

Cooler Valley days to arrive with better air quality

By Eddie Jimenez, staff writer

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A dip in temperatures and ozone levels this weekend is expected to improve the Valley's air quality, which was unhealthy for much of the region this week.

Air quality also should benefit from lower levels of particulate matter and diminishing smoke from the Sheep fire in Sequoia National Forest and Kings Canyon National Park, said Jaime Holt, spokeswoman for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

"It wasn't all that great," Holt said of the Valley's air quality, "but it's getting better."

Air quality today is expected to be moderate for Fresno, Madera, Kings and Tulare counties, she said.

A few drops of rain accompanied muggy conditions in the Valley on Friday, said Carlos Molina, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Hanford.

Fresno's high Friday was 91.

The weekend Valley forecast calls for highs in the low 90s today with a 20% chance of isolated showers from midday to early evening.

Temperatures will drop into the mid-80s on Sunday.

A strong cold front is expected to move through the region Sunday night and into Monday, Molina said.

Monday's highs will be in the upper 70s.

Normal highs this time of the year are in the mid-80s, Molina said.

Overnight lows are forecast in the mid-60s tonight before dropping into the 50s the next few days.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Monday, Oct. 4, 2010:](#)

Rail project moving forward

More local and federal funding show continued confidence in it.

Fresno County's application for the state's high-speed rail heavy maintenance facility has taken another step forward when the Council of Fresno County Governments voted to allocate \$25 million in Measure C funding to the project.

Fresno County has put together an excellent proposal and the Measure C funding will make it much more attractive for the California High-Speed Rail Authority to put the facility in the county.

The authority has already decided that a maintenance operation for the rail system should be in the Valley, and the competition is intense among communities in the region.

The maintenance facility would employ 1,500 people and have an annual payroll of about \$110 million. Economic development experts say the maintenance facility would be a "billion-dollar-a-year game-changer" for the county's economy.

High-speed rail is the most promising public-works project to come along in decades. It not only will create high-paying jobs, but will also transport people around the state efficiently and help improve our air quality.

The Valley will be a major beneficiary of high-speed rail. We desperately need speedy and efficient transportation to other parts of the state, as well as the jobs that it will create.

In 2008, California voters passed a \$10 billion bond measure to begin the initial phases of the 800-mile project. It has also received federal help and on Thursday, the state High-Speed Rail Authority was awarded a \$194 million grant by the Federal Railroad Administration for preliminary engineering and environmental analysis.

"This funding award demonstrates again the continued confidence the federal government has in California and the progress we're making in planning our state's high-speed rail project," said Curt Pringle, chairman of the High-Speed Rail Authority.

It hasn't been easy for high-speed rail advocates to get this far because of opposition from those who don't understand the promise of a transportation systems that has been used for decades in other countries. But the California project has been moving forward steadily and one day will become a reality.