

New PG&E technique to spare Kern's air

By JOE MULLIN, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, August 11, 2005

Workers from Pacific Gas and Electric Company prepared to replace a pipeline in south Bakersfield today --without the blast of methane gas that usually accompanies the work.

A company spokesman was on hand to tout a new technique the company started using in March. Instead of clearing out the pipeline segment by venting gas into the air, a few workers used two giant machines to pump the gas into another pipeline nearby.

"It's not brain surgery, but it's never been done before," said spokesman Jason Alderman. "Bakersfield is choking on pollution, and to release thousands of pounds of methane is a bad idea."

This was the fourth time PG&E has used the technique to prevent emissions. Had they not used it, 520,000 pounds of methane natural gas would have been shot into the atmosphere.

Although it would have been a one-time emission, it's enough to make a difference on an already-bad day, said Brenda Turner of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

"That's a significant amount of gas to put into the air," said Turner. "It could tip it over the line," resulting in a "Spare the Air" day, she said.

Winds probably would have blown the gas toward Arvin, a town already frequently plagued with the worst air quality in the valley, according to Turner.

PG&E workers will begin replacing 4,500 feet of pipeline today. The pipeline, which is about four feet deep in the work area, is part of a network owned by PG&E that extends from Arizona through Canada.

Alderman said the two-day project is needed because the once-rural area has more housing in it. A thicker pipeline is required to protect against possible punctures from contractors digging.

Hybrids to HOV

Law allows drivers of gas-saving vehicles to use car-pool lanes even when alone.

By SORAYA SARHADDI NELSON
The Orange County Register, August 11, 2005

SACRAMENTO - Hybrid car drivers who have been aching to move into the HOV lane have finally gotten a green light. A new state program announced Wednesday allows owners of approved hybrid vehicles to apply for a special decal that will let them use car-pool lanes even if they are alone in their cars.

The measure was approved by state lawmakers last year to reward drivers of energy-efficient and low-emissions vehicles. But it wasn't formally adopted until Wednesday when President George W. Bush signed a federal transportation bill clearing the way for California to become the second state in the union to enact it.

The state needed federal buy-in to avoid putting federal highway funds at risk.

Only certain models that officially get at least 45 miles per gallon will be eligible for the decal, which will cost \$8. Certain other vehicles, including motorcycles and electric cars, are already eligible.

The hybrid policy change surprised some backers of the state bill. One of them, bill author Assemblywoman Fran Pavley, D-Agoura Hills, said she had expected clean-air regulators to take time ensuring that their version met federal regulations, but that she was pleased nonetheless.

Gennet Paauwe, spokeswoman for the state Air Resources Board, said the board had time to review both measures before Bush signed the federal bill and decided to proceed immediately.

"It's a common-sense policy that represents yet another step toward cleaning up our environment and reducing air pollution," Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said in a statement. "The more we can encourage Californians to buy and drive cleaner-air hybrid cars and trucks and give them some incentive to do so, the better off we will be."

According to the DMV, there are 57,164 hybrid vehicles registered in California. An Orange County Toyota salesman said he expected HOV-lane incentive to boost sales of his company's Prius hybrid sedan, which is so popular that there's usually at least a 30-day wait to get one.

"I'd already seen a dramatic increase in sales over the past 21 to 30 days," because of soaring gas prices, said Tustin Toyota salesman Greg Vernon. "But the phone is already ringing off the hook today (Wednesday) with people excited about the news. Three called me in the last hour."

Prius owner Pat Livingston of Newport Beach said she was thrilled the decals would finally be available. She anticipates being able to shave 15 minutes off her 50-minute drive to Torrance on weekdays to visit friends.

"It's definitely going to be an advantage to use them," she said. "On Tuesday afternoon I had my college roommate and her husband with me from Boulder (Colo.), and we used the carpool lanes to go watch a TV taping in Los Angeles. We saved a lot of time."

Irvine Mayor Larry Agran, who recently bought a Prius, said he, too, planned to apply for a sticker although he didn't know how often he'd exercise his new privilege, given how crowded car-pool lanes can be.

HOV lanes are traditionally reserved for cars carrying at least two people.

"I probably will use it from time to time although I try to be kind to myself and considerate of others," he said. "I don't want to feel like I'm taking advantage of anyone."

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Hybrids on fast track to HOV lane

By Tim Molloy, Associated Press

Published in the LA Daily News, August 11, 2005

President George W. Bush's signature on the \$286 billion federal transportation bill will allow hybrid car owners to begin driving solo in California car-pool lanes within weeks, officials announced Wednesday.

The policy change was designed to encourage drivers to buy the high-mileage, low-emission vehicles. But the announcement that hybrid drivers will be allowed to start applying today for decals allowing them in the lanes came as a surprise to backers of the change, who had predicted that it might not be implemented for months.

California's law was supposed to take effect Jan. 1 but first needed approval from the federal government. That permission was tucked into the transportation bill.

The state originally planned to wait for clean-air regulators to reconcile the state bill with the federal legislation, which supporters had said could take months. But the state Air Resources Board had time to review the state and federal legislation before Bush's signature, and decided to proceed with the change immediately, said Gennet Paauwe, a spokeswoman for the board.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said in a statement that the change was "a common-sense policy" toward reducing air pollution. The state has some of the most polluted regions in the nation.

"The more we can encourage Californians to buy and drive cleaner-air hybrid cars and trucks, and give them some incentive to do so, the better off we will all be," Schwarzenegger said.

Only three hybrid models Toyota's Prius and Honda's hybrid Civic and Insight will be allowed in the lanes. They are the only models that meet the eligibility standards of at least 45 miles per

gallon and almost no smog-causing emissions, according to the office of the bill's author, Assemblywoman Fran Pavley, D-Woodland Hills.

Hybrid owners will have to send in applications and \$8 fees to the Department of Motor Vehicles to receive their decals.

Cathy Margolin, president of the Orange County Prius Club, said using the car-pool lanes will shave an hour each day from her commute between Newport Beach and Fullerton.

"It's an incentive for drivers to switch to hybrids instead of driving their gas-guzzler SUVs," she said.

Hybrids get better mileage by supplementing gas with electricity harnessed from the engine during braking and coasting.

California will become the second state to allow hybrids with solo drivers to use car-pool lanes. Virginia enacted the change in 2000, and Arizona, Connecticut, Georgia and Minnesota are considering it.

Some Virginia drivers complain that allowing hybrids in the lanes has led to a crush of cars and slowed once-speedy commutes. The American Lung Association of California advocates hybrids but took no stand on Pavley's bill for fear it might cut car pooling and lead to more pollution.

To prevent hybrids from clogging the lanes, Pavley's bill expires in 2007 and caps at 75,000 the number of hybrid vehicles that could participate.

As of the end of June, there were 57,164 hybrids registered in California, though not all would be car-pool-eligible, according to the Department of Motor Vehicles.

In a sign of the vehicles' growing popularity, nearly 24,000 hybrids were registered in the first six months of this year.

To qualify for the stickers, motorists in the San Francisco Bay Area will also have to have a FasTrak pass and transponder that allow them to drive by toll bridge booths without paying. Stopping at a toll booth would add to air pollution, state officials said.

Hybrid owners can get an application for the permits from the DMV Web site or from a DMV office.

Hybrid drivers can begin applying to drive solo in car pool lanes

By TIM MOLLOY, Associated Press Writer
in the S.F. Chronicle, August 11, 2005

Los Angeles (AP) -- President Bush's signature on the \$286 billion federal transportation bill will allow hybrid car owners to begin applying Thursday for decals allowing them to drive solo in California car pool lanes, officials announced.

Hybrid drivers could begin using the lanes within weeks.

The policy change was designed to encourage drivers to buy the high-mileage, low-emission vehicles. But the announcement that hybrid drivers can apply immediately for the decals came as a surprise to backers of the change, who had predicted that it might not be implemented for months.

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"The more we can encourage Californians to buy and drive cleaner-air hybrid cars and trucks, and give them some incentive to do so, the better off we will all be," Schwarzenegger said.

Reps. Brad Sherman, D-Sherman Oaks, and Darrell Issa, R-Vista, pushed to include language in the highway bill allowing California's law to take effect.

"It's good news for really everyone in the country and the world that wants to see us switch to a cleaner, more fuel-efficient technology," Sherman said.

Only three hybrid models - Toyota's Prius and Honda's hybrid Civic and Insight - will be allowed in the lanes. They are the only models that meet the eligibility standards of at least 45 miles per gallon and almost no smog-causing emissions, according to the office of the bill's author, Assemblywoman Fran Pavley, D-Agoura Hills.

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To prevent hybrids from clogging the lanes, Pavley's bill expires in 2007 and caps at 75,000 the number of hybrid vehicles that could participate.

As of the end of June, there were 57,164 hybrids registered in California, though not all would be car pool-eligible, according to the Department of Motor Vehicles.

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On the Net:

<http://www.arb.ca.gov/msprog/carpool/proposedhybrid.htm> www.arb.ca.gov/msprog/carpool/proposedhybrid.htm

<http://www.dmv.ca.gov/> www.dmv.ca.gov <http://www.dmv.ca.gov/>

Carpool lanes open to hybrids

State will give solo drivers in three gas-sipping cars a helping hand in traffic.

By Tony Bizjak, Bee Staff Writer

Sacramento Bee, August 11, 2005

After months of uncertainty, California will open its carpool lanes to solo drivers in high-mileage hybrid vehicles.

The decision, announced Wednesday by the Schwarzenegger administration, puts into effect a California law passed nearly a year ago to encourage the state's drivers to buy fuel-efficient vehicles.

State officials had been waiting since then for federal officials to give their blessing to the law.

The federal transportation act signed Wednesday by President Bush gives states the authority to allow cleaner, high-mileage cars in carpool lanes. Its wording does not, however, match the wording of the more stringent California law.

Schwarzenegger administration officials say they decided to implement the law anyway, after state Air Resources Board attorneys consulted privately with federal transportation officials.

ARB spokeswoman Gennet Paauwe declined to offer details of those talks.

"We determined the (president's) signing today gave California the approval it needed," Paauwe said.

Acknowledging opposition to the law from some American automakers, Paauwe said, "We have been sued before by automakers, and it could happen here, but we're hopeful that won't be the case."

The law goes into effect immediately, Department of Motor Vehicles officials said.

DMV officials said they have a window sticker program ready to go. Hybrid owners must fill out an application, available on the DMV Web site, and mail it to the DMV with an \$8 check, officials said. Those officials said they should be able to mail windshield stickers to qualifying drivers within two weeks.

Only hybrid vehicles that get more than 45 miles to the gallon, however, will be allowed with a single occupant in carpool lanes, DMV officials said Wednesday.

The three gas-electric models that the Air Resources Board says currently qualify are the Toyota Prius and Honda's Insight and Civic Hybrid.

They will join a growing list of single-occupant vehicles allowed during commute hours into carpool lanes - marking a continuing shift in the state's philosophy on how carpool lanes are used.

Initially designed to encourage people to commute in groups, the state's 1,112 miles of high occupancy vehicle lanes, known as diamond lanes, also allow buses, motorcycles and a handful of vehicles that run on all-electric power or on compressed natural gas.

The law was strongly championed by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and by state Treasurer Phil Angelides.

Schwarzenegger, in a press release, hailed the decision to open carpool lanes to certain hybrids as "a common-sense policy that represents yet another step toward cleaning up our environment and reducing air pollution."

"The more we can encourage Californians to buy and drive cleaner-air hybrid cars and trucks, and give them some incentive to do so, the better off we will all be," the governor said.

State officials said 57,164 hybrid vehicles were registered in California as of last month, already a significant increase from 34,000 a year ago.

California law allows up to 75,000 hybrid and other highly clean vehicles to use carpool lanes until the end of 2007.

At that point, single-occupant hybrids will no longer be allowed in carpool lanes unless state officials extend the privilege.

By then, state Assemblywoman Fran Pavley, who wrote the bill, said she hopes many more consumers will have bought the higher-mileage hybrids.

Gas-electric hybrid technology saves fuel and reduces pollution by letting a vehicle run at certain speeds on an electric motor.

Major American automakers, however, have been announcing plans recently to produce a new generation of larger gas-electric vehicles that will use hybrid technology for more powerful engines rather than for increased gas mileage.

Ford Motor Co. Chairman Bill Ford challenged the California law during the legislative debate last year because it excluded, for instance, Ford's new 35-mpg Escape hybrid sport-utility vehicle. In a letter to the governor, Ford called the plan a "buy Japanese" bill and a "special-interest measure ... intended for almost exclusive use by Toyota Prius drivers."

Angelides, a Democratic candidate for governor, responded that "what Bill Ford ought to be focusing on is how Ford can make the most fuel-efficient vehicles and how Ford can beat the Japanese."

The law also has been challenged by some transportation advocates in metropolitan areas, such as the Bay Area Transportation and Land Use Coalition, whose officials complain the law could clog carpool lanes, making them less useful for their primary users, buses and carpoolers.

Hybrid owners in turn have expressed frustration that they've had to wait for nearly nine months for the state law to go in effect.

Holly Brickner, a Sacramento real estate agent who owns three hybrid vehicles, applauded the law, although she said she thought all hybrids should be given the carpool lane privilege.

"Any way government can incentivize people to purchase hybrids makes sense," she said.

State Air Resources Board officials have posted those vehicles that qualify on the agency's Web site at www.arb.ca.gov/msprog/carpool/carpool.htm <<http://www.arb.ca.gov/msprog/carpool/carpool.htm>>.

[Modesto Bee, Editorial, Thursday, Aug. 11, 2005](#)

School buses need help in cleaning up their act

School buses have emerged as one of the biggest problems facing those trying to clean up the valley's polluted air. They are a special concern because of the precious cargo they carry. Children inside older buses are often exposed to greater amounts of dangerous particulate matter than are found in the open air adjacent to busy freeways.

The older buses are also simply less safe.

That's why a Tuesday press conference in Fresno displaying newer, cleaner buses and retrofit technology for older diesel-powered buses was such welcome news. Best of all: There's finally a little funding available to start the job.

The state budget has \$25 million for those purposes. Half will be spent replacing buses built before 1977; they are the worst polluters and can't be brought up to today's standards. The other half will be spent retrofitting newer buses with devices that will dramatically reduce their emissions.

Much more money is needed. The state has more than 1,000 of the oldest buses, and they cost about \$150,000 each to replace. And the older, dirtier buses are concentrated in our valley - about a third of the total - where school districts are chronically less well-funded than their coastal counterparts.

Unfortunately, the valley is where the air quality problem is greatest.

A bill by state Sen. Chuck Poochigian would do much more to address the funding problem. SB698 would spend \$50 million a year for five years and replace or retrofit all the offending vehicles. It's stalled in the state Senate, but Poochigian is still pushing it.

Ironically, one of the problems with diesel engines is that they are so rugged. A properly maintained engine has a useful life of decades - but that's a drawback as we learn more about the fine particles in diesel emissions that cause so many health problems.

Farmers who use diesel engines to power irrigation pumps and other equipment already have run into this problem. Legislators have answered by appropriating funds to help pay for switching to newer engines, and utility companies are being persuaded to offer lower rates to subsidize a shift to cleaner - but more expensive - electric motors.

Schools need help as well. Few districts can bear the full burden of this essential change. The more help they get, the better - and as soon as possible.

[Modesto Bee, Letter to the Editor, August 11, 2005](#)

'No-emission cars' don't spare the air

In response to the Opinion, "Here's one way to spare the air by driving a car" (Aug.6), the writer seems to have missed the point as well.

While vehicles powered by electricity seem to be clean, or "zero-emission vehicles," the writer must not forget that the charge in the batteries has to come from somewhere.

Thirty-three percent of California's electricity comes from burning natural gas, coal (16 percent) or nuclear reaction (15 percent). I don't think most people would consider these to be clean sources of power, although there is some validity to the cleanliness argument in the case of nuclear power. Add to this the loss of efficiency that comes from the transmission of electrical power over long distances from generation plants to the end user, and electrical "zero-emission vehicles" look more like "elsewhere-emission vehicles." They are a nice idea but, like the nice little packages of red meat in the supermarket, something nasty has to happen before the product gets to the end user.

Electric cars, while worthy of further experimentation, are just more "feel-good science" promoted as clean because the user doesn't see the actual smoke coming out of the generation plant.

BERRY J. GRIFFIN

Modesto

[Modesto Bee, Letter to the Editor, August 11, 2005](#)

Tout bill to power up solar panel use

I would love to see coverage in The Bee on the Million Solar Roofs bill, SB1. Sponsored by Gov. Schwarzenegger and authored by Senators Kevin Murray (D-Los Angeles) and John Campbell (R-Orange County), it continues solar panel buyer rebates from the government that were originally set to end in 2006. It also gives builders who use solar energy in new homes a financial incentive.

The bill sets the goal of a million homes with solar power by the year 2017. If this goal is achieved, California would be more independent from foreign oil, would have a more dependable power grid, and would cut pollution and the need for new power plants.

The plan requires home builders to offer solar power as an option to buyers. The bill also requires utilities to give credit to homeowners whose solar panels produce more electricity than they use.

Modesto, which has some of the worst-quality air in the world, could benefit greatly from the implementation of clean, renewable energy sources in California. The bill has been passed by two policy committees in the state Assembly, and the next vote will be in the Assembly Appropriations Committee sometime between Monday and Aug.26.

Contact your state officials to make sure this bill gets through these two committees.

ELEANOR LOVINFOSSE

Delhi

[Sacramento Bee, Letter to the Editor, August 11, 2005](#)

Carpool lanes for carpools

Re "Hybrids' carpool waiver in doubt," July 30: I think it's great that gas-electric hybrid cars get outstanding gas mileage, and they utilize alternative sources of fuel for city driving. But hybrid vehicles get better gas mileage in "city" driving than "highway" driving, as shown on window stickers and promotional materials for those hybrids.

It's important to note that when the hybrid vehicle is driving at highway speed, it utilizes gasoline. So if hybrids, such as the Toyota Prius, are allowed to drive in the HOV lane with only one driver, I should be allowed to drive my compact, fuel-efficient car in the HOV lane as well. It also runs on gasoline when driving on the freeway, just like a hybrid.

HOV lanes are designed to encourage us to carpool. If hybrid car drivers can carpool, then - and only then - should they be allowed to drive in the HOV lane.

Tina Borgman

Pleasant Grove

[Sacramento Bee, Letter to the Editor, August 11, 2005](#)

Encouraging hybrid cars

Re "Hybrid hypocrisy," editorial, Aug. 3: The Bee is wrong to dismiss hybrid cars as "the latest, hippest symbols of green technology." These fuel-efficient vehicles clear the air, reduce our dependence on polluting fuels and save motorists precious dollars. That's why I was proud to sponsor the law that allows fuel-efficient hybrid and other advanced-technology vehicles - even with a single occupant - access to the carpool lane.

Californians today breathe some of the most polluted air in the country. Hybrid electric vehicles offer a transition to a truly zero-emissions future. Providing new incentives for drivers to purchase, and manufacturers to build, hybrid vehicles is one key way we can promote technology with the potential to dramatically improve our environment.

Additionally, the enactment of the law allowing solo hybrid drivers to merge into the carpool lane comes at a particularly important time. As gas prices continue to rise, drivers throughout California are feeling the pinch. Promoting new technology that saves money at the pump and helps clean up our environment is good environmental policy that will help provide welcome relief for countless California commuters.

Phil Angelides, Sacramento

California Treasurer

[Sacramento Bee, Letter to the Editor, August 11, 2005](#)

The diesel hybrid alternative

The Aug. 3 editorial "hybrid hypocrisy" rightly faults a tax policy that rewards an automotive technology blindly without considering how well it actually meets the public policy goal - reduced fuel consumption. But this policy is also wrong because it only rewards buying an automobile powered by a gasoline/electric hybrid engine and not automobiles powered by other highly fuel-efficient power plants. These include diesel engines.

It is well-known (and established by Consumer Reports testing) that the EPA fuel efficiency ratings for hybrids are overstated. The Prius is rated to achieve 60/51 mpg (city/highway) and the Civic hybrid 47/48. The owners of these two vehicles at my workplace report upper and mid-40s for these cars respectively. Meanwhile, my VW Golf TDI rated at 38/46 by the EPA gets an "average" of 48, and on freeway trips it has done as well as 52. Others report similar fuel mileage.

Contrary to those who would cry that diesel is dirty, the latest diesel engine technology and ULSD (ultralow-sulfur diesel) fuel can make diesel engines (per vehicle mile) as clean as, if not cleaner than, many gasoline engines.

Robert S. Sronce

Sacramento

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, August 11, 2005](#)

Dairy waste toxic

In my opinion, one of the biggest problems with having more dairies in the Bakersfield area is the burning of manure-contaminated hay, straw and other materials.

For several years I drove Interstate 5 past two dairies near Stockdale Highway and Rosedale Highway.

Periodically, often during the night, the dairies burn huge piles of this foul-smelling waste material for hours.

It can be impossible to breathe for miles, even with car ventilation closed. In addition to being done at night, it is often done during heavy fog so that it is difficult to see the smoke and identify where it is coming from. (I'm sure the dairies would insist this is merely a coincidence).

Agricultural waste burning contributes a great deal to air pollution in the Central Valley and should be regulated more stringently than it is.

Dairy waste burning is far worse from a quality-of-life standpoint, for those unfortunate enough to live downwind and within 10 miles of a dairy.

JUDY WOLLESEN

Bakersfield

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, August 11, 2005](#)

Appalled by letter

I recently attended a public workshop discussing a dairy emissions report prepared by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control officer. Emissions are volatile organic compounds that are given off by manure, feed and cows at a dairy and are precursors to the formation of ozone (smog).

The officer and his scientists and engineers analyzed information provided by the Dairy Permitting Advisory Group, along with other research, and conservatively calculated an emissions factor of 20.6 pounds per head per year, which was well documented in the report.

A letter signed by a number of valley legislators was presented. It cautioned that unreasonable, incorrect or arbitrary choices could harm the valley's economy, implying the APCO's factor was unscientific.

The letter focused on the needs of the dairy industry while giving lip service to air quality. It failed to acknowledge that the officer is responsible for ensuring that compliance with the eight-hour federal ozone standard is demonstrated by June 15, 2007. If the standard is not met, EPA could yank billions of federal highway funds.

The most egregious part of the letter urges the APCO to reconsider the emissions factor, essentially requesting that he "backoff." The letter smacks of dairy lobby influence. Local signatories include Roy Ashburn, Kevin McCarthy, and Nicole Parra. Instead of supporting the air district staff in their challenging work, valley legislators are being critical, and favoring one industry -- dairies -- over all others.

Unlike the dairy industry, other valley businesses and residents have been dealing with air quality regulations for years.

BILL DESCARY
Bakersfield

[Visalia times-Delta, Letter to the Editor, August 11, 2005](#)

Cows and dairies produce more than pollution

Regarding your July 20 article stating that cows pollute more than cars.

All God's creatures got to breathe. Apparently, it's the exhaling that's gotten the poor cow in trouble. If the cumulative smog-producing emissions of all the critters here in the Valley were recorded, we may find their contribution to our own health and lifestyle would require a restriction in their numbers as well.

The dairy and beef cow is a huge contributor, not only for our nutritional needs, but to our economy, i.e., the number of crops grown to feed her, and the manufacturing plants and ancillary businesses needed to process her significant dowry.

According to the Tulare County Ag Commissioner's Annual Report, this smog producer was the No. 1 producer in the myriad crops we produce. Even the cows other emissions had a dollar value of \$27 million.

Now what did the rest of our gas producers contribute to our health and welfare?

RALPH H. GRAVES
Visalia