

Roll with it: 200 employees cruise on Modesto's Bike-to-Work Day

By Dan Day, staff writer

Modesto Bee, Friday, May 15, 2009

On high-priced road bikes and battered frames with fat tires, scores of people converged on downtown Modesto on Thursday morning during the annual Bike-to-Work Day promotion to encourage commuting by cycling.

The riders came to Tenth Street Plaza on their own or in packs from various starting points around town.

Megan Distaso, the city's rideshare coordinator, estimated the number of riders at 200. At the plaza, they were treated to a continental breakfast, free T-shirts and an assortment of water bottles and other trinkets handed out by the city, Memorial Medical Center, the regional air board and other exhibitors.

The riders included daily commuters and casual riders such as Larry Mason, 51, of Modesto. He rode in from near Johansen High School on the city's far east side. Afterward, he joked that he needed to "stand on my head and let the blood rush back to my body."

Lee McFadden, 45, an experienced cyclist who joined the ride at the Barnes & Noble bookstore on north McHenry Avenue, said his trip into town represented "one less car" on the road.

"The nice thing is, once people try it, especially on a day like today, they'll realize: 'Oh, that was really fun. I enjoyed my ride. I liked my commute,'" Distaso said. "And I always get at least a few people then who will do it regularly."

Distaso said car-pooling, riding the bus and commuting by bicycle help the environment.

"I encourage everyone to try it," she said. "It doesn't work for everybody every day, but every little bit helps."

Government roundup: Senate OKs ag burning limits

The Bakersfield Californian, Friday, May 15, 2009

A bill by state Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter, to eliminate a double standard that let agriculture burn when the air's so unhealthy that fireplace fires are banned passed the Senate Thursday.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District prohibits lighting fireplace fires on days where air quality has been deemed unhealthy. In the past, ag has been allowed to continue open-field burning of agricultural waste until pollution has reached higher thresholds.

Florez introduced the bill after The Californian reported farmers were allowed to burn agricultural waste -- in some cases hundreds of acres of it -- on days when fireplace burning was prohibited. Also after the story, the air district eliminated the double standard.

"If you are telling me that air quality is such that I should not be spewing smoke into the air, then the farmer down the street should also not be spewing smoke into that same air," Florez, who chairs the Senate Select Committee on Air Quality, said in a news release.

Senate Bill 382 passed the Senate 23-14 and will next be taken up by the California State Assembly. State Sen. Roy Ashburn, R-Bakersfield, voted no, his office said.

Air pollution drops dramatically in OC, state says

Pat Brennan, green living, environment editor

Orange County Register, Friday, May 15, 2009

Air pollution took a sharp drop in Orange County and the rest of the Los Angeles basin over the past two decades, according to a new report.

The state Air Resources Board, which tracks a variety of pollutants, says ground-level ozone, a lung-irritant, went down 35 percent in the air basin since 1990. Fine particle pollution, an

increasing worry for regulators because the tiny bits can burrow deeply into the lungs, also dropped 35 percent between 1999 and 2007.

"It's pretty incredible when you look particularly in the South Coast, how much progress we've made in the last 40 or 50 years," said Gennet Paauwe, spokeswoman for the air board.

Both the ozone and particle reductions are attributed to regulations aimed at cutting air pollution adopted both by the state board and by local air districts, such as the South Coast Air Quality Management District in Diamond Bar, over the previous 40 years.

The findings were released as part of the California Almanac of Emissions and Air Quality, published each year by the state air board. They also show less dramatic drops in the San Joaquin Valley, another troubled region of the state for air pollution.

The data come from some 10 million air quality measurements from 200 monitoring stations across the state each year. For the state as a whole, they also show a 53 percent drop in hydrocarbon emissions, a 35 percent drop in nitrogen oxides, a 35 percent decrease in unhealthy ozone days and an 80 percent drop, in urban areas, of exposure to ground-level ozone

Committee reaches deal on cap-and-trade plan

By Jennifer A. Dlouhy, Hearst Newspapers
In the S.F. Chronicle, Friday, May 15, 2009

Washington - -- Congressional leaders who support a new cap on greenhouse-gas emissions reached agreement on a plan Thursday to ease the burden it will impose on refiners, paving the way for a key House panel to vote on the climate-change proposal next week.

Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Los Angeles, chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, and Rep. Edward Markey, D-Mass., signed off on the compromise with Texas Democrats Gene Green and Charles Gonzalez. The cornerstone of their deal was a commitment to donate 2 percent of valuable carbon dioxide emissions permits to refiners.

The compromise on refiners could help Waxman and Markey steer their contentious climate-change measure through the 59-member Energy and Commerce Committee next week.

The measure also is buoyed by a new agreement among many committee Democrats on core parts of the bill, including a plan to freely give away more than 50 percent of those emission allowances to local electric-power distributors, trade-sensitive industries and automakers.

"We are now one huge step toward creating a 100-year solution to the carbon problem ... that will protect consumers," Markey said.

The Waxman-Markey legislation would impose a new "cap" on carbon-dioxide emissions. By 2020, the cap would be set at 17 percent below 2005 levels.

Under the so-called cap-and-trade plan, power plants, refiners and manufacturers could exceed the new limits by buying and exchanging emissions allowances on a new carbon-trading market.

Waxman and Markey were preparing late Thursday to unveil their new bill, reflecting the compromises with committee Democrats. Waxman said his Energy and Commerce Committee would begin voting on the legislation Monday, and he hopes to wrap up work before Memorial Day, when Congress takes a one-week recess.

With all 23 committee Republicans expected to vote no on the legislation, Waxman has been trying to shore up support for his bill among the panel's 36 Democrats. To prevail and get the legislation passed out of the energy committee, Waxman needs at least 30 of the lawmakers to back the legislation.

Green and Gonzalez said that with the changes aimed at helping refiners and other modifications, they expected to vote for the legislation next week.

DOE chief announces billions for clean coal

By H. JOSEF HEBERT - Associated Press Writer
in the Tri-Valley Herald and Contra Costa Times, Friday, May 15, 2009

WASHINGTON—Energy Secretary Steven Chu says he will provide \$2.4 billion from the economic recovery package to speed up development of technology to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from power plants and factories that burn coal.

Chu told a meeting of the National Coal Council on Friday that it's essential that ways are found to capture carbon dioxide from coal-burning power plants and industrial sources. Carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels is the leading greenhouse gas blamed for global warming.

Chu said coal will remain an essential energy source. He said even if coal plants in the United States were shut down, as some environmentalists want, China and India will not turn their back on coal.

[Letter to the Tri-Valley Herald, Friday, May 15, 2009:](#)

Air board errs repeatedly

Former Assemblyman Guy Houston's May 2 letter starts with some praise for the California Air Resources Board and some new plan it has.

I don't trust any more plans by the CARB. Isn't this the same group that made us pay millions of dollars in taxes to add poison (MTBE) to our gasoline?

Then we were forced to pay millions, if not billions, more to have it taken out of the gasoline after it poisoned our drinking water.

This is not the only mistake the CARB made that cost us money. Quite a few years ago they came up with a new diesel fuel that ended up ruining every diesel engine it was put in.

We paid billions to clean up that mistake also. We are paying these bureaucrats each \$100,000-plus salaries to sit on their butts and come up with schemes that don't work.

I urge everyone to look up the track record of the CARB and see for yourself. It's not pretty.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses Congress advances forward with the proposal to limit emissions that cause climate change. For more information on this Spanish clip, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Avanza en el Congreso propuesta para limitar emisiones que ocasionan el cambio climático

By Manuel Ocaño, Noticiero Latino
Radio Bilingüe, Thursday, May 14, 2009

El presidente del Comité de Energía del Congreso, el demócrata Henry Waxman de California presenta hoy una iniciativa que de aprobarse impondría nuevos límites a las emisiones de gases que ocasionan el cambio climático. Waxman propone que las empresas que van a lanzar contaminación al aire tengan que pagar tarifas para conseguir permisos previos. El dinero que paguen serviría precisamente para limpiar el deterioro al aire. La propuesta asemeja un

reglamento de autoridades ambientales del área de la bahía de San Francisco. Waxman presenta su iniciativa hoy a su propio comité y se espera una votación para la próxima semana. Sería un primer reglamento para todas las empresas en todo el país.