

Heat lags 2003 -- feeling cooler? Expect another scorcher today

By Rhashad Pittman, Record Staff Writer
[Stockton Record, Wednesday, Sept. 8, 2004](#)

STOCKTON -- Darrell Johnson walked a block from his air-conditioned downtown apartment Tuesday afternoon, and his forehead was already glistening with sweat.

On his way to the San Joaquin County Human Services office, the 27-year-old said that when temperatures surpass 100 degrees, as they did Tuesday, he tries to stay in his house to stay cool. As a teenager, he said, he was prone to heatstroke.

If the weather reaches 102 degrees today as forecast, he may want to stick close to home.

"I'm liable to pass out on the sidewalk," he said. "When I walk down the streets, I jump from shade to shade."

As Johnson sought shade Tuesday, other Stockton residents walking through downtown licked ice cream cones and carried water containers. But others stayed cool without either. Jody Antone and her teenage daughter, Jo-An, walked along Sutter Street to a bus stop in black T-shirts and pants.

"It's cool to us because we're from Arizona," Jody Antone said. "Here, it's hot during the day and cool at night. There, it's hot all the time, night and day."

Temperatures reached a high of 102 degrees Tuesday afternoon and are predicted to reach that mark today, said Karl Swanberg, a Sacramento-based forecaster for the National Weather Service. AccuWeather predicts Stockton will hit 103 today.

It would be the 11th day this year that temperatures reached 100 degrees or hotter. There were 23 days hitting 100 or hotter in 2003.

"We've had a persistent ridge of strong high pressure across California," Swanberg said. "This is when we get our hot spells -- under the high pressure dome."

By Thursday, temperatures should start to cool off, he said. And over the weekend, they are expected to drop to the low 90s.

"We'll see a little bit of a Delta breeze developing for Thursday," Swanberg said.

Ray Black was not worried about staying cool. He was more concerned about staying healthy. Black, 50, said he suffers from bronchitis and was coughing a lot lately.

"The combination of the heat and the bronchitis don't go together well," he said.

People with breathing ailments, along with children and the elderly, should limit their outdoor activities on bad air-quality days like Tuesday, a Spare the Air day, said Anthony Presto, public education representative for the Northern Region of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Area residents suffering from breathing problems may get relief today. Presto said the air quality was expected to improve and that the air district would not declare a Spare the Air day.

Tuesday was only the Valley's second Spare the Air day of the summer season ([Note: reporter should have said county, not valley](#)), which runs from the beginning of June to the end of September. Last year by this time, there were 11 Spare the Air days, Presto said.

He said the decrease could be for a number of reasons, including the 500 new rules and regulations that the control district implemented since 1992, causing almost a 50 percent drop in emissions from homes and businesses, a shift in driving patterns because of high gas prices and an increase of new, cleaner-burning automobiles on the road.

"There's a lot of reasons," he said. "We can't be sure what's the main cause."

Dairy wary activists make Sacramento Valley next battleground

By Brian Melley, Associated Press
[S.F. Chronicle, Wednesday, Sept. 8, 2004](#)

DIXON, Calif. (AP) -- Alongside Interstate 80 a sign for the Milk Farm restaurant stands as a landmark to when this Sacramento Valley community was known as "Dairy City" and diners guzzled all-you-can-drink milk for a dime.

But those days are long gone since the cafe closed and some of the very dairies that gave the city its distinction have dried up.

With the arrival of a 3,000-cow farm outside city limits two years ago, Dixon now finds itself joining its neighbors in saying no to so-called megadairies that are blamed for pollution and a stench powerful enough to knock a buzzard off a manure wagon.

With only two big dairies in the Sacramento Valley, environmentalists are using tactics that stalled dairy construction in the San Joaquin Valley to halt the northward migration of cows. Government is getting in on the act, considering stiffer regulations and even a moratorium on large dairies.

After the Heritage Dairy spewed 1.3 million gallons of manure into waterways leading to the Sacramento River in November, environmentalists have launched attacks in Solano and Yolo counties to stem the flow of dairies into the region from places such as Southern California, where they're being displaced by housing.

Leading the charge in litigation is attorney Brent Newell, veteran of the San Joaquin Valley dairy wars who is opposed to what he calls animal factories.

"I used to use the term factory farm, but these things don't deserve to have farm involved," he said. "It's industrial in efficiency and scale. When you compare the amount of pollution that comes out of them, they produce pollution like any other industry. It's not agriculture anymore."

Milk remains the leading commodity in the nation's most productive agriculture state, but the scale at which it's being produced has raised objections from community groups and environmentalists who have sued to stop massive projects that call for as many 10,000 cows.

Opponents say manure pollutes air and water, attracts flies and creates a stink.

Farmers vehemently object to such claims, saying in part that pollution figures are based on outdated science. They say they need more cows to make a profit and the size of dairy operations has ballooned to meet that demand.

For example, Tulare County, the nation's biggest dairy county, had 63,000 cows on 230 farms in 1970, an average of 273 cows per farm. During a survey in 2002, it had 395,984 cows on 313 dairies, an average of 1,265 cows per dairy.

"I think when you hear those big numbers it scares people," said David Albers, a third-generation dairyman and lawyer for many of the embattled dairies. "It's hard to defend because you can't understand where people are coming from. It's bad that people think dairies are polluters and bad people and they're not."

On behalf of the Sierra Club, Newell filed notice in Sacramento federal court in January to sue Heritage Dairy for its spill. The suit never was filed after state regulators stepped in and fined the dairy \$90,000, he said.

Last month, he filed a club lawsuit against the Yolo County Board of Supervisors for approving the expansion of the 1,500-cow Cache Creek Dairy outside of Woodland. The suit pending in Yolo County Superior Court claimed the board failed to follow stricter rules it established for new and expanding dairies in 2000 after Jack Kasbergen moved his operation there from New Mexico.

The suit seeks to force the county to require a permit that would trigger an extensive environmental review. Sierra Club members said they want to deter other big dairies from moving to the area.

"When you have something going on with industrial ramifications, it is not the kind of agriculture we try to promote," said Susan Pelican, a Sierra Club member who lives on a rice farm near the dairy. "If they could get milk out of machines that would be better."

Kasbergen would not comment, but Albers, his lawyer, said the lawsuit was without merit and that the Sierra Club was merely trying to get headlines.

John Bencomo, Yolo County planning and public works director, said Kasbergen had a right to expand by 700 cows without meeting the new requirements, but he acknowledged that the dairy's arrival had prompted the regulation change as the county was concerned about becoming a home for massive dairies.

"We wanted to make sure we had enough safeguards not to be consumed by dairies," Bencomo said.

In Solano County, the spill at the Heritage Dairy has quickened the pace of planners to draft a code for large animal operations to protect public health, an issue supervisors will take up in December along with new zoning requirements that would require up to a two-mile buffer for dairies outside city limits.

Meanwhile, six of the county's seven cities, including Dixon, have passed resolutions asking the board of supervisors to halt approving any more big dairies until their effect on air and water quality can be determined. One dairy is currently on hold and another dairy withdrew its permit application after Heritage inspired new environmental scrutiny.

Vacaville Mayor Len Augustine, a dairy moratorium supporter, said all it took for him was to take a whiff while driving up Highway 99 in the San Joaquin Valley to wonder what kind of health problems the dairy air could cause.

"We don't want to oppose the California cow that's happy," Augustine said. "Most think of dairy as lush hills with cows grazing over them. The truth is that isn't the case."

Good news, bad news: BART waives fare again Smog prompts 2nd Spare the Air day

By Steve Rubenstein, staff writer
[S.F. Chronicle, Wednesday, Sept. 8, 2004](#)

A little air pollution paid off big time for BART riders Tuesday morning, and it will again today, too.

The transit line gave away about 80,000 free rides to rush-hour commuters Tuesday as part of a program to get people out of cars during the first "Spare the Air" day of the season.

What was bad for the air was good for the bottom line, and BART riders were as happy as BART riders can be on the morning after a holiday, especially considering there was also a stuck eastbound train at the Balboa Park station around 5 a.m., just as things were getting interesting.

"What a pleasant surprise," said John Forbes, who rode from 24th Street- Mission to Powell station and found himself \$1.25 ahead. "It's not as pleasant as going sailing, but still . . ."

Jane Foord and Catherine Corcoran, tourists from New Zealand, rode BART from the Coliseum station after landing at the Oakland airport and emerged from Powell for their first peek of San Francisco, a full \$6.30 to the good.

"The sun is shining, the sky is blue, and now we have enough for free coffee," Foord said. "We need coffee, because we got up at 2 a.m. to catch our plane. I think I better get a double."

BART spokesman Linton Johnson said it was impossible to calculate precisely how much fare money was lost, because the fare gates were deactivated from 4 to 9 a.m. and no one used a ticket. But on a normal day, an average of 80,000 passengers take rides worth an average of \$2.25 each, which means the Metropolitan Transportation Commission will be reimbursing BART about \$180,000.

It was the first of five free BART mornings authorized for Spare the Air days. The catch is that the program ends Oct. 15. So the pollution must continue for the stainless steel gravy trains to keep running. With smog, the government says it's use it or lose it.

"I suppose if you want to jeopardize the Bay Area's air, you can feel free to pray for smog," Johnson said. "I think most people would rather pay their BART fares."

The bad news -- or good news -- is that today is another Spare the Air Day, and rides will once again be free this morning.

At Powell station, BART station agent Davin Modeste said a few passengers had stopped long enough to say thanks, which was nice, because at other times passengers are not at all shy about sounding off about problems and delays.

Fellow station agent Cynthia Held said even the free fare deal had some folks grumbling, especially passengers who purchased tickets before they realized they didn't have to.

"They came over to the booth and wanted me to give them refunds, but I couldn't do that," Held said. "I told them they could keep the ticket and use it next time. That wasn't good enough. Some people will never be happy."

The program also includes free valet bicycle parking at five stations: Dublin/Pleasanton, North Berkeley, downtown Berkeley, Walnut Creek and Embarcadero. In addition, seven BART cars have been wrapped with blue Spare the Air ads which, while jarring, are not as jarring as the department store ads that currently cover several Caltrain cars.

Spare the Air Days typically occur during hot spells with light winds, which allow ozone levels to build up. The Bay Area Air Quality Management District has declared 174 Spare the Air days since the program began in 1991. The worst year was 1996, with 25 Spare the Air days.

The hot-spell-light-wind kind of weather is going to continue, at least through today, National Weather Service forecaster Bob Benjamin said. It's all being caused by a high pressure system. He did not know, exactly, what was causing the high pressure system.

"Could be some effect from all the (hurricane) activity back East," he said, "but I don't really want to go there. That's all chaos theory, butterfly-flapping-his-wings stuff."

It was three-digit hot in parts of the Bay Area, including 103 in Gilroy, which tied a record for the date. It was 103 in Livermore, 99 in Napa, Redwood City and Concord, and 85 in San Francisco.

Today it will be in the 80s to 100 in the Bay Area, which means that BART riders cashing in on another day of free rides are advised to select a car with a working air conditioner. Not all of them have one.

BART, WHEELS take public for free ride

With the heat rising, another Spare the Air day means no-cost rides on local transit

By Simon Read, STAFF WRITER

[Tri-Valley Herald, Wednesday, Sept. 8, 2004](#)

PLEASANTON -- In an effort to "Spare the Air," BART and WHEELS are offering free rides for the second-day running as temperatures continue to bake the Valley.

In an effort to minimize unhealthy air conditions, WHEELS today will provide bus service at no charge in Livermore, Pleasanton and Dublin, while BART will open its turnstiles to anyone who enters a station between 4 and 9 a.m., officials said.

Hot, smoggy conditions on Tuesday prompted the Bay Area Air Quality Management District to declare Tuesday a Spare the Air day.

With temperatures expected to again hit the triple-digits today regional air quality managers are urging the public to drive less and again take advantage of the free public transit.

"We're hoping that by offering free rides, people will use the bus and save the air quality," WHEELS spokeswoman Barbara Duffy said. "It also gives them a chance to see if they like (the bus)."

The free rides were made possible by a grant from the air quality district, Duffy said. Tuesday was the first commute day WHEELS has offered free rides.

"We've had one Spare the Air Day prior to this -- on Saturday, Aug. 28," she said. "We offered free rides that day and our ridership was up by 8 percent over the other three Saturdays that month."

On normal Saturdays, WHEELS averages 2,800 riders, Duffy said. On the Saturday that free rides were offered, WHEELS carried 3,000 people to their destinations.

On Tuesday, BART offered the first of five free weekday commutes it's planning during the warm season, spokesman Linton Johnson said.

The free service will be offered during the first five Spare the Air days, providing such days land on a weekday prior to Oct. 15, Johnson said. The rides are subsidized by \$2 million in grants from the air district and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission.

"Our measure of success will be if the air improves," Johnson said. "We could double the number of BART riders, but if we don't improve the air quality, then arguably, it would not be a success. This is all about having cleaner air."

Temperatures on Tuesday climbed as high as 103 degrees in the Valley, said Steve Anderson, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service. Today's are again expected to hit the triple digits.

Anderson said the blazing heat gradually will begin to taper off by the end of the week.

Staff writer Sean Holstege contributed to this report.

Inland Empire Traffic Is 5th Worst Population growth and more trucks raise the region's U.S. ranking. L.A. area is still No.1.

By Hugo Martín, Times Staff Writer
[LA Times, Wednesday, Sept. 8, 2004](#)

A massive migration of families in search of housing, plus an onslaught of truck traffic from local ports, has pushed the fast-growing Inland Empire onto a list of the nation's top five most traffic-choked urban areas, transportation experts said Tuesday.

Though the Los Angeles area — which includes portions of Ventura and Orange counties — still has the country's worst traffic, motorists in the Inland Empire who travel during rush hour have endured more than a 500% increase in the amount the time spent stuck in traffic: from nine hours in 1982 to 57 hours per year on average in 2002, according to a study released Tuesday by the Texas Transportation Institute.

The increase ties the Inland Empire with Dallas-Fort Worth for the biggest increase in traffic over 20 years. It also propels the region from 32nd place in the institute's 1982 ranking to fifth place in 2002, leapfrogging over such high-density hubs as San Jose, Chicago and Orlando.

The Bay Area came in second in the rankings, with an increase of nearly 22% in traffic delays over the past decade.

The institute, which is affiliated with Texas A&M University and is known for producing accurate traffic analyses, compares actual commute times with the time those trips would take in free-flowing traffic.

The increasing congestion in the Inland Empire was no surprise to regional transportation officials, who cited as a reason the migration of people from Los Angeles and Orange counties to San Bernardino and Riverside counties in search of affordable homes.

The population in those inland counties jumped by 660,000 residents from 1990 to 2000 — a 25% increase — and was expected to grow 74% more by 2025, according to census figures and regional government planners. The two counties were home to 14 of the region's 20 fastest-growing cities or unincorporated areas during the 10-year period.

But the job centers have remained primarily in Los Angeles and Orange counties, creating a growing number of long-distance commuters.

"They still continue to go to work where their jobs originally were," said Ron Roberts, former head of the Riverside County Transportation Commission.

Contributing to the freeway morass is an increase of trucks that haul cargo from the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach to newly created transfer centers in the Inland Empire, where products are repackaged and loaded onto trains or put on trucks that go to warehouses.

The two ports generate about 35,000 truck trips per day. That number is expected to more than triple in two decades, according to port officials. The most popular routes for trucks hauling cargo to and from the ports are along the Long Beach, Pomona and San Bernardino freeways.

The Texas Transportation Institute estimated that the Inland Empire needs an additional 78 miles of highways and surface streets each year and enough mass transit to serve an additional 100,000 riders annually to keep congestion from worsening.

Riverside and San Bernardino counties collect a half-cent sales tax to pay for transportation projects. But Roberts and other officials say that isn't enough and that congestion will worsen unless the state expands freeways and mass transit. Over the past four years, however, state lawmakers have siphoned \$2.2 billion in transportation funds generated by a state gasoline tax to solve the state's budget crisis.

"Until we get adequate transportation funding, we won't make a dent in this," said Norm King, executive director of the San Bernardino Associated Governments.

The institute's annual report offered a bit of good news for Los Angeles-area drivers: Traffic delay on average has dropped slightly in the past four years, which transportation experts attribute to a sluggish economy and ongoing traffic-reduction programs such as added carpool lanes and freeway tow-truck patrols.

Rush-hour commuters in the Los Angeles region spent 93 hours stuck in traffic in 2002, down from 94 hours in 2001, according to the study.

"In the strange world of traffic congestion, not getting worse is a good sign," said Tim Lomax, a research engineer and co-author of the annual report.

Southern California is not alone in its freeway misery. Congestion has increased in just about every region of the nation, from Eugene, Ore., where delays have nearly doubled in the past decade, to Dallas, where delays have jumped more than 40% in the same period, according to the study.

Throughout the nation, road delays in 85 urban areas studied by the institute cost drivers more than \$63 billion in wasted time, extra fuel and car repairs in 2002, a \$2-billion increase over the previous year.

Traffic here is bad -- but not that bad

By ROBERT PRICE, Californian staff columnist
[Bakersfield Californian, Commentary, Wednesday Sept. 8, 2004](#)

Perceptions about traffic jams, and what constitutes a bad one, are relative. Rush-hour speeds of 30 mph on the Santa Monica freeway constitute reasonably clear sailing, whereas the same sort of congestion on Bakersfield's Truxtun Avenue can elicit gasps of dismay.

It's all about what you're used to.

That truth is underscored by the Texas Transportation Institute's 2004 study on traffic congestion, released Tuesday.

Traffic in the Bakersfield metro area might seem to be getting incrementally worse -- and it is, by several measures -- but it's not getting as bad as fast as one would think, based on how bad it's getting elsewhere.

Got that?

To put it another way: The chamber of commerce ought to jump on this bragging point. The old affordable housing angle is fading fast.

Hard as it may be to believe, especially if Rosedale Highway is your primary commute route, Bakersfield-area transportation planners are dealing with growth as well as or better than the rest of the country. At least based on the cold, hard numbers.

The findings in the 2004 Urban Mobility Report depict Bakersfield as an area that isn't nearly as bad as some cities of similar size -- and certainly not as bad as L.A., still the nation's biggest rush-hour nightmare. The findings include data on travel-delay time, hours of road congestion, "wasted" fuel and other measurables.

In Colorado Springs, Colo., the average number of hours spent in congested traffic jumped from two hours annually in 1982, for the average peak-period traveler, to 23 hours in 2002, more time than you'd be stuck reading bumper stickers in Kansas City, Mo., Cleveland or Buffalo, N.Y. In Pensacola, Fla., delay time went from four hours in 1982 to 19 hours in 2002, giving drivers there more time to study roadside billboards than in Pittsburgh, New Orleans or Oklahoma City.

Bakersfield, with roughly the same population as Colorado Springs and Pensacola, went from two hours of 1982 traffic-jam time to seven hours in 2002. That's the same as in 2001 and only an hour more than in 1992. Of the 17 cities surveyed with metro populations less than 500,000, Bakersfield was in the least-congested third.

The problem with a little bit of good news, however, is that it can obscure the bad. And there is bad.

Total daily vehicle miles of travel, a measure of things like sprawl and lot size, jumped from 6.6 million in 1998 to 7.6 million just four years later. The number of new lane-miles needed to maintain the congestion levels we now have increased between 1998 and 2002 by 40 percent. And we wasted 3 million gallons of fuel idling in backed-up traffic in 2002, 1 million gallons more than in the previous four years.

The amazing thing is that Bakersfield held up as well as it did with an underutilized public transportation system and without a single, dedicated commute route from its larger, faster-growing west side.

Tim Lomax, who wrote the report for the transportation institute, based at Texas A&M University, said he's not surprised Bakersfield did as well as it did even in the face of obvious, specific shortcomings like a true crosstown freeway.

"We don't look at traffic hot spots or bottleneck places," he said, "but in every one of these places we studied, there's an interchange or a bridge or a couple of roads that needs to be fixed."

In other words, Bakersfield can just join the crowd of cities with a crying need for one or more specific traffic-movement refinements.

"Not falling behind everyone else," Lomax said, "qualifies as progress."

Yes, sad but true: In the bizarre world of transportation immobility, falling deeper into gridlock at a slower pace than the next city pushes one to the head of the class.

Let's not get too big-headed about this one.

The Texas Transportation Institute's 2004 Urban Mobility Report: <http://mobility.tamu.edu/ums>

We're All for Mass Transit -- in Theory

By Steve Lopez

[LA Times, Commentary, Wednesday, Sept. 8, 2004](#)

On the morning after Labor Day, the southbound 5 is backed up just north of Dodger Stadium and the northbound 101 is stalled near the Rog Mahal, where a few stressed-out motorists may have paused to pray for an early death.

I get to the office and go digging for a report from the Public Policy Institute of California.

There it is; here's what it says:

"Two in three [California] residents (67%) prefer to focus on making more efficient use of freeways and highways and expanding mass transit instead of building new freeways (30%)."

This has to be a mistake, at least on the mass-transit issue. The report also claims 68% would vote for a sales tax hike to pay for more roads and — I swear on my grandmother's grave — more public transit.

We drive in California, preferably alone. That's what you and I do. And if we liked taxes, we wouldn't have voted for the current governor, who expressed his feelings about a car tax increase by dropping a wrecking ball on an automobile.

I'm telling you the Public Policy Institute researchers were duped if they think two-thirds of the respondents would rather expand bus and train service than throw every last nickel into laying down more asphalt.

A new report by the Texas Transportation Institute crowns greater Los Angeles yet again as national champion for the amount of time we're stuck in traffic.

This is not an achievement you luck into. You have to work at it, with year after year of bad planning, for one thing, and a collective commitment to avoid any personal sacrifice.

Traffic has actually taken a dip in these parts since 1992, which could be because of more highways. So why not build more?

The same Texas study sent a shout-out to San Bernardino and Riverside counties, which tied Dallas-Fort Worth for biggest increase in traffic nationally.

My promise to Dallas and Fort Worth is that they won't be able to keep pace over the next 20 years. San Bernardino and Riverside will leave them in the dust in both traffic jams and smog, or as we like to call it here, "unhealthful air."

How do I know this?

Because population growth was the whole point of the Public Policy Institute survey. We could go from the current 35 million to around 45 million by 2025, and no one in Sacramento is doing a thing to prepare the state for this expansion.

"For most people," said survey director Mark Baldassare, "it seems to be that mass transit is part of the mix they'd like to see for the state's future."

Don't believe it for a minute.

Sure, you might occasionally hear someone chatting up the merits of mass transit. But the first assumption is that someone else will use it, and the first requirement is that it pass through someone else's neighborhood.

Take the Gold Line, long-awaited and much ballyhooed. Nobody rides it, and neighbors complain of the noise.

Take the Orange Line busway in the San Fernando Valley. It may never get built, thanks to neighborhood opposition.

Take the Wilshire Boulevard buses-only lane. It could get dumped because car traffic is slowed while bus passengers whisk by.

"It's annoying," a frustrated 21-year-old driver told The Times' Caitlin Liu.

"You see an empty lane, you want to dart over there, but you can't."

Don't just get rid of the bus lane, I say. Get rid of the buses.

And what's with these bike riders clogging traffic?