

## **SUSD uses air funds to retire old fleet of buses for clean-diesel ones**

Stockton Record, Wednesday, Oct. 26, 2010

STOCKTON - The yellow school buses of Stockton Unified are going green thanks to a windfall of greenbacks provided mainly by a financial grant from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Forty-three new clean-diesel buses, valued at nearly \$4.2 million, were unveiled at a ceremony Monday afternoon in Stockton. The new buses replace older diesel-powered buses and will emit 90 percent less total emissions over their lifetimes, including drastic reductions in particulate pollution, which has been linked to chronic lung disease, respiratory illness, heart attacks and premature death.

The air district's funding came from local Department of Motor Vehicle funds, the state Air Resources Board and the federal government. Stockton Unified contributed \$1 million.

"This is a great example of a project that has far-reaching benefits for not only Valley schoolchildren but the air basin in general," said Seyed Sadredin, the executive director and air pollution control officer for the Valley Air District. "Incentive funding such as this is critical to cleaning up our air."

Air Resources Board chairman Mary D. Nichols added, "The yellow school bus is an iconic symbol - one that conjures images of happy schoolchildren. Today, not only should the children be smiling, but so should the bus drivers and maintenance workers, local community members and anyone who lives or works where school buses operate. I congratulate the Stockton Unified School District for taking advantage of available state funding to clean up their bus fleet for the benefit of local air quality and public health."

## **California to get another \$900M from feds for rail**

By Kevin Freking - Associated Press Writer

In the Modesto Bee and Merced Sun-Star, Tuesday, Oct. 26, 2010

WASHINGTON -- Federal lawmakers say the state of California is getting another \$902 million in federal funding to advance the design and construction of a high-speed rail system initially running from San Francisco to Los Angeles.

The funding announcement is being made in the days leading up to a high-stakes election featuring Democratic Sen. Barbara Boxer and Republican Carly Fiorina. One of the key battlegrounds in that race is the Central Valley, where the vast majority of the new funding is going.

California voters approved nearly \$10 billion in bonds for high-speed rail in 2008.

Boxer said high-speed rail would help boost the economy and reduce congestion and air pollution.

## **Valley gets more federal funds for high-speed rail**

By The Associated Press

In the Hanford Sentinel, Monday, Oct. 25, 2010

WASHINGTON - Federal lawmakers say the Central Valley is getting another \$715 million in federal funding to advance the design and construction of a high-speed rail system.

The money, made available through the Federal Railroad Administration's High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Program, will go toward beginning construction on the state's high-speed rail system between Merced and Bakersfield.

That's the lion's share of the total \$902 million allocated for the entire state.

The funding announcement is being made in the days leading up to a high-stakes election featuring incumbent Rep. Jim Costa, D-Fresno, and Republican challenger and Hanford cherry farmer Andy Vidak, as well as U.S. Senate candidates Democratic Sen. Barbara Boxer and Republican Carly Fiorina. One of the key battlegrounds in that race is the Central Valley. Boxer said high-speed rail would help boost the economy and reduce congestion and air pollution.

Costa announced the funding Monday at a press conference along with Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearingin, saying high-speed rail "means more jobs and economic opportunity for the Valley. That's why I authored the original bond measure and fought for these funds."

California voters approved nearly \$10 billion in bonds for high-speed rail in 2008.

## **New federal money may help Kern's bid for rail facility**

By John Cox, Californian staff writer  
Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, Oct. 26, 2010

Kern County officials reacted cautiously Monday to news that the federal government has set aside \$715 million to begin building a Central Valley segment of the proposed California high-speed rail project.

The man who made the announcement, Rep. Jim Costa, D-Fresno, said the funding award ensures that construction of the entire project will begin in the valley. If so, that could boost efforts in Kern and elsewhere in the valley to land a lucrative train maintenance facility.

Others were less confident that construction would necessarily begin in the valley, noting that the project's governing board is not expected to decide until early next month whether construction should start in the northern, southern or central parts of the state. At best, they said, the federal money acts as an incentive to begin building the project in the valley.

At least six Central Valley communities, including Kern, have submitted bids to host the maintenance facility, which is expected to come with more than 1,500 jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars a year in economic benefits.

Representatives of the Federal Railroad Administration, which Costa said made the funding commitment, could not be reached for comment Monday.

A spokeswoman for the California High-Speed Rail Authority said Monday that officials there had no information about the \$715 million, which makes up the bulk of a new, \$902 million federal package that would pay for various aspects of the rail project.

Irrespective of the maintenance facility's proposed locations, Monday's announcement drew praise from state elected leaders. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sen. Barbara Boxer welcomed the federal funding commitment as an economic boon that would [help reduce pollution](#) and move people across the state more easily.

A Costa representative said he understood the federal money was contingent upon rail construction beginning somewhere between Merced and Bakersfield.

But even if that's not the case, Costa spokesman Will Crain said, "this funding sets the valley up to be a strong candidate" to be the first rail segment built.

Ron Brummett, who has been closely involved in Kern's proposals as executive director of the Kern Council of Governments, said Monday's funding commitment shouldn't have any impact on Kern's bid "one way or the other." That's because there will be no need to build a maintenance facility until the rest of the project can be built as well, he said.

County Supervisor Ray Watson noted that the rail project could still begin construction in the Los Angeles area. If that's the case, he said, "they're not going to have a (rail maintenance facility) in Kern County."

Teresa Hitchcock, a county administrative analyst working on Kern's bid along with Watson and Brummett, said the federal money might persuade the project's governing board to begin construction in the region that has the most funding in place.

"I would definitely think that this would sway (board members') decision-making," she said.

## **NRCS State Conservationist Announces California On-Farm Air Quality Accomplishments and 2011 Funding**

By USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service  
In the Sacramento Bee, Tuesday, Oct. 26, 2010

FRESNO, Calif., Oct. 25 -- FRESNO, Calif., Oct. 25 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Results tabulated from the first two years of a new voluntary air quality program show farmers are making significant improvements in reducing nitrous oxide emissions, precursors of ozone. Ed Burton, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist for California, made today's announcement at the Souza Dairy Farm near Fresno, where he also committed \$24 million to the program for 2011.

The program splits with farmers the cost of replacing the oldest and most polluting combustion engines on the farm, with new technology that runs 75 percent cleaner. Using this program California farmers have replaced engines on 814 old tractors and other farm equipment in the past two years and reduced nitrous oxide emissions by 1,349 tons.

"To put this in perspective, these emission reductions are roughly equivalent to removing 408,000 cars from California highways," said Burton. "Think about it. That many cars would stretch from Washington State to Mexico."

Farmers interested in participating in NRCS programs have from now until Nov. 12, 2010 to sign up at their local NRCS office to be considered for the first funding round of fiscal year 2011.

"California's farmers have responded enthusiastically to our efforts to improve air quality," added Burton. "We look forward to seeing what they can achieve in 2011."

The new program, part of the 2008 Farm Bill, was first rolled out in 2009. The primary goal is to help farmers and ranchers achieve air quality conditions set by the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). Producers in the 36 California counties that are currently not in compliance with one or more of these standards were eligible for the new program. The program can operate for two more years under current authorizations.

While the new program in California specifically targets nitrous oxide emissions from combustion engines, NRCS and farmers collaborate on air quality work on nine conservation practices to further air quality goals for PM10, PM 2.5, ozone, and Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs). These include practices such as the engine replacement program, conservation tillage, treating farm roads to reduce dust, using machinery that reduces VOCs in orchards and more.

In the past two years, NRCS has received over 5000 applications for the diesel emissions reduction program and has been able to fund 814 of these at a cost of \$43.4 million. Additionally, NRCS has joined into 420 contracts for other types of air quality conservation work, at a cost of \$6.4 million. Farmers typically contribute 50 percent. In 2009 the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District provided \$3 million to increase the cost share rate for some of the farmers in their district.

Burton credited the effective partnership that has supported the policy, technical and educational work necessary to achieve the air quality benefits. "Conservation, farming and environmental groups all got behind the effort to help put California agriculture on the leading edge of conducting business in a cleaner, greener way that protects the air and complies with local and state regulations," concluded Burton.

The partnership includes the California Department of Food and Agriculture, the Environmental Defense Fund, California Farm Bureau Federation, Nisei Farmers League, Western United Dairymen, California Cotton Growers and Ginners, Resource Conservation Districts, California Citrus Mutual, California Grape and Tree Fruit League, California Dairy Campaign, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, and the USDA's Farm Service Agency. Several partners joined with NRCS in 2009 to host 15 workshops throughout the Central Valley to alert and educate producers about air quality and the opportunities available through the Farm Bill program.

[Fresno Bee Earth Blog, Sat., Oct. 23, 2010:](#)

## **A few thoughts about ozone in California**

By Mark Grossi

The New York Times wrote about ozone in the San Joaquin Valley last week. The writer quoted someone from Texas about the idea of making motorists pay extra to help clean up dirty-air regions.

I think it's fine to quote someone from Texas. Or Arizona. Those states have ozone problems. But they don't have nearly the challenge that California faces.

Californians and other folks around the country need to hear this.

I took a quick stroll through Houston's ozone numbers for this year. The region doesn't have half the number of ozone violations as the Valley. South Coast has even more than the Valley.

But, more interesting, Houston's ozone concentration for the eight-hour standard is not as high as it is in the Valley, South Coast or Sacramento.

Even the breezy San Francisco Bay Area has a higher maximum ozone concentration this year than Houston.

Houston does have ozone problems. The city had 43 bad days this past year -- not a pretty picture. Their air experts are valid people to quote in any national story about ozone.

But when Congress updated the Clean Air Act in 1990, it was not written with Houston, Phoenix or Las Vegas in mind. Lawmakers were driven by the unique problems and politics in Southern California and the rest of California.

This is ground zero of ozone pollution in the United States.