

[Hanford Sentinel, Commentary, Tuesday, June 14, 2011:](#)

Some questions to ponder about high-speed rail

By Bill Clark

I have not attended any of the forums on high-speed rail, largely because I did not wish to argue with good, longtime agricultural friends. However, I feel I must speak out.

The Clark family has farmed and produced milk in Kings County for over 100 years. We love Valley agriculture and therefore I read the lead article in the June 8 Sentinel "High-speed rail opponents jam meetings" with great interest and but also great concern. It seems like the whole ag community is against the high-speed rail in Kings County. I have not heard of ag concerns in Tulare or Fresno counties, but they may well be there. However, from what I understand, Tulare or Visalia would be very happy to have the train and station that Hanford is trying to reject.

In a business, which I founded in the 1970s and still continues, we export cattle genetics to over 70 countries around the world. My staff and I were fortunate to use the high-speed rail systems in Europe and Japan for many years. These systems are very impressive, And we have all read of the great network of high-speed rail that China is building. Thus, while I understand the anger of having farm land taken from you or maybe the frustration of not getting the answers you seek from the state, there is still much I don't understand and I have questions which I have not seen fully covered in the news.

It seems everyone is almost afraid to ask questions for fear of being shouted down. Therefore I post them in hopes of achieving a more objective discussion of the proposed high-speed rail in the media and meetings.

1. The biggest concern seems to be the ag land which will be taken out of production or crossed on an angle. The Kings County Farm Bureau seems to have taken a lead position on this. But if true, where were the farm bureau and all the others when widening Highway 198 took a big slice of prime farm land from dairyman DeJong and others? Where were they when we sold considerable prime land west of Hanford to the city which became the much-needed joint high school and junior college as well as subdivisions outside of town? I don't recall anyone telling us that expansion of the city was wrong.

As agriculturalists we were fairly compensated and the others will be as well. So why this sudden outburst of anger? And when I hear someone claim his orchard in the path of the high-speed rail is worth \$100,000 per acre, please tell him we have quite a bit nearby we would be very delighted to sell for a fraction of that!

2. Fine farm land is going to continue to be eaten up in development. It is going to happen regardless of what anyone thinks and the best we can do is to plan it in an orderly way, so it benefits the whole area. And would someone explain to me why it is so terrible if it happens in our county but is fine if Tulare and Fresno counties lose prime farm land for railroad right of way? The Valley needs to be considered as a whole and accept what is best for the whole.

3. The same paper says "Kings County officials predicted the county would suffer \$100 million hit in its economy..." Maybe, but what dollar benefits would high-speed rail would bring Hanford and the Valley to offset this theoretical loss? They must also be great, I would guess greater. We already have some of the most polluted air in the U.S. What value do you put on better air quality for your families? What value do you put on greatly increased visitors to Hanford, new businesses, new production facilities, new jobs and opportunities? What value do you put on the convenience of getting to the major urban areas in a fraction of the time a car or bus or Amtrak take today? Will high-speed rail help stop the brain drain of the Valley with the best and the brightest moving to the urban areas due to lack of opportunity here? I believe, when rationally studied, the advantages will outweigh the disadvantages.

4. Folks, let's be realistic. Many may wish our area to almost remain an island, avoiding the influx of growth. But folks, it ain't gonna happen! The nation, state and county are going to grow. You cannot stop it! So I urge you, conduct a rational discussion, instead of what reads like a lynch mob mentality at the meetings according to the article. Let's see if there is not a more balanced

view out there. I am not discussing if it is wise fiscally. But I am saying if it is coming regardless how we feel, let's get on the "fast track" to study and use it the best we can. Our neighbors in Tulare and Fresno counties may know something we don't.

And I send my congratulations to those in the audience who said "Let her speak!" when Veronica Felts, who was brave enough to speak out in favor of the high-speed rail, was being booed and jeered at the meeting. I did not think that is the way a democracy works. In fact I know it is not.

Clark is the founder of the Clark Center for Japanese Art and Culture in Hanford.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the Valley Air District's Clean Green Yard Machines program. For more information on this or other Spanish clips, contact Maricela Velásquez at 559-230-5849.](#)

Subsidio para cortadoras de césped eléctricas

Periódico Cambalache, May 2011

VALLE CENTRAL.- El Distrito del Aire de San Joaquin ha puesto a disposición de la comunidad del valle central, recursos económicos para renovar sus cortadoras de césped.

Los nuevos fondos y un proceso simplificado hará que más cortadoras eléctricas inalámbricas lleguen a manos de residentes locales a través del programa "Clean Green Yard Machine".

Consiste en reemplazar las cortadoras eléctrica (marca Neuton), por las de gasolina contaminantes. El pago es de 50 dólares (ancho de

corte de 14") o 100 dólares (ancho de corte 19"), incluyendo el envío, con la entrega de una cortadora de gasolina usada.

Los cupones deben de ser solicitados por teléfono y serán distribuidos a los que llamen primero hasta que se agoten los cupones que se ofrecen uno por casa o tres por negocio.

Los participantes deben ser residentes de uno de los ocho condados dentro de la cuenca del aire del Valle de San Joaquín: San Joaquín, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare y Kern.

Al recibir el cupón, deben de entregar su cortadora de gasolina a un centro de reciclaje autorizado en su condado (la lista de centros de reciclaje se puede ver en www.valleyair.org). Después, tendrán que llamar al número gratuito de la compañía para ordenar su cortadora eléctrica inalámbrica, que será entregada a domicilio.

Cambiar una cortadora de gasolina por una eléctrica es una manera eficiente y fácil para reducir las emisiones y limpiar el aire en el valle. Las emisiones de las cortadoras de gasolina durante una hora producen lo mismo que 40 vehículos de último modelo.

Los residentes de los condados de Merced, Stanislaus y San Joaquín pueden llamar al teléfono 209-557-6485.