles that convert sunlight into electricity. Homeowners in some communities are already choosing them to reduce their electric bills.

California, which has for decades required that refrigerators, air conditioners, water heaters and other appliances become more energy efficient, just added to the list: first, chargers for cellphones or computers; second, set-top boxes and other remote-controlled devices. Those categories consume up to 10 percent of a home's power.

Last fall, California regulators barred major investor-owned electrical utilities from signing long-term contracts to buy energy unless the seller's greenhouse-gas emissions meet a stringent standard.

"We are dealing with it across the board," said Michael R. Peevey, the president of the Public Utilities Commission. By contrast, the Bush administration has been averse to any legislative assault on climate change.

Opponents say California may hurt its own residents with its clean-energy mandate. Scott Segal, a lawyer for Bracewell & Giuliani who represents electric utilities, summarized California's policy as: "All electrons are not created equal. We're going to discriminate against some of them, and create artificial barriers in the marketplace for electricity." California consumers could end up paying more for their energy and struggling to find enough, Mr. Segal said.

Is California dreaming? Can its multifaceted approach become a toolkit for other states? Will investors make the state the incubator for clean-energy technologies that will reduce its energy bills and buoy its economy? Or will all this turn California into a stagnating economic island of ever-rising electricity prices and ever-rolling blackouts?

One thing is certain: The issue will not go away. This summer, a brutal California heat wave killed roughly 140 people. A 2004 National Academy of Sciences report predicted that, at the current growth rate of emissions, there would be at least five times as many heat waves in Los Angeles by 2100 compared with the current historical average, and twice as many heat-related deaths. The study predicted that at least half the state's alpine forests would disappear by century's end, and that the Sierra snowpack — crucial to California's water supply — would decline by at least 29 percent and as much as 70 percent.

There seems to be political support, in California and nationally, for action on climate change. Statewide, a July 26 poll from the Public Policy Institute of California showed that 79 percent of 2,051 people surveyed said that global warming was a "very serious" or a "somewhat serious" threat to the state's economy and quality of life. The findings mirrored those of a national poll of 1,206 people conducted in mid-August by The New York Times and CBS News.

But polling organizations have asked little about the potentially painful sacrifices that may be required.

The Car Culture

Back in the 1950's, when the movie director George Lucas was growing up, cars rocked around the clock in Modesto, and they were so enshrined in his 1973 hit, "American Graffiti." The movie reaffirmed what much of the nation knew — there was no car culture like California's. Sleek convertibles? Muscle cars? Sport utility vehicles? Many were hatched in the design studios of Detroit, but popularized by Hollywood movies and celebrities, and by plain old California consumers.

Fast forward to August. In the middle of the sales lot at Modesto Toyota sat a long row of sport utility vehicles the dealership had acquired as trade-ins in previous weeks. Leaning on a 2006 Ford Expedition, George S. Ismail, a sales manager, said, "We're getting a lot of people trading in

their sport utility vehicles for smaller cars." Even heavily discounted, the used S.U.V.'s sit for weeks.

Yet Modesto Toyota is breaking records, Mr. Ismail said, selling about 400 vehicles a month, up from 260 a year ago. Most are small cars — Camrys and Corollas. Some are hybrid vehicles that use even less fuel, like the Prius. One-quarter of 200,000 new hybrid vehicles registered nationwide in 2005 belonged to Californians, according to the automotive analyst R. L. Polk. With smaller cars increasingly popular, California now burns less gasoline per capita than all but six states. Burning less gasoline cuts carbon dioxide. Tailpipes account for more than half the state's carbon dioxide emissions, federal figures show.

Much of this change in driver taste is attributable to the higher price of gasoline. But what if gasoline prices fall again and bigger, less efficient vehicles become more popular? California has an answer.

It came from Assemblywoman Fran Pavley, a Democrat and former schoolteacher who drives a Prius and whose South Coast district has a bird's-eye view of the smoggy Los Angeles basin. Four years ago Ms. Pavley wrote the first state law regulating carbon dioxide emissions from cars and trucks. It requires vehicle makers to eventually reduce the average emissions of carbon dioxide of the mix of cars it sells in California by 30 percent, beginning with the 2009 model year. Light trucks, including sport utility vehicles, must meet the same standard by the 2016 model year.

Ten states, including New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, have followed suit. Canada instituted voluntary emissions reductions at similar levels, which major automobile manufacturers have agreed they can meet. "We think that, coupled with Canada, we're now over one-third of the market," Ms. Pavley said in an interview.

But automobile manufacturers and some dealerships have vowed to wipe her law from the books. Their lawsuit's central assertion is that, by regulating carbon dioxide emissions, California is using a backdoor means to control fuel efficiency, which, under the federal Energy Policy and Conservation Act, is the exclusive preserve of the federal Transportation Department. To produce less carbon dioxide, cars would have to be more fuel efficient.

On Sept. 15, Judge Anthony W. Ishii of Federal District Court in Fresno will hear arguments on California's request to dismiss the case. If the lawsuit survives, the first hearing is set for January. This schedule overlaps with that of another case with direct bearing on this issue. The Supreme Court, petitioned by a dozen states, led by Massachusetts, and three cities, including New York, will decide whether the law requires the Environmental Protection Agency to declare carbon dioxide a pollutant and to regulate it. The Bush administration contends it has no authority to do either.

If the Supreme Court accepts the administration's arguments, it will not help California in its legal fight against Detroit, because a key to the state's case is the contention that carbon dioxide is in fact a pollutant under the Clean Air Act.

Hungry Electronics

Imagine all the small electronic devices in a modern home — iPods and handheld organizers, cellphones and laptops — charging at a power strip.

Arthur H. Rosenfeld, a member of the California Energy Commission, knows how much electricity is wasted when people unplug the devices but leave the charger plugged in. Dr. Rosenfeld estimates that such chargers — along with appliances like televisions that draw power even when they are off because they are designed to respond to remote controls — use up to 10 percent of an average home's power.

He calls them “vampires” — things with teeth that suck power at night.

Recently, Dr. Rosenfeld proudly held up a small green cellular phone charger that consumes less than half a watt of electricity — a fifth as much as its predecessors — when left plugged into an outlet. It meets state standards that take effect in 2007. The same standards will require sharp power cutbacks from audio and video equipment, both when the devices are in use and when they are standing by for a remote signal.

Since the 1970's, California's energy-efficiency standards have reduced electricity consumption by the equivalent of the output of more than 20 average power plants, Dr. Rosenfeld said. And the standards have become templates for other states and Washington. Nationally, Dr. Rosenfeld added, energy-efficiency policies have saved the economy \$700 billion since the 1970's. But why would utilities, which sell electricity, have any interest in seeing sales diminish? In 1982, the Public Utilities Commission decoupled utilities' sales and their profits by allowing rate increases for utilities that helped customers cut energy use.

The logic was that for every dollar the consumer did not spend on energy, the utility would get real income — say 15 cents, which would exceed the profit the utility could have made on that dollar. For consumers, efficiency savings more than offset the rate increases. “Even though rates go up, bills go down,” said Mr. Harvey of the Hewlett Foundation.

Ralph Cavanagh, the co-director of the energy program at the Natural Resources Defense Counsel, said: “Every other state in the country rewards utilities for selling more energy. It's a perfectly perverse incentive.”

Mr. Peevey, of the utilities commission, said he expected new efficiencies to absorb half the increase in demand as the state grows to 40 million people, from 38 million.

Mr. Peevey's commission has also been a prime mover in increasing state support for residential solar power. Solar energy remains four times as expensive as electricity produced by conventional fuels. But, he said, “the idea is to make the solar industry a self-sustaining, economically viable industry,” and to make the cost come down.

California businesses and investors, public and private, are getting into the act. The state's huge pension fund, Calpers, is committing just under \$1 billion to renewable-energy investments. Among the early incentive-driven ventures in solar power are the homes in the Carsten Crossings subdivision in Rocklin, a Sacramento suburb. In August, Mr. Schwarzenegger signed legislation making solar panels a standard option for new-home buyers by 2012 and ensuring that utilities reduce homeowners' bills based on the electricity returned to the grid.

Some of those incentives were available when construction started. Now four families have moved in. They see themselves as pragmatists, not crusaders. “This is the next logical step” in construction, said one of the homeowners, Lt. Col. Thomas Sebens, a specialist in drone aircraft at Beale Air Force Base.

Their roofs show how public and private decisions, markets and government, have meshed. T. J. Rodgers, a fiercely anti-regulatory entrepreneur, underwrote the solar cells' production. The PowerLight Corporation, based near San Francisco, bought the cells from Mr. Rodgers's company, the SunPower Corporation, and turned them into roof tiles. The tiles ended up on houses built by Grupe Homes, based in Stockton, because state utility regulators established a \$5,500 state-financed rebate for builders who install similar systems, which cost \$20,000. Federal law gives home buyers a \$2,000 tax credit; state law guarantees lower electric bills as utilities buy back power homeowners do not need.

The July utility bills, the new homeowners' first, were the talk of the neighborhood.

Larry Brittain, an office products salesman with a four-bedroom, 2,400-square-foot home, was the winner at \$73.27 for electricity in the month ending July 25 — the hottest July on record. For the last 10 June days in a similar house nearby, his bill was \$103.

“This is a bet with a winning hand,” Mr. Brittain said. “You can’t lose.”

Pressure on Suppliers

In Gerlach, Nev., 100 miles north of Reno, a high desert butte was made ready two years ago for its wedding to the Granite Fox Power Project, a plant designed to burn pulverized Western coal. Electrical transmission lines were close by.

But, like Miss Havisham in Dickens’s “Great Expectations,” Gerlach waits for a groom that may never arrive. The plant was a certain source of significant new carbon dioxide emissions. Mr. Cavanagh predicted that it “would wipe out all the carbon dioxide savings from California’s spectacularly successful efforts to save electricity during 2001 and 2002.”

Southern Californians would likely be the eventual customers. But last fall, the California Public Utilities Commission barred the investor-owned utilities it regulates from signing long-term contracts for electricity if the emissions exceeded those of the cleanest gas-driven plants. The only technology that could accomplish that with coal is expensive and has not been perfected. Said Mr. Peevey of the commission, “All we’re saying is, Fine, you send it here, but it has to be, in terms of air quality and greenhouse gas emissions, it has to be comparable to the newest combined-cycle gas turbine.” One fifth of California’s electricity comes from coal, the vast majority of it from outside the state.

This past winter, Sempra Energy, the parent of San Diego Gas & Electric and Sempra Generation and the developer of Granite Fox, put the project up for sale. Neal E. Schmale, Sempra’s president, said the ruling had had a negligible impact on the decision. High natural gas prices prompted the company to invest in gas storage and terminals instead, Mr. Schmale said.

Among California environmentalists, however, the “for sale” sign on Granite Fox was taken as a victory for a pioneering policy that reaches beyond the state’s borders. V. John White, an environmental lobbyist in Sacramento, compares building a Southwestern power plant to building a mall: California is a desirable anchor tenant.

But California is also the state where electricity deregulation foundered in 2000; bills soared and an economic crisis ensued. Even without a crisis, Californians’ electricity rates are about 40 percent above the national average.

Robert McIlvaine, a coal industry consultant from Northfield, Ill., said, “If you are going to generate electricity from gas, the cost of doing so is going to be considerably greater than coal — 50 percent more or 100 percent more.”

But, Mr. Harvey said: “People don’t pay rates. They pay bills. You can have twice the rate and half the consumption and be just as happy.”

On Aug. 31, legislators enacted the bill sponsored by the State Senate president, Don Perata, Democrat of Oakland, and extended the commission’s rule to all power providers.

Business people ask if this could provoke another crisis. Power-plant siting experts, like Thomas A. Johns, the vice president of development at Sithe Global Power, a New York company, say that, in the short term, the loss of California business may not matter much to the merchants of power in the Southwest. Fast-growing cities like Phoenix and Las Vegas are ready markets. In the long run, however, “California is a big piece” of the total consumption in the West — 40 percent, Mr. Johns said. “If 40 percent of the Western load will not buy coal, you will have less coal.”

The risk, both Mr. Johns and Mr. Schmale said, is in increasing the state's reliance on natural gas, whose price has been extremely volatile in recent years. (California law bars construction of nuclear plants until the questions of waste disposal are resolved.)

"When you exclude coal and nuclear from your base load," Mr. Johns said, "you've only got one option, and that's natural gas." Another measure awaiting the governor's signature toughens standards by requiring that by 2010, 20 percent of the energy sold in California comes from a portfolio of renewable sources, like geothermal and wind. Last year, 10.7 percent of California's power came from renewable sources.

New renewable energy sources could make prices less volatile, but Mr. Schmale of Sempra said California's policy makers need to muster "the political will" to build transmission lines and "all those other things that would be necessary to make the environmental things work."

Caps, Costs and Credits

Perhaps the most ambitious measure California has undertaken is the newly mandated 25 percent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions. "If we do it right," Mr. Schwarzenegger said at a news conference, "it can be an example for the rest of the world and the rest of the country to see." If not, the concept could be discredited.

The law, sponsored by Ms. Pavley and the Assembly speaker, Fabian Núñez, Democrat of Los Angeles, gives the California Air Resources Board authority to set industry-specific targets for emissions reductions, effective in 2012, and to establish mechanisms — including the creation of emissions allowances that companies might trade or bank — to facilitate compliance. These targets would be adjusted from 2012 to 2020 to meet the 25 percent goal.

Those who have studied the question agree that the new system will cost consumers more. "A cap-and-trade system will raise the cost of electricity to consumers to some degree," said Lawrence H. Goulder, a professor of environmental and resource economics at Stanford University.

As the European Union found after the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, figuring out how to assign emissions credits is not easy.

Whatever the decisions, chances are that they will be met by a lawsuit. Margo Thorning, the chief economist at the American Council for Capital Formation, a group supporting business interests, argues in a study that "sharp cutbacks in California's energy use would be necessary to close the 41 percent gap in 2020 between projected emissions" and the cuts the law requires. Dr. Thorning added in an interview, "The technologies that will enable us to move quickly in a cost-effective way away from fossil fuel just aren't there yet."

Allan Zaremborg, president of the state Chamber of Commerce, predicted that businesses would flee to unregulated areas and continue to emit climate-changing gases.

Dr. Thorning's study was countered in mid-August with a study by David Roland-Holst, an adjunct professor of agricultural and resource economics at the University of California, Berkeley. Professor Roland-Holst argued that the new law would add \$60 billion and 17,000 jobs — in fields like alternative energy — to the California economy by 2020 by attracting new investment.

James D. Marston, the head of state global warming programs for Environmental Defense, the New York group that helped lead the fight for California's new carbon cap, said, "We'll look back in 10 years and say this was the final breakthrough and the final political consensus that we have to do something meaningful on global warming."

Jerry Brown releases ads against Chuck Poochigian

Stockton Record, Saturday, September 16, 2006

The ads: All make the case that Fresno state Sen. Chuck Poochigian, whose district includes part of San Joaquin County, is too extreme for California.

Claim: That Poochigian "wants to outlaw abortion."

The facts: This claim goes too far. Poochigian does personally oppose abortions except in cases of rape, incest or to save the life of the mother, but he says if elected as attorney general he would enforce existing law and not seek to change it.

Ironically, the state Republican Party is running ads attacking Brown for his opposition to the death penalty; Brown also says he would enforce existing law and not seek to change it.

Brown's campaign makes the claim largely based on a questionnaire from the California Pro-Life Council that gives Poochigian a 100 percent rating. The questionnaire includes a question that asks candidates whether they'd overturn Roe v. Wade. But both the council and Poochigian say he never filled out that questionnaire; his perfect rating is based on Poochigian's long voting record as a member of the state Assembly and Senate.

As a legislator, Poochigian has consistently voted against measures supporting existing abortion rights.

Claim: That Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown "will always defend your right to choose."

The facts: For the most part, Brown has supported abortion rights for much of his long career, and he opposed last year's Proposition 73, which would have required a minor seeking an abortion to tell her parents first and wait at least 48 hours before undergoing the procedure. But in 1988, after spending time with Mother Theresa, Brown did say, "the killing of the unborn is crazy."

Claim: That Poochigian opposed the 2004 state ban on the sale of .50-caliber rifles.

The facts: True. Poochigian voted against the ban because he said this weapon, used by long-range target shooters as well as by the military and law enforcement, is rarely used to commit crimes. The rifles typically weigh about 30 pounds and cost several thousand dollars.

There have been several recent incidents, however, including a foiled murder plot in Minnesota earlier this year in which one of the rifles was found in a suspect's home. A man charged with a triple murder in Cincinnati late last year had a .50-caliber rifle in his home, and a Kansas City man shot at police with one during a standoff in 2004.

Claim: Poochigian opposes stem cell research as well as tougher standards for water and air pollution.

The facts: Largely true. Poochigian has indeed opposed numerous clean-air and water bills in the Legislature, largely because they were opposed by the San Joaquin Valley's agriculture industry. Poochigian's district includes some of the richest farmland on the planet, and he has opposed many of the provisions as being bad for business.

Poochigian did, however, sponsor a bill to retire old, smog-belching school buses - San Joaquin County has one of the largest such fleets - which passed the Legislature last year.

Cost of air travel measured in terms of pollution, not dollars

Travelocity and Expedia partner with groups that fund clean energy projects and reforestation.

JAMES GILDEN

Los Angeles Times, Sunday, September 17, 2006

In the United States, air travel generates as much as 10% of transportation-based emissions of carbon dioxide, the primary greenhouse gas responsible for global warming, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Center for Climate Change and Environmental Forecasting. A typical flight from Los Angeles to New York, for example, generates 1 ton of carbon dioxide per passenger.

To spread the word about travel's contribution to global warming, online travel agencies Expedia and Travelocity this month partnered with groups dedicated to decreasing the amount of greenhouse gases released into the environment.

"There is a large contingent of consumers ... concerned with green travel," said Expedia spokeswoman Katie Deines. "It's important to us to offer our customers options in that vein."

Expedia has become partners with TerraPass (www.terrapass.com), a 2-year-old company that sells customers "passes" to help offset the greenhouse-gas emissions caused by their travel.

For a round-trip flight of 6,500 miles (a bit more than a trip from Los Angeles to New York), a TerraPass costs \$17; for international flights, \$30.

Expedia gives all the money directly to TerraPass, which invests in projects designed to decrease carbon emissions in other industries. It funds clean energy projects throughout the U.S., including wind farms and biomass energy, and the generation of electricity from animal and plant material, such as cow manure.

Methane derived from cow manure has several advantages over fossil fuels, according to TerraPass. It's renewable, which means no net carbon is put into the air, and the process reduces the amount of methane, a greenhouse gas 22 times more potent than carbon dioxide, entering the atmosphere.

TerraPass also purchases something called "carbon offsets" — which are essentially licenses to pollute — and retires them.

These carbon offsets are voluntary restrictions on carbon emissions to which businesses nationwide agree. If a business has an excess of them, they can be traded on the free market on the Chicago Climate Exchange. In theory, the fewer licenses on the market, the less pollution.

Such models of greenhouse gas reduction have been around Europe for years but are just catching on in this country.

The U.S. has been "a little bit behind the rest of the world in recognizing the concept," Deines said.

One of the forerunners of this type of environmental approach to travel is the Britain-based firm Carbon Neutral Co. (www.carbonneutral.com). It has been around since 1997 (when it was called Future Forests) and performs much the same function as TerraPass.

Such programs may not be the approach many people think of when talking about improving the environment.

"It's less about trees and more about investing in renewable energy and energy-efficient projects in developing countries that will save the equal amount of CO₂," said Carbon Neutral spokesman Jim Peacock.

For example, Carbon Neutral invests in a solar panel project in Sri Lanka that reduces dependence on greenhouse-gas-emitting kerosene.

The Conservation Fund, favored by Travelocity, takes a more traditional approach to the solution of global warming. Since its founding in 1985, the group has reforested with native trees and plants more than 5 million acres of public land that had been deforested through logging and farming activities. Trees act as a natural filter for carbon dioxide, turning it into oxygen.

"Our program ... is blending climate change with wildlife habitat and heritage" preservation, Conservation Fund President Larry Selzer said.

Through a Conservation Fund program called Go Zero, Travelocity customers can elect to donate \$10 to \$40, depending on the distance of the trip. Travelocity passes on 100% of the contribution to the nonprofit Conservation Fund.

"Climate change and global warming have emerged as the great environmental issue in the 21st century," Selzer said.

Acknowledging that and providing a way for individuals to make a positive environmental contribution are the keys to solving the crisis, he said. Individual involvement was key to the success of recycling programs, and Selzer is convinced that once people understand their carbon impact, they will respond.

"When given the opportunity, the American people will participate" in environmental programs, he said.

Expedia and Travelocity say they are participating in the programs in response to consumer demand and awareness.

But some are a bit skeptical.

"Expedia and Travelocity are doing nothing more than cashing in on travelers' sensitivity to global warming," said Henry Harteveltdt, principal analyst for travel research at Forrester Research. "Nothing wrong with that, and it's fine they give travelers the option to participate. Just don't mistake these for what they really are: revenue-generating opportunities for the agencies."

Still, awareness that travel has an effect on the environment is a good thing, and the agencies aren't taking a cut of the donations. Plus you don't have to buy from one of the online agencies to participate. You can go direct to the source and contribute for air travel and any other carbon-generating activities. Selzer scoffed at the idea that just traveling less would remedy the situation.

"Get out and enjoy the great natural resources," he said. "You'll become better stewards of them in the future."

Tulare County's city leaders define the challenges that lie ahead

Visalia Times-Delta, Saturday, Sept. 16, 2006

Tulare County's cities are growing and developing at a prodigious rate. They're not just adding new homes and acreage, but new businesses, facilities, public works, parks and roads.

With those come more responsibility for public safety, infrastructure maintenance, planning, recreation and preservation of quality of life.

We asked the city managers of the five central cities in Tulare County -Visalia, Tulare, Exeter, Woodlake and Farmersville - to give us a brief rundown of the state of their cities by answering the following three questions:

1. What is the most critical issue in growth and development facing your community?
2. Of the following issues, select three that you regard as being the most critically important for your community to address and briefly explain why:
 - Public safety
 - Growth and development
 - Traffic and circulation
 - Economic development and job creation
 - Infrastructure
 - Parks and recreation
 - Health care
 - Community image.
3. What do you regard as your community's most pressing need at the present time and has that changed?

Here are their responses.

Exeter City Manager John Kunkel

1. The most critical issue in growth and development is the need for quality, and well-managed growth.

We have seen far too many examples of growth for growth's sake, and the end results are not what most communities need.

2. Three most important areas are: Growth and development for the reasons cited above.

Secondly, I feel it would be infrastructure. Especially in the Central Valley where we have a big concern with water and chemicals we find in our water supply from the agricultural uses years ago. We also must insure that we have adequate sewer capacity as well as updating our older water/sewer lines to insure quality delivery of services to the older areas of the community. Lastly, image. How was it that said image is everything. If you have an image of a safer quaint community, people will generally perpetuate that image. However, image is not something left to chance, it must be planned and developed.

3. Our most pressing need is for more water wells within our community. We are currently developing two new water wells, one which will be online in October and another by May 2007.

Farmersville City Manager Rene Miller

First and foremost I see economic development and job creation as a very pressing need for the city. Naturally, development will assist the city with tax revenue but every dollar that residents spend in town not only benefits the city but other businesses in town as well. Many residents do not have transportation to other parts of the county for work and having jobs in town would make it more feasible for the residents to work; thereby improving the standard of living for them.

Growth and development of the population of the community is another issue facing the city and is a very important aspect of economic development. Without residential development, there will be little, if any, new economic development. The current population of the city is 10,250, and many commercial developers have indicated that they will not consider development in Farmersville until the population reaches 15,000.

A related dilemma facing the city is that there is insufficient wastewater capacity for new housing development and insufficient funds to build a new wastewater treatment plant without new development fees.

Until the city can correct this issue, Farmersville's residential growth is stagnant. The wastewater treatment plant has capacity for industrial and commercial growth, however.

Tulare City Manager Darrell Pyle

I believe the most critical issue in growth and development facing our community today is the lack of adequate street and highway infrastructure. Highway 99 widening and interchange improvements are desperately needed. Grade separated railroad crossings are a close second. These issues may see relief from the voters of California and Tulare County on the November ballot.

Of the issues listed, I believe the three that are most critical are as follows:

1. **Public Safety:** Business will locate and grow where crime is not an issue. This statistic was highlighted in a report distributed by the Tulare County Economic Development Corp. several months ago. Public safety was a key issue taken into consideration by business locators.
2. **Traffic and Circulation:** This is as important for new businesses and new home buyers as it is for our longtime residents and businesses. This can also be a factor in public safety in terms of response times. Our major industries and employers depend on farm-to-market transportation for survival. We need to continue to improve this major quality of life element.
3. **Infrastructure:** This issue continues to grow in complexity, highlighted by our ongoing efforts to remain compliant with ever-changing state and federal regulations. These infrastructure improvements are necessary to handle growth, but also necessary just to keep up with [more stringent air and water quality mandates](#).

I believe that when these three issues are resolved, the balance of the issues on the list is improved by market forces. I believe the most pressing needs are being addressed at the present time. They included items such as hospital capacity issues, school crowding, new and varied housing opportunities, and job creation. With successful community efforts to provide for a major hospital expansion, new school construction, new housing products being built in town, and increasing demands for commercial and industrial development, I believe the most pressing need will be reevaluated over the next 24 months. There is substantial positive energy in the community and a real feeling that the best is yet to come. It is our job to make sure that is the case.

Visalia City Manager Steve Salomon

1. Growing and developing the community while using land efficiently, preserving ag land and promoting community values is a big challenge.

For decades, a major goal has been to keep Visalia's downtown the vibrant heart of the community.

The City Council is working to expand downtown by taking advantage of the vacant and underdeveloped land to include mixed-use developments with as many as 3,000 new residential units. Sewer and other infrastructure must be upgraded. Parking structures will be needed, and there is a desire to enhance Mill Creek. Significant funding and a long-term commitment by the public and private sectors is critical to success.

The cost of building and maintaining infrastructure and the tax structure in California can lead to competition between governmental agencies, which complicates long-standing policies to manage growth while limiting the impact on agricultural areas. The housing boom has resulted in the county considering developments on the city's fringe, north of the St. Johns River, southeast of Mooney Grove and west of the industrial park.

While not inside the Visalia city limits, the residents will look to Visalia for services. These projects are not consistent with Visalia's general plan or development standards, and will pose challenges for residents in the long-term.

2. The three most critically important issues are public safety; growth and development; and traffic and circulation.

Public safety, particularly gangs, remains a large concern. The number of gang members has declined; (923 documented gang members in 2005 compared to 1,104 in 2004). There has been a significant decrease in gang-related homicides over the past year. (Two to date this year, compared to eight last year.) Two officers were added to the Special Enforcement Unit, to focus on gangs.

Chief Bob Carden and Sheriff Bill Wittman have cooperated to initiate a Visalia Area Metro Gang Unit.

The City Council has allocated \$100,000 toward an inter-agency effort to come up with additional ways to improve gang-intervention efforts. We need to look at comprehensive approaches including family relationships, keeping kids in school, involved and employed as appropriate. The growth and development issue is noted in Item 1 above.

Traffic and circulation are an issue because the state, over the past decade, has diminished its responsibility for the state highway system. Billions have been diverted away from roads and will never be replaced. As a result, State Route 99, State Route 198, and State Route 63 all need significant improvements that historically have been funded by the state, but now must be completed with significant local contributions

3. What do you regard as your community's most pressing need at the present time, and has that changed?

The pressure to plan adequately to accommodate growth has increased. The pressure has intensified with California's increasing population, the relative affordability of housing in the Central Valley and the quality of life here.

Our challenge will be to handle this growing demand, while retaining and enhancing Visalia's charm and attributes.

Woodlake City Manager Bill Lewis

1. The biggest issue is trying to balance residential, commercial and industrial development. We have a very old general plan and although we have funds available this fiscal year to begin the update, trying to predict where different types of growth will occur can be difficult. Over the past 15 years the only growth we had was in residential types. Lately we have seen quite a bit of demand in industrial parcels.

2. Infrastructure - water, sewer and streets - In the short term, we will need to drill a new municipal well to accommodate the increase in water usage. We are in the process of constructing a new (additional) 500,000-gallon storage tank which should handle the storage needs for the next 30 years. Our waste water treatment plant is woefully inadequate and unable to comply with more stringent regulations. The state has, over the past several years, used transportation dollars to balance their budget and increased street capacity projects have had their funding deferred.

Economic development and job creation - Our unemployment rate is still high. While we want people that live in Woodlake to work in Woodlake, the actual job of recruiting local employers can be a challenge. We do have success stories like US Tower and Bradford Steel we have much work to do in order to get the unemployment rate down to the state average.

3. It is hard to narrow down to the most pressing need of a community but at this time probably the most pressing need is a new waste water treatment plant. We need to bring this to the forefront before some other agency does this for us. We are working toward a plant that has secondary treatment with a denitrification process. This would allow for the placement of treated water on crops for nonhuman consumption and at the same time be more earth-friendly.

Washington In Brief

Ozone Levels Drop in Eastern States

The Washington Post, Friday, September 15, 2006

Ozone levels are falling sharply in Eastern states where smog has been a recurring summer problem, the Environmental Protection Agency said yesterday.

The improvement in air quality for a third of the nation's population is due to reduced emissions of nitrogen oxides from hundreds of coal-burning power plants, manufacturing plants and other large facilities in 19 Eastern states.

Ground-level ozone pollution caused by nitrogen oxides reacting with other chemicals produces smog, particularly in the summer months, when the sun is hottest and brightest. Other major sources of ozone are motor vehicle exhaust, gasoline vapors and chemical solvents.

The EPA said in an annual report that nitrogen oxides from hundreds of power plants and other industrial sources in the East fell to 530,000 tons in 2005, an 11 percent decrease from 2004 and a decline of more than 50 percent from the 1.2 million tons in 2000.

Based on air-monitoring data, the EPA said 66 percent of the areas that in 2004 failed to meet national air quality health standards now exceed the standards.

DaimlerChrysler Opens New China Factory

By Joe McDonald, The Associated Press

The Washington Post, Friday, September 15, 2006

BEIJING -- DaimlerChrysler AG on Friday formally opened its first factory to make Mercedes-Benz and Chrysler sedans in China, joining a rush of foreign automakers scrambling for a share of the booming Chinese car market.

DaimlerChrysler said the factory in suburban Beijing is part of a 1.5 billion euro (\$1.9 billion) investment in China.

The company plans to expand its financing business and is talking to potential Chinese partners about possibly producing a lower-cost model for the U.S. market, said chairman Dieter Zetsche.

"DaimlerChrysler is strongly committed to this market for the long-term future," Zetsche said at a news conference.

Earlier, Zetsche and VIPs, including the Communist Party secretary of Beijing, attended a grand opening ceremony with fireworks and traditional Chinese drummers and dancers.

The German-U.S. automaker is a latecomer to manufacturing in China, the world's second-largest car market after the United States, with 7 million new vehicle sales a year.

General Motors Corp., Volkswagen AG, Toyota Motor Corp. and other competitors already make cars in China.

Car sales in China are growing at double-digit rates, but DaimlerChrysler is opening its factory just as the government is rolling out new taxes meant to slow the growth of [air pollution](#) by reining in sales of bigger luxury cars.

A key challenge for foreign automakers in China is the government's insistence that at least 40 percent of their components come from Chinese suppliers, whose quality is still uneven. Zetsche said DaimlerChrysler intends to meet that target, though he acknowledged that it would not be able to do so immediately.

Zetsche declined to comment on U.S. and European complaints that China's tariffs on auto parts are too high. The governments are reportedly considering filing a World Trade Organization complaint against Beijing.

The DaimlerChrysler factory is to produce Mercedes E-Class and Chrysler 300C sedans, as well as Mitsubishi's Outlander sport utility vehicles. It has an annual capacity of 25,000 Mercedes and 80,000 Chrysler and Mitsubishi vehicles.

Zetsche said the company expected sales to meet those levels but would not say how long it would take. He said the factory is expected to be profitable when sales are well below its full capacity.

The factory, which employs 1,200 people, began test-production of vehicles last December and has made about 4,100 Mercedes sedans since then, said DaimlerChrysler spokesman Trevor Hale. He said Chrysler production was due to start in October.

"We've had a very slow ramp-up to make sure we get the quality right," Hale said. "As we identify more suppliers that meet our standards, we bring them into the supply chain."

In contrast to General Motors and other automakers that have produced specially designed models targeted at the Chinese market, the Mercedes and Chrysler models to be made in Beijing are identical to those sold abroad.

The company has not disclosed prices for the models made in Beijing.

Zetsche said DaimlerChrysler is talking with several possible partners about producing a lower-cost model to be sold in the United States under the Dodge brand.

"With one partner, we have very much progressed (in talks), but still haven't come to a final decision," he said.

The company's new Beijing factory is a joint venture with a Chinese partner, state-owned Beijing Automotive Industries Corp.

Beijing Automotive's chairman, An Qingheng, said the venture hopes eventually to produce 300,000 vehicles a year.

The joint venture's president, Guenter Butschek, said it plans to launch a new Chrysler advertising campaign in China shortly.

"This brand will for sure be far better known to the Chinese customer in a couple months," he said.

Chrysler Corp. opened a joint-venture Jeep factory in Beijing in 1983, becoming the first Western company to produce vehicles in China since the 1949 communist revolution. Chrysler merged with Stuttgart, Germany-based Daimler Benz AG in 1998 to form DaimlerChrysler.

Clean-air caravan visits Merced November ballot measure promises to find cleaner fuels

By Corinne Reilly

Merced Sun-Star, Friday, September 15, 2006

Local supporters of a November ballot initiative that aims to cut California's petroleum use gathered Thursday at UC Merced, where campus faculty and administrators strongly endorsed Proposition 87 and the research funding it promises.

"Everyone keeps saying they will come up with new energy sources before the oil runs out. But who is they?" UC Merced professor David Kelley said before students and the media. "The answer is researchers here at UC Merced and at other California universities."

Proposition 87 hopes to reduce petroleum consumption in the state by 25 percent over the next decade. It would establish a \$4 billion program to fund research and develop alternative energy technologies; a new tax on oil companies that drill in California would pay for the program.

Backers of the proposition say it will force oil companies to pay their share for cleaner energy, and includes protections that would make it illegal for companies to pass costs to consumers. Thursday's press conference at the campus library was the latest stop in a tour that began last week in San Diego, during which Yes on 87 campaigners are driving a small fleet of energy efficient and hybrid vehicles -- including a truck and an SUV -- around the state.

"We are showing that Californians can have it both ways," said Yes on 87 staffer Joelle Terry. "We can drive the vehicles we want and have clean air."

Jeff Wright, dean of UC Merced's School of Engineering, said the state can become a leader in renewable and alternative energies. But, he said, more research is needed to make such energy sources practical and affordable.

"We need Prop 87 to support this research so we can move forward," said Wright.

Representatives from the Merced-Mariposa County Asthma Coalition also attended the event and pointed to the San Joaquin Valley's poor air quality as a reason to develop clean energy.

"The San Joaquin Valley has the worst air pollution in the nation," said coalition program manager Mary-Michal Rawling.

According to the American Lung Association, Merced has the fifth worst ozone air pollution of all American cities.

"Anything that's going to clean up the air in the Valley and in California is worthwhile," said Rawling.

Opponents of the proposition say it would create more bureaucracy and waste, and increase California's dependence on foreign oil.

And, they say, the proposition doesn't necessarily guarantee costs won't be passed on to consumers.

"What will happen is that it will force us to import oil from other states and nations," said No on 87 spokesman Bill George, who didn't attend the press conference. "That will mean higher distribution and refining costs, which will go to the consumer.

"We agree that we need alternative energies, but this isn't the way to get there."

UC Merced environmental engineering student Henry Teng, who stopped to listen to proposition backers, said he liked what he heard.

"It sounds like an interesting idea," said Teng. "Arnold Schwarzenegger says we need to reduce the bad emissions, but he doesn't know how to do it.

"So I guess it's up to the scientific community."

Bay Area would get at least \$2 billion if Prop. 1B passes \$20 billion transit, transportation bond on November ballot

Michael Cabanatuan,
San Francisco Chronicle, Friday, September 15, 2006

Proposition 1B, the transportation bond measure on the November ballot, would infuse at least \$2 billion -- and perhaps as much as \$4.5 billion -- into some major, long-stalled projects in the Bay Area.

Getting enough money to build a transportation project typically requires a time-consuming process of collecting money from a variety of sources: bond measures, transportation taxes, grants and development fees. Prop. 1B would provide a major infusion of cash and allow many big, partly funded projects to be constructed.

No projects are listed in the measure; instead, state and local agencies will decide what should get funded. But in the Bay Area, the money is likely to go to large and familiar projects that have already accumulated partial funding: carpool lanes on Interstate 580 in eastern Alameda County and on Highway 101 in Marin County or on the Peninsula; a fourth bore for the Caldecott Tunnel; and rebuilding the Cordelia Junction interchange of Interstates 80 and 680 and Highway 12.

If voters approve the measure, local agencies could decide to spend their allotted bond money on projects like bus-only highway lanes in the East Bay, BART extensions or railcar replacements, and Muni's Central Subway.

"Proposition 1B is going to be the best chance for voters to do something about transit in the Bay Area, about congestion relief in the Bay Area for a long time," said Randy Rentschler, spokesman for the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. "This bond gives big projects like that a chance to happen."

Backers, including the heavy construction industry and building trade unions, have already pumped more than \$5 million into the campaign.

So far, there is little organized opposition. A taxpayers organization that is battling the bond measure has not raised enough money to register with the secretary of state as an opponent.

Environmental groups, including the Sierra Club, are neutral on Prop. 1B.

Yet many of their members had urged opposition, saying it steers too much money toward highways and relies on the state's general fund budget instead of raising the cash -- perhaps through higher gasoline taxes, higher bridge tolls or fees to use express lanes. The initiative also does nothing to halt suburban sprawl, they say.

"Transportation has proven itself to be one place where voters have been willing to vote for taxes and user fees," said Stuart Cohen, executive director of the Transportation and Land Use Coalition, a Bay Area group that favors alternatives to driving. "Basically, if this passes, it's paving the roads with school books and health facilities when transportation could pay for itself."

Proposition 1B would authorize the state to sell about \$20 billion in general obligation bonds to pay for projects that ease congestion and improve goods movement, air quality or transportation safety and security. The measure would raise money to be spent in four categories:

-- Congestion relief: \$11.3 billion for capital projects to reduce congestion or increase capacity on highways, local roads and public transit.

-- Public transportation: \$4 billion for capital improvements to local transit agencies and the state's intercity rail network.

-- Goods movement and air quality: \$3.2 billion to improve the shipping of goods through ports, on highways and via rail, and to reduce pollution from trucks and port equipment and from school buses.

-- Safety and security: \$1.5 billion to bolster protection against terrorist threats and improve disaster response on transit systems, improve the safety of rail crossings, seismically strengthen local bridges, overpasses and ramps, and improve maritime security in ports and ferry terminals.

For the Bay Area, Prop. 1B would deliver \$1.3 billion for public transportation modernization and expansion projects to transit agencies to spend as they wish, with an extra \$347 million for the

transportation commission to distribute to counties for projects in the state transportation plan; and \$375 million for local streets and roads to the region's cities and counties.

The Bay Area could also be expected to reap an extra \$2.2 billion to \$2.5 billion that would be distributed statewide on a competitive basis, according to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission.

While the California Taxpayers Association is backing the bond measure, another taxpayers group, the California Taxpayer Protection Committee, is campaigning to defeat the proposition and the rest of the governor's infrastructure bonds.

Tom Hudson, executive director of the group, said it opposes the measure because it's borrowing money that will have to be repaid from an already-lean state general fund budget. It also steers too much money toward public transit when Californians prefer to drive and fails to revise the state's cumbersome environmental-review process, Hudson said.

Opponents expect to raise enough money to be considered formal opponents soon, he said.

Among the initiative's biggest backers is the California Alliance for Jobs, an Emeryville coalition of heavy construction companies and trade unions that also runs the Rebuild California campaign.

Dennis Oliver, a spokesman for the alliance and the campaign, said California has ignored its transportation infrastructure far too long and desperately needs to play catch-up.

"This is just the down payment we've known we would have to make for a long time," he said. "Voters know why it's needed. And I think they'll approve it."

A July Field Poll found that 54 percent of California voters favored Prop. 1B while 27 percent were opposed and 19 percent undecided. The measure requires a simple majority to pass. The wish list

The Bay Area could get billions in transportation money if voters approve Proposition 1B in November. Here's a breakdown of how the money must be spent locally:

\$1.3 billion for modernizing and expanding public transit.

\$348 million for projects included in state transportation plans but not fully funded.

\$375 million for local street and road improvements.

\$2.2 billion to \$2.5 billion that could be distributed from a statewide pot based on competitive proposals.

Source: Metropolitan Transportation Commission

[The following clip discusses South Coast Air Quality Management District's warning that the transport of cement from a mine that ceased operations to protect the environment also contributes to air pollution. For more information, contact Maricela \(559\) 230-5849.](#)

El transporte de cemento también contamina el aire del sur de California Cemento, fuente de contaminación ambiental en L.A.

Aire Libre, California

Radio Bilingüe, Friday, September 15, 2006

La Administración de Calidad del Aire del Distrito Costa Sur en el área de Los Angeles advirtió que el traslado de cemento desde una mina que dejó de operar para cuidar el ambiente también contribuye a contaminar el aire que respiran decenas de miles de personas.

De acuerdo con esa oficina, aunque la mina Cemex dejó de extraer cemento, en el traslado de ese material que tiene elementos químicos resulta muy difícil impedir que las partículas vuelen, especialmente en épocas de vientos.

La oficina distrital ordenó regar con agua cada 30 minutos el camino de salida de la mina, pero cuando los camiones particulares salen del perímetro, el viento esparce químicos en la región más contaminada en Estados Unidos.

[The following clip discusses Lung Association warning how a weak EPA plan would leave 77 million Americans vulnerable to deadly pollution. For more information, contact Maricela \(559\) 230-5849.](#)

Hay 77 millones de personas expuestas a contaminación peligrosa del aire La EPA defiende desde julio pasado la propuesta ante el Senado, pero grupos empresariales advierten que al proteger al ambiente se podría atentar contra la actual economía en general

Aire Libre, California

Radio Bilingüe, Friday, September 15, 2006

El presidente de la Asociación de Salud Pulmonar Estadounidense, la American Lung Association, John Kirkwood dijo que actualmente 77 millones de personas residentes en Estados Unidos están expuestas a una peligrosa contaminación del aire.

Al urgir a la Agencia federal de Protección Ambiental (EPA, por sus siglas en inglés), a aprobar una propuesta para controlar partículas contaminantes, Kirkwood dijo que lo que determine el Congreso sobre esa propuesta salvaría a la actual y a la futura población del país.

La EPA defiende desde julio pasado la propuesta ante el Senado, pero grupos empresariales advierten que al proteger al ambiente se podría atentar contra la actual economía en general.

[Fresno Bee Editorial, Monday, September 18, 2006](#)

Road to progress: Fresno County voters will set the course of the Valley's future during the Nov. 7 election.

By Russell Minick

How do we need Measure C? Let us count the ways.

It's hard to imagine what Fresno County's transportation system would look like today if voters hadn't approved the original Measure C in 1986. Fresno and Clovis would still have a skeletal and incomplete freeway system, with large sections of the metropolitan area left to rely on increasingly congested surface streets. That's true today, the cynics will sneer, but it would be unimaginably worse without those two decades of expenditures.

The rural roads and urban streets that serve us still need much work and expansion. But that's not evidence that the original Measure C failed. Rather it's a chilling reminder that if voters hadn't shown the foresight to pass Measure C, we'd be in a much deeper hole now.

Now an extension of the original Measure C is on the Nov. 7 ballot in Fresno County. It would keep the half-cent-per-dollar sales tax in effect for another 20 years.

It is imperative that it pass. Its failure would condemn the county and its residents to a bleak transportation future, with overburdened and inadequate roads and streets eventually breaking down under an ever-increasing volume of traffic. It would mean tighter resources for the county and in the cities as they come under ever-greater pressure to meet the demand for maintenance and repair, and falling farther and farther behind each day.

It would mean a growing population being asked to live with a shrinking number of choices and a steadily decaying infrastructure. It would be, in a word, a catastrophe.

The Bee has supported the extension of Measure C since it first began to be discussed, and we are hardly alone. In this special, expanded Vision section, we have gathered opinions from other supporters, as well as our own, to offer what we believe is a compelling case for passing the Measure C extension. It won't be easy; the original measure required only a simple majority, which it easily achieved. This time, the threshold is a two-thirds majority, a terribly difficult task under any circumstances, and even harder to meet when people are being asked to keep taxing themselves - always a challenging proposition.

Equally challenging was the process of putting together this extension of Measure C. Some two dozen community leaders and activists, representing a broad swath of interests, met over 18 months to hammer out what is a quintessential compromise. Like any compromise, the end product is perfectly satisfying to no one - but the sum of the elements offers something for everyone.

For those who think we need more highways, roughly one-third of the expected \$1.7 billion will be used for that purpose, along with major streets and airports.

Those who believe we need more alternatives to the automobile will see a similar share of the Measure C money spent on better and more frequent buses, bicycle paths, trails and other options.

For those whose principal concern is local streets, the Measure C extension offers another one-third of its funds for that purpose, to be spent as county supervisors and city councils see fit.

Those who worry that government spending programs are fraught with waste should be comforted by the presence of a citizens oversight committee written into the law.

Extending Measure C will help clean up the Valley's dirty air - something we should all support.

The best argument for passing the 20-year extension may be the impact it will have on the quality of life in Fresno County.

Measure C will produce jobs, helping address the chronic and desperate poverty that afflicts so many here. It will make the county more competitive in the cutthroat game of economic development. Efficient transportation systems - like better schools, more parks and open space, and enhanced recreation and entertainment opportunities - make an area more attractive to prospective businesses, and make it easier for existing businesses to grow and prosper.

And creating a higher quality of life in Fresno County makes it more likely that the area will retain more of its talented young people, who have for years left in large numbers because the region does not offer all they want in life.

It comes down to this: The Measure C extension is about our future, and the future of Fresno County's children and grandchildren. For a painless few pennies a day from each and every one of us, we can give hope to that future - or we can save those pennies now and guarantee a dreary and increasingly decayed environment for those children. Choices never get any plainer.

[Stockton Record Editorial, Monday, September 18, 2006](#)

Just weathering the weather

Who knew the dog days of July would give way to one of the coolest Augusts on record at Stockton Metropolitan Airport, where the National Weather Services takes measurements for San Joaquin County?

Who could have imagined a scorching 100 degrees Wednesday followed by a high of only 78 Thursday?

With an average temperature of 74.5 degrees, who knew summer 2006 would be the second-hottest in U.S. history? Only 1936's 74.73 degrees was hotter.

After stagnant air created a "dead" zone of smoke, smog and haze the first two weeks of September, who knew cooling Delta breezes would stream back in at 40 mph?

Who could have imagined 200 heat-related deaths nationwide, with 160 in California? Six died in San Joaquin County, the victims either lacking air-conditioning - or either refusing to use it or being unable to because of the cost.

Who would have believed a staggering \$500 million in agricultural losses would occur statewide because of the heat?

Cows, chickens, horses and pigs all died by the hundreds.

Who could have envisioned 13 August days in a row with triple-digit temperatures in the county and nights with temperatures that never fell below 70?

We all knew all of this was possible but just never thought it would happen.

Farm losses, human death, a blissful August and a hot-and-cold beginning to September.

Who knew?

[Sacramento Bee Editorial, Monday, September 18, 2006](#)

Editorial: Bonds for the future

Californians will have a rare chance Nov. 7 to invest in public works projects that have been neglected for too long.

Five bond measures on the ballot will help pay for highways and transit; affordable housing; schools; levees; water systems and parks. All five deserve approval. If voters reject them, it will be hard to blame "the politicians" for freeway congestion, floods and other ills synonymous with this growing state.

These five bond measures come with a combined price tag of \$42.7 billion, which means the total tab will run to \$84.8 billion over 30 years once interest costs are paid. That's a lot of borrowing.

This page urged lawmakers to raise the gas tax, assess property owners in floodplains and adopt other "pay-as-you-go" measures to reduce the expected debt. Lawmakers, however, showed no spine for hiking taxes and fees, even though some projects will benefit current residents and should be rightfully financed by them.

Can California afford this borrowing? It can, assuming the economy doesn't take a sharp downturn. If it does, this extra debt service will add to the pressure to raise taxes or cut existing programs.

So is this an ideal package? No, but rejecting it would surely condemn California to even worse gridlock and lost opportunities for new parks, schools, levees and affordable housing. That's why these five measures deserve a Yes vote.

Prop. 1B: Highways and transit

Since 1990, voters have approved just \$5 billion in state bonds to upgrade transportation, one reason the state now has a \$160 billion backlog of transportation needs. Measure 1B would pour \$19.9 billion into a fairly balanced package: More than \$11 billion would go to congestion relief, highways and local roads. Some \$4 billion would go to public transportation. More than \$3 billion would go to moving goods through ports while [reducing air pollution](#) and another \$1.5 would be used to protect bridges from earthquakes and to safeguard harbors, ports and ferry terminals. The Sacramento region is likely to benefit with new carpool lanes, rail corridor improvements and cleaner school buses.

Prop. 1C: Housing, shelter

Since the mid-1990s, the run-up in housing prices has left many California homeowners feeling wealthy.

Others have been left on the street. Proposition 1C would provide \$2.85 billion to help low-income renters, first-time homebuyers, the homeless and those on the tipping point. Some money would go to traditional programs, such as efforts to provide shelter for battered women, or to low-interest loans for qualified homebuyers. About \$1.35 billion would go to provide needed water, sewage and environmental cleanup so housing can be built in downtown areas.

Anyone who has watched the slow pace of redevelopment in Sacramento's railyard knows that contamination and basic infrastructure can be roadblocks to revitalizing downtown areas. Proposition 1C, smartly, would remove some of those roadblocks.

Prop. 1D: Schools, universities

Since voters approved Proposition 39 six years ago, school districts have passed building bonds. But the state is still far behind in catching up from a 1980s construction backlog, partly because costs for steel and other materials have skyrocketed.

Proposition 1D would dedicate \$10.4 billion to help school districts jump-start these projects and also help universities, community colleges and career-technical facilities.

About \$7 billion would be spent on K-12 schools. Anyone who has seen clusters of modular buildings in schoolyards knows that new facilities are needed. We also like the \$500 million dedicated for career technical facilities to help Californians seeking training in various trades.

Prop. 1E: Flood protection

Levees protect homes and water supplies for tens of millions of California residents, yet lawmakers cut funding for their maintenance during the budget crisis a few years ago. Proposition 1E would provide more than \$4 billion, 75 percent of which would be spent in the Central Valley and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. Arguably, this is the most urgent expenditure of all the bond measures. Without it, the state Department of Water Resources will never catch up on a backlog of needed levee repairs or upgrades, which DWR now estimates at \$7 billion to \$12 billion.

Prop. 84: Water and parks

Californians cherish their coasts and worry about their water. This ballot measure would authorize \$5.3 billion in bonds to clean up beaches and drinking supplies, fund water conservation programs and improve state and local parks, while providing an extra \$1 billion for flood control. Historically, this page has opposed "ballot-box budget initiatives" that groups placed on the ballot without legislative approval. In 2002, we opposed Proposition 50, another water and parks bond, hoping lawmakers would craft their own plan, and seize control of water policy.

Guess what? It didn't happen. This year, a majority of legislators wanted to put a water and parks bond on the ballot, but couldn't get the two-thirds vote needed for passage. Fervent differences over surface storage reservoirs stalled the talks. Legislative leaders rightly feared the dispute would drag down all the bonds. So they abandoned their effort and forging a compromise while Proposition 84 headed to the ballot.

While we still hope lawmakers can have a rational debate about water, Proposition 84 is a decent initiative. It has been widely vetted, and is supported by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, the California Chamber of Commerce, water districts and conservationists. It wouldn't create a new state bureaucracy, just finance existing programs administered by conservancies and the Department of Water Resources.

Proposition 84 is also a major source of funding to restore the San Joaquin River -- a historic settlement anticipated by the initiative's authors and announced last week. Clean beaches? More water? Free flowing rivers? These are some of several reasons to support Proposition 84.

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Monday, Sept. 18, 2006:](#)

No vote for Parra

Assemblywoman Nicole Parra peddled her votes to get other Assembly members to vote against SB 999. This progressive bill would have made our local air district board more responsive to the health needs of valley residents and less beholden to polluting industries.

It would have done this by adding members from more valley towns and by adding a couple of health and science experts. This would have served to balance out the present board, composed mostly of various county supervisors who know nothing about cleaning our air, except to make it painless for their most important donors.

Despite recent claims to the contrary, our air is not getting better. Ozone violations are on the rise. Nothing is more important than cleaning our air if we are to have a valley that is economically prosperous and healthy.

For the first time in my life I will be voting happily for a non-Democrat. Goodbye, Nicole.

TOM FRANTZ, Shafter

[Editorial in The Orange County Register, Sunday, September 17, 2006:](#)

Snuffing out freedom at the water's edge

Proposed county beach smoking ban pretends to solve a problem that actually doesn't exist

Years ago, California was renowned for its laid-back lifestyle, especially in surfing towns and beach communities. Yet these days California is gaining the not-so-glamorous reputation as the supreme Nanny State, where dour government minders are committed to snuffing out any semblance of pleasure one might have.

H.L. Mencken's definition of a Puritan: "somebody who was desperately afraid that somebody, somewhere might be having a good time," just as easily applies to liberal health and environmental zealots as it does to conservative religious zealots. And zealots are actively at work in Orange County, promoting a ban on smoking at beaches, even though the county Harbors, Beaches and Parks Commission already has strongly rejected this unworkable proposal.

Commission Chairman Cathy Green told the Register: "I thought lifeguards should be saving people's lives and watching swimmers, not enforcing smoking rules." Commission member Debbie Cook also was right when she explained that most of the pollution on the beach, including the cigarette butts, comes from urban runoff, not from beach-going litterers. In our view, it's

perfectly reasonable to punish those who litter, but downright silly to ban smoking entirely from the beach.

The new impetus for regulation comes from California state bureaucrats who have recently labeled secondhand smoke a toxic air contaminant. It may be, in close quarters, but it's absurd to suggest that air quality is damaged in the great outdoors, next to the world's largest air purifier – the ocean. We are left wondering why Orange County's health officials are ignoring the ruling of the commission and pushing their no-smoking agenda ahead again. Orange County city beaches have banned smoking already. We don't agree with that, either, but at least now there is a choice. Those horribly offended by an occasional smoker can swim at city beaches.

County board members must still vote on this. Supervisor Chris Norby said, "I have a problem with passing laws that solve problems that don't exist." In the current California Nanny State, we wish more legislators and bureaucrats thought that way.

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Sunday, Sept. 17, 2006:](#)

A 'sucker bet'

Living here all my life I know three things: People in general are nice, the air quality is bad and the week before the fair the temperature is in the 80s.

I also know one more thing - the day the fair starts it will hit close to 100 degrees again or it will rain. Every year.

So, if you want to make a sucker bet, bet a buddy that it will be hot during the fair or it will rain during the fair.

Mark Thompson, Bakersfield

[San Francisco Chronicle Editorial, Sunday, September 17, 2006](#)

A smoking tailpipe

EVERY DRIVER HAS seen it: a clunker spewing a dark cloud of smoky exhaust. Why doesn't the law pull these bad-boy polluters over?

In truth, there are laws against driving smoking-tailpipe vehicles, but police and the California Highway Patrol often have higher priorities.

A bill on Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's desk approaches the problem a different way, via **smog** testing. The measure, AB1870, would require mechanics to inspect exhaust pipes for visible smoke, a telltale sign that the engine is spewing out a spray of fine dust called particulates. This soot is a health danger when it coats lungs and works its way into the body, causing respiratory and heart disease.

California's vehicle fleet is already among the most tested in the nation -- but only for invisible emissions such as carbon dioxide and other gases that cause **smog**. Gritty particulates aren't part of this screening, meaning a clunker can pass muster and drive right back on the road in a cloud of smoke.

This measure by Assemblywoman Sally Lieber, a San Jose Democrat, would end this loophole. A visual inspection would be added to the **smog** check.

The bill comes with sweeteners because a repair job can be expensive. Low-income drivers could get a two-year waiver or a \$500 subsidy for repairs. Also, the state will increase its offer to buy back clunkers to \$1,500 per vehicle.

The target of the bill is an estimated 200,000 vehicles out of the state's 27 million cars and trucks. This is a small number that can do major damage. One car with a badly smoking tailpipe can pollute more than 20 well-maintained cars, Lieber's office says.

The bill passed with wide bipartisan support, plus the backing of the Sierra Club and air-quality agencies. The governor should continue his green streak and sign AB1870.

[Tri-Valley Herald Editorial, Friday, September 15, 2006](#)

State must solve car pool congestion first

TIMING is as important in government and politics as it is in athletics and entertainment. It's one reason good ideas sometimes fail and bad ones prevail.

A bill awaiting Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's signature that would increase by 10,000 the number of hybrid vehicles, whether they have more than one occupant or not, using California car pool lanes is a case in point.

So much so that Schwarzenegger should veto the bill authored by Assemblyman Ted Lieu, D-Torrance, and give the state a chance to address growing congestion problems in car pool lanes first.

Hybrid vehicles that get at least 45 mpg, if they have permits, don't have to abide by the two-persons-or-more rule in diamond lanes during commute hours. The current cap on hybrids using such lanes is 75,000. Lieu's bill ups it to 85,000. It also extends the sunset date from 2008 to 2011, giving the state more than a year to address a growing congestion problem before approving more hybrid use of the lanes.

A Caltrans report says that between April 2005 and April 2006 congestion reached "unacceptable" levels on between 3 percent and 5 percent of California's car pool lanes. "On any given day" about 10 percent of them operate under what it calls "degraded" (slowed) conditions. In the Bay Area, interstates 80 and 880 and U.S. Highway 101 are among them.

In some cases they slow down to the same stop-and-go pace as regular lanes. Stuart Cohen of the Transportation and Land Use Coalition says some creep along at between 5 and 10 mph during peak commutes. And, single-occupancy vehicles, which legally must be hybrids, so irritate commuters that we're "detering" them from joining car pools and using mass transit. Some even have gone back to driving alone.

Lieu says his bill will spawn the sale of more hybrids as well as cut air pollution and oil consumption. But auto dealers argue that the price of gasoline has had more to do with the popularity of hybrids than car pool lanes. To wit: 113,000 hybrids were sold in California in August compared with 57,136 in July of 2005.

The congestion problem has surfaced since Lieu's legislation was passed last month, and Uncle Sam could intervene. Federal law enables states to let hybrids use diamond lanes, but requires that they be monitored and solo-driver access for hybrids be restricted or discontinued if lanes get too congested. Another solution is to make regular vehicles have three people in them to use car pool lanes. Only Interstate 80 to and from the Bay Bridge now does so.

Thus, the timing problem with Lieu's seemingly good idea.

The bigger issue — growing congestion in car pool lanes — needs to be solved first.

Schwarzenegger should not sign a bill increasing use until the state decides how to keep car pool lanes flowing.

Lawmakers and bureaucrats have the 2007 legislative session in which to do so. In the interim, 75,000 hybrid permits remain valid and the number can be increased after the congestion problem is eliminated.

[Commentary in La Opinión, Monday, September 18, 2006:](#)

[The following commentary discusses how the ports in Long Beach and Los Angeles have become the major source of diesel pollution of the Los Angeles metropolitan region. Due to the ships, trains and trucks utilized to import and transport loads for and toward the remainder of the country use diesel fuel. Therefore, the residents of Southern California are paying additionally with their lungs and lives by this international trade. For more information, contact Maricela \(559\) 230-5849.](#)

ECOLOGÍA: Se debe promulgar ley para puertos

Felipe Aguilar

Cada vez que compramos un nuevo artículo importado de China o de otro lugar, solemos pensar cuán afortunados somos de poder pagar precios tan bajos por estos productos. Sin embargo, lo que muchos no conocen es que existe un precio escondido que los residentes de los alrededores de los puertos, las líneas de los ferrocarriles y las carreteras están pagando para que estas mercancías puedan llegar a los almacenes del resto del país.

Los puertos de Los Ángeles y Long Beach se han convertido en la fuente de contaminación diesel más grande de la región metropolitana de Los Ángeles. Debido a que los barcos, los trenes y los camiones utilizados para importar y transportar carga para y hacia el resto del país funcionan a base de combustible diesel. Por lo tanto, los residentes del sur de California estamos pagando adicionalmente con nuestros pulmones y nuestras vidas por este comercio internacional.

La propuesta de ley SB927 (escrita por el senador estatal Alan Lowenthal) solicita la modesta recaudación de 30 dólares por cada contenedor de 20 pies o TEU que entra a este complejo portuario y divide los fondos recolectados en tres partes para:

- * Adquirir nuevas y efectivas tecnologías para reducir la contaminación del aire en los puertos.
- * Mejorar los sistemas de rieles de los trenes para movilizar la mercadería con mayor rapidez,
- * Cubrir las necesidades de mejoramiento de la seguridad, como la revisión del contenido de los contenedores.

El cobro por contenedor es responsable y modesto. Un nuevo estudio económico realizado por expertos del comercio marino demostró que un cobro por contenedor en los puertos de LA/Long Beach no desviaría el tráfico de los barcos hacia otros puertos. Y los 30 dólares incrementarían el costo total de un viaje por barco al complejo portuario en tan solo 1.5% a 2.5% en promedio. Finalmente, este modesto incremento será pasado a nosotros los consumidores después de todo. Pero eso está bien para los consumidores californianos quienes, de acuerdo a un reciente sondeo del Instituto Público de California estamos dispuestos a pagar más por productos importados si ese aumento se destina específicamente para limpiar el aire de la contaminación creada por el transporte de esta mercadería.

Necesitamos ahora la firma del gobernador Arnold Schwarzenegger para limpiar nuestras comunidades y proteger a nuestros pulmones y a nuestras vidas.

El humo diesel es particularmente mortal ya que produce cáncer. Un estudio del Distrito de Manejo de la Calidad del Aire de la Costa Sur (AQMD) concluyó que más del 70% de los riesgos de contraer cáncer debido a la contaminación del aire en el área de Los Ángeles es atribuible al humo de los motores diesel.

Conozco esta historia demasiado bien, ya que veo, oigo y huelo a los barcos, trenes y camiones que pasan por mi comunidad todos los días, repletos de contenedores de carga. Como médico también veo a cientos de niños en el cuarto de emergencia sufriendo de ataques de asma y a sus desesperados padres queriendo hacer algo para detenerles el dolor.

El gobernador tiene una rara oportunidad al firmar la SB927 pues ésta, además de salvar vidas, es una inversión en el futuro de la economía en California al proveer los fondos necesarios para limpiar y mejorar nuestros puertos más grandes.

Los puertos de Los Ángeles y Long Beach ya envían 40 mil camiones diesel a las calles todos los días. Esta cantidad podría incrementarse al triplicarse el comercio durante los próximos 20 años si no invertimos ahora en tecnologías y combustibles más limpios. Estos camiones y trenes expulsores de diesel transportan contenedores desde los puertos y viajan a todos los rincones del estado, llevando consigo más que mercancías; ellos también pasan dejando tóxicas emisiones diesel a las regiones por las que atraviesan.

La Junta de los Recursos del Aire de California también halló que las emisiones de los puertos y las actividades del movimiento de carga causan 2,400 muertes prematuras y por encima de un millón de ausencias escolares cada año. ¡Esto es más del número de muertes por suicidio en el estado en un año! No deberíamos estar pagando estos precios por ningún producto.

Para los californianos —los miles, que han escrito, llamado y demostrado su apoyo a esta legislación— es un asunto de vida o muerte. Sabemos que podríamos pagar el último precio si esta propuesta no se convierte en ley —nuestra salud y nuestras vidas se encuentran en juego.

Urjo al gobernador Schwarzenegger a que firme la SB927 para invertir en el futuro de California al salvar vidas, mientras que al mismo tiempo, preserve la estabilidad económica de los puertos.

El Dr. Felipe Aguilar es jefe del Comité de Salud Ambiental de Médicos por Responsabilidad Social-Los Ángeles.