

Partnership with SJV Air District saves district funds – FUSD helps with clean air in the Valley

FUSD eNewsletter, January 2010

Fresno Unified School District, Transportation Department received two new Blue Bird CNG school buses in September of 2009 through a grant from San Joaquin Valley Air District. These two buses replaced pre-1976 buses. The cost of the buses was \$339,483. Through the grant process the buses only cost FUSD \$59,483.

These buses meet the green environmental criteria that the state is asking us to meet. They are equipped with lap and shoulder restraint systems which are 172 times safer than a passenger car. These buses have the capacity to transport 76 passengers and are very efficient mechanically and in fuel usage.

We continue to work with SJVAD to seek and obtain grants that become available to replace our older diesel buses with newer, cleaner and safer buses.

Tracy wants 'green' input

by Cassie Tomlin/ TP staff

Tracy Press, Saturday, February 8, 2010

How Tracy can get greener, recycle more, produce less trash, have more renewable energy and cut smog will be the topic of a Feb. 17 community workshop to gather input about the city's plan to become more environmentally friendly.

A state law requires California by 2020 to reduce carbon emissions to where they were in 1990, and the city wants help deciding how best to curb those greenhouse gas emissions.

Last year, Tracy signed on to the Emerald Cities Pilot Program, a public-private effort to help cities lay out ways to conserve energy; reduce carbon emissions and landfill waste; and require more environmentally responsible land development.

Riverside is the only other city participating.

The city's work on the plan so far, which mostly suggests policy change, will be unveiled at the community meeting, said Kimberly Matlock, the city's assistant planner.

The city spent a \$150,000 federal grant on a consultant to help prepare the plan and on a report that tallies Tracy's 2006 carbon emissions.

Matlock said she hopes a conclusive approach will be finalized this spring. The City Council could vote to approve the plan, adopt its goals and enforce its rules.

Matlock said the plan is essential to guide long-range efforts.

"It's going to be a structure we can follow to guide future city actions," she said. "This sometimes consists of simple adjustments or new, creative ways of thinking."

At a glance

- WHAT: Emerald Tracy community workshop
- WHEN: 7 to 9 p.m. Feb. 17
- WHERE: Tracy Transit Station, 50 E. Sixth St.
- INFO: 831-6430

Tulare County officials will lobby for rail line

22 people from Tulare County will travel to Washington, D.C.

By Valerie Gibbons, staff writer

In the Tulare Advance-Register and Visalia Times Delta, Saturday, Feb. 6, 2010

A trip that took 22 local officials to Washington, D.C., last winter — at a cost of at least \$30,000 — will be repeated at the end of this month.

The One Voice trip is widely touted as a way for area representatives to lobby nationally elected officials and staff for funding from Capitol Hill. The trip is scheduled Feb. 22-26.

"We have a new set of priorities this year," said Ted Smalley, executive director of Tulare County Association of Governments. "The transportation bill was delayed again, and we are lobbying to keep the air-quality funding we receive."

The priorities for the 2009 trip included lobbying to buy a rail line between Jovista and Strathmore and for federal stimulus money. The biggest success story from that trip: \$25 million in stimulus money for the widening of Road 108 south from Visalia to Tulare.

According to the agency's proposal, the trip's focus in 2010 will be the federal transportation bill and how it fits into the association's three local priorities: promotion of a short-haul railroad, the widening of Highway 99 and the continuation of air-quality funding.

In 2009, the trip included officials from Visalia, Tulare, Farmersville, Exeter, Dinuba, Woodlake, Lindsay and Porterville, four members of the county Board of Supervisors and the county's chief administrative officer. Smalley said the roster will be the same size this year.

"As far as I know, there aren't too many changes," he said.

Airfare and hotel rooms for the One Voice trip in 2009 cost taxpayers at least \$29,334.80, according to expense accounts obtained by the Times-Delta/Advance-Register.

Meals for TCAG and county staff totaled an additional \$813.83.

The tab for the week is covered by the member cities and the county.

A look at expenses from TCAG shows that airfare, hotel rooms, meals and taxi expenses were billed to the county for four separate trips to Washington, D.C., during the first half of 2009.

The other three trips also focused on lobbying for the rail line and stimulus money.

Who went in 2009

In February 2009, county Chief Administrative Officer Jean Rousseau and four of the five supervisors took part in the One Voice Trip. Only Supervisor Phil Cox stayed in the county that week.

Smalley also attended, as did two staff members. A corporate sponsor, the Visalia company Omni-Means, spent \$3,000 to help defray the travel costs of association staff. The company sent two members of its staff to provide specifics on the Road 108 proposal during lobbying efforts for the federal stimulus dollars. The company has a \$2.2 million contract with the county for the initial widening studies and oversees the right-of-way acquisition.

Omni-Means has been a frequent sponsor of association trips and events. The February 2009 trip was the second time the company sent employees to Washington, D.C., with the county's contingent.

The company is working on projects in Tulare, Lindsay and Porterville. In June, it received a \$1.5 million contract to design the Betty Drive/Avenue 312 route from Highway 99 to Visalia's Industrial Park .

The county received \$23 million in stimulus money in 2009 and is vying for an additional \$20 million this year.

SoCal rejects \$11 million in ethanol funding

The Associated Press

Capital Press, Sunday, Feb. 7, 2010

LOS ANGELES (AP) -- A Southern California group has declined about \$11 million in federal money that was earmarked to build ethanol fueling stations across the region.

The Southern California Association of Governments rejected the stimulus funds Thursday. It says using more ethanol in Southern California would actually increase pollution because it must be trucked from farms in the Midwest.

The federal money would have been used to build 55 stations that could pump a blend of 85 percent ethanol and 15 percent gasoline. The corn-based fuel has been promoted as a cleaner burning, renewable fuel alternative.

About 500,000 vehicles in California are equipped to use the blend.

Some 2,000 stations around the country offer so-called E-85 fuels, including six in Southern California.

Concord begins final hearings on weapons station plan

By Paul Thissen

Contra Costa Times & Tri-Valley Herald, Sunday, Feb. 7, 2010

CONCORD — Tuesday night marks the first of the final two public hearings on the plan to redevelop the Concord Naval Weapons Station with parks, schools, thousands of homes and millions of square feet of commercial space.

At Tuesday's meeting, and another Feb. 23, the council must consider the final environmental review of the plan.

After that vote, a few procedural steps will remain to codify the proposal into the city's general plan.

The environmental review considers the "clustered villages" plan, picked by the City Council in January 2009 as its preferred option. That option includes dense development near the North Concord BART station and three smaller "villages" along the southwest border of the property in the area known as "bunker city."

It would add as many as 12,272 housing units, 28,800 residents and bring as many as 26,530 jobs to the inland portion of the 5,028-acre former U.S. Navy munitions depot in the northeast part Concord, extending to Highway 4 and the border with Pittsburg.

"This plan protects Diablo Creek, provides a buffer to our existing neighborhoods, creates a regional park and creates a site for a potential CSU East Bay," said Mayor Guy Bjerke in his State of the City address in January.

Interest groups, though, are not thrilled with the final environmental review. The Community Coalition for a Sustainable Concord has asked the city to rework portions covering traffic, wildlife, air pollution and housing concerns.

The Concord Naval Weapons Station Neighborhood Alliance has gone further, saying it will likely file a ballot measure or lawsuit if the city does not switch the plan to the "concentration and conservation" alternative, a different proposal that sets all development in the area near the North Concord BART station.

These may be the final hearings on the plan before the City Council, but no bulldozers will be rolling onto the shuttered base any time soon. The Navy has yet to begin its version of an environmental review, Bjerke said.

"It's entirely likely that they will take two or three more years to create their final review of the process before they hand it back to us and allow us to work with them to dispose of the property," Bjerke said.

San Mateo shuttle to Caltrain likely to shut down

By Mike Rosenberg, San Mateo County Times

Contra Costa Times & Tri-Valley Herald, Saturday, Feb. 6, 2010

SAN MATEO — A free shuttle that connects southern San Mateo residents and workers to Caltrain will shut down unless local companies fund it, officials said Thursday.

The Norfolk area shuttle costs \$115,988 per year, and the city — which has been subsidizing the route since 2000 — contributes about \$29,000, said Public Works Director Larry Patterson. Because of the city's strained finances, officials are eliminating that funding.

Last week, Patterson sent letters to local businesses asking them to commit to a \$150 to \$700 contribution, depending on their number of employees, by Feb. 26. He said without enough money, the commute-time shuttle will cease operation when the current fiscal year concludes at the end of June.

The shuttle runs weekdays from the Hayward Park Caltrain station to four office parks near the interchange of state Route 92 and Highway 101. It also picks up residents in the Lakeshore and Fiesta Gardens neighborhoods at five street corners, from the Norfolk Street and Marina Court intersection to Delaware Street and Bermuda Drive.

Elimination of the Norfolk shuttle would leave riders at the station with no public transportation connection to their homes or jobs. Officials fear this could result in more cars on local roadways.

The shuttle is timed to leave the Caltrain station once per hour for three trips in the morning. It returns to the station once per hour in the evening commute period for four trips.

The shuttle from October through December carried 1,761 riders, or an average of 28 per day — a 36 percent drop from the same period in 2008, according to the Peninsula Traffic Congestion Relief Alliance, which operates the route.

The Norfolk shuttle is also funded by grants from the San Mateo County Transportation Authority, the City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District.

The grants will remain, leaving the companies to fund the city's 25 percent share, said Christine Maley-Grubl, executive director of the alliance. She said in the past, some San Mateo County companies have funded one-fourth of the cost of other shuttles.

Effort underway to suspend California's global-warming law Conservatives propose an initiative that would delay curbs on greenhouse gas emissions until the state's unemployment rate drops to 5.5%, a level not seen since 2007.

By Margot Roosevelt, staff writer
L.A. Times, Sat., Feb. 6, 2010

Republican politicians and conservative activists are launching a ballot campaign to suspend California's landmark global-warming law, in what they hope will serve as a showcase for a national backlash against climate regulations.

Supporters say they have "solid commitments" of nearly \$600,000 to pay signature gatherers for a November initiative aimed at delaying curbs on the greenhouse gas emissions of power plants and factories until the state's unemployment rate drops.

GOP gubernatorial candidates and Tea Party organizers paint the 2006 law, considered a model for other state and federal efforts, as a job-killing interference in the economy. Talk radio is flailing at what John Kobylt and Ken Chiampou, drive-time hosts on Los Angeles' KFI-AM (640), call "the global-warming final solution act" promoted by "fascist, Nazi" officials.

"We are on fire," said Assemblyman Dan Logue (R-Marysville), a sponsor of the proposed initiative. "People are calling from all over the country. This will be the most intense campaign the state has seen in 50 years."

Mary D. Nichols, chairwoman of the state's Air Resources Board, which is implementing the law, known as AB 32, called the initiative "a campaign that has to be taken seriously."

"It would put all our efforts at energy efficiency and renewable energy in the deep freezer for a long time," she said.

The measure would halt proposed regulations until the state's jobless rate dips to 5.5% or below for a year. That's a level that California has not seen since 2007. California has one of the nation's highest unemployment rates: 12.4%.

The effort to ignite a revolt in the Golden State comes as years of industry-backed campaigns have sown doubts about the scientific consensus behind global warming and as the public has become more concerned about the economy..

A survey by the Pew Research Center found that 28% of the public considers global warming a high priority, a drop of 10 points from 2007. The economy and jobs topped the agenda. Federal climate legislation, after passing the House last year, is stalled in the Senate.

No major California company has endorsed the initiative yet. But Gino DiCaro, a spokesman for the California Manufacturers and Technology Assn. said last month: "The state's greenhouse reduction program is not a freebie. Large costs foisted on an unemployment-riddled state economy and increased electricity rates . . . are not affordable at this time, if ever."

Sponsors of the California initiative, including Rep. Tom McClintock (R-Granite Bay), Ted Costa of the People's Advocate, a Sacramento-based anti-tax group, and Thomas Hiltachk, an attorney with Republican Party ties, have dubbed the measure the California Jobs Initiative.

The official wording of the initiative, however, lies in the hands of Atty. Gen. Jerry Brown, an outspoken advocate of AB 32 and a presumptive Democratic candidate for governor. On Wednesday, his office discarded the "jobs initiative" title in favor of the unwieldy: "Suspends Air Pollution Control Laws Requiring Major Polluters to Report and Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions That Cause Global Warming Until Unemployment Drops Below Specified Level for Full Year."

Logue, an initiative sponsor, said that the money pledged to the effort is not yet in hand. At least twice as much would have to be raised to guarantee enough valid signatures. Costa, another sponsor, said there were disagreements among supporters about strategy, including how much to rely on the Internet for signature gathering.

Noting the Wall Street Journal's recent endorsement of the initiative, environmentalists worry that money from around the country will pour into the effort.

"People see California as ground zero in this fight," said Ann Nothoff, California advocacy director for the Natural Resources Defense Council. "Polluters will do anything to defeat climate legislation in Washington, D.C., even if it means using California as a pawn."

Industries have lobbied intensely against proposed regulations. Auto manufacturers unsuccessfully sued to overturn rules to slash carbon dioxide emissions from tailpipes. Oil refiners and truckers filed suit this week against a measure to reduce the carbon content of gasoline and diesel.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, who has made climate change one of his signature issues, is reportedly asking major companies to remain on the sidelines. The governor "absolutely opposes" the initiative, said spokesman Aaron McLearn, adding that it is "deceptively written to protect big polluters and would keep us from staying No. 1 in the country in creating clean tech jobs."

GOP gubernatorial candidate Steve Poizner has endorsed the initiative. His rival, Meg Whitman, contends that AB 32 "will discourage job creation and could kill any recovery," and vowed to impose a one-year moratorium on AB 32 on her first day as governor.

Businesses that benefit from greenhouse gas curbs are meeting with environmentalists to mobilize against the initiative. Many are connected to Silicon Valley's deep pockets.

Suspending AB 32 "would be the real job-killer," said Susan Frank of the California Business Alliance for a Green Economy. "The mere passage of AB 32 has generated green job growth

even as the rest of the economy has contracted." A December study by Next 10, a San Francisco-based think tank, found that jobs in California green businesses grew 36% from 1995 to 2008, while total employment expanded only 13%.

A report on the proposed rollback of AB 32 by the state's nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office last month said that the measure could lead to greater short-term profits for some businesses, but would dampen investments in clean technology and green jobs.

The report said the initiative would invalidate a Schwarzenegger executive order requiring that a third of all retail electricity sellers get their power from renewable sources by 2020. And it would suspend the regulation to slash carbon intensity of fuels by 10%.

However, half of the state's measures to bring greenhouse gases down to 1990 levels by 2010 would survive, the analyst report concluded, notably the rules to cut tailpipe emissions, because they were enacted under different statutes.

A crowded ballot in November could work against the measure, but Costa, who was active in the successful effort to recall former Gov. Gray Davis, says his group's Internet outreach will spawn "a new coalition."

"Look at what happened in Massachusetts," he said, referring to the "tea party"-supported election of Sen. Scott Brown. "I see that happening with AB 32. Blue-collar voters think the government has gone too far. We're told we're somehow warming the planet. But they don't see the evidence."

New federal climate change agency forming

By Randolph E Schmid - AP Science Writer

Modesto Bee, Monday, February 8, 2010

WASHINGTON -- The Obama administration is forming a new agency to study and report on the changing climate.

Also known as global warming, climate change has drawn widespread concern in recent years as temperatures around the world rise, threatening to harm crops, spread disease, increase sea levels, change storm and drought patterns and cause polar melting.

Commerce Secretary Gary Locke and Jane Lubchenco, head of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, planned to announce Monday that NOAA will set up the new Climate Service to operate in tandem with NOAA's National Weather Service and National Ocean Service.

NOAA recently reported that the decade of 2000-2009 was the warmest on record worldwide; the previous warmest decade was the 1990s. Most atmospheric scientists believe that warming is largely due to human actions, adding gases to the atmosphere by burning fossil fuels such as coal and natural gas.

Researchers and leaders from around the world met last month in Denmark to discuss ways to reduce climate-warming emissions, and a follow-up session is planned for later this year in Mexico.

"More and more people are asking for more and more information about climate and how it's going to affect them," Lubchenco explained. So officials decided to combine climate operations into a single unit.

Portions of the Weather Service that have been studying climate, as well as offices from some other NOAA agencies, will be transferred to the new NOAA Climate Service.

The new agency will initially be led by Thomas Karl, director of the current National Climatic Data Center. The Climate Service will be headquartered in Washington and will have six regional directors across the country.

Lubchenco also announced a new NOAA climate portal on the Internet to collect a vast array of climatic data from NOAA and other sources. It will be "one-stop shopping into a world of climate information," she said.

Creation of the Climate Service requires a series of steps, but if all goes well, it should be finished by the end of the year, officials said.

In recent years, a widespread private weather forecasting industry has grown up around the National Weather Service, and Lubchenco said she anticipates growth of private climate-related business around the new agency.

While most people notice the weather from day to day or week to week, climate looks at both the averages and extremes of weather over longer periods of time. And understanding both weather and climate, and their changes, are vital to much of the world's economic activity ranging from farming to travel to energy use and production and even food shipments and disease prevention.

Atmospheric scientists have long joked that climate is what you expect and weather is what you get. But greenhouse warming is changing what can be expected from climate, and researchers are seeking to understand and anticipate the impacts of that change.

[L.A. Times editorial, Friday, Feb. 5, 2010:](#)

Backing down on climate change

Washington appears to have lost its appetite for attacking the problem of global warming.

If changes in the public mood and the party alignment of the U.S. Senate have stalled healthcare legislation, they may have thrown the highly anticipated climate bill under a bus.

Even before Republican Scott Brown's stunning election to the Senate in traditionally Democratic Massachusetts last month, it was proving hard to corral moderate Democrats to support a bill capping greenhouse gas emissions. Now they're afraid to back anything that could be perceived as harmful to the economy. "Realistically, the cap-and-trade bills in the House and the Senate are going nowhere," Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) told the New York Times. That's a distressing comment coming from one of the three senators supposedly crafting a compromise climate bill that's capable of achieving a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate.

President Obama has backed down too. On Tuesday, he signaled that cap-and-trade could go the way of healthcare reform's "public option," saying it could be removed from the climate bill. That would eliminate the market mechanism for pricing greenhouse gas pollution -- and without setting such a carbon price, other measures under consideration, such as a national renewable energy standard, won't go far enough to significantly slow global warming.

Global emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases rise every year, and within decades are expected to hit a worrisome atmospheric concentration threshold of 450 parts per million. At that point, there's a high probability that average global temperatures will be at least 2 degrees Celsius higher than they were in 1850 (they're already 1 C higher). Our children would live in a world of mass migrations, wars and conflicts fueled by scarce water supplies, infrastructure destruction as rising sea levels swallow coastlines, extreme weather events, wildfires and increased poverty and disease. These are not the predictions of wild-eyed liberal pundits but of thousands of climate researchers around the world, along with organizations such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the U.S. Global Change Research Program and the National Academies of Sciences.

It gets worse. No one really knows what would happen if average temperatures hit 5 C higher than 1850 -- a level we could easily reach within a century under a business-as-usual scenario -- but changes to the physical geography of the planet become probable: land masses would vanish; ecosystems would collapse. Human civilization would change, and not for the better.

This process can still be slowed at a moderate economic cost, but time is short -- delays make both fighting climate change and adapting to it dramatically more expensive, and eventually could

make it impossible. It's foolish to say we can't afford to pass a climate bill during a recession. We can't afford not to.

[Merced Sun-Star, Commentary, Monday February 8, 2010](#)

Los Angeles Times: Backing down on climate change

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It's foolish to say we can't afford to pass a climate bill during a recession. We can't afford not to.

[Sacramento Bee, Guest Commentary, Saturday, February 6, 2010](#)

Viewpoints: EPA must tighten up controls on smog

By Dr. Stephen Maxwell, Special to the Bee

As a lung surgeon, I encounter the corrosive damage of smog in my patients on a daily basis. Smog burns lung tissue, making these essential membranes red and inflamed.

As a physician I know the human costs are too high to delay reducing this threat any longer. Smog shortens the lives of people like my patients. Smog hits the most vulnerable people especially hard, including infants, children and teens, as well as adults with lung disease.

As a Californian, I applaud the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's proposal to tighten the limits on ozone "smog" pollution.

Here in the Sacramento region, we experience the sixth-worst air quality in the nation. Smog is an unwelcome intruder in our daily lives. The onset of summer means more than just swimming and sunscreen for my patients and the hundreds of thousands of Sacramento-area residents who suffer from asthma or other chronic lung illness.

For them, summer ozone simply makes it harder to breathe. They cough and wheeze; they gasp for air. They are rushed to the emergency room and admitted to the hospital.

Aside from the personal trauma of these emergencies, the additional medical needs add a tremendous burden to our already overstretched health care system and additional costs to family budgets.

Fortunately, it does not have to be this way. The EPA is considering stronger ozone standards that would better protect the public from the serious toll ozone smog imposes. If the EPA adopts a stronger limit on ozone, it would mean cleaner air for our state and greatly improve the health of all Californians.

Smog remains one of the most widespread and dangerous air pollutants across California and the country. In fact, according to the American Lung Association State of the Air report, six of the 10 most polluted cities for ozone in the United States are in California, threatening the health of millions of our fellow residents. We need to tell the EPA that we need a stronger standard now.

Here in California, we've led the nation in adopting the cutting-edge pollution controls needed to meet these tighter standards. While we have much more work to do, California has demonstrated that we have real and proven strategies to cut pollution and provide more protection for people like my patients.

In 2008, the EPA's independent science experts unanimously recommended the standards proposed now. Then, the EPA ignored its scientists and set a standard that allowed much more ozone pollution. It disregarded the strong body of research on ozone that clearly demonstrates that the weaker standard failed to meet the requirements of the Clean Air Act. It discounted the evidence that the weaker standard put millions of people at risk for health emergencies.

Fortunately, they have reconsidered. EPA is now proposing a much stronger standard between 60 and 70 parts per billion, a level that would result in substantial improvements to the public's health.

The EPA's proposal is a prescription for a healthier nation and longer lives for future generations. That's why the American Lung Association and other health and medical organizations are urging the EPA to adopt the most protective standard when the EPA makes its final decision in August: 60 parts per billion. Californians also demonstrated strong support for these tighter standards at a recent EPA hearing in Sacramento.

My patients need this protection. And so do I. There's evidence that even healthy adults like me experience decreased pulmonary function – meaning, our lungs don't work as well – when we breathe ozone while exercising. This is true even if ozone levels are much, much lower than the levels we regularly experience here in the summer in Sacramento.

I strongly encourage the EPA to follow the science and prescribe the most health-protective ozone standards for our national air quality. It is good medicine and we will all be healthier because of it.

[Fresno Bee Earth Blog, Thursday, Feb. 4, 2010:](#)

Childhood ear infections decline as air quality improves

By Mark Grossi

Air quality improvement and the prevalence of frequent ear infections in children.pdf

A UCLA study connects improving air quality with a downturn in frequent ear infections among children in the United States.

But the study had a second conclusion that might surprise some people: Childhood respiratory allergy did not seem to be associated with air quality improvements.

I've heard many health experts talk about the possible connection between allergies and pollution. I haven't read many studies that looked at the possible link.