

Lower emission school buses for Manteca?

Jason Campbell, Reporter

Manteca Bulletin Monday, Sept. 8, 2008

It's happened to every motorist - getting stuck behind a school bus at a traffic light or a train and having to brave the massive brown diesel cloud that seems to engulf everything around it once the bus starts rolling again.

But that might end up being a thing of the past.

When the Manteca Unified Board of Education meets on Tuesday, Sept. 9 - most likely inside of their new chambers located upstairs in the district's new administrative complex - they'll consider authorizing the submission of an application for the Lower Emission School Bus Program.

Those noxious black clouds could be a thing of the past.

According to the report prepared for Tuesday's board meeting, the district has applied for replacement of 15 new school buses under the program that will serve as a starting point for what could eventually become a permanent part of the district's transportation plan.

If approved, the program will be part of a partnership with the San Joaquin County Air Pollution Control District in association with the Lower Emission School Bus Program.

According to the California Air Resources Board, the program exists to both reduce the exposure of cancer-causing agents found in diesel exhaust and take a proactive step towards removing smog forming particles - something that carries even more weight in the geographic bowl of the Central Valley that tends to let emissions linger.

The San Joaquin County Air Pollution Control District - which aims to improve the overall quality of the air that residents breathe from the upper-most reaches of San Joaquin County all the way down to the extremely unhealthy regions surrounding Tulare and Bakersfield - has been extremely active in offering a multitude of programs to remove objects classified as gross polluters.

Over the course of the last several years, the City of Ripon partnered with the organization through a grant to allow residents to turn in two-stroke lawnmowers and other high-polluting lawn care equipment for credits towards new electric models that all but eliminate exhaust.

As part of Manteca Unified's campus expansion and rebuild, the transportation building now includes a state-of-the-art building with additional service bays to maintain buses that might be problematic.

Tuesday's meeting will begin at 7 p.m. at the district's new complex located at 2901 E. Louise Avenue. For more information, or to obtain a copy of the agenda or the board materials, visit www.mantecausd.net, or call 825-3200.

Judge allows truck plan

By Kristopher Hanson, Staff Writer

LA Daily News, Tuesday, September 9, 2008

A federal judge Monday tentatively upheld the Clean Trucks Program for local ports, dealing a heavy blow to trucking companies and retailers that had sought to block the plan.

The ruling by U.S. District Court Judge Christina Snyder comes after months of struggling between port authorities and a national trucking association for control of the roughly 17,000 truck drivers serving the nation's largest seaport.

Snyder said she would issue a final decision Thursday, but indicated it was unlikely to change.

"I'll tell everyone that I'm not really persuaded by the argument to change" my ruling, Snyder said during a 30-minute court hearing downtown.

If it stands, the court's decision means the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach can move ahead with their Clean Trucks Program in coming weeks.

The program's overriding goal is to progressively ban polluting diesel trucks from Oct. 1 to Jan. 1, 2012, when only rigs meeting federal 2007 emission standards will be granted access to waterfront marine terminals.

The turnover is expected to reduce diesel pollution from trucks by 80 percent within five years.

But there are elements of the plan - which business groups have slammed as unconstitutional - stipulating who may drive the trucks and who may own them.

In seeking an injunction, the Washington, D.C.-based American Trucking Associations argued that such stipulations violate federal trade laws and cause "irreparable harm" to their members' finances.

The ATA is particularly opposed to a port rule requiring truck companies to obtain taxicab-style licenses to gain port access after Oct. 1.

The licenses in the two ports are virtually identical with regard to environmental mandates, but differ widely in other areas.

In Los Angeles, for example, license holders must agree to hire hourly drivers, while in Long Beach licensees may hire either hourly or contract drivers.

The ATA sued the ports in late July, saying the new rules place a financial burden of more than \$1 billion on local companies by stifling competition.

The trade group also contends the rules violate federal trucking deregulation laws.

"The (ports) want to create a motor carrier industry in their own vision," ATA attorney Robert Digges told Snyder.

Attorneys for the ports, however, disagreed, saying that the licenses simply give authorities an enforcement tool to ensure compliance with new standards.

"It provides teeth to both security and environmental programs," said port attorney Steve Rosenthal.

However, Snyder barely mentioned environmental arguments in her ruling, saying that security measures in the licenses were of utmost importance.

Under the license agreements, carriers must dispatch only those drivers with a federal background security clearance - a rule adopted by the federal government in the wake of 9-11 but which has been repeatedly delayed.

Snyder said the stipulation on security clearances overrode any remaining concerns.

Then, after stating that the "balance of hardships and the public interest tip decidedly in favor of denying the injunction," Snyder ended the hearing, with a promise to review the arguments and issue a final ruling by Thursday.

Such decisions, according to several attorneys questioned Monday, are rarely overturned.

Industry groups declined to comment, other than to say they would appeal the decision to the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Port of Long Beach officials said the ruling allows them to continue providing drivers and companies with financial grants and incentives designed to get them into clean trucks.

"Concessions are a key element of our Clean Trucks Program so that we can bring a new generation of clean trucks and clean air to this region, and so we can begin a new era in port security," said Long Beach harbor Commissioner James Hankla.

Regulators blame pollution from trucks, trains, ships and cargo-handling equipment for some 3,700 premature deaths in California annually.

Valley air quality mixed bag in '07

LA Daily News, Tuesday, September 9, 2008

Air quality in the San Fernando Valley was a mixed bag in 2007 when ozone levels rose in the West Valley, particulate matter increased in eastern communities, but overall air quality improved, according to a report released Monday.

The San Fernando Valley Economic Research Center, at California State University, Northridge, reported overall decreases in carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, sulfate and lead, according to the report.

"The good news is that the levels of all of these potential pollutants are below federal standards and have been for some time," the report said. "In fact, the levels have been so low for some pollutants that their monitoring has been suspended in the Valley."

But ozone results in the West Valley were worse by state standards but better by federal guidelines.

"Regardless of which standards are applied, the number of violation days in 2007 is lower than those in 2004," according to the report. "Secondly, the West Valley has more of an ozone pollution problem than the East Valley. The West Valley shows more days in violation than does the East Valley."

But the East Valley did exceed state standards in particulate pollution when compared with the last several years.

Particulate matter refers to the presence of suspended particles that are 10 micrometers in diameter. Those particles have decreased since 1999, but rose slightly in 2006 and 2007.

Many of the communities in the Northeast Valley include clusters of auto dismantlers, junkyards, defunct landfills, recycling facilities and gravel pits - all ingredients for pollution and asthma.

Southern California has enacted the strictest air-quality requirements in the nation, including most of Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

LA judge favoring ports' clean truck program

The Associated Press

Tri-Valley Herald, Contra Costa Times, Merced Sun-Star and other papers, Tues., Sept. 9, 2008

LOS ANGELES—A federal judge on Monday indicated she will reject an attempt by the American Trucking Associations to block an effort to ban older trucks from entering the twin ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach and clean up the air in the surrounding neighborhoods.

The industry group has sought a preliminary injunction to halt the clean trucks program, which is scheduled to begin Oct. 1, by arguing that it placed unfair restrictions on truckers.

U.S. District Court Judge Christina A. Snyder said she would issue her decision Thursday, but indicated the program's value to the public weighed her decision "decidedly in favor of denying the injunction."

The associations will file an appeal, spokesman Clayton Boyce said.

The cities of Los Angeles and Long Beach passed plans earlier this year aimed at reducing diesel emissions at the nation's busiest cargo container complex by as much as 80 percent by replacing

16,800 trucks built before 1989 with newer, cleaner models. By 2012, all trucks passing through the ports must meet tougher 2007 federal vehicle emission standards. On Oct. 1 a fee of \$35 per 20-foot container will be assessed to fund a program to help truck owners pay for the new vehicles.

The ports handle about 40 percent of the nation's imported goods.

The trucking associations said it does not oppose efforts to clean up the air but is concerned that other measures in the plans violate federal laws by unfairly regulating prices, routes and services.

The measures include a Long Beach requirement that trucking companies dispatch only drivers who have undergone a security background check and obtained a federal Transportation Worker Identification Credential. The Los Angeles plan requires the nearly 17,000 independent truckers who work at the port to eventually become employees of trucking companies.

The Long Beach measure is unnecessary since the security measures are already in place, Boyce said.

"These concessions put costly, unnecessary regulations and requirements on trucks," he said.

Judge doesn't halt ports' clean-truck program

By Louis Sahagun, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer
L.A. Times, Tuesday, September 9, 2008

A federal court judge in Los Angeles on Monday tentatively denied a trucking association's bid to block a landmark clean-truck program at the nation's busiest port complex.

After a 40-minute hearing, U.S. District Judge Christina Snyder said she would probably allow the program to move forward, despite objections from truckers.

"The balance of hardships and the public interest tip decidedly in favor of denying the injunction," she said in court.

Under the program, the adjacent ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach would upgrade their aging fleet of about 16,800 mostly dilapidated rigs that produce much of the diesel pollution in Southern California.

The American Trucking Assn., which represents 37,000 trucking companies nationwide, argued that the program would place an unconstitutional and unfair economic burden on port truckers. The program is scheduled to begin Oct. 1 with a ban on pre-1989 trucks.

By 2012, only trucks that meet 2007 standards would be allowed to service the ports, which handle 40% of the nation's imported goods.

100 goats turned loose on a downtown L.A. plot

A city agency hired them to clear thick weeds on a slope next to Angels Flight at 4th and Hill streets. The scene delights office workers, who snap photos.

By Bob Pool, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer
L.A. Times, Tuesday, September 9, 2008

The hills were alive with the sound of munching.

In fact, the only things that seemed missing Monday when a herd of goats climbed up a weed-choked lot in the Bunker Hill high-rise district were Julie Andrews and the Von Trapp family singers.

Leaders of the Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency hired 100 goats to nibble away thick weeds on a steep slope at the corner of 4th and Hill streets, next to the Angels Flight funicular.

Agency officials said the goats were cheaper and more environmentally friendly than two-legged brush-clearers armed with gasoline-powered weed-whackers.

And they are much more fun to watch, downtown office workers and other passersby quickly decided, as the animals fanned out over the 45-degree slope and chowed down. Commuters emerging from the Red Line subway who came face-to-face with the goats reached for their cellphones and snapped pictures.

"My friends won't believe this unless they see it," said Vicky Bravo, a student who lives south of downtown.

Sam Vera, an auto repairman, pulled a digital camera from his backpack to photograph the grazing goats with the glass-walled California Plaza high-rise gleaming above them.

"This is absolutely beautiful. It's a wonderful contrast to the big buildings around here," he said.

Some wondered whether the goats were part of a movie scene or some kind of performance art, while others made jokes about the approaching lunch hour and goat barbecue.

On the hillside above, goat-keeper George Gonzales dismissed such talk.

"These just came from Monrovia and Duarte, and they have poison oak all over them. You don't want to touch them," he said of the goats.

He said his crew would work long hours over the next week to 10 days and "won't collect a pension or charge for working overtime and won't call in sick." If any of them lose their appetite, his wife, veterinarian Liz Gonzales, will tend to them, he said.

An electrified fence helps corral the goats and keeps them from falling over a retaining wall at the base of the slope. Security guards will be on duty when he is not there to watch over the herd, said Gonzales, 71, of Chino.

Most of the South African Boer goats are female, Gonzales said. To keep them focused on their eating, males in the herd have been castrated, he said.

Redevelopment agency head Cecilia Estolano said the goats were being rented for \$3,000. The cost of hiring workmen to clear the 2 1/2 -acre hillside would have totaled as much as \$7,500.

The brush-covered hillside lot, called Angels Knoll, is topped by a grassy park that is maintained by the city.

Eventually, the lot is slated to become the site of a third mixed-use California Plaza tower.

At lunchtime, a steady stream of California Plaza office workers came to the small park to get a close-up peek at the goats, some of which were leaping into the air to snag a taste of tree leaves hanging over the lot.

On the corner below the hill, a street musician belted out a bluesy jazz tune on his saxophone.

"Instead of jazz, they should be playing Rodgers & Hammerstein," suggested one of the office workers, Michael Alexander. The Mount Washington resident is in charge of the California Plaza arts program.

"You know which one I'm talking about: the 'Lonely Goatherd' song from 'Sound of Music.' "

Alexander whistled a few notes from the tune, which most remember as the yodeling song.

Busily lunching on their weed buffet, Bunker Hill's goats didn't even look up.

[Bakersfield Californian, Editorial, Tuesday, Sept. 9, 2008:](#)

Valley picking up state's tab?

Poor valley air quality is far from being strictly of our own making

A Fresno assemblyman wants to stick Central Valley residents with a \$30 surcharge tacked on to car-registration fees. There's clearly a connection between the valley's bad air and residents' choice of transportation options, but this course of action sticks in our craw.

Why should San Joaquin Valley drivers foot the entire bill for a problem that rightly belongs to the entire state? The valley's ozone and particulate-matter problem is largely attributable to cars and long-haul trucks traveling the Interstate 5 and Highway 99 corridors, bringing goods to the state's major population centers; to agricultural production that benefits the entire nation; and to our unique, soup-bowl geography, which tends to trap pollutants blown south from the Bay Area.

To be sure, the valley creates some of its own problems with its reluctance to embrace pollution solutions, such as low-sprawl development and public transportation. But our air quality is far from being strictly of our own making.

Why, then, should valley residents bear the burden of a \$30 surcharge - up from the current air-quality surcharge of \$7 - directed at them and them alone?

Assemblyman Juan Arambula, D-Fresno, has his heart in the right place. His AB 2522, which awaits only the governor's signature (along with a multitude of other in-limbo bills), would direct additional funds to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, enabling the agency to expand new and existing clean-air programs.

Funds raised through AB 2522 would allow the eight-county air district to provide more incentive-based air quality improvements - refurbishing cars, buses and farm equipment to meet air quality standards, and incentives to purchase hybrid vehicles. Those are noteworthy goals.

Last month, the valley reached new air quality lows, with ozone levels at their highest since 2002. One in three San Joaquin Valley families has a member with a respiratory ailment, and air pollution cost the region over \$3 billion in annual health-related costs.

But the valley's air is a statewide problem that demands big-picture solutions. Pinning it on one region because of its geography, economic role and proximity to the West Coast's most vital interstate is patently unfair. Arambula is right to want to address it; he's just aiming too low.

[L.A. Times editorial. Tuesday, Sept. 9, 2008:](#)

The U.N.'s meatless drive

Our appetite for steaks and burgers is a huge contributor to global warming.

So it turns out that meatless Fridays, which for generations inflicted fish sticks and tuna casseroles on millions of school-age children, Catholic and otherwise, were actually saving the planet. The United Nations is now urging wealthy nations to make a dramatic shift in eating habits, saying the best way to curb climate change is for people to go at least one day a week without meat.

And Rajendra Pachauri, chairman of the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change -- which shared the Nobel Peace Prize last year -- isn't just asking diners to bypass a burger now

and then. After achieving a weekly day without meat, he said, they should embark on a progressive reduction of their meat intake.

The problem isn't so much with hamburger patties as it is with cow patties. Meat production accounts for nearly a fifth of global greenhouse gas emissions, according to the United Nations. Cows and other ruminants, such as sheep and goats, release methane and nitrous oxide in amounts that put to shame the carbon dioxide belched out by cars. In fact, a red-meat-eater in a Prius is probably hurting the environment more than a vegan in a Hummer.

The U.N. also is calling for governments to launch campaigns to reduce meat eating. If they do, such efforts will probably start in Europe, then sweep through every city, town, village and hamlet in Asia, Africa, Australia and Antarctica before the U.S. Department of Agriculture stops propagandizing on behalf of meat without any regard for human or environmental health.

Which brings us back to individual abstinence. We're not calling for a vegan revolution, but this page has noted that a sincere personal effort to fight global warming must include a reduction in eating red meat. Were fish sticks on Fridays really that bad?