

Board of Supervisors: Controversial northwest development approved

By James Burger, Californian staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Wednesday, April 1, 2008

Kern County supervisors approved a disputed gateway project in northwest Bakersfield Tuesday.

And they reversed a Planning Commission recommendation that developer Mike Soper of Soper Homes be required to build one-acre lots on his 79-acre development rather than the quarter-acre lots he'd asked to build.

Supervisor Ray Watson recommended replacing the one-acre rule with a buffer zone of half-acre lots around a core of quarter-acre lots. Four of the five supervisors voted to support his support for Soper; Supervisor Don Maben dissented.

Neighborhood opposition to his small lot plan has been loud and constant.

"We're concerned about traffic," said resident Jennifer Keller Tuesday. "It used to take me half an hour to get to work. Now it's an hour. I'm worried about the compatibility. I'm worried about the ground water. I'm worried about the schools."

Soper was still forced to pay large fees for environmental impacts and abide by restrictions on when and how to build.

The supervisors' strong support for those fees could have long-range impacts on 12 other northwest projects in the county pipeline.

Soper's project at Nord Avenue near Johnson Road is the first of four sites in the proposed Northwest Communities development.

Northwest Communities is one of 13 projects county planners put in limbo a year ago, saying area road systems couldn't handle the additional traffic from growth.

Some of the county's grim outlook on growth has eased, but projects in the area are facing strong conditions and impact fees.

Engineer Roger McIntosh, representing Northwest Communities co-developer Dave Packer, attacked the condition allowing county Roads Commissioner Craig Pope to veto building on the projects unless two major road projects have been finished.

Pope said the county is trying to construct segments of road before the developments that need them are allowed to be built.

Other area developers complained about higher fees to mitigate traffic, [air quality](#) and other impacts.

But supervisors defended the fees.

"We should have had those fees in place five years ago," said Supervisor Michael Rubio. "We are living with the sins since we didn't have those fees in place."

States sue EPA over global warming

Modesto Bee, Wednesday, April 2, 2008

BOSTON — A group of state attorneys general is taking the EPA back to court to try to force it to comply with a Supreme Court ruling that rebuked the Bush administration for inaction on global warming.

The high court decided a year ago that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are air pollutants under the Clean Air Act and ordered the Environmental Protection Agency to take action.

But 17 states and others said in a court filing Wednesday that the EPA has not issued a decision on regulation. Their court filing seeks to compel the EPA to act within 60 days.

Massachusetts Attorney General Martha Coakley said the EPA is failing to deal with the dangers of global warming.

An EPA spokesman did not immediately respond to a call seeking comment.

The plaintiffs in Wednesday's court action include Coakley and attorneys general from Arizona, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington and the District of Columbia, plus the city of New York, and the mayor and city council of Baltimore.

SMUD opens hydrogen fueling station

By Bill Lindelof

Sacramento Bee, Wednesday, April 2, 2008

SACRAMENTO – SMUD opened a solar-powered hydrogen fueling station for fuel-cell vehicles Tuesday near its headquarters on S Street.

The station – a joint venture of Sacramento Municipal Utility District, BP, Ford Motor Co. and the U.S. Department of Energy– is designed to demonstrate fuel-cell electric vehicles and generation of hydrogen from alternative resources.

The hydrogen will be used in SMUD's fuel-cell vehicles and similar vehicles owned by others.

SoCal regional air district threatened with federal lawsuit

The Associated Press

In the Contra Costa Times, Sacramento Bee, Modesto Bee and other papers, Wednesday, April 02, 2008

LOS ANGELES—A coalition of environmental groups are threatening to file a federal lawsuit against the South Coast Air Quality Management District if the agency does not end a practice of selling companies pollution credits that the groups say are invalid.

The Natural Resources Defense Council announced the 60-day notice of intent to sue on Tuesday, saying over 17 years the regional agency has sold bogus credits to energy companies and other facilities in Southern California resulting in millions of dollars in profits.

"Southland residents continue to suffer as a result of the air district's bungled efforts to comply with the same laws that it is supposed to enforce," said Tim Grabel, environmental justice attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council. "The air district is selling credits that flat out don't exist to the very companies pumping pollution into our lungs everyday."

Kurt Wiese, an attorney for the agency, rejected the claims.

"There isn't any basis at all for the charges they are making," Wiese said. "We are concerned that this kind of litigation is evolving into a fundraising scheme for the environmental groups."

Developers are required by federal and state law to purchase emission credits before building or expanding polluting facilities. While there are valid emission credits created when older facilities are shut down or through emission reductions at existing facilities, conservationists charge that the air district's cache of emission credits were used up long ago.

The group of environmental organizations includes the Natural Resources Defense Council, Coalition for a Safe Environment, Desert Citizens Against Pollution, and Communities for a Better Environment. The coalition wants a court to declare that the district violated the federal Clean Air Act and wants an injunction prohibiting the district from distributing the invalid credits.

Student fights climate change at home

By Banks Albach, MediaNews Staff

Tri-Valley Herald, Wednesday, April 2, 2008

ATHERTON — At first glance, 16-year-old Anna Murveit is just another high school sophomore with high grades and a jam-packed schedule of classes and sports.

But the Menlo-Atherton High School student has another passion, and her paperless method of transporting her lunch — a bright red lunch box — usually gives it away: She's worried about climate change.

There's also her travel cup for coffee, imitation Nalgene bottle for water and an assortment of recycling bins at her house. And she drives a hybrid Toyota Prius. Anna says she prefers to zero in on the small things people can do to fight global warming.

"It's a huge issue," she said before a lacrosse match last week. "It's frustrating, but I'm doing my part. And my friends are starting to, as well."

Her lifestyle choices, however, aren't the reason Anna was recently chosen as one of 15 Climate Champs by the British Council and the California Air Resources Board. She made their list because of her efforts to educate others on environmental stewardship.

In her leadership class, Anna launched Menlo-Atherton's first Environmental Committee. Thanks to Anna and her six student colleagues, classrooms at the high school now have recycling bins.

Members of the committee speak in class once per week to remind students where to toss cans and plastics. The committee also bought 140 reusable water bottles with class funds and is selling them on campus.

Outside of school, Anna and a friend are planning this summer to launch "Environ-Mentality," a free service for businesses. Anna said they will research green alternatives, like compost packaging, and conduct energy audits at stores.

"I have this whole list of things," said Anna, pointing to pages in her organizer.

Leo Kay, the air board's communications director and one of three judges who selected Anna for the award, said he remembers Anna for many reasons, but in particular for her answer to one question.

Given the chance to present climate change policy to a world leader, Anna told the judges she would improve public transit, make energy conservation mandatory and place a cap on electricity use.

"It was just obvious that she's an environmentalist at heart," Kay said.

Those policies might rile some skeptics, but Anna admits that conservation is in her blood. Her family has always taken measures to recycle and conserve, she said, and her father has installed an extensive solar panel system on their Portola Valley home. So there's no feuding at the dinner table over Al Gore's message.

But Anna does draw some flak at school from friends and fellow students who like to play devil's advocate.

"Some students like to egg me on about global warming, but it's OK," she said. "I like to debate and get my message out. And they're my friends, too."

Anna and the other 14 winners were chosen from a list of three dozen applicants. Kay said this is the first year the competition has been held, but other countries, such as Britain, have conducted similar contests for years. Three of the winners from California are in London meeting with dozens of winners from other countries.

Over the next year, Anna and the other 14 winners, ages 16-18, will be given environmental tasks such as public outreach and community education. Kay also said the state wants the high school to teach employees in Sacramento about the benefits of environmental work through the Web, Facebook and MySpace.

Beijing pollution risky for endurance athletes

By Nick Mulvenney, Reuters

In the Washington Post, NY Post and other papers, Wednesday, April 2, 2008

BEIJING (Reuters) - Endurance events at the Beijing Olympics could pose a health risk if they are staged on heavily polluted days, the International Olympic Committee said on Wednesday, although it was prepared to reschedule such events.

Hein Verbruggen, chairman of the IOC coordination commission, said there was a small chance of athletes suffering some damage to their health if they took part in events lasting longer than an hour, such as the marathon and cycling road races.

Beijing is one of the most polluted cities in the world and, despite a 120 billion yuan (\$17.12 billion) clean-up over the last decade, air quality remains a concern for many athletes coming to the Olympics, already a lightning rod for rights protests worldwide.

"There can be a risk, but it's not big, for endurance events that last longer than an hour," the Dutchman told Reuters on the sidelines of the final inspection of preparations for the August 8-24 Games.

"In that case, we are developing a Plan B. We might delay certain events for a couple of days. But to do that it must be very bad."

Organizers could face a dilemma if on the final day of competition pollution levels are too high to stage the men's marathon.

For events that take less than an hour to complete, Verbruggen said, there was no chance of any damage to the health of an athlete.

"The Chinese together with our medical commission have done an excellent job," he added.

"They have scientifically proved there is no risk for the wide majority of sports."

IOC press commission chief Kevan Gosper said Beijing's investment had already delivered better air quality and he was confident that contingency plans would be effective.

"At Games' time, they've got many levers to pull ... they've given us a great list of details of what they propose to do," he said.

"Every Games I've been to as an administrator since 1984, we've worried about air quality ... in all cases, things turned out to be normal," he added.

Beijing plans to take about half of its 3.5 million cars off the roads and partially shut down industry in the capital and five surrounding provinces for two months for the Olympics and following Paralympics.

City authorities have trumpeted the rise in the number of "blue sky days" -- from 100 in 1998 to 246 last year -- as evidence of the improvements already made.

But some athletes have not been reassured. Marathon record holder Haile Gebrselassie, an asthma sufferer, said last month he would not compete in the event in August because of the pollution.

The "blue sky day" scale has not been widely recognized by international scientists and some foreign media have accused local officials of fiddling with measures to get the desired results.

"There'll always be critics, but it's out there for people to see and for those of us who've been coming here for 30 years, there's tangible evidence of dramatic improvement," said Gosper.

"I believe they've done a great deal on air quality and I don't believe it will be an issue at Games time."

[Bakersfield Californian, Commentary, Tuesday, April 1, 2008:](#)

What's that, fluttering in the haze? A colorful call to action

By Robert Price, Californian columnist

Quick: What is the significance of the yellow flag flying over the Kern County Department of Public Health building?

No, it is not a reminder that bananas are a good source of potassium. (Although that's helpful to know.) And, no, it is not a warning about the potential for an outbreak of malaria. (Hopefully, there's a better plan in place than that.)

The flag is part of a Central Valley-wide program that notifies people about local air-pollution levels, using a system of color-coded banners. An air quality index score of 50 or less, for example, rates a green flag, indicating clean air.

Many flags around the valley were yellow last week, signifying that the air is "moderately" breathable. Orange is "unhealthy for sensitive groups," and red - which comes out when the index exceeds 151 - is a warning to stay indoors, if possible.

Haven't heard about this program? Neither had I, until last week, and I write about air-quality issues from time to time.

Yet, hundreds of schools in the eight counties of the San Joaquin Valley, including a good number in Arvin and Delano, have adopted the program, sponsored by the American Lung Association and Kern County Asthma Coalition (which provides the flags free of charge through a grant program). The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is on board as well. So is the county's public health department.

The flag-alert program, which includes optional "Asthma 101" curriculum for schools, would seem to have great potential. In conjunction with other measures, such as bad-air alerts from the air district, the program helps educate students, keeps parents informed, and subtly fosters awareness about the long-range costs of bad air among the general population.

In Merced County, where 21 out of 22 school districts participate in the air-quality alert program, the City of Merced has agreed to fly the flags over several city buildings, including its civic center, a police station and the city's public works yard, starting in mid-April.

In Fresno County, at least 129 schools participate in the program. Stanislaus and Tulare counties each have more than 70 schools taking part, along with at least one city hall in each of those jurisdictions.

Kern County, which has a bigger air-pollution problem than any of them, has seen comparatively meager participation. Kudos to Arvin, which lays reluctant claim to dirtiest air in America, for its involvement. Its city hall hoists the air-quality flags, too. But Bakersfield? By comparison, it's like no one cares. Just 12 of the Bakersfield City School District's 42 campuses, for example, have signed up.

Why not more BCSD schools? One flag-program official confided that she was told union officials objected to school staffs being required to raise another flag. They were already hoisting two. BCSD officials said the union's objection was news to them, but neither were they sure why so few of their schools were participating.

Still, the BCSD's middling interest level beats the county's other large districts. Among the Kern High School District's 22 schools, only Arvin High flies air-quality alerts. The Panama-Buena Vista Union School District doesn't take part at all.

"We monitor air quality for the sake of our students," said Brenda Lowe, the K-8 district's safety coordinator, "but as far as being a billboard for the community, no, we don't do that."

The billboard effect represents a major side benefit of the program, however. Clean-air advocates in other valley counties agree that the flags make current pollution conditions more easily accessible - for everyone. Bringing city and county buildings into the program helps assure that the flag-alert system doesn't go dormant when schools close during the summer, which happens to be the worst season for many types of pollution.

The more red flags hanging from flag poles around a city, the more likely people will be to appreciate the weight of the overall problem. That's in addition to the program's stated goal - alerting people to the need to rethink their outdoor activities on particularly nasty air days.

In view of Kern County's astronomical asthma rate and the recent study suggesting a link between air pollution and late-in-life dementia, we ought to be doing more, not less, than other valley counties.

Do I seriously believe that flying a bunch of flags from schools, fire stations and hospitals can cut asthma rates? Well, maybe not to any measurable extent. But fly enough of them, and the general population starts thinking more about the veil of dust that perpetually hovers over this valley like a guilty conscience.

Lungs are a terrible thing to waste. It still astounds me that air quality - the most troubling aspect of daily life in the Central Valley, according to fully half the surveys I've seen - continues to take a back seat to other priorities. But that's the confounding reality.

TELL THEM WHAT YOU THINK

Tell your city manager, county administrator and school district superintendent about the flag program. A few contacts:

Bakersfield city manager: atandy@ci.bakersfield.ca.us

County administrative officer: caomailbox@co.kern.ca.us

Kern High School District: dcarter@khsd.k12.ca.us

Bakersfield City School District: lingom@bcasd.k12.ca.us

Panama Buena Vista Union School District: kiph@pbvusd.net

To learn more: www.californialung.org.

[S.F. Gate editorial, Wed., April 2, 2008:](#)

Bay Area fireplace ban makes sense

Abe Lincoln studied in front of one. Cavemen kept warm by its flames. And today millions of homes come equipped with them.

But fireplaces can be bad for your health and add to air pollution, despite the warm history and soothing sentiment.

The Bay Area's nine-county smog board is moving toward a June decision that's likely to limit wood-burning fireplaces in major ways. There may be bans on lighting a fire during the cold season - think of Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's holidays without a crackling fire- and an end to the familiar, open-front hearth in new homes and remodels.

There will be exceptions for people with no other way to keep warm, and barbecue grills or wood-burning ovens will be exempted. But the blazing fireplace will join smoking tailpipes and factory smokestacks as a pollution target.

The Bay Area isn't alone. Southern California and the Central Valley have already moved against home chimneys. In the Bay Area, fireplaces are blamed for 30 percent of lung-damaging particulates, those nearly invisible soot particles, that push readings over a federal limits. Barring fires on windless winter nights, when conditions are worst, is one way to make a serious dent in the problem, air board officials believe.

How serious remains to be seen. The number of likely no-fire nights varies with the weather, ranging from some 20 two winters ago to just six this past season. Also, at least for now, the smog board is selling its crackdown as enforcement-lite with mailed-out notices, leading to parking-ticket-size fines.

There are an estimated 1.7 million fireplaces in the Bay Area, and about half are rarely used, according to the air board. Still, the notion of limiting a cozy fire on a cold night sounds like intrusive government at its worst.

These contemplated changes are anything but that. Clean, healthy air is an even better tradition than a warm fireplace.

[N.Y. Times editorial. Wed., April 2, 2008:](#)

It's Up to You, Mr. Silver

The City Council did right by New York City this week and voted to move forward on congestion pricing. If that brave action were enough, we would be cheering the advent of cleaner air, less gridlock and billions of dollars for mass transportation. Now the fate of congestion pricing rests with Albany, and that is not reassuring.

The plan, which is strongly supported by Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Council Speaker Christine Quinn, would charge most cars that drive into Midtown and Lower Manhattan during the busiest hours on weekdays an \$8 fee, with higher prices for trucks. The revenues — which are projected to be nearly \$500 million annually — would go toward improving mass transit.

While Gov. David Paterson and Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno have embraced congestion pricing, the third man in the Albany power triangle, Sheldon Silver, the Assembly speaker, has been his usual reticent self. Worse, Mr. Silver has said that he would not put a congestion pricing bill to a vote until after the state budget, now officially late, is resolved, perhaps by the end of the week. That's cutting it close because the deadline for collecting \$354 million in federal money to implement congestion pricing is Monday. Mr. Silver can do better.

Congestion pricing has been put through its paces, many of them dictated by Mr. Silver. At his urging, a commission composed of representatives of top city and state elected officials was appointed. It markedly improved on Mr. Bloomberg's plan. Mr. Silver also asked for the City Council to approve the plan first, providing cover for state legislators to follow suit.

Now it is Mr. Silver's turn. He needs to schedule congestion pricing for a floor vote this week while there is still time to meet the federal deadline.

Congestion pricing is primarily viewed as a way to reduce traffic and pollution, but the fees it would produce are also vital to the state-run Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which has found its existing revenue stream undependable and inadequate. If congestion pricing is defeated, New Yorkers can look forward to higher taxes, higher fares and worse transit service.

With Mr. Paterson now in the governor's mansion, it is a new era in Albany. Mr. Silver can ensure that it gets off to a responsible start by seeing that the Assembly passes congestion pricing without further delay.

[Letters to the Fresno Bee, Wed., April 2, 2008:](#)

Go all the way in cleaning up vehicle pollution

A letter writer (March 25) wishes "To hell with highways and freeways and airplanes." Why stop there?

Instead of the 55 mph speed limit he extols, let's mandate a return to the horse and buggy.

Since "fuel-efficient railroads," which he also lauded, do use fuel, it is imperative that we eliminate them, too, and return to 20-mule teams to haul our goods about.

This will have the added bonus of aiding "organic farming" -- another great economic, societal and moral imperative.

He suggested "Only allow small, four-cylinder engines in cars" and specified the motor sizes to be permitted in his utopia. He forgot to add the requisite new regulation of only one child per family -- a lá China -- since that is all that will fit in the car driven by his perfect motor. My daughter (a delightfully sarcastic "chip off the old block") suggested adding: "And it has to be a boy."

Anyway, I'll see you next year in Boston -- if the wind holds up and the clipper ship doesn't keel over while sailing through the Straits of Magellan.

Steve Sortini, Fresno

'It will be too late'

Bravo, Warren F. Hillman (letter March 25)! He's my kind of guy.

Even the skies are polluted. Look at all the jet contrails spewing poison into the skies like crop dusters spraying cotton. Someday our legislators will wake up, but it will be too late. We need more citizens like Mr. Hillman.

Bob D. Mugrdechian Sr., Clovis

[Letter to the N.Y Times, Wed., April 2, 2008:](#)

Cleaner Air by 2015

"Parks in Peril" (editorial, March 24) was quite right about the poor record of the Bush administration when it comes to air pollution.

But one of the examples cited — the Clean Air Interstate Rule — is only one of two things the Environmental Protection Agency has done right. The other was a good, new standard for off-road diesel engines.

The Clean Air Interstate Rule requires a roughly 70 percent reduction in sulfur dioxide emissions and 60 percent in nitrogen oxides emissions from power plant smokestacks across 28 Eastern states and the District of Columbia. The cuts will be made in two phases, with deadlines in 2010 and 2015.

Those two chemicals are the main causes of acid rain and smog. You may argue that the cuts could be deeper or faster, but they certainly are not a "cover for many of the dirtiest plants to avoid expensive pollution controls."

John F. Sheehan, Albany, March 24, 2008

The writer is the director of communications for the Adirondack Council, a not-for-profit environmental organization.

No more free-parking for hybrid car owners?

L.A. Times, Wed., April 2, 2008

The pious among Prius owners seem to gloat as they drive solo in the carpool lane or park without having to feed the meter in many cities. But are these perks for the owners of fuel efficient Prius and other hybrid cars coming to an end?

After initially giving hybrid vehicle owners another three years of free parking at city metered spaces, the Los Angeles City Council decided to study whether to eliminate the benefit as part of an effort close a possible \$500 million budget deficit, reports the Daily News.

The city loses about \$116,000 a year in meter money that would have been paid by hybrid car owners. That would do little to close the budget gap but every little bit counts, said councilman Bill Rosendahl, who proposed scrapping the free-parking perk.

"This was a great incentive when we first did it," Rosendahl said. "But hybrids don't need assistance from us. They already are getting a benefit from the savings they get by not having to buy \$4-a-gallon gas."

Solo hybrid drivers might also get pushed out of the carpool lanes under one of several options state officials were studying last year to cut down on HOV lane congestion. Like free metered parking, allowing hybrid car owners to drive alone in the carpool lane was viewed as incentive to encourage alternative, fuel efficient vehicles.

Now, with the roll out of hybrid SUVs getting less gas mileage than some gasoline-powered cars, support seems to be weakening for such perks, even among the vehicles' advocates. Felix Kramer, founder of CalCars.org, said he would rather see tax breaks to encourage fuel efficient, low-emission cars.

"Free parking spots for hybrids doesn't really address any problem directly," Kramer said. "It just provides a freebie for people who have high-mpg cars."

-- *Jesus Sanchez*

[Hanford Sentinel, Opinion, Wednesday, April 2, 2008:](#)

Our View: Board is backing down to auto makers

Call it March Madness. Call it the Super Bowl of miserable ideas. Call it what you want, but the California Air Resources Board decision last week on emissions-free vehicle requirements is a home run for the auto industry.

The board backed away from more stringent standards on how many zero-emissions car manufacturers must provide in California, settling instead on a confusing, industry-friendly program that even car makers don't fully understand.

Instead of requiring the big companies to provide 25,000 zero-emissions vehicles by 2014, the board lowered the number to 7,500. Board apologists said it was a pragmatic decision. Environmentalists and the smaller companies said it was a decision meant to stop the big companies from crying about what they might have to do.

Any way you look at it, the board's new rules are a further erosion of a grand scheme created in 1990, the original goal of which was to require that 10 percent of all cars sold in California have zero tailpipe emissions -- and that was to have occurred by 2004.

Now, four years beyond that target date -- and with the big auto makers still moaning about being unable to meet those earlier requirements -- the Air Resources Board seems to have performed an almost perfect capitulation to an industry whose decision makers remain convinced that Americans want big, gas-sucking, pollution-spewing vehicles.

Former CIA Director Jim Woolsey was at the meeting last week, representing investors in a small zero-emissions car company. When the board voted to ease back on the requirements, he said it backtracks on common sense, and refuses to acknowledge that zero-emissions vehicles are an integral part of what he calls the "national energy security." Zero-emissions cars generally get double or even triple the gas mileage of standard vehicles.

Air Resources Board members say they are just being practical. We say they had a chance to hold car makers to a schedule of producing more-efficient, less-polluting vehicles. Instead, they gave tacit approval to car makers' marketing ploys.

A report from scientists late last week indicates western states are warming up faster than normal, due to climate change.

Yet the Air Resources Board can't seem to put two and two together.

[Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Commentary, Wednesday, April 2, 2008:](#)

Chamber makes its case for Acequia

The Board of Directors of the Visalia Chamber of Commerce voted at its March meeting to support Alternative Two for the conversion of Acequia Avenue to two-way traffic - the alternative without bike lanes - because we oppose the loss of parking spaces.

We respectfully ask that the City Council reconsider its vote regarding the addition of bike lanes on this very busy roadway.

The chamber board voted to request that the council reconsider their vote for several reasons: loss of parking spaces, the cost to replace those spaces elsewhere, the fact that bike lanes have

never been intended for Acequia, and the fact that parking space counts were a key component of the hospital's expansion plans.

The businesses of the downtown, and consumers from all over Visalia, clamor for additional parking downtown, and discarding 35 parking spaces will require additional spaces created somewhere - at a cost of \$700,000.

As a Chamber of Commerce, our focus is on how we enhance and maintain the vitality of business downtown and throughout Visalia.

The vitality of business downtown requires convenient parking.

It is our understanding that Acequia Avenue was never intended to have bike lanes, and that the city's own plans call for bike lanes along Center, Murray and Mineral King avenues - not Acequia. The hospital's expansion was hard won, and identifying sufficient parking spaces was no easy task.

We can ill afford to lose these spaces and we certainly cannot afford, nor can we justify, spending the money to replace them.

In addition, while we support cycling as an [air quality-friendly](#) and heart-friendly activity, we cannot accept that cyclists will utilize these bike lanes because Acequia is simply too heavily traveled.

It would be unwise and unsafe to mix ambulances, heavy traffic and bicycles. Thank you for your reconsideration of this important issue.

Nancy Lockwood is Chairwoman of the Visalia Chamber of Commerce.

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Wednesday, April 2, 2008:](#)

Watch out for bicyclists

Organizations like Bike Bakersfield promote bicycling as everyday transportation in our community. I wholeheartedly support their mission and agree that riding your bike to school or work makes for a healthier community and environment.

However, I feel that more needs to be done to make Bakersfield a safer place to ride your bike.

I am a student at Cal State Bakersfield. I do my part to make the world a better place by riding my bike to school and work, recycling and supporting organic farmers. I ride my bicycle from Stockdale Estates across Gosford at Kroll Way (if you have ever seen a brunette on a pink beach cruiser, it's probably me!), and have had numerous dangerous encounters with incautious drivers who just aren't paying attention or simply believe that the law does not apply to them and they do not have to yield to pedestrians or bicyclists in the crosswalk.

Recently, I almost got hit by two cars coming from different directions (each was turning right or left onto Gosford), and it's scary. Often I have been stuck out in the middle of the intersection (after I have patiently waited for my turn to cross), waiting for cars that do not yield to bicyclists and/or pedestrians.

I believe this issue deserves attention if we wish to promote a bike riding community. I would support any additional measures taken to ensure bicyclists' safety. We can all work together to make bike riding safe for ourselves, our family and our friends.

Candice Cravins, Bakersfield

[Washington Post Opinion, Wednesday, April 2, 2008:](#)

Ignoring the Supreme Court

The Bush administration punts on greenhouse emissions.

THE BUSH administration never had any intention of doing what the Supreme Court commanded it to do a year ago today: regulate greenhouse gas emissions. We infer this because, even though President Bush ordered his agencies last May to work together to meet the court's

directive, and even though the Environmental Protection Agency delivered to the White House last December its finding that those pollutants endanger public welfare, a prerequisite for regulation, EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson announced last week a plan to seek public input starting in the spring on how best to limit the emissions. Translation: punt to the next administration. This giant step backward is the starkest example yet of the chasm between the words and deeds of Mr. Bush on climate change.

For a year, Mr. Johnson assured all who inquired that the EPA was "working diligently to develop an overall strategy" for regulating greenhouse gas emissions while at the same time he was making decisions that increased U.S. contributions to global warming. For instance, in August 2007, he issued a permit authorizing construction of a coal-fired power plant in Utah. In December, he denied California's request for a waiver to mandate a 30 percent reduction in tailpipe greenhouse gas emissions by 2016. Eleven other states, including Maryland, had adopted the California standards.

Thanks to a 10-page letter from Rep. Henry A. Waxman (D-Calif.) to Mr. Johnson, we know that all that talk about working diligently wasn't a total ruse. The March 12 missive chronicled the work of scores of people in multiple federal departments who labored for months to craft a proposal that would have reduced carbon dioxide from motor vehicles equivalent to a fleet fuel economy of 35 miles per gallon by 2018. It noted that Mr. Johnson signed off on the finding in October. Fulfilling a commitment made to Congress to issue a finding by the end of the year, Mr. Johnson had the 300-page proposal delivered to the White House in early December. But later that month, Mr. Bush signed the energy bill that boosted fuel economy for cars and light trucks to 35 mpg by 2020 and increased the amount of renewable fuels in the gas supply. That's when action stopped, prompting Mr. Waxman's inquiry into why.

Mr. Johnson's decision to call for public comment after all that work shows a lack of leadership and a willingness to do the bidding of opponents of regulating carbon dioxide, who lobbied for a prolonged study period. Several environmental organizations will file suit today in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit to compel faster compliance from the EPA. We wish them luck. The Bush administration has dragged its feet on global warming for nearly eight years. It has looked askance at the sense of urgency around the world. And it has defied the Supreme Court. This latest move shows that it will stop at nothing to do nothing about climate change.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the proposed fees to finance a program to reduce air pollution program. For more information on this or other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Proponen impuesto para financiar programa anticontaminante en Los Ángeles

Manuel Ocaño, Noticiero Latino
Radio Bilingüe, Tuesday, April 1, 2008

El área de Los Ángeles debate una propuesta de ley que pudiera elevar 9 centavos de dólar en impuestos el precio de cada galón de gasolina, y 90 dólares adicionales por renovación anual de registro de cada vehículo, para formar un presupuesto que financie programas contra la contaminación del aire.

La propuesta se llevara a referendo y los propios residentes de la región con el aire más contaminado en el país deberán decidir.

De aprobarse, el plan representaría una encrucijada para el gobernador, Arnold Schwarzenegger, quien se destaca por sus políticas ambientalistas pero también por rechazar toda propuesta para aumentar impuestos.