

## **Stanislaus growth, pollution subject of meeting**

Bee Staff Reports

Modesto Bee, Tuesday, Jan. 8, 2013

STANISLAUS COUNTY -- People interested in how growth affects air quality are invited to share ideas with transportation leaders.

The general concept: cleaner air through reduced driving because leaders engage in better planning.

State air quality officials have ordered agencies in Stanislaus County to reduce 2005-level greenhouse gas emissions 5 percent by 2020 and 10 percent by 2035. Integrating growth and road planning could do the trick, say leaders with the Stanislaus Council of Governments.

They are preparing key documents combining what's called a regional transportation plan with a new sustainable communities strategy. An environmental review features a Jan. 22 public workshop, and other comments should be submitted by Feb. 5.

The transportation plan will list projects envisioned across the county through 2040, including new roads and anything else having to do with cars, buses, trucks, trains, bicycles, airplanes and walking paths.

Leaders want to "improve system efficiency by influencing individual travel behavior," perhaps with "incentives to encourage alternatives to the single-occupant vehicle," a notice says.

The plan will analyze the region's need for new homes and jobs and lay out funding sources, the notice reads.

The sustainable communities component, required by state climate-change law, will discuss goals for building more compact communities that require less driving.

The Jan. 22 "scoping meeting," to gather input on study content, or scope, starts at 4 p.m. in StanCOG's third-level board room at 1111 I St., Modesto.

Written comments should be mailed by Feb. 5 to StanCOG, 1111 I St., Suite 308, Modesto 95354. Questions also may be addressed to StanCOG at (209) 525-4600.

## **Federal court tells EPA to enforce its soot standards**

Central Valley Business News, Monday, Jan. 7, 2013

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit has ruled that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency must implement stronger requirements to clean up particulate matter, also known as soot.

Particulate matter has been an issue of air pollution controls in the Central Valley.

In rejecting EPA's adoption of a weaker approach, the court says that the public health protections in the Clean Air Act require EPA to use more stringent cleanup requirements in communities with unhealthy particulate matter levels.

The suit was brought by Earthjustice on behalf of American Lung Association, Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club, and Medical Advocates for Healthy Air.

"Soot pollution is dangerous to kids, seniors, and people with heart and lung problems, and kills tens of thousands of people each year" says Paul Cort, the Earthjustice attorney who argued the case. "This ruling will mean much stronger protections against this deadly pollutant."

Major sources of soot pollution include coal-fired power plants, factories, oil refineries, and diesel engines.

The ruling means that more plants will be subject to more protective particulate matter limits in areas that violate health standards, says Earthjustice. It also will require limits not only on direct emissions of soot, but also on pollutants that transform into particulate matter in the air.

Under the ruling, the most stringent controls will apply to communities that fail to timely attain health standards (within four to six years). Among other things, these areas will have to implement the best available control measures (instead of just reasonably available measures) and achieve pollution cuts of at least five percent per year if they fail to meet standards on time.

“Few court rulings strike so close to home. This one’s as close as your next breath of air,” says John Walke, senior attorney and director of NRDC’s Clean Air Program. “Soot kills. Now there will be less of it - in our air, our hearts and our lungs.”