

Board of Supervisors to kennel: Stay

July 10-02

Neighbors bite back,
but appeal to stop
project is turned down

By **ALEJANDRA NAVARRO**
BEE STAFF WRITER

A kennel project on Twenty-Eight Mile Road north of Oakdale can move forward, the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors decided Tuesday.

But the kennel's permit is now for 50 dogs, not 100, to start with. And Bill Sargenti, the man behind the project, said he will move the kennel 800 feet off the road, providing a 2,200-foot cushion between the kennel and the closest houses.

The board turned back neighbors in their bid to stop the kennel. In their

appeal, they cited concern over traffic, water pollution and noise.

Supervisor Pat Paul, who represents the Oakdale area, cast the only dissenting vote.

The Planning Commission had given Sargenti a permit for 100 dogs on the nearly 58-acre site, which is zoned for agricultural use — including kennels.

Paul urged the board to reduce the maximum number of dogs from 100 to 50. The board decided to let Sargenti open one building for up to 50 dogs, and told him to return for further approval before putting up a second building for 50 more dogs.

Sargenti volunteered to move the kennel project back from the road.

Paul said she would rather see the kennel in the center of the acreage,

even farther from the neighbors' houses. But ponds at the center of the land would make it difficult to put the kennel there, said Tom Zeff, Sargenti's attorney.

Neighbors said they were pleased at the compromises, and to have supervisors listen to the appeal. "I think we gained some ground," Laverne Clow said.

Zeff is a neighbor, too, living across from the kennel site. "I don't see the noise being a problem," he said.

He said that with one kennel building, only 20 to 35 dogs will be on the property at one time for training.

Sargenti will live on the property, Zeff said, and a caretaker will live within 100 feet of the kennel. Concrete

SEE PAGE B-2, KENNEL

KENNEL: Now smaller and 2,200 feet away from residents

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block walls will keep the sound of the dogs from traveling, he said.

Still, Paul said, there is no guarantee that the sound will not travel.

"I'm really concerned about the quality of life for these residents," Paul said.

Modesto-area Supervisor Nick Blom said he has not had any noise problems with a kennel about a quarter-mile from his home. He reminded Sargenti's neighbors that, instead of a kennel, the land could house a dairy, posing more problems than a kennel.

Paul said that once Sargenti's kennel is up and running, dealing with potential problems could take a long time.

For example, the board took action Tuesday to resolve a zoning complaint dating back to April 2000.

The board voted to require a rice farmer to stop running a trucking business at 4333 Claus Road, which is not zoned for commercial use. The owner already has begun to clean up the property.

"It's a slow process," Paul said of the two years of correspondences and court dates.

Bee staff writer Alejandra Navarro can be reached at 578-2339 or anavarro@modbee.com.

AT A GLANCE

The Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors also took the following action on Tuesday:

■ **PANHANDLING** — Approved an ordinance prohibiting panhandling, selling goods or requesting work on public streets, sidewalks and private parking lots on land outside cities. The ordinance will go into effect in 30 days.

■ **EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES** — Approved a contract with the Mountain Valley Emergency Medical Services Agency to run through June 30. The agency is a collaboration among Stanislaus, Alpine, Amador, Calaveras and Mariposa counties. Stanislaus County's share of the cost will be \$192,495.

■ **SHACKELFORD ROAD** — Approved sending the Shackelford Road Improvement project out to bid for a second time. The estimate is \$5.28 million, and both first-round bids came in higher than that — at \$6.5 million and \$7.3 million. The Public Works Department plans no changes in the specifications. The project calls for improved sewer and drainage systems, and the addition of curbs. The department hopes to get new bids by Aug. 12 and have work begin a few weeks after that.

■ **DRUG LAB CHILDREN** — Accepted \$50,000 to help children found living in homes with drug labs. The money will pay for medical care, training and help placing children, from birth to 5 years old, in alternative homes. The funding comes from the Stanislaus County Children and Families Commission and goes to the Sheriff's Department.

■ **COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT** — Accepted a report from the Human Services Agency looking at health, education, economic, housing and environmental factors, and attempting to show a picture of the health and well-being of county residents. The staff used information such as birth and death statistics, health care access, crime rates, graduation rates and demographics over the past 30 years. County agencies and local organizations will present the information to the public, and a detailed survey is planned later this year. The goal is to find gaps in available services, and partner with schools, hospitals, law enforcement and government agencies to address them.

It's time to think regionally

By DRUCE E. JONES

Stanislaus County faces a triple-headed and very interrelated crisis that cries out for an improved level of governmental planning at the regional level:

- The air pollution hammer is now poised over our heads — with the recent declaration of an “extreme” emergency, we not only face major fiscal sanctions in the future, but we have seriously damaged our image and potential for attracting new economic development to this county and valley.

- Traffic congestion and the slow pace of putting in place public transportation investments are contributing to both the air pollution and economic challenges.

- Commuter demand for cheaper (than Bay Area) housing will continue, even with our bad air, and threatens the viability of our agricultural economy and of government's ability to provide infrastructure — the Village I debacle is but one demonstration of the adverse impact of over-development and stretched infrastructure on the tax base of governments.

There is no single answer to these related issues, but surely a regional approach is better than the piecemeal, jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction way of doing things today. Other than such agencies as the eight-county air pollution district for San Joaquin Valley, the closest we come to even a countywide approach to problems is the Stanislaus Council of Governments, which has only a single mission of planning transportation improvements.

We must think regionally across Stanislaus County and the San Joaquin Valley and move toward the establishment of a multipurpose Council of Governments (COG) in our area. It is true that COGs are largely only advisory, which is the primary reason local governments will tolerate them. This is also why their plans so often are mere exercises in form rather than substance. Indeed, COGs have a downside, but at least they can produce well-researched regional plans that provide a broader perspective and baseline for designing local government general plans.



I worked for the Sacramento Regional Area Planning Commission (later the Sacramento Area Council of Governments) in the 1970s. The common interests and conflicts among seven (later five) counties were addressed by a series of separate regional plans, including land use, energy conservation, water quality management, and, of course, transportation (the only document with meaningful federal/state authority behind it). It is time for Stanislaus County to produce a single multitopic “regional” — that is, at least countywide — land use/transportation/economic development plan to balance growth needs and constraints, plus identify farmland protection, smog reduction and energy conservation measures. Once we are committed to producing a useful countywide document, we should start negotiating with neighboring jurisdictions to prepare a truly regional plan for the San Joaquin Valley that transcends arbitrary boundaries.

Such plans also will give our valley and county much higher credibility in future political campaigns to force the Bay Area to be accountable for the smog it ships us via wind currents. Why should the Legislature react to

our pleas when we haven't even taken the most basic steps toward managing our own problems?

In addition, a good land use plan can also lead the way in defining that elusive “economic diversification” goal so often advocated without amplification of the many steps needed to get there.

Finally, this plan must be prepared internally without outside consultants once again billing us heavily for more uninspired work. Please also do not be misled by those who will insist a regional plan will take years of work. With a clear mandate, a small team of planners can pull together the variety of existing plans into one consolidated document in a matter of months. Conflict resolution can then begin.

The full impact of smog, growth and economic threats facing us has only begun to be reported and understood. It is time to pool our resources and think regionally, if only to the county boundaries. Our leaders must respond with creativity, collaboration and measurable action, and we must start now.

Jones is a writer and founder of the Stanislaus Futures Project who has lived here since 1995. He previously worked for 15 years as a governmental land use planner and consultant in Sacramento.

July 12 02

Stanislaus agency to seek outside advice on roads

By MELANIE TURNER
DBE STAFF WRITER

Stanislaus County's transportation planning agency agreed this week to solicit consultants to guide road projects, but stopped short of committing to contracting with an outside firm.

The Stanislaus Council of Governments policy board voted 11-0 Wednesday to put out a call for consultants who would take the place of Caltrans in project management.

"This is part of reinventing StanCOG," said county Supervisor Paul Caruso, policy board chairman. "We know we have to do things differently. What we did in the past didn't work, obviously."

People have long complained about the agonizingly slow pace of major road improvement projects under management of the California Department of Transportation.

The last major project completed in Stanislaus County was a Highway 99 widening near Keyes in 1994. Of eight major projects now in the works, seven are in the often-cumbersome environmental review phase.

While the StanCOG board went along with Executive Director Gary Dickson's recommendation to solicit consultants, it was not yet sold on the idea of using them. The board also wants to look at the possibility of hiring a full-time person to manage projects.

The board is scheduled to meet next on Sept. 11,

SEE PAGE B-5, BOARD

BOARD: Road agency wants to get projects built quicker

CONTINUED FROM B-1

and is due to decide then which route to take. Board members will receive information on what a full-time staff person would cost, and what firms might be interested in managing Stanislaus projects. The policy board does not meet in August.

Caruso said that once the transportation agency proves that it can get projects done more quickly, people in Stanislaus County may be ready to approve a half-cent sales tax for road work.

The board did not talk about how the planning agency would pay for a project manager. It is rare for a county without a half-cent sales tax, like Stanislaus, to hire a consultant, Dickson said.

The StanCOG board heard from Will Kempton, who in 1985 headed Santa Clara County's effort to enact a half-cent sales tax for road work — the first such road tax in the state.

Consulting firms could prepare studies, get projects ready to build and oversee projects. Dickson emphasized that Caltrans, which owns and operates state highways, cannot be re-

placed. The state agency would still build projects.

"Caltrans actually knows how to build projects," he said. "It's getting it to that point that's the problem."

Kempton, a former longtime employee of Caltrans, outlined the challenges that Caltrans faces. For example, there is high turnover in the agency, affecting projects that often take five or six years to complete.

But his report offered an optimistic message.

"Is it possible to give your agency a more meaningful and productive role in the delivery process? Can StanCOG achieve a better delivery record?" he wrote. "I am convinced that the answer to all these questions is a resounding 'Yes!'"

In an effort to increase consistency on the StanCOG board itself, StanCOG is expected in the future to consider making the board chairmanship a two-year post. Caruso began a one-year term this week.

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• • • July 13th 02

Double-digit jobless rates continue to plague the Northern San Joaquin Valley. Last month in Stanislaus County, the unemployment rate was a shameful 11 percent.

As population growth persists — and thousands of new houses are built in the region — creating high-wage jobs for area residents remains the No. 1 priority for the valley and its future.

• • •

Fans of farm fresh produce now have another shopping venue: the new farmer's market in Salida, on Sisk Road north of Pelandale Avenue.

The market, a great addition to the growing residential and retail corridor in northwest Modesto and Salida, will run from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. each Sunday through mid-November. Give it a taste!

Jobless rates

July 1302

climb in region

Many Bay Area residents moving to valley, foothills, causing labor force to grow

By **JEFF JARDINE**
BEE STAFF WRITER

Stanislaus County had 3,000 more jobs and San Joaquin County had 2,600 more last month than they did in June 2001.

So why, then, did the June unemployment rates in those and the other four Northern San Joaquin Valley and foothills counties rise from year to year?

The number of people looking for jobs outpaced the number of new jobs in most of the counties.

"Because of the influx of people coming from the Bay Area for affordable housing, the civilian labor force will continue to grow," said Liz Baker, a labor analyst with the state Employment Development De-

partment.

June traditionally is a month in which unemployment increases slightly before heading down in July as the hiring season peaks, Baker said. This June was no exception. The overall economic downturn probably pushed up the numbers, she said.

A county-by-county snapshot:

- Stanislaus County's labor force — those working or looking for work — grew by 6,300 from June to June, more than double the number of new jobs. Consequently, the county's unemployment rate crept up to 11 percent in June 2002 from 10.2 percent in June 2001.

Retail gained 1,300 jobs, with most of that coming in grocery stores and restaurants. Other industries, including services, government, manufacturing, finance and wholesale trade, all gained jobs. But construction lost 1,000 jobs from June to June,

SEE PAGE D-4, **JOBLESS**

JOBLESS: Unemployment up despite new openings

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as housing starts were down by 15 percent from a year ago, according to the May numbers.

- For each new job in San Joaquin County, there were nearly three more people to compete for it. San Joaquin County's labor force grew by 7,700 people from June 2001 to June 2002. The county's jobless rate rose from 8.7 percent to 9.3 percent. Government gained 1,600 jobs, services 1,400 and retail 1,300. But manufacturing lost 900 jobs while construction, transportation and whole-

sale trade also experienced job losses.

- In Merced County, the labor force grew by 200 while the economy lost 400 jobs overall. Gains in federal government jobs were negated by losses in manufacturing and farming. The county's 14.2 percent jobless rate was up a full percentage point over June 2001.

- Tuolumne County's jobless rate rose slightly, to 8.9 percent from 8.7 percent in June 2001. The county gained nearly 600 jobs, including 340 in government jobs and 160 in restaurants. But other industries lost jobs and there

were 720 more people looking for work.

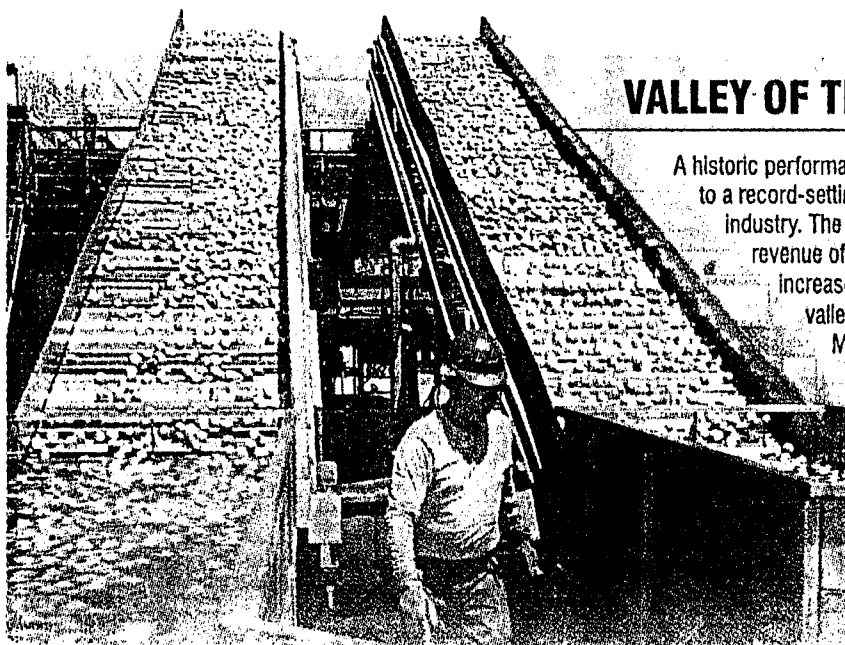
- Mariposa County had the area's lowest jobless rate, 5.1 percent, which was up from 4.9 percent in June 2001. The sparsely populated county lost 30 jobs and gained 10 people in the labor force.

- Calaveras County gained 610 people in the labor force who competed for 450 more jobs. The county's unemployment rate rose from 8.8 percent to 9.3 percent to 6.2 percent last month.

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July 17th 02

Farm income climbs



VALLEY OF THE GREEN

A historic performance by San Joaquin Valley dairies led to a record-setting 2001 for the region's agriculture industry. The valley's ranchers and farmers rung up revenue of \$15 billion last year, a 5 percent increase from 2000 and breaking the previous valley record of \$14.55 billion in 1997.

Milk revenue from the valley's eight counties reached nearly \$3.5 billion last year, accounting for 23 percent of the value of the region's ag production. The valley's top six ag-producing counties rank among the 10 most prolific in the nation, with Tulare, Fresno and Kern ranking first, second and third, respectively, in the United States.

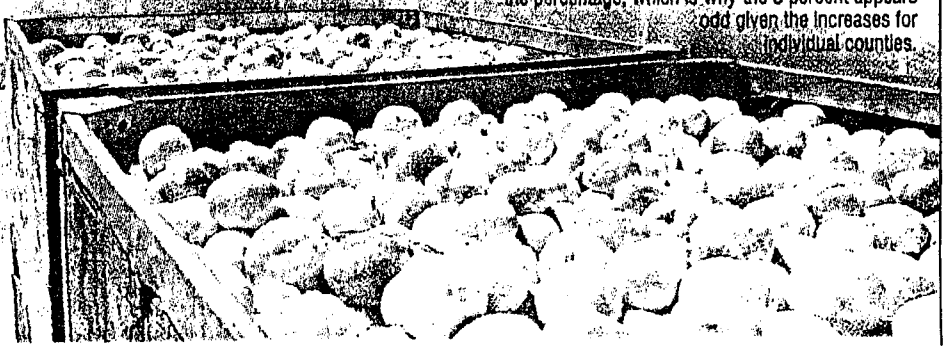
Rank ('00)	County	2001 Revenue	2000 Revenue	% change from '01	Top crops (Millions, unless noted)		
1 (2)	Tulare	\$3,494,006,000	\$3,068,648,200	+14%	Milk (\$1.15 Billion)	Oranges (\$530.5)	Cattle (\$438.5)
2 (1)	Fresno	3,220,101,800	3,281,285,400	-2	Cotton (\$368.1)	Grapes (\$343.1)	Poultry (\$339.0)
3 (3)	Kern	2,255,693,200	2,209,449,900	+2	Grapes (\$437.9)	Citrus (\$264.3)	Milk (\$208.0)
4 (4)	Merced	1,703,038,000	1,538,538,000	+11	Milk (\$625.8)	Chickens (\$156.6)	Cattle (\$143.1)
5 (5)	San Joaquin	1,389,307,000	1,348,628,000	+3	Milk (\$298.7)	Grapes (\$243.7)	Cherries (\$99.1)
6 (6)	Stanislaus	1,353,300,000	1,197,302,000	+13	Milk (\$476.3)	Almonds (\$137.0)	Chickens (\$128.5)
7 (7)	Kings	951,950,000	886,479,000	+7	Milk (\$361.8)	Cotton (\$205.7)	Cattle (\$67.0)
8 (8)	Madera	651,794,000	711,405,000	-8	Grapes (\$134.3)	Milk (\$125.0)	Almonds (\$87.3)
Valley total		\$15,019,190,000	\$14,241,735,500	+5*			

Sources: County agricultural commissioners.

* The valley's overall percentage increase is based on revenue from 2001 and 2000. Larger counties exert a greater influence over the percentage, which is why the 5 percent appears odd given the increases for individual counties.

Cling peaches roll along a processing conveyor at the Del Monte Foods plant in east Modesto on their way to becoming part of the valley's bountiful ag economy.

TED BENSON/THE BEE



2001 valley production \$15 billion

By RICHARD T. ESTRADA
BEE STAFF WRITER

You won't find peach trees at Del Monte Foods' cannery in east Modesto, although the plant's 2,600 workers rely on the fresh fruit for job security.

Don't look for dairy cows at the Hershey candy factory in Oakdale, either, although the region's prolific bovines are key to the 630 full-time jobs at the plant.

Without the peaches and cream, there would be no canned fruit cocktail or Hershey's Kisses. Nor would there be the jobs.

"The (San Joaquin Valley's) agri-

culture and food-processing industries rely on each other for their existence," said Dave Withycombe, senior vice president of Western manufacturing for Del Monte. "Combined, they play an important role in the economy."

Agriculture displayed its economic prowess in 2001, as San Joaquin Valley farmers and ranchers produced a record \$15 billion worth of food and fiber, according to crop reports from eight counties from San Joaquin in the north to Kern in the south.

The valleywide total represented an increase of 5 percent, or \$777 mil-

lion, over 2000. It was well in excess of the old record of \$14.55 billion in 1997.

Much of that cash, though, left the valley's farms and ranches almost as quickly as it arrived.

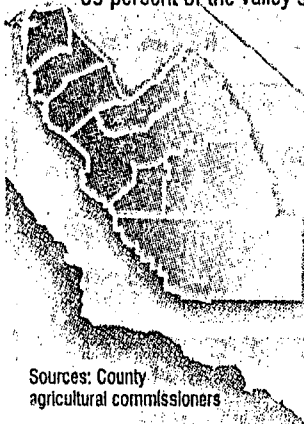
That's the way California's ag industry operates, with growers bringing in vast amounts of money, then quickly distributing much of it to pay debts and finance future crops.

"Agriculture affects the economy of the San Joaquin Valley thoroughly," said Daniel Sumner, director of the Agricultural Issues Center at the

SEE PAGE A-16, AGRICULTURE

TOP COMMODITIES

Milk and grapes were the San Joaquin Valley's billion-dollar crops in 2001, combining for revenue of nearly \$5.1 billion. The region's top 10 agricultural commodities combined for revenue of nearly \$10.4 billion, or 69 percent of the valley's total ag revenue.



Commodity	Revenue
1. Milk, all	\$3,498,224,000
2. Grapes, all	1,583,476,000
3. Cattle & calves	954,791,000
4. Oranges	881,760,000
5. Cotton	750,742,000
6. Almonds	740,605,000
7. Chickens	590,481,000
8. Alfalfa	522,081,000
9. Tomatoes, all	469,311,000
10. Nursery products	404,899,000
Total of top 10	\$10,396,370,000

Sources: County agricultural commissioners

THE BEE

The valley has dozens of other facilities — Pacific Coast Producers' cannery in Lodi, E.&J. Gallo wineries in Modesto and Livingston, and Land O' Lakes' cheese plant in Tulare, to name a few — that turn raw farm products into finished goods.

Other industries also benefit from the billions of dollars farmers generate.

"Because jobs and economic activity have continuing linkages, the effects go on to everything from health care to schools and even newspapers and universities," Sumner said.

Money coming into farms — called farm-gate revenue — is only one aspect of the business, noted Bob Krauter, a spokesman for the California Farm Bureau Federation. "There is a significant annual investment that a farmer must make in his operation.

"Money is constantly going out to pay land costs, labor and inputs such as water, seed, fertilizer and pesticides. Then you include regulatory costs, and they add up to a substantial amount."

That investment has produced an agricultural region unmatched by any other in the country and perhaps the world.

California's agricultural revenue reached \$27.2 billion in 2000 — the 2001 figure is due to be released later this year — making it the nation's top agriculture state. If the valley were its own state, it would likely be No. 1 ahead of Texas, which had revenue of \$13.3 billion in 2000.

"The link between production and processing is that many of the products grown in the valley are perishable and wouldn't survive a long trip," Withycombe said. "That's what led the processing industry to locate their plants so close to the fields."

Proximity also is a reason for the presence of milk-processing plants spread from Stanislaus County to Tulare County.

As processing plants continue to be built and expanded, dairies continue to produce more.

That expansion, combined with a healthy price increase, pushed the valley's dairy revenue to nearly \$3.5 billion in 2001. That was a 29 percent increase from \$2.72 billion the year before.

While dairies squeezed out a record performance, the valley's grape growers dealt with excess supply and low prices.

Grape revenue fell to \$1.58 billion in 2001, a decline of more than \$300 million from 2000, although the fruit still remained the valley's No. 2 ag commodity.

It was followed by cattle, which climbed two spots to No. 3 with revenue of \$954.8 million.

The growth was attributed to a rise in beef prices and higher prices paid for replacement heifers, which dairies buy to replace older milk cows.

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AGRICULTURE: Economy of valley fueled by farm goods

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University of California at Davis. "It's easy to see how transportation, food-processing, farm equipment and energy industries are affected directly by the farm economy."

Hershey's plant, for example, has a \$27 million annual payroll and spends another \$27 million on supplies. Del Monte, which sees employment at its Modesto plant peak at 2,600 during the summer, has a \$26 million payroll.

It's easy to see how transportation, food-processing, farm equipment and energy industries are affected directly by the farm economy'

— Daniel Sumner, UC Davis director of agricultural issues

Stanislaus eyes first farmland easement

July 16 02

By JOHN HOLLAND
BEE STAFF WRITER

Negotiations could be finished in as little as two weeks for Stanislaus County's first use of conservation easements, which pay farm owners to resist development.

Meanwhile, preservationists are looking at how to use tens of millions of dollars expected from private, state and federal sources for efforts around California.

The Stanislaus Farmland Trust hopes to secure an easement on a 764-acre walnut farm at the northwest edge of Riverbank. The land, known as the Wendt property, is owned by John Hancock Life Insurance Co. of Boston.

Under a typical easement, the owner agrees to keep the land in farming forever in exchange for a payment of the difference between the agricultural value of the property and the price it could fetch from developers.

The 2-year-old Stanislaus trust chose the Hancock property because it is prime farmland close to a growing city.

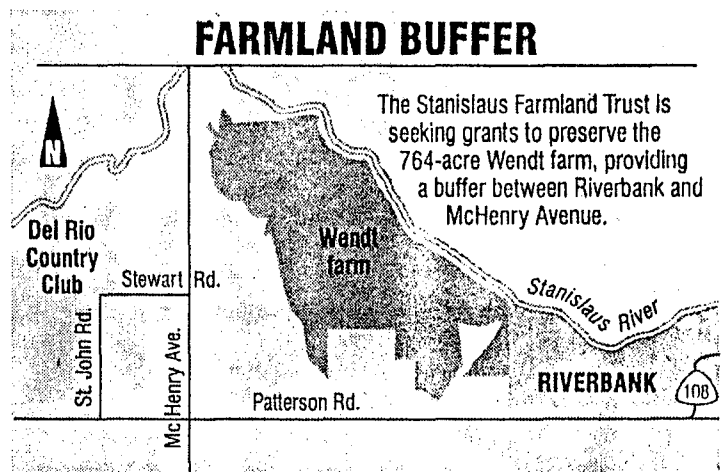
An agreement on the price and other details might be ready in a couple of weeks, but no formal announcement would be made until escrow closes a few months later, Greg Kirkpatrick said. He's a land protection representative at the Visalia office of the American Farmland Trust. The national group is representing the Stanislaus trust in the talks.

"I think that we're really seeing a number of landowners coming together to try to look at this as a real option

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LOCAL NEWS

FARMLAND BUFFER



THE RFF

FARMLAND: Easements in other communities proposed

CONTINUED FROM B-1

to the inevitable sale for development," Kirkpatrick said.

The Stanislaus trust has applied for part of the funding for the easement from the Great Valley Center of Modesto, which received \$5 million from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation for farmland preservation in Stanislaus, Merced and Yolo counties.

The Great Valley Center has applications for Packard money for a proposed easement in the Delhi area and for another in Yolo County, said Holly King, the center's agricultural programs manager.

Kirkpatrick said another easement proposal has emerged from landowners in the Hughson area. Details have not been disclosed about this and the proposals in Merced and Yolo counties.

Easement proponents could get some of their funding from the California Farmland Conser-

vancy Program, which got a big boost from a bond measure state voters approved in March. The Legislature is discussing how much of the \$75 million should be spent on cropland and how much should go to rangeland and oak woodland, said Don Drysdale, a spokesman for the state Department of Conservation.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has \$50 million to spend on conservation easements this year under the farm bill President Bush signed in May. Like the state, the federal program covers up to half the cost of an easement.

"There is a lot of interest," King said. "The challenge is getting the transactions put together and the funding together. They are complex transactions that usually take from 12 to 18 months to close."

Bee staff writer John Holland can be reached at 578-2385 or jholland@modbee.com.

BRIEFS

JULY 16-02

Roundabouts seen as solution

Agency studies ways to improve traffic from Highway 132 to 99

By MELANIE TURNER
BEE STAFF WRITER

Roundabouts could solve a traffic problem that has long plagued Highway 132 from Modesto's industrial center to Highway 99, business leaders say.

Now the California Department of Transportation is fine-tuning four ideas — all involving roundabouts — to present next month to a team of people working to move traffic to and from the Beard Industrial Park southeast of downtown.

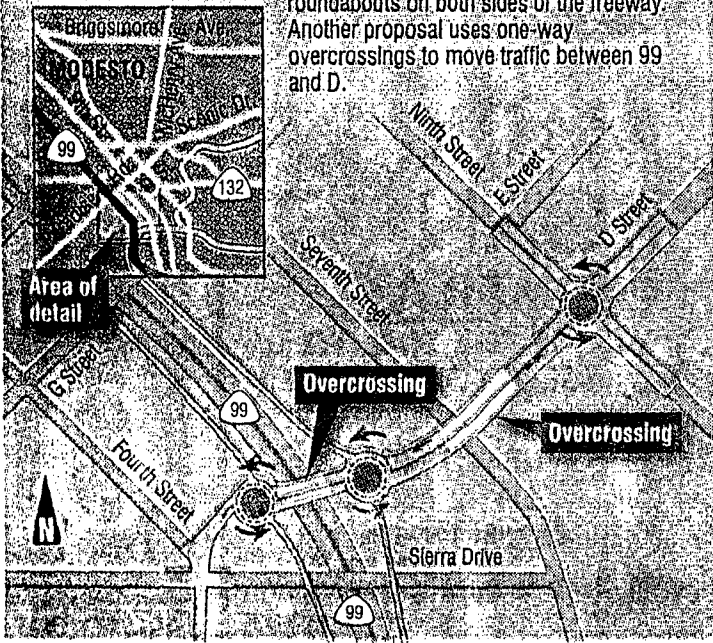
The ideas came about as part of an experiment by the Stanislaus Council of Governments that brought together people with an interest in a major transportation project. Access between Highway 132 east (Yosemite Boulevard) and Highway 99 became the test project.

Officials and business leaders say the team approach has helped fast-track planning, and

SEE PAGE B-2, TRAFFIC

SOLVING TRAFFIC PROBLEMS

A team of people interested in traffic problems between Yosemite Boulevard and Highway 99 has come up with four preliminary alternatives. This one moves traffic from a roundabout at 132 and D Streets to another at D and Ninth streets, over the abandoned Union Pacific railroad tracks and Seventh Street, and over 99, with roundabouts on both sides of the freeway. Another proposal uses one-way overcrossings to move traffic between 99 and D.



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TRAFFIC: Flow between 99 and 132 is addressed by team

CONTINUED FROM B-1

they'd like to see more major projects use teams.

"I think what comes out of it is a sounder, saner plan," said Waterford Mayor Charles Turner, who came up with the idea for a team approach as chairman of StanCOG's policy board.

The team has met five times this year and will meet again in August. Members include business leaders, elected officials, and staff from Coltrane, the county and the cities of Ceres and Modesto.

Results of a study released last year showed that 15,000 trucks move through the industrial park daily to 99, creating crowded roads in Modesto and Ceres. It also found that cross-traffic on 132, rail crossings, pedestrians and other factors decrease productivity for companies.

Ideas for getting trucks to and from the industrial park and 99 vary, but all include a roundabout along Ninth Street at either D Street or E Street, or between D and E in downtown Modesto.

One preliminary drawing shows an overpass at 99 with roundabouts on both sides at Fifth and Sixth streets in Modesto. Another uses one-way overcrossings to move cars to and from 99 and D, using a southbound overcrossing via Fifth Street and a northbound overcrossing that would be a 99 off-ramp just south of D.

Cost estimates range from \$38 million to \$118 million. For \$38 million, E and D would become one-way streets heading west and east, respectively, with a roundabout in between at Ninth Street, sending traffic to roundabouts on an overcrossing at 99.

The most expensive project uses the one-way overcrossings to get traffic to and from D Street and 99.

StanCOG has earmarked \$40 million for the project, council senior planner Lark Downs said.

Chris Murphy, a member of the team and vice president of a Modesto warehousing and distribution company, said StanCOG will be able to hold up the project as a positive example.

It will serve as the "proof" some people have said they need before they can support a half-cent sales tax for transportation, he said.

"People whimper and whine about StanCOG, but no one ever gave them good direction," Murphy said. "The business people have to step up to the plate."

Jan Ennenga, executive manager of the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau, said she found the team beneficial.

For example, officials realized early on that the project could affect a couple of city of Modesto projects.

"Nobody was aware of those issues when we first started," Turner said.

While a long-term solution is still many years away, and funding sources are unknown at this point, short-term solutions may offer some relief:

- Replace the traffic signal at 132 and D Street in Modesto with a roundabout.
- Install landscaped medians along 132 to channel traffic to intersections with signal lights, add lighted crosswalks and remove on-street parking.
- Widen intersections at Mitchell Road and Daly Avenue between Modesto and Ceres to accommodate trucks.

Stanislaus County Supervisor Paul Caruso, chairman of StanCOG's policy board, said he's pleased with the team's progress. "At least it fast-tracks the planning stage of it," he said. "What happens after that is yet to be tested."

Caruso said he hopes teams will complement consultants, which StanCOG's policy board is considering hiring to get projects built faster.

County rejects growth measure

Aug 7 02

Supervisors say that they're doing just fine preserving farmland

By JOHN HOLLAND
BEE STAFF WRITER

Stanislaus County residents will not get a chance in November to advise the Board of Supervisors on land use.

The board declined Tuesday to submit a measure urging that development be kept within the nine cities in the county.

Supervisors said they are doing just fine at preserving farmland, and they took unbrage at the Modesto and Oakdale city councils for seeking the measure.

"I would just ignore it," Supervisor Nick Blom said.

Supervisor Ray Simon said the county has approved a few residential lots since 2000, while the cities have approved several thousand.

"We have done a job that few counties in the state of California have done in attempting to protect our agricultural base," Simon said.

Over the past decade, the board has approved development mainly in Salida, an unincorporated town that has grown to about 13,000 residents. Even here, Supervisor Paul Caruso said, the board spared the rich farmland south of Murphy Road.

The board agreed to reject the advisory measure three days before Friday's deadline for putting matters on the Nov. 5 ballot.

The measure was proposed by Modesto Councilman Denny Jackman, who said the county needs a clear statement about keeping development from sprawling away from cities.

"They talk about it, but they don't do anything about it," Jackman said after the supervisor's meeting. "If they want to take a position of not finding out what the public thinks of this issue, that's their choice."

Jackman, a longtime advocate of

GROWTH: County rejects Modesto, Oakdale measure

CONTINUED FROM B-1

farmland preservation, said he still hopes Modesto voters next year will consider a measure that would require future votes of the electorate to expand the city's long-term growth areas.

In 2000, the Board of Supervisors declined to support a countywide version of this proposal.

In urging the advisory measure, the Modesto council complained that the county has approved commercial development, which provides substantial taxes, while leaving less-lucrative housing to the cities.

Simon said the council neglected to note the county's agreement to share sales taxes with Modesto from the unincorporated part of McHenry Avenue.

He said the council would be better served tending to Village I, where development fees for streets, storm drains and parks have fallen short.

"Quite truthfully," Supervi-

sor Tom Mayfield said, "I wish that the Modesto City Council would take care of their business and let the county take care of our business."

The Oakdale council was concerned mainly about increased demand on its public services by people living in nearby unincorporated areas.

Supervisor Pat Paul, who represents the area, noted that these people also spend money at Oakdale businesses, generating city taxes.

Caruso said the measure would discourage projects that are outside cities but not on prime farmland. He cited the Diablo Grande community in the southwest hills and the industrial development proposed for the former Navy airfield near Crows Landing.

Bee staff writer John Holland can be reached at 578-2385 or jholland@modbee.com.

Other action
by the
Board of
Supervisors.

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OUR VIEWS

Aug 10 02

Supervisors' spin ignores the facts of county growth

The Board of Supervisors this week dismissed a request that they ask county voters' advice on growth this November, but the issue is far from dead. Local debate about how, where and how fast Stanislaus County should grow is both timely and vital.

The elected supervisors repeatedly insist that they direct urban growth to cities, but U.S. Census numbers clearly dispute that, especially in Salida, where the population has tripled in a decade. At this stage, the supervisors should spend less time spinning and more time listening to what the public and other local government agencies have to say about growth.

Jobs ^{Aug 9} agency ₀₂ chooses leader

Stanislaus Alliance CEO
seeks more opportunity,
training for area workers

By J.N. SBRANTI
BEE STAFF WRITER

Bill Bassitt, who has 20 years' experience in economic development and chamber of commerce leadership, was named Thursday as head of the new Stanislaus Economic Development and Workforce Alliance.

"Bill stood out as clearly the best candidate for the job. He'll take us where we want to go," said Modesto attorney Ralph Curtis, a member of the Alliance board.

The Alliance is the new agency that resulted from the merger of the Workforce Investment Board and the Stanislaus County Economic Development Corp. It will coordinate job-creation and job-training efforts throughout the county.

Bassitt, 57, was picked from 100 applicants after a nationwide search. He starts Aug. 19.

"There's a lot of economic opportunity ahead for this county because of the growth coming out of the Bay Area," Bassitt said.

That population growth, he predicted, is the precursor to business relocation into Stanislaus County.

Bassitt said the county put itself on the right track to promote a business and job boom when it created the Alliance last month.

He said the Alliance concept of combining work force development with economic development excites him. Bassitt said getting job training in sync with the needs of prospective employers will be difficult, but worthwhile.

"It's a doable challenge," said Bassitt, who helped lead economic development in Detroit from 1996 through 2000. "It's going to take a concerted effort by the public and private sector."

Another challenge, he said, will be one of public attitude.

"One of the biggest things we're going to have to change is the mindset of people that nothing much good is going to happen here no matter how hard we try," Bassitt said.

He is optimistic there is great opportunity for economic progress in the county.

During the past two years, Bassitt was a private consultant for businesses seeking new locations. Before that, he was the Detroit Regional Chamber's senior vice president for economic development.

His previous posts included being president of the St. Joseph (Mo.) Area Chamber of Commerce, the Lima (Ohio) Area Chamber of Commerce and the Lima-Allen County Economic Development Council.

Neither the Alliance nor Bassitt would disclose details of his contract or his salary as the Alliance's chief executive officer.

Bee staff writer J.N. Sbranti can be reached at 578-2196 or jnsbranti@modbee.com.



Bassitt

July 11
2002

HOME-BUYING HELP

County offers bigger loans

- Prospective home buyers in unincorporated parts of Stanislaus County can apply for special loans of up to \$30,000 to cover down payments and closing costs on regular loans. The Board of Supervisors has doubled the cap from \$15,000 to reflect the rapid rise in housing prices. The help is for first-time home buyers within income limits. A family of four, for example, can make up to \$37,200 a year. The aid must be repaid after 20 years or when the house is sold. A state grant allowed the increase for the program, which has helped more than 100 families since 1994. For more information on the county program, call Jim Duval or Ana Rocha, 525-6330.

TODAY

• • • July 25, 2002

We realize that city leaders are busy grappling with Village I, but that does not excuse the lack of progress on proposed business parks in Modesto. "Absolutely nothing has happened in a year" on plans for a business park on Kiernan Avenue, Councilman Bill Conrad said at the council meeting Tuesday.

Nothing is more important to this valley — gripped and shamed by double-digit rates of poverty and unemployment — than high-wage job creation. It is well past time for the Modesto City Council and Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors to show progress on the jobs centers planned for north Modesto and Salida.

Labor force, Aug 10-02 jobs out of balance

By J.N. SBRANTI
BEE STAFF WRITER

More people were out of work this July than were jobless in July 2001 in the Northern San Joaquin Valley and nearby foothills.

But the employment news wasn't all bad because the total number of residents working actually increased.

Those seemingly contrary facts are simple to explain: "We're not growing jobs as fast as people in the labor force," said Carletta Evans Steele of the state Employment Development Department.

Stanislaus County's labor force reached an all-time high in July — 321,300, which was 5,800 more than the year before, according to state labor market statistics.

Tuolumne County and Mariposa County also set highest-ever labor force records.

Just look around, Steele suggested, and the population boom is evident.

"We're building in absolutely every direction. It's houses we're building, and they're not little houses," Steele said.

Businesses and job opportunities are going to have to catch up before jobless rates go down, she said. Steele is optimistic that will happen.

"We're moving in the right direction," she said.

Jobless rates in the valley, however, often are at the mercy of Mother Nature.

"As the weather goes, so go the crops," said labor analyst Bunny Bentley. "And employment fluctuates according to what crops are being picked."

Bentley suggested that was a primary factor in Merced County's jobless jump last month.

All things considered, Steele and Bentley said nothing in the jobless numbers is surprising or cause for concern.

Bee staff writer J.N. Sbranti can be reached at 578-2196 or jnsbranti@modbee.com.

Stockton's enterprise zone lures Turlock company north

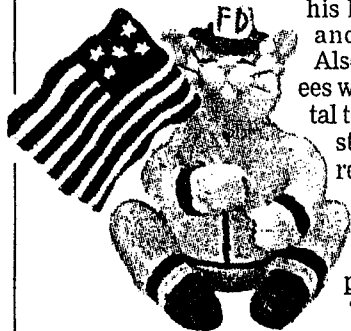
July 26, 02

By **JEFF JARDINE**
BEE STAFF WRITER

Michael Daley refused to locate his company, Annaco Creations, in San Joaquin County when he started it 15 months ago.

"I didn't want any part of Stockton," he said. "Modesto was our first choice. But we couldn't find warehouse space that was suitable."

He settled on Turlock, which offers roughly equal distances between his homes in Berkeley and Twain Harte. Also, several employees whom he deemed vital to the success of the startup business already lived in Turlock or Livingston.



© 2001 ANNACO CREATIONS
Annaco Creations designs whimsical collectibles.

"Once we found out about their enterprise zone ..." he said. "SBA loans, fee reductions, \$1,000 to \$1,500 for training employees, the tax breaks."

Annaco Creations will move into its new

43,000-square-foot building in Stockton's Arch Road Business Park, near the Stockton airport, in mid-August.

Annaco Creations is a rapidly growing business that markets whimsically themed animals, piggy banks and other collectibles. The company's designers here create the figurines that are manufactured in China. It sells and distributes them to more than 3,500 customers in the United States and is now branching out into the Canadian and European markets.

The company quickly overflowed its small warehouse on Ellerd Drive in south Turlock and went shopping for a new facility. San Joaquin County offered economic incentives Stanislaus County couldn't match, he said.

Stanislaus County economic development officials could have arranged Small Business Administration loan financing and job training.

But the business park in south Stockton is located within the state-designated Stockton-San Joaquin enterprise zone, where he receive more than \$36,000 in tax breaks for every new employee the company hires out of specific lower-income zip codes.

Consequently, he never approached Stanislaus County officials about staying here. They never had a chance to try to retain the business.

The wholesale company started up, grew and moved out of Turlock before anyone in Stanis-

SEE PAGE D-4, ANNACO

ANNACO: Here and gone before Stanislaus knew it

CONTINUED FROM D-1

laus County realized it existed, Daley said.

"I don't think they even knew we were here," he said.

Stanislaus County is in the process of trying to get the state to designate an area of south Modesto as an enterprise zone, said Richard Jantz, deputy chief executive officer for Stanislaus County.

"We're anticipating the governor signing legislation that would, in essence, create an enterprise zone," Jantz said. "It would benefit existing business as well (as new ones)."

Daley worked for similar companies in Berkeley and Los Ange-

les before starting Annaco Creations.

"I decided to do my own thing and stop killing myself for other people," he said.

The company currently employs about 16 people, and he expects the work force to double by the end of the year.

"In another year, we could need another building," he said. "We're very blessed."

Still, he wants to control Annaco Creations' growth.

"It's a trend industry," he said. "I've seen lots of companies grow themselves right out of business."

Bee staff writer Jeff Jardine can be reached at 578-2383 or jjardine@modbee.com.

City:

Rapid growth not wanted

JUNE 9-02

Building more houses in Modesto to suit Bay Area buyers criticized

By MICHAEL MELLO
BEE STAFF WRITER

Modesto has no obligation to shelter Bay Area refugees, city and Stanislaus County officials said Saturday at a public forum on housing.

"We are the affordable housing for the Bay Area," said Gary Dickson, executive director of the Stanislaus Council of Governments. "That's not fair."

Based on growth projections, the state would like to see 11,600 new homes in Modesto over the next five to six years, Dickson said. Instead, the city would like to reduce that figure to 6,736, for what

officials call a "quality of life balanced alternative."

Rapid growth over a short period would burden city services such as sewer treatment, and turn arterial streets into parking lots.

"We're running a risk with the state," Dickson added, referring to the potential loss of grant money to stand up to Sacramento.

"They want us to provide more housing for the other parts of the state, and we don't think that's fair. We told the state we're not going to do that. We're going to come up with our own numbers."

Housing growth in Modesto already is drawing people from the Bay Area who can afford homes here but not where they came from.

Even San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown has said his city looks to the San Joaquin Valley for cheaper

homes, Mayor Carmen Sabatino said.

The influx has drastically increased land and housing prices, Dickson said. And people who already live here are being priced out of the market.

That predicament is one of the major factors — along with public input — that will shape the city's planned housing policy for the next five years. Per state law, Modesto must update the policy — called the Regional Housing Needs Assessment, part of the city's general plan — twice a decade.

Knowing that it will not be easy, the city has started the process already, although the policy must have to be completed until December 2003.

It is a complicated process, city fathers admit, so they have asked for the public's opinion on how

SEE PAGE B-2, SHELTER

SHELTER: Public concerns mostly focus on affordability

CONTINUED FROM B-1

best to provide ample and affordable roofs over city residents' heads.

Problems were pointed out more often than solutions were offered at the forum, which was fine with Brad Kilger, director of Modesto's Community and Economic Development Department.

"If we leave with more questions than we've answered, it's OK," he said. "It's very critical we get these issues on the table."

And that is exactly what happened. Several dozen people showed at the forum, forcing city employees to print more workshop programs.

Most of the concerns centered on the affordability of housing.

"One would figure, if we restrict the amount of housing significantly, we'll just force the price of housing up," said Mike Zagaris, president of PMZ Inc., a real estate sales and development firm.

Even then, the influx to Modesto would not stop, resident Brian Nelson Marks said.

"If we think we can hold them back at the fences, we're fooling ourselves," he said.

Others were concerned that the pricing cost of living would

push Modesto's homeless number even higher.

The situation is not easily remedied by building low-income housing, said Bill Zoslocki of Zoslocki Construction.

Because of high land prices, he said, "The least profitable development right now is 'affordable' houses," meaning homes available to people at most income levels, usually smaller dwellings.

Smaller houses in those categories provide only a \$2,500 return per home on a typical development, Zoslocki said, and that is after putting a \$1.4 million investment into a typical subdivision.

To compound the problem, the state is no help, Zoslocki said. Nearly 78 percent of the state's low-income housing grants go to heavily populated counties in Southern California and the Bay Area, leaving the rest of the state to fight over the remaining funds.

Comments from the forum will be forwarded to the Council of Governments, which will discuss the housing policy in July, Dickson said.

"In 2012," Sabatino said, "when people look back, they'll say, 'These people planned,' and we'll be better off because of that plan."

HARD BARGAIN FOR ALL

Patterson, developer both mean business

By JEFF JARDINE
BEE STAFF WRITER

North Carolina developer J. Patrick Gavaghan set down one condition when he announced his plans in October 2000 to build a 224-acre business park west of Patterson.

Gavaghan, president of KeyStone Corp., said the \$200 million KeyStone Pacific Business Park had to break ground within 18 months — meaning by this March — or he might take his grand plans and his investors elsewhere.

Fact No. 1: It won't get started on time, primarily because of delays caused by an insufficient environmental impact report that will be redone. The best-case scenario would have the first shovelful of dirt turning about a year from now — not next month.

Fact No. 2: Gavaghan still wants to build the 28-building business park and an accompanying 987-home subdivision, easing his position on that deadline.

"It's going to be done," he said.

The deadline, however, served two purposes. It told local officials Gavaghan is serious about building the park, which he hopes will attract businesses that support Silicon Valley high-tech industries.

And the deadline showed him just how serious local officials were about getting the park built. It put the onus on the city of Patterson and Stanislaus County to expedite the approval processes, clearing the way for roads to be built or improved, and water and sewer lines to be extended.

Patterson and county officials have convinced

SEE PAGE D-2, KEYSTONE

Some embrace, others disdain growing pains

By AMY WHITE
BEE STAFF WRITER

PATTERSON — Plans to create more jobs with a large business park west of town inspire mixed reactions from residents.

Some fear the business park, with its predominantly corporate-based jobs, may change the character of the long-time agricultural community.

Retired restaurant owner Jackie Winegar, 67, who has lived in Patterson most of her life, is resigned to the changes. But she is not pleased with the idea.

She's concerned that the new complex will "wreck this town."

"It is good for the people coming from the Bay Area, but the people who live here are used to their little things in Patterson," Winegar said.

She is afraid new businesses will force

hopefully the change will be viewed as a very positive one."

Planners don't want to give up the rural feel but feel the need to create a more diversified economy, Mayor Rich Dodds said.

"I think that what they are going to see is Patterson trying to mature," he said.

Some Patterson residents are looking forward to the project.

Carpet layer Antonio Mora, 34, recently moved to Patterson to be near family — and because he could afford a home for himself, his wife and their four daughters.

But he still commutes to San Jose.

He'd be pleased to get a carpet-laying job as part

of building the new business complex, he said, and he'd be willing to change his line of work if he could find a job there.

"As long as I don't have to drive," Mora said. "I can make more money (in San Jose), but I know I am wasting four hours every day."

Kristy Hernandez, 24, who lives in a subdivision near Patterson's West Side Shopping Center, used to drive four to six hours a day to her human resources job in Milpitas, near San Jose.

Now she works as assistant store manager at Allied Cash Advance, which recently opened at the shopping center. She is glad new jobs are coming to the area.

"I think it's great because it is a commuter town," she said. "Now I live here and work here ... so it's a whole different world."

Developers have big dreams for Patterson's future.

Page 11

out older ones or will jack up prices because Bay Area-based residents are used to — and willing to — pay more.

"I think it will bring more new commuters, which I don't think we need," Winegar added. "But you can't keep them out ... It's progress."

Stanislaus County Supervisor Paul Caruso said that for some, the change could be bittersweet.

"You'll lose a little bit of that small town flavor," he said, "but things are going to change. If you look to the future

SEE PAGE D-2, REACTIO

StanCOG

just pokes along

*Agency
ignores
horrid
roads*

Stanislaus County's transportation system is in sad shape.

It's difficult to disagree with that assessment, especially if you drive a vehicle, whether a car or a truck, or whether you're delivering children to school or goods to a business.

Stanislaus County needs a bigger, far better transportation system. The majority of streets need to be resurfaced; the busier boulevards need to be widened; existing highways need to be made safer; freeway interchanges need to be modernized; and new roadways and expressways need to be built.

Moving people and goods safely and efficiently throughout our communities and county is pivotal to our future — our health is compromised when gridlocked cars sit and spew toxins into air that already ranks among the worst in the nation, and our ability to attract high-wage employers is hobbled by poor traffic circulation.

Creating a first-rate transportation system by improving current roadways — and more important, building new ones — will take money. Millions upon millions upon millions of dollars. So much money, in fact, that the only feasible way to fund the necessary improvements is a sales tax increase specifically for road and transportation improvements.

Until Stanislaus County voters pass a sales tax increase — a half-cent per dollar is

needed — we'll be able to do little more than slap small Band-Aids on what is becoming a bigger and bigger ailment. For change to happen, Stanislaus County's various governments, businesses and industry, and the citizenry must work together, toward a common goal.

Unfortunately, the chance of that happening is slim until a key governmental organization — StanCOG — undergoes a massive overhaul.

Dissatisfaction with the Stanislaus Council of Governments — the regional transportation agency composed of representatives of the county and its nine cities — isn't new. In 1998, we heard a chorus of discontent with StanCOG after a push for the half-cent tax increase fizzled.

StanCOG is "asleep ... buried in process," "It's just not

functioning," "It's not working," were among the quotes from citizens and elected officials in a 1998 Bee editorial critical of StanCOG's performance.

The agency's policy board, the editorial stated, "needs to jump-start (the) staff. It's got to focus on speeding up the planning process, getting projects going and ranking priorities in the context of big-picture transportation needs." "Our roads are too bumpy and dangerous. We have money but few plans approved for improvement. Our patience is growing thin, and the public's should be, too," the editorial concluded.

In the four years since, as roads have grown more clogged and tattered, dissatisfaction with StanCOG has intensified. And now, a growing chorus of StanCOG critics seems

determined to fix the problem. Business leaders understand the importance of a safe and efficient transportation system. And they understand that **nothing — or at least nothing much — can happen without a sales tax increase.** San Joaquin County passed such a tax years ago — a tax that has resulted in new freeway interchanges and a string of significant road improvements.

OVER

But the business leaders also say they will not support a tax increase for roads until elected officials who sit on StanCOG "reinvent" the organization.

"If it's not broken, it's nearly broken," said Gary Plummer, president and chief executive officer of the Modesto Chamber of Commerce. "We think it needs to be completely overhauled in order to become effective."

"We don't want to put more money into an organization that hasn't produced results," said Jan Ennenga, executive manager of the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau.

"Some people have been asleep at the switch," said Craig Lewis, who leads an ad-hoc committee of business people who evaluate transportation issues.

Among them are the elected officials who sit on StanCOG's policy-making board — the board that we hoped would tune up the organization in 1998.

Some of its members have changed, but it's still made up almost entirely of city and county elected officials. They are the ones who represent the rest of us at StanCOG meetings, in charge of providing direction and decision making. And it is the full membership of each of the nine city councils and the Board of Supervisors that ratifies StanCOG's priorities. Through a joint powers agreement, they determine its design.

So if changes are needed, it's our elected representatives who have to make them. The business transportation committee has taken the lead in bringing the issue to public attention this year. Now it's up to those we elected to provide leadership to do just that. Are they willing to put up with the snail-paced status quo, or do they want to make things better?

Members of the policy board are:

- **Ceres** — Andy Constantinou
- **Hughson** — Bart Conner
- **Modesto** — Tim Fisher, Carmen Sabatino and Bruce Frohman
- **Newman** — Tom Applegate
- **Oakdale** — Phil Rockey
- **Patterson** — Kathy Wright
- **Riverbank** — Curtis Lineberger
- **Turlock** — Bill Wallen
- **Waterford** — Charles Turner (chairman)
- **Stanislaus County** — Nick Blom, Paul Caruso (vice chairman), Ray Simon, Tom Mayfield and Pat Paul
- **Caltrans (ex-officio)** — Dana Cowell, District 10

Attendance record

- The attendance record for StanCOG policymakers is nothing to brag about, especially for the members of the Board of Supervisors. Since January 2000, there has been only one monthly meeting at which all five supervisors were present. Usually it's no more than two.
- In fact, the record shows that not once in the past two years has the policy board ever met with its full membership of 16 elected officials. The closest they came was in September, when 15 members showed up.
- City representation often rotates among council members, and there are sometimes changes of council members due to elections. Modesto has three representatives, and each of the remaining eight cities has one. On average, since January 2000, most city representatives have shown up. But Modesto's attendance has fallen off this year, with only the February meeting drawing three council members. In April and May, Modesto had only one of its three representatives present, according to StanCOG records. The supervisors have not sent more than two members to each meeting so far this year. The other cities, though, are doing well, with only Ceres and Oakdale missing one meeting each.

DEC-2-01

Road construction everywhere

Improvements will help economy in Modesto area

Highway 99 through Modesto is becoming safer and better looking.

There's still a daunting amount of work to be done, including upgrading the several substandard overpasses along Highway 99, beginning with the Pelandale Avenue interchange.

That said, the work Caltrans is doing now shouldn't be overlooked.

Crews are building a barrier along the freeway median to prevent another crash like the one that killed 18-year-old Gerardo Medina of Modesto on March 31. A pickup veered through the median and landed on top of his car. Double concrete walls, now being poured between the G Street overpass and Maze Boulevard, should prevent similar tragedies. When Caltrans is finished, by the end of this month, barriers will separate the northbound and southbound lanes of the highway all the way from Whitmore Avenue in Ceres to Kiernan Avenue in Salida.

While safety is the core issue, Caltrans also responded to aesthetic concerns initiated by Modesto businessman Pete Bakker. Instead of ripping out the oleanders planted in the freeway median, not uncommon when a new center barrier is installed, Caltrans used the double wall design to fence in the flowering shrubs. We appreciate that.

More beautification progress was made when Caltrans teamed up with the Stanislaus County Workforce Investment Board, the county and Modesto. The joint effort, aided by a \$48,000 grant from the Workforce Investment Board, landscaped areas along the sound walls that flank Highway 99 south of Kansas Avenue.

Caltrans, by the way, also doubled its litter pickup efforts along the Modesto stretch of freeway. That, in addition to the painting and landscaping of the wooden sound wall along Sisk Road, means the Modesto corridor finally is starting to look better, too.

It's not just Highway 99 that's being upgraded. We're seeing progress on several fronts — from city street repairs to the

preparation of a regional transportation plan.

That's important because good road links are integral to efforts to bring more and better-paying jobs to the area — and high-wage job creation remains this region's No. 1 priority.

This year, 52 miles of Modesto streets were resealed or repaved to eliminate cracks and potholes. Another 44 miles are scheduled for repairs when work resumes in the spring. The city still has multimillion-dollar road repair backlog, but progress is accelerating.

The extension of Pelandale Avenue from Tully Road to McHenry Avenue just opened, linking Pelandale to Claratina Avenue and on to Coffee Road. That provides another connection between Highway 99 and the rapidly growing northeast quadrant of the city. And that in

turn should ease east-west traffic on Standiford, West Union and Bangs avenues.

Coming soon is a short-term, partial f to the dangerous Pelandale-Highway 99 interchange; work is scheduled to start when the rainy season is over. Lanes w be added to help move backed-up traffic the freeway and onto Pelandale and Sisk Roads. In the meantime, especially duri the holiday shopping season, which dra so many cars to north Modesto because its many stores, the potential for a tragi accident on the clogged freeway remains high.

Fast growth long ago caught up to and passed the cumbersome planning and approval process for countywide transportation needs, and this area has a lot of catching up to do. Fortunately, city and county policy-makers, prodded by business leaders, seem much more

interested in the team approach and are working better together.

That is reflected in stronger Stanislaus Council of Governments staff work. Just rolled out is a fresh countywide transportation plan encompassing 19 road improvement projects aimed at making highways safer, less congested and better able to support economic development.

Projects, most still many years from construction, range from widening Highway 99 to eight lanes between Ceres and Salida to much-needed safety improvements on Highway 132.

Progress is gaining speed. Let's build on the momentum, literally.

StanCOG is making progress on transportation

By CHARLES M. TURNER

A little over a year ago, Kirk Lindsey, then a new appointee to the California Transportation Commission, told the Stanislaus Council of Governments that reaching consensus on the region's top transportation priorities would be its most important task for the year. He was right.

Now, let's look back at the significant progress we've made by consensus and note StanCOG's accomplishments last year.

Of major importance, StanCOG has updated the Regional Transportation Plan, a long-range blueprint which serves as the region's master plan for funded transportation projects.

The 2001 RTP includes 19 major transportation improvement projects primarily aimed at maintaining Highway 99 and Highway 132 and making them safer, less congested, and more supportive of economic development.

The eight "baseline" projects carried over from the 1998 RTP and 11 additional priority projects represent total spending of \$662.1 million of federal and state transportation funds over a 25-year period.

The baseline projects have already received some funding and are in various stages of development and represent improvements to Highways 99, 132, 120, 108 and 219. StanCOG has submitted the Regional Transportation Plan to the state as required by law.

Also in 2001, StanCOG distributed and helped put to work nearly \$40 million in federal and state funds to its members. To be specific, StanCOG delivered projects using more than 100 percent of its share of Regional Surface Transportation Program and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program federal funds.

Monies were used in a variety of ways, from operating public bus and transit systems, fixing potholes in our roads and streets, purchasing vehicles that reduce air pollution, building a bicycle and pedestrian crossing along Highway 99, and beautifying our highways and streets with new landscaping.

Soon, lighted crosswalks, curb ramps, pavement markings, new sidewalks, traffic signs, and flashing beacons will guide our students safely across the streets to school

StanCOG advised and assisted our cities in applying for federal Safe Routes to Schools program funds to improve student safety on streets near public schools. Our members received \$1.9 million in funds which represent an unprecedented significant portion of this federal fund coming to our region. Soon, lighted crosswalks, curb ramps, pavement markings, new sidewalks, traffic signs and flashing beacons will guide our students safely across the streets to school.

As a regional planning agency, StanCOG addresses issues that impact our communities. One issue in particular came to our attention as a result of a Central Stanislaus Freight Study that was conducted last year. The study reaffirmed that the Highway 132 Job Center is a major driver of the region's economic engine.

The center is located south of Yosemite Boulevard, north of the Tuolumne River and east of Highway 99 in Modesto and Stanislaus County. The area includes the Beard Industrial Park on the east and the E.&J. Gallo Winery on the west. The area provides 18,000 year-round and 49,000 peak season food-processing jobs in the county.

Our study found that 15,000 trucks move through the Beard Industrial Park every day, creating traffic congestion as trucks move through downtown Modesto and Ceres to reach Highway 99. Pedestrian traffic, cross traffic, rail crossings and non-synchronized traffic signals cause delays in the movement of goods and services to the

Highway 99 corridor. These delays add up to 750,000 hours of wasted transportation time, transportation costs, and productivity losses. Moreover, the safety and air quality for people living in adjacent communities are impacted by the heavy truck traffic.

Our challenge is to find a way to move goods and services safely and efficiently through the Highway 132 Job Center area, without compromising the quality of life in neighboring communities. We are now addressing this challenge. I have proposed, and the StanCOG Policy Board has approved, the implementation of Plan Implementation Project team.

The PIP team is a collaborative effort comprised of representatives from StanCOG, Building Industry Association, Caltrans, Ceres and Modesto chambers of commerce, Farm Bureau, Manufacturers Council and the Stanislaus Economic Development Corporation, as well as elected officials from Stanislaus County, Ceres and Modesto.

Our objective is to come up with viable solutions and an action plan for implementation of a project to address the movement of goods and services along Highway 132.

The team will utilize the completed studies and available fiscal resources and facilitate coordination between public agencies and the private enterprises to "fast-track" a project designed to address community concerns while encouraging economic growth in the targeted area.

It is my hope that through this collaborative effort, we can develop a more streamlined and timely process that could be applied to other regional transportation problems. The results of this PIP team effort should be available by the end of my term as chair of StanCOG.

Turner is chairman of the Stanislaus Council of Governments Policy Board, a regional planning agency comprising elected representatives from Ceres, Hughson, Modesto, Newman, Oakdale, Patterson, Riverbank, Turlock, Waterford and Stanislaus County.

+ Cities,

WORK & MONEY

DEC 22, 2007

county pursuing grants

By **JEFF JARDINE**
BEE STAFF WRITER

Five cities and Stanislaus County have applied for a total of more than \$2.26 million in state grant money to improve roads and services.

The applications are part of the state's \$12 million Central Valley Infrastructure Grant program. Recipients will be announced in February.

The money can be used to enhance economic development in rural cities in the San Joaquin Valley. Each city could apply for

up to \$400,000 to develop or repair streets, roads, sewers, utilities, telecommunications or other projects.

■ Stanislaus County applied for \$400,000 for road improvements for business parks.

■ Hughson requested \$400,000 to extend its drainage system for industrial parks.

■ Newman requested \$400,000 to build roads and wells for an industrial park.

■ Turlock applied for \$400,000 for business construction.

■ Oakdale requested \$262,500

to build roads and traffic signals within its redevelopment area.

Charline Speck, president of the Stanislaus County Economic Development Corp., said she believes all of the proposals have an excellent chance of receiving funds because there were only 41 applications statewide. In all, 30 will receive grants.

SCEDCO hired a consultant to help the cities write their grant applications.

Bee staff writer Jeff Jardine can be reached at 578-2383 or ljardine@modbee.com.

really. So, I hope the veterans see this the way I do.

ALSTON LEVESQUE
Modesto

Poverty and affordability

I read with interest the column of Dec. 13 by Edward Taczanowsky of the Building Industry Association. I must dispute one of the premises. Citing affordable housing as an argument against preserving prime farmland is a red herring. Much of the affordable housing built is either apartments or lower-priced homes on very small lots, a practice that proponents of farmland preservation have promoted for years. If cities and counties would increase the housing density of all residential zoning categories, we could house many more people with less land.

Second and more importantly, housing is less affordable in Merced County — not because it is too expensive. It is less expensive because most of our residents are poor. Houses in Merced County cost a fraction of what they do in Bay Area communities. You can build the least expensive houses in the state, and if people have little money, those houses will be unaffordable.

The BIA's housing affordability indexes are used mainly as arguments against strict zoning, growth controls and having to pay for impacts on schools and other services. If you compare homes in Merced and Stanislaus Counties to a community like Livermore, they are a real bargain. The building industry's own real estate advertisements in Bay Area papers will attest to that.

MAXWELL NORTON
UC Cooperative Extension
Merced

Condit helped veterans

I, for one, find it noteworthy that out of more than 500 elected officials in Congress, only one of them introduced a bill to have Uncle Sam honor his commitment to provide promised medical coverage for those of us who served in the military.

The United States closed many bases where I once received military medical treatment. Now as a retiree, my wife and I are covered by Tricare For Life because we have Medicare Part B, so I feel well-taken care of.

And I attribute it in part to Rep. Gary Condit. In large part,

DEC 26, 2007

The Modesto Bee

The Modesto Bee's opinion is expressed in the editorials on this page. The opinions expressed in columns, letters and cartoons are those of the authors and artists.

Opinions

Letters to the Editor are limited to 250 words, are subject to editing and must include name, address and phone number. All letters submitted become property of The Modesto Bee and may be republished in any format. Send to: Editor, The Modesto Bee, P.O. Box 5000, Modesto 95352-0500; fax (209) 574-2297, or e-mail to letters@modbee.com

Stepping stones out of poverty

Valley can no longer prosper on ag alone

Census data have confirmed what too many local leaders hasten to downplay or, worse yet, deny: The people of the Northern San Joaquin Valley earn less money, have less economic opportunity and face poverty in greater numbers than most other Americans.

In Stanislaus County, a staggering 38 percent of children under age 5 live in poverty, according to Census data gathered in 2000 and released last month.

Chew on that for a minute. That's nearly 40 percent — or two out of every five children.

Poverty is a complex and challenging problem, and turning our valley of the poor into a valley of prosperity will take complex and challenging solutions.

But most of these kids today are impoverished because their parents are either unemployed or underemployed.

And that brings back, once again, to jobs.

Jobs aren't the only key to weakening the grim grip of poverty, but they may well be the single most important one.

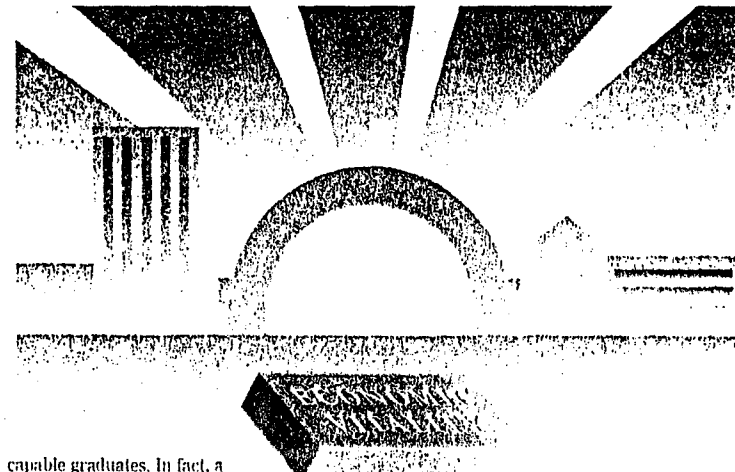
Jobs are what bring broad prosperity to a community or a region. Jobs are what interrupt the cycle of poverty, low expectations, low achievement and more poverty. Jobs are what this valley needs above all else.

It goes back to the saying that giving someone a fish feeds him for a day, whereas teaching someone how to fish feeds him for a lifetime.

The problem in the valley is there aren't enough places here to fish.

As The Bee reported last month, "Enrollment is up in computer training programs, and more privately run vocational education schools are teaching technical skills in Modesto."

Sounds great, until we read on: The problem is a lack of local job prospects for the



capable graduates. In fact, a Stockton computer training school has quit offering certification courses for computer technicians because the graduates can't find jobs in the valley.

True, not all area residents are qualified for middle-class, high-wage employment. Census-takers found a depressing if unsurprising lack of education in the valley; in Stanislaus County, only 63 percent of residents have high school diplomas.

Clearly, today's public schools require comprehensive improvement. That said, many of the woes in valley classrooms are directly linked to the high child poverty rate — which goes back, again, to parents who are un- or underemployed.

Meanwhile, what about the local youths who graduate from high school, leave for college and ultimately settle in places where financial opportunity and high-paying jobs are far more plentiful than in the valley?

We'd also like to see the thousands of Stanislaus County commuters who drive daily to high-wage jobs in the Bay Area — 8,000 to the Silicon Valley alone — join the local work force. But they obviously would need job prospects here.

The answer does not lie in agriculture. Farming has a valuable role and heritage here, and we support preserving much of the prime soil in the valley. But the flip side of the farming coin and related food processing jobs is this: Much of agribusiness involves low

wages and seasonal work which perpetuates poverty and underemployment.

To rely on agriculture as the region's economic centerpiece is to accept the double-digit unemployment and astronomical poverty rates that characterize farming communities throughout California.

The answer lies in diversifying the local economy. Clinging to the status quo is a gross miscarriage of planning.

Facing the truth is not easy, for this paper or for community leaders. It's a difficult balancing act: We want to support our home region, and celebrate its finer points. Yet we can't gloss over the fact that poverty and unemployment are damaging a lot of lives here.

We need to publicize that reality to help spur change, because too often, people in power have other interests or are too complacent to demand improvement until pressed to do so.

When The Bee laments local poverty, defenders of the status quo often reply, "What about the prospering downtown?" as if one can alone for the other or cancel the other out.

The whole picture is mixed, complicated; good things happen and bad trends continue.

The bad trends — and the disheartening if predictable Census data — are underscored by a statewide report released last month by the nonprofit, nonpartisan Children Now. The study found that valley counties endure some of the worst child poverty rates in California. That deprivation leads to a spectrum of social welfare challenges in education, health care, parenting and more.

In examining the Children Now study, The Bee relayed a local anecdote about a 6-year-old who had not batted for so long that his socks stuck to his feet. As one social services expert put it, "He (the boy) had a lot to worry about before he could think about learning how to read."

High-wage jobs not only create broad prosperity like

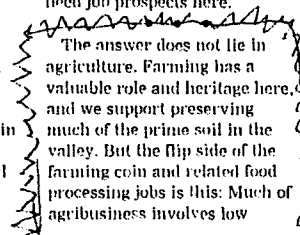
nothing else can, but they give workers an opportunity to climb the economic ladder. In turn, they open mid-wage jobs for low-wage workers, and low-wage jobs for entry-level workers. And so it moves like a cycle.

Local leaders in charge of cultivating jobs need more support from the private sector. Merging the Stanislaus County Economic Development Corp., a public agency, and the Workforce Investment Board, made up of business representatives, will begin to address that shortcoming. A model government-business partnership has emerged with the Valley Business School in downtown Modesto. The charter high school, run by the Stanislaus County Office of Education, has used business leaders' expertise to shape the curriculum and prepare kids for the local job market.

Local job creation efforts need the same kind of private sector influence. A

group of businessmen on the Workforce Investment Board is not enough. The community needs more business leaders to step forth with ideas and financial support for job creation.

Economic development is the most fundamental of anti-poverty, community improvement initiatives. It's a big challenge that must be met to bring needed opportunity for all. It can't be accomplished without more support from the private sector.



Business leaders blast agency

Stanislaus government council criticized for unfinished road work

By MELANIE TURNER
BEE STAFF WRITER

Stanislaus County business leaders say they will not support a half-cent sales tax for roads until elected officials who sit on the region's transportation planning agency board "reinvent" the organization.

"We don't want to put more money into an organization that hasn't produced results," said Jan Ennenga, executive manager of the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau, referring to the Stanislaus Council of Governments.

At the same time, Modesto Mayor Carmen Sabatino is touting a sales tax increase for roads — although he believes that a vote in November would be too soon to gather enough support.

Instead, Sabatino wants the vote to be in the spring of 2003, he told members of the Downtown

Modesto Association on Tuesday.

A half-cent transportation sales tax, something that most Northern California counties have, would require two-thirds support to pass.

Business leaders, who also believe that November is too soon for a tax vote, complain that the Stanislaus Council of Governments has not completed any major road projects in 13 years.

"If it's not broken, it's nearly broken," said Gary Plummer, president and chief executive officer of

SEE PAGE A-18, TAX

CONTINUED FROM A-1

the Modesto Chamber of Commerce. "We think it needs to be completely overhauled in order to become effective."

Business leaders want improved and new roads to help move people and goods through the county, something that they say would help bring the kind of economic development that the community needs.

The business people have not given the transportation council a deadline, but they say major projects need to be built before giving support to the tax.

Craig Lewis heads an ad-hoc committee of business people who study transportation issues. He said the Council of Governments needs to get "one in the ground and two ready to go" before the agency earns his support.

Meanwhile, Sabatino said people are calling for changes in the council's leadership.

"You can't blame the leadership entirely," he said. "(Executive Director) Gary Dickson is a good planner. But he doesn't get any roads built."

Tuesday, Dickson said the director's job needs to be on the line any time that an agency is perceived as not performing.

Lewis, president of Prudential California Realty, criticized the agency two weeks ago, and afterward Dickson indicated to the state that his "job is on the line."

He wrote in a recent e-mail to California Department of Transportation officials that "something is wrong with a system where (Caltrans) has almost all of the staff resources and StanCOG gets almost all of the blame when those staff resources do not perform."

"I have no desire to fall on a sword for somebody else's screw-ups," he said Tuesday.

Dickson sent the e-mail to Mark Leja, director of Caltrans District 10, and others.

"StanCOG is being held accountable by our community for the failure of Caltrans to deliver major (state transportation improvement) projects!" he wrote.

"The community wants progress, or falling that, a scapegoat, and it looks like it may be us, or more specifically, me."

Dickson plans to meet with Leja on Thursday. Leja could not be reached for comment.

Stanislaus County Supervisor Nick Blom, who serves on the StanCOG Policy Board, said board members should not make hasty changes. "There's got to be some good cause."

He also said that there is no hurry on the sales tax, saying that the economy needs to improve before the issue is put be-

fore the voters.

"You just don't put a tax on people when they're struggling to stay afloat," he said.

Meanwhile, the Council of Governments has hired a consultant to prepare a memo to Caltrans, outlining the council's options for hiring contractors other than Caltrans to build road projects. That would be possible only if the county had a half-cent sales tax, Dickson said.

Business leaders said they do not know the cause but that the problems are obvious: no major projects in recent years and a poor meeting attendance record by policy board members.

"Some people have been asleep at the switch," Lewis said.

At the last meeting, 10 of 16 policy board members showed. The members are all five county supervisors, Sabatino and two other Modesto City Council members, and one representative from each of the other eight cities in the county.

Blom agreed that his colleagues need to be more involved. "Some of the board members who want to make a change probably should have been more active themselves in the leadership," he said.

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO. 99-1009

The following person is doing business as:
JA GROVER CONSTRUCTION 3606 Dakota Avenue, Modesto, CA 95358.

AJ GROVER CONSTRUCTION, INC. 3606 Dakota Avenue, Modesto, CA 95358.

This business is conducted by:
a corporation.

The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed above on 10/1/90.

The type of business being conducted:

n/a.

Statement expires five years from the date it was filed.

JOHN A. GROVER, PRESIDENT

MAY 30, JUNE 6, 13, 20, 1999

County, landowner at odds over zoning

By JOHN HOLLAND
BEE STAFF WRITER

In 1999, Larry Turner started keeping his big concrete pumping trucks on a wedge of land next to northwest Modesto.

Stanislaus County officials now are trying to force out the rigs, on the grounds that the business violates the county's policy of keeping the area in agriculture.

Tuesday, the Board of Supervisors rejected Turner's request for a change in countywide zoning to allow the trucks. He plans to pursue another option — rezoning just his five acres — but the board might not like that, either.

"The primary reason is a use that is incompatible with agriculture," said Jan Ennenga, executive manager of the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau.

Turner owns D&L Concrete Pumping. He keeps six trucks on the site, a triangle between Dakota Road and the Union Pacific Railroad tracks along Highway 99. No concrete is kept there.

The site is part of a 1,040-acre area, just south of Salida and west of Modesto, that has been under debate for several years.

The Modesto City Council in 1995 designated the area for likely annexation and development by 2025. The council is rethinking that move, in part because of traffic concerns, in part because the county has kept the land zoned for agriculture.

Turner's land is zoned A-2, as is most of the farmland in the county. This label allows owners to seek permits for uses related to farming, such as farmworker housing, small food-processing plants, wholesale nurseries and produce markets. It also allows applications for some uses unrelated to agriculture but still customary in rural areas, such as schools, churches and landfills.

The county planning staff argued that storing concrete-pumping trucks should not be added to the list.

"It's a broad-based contracting business, not directly agriculture-related," planner Bob Kachel said.

Turner said he started storing

the trucks without knowing it was a zoning violation. An anonymous tip, he said, prompted the Planning Department to order that he move the trucks. Turner said a move is impractical, so he is likely to go out of business if his site is not made legal.

His attorney, Brett Jolley of Stockton, said the proposed zoning change would be narrow: It would apply only to sites of four to 10 acres and allow no more than 10 commercial trucks at a time per site. The land could not be covered by the state Williamson Act, which cuts property taxes for land kept in farming.

The owner would have to ask for a permit from the county, which could attach conditions or reject the truck parking outright.

The rezoning request is scheduled to go to the Planning Commission on June 6. The Board of Supervisors could make a final decision in August.

Not everyone agrees *5/1/02*

Like Steve Blinkenstaff, I also question the statements attributed to Councilman Bruce Frohman in The Bee regarding the "Beckwith Triangle." I would like to know how he can, in good conscience, state that the majority of people who live in the area do not want the Beckwith Triangle annexed to the city of Modesto.

Personally, I don't know what the majority of people who live in the area feel on this matter. What I do know is that Frohman has never contacted my parents, who live on a 23-acre farm in the triangle, for their opinion. And as a part-owner of this property, I know he also hasn't asked me, but I'm guessing that my opinion isn't very important, because I don't live in the area.

Questionable statements aside, I believe it is only a matter of time before the area is developed. One would have to be in denial not to realize the prime freeway access the area provides, and how desirable that feature is when businesses search for building sites.

I suggest that planning for this development is not only prudent, but essential, if there is any hope of this development being done in an intelligent manner.

ROD KOOTSTRA
Ripon

JUNE 7 02

Council wants housing ideas

Modesto seeks ideas on promoting affordability

Barely one-fourth in state can afford to buy a home.

Page D-4

By MELANIE TURNER
BEE STAFF WRITER

To many people struggling to buy homes, Modesto's biggest housing problem is obvious:

It's a market with a small supply of homes that are much cheaper than ones in the Bay Area, but more expensive than many people in Modesto can afford.

The city is getting ready to work on a state-required plan to address this and other housing issues, and it wants to hear people's ideas.

Saturday will be the first of a series of workshops where people can talk with the Modesto City Council about housing concerns.

The workshops come as the city

starts to update its housing goals. The sessions are scheduled well in advance of a December 2003 deadline to update the city's housing goals and policies. More workshops are planned for the fall.

"We're just trying to be proactive and get some good direction from the council for this massive effort, so we have at least some understanding of community and council concerns," said Miguel Galvez, an associate city planner.

The problem isn't limited to would-

be home buyers, Galvez said. People are being priced out of the rental market, too, he added.

"Many of our local residents are having to find housing in other parts of the valley, like Merced and Turlock," he said.

City officials will look at existing and projected housing needs and identify barriers to housing to help policy makers determine what needs to be done.

The city's housing element is part of

SEE PAGE B-2, HOUSING

HOUSING: Workshop will present possible strategies

CONTINUED FROM B-1

its overall general plan, a blueprint for the city's long-term development goals and policies. State law requires local governments to update their housing elements every five years.

The goal will be to find out how many homes should be built in the next five years and of those, how many will be for people of different income levels.

On Saturday, planners will present an array of strategies that could be used to address the projected population growth and the lack of affordable housing.

The council might want to seek to attract better-paying jobs as a way to help people afford homes here, for example.

"We have lots of jobs that don't pay people enough to afford a house in our community," Galvez said.

Landlords, neighborhood groups, homeless people, business owners, developers and representatives of nonprofit agencies have been invited to Saturday's workshop. Anyone else with an interest in housing in Modesto can attend as well.

The workshop will be from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday in the Stanislaus River Room at Modesto Centre Plaza. Plan to arrive at 8:30 a.m. for check-in and refreshments. For more information, call the city's Community and Economic Development Department at 577-5267.

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The Modesto Bee

The Modesto Bee's opinion is expressed in the editorials on this page. The opinions expressed in columns, letters and cartoons are those of the authors and artists.

OUR VIEWS

MAY 15 02

Opportunity ripe to cultivate jobs

Economic development officials have a plum opportunity to refocus, regroup and rethink their approach to job creation in Stanislaus County.

Job growth remains the No. 1 priority in the Northern San Joaquin Valley; only a broad mix of well-paying jobs, underpinned by comprehensive education and training, can slash the region's shameful unemployment and poverty rates.

Business as usual will not bring improvement. However, the Stanislaus County Economic Development Corp. — in whatever form it takes when and if it merges with the Workforce Investment Board — soon will have a fresh slate. It will have a new office at Tenth Street Place and a new president, preferably a proven leader from outside the Northern San Joaquin Valley — someone with no stake in defending the choices SCEDCO and other local officials have made in the past.

That new leader would well-serve the public by staking out a new, independent direction, and by:

- Preparing an action agenda and making it public. What are the organization's priorities? How will it achieve them?

- Quitting the cycle of repetitive studies, and looking outward instead of inward. The pattern of study has become almost comical; as Bee reporter Jeff Jardine wrote last month in a special report on the valley's economy, "Those entrusted with economic development have commissioned study after study over the years, and are now studying the results of all the previous studies." Instead, how about actively examining — and emulating — other counties that successfully have courted new industry?

- Shifting SCEDCO from a tool of government to an arm of the private sector. Although technically a nonprofit organization, SCEDCO is almost entirely dependent on Stanislaus County and its cities for funding. As a result, it is unduly swayed by government officials, particularly the county Board of Supervisors.

- Completing the long-planned merger of SCEDCO and the Workforce Investment Board. The worthy idea behind the WIB was to pump the private sector into economic development planning. It's time to get the merger done so that it stops draining time and focus from the core mission of job creation.

That mission has drawn support — in concept if not in detail — from a spectrum of community leaders, including elected policymakers, area business leaders, the Building Industry Association, the Modesto Chamber of Commerce, The Bee and many others.

The consensus is there. This county needs an infusion of high-wage jobs. If economic development officials can seize the opportunity to regroup and become more effective in job cultivation, they will earn broad support from the public and community.

Disabled veterans ignored

In the news lately there has been a big uproar over the marriage penalty tax. I agree that this is wrong and should be corrected. However, there is a much larger inequity and the political parties do not say one thing about it, because the voting bloc is so small. Because of this bloc is so small, the majority of our representatives do not care about those veterans that gave so much to keep our county free.

These veterans have given part of themselves for their country and what do they get in return? They have to sacrifice part of their retirement payment in order to receive their disability compensation. They worked and served their country for more than 20 years and earned a

RIAL BOARD

retirement, yet this is discounted because they also gave part of their bodies for their country.

In many cases this involves veterans who served in World War II, Korea and Vietnam and in doing so sacrificed not only part of their bodies but also years of separation from their families.

This is the only group of civil servants that is penalized for being disabled. All other civil servants can and do collect both their earned retirement and also for their disability. Yet, they did not put their lives on the line in combat. They did not sit in those foxholes in miserable conditions wondering if they were going to be alive when the sun came up. So, I ask the question: Why do these civil servants deserve both and veterans do not?

To deny this on the sole basis of what it is going to cost is just an excuse. For example: If a foreign country needs money (in the billions) Congress always seems to find the money. If there is a disaster such as a hurricane, floods or wildfires the government can always find the billions of dollars to give to those people. Even if it is an earthquake in a foreign country Congress always sends money and aid.

I am not saying that some of these causes are not important; they should be helped. What I am saying is that veterans, and what they did for the country, are just as important as those foreign countries or people choosing to live in those coastal areas, or near rivers, or in forests. What the veterans gave for freedom often is forgotten or ignored just because they do not have a large enough voting bloc.

Don't you think it is time to correct this very obvious discrimination?

E.M. "JOE" UNDERWOOD
Modest

Growth boom to hit?

DEC 19, 2001

By JEFF BENZIGER

Editor of The Ceres (Calif.)

Courier

If you thought Ceres grew fast in 1989 and 1990, hold onto your hats. A state agency is forecasting that Ceres will need to crank out 4,000 homes by 2008, or an average of 571 homes per year.

But Ceres is not the only city that will have to deal with how to accommodate such growth being forecast by the state Department of Housing and Community Development. Every city and hamlet in Stanislaus County will need to find room for 42,000 new homes between 2000 and 2008.

While the numbers are still fluid and expected to change, City Council members were shocked with the news at their Dec. 17 meeting.

Randy Hatch, Ceres' director of Planning and Community Development, said 571 units per year completely blows the current growth cycle out of the water. Right now Ceres is experiencing an average of 130 new residential units per year.

To give the council an idea of how great a growth cycle 4,000 represents, Hatch told them to envision two Eastgate master plan areas. Eastgate is the planning area for the land between Hatch and Whitmore and Boothe and Ruth Home.

"We've never grown that fast," commented Public Works Director Joe Hollstein, who recalled the Bay Area commuter induced boom of 1989-90.

"Challenge it," a startled Mayor Eric Ingwerson told Hatch after he broke the news.

The state Department of Finance's Population Research Unit actually does the population project. StanCOG, the Stanislaus Council of Governments, is in charge of dividing up the numbers among the nine cities and the county.

Ceres will be rewriting its housing element of the Ceres General Plan in 1-2 years and will have to plug the new numbers into it.

"The state, as a whole, is showing a great deal of population," said Hatch, "and that's because our economy is still very strong, not withstanding maybe we're in a recession maybe for

See 'COUNCIL,' pg. 3

Council

From page 1

the first year or two of this time period. But their population projection models show that we'll continue to be a source of job growth and housing growth."

Population migration into California, jobs growth and births outstripping deaths is helping the Valley.

"A big chunk of our growth is accommodating the commuters."

If a city does not receive state certification of its housing element, the city as a whole can suffer. Without an approved element, Ceres would no longer qualify for various grants and possibly could lose its gas tax funding.

"The state uses the biggest stick they can to whack us to try to get our attention," added Hatch.

County studies link to trains

Dec 23 01

Commuters tout need to extend Bay Area rail connection to Modesto

By JOHN HOLLAND
BEE STAFF WRITER

At 5 a.m. each weekday, John Vegas boards a bus in Modesto that takes him to the edge of Lathrop, where he switches to a train and rides to his job in San Jose.

How much nicer it would be, Vegas said, if he could simply board the train in Modesto.

A study released last week says a Stanislaus County branch of the rail line, the Altamont Commuter Express, would be worth pursuing even with its high cost — as much as \$288 million.

"It's talked about a lot," said Vegas, a homicide investigator in Santa Clara County. "The people on the bus and train talk about how it would be more convenient if (the train) went all the way through."

The county Board of Supervisors voted to have a more detailed study done over the next year or two. If the needed money came through, the service could start in as little as four years, said George Stillman, county public works director.

ACE, established in 1998, runs three ~~westbound morning~~ trains and three eastbound evening trains each weekday. The stops include Stockton, Manteca-Lathrop, Tracy, Livermore, Pleasanton, Fremont and San Jose.

About 15 percent of ACE's 2,000 or so daily riders live in Stanislaus County, the study says. Some drive to the Manteca-Lathrop station. Some get there on a Modesto city bus from Vintage Faire Mall.

The study says three daily round trips on the Stanislaus branch could draw an additional 1,450 riders to the service.

The state last year provided \$8 million for initial work on the branch. The study estimates the total capital

SEE PAGE B-2, RAIL

CONTINUED FROM B-1

cost for two options:

- \$177.3 million if the trains ran on the Union Pacific freight track along Highway 99, with stops in Turlock, Ceres, Modesto, Salida, Manteca and Lathrop. The advantage is that this track is in place. The disadvantage is that many freight trains already use it.

- \$288.2 million if the passenger trains ran on the existing track between Turlock and Modesto, then on new track near Highway 132 to Vernalis and on a little-used freight track along Highway 33 to Tracy. This route would have less conflict with freight trains, could pick up West Side residents and could have a rail connection to Los Banos.

The costs would include locomotives, coaches, stations and track work. The sources of money include the state and federal governments, which have boosted their rail budgets in the last few years. Another option is asking county voters to increase the sales tax.

The study estimates the branch's operating cost at \$8.4 million to \$11 million a year for three round trips a day. A third to half of this could be covered by fares.

"The trains have some fairly high initial costs, but the problem with our freeway network is that freeways are getting very congested and constrained," Stillman said.

Freeway improvements are expensive, too. A tentative plan for Highway 99 includes \$90 million for widening between Ceres and Salida, plus \$238 million for five new or improved interchanges in that stretch.

Advocates of rail say it reduces

air pollution and the amount of land needed for parking cars. Vegas saw another advantage as he looked out on Highway 99 before dawn last Tuesday.

"Today was so foggy, people who drove crawled on the road," he said.

Existing ACE service is mostly on a secondary Union Pacific line. The Stanislaus branch would be at least partly on the busy main line through the Central Valley, meaning that double tracking, signal improvements and other work would be needed.

John Bromley, director of public affairs at Union Pacific headquarters in Omaha, Neb., said planners of the new ACE branch have had "very preliminary" talks with railroad officials.

"We have to be made whole so that whatever they do doesn't im-

pact our freight business," he said.

The county already has Amtrak passenger service — four round trips a day between Bakersfield and Oakland; one a day between Bakersfield and Sacramento. That service does not run at the right times or to the right parts of the Bay Area to be an effective commuter system, the study says.

The county also would be on the Sacramento-Merced branch of the high-speed rail system under study by the state. This system, which would provide a roundabout way into Silicon Valley, would not be built at least until 2015.

Bee staff writer John Holland can be reached at 578-2385 or jholland@modbee.com.

Claribel highway study still alive

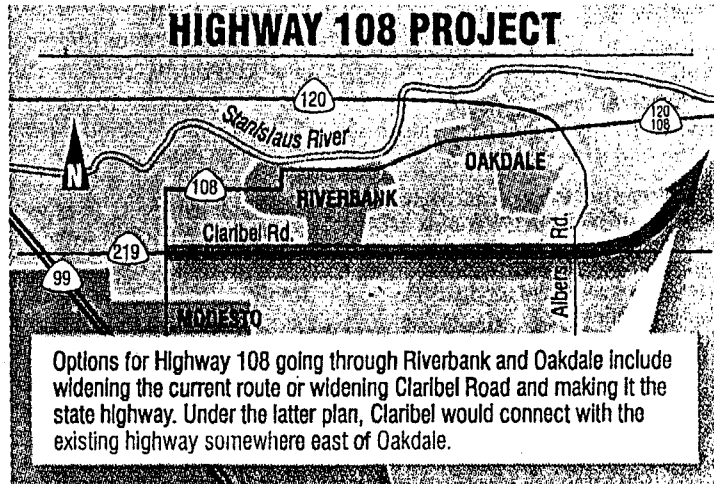
Board refuses area residents' plea to kill review of state route

By JOHN HOLLAND
BEE STAFF WRITER

Residents of Claribel Road tried without success Tuesday to smother the idea of turning the two-lane rural route into a state highway.

They told the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors that the proposal, which would reroute Highway 108 to the south of Riverbank and Oakdale, would be expensive and interfere with farming.

"We're asking that you not do an unnecessary, very costly study (of the Claribel route)," said Gwen Larsen, who lives along the road.



THE BEE

Supervisors said they understand their concerns, but believe it is too early to consider removing that option from a study on how to ease congestion on High-

way 108, which goes through the heart of the two cities.

The California Department of Transportation is looking at sev-

SEE PAGE B-2, CLARIBEL

CLARIBEL: Residents cite farming concerns

CONTINUED FROM B-1

eral options, including widening the existing highway, making Claribel the state highway, or using other routes.

Mark Robinson, deputy district director for project management for Caltrans, said the state would not use the Claribel route if the county board objected. He also said the required study of the proposal's impacts will take at least five years and involve plenty of contact with affected people.

"I am here to tell you that we are not back-dooring anybody," Robinson said.

Claribel residents said they could accept widening the road to three lanes, including a middle turn lane, to improve safety. They object to a state highway designation and any further widening. Some said they heard of plans for as many as six lanes, plus frontage roads.

Robinson said the width has not been determined. This will affect how much right of way Caltrans would have to buy along the road.

Supporters of the Claribel proposal say it would allow heavy trucks to avoid downtown Oakdale and Riverbank as they go to and from the cities' indus-

trial areas. Also, Claribel connects to Highway 99 via Kiernan Avenue, at Modesto's north edge.

Gary Dickson, executive director of the Stanislaus Council of Governments, said the federal government has indicated that it would withhold money for the project if it does not reduce traffic where highways 108 and 120 meet in downtown Oakdale.

Oakdale City Manager Bruce Bannerman also urged that the study go forward with Claribel as one of the options.

Claribel residents said highway traffic would interfere with movement of farm equipment. Les Larsen, Gwen Larsen's husband, said the project would in-

clude a major expense for controlling the flooding that occurs at Claribel and Claus roads two or three times a year.

Supervisor Pat Paul, who represents the area, said the Claribel option still should be studied even though it does not appear to be the best choice. She also said Caltrans should have let residents know of the proposal earlier.

Board Chairman Tom Mayfield said building an entirely new highway likely will be opposed by people who would live along it.

Bee staff writer John Holland can be reached at 578-2385 or jholland@modbee.com.

Modesto can plant will close

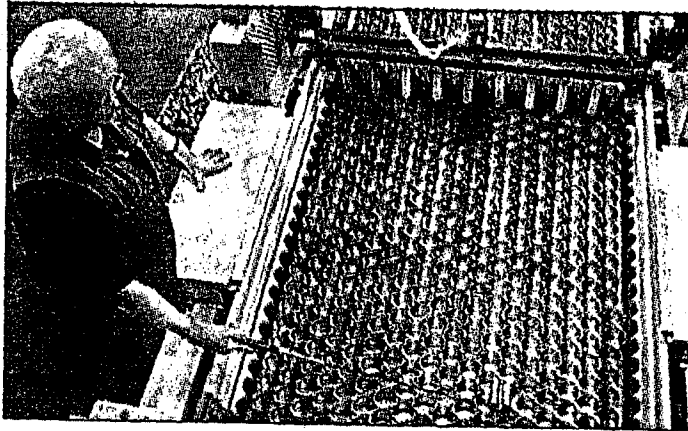
Company officials say Tri Valley failure was too big a blow

By JEFF JARDINE
BEE STAFF WRITER

Unable to rebound from losses suffered when Tri Valley Growers declared bankruptcy, Crown Cork & Seal will close its Modesto can-making plant, a company official confirmed Tuesday.

Workers at the 36-year-old plant, on Nathan Avenue in the Beard Industrial District, were told of the closure Monday afternoon.

The company also sent government authorities the required 60-day notice, in accordance



THE BEE

A Crown Cork & Seal operator gets cans ready for shipment.

with the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act.

The plant can close anytime

after March 8, said Richard Backlund, the area industrial relations manager for the

SEE PAGE A-10, CROWN

CROWN: Plant's production dropped after Tri Valley failed

CONTINUED FROM A-1

Philadelphia-based company. But he said no date had been determined.

The company simply decided to cut its losses with the Modesto operation, Backlund said.

"We're out of that market," he said.

Forced out, he said, by Tri Valley's bankruptcy. When it filed for Chapter 11 protection in July 2000, the co-op owed Crown Cork & Seal about \$74 million.

Tri Valley's assets were then purchased by John Hancock Life Insurance Co., one of Tri Valley's largest creditors. John Hancock Life then created Signature Fruit Co. to run the canneries.

Some of Tri Valley's debts — including what the co-op owed Crown Cork & Seal — are being litigated.

"We were just never able to recover from that," Backlund said.

The plant had 240 employees working several production lines when Crown Cork & Seal bought the 180,000-square-foot facility from Tri Valley Growers in 1994.

The company spent \$2 million in 1998 to modernize the plant, and its reduced workforce of 166 people produced more than 500 million cans a year.

Since Tri Valley's bankruptcy, however, production has dwindled to two shifts per day on one production line with about 20 hourly employees, plus managers and other staff. There are 110 employees on the seniority list, according to Machinists union Local

1528, which represents the workers.

The plant ran three shifts until November, said Vince Avana, who was among those laid off at that time.

"They said they'd be bringing us back the first week in January," he said.

Instead, the company notified its Modesto management and remaining workers of the shutdown. Those on standby will be contacted by mail.

Backlund said the Modesto employees have known for some time that the closure was possible — even after the company closed its facilities in Merced and Fremont in 2001.

Charline Speck, president of the Stanislaus County Economic Development Corp., said her agency met with Crown Cork & Seal officials in 1999 and emerged optimistic about the plant's future.

"It was good news that they were moving the Fremont lines out here," she said. "We offered the relocating employees a tour of the area. The door (of communication) was opened for a while. Then it closed because of Tri Valley."

The company laid off 97 employees briefly in July 2000 — a week after Tri Valley filed for bankruptcy protection — but most returned to work within a few weeks.

Speck said the development agency and Crown Cork & Seal officials were supposed to meet in July to look for cost savings.

"They didn't show up at the meeting," she said. "After that, their secretaries were pleasant whenever we called. But it was

very clear they didn't want to provide any information."

Crown Cork & Seal picked up a contract to make 30 million cans this past season for Sun Garden Gangi and Morning Star Packing Co., said Sun Garden's Glenn Spyksma.

He said Crown Cork & Seal is obligated to provide 30 million more cans next summer, but a Sun Garden official was informed Monday afternoon of the plant's closure.

"We still have a contract," Spyksma said. "We'll have to work through that."

Meanwhile, the Crown Cork & Seal employees — active and those who were awaiting recall — will work through separation issues. They will receive a severance package that was negotiated as part of the labor agreement, Backlund said.

The six-year contract began in 1999 and calls for a week's pay for each year of employment for each worker.

Union business agent Gil Gonzalez could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

Terry Plett, director of the county Department of Employment and Training, said his agency hopes to provide services to the displaced workers.

Those services could include retraining and educational opportunities, job placement assistance and job fairs.

"We'll initiate contact with (company officials) immediately," Plett said. "We'll try to do the same kinds of things we tried to do for the Tri Valley workers."

Bee staff writer Jeff Jardine can be reached at 578-2383 or jjardine@modbea.com.

Stanislaus needs to balance growth, ag

JAN 30-02

The following is excerpted from the State of the County speech given Tuesday by Tom Mayfield, chairman of the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors.

The Stanislaus County vision remains — “to be a county that is respected for its service in the community and is known as the best in America.”

This year I would like to speak primarily to the present and the future. However, as a brief reference I think it is important to briefly talk about our most recent challenges. It has been a very difficult year for all Americans due to the acts of terrorism this past September and the associated dip in the economy.

At home, not all programs have performed up to our rigorous standards — mistakes will happen. The best thing we can do as a continuous improvement organization is to learn from our mistakes and continue to move forward. That is exactly what we plan to do.

To be a visionary is to project the big picture for the future, and to provide a road map for change. This board will continue to chart an impressive course.

- We have purchased additional land for our landfill, which will enable consistent garbage disposal for the next generation of Stanislaus County residents.

- We re-opened the old Memorial Hospital in Ceres. Focusing on the human toll taken by drug and alcohol abuse, this site currently offers day treatment services to 30 adolescents, 13 women and their children, and residential treatment with 73 beds for adults 18 and over.

- The Sheriff's Department has ordered (its) sniffer unit and expects it to arrive later this year. This new technology will enable the Drug Enforcement Agency to sniff out a drug lab within a one-mile radius. Last year, we busted 90 labs. On the average, it is reported that only 10 percent of lab producers are ever caught. That means that there could be as many as 900 operating labs in Stanislaus County. These labs need to be shut down.

- The Health Services Agency of Stanislaus County has 53 programs, not including the individual clinics. Last year they had 248,000 patient visits. We have created drop-in clinics and expanded our urgent care and some clinic hours to provide a cheaper and faster way to get care without having to go to the emergency room.

- In Turlock, at the newly opened Turlock Salvation Army site, Stanislaus County Community Services Agency has developed a unique collaboration and is also offering satellite services at our new offices in downtown Turlock.

- On the West Side, our public works department has put in a 96-inch pipe to take care of the runoff from the creeks in the Patterson area. This has lessened (the) flooding problem and is saving the county approximately \$750,000 from damages that have occurred to property owners in that area.

- In Salida, we have purchased a 25,000-square-foot building for a new library branch. This, coupled with a new library in Turlock and a remodel of the Modesto branch library in progress, are encouraging accomplishments.

These are just a few examples of the common-sense improvements that we continue to make. This year, we would like to continue to add to these successes in realistic yet impacting ways.

- When Tri Valley (Growers) went bankrupt, it affected many small businesses; now they too are going

over

out of business. Along with enticing new businesses to move into our county, we need to help the ones that are struggling to stay afloat. I believe that a greater focus needs to be placed on business retention and small business expansion — building the businesses we already have — along with looking outward toward new recruitment. A more concerted approach to developing our positive image and regional perception, a small business-friendly environment, and continued travel and tourism development which, by the way, brought in an additional \$300 million last year. We need to find ways to triple that. Downtown redevelopment will go far toward making our communities attractive relocation alternatives.

- One special project we would like to incorporate this year is a project I call, "Road Maps to Success." We would like to have a step-by-step road map for several major processes (i.e., use permit, building permit, mobile home permits, etc.) These informational brochures would assist anyone applying for a permit with a step-by-step listing of what is needed and identifying a time frame for each permit process in a very simple checklist format.

- Another project we would like to complete this year is to work through agreements with the cities to have them annex all county islands. We are not washing our hands of these areas; we feel that the county is obligated to help with infrastructure and see the projects through to completion. Citizens living in these islands deserve the same city police and municipal services that their adjacent neighbors enjoy.

- We do not have the jurisdiction

to determine where a school can or cannot build — this is all done at the state level. We need to look into changing this! Many schools choose to build on agricultural ground, which creates problems for the surrounding farmers. Once a school is built, many restrictions are placed on farmers in the near vicinity. This is very unfair to the farming community. If local opinion was sought, these problems could be avoided. I hope the board supports legislation to change this.

- Let's face it: Our transportation policies and plans have not produced what we need. I am asking for the board's help in pursuing and implementing creative ways to move from "planning" to actual construction. This year the county, cities and state committed only one-third of the funds available for transportation. Why, you ask? Because we have not moved our planning to aggressive implementation. In Fresno County, they have borrowed \$100 million because their projects are ready to go; we could do the same. If we linked our economic development plans with our transportation plan, we could use industrial development bonds to accelerate our road improvements. We have the legal authority at the local level to hire the engineers, environmental consultants and acquire rights-of-way *now* instead of waiting for Caltrans to get to us. I ask the board and all local citizens to help push hard for these needed changes.

- We would like to clear up some misconceptions regarding growth. The Board of Supervisors has supported the conservation of agricultural land in this county and continues to have one of the highest rates of Williamson Act participation in California. We have

supported the formation of the Stanislaus Farm Trust and recently passed a resolution supporting the acquisition of the trust's first purchase of an agricultural easement.

- The recently released census data shows that between 1990 and 2000, that population growth has occurred within the nine cities in Stanislaus County in a far greater degree than has taken place in the unincorporated area in the county. For all those who promote the preservation of agricultural land, you need to appear before the nine City Councils and convince them of the importance of preserving agricultural land since this is where it is being consumed.

Let me assure you, Stanislaus County government is fiscally strong! We intend to maintain a strong level of fiscal stability, certainty and conservatism. We have strong reserves and we will consider their use as part of a well-planned budget effort.

Our annual budget of approximately \$707 million consists primarily of state and federal revenue. Our local revenues — such as sales tax, vehicle license fees and property taxes make up 25 percent of this amount — two-thirds of which is mandated to be spent in ways allocated by the state and federal governments.

In the words of Harriet Beecher Stowe, "Common sense is the knack of seeing things as they are, and doing things as they ought to be done." As a county, we will strive to be the best in California. You can count on a continuously better county government and a stronger, healthier community as a result.

The full text of Mayfield's State of the County address is available at www.modbee.com.

Supervisor candidates air concerns ²⁻⁰⁵⁻⁰²

Stanislaus hopefuls discuss ideas for better jobs, roads, ag at forum

By JOHN HOLLAND
BEE STAFF WRITER

The four candidates for Stanislaus County supervisor agreed Monday night on the need to create jobs, improve roads and protect agriculture.

They differed somewhat on the details during a League of Women Voters of Modesto forum held at Tenth Street Place. Candidates for county assessor and clerk-recorder also spoke.

The supervisor candidates in the March 5 election include Jeff Grover and Gary Lopez in District 3, taking in Salida and western parts of Modesto, and Mike Birch and incumbent Ray Simon in District 4, covering much of Modesto.

Grover, owner of Solecon Industrial Contractors, said the county could reduce its jobless rate by better spending the \$80 million it gets each year for job training. He also urged continued work on turning the former Navy airfield near Crows Landing into a distribution center.

Grover said the county needs to firm up its road priorities if it is to get federal and state money. He urged a private toll road for trucks to the Bay Area, coupled with high-speed passenger rail.

Lopez, a Modesto fire captain and school district trustee, said his goals are ensuring public safety, controlling sprawl, spending tax money wisely and improving the local economy.

Noting the backups on Pelandale Avenue at Highway 99, Lopez urged better planning for the public works needed by new development. He said the county must not be "bypassed" by the high-speed rail system planned by the state.

Birch, owner of an agricultural export business, said poorly planned growth is gobbling farmland and polluting the county's air. He said town houses and other alternatives to sprawl could play a role if they are "attractive and livable to a lot of people."

Birch said he is running because "our political leadership is unfocused." He, too, cited the Pelandale-99 interchange as an example of poor planning. He urged efforts to increase income from farm products.

Simon, an insurance company president who has been on the board for 27 years, said most development should be within cities and have a balance between homes and businesses.

Simon called for insuring children by using tobacco tax income and expanding county clinics as an alternative to emergency rooms. He also said he would work on bringing Altamont Commuter Express train service to Salida and keep up the fight against methamphetamine.

Assessor candidate Doug Harms, chief of administration in the office, said he has experience in all aspects of the operation. He pledged fair assessments, strong customer service and continued improvements in technology.

Opponent Mike Serpa, a senior appraiser and

SEE PAGE B-2, FORUM

FORUM: County posts' hopefuls speak

CONTINUED FROM B-1

Modesto city councilman, also vowed to keep assessments fair. He urged expanded hours, efficient use of taxpayer money and outreach to the public about the office's services.

Clerk-recorder candidate Bob Deklinski, an Oakdale city councilman and retired FBI agent, said he would upgrade technology in the elections office, prevent voter fraud and purge outdated names from the rolls.

His opponent, Modesto attorney Lee Lundrigan, pledged to upgrade technology and refine the voter rolls as well. She also said she would improve access to campaign finance records and urge high school students to be poll workers.

Park ¹⁻³⁰⁻⁰² ^{Clark} ^{Courier} site to LAFCO

79-acre site on Hatch Rd. to be annexed

By JEFF BENZIGER

Editor of The Ceres (Calif.) Courier

Members of the Ceres City Council had no qualms about annexing 79 acres of land north of Hatch Road as another step of creating a regional park.

The council took the two necessary steps—one on Jan. 14 and the last on Monday—to prezone the future park site to C-F (Community Facilities).

The next step is to send the annexation application to LAFCO, the Local Agency Formation Commission which has the final say. The panel is expected to approve the request.

During the public hearings on the annexation proposal, Councilman Rob Phipps stepped down out of a conflict of interest. Phipps' family owns and operates the River Oaks Golf Course which is located within feet of the proposed park.

On Jan. 14 citizen Leonard Shepard gave his compliments to the council for thinking about the future of Ceres.

"I applaud this effort," said Shepard, a member of the Tuolumne River Regional Park (TRRP) Citizens Advisory Committee.

The city plans to deed an estimated 23 acres of the parksite within the river flood plain to be deeded over to the Tuolumne River Park to extend the eastern boundaries of the park. TRRP is governed by a joint powers

Park: site advances

From page 1

authority comprised of the city of Ceres and Modesto and Stanislaus County.

"This is a positive step we're taking to make the Tuolumne River a gem in the Valley," he added.

Councilman Andy Constantinou chided one unnamed former councilman who said the site would be a "horrible place for a park." Mayor Eric Ingwerson then thanked Constantinou for "sticking to his guns."

Development of the park has been off to a rocky start. In the summer of 2000, the city was promised \$2.3 million in state funds for acquisition, and \$870,000 for playground improvements. City Manager Tim Kerr and then Mayor Louie Arrollo even were invited to witness Gov. Gray Davis sign the budget that year. The city started the process of purchasing the land at a price of \$1.05 million. But the state then cut the funding. City officials scrambled to pay for the land acquisition from a variety of sources, including \$550,000 in parkland dedication fees paid by new developers. The city also found \$500,000 in Transportation Enhancement Act (TEA) funds since the park site is within view of a

major business route, Mitchell Road.

Assemblyman Dennis Cardoza had the funding restored last year but in late fall the governor announced his intention to not fund the amount because of a projected state budget deficit.

City of Ceres Public Works Director Joe Hollstein said the public will be asked to provide input on what they want the park to contain. Ideas include adding soccer fields, more baseball diamonds and a fishing and boat launching area.

The city is now in the process of seeking out firms that may be interested in contracting to come up with a park master plan.

New parks director hired

The council approved the filling of a new department head post on Monday when Douglas Lemcke was hired as the director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities.

Lemcke, the former executive director of the Sportsmen of Stanislaus Club, is a former 20-year employee of the city of Modesto. He last served as recreation supervisor.

The new role was created to ease the burden on Hollstein and Planning Director Randy Hatch. Lemcke's responsibilities will include managing existing parks, planning new parks and overseeing recreational programs. City buildings and facilities are also under his watch.

20/20 hindsight doesn't help crosstown traffic flow



CHRIS MURPHY

COMMUNITY

One of the best views in the world is from the summit of Half Dome in Yosemite. Atop the 3,000-foot sheer drop, an unobstructed view all the way across our Central Valley is awe-inspiring.

Now, travel with me to the nose-bleed altitude perch atop the Pelandale Overpass. No granite walls or sweeping view of the valley floor, but an eastbound view, littered with driveways and filled with no less than five traffic lights in a half-mile, at least this week.

Apples and oranges, polar opposites that defy comparison? Maybe, but the differences are important.

I propose a citizen proclamation that reads: "Herefor after today, the words 'Pelandale' and 'Expressway' will no longer be used in relation to each other or even appear in the same sentence. Henceforth doing so may result in a public flogging."

Checkpoint reality: There is no way that this can ever be an expressway with all the lights and shopping centers. Even with an efficient and forward-thinking roundabout, it is doomed to be another shopping center frontage road. Even in the city "guide to expressway classifications" (interesting reading if you need to get to sleep sometime), Pelandale Avenue is listed as

Class C (skinnier) from Sisk Road to Dale Road and then Class B (wider) from Dale to McHenry Avenue. This is an intentionally designed bottleneck that makes even Briggsmore look sensible. Could this be a reason to start planning ahead?

The secret word of the day is "access." You know, like an all-access backstage pass at a concert, but this time it's "freeway access." No bouncers, roadies or groupies, just efficient cross-town transportation.

Connecting the freeway with industry and residences can be pretty exciting. Real arterials — whether an ACE train connection with access to Stockton and the Bay Area or a new interchange connecting a cross-town arterial — reduce traffic and create mobility. This takes a lot of the heat off of our everyday navigation around Modesto for those who never leave town and for those who do. See how this works?

There is an action plan that has surfaced from the newly energized Stanislaus Council of Governments. After dozens of regional meetings and a transportation study of the Beard Industrial Tract, there is a real plan to deliver access that will align the planets to make it happen so the city, the county and the state can have the same goal and get us on radar.

The plan? Make Kiernan Avenue (aka State Route 219) a real cross-town expressway, maybe even a highway. There can even be an overpass over McHenry. The people living on the road may not like this, but 20 years from now, it will have

been the right move.

The Kiernan-Claribel expressway can even be designed to flow all the way to Oakdale Road. Agricultural land can still be preserved, but we must do this now before we ever think of development.

We need to start making a habit of figuring things out *before* they are built so we do not have to do all this rehaul work. Driving by Tracy on Interstate 205, there is a nearly completed residential neighborhood with large single-family homes with a completed park adjacent to multifamily housing. Wow! It really can work. Look at that beautiful Jack Tone interchange with a sign that says Ripon. This shows it can be done and it is not impossible.

A change of mindset is possible. Smart growth must be a priority for all of us in the city and the county. We can't waste our land, money or time. It's our job to create a city that our kids can use for generations and be proud of, so let's get going today so we can enjoy our high-altitude vistas with smooth-moving traffic as far as the eye can see.

On the Net:

Expressway details:

www.ci.modesto.ca.us/etd/expressways/
StanCog plan: www.stancog.org/projects.htm

Murphy is vice president of sales and marketing for a warehousing and distribution firm in Modesto. He can be contacted at www.modestoview.com.

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Stanislaus eyes building project for new offices

BEE STAFF REPORTS

Stanislaus County supervisors today are scheduled to consider erecting a building for the district attorney's office at 12th and I streets in downtown Modesto.

The site had been pegged for a private, five-story office building by Westland Development Co. of Visalia. County and Westland representatives recently have discussed having the county take over most of the project for its own use.

Westland still would develop the ground floor for retail use. The site is now a public parking lot.

The Board of Supervisors will hear about the basics of the arrangement today and consider final approval later.

The county already was planning a building for the district attorney's staff at an undetermined location. The department is crowded into the courthouse and has other locations downtown. The county's Downtown Plan put the cost of a new building at \$8.4 million.

The county also is planning a parking garage next to the West-

land site. This project, which also has an estimated cost of \$8.4 million, would provide up to 650 parking spaces. Westland had planned to lease 160 of them for its office building tenants but would need only about 40 for its retail project.

The garage site now has a parking lot and small buildings owned by the county.

Also today, the board is scheduled to get an update on progress toward "visioning" goals adopted in 1999. Leaders with the county, cities, business and other

groups mapped out long-range goals for land use, the economy, education and other concerns.

The Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors will meet at 9 a.m. today in the basement chamber at Tenth Street Place, Modesto.

Board hears update on 'visioning' plan

By JOHN HOLLAND
BEE STAFF WRITER

In their "visioning" effort a few years back, Stanislaus County leaders hoped that cities would be compact so farmland could flourish.

In a discussion Tuesday, people involved in the effort said that goal is being met in some places but not in others.

The county Board of Supervisors heard an update on progress toward the visioning principles that it and the nine city councils of the county adopted in 1999. The principles suggest ways to achieve a sound economy, good schools, easy transportation and a host of other benefits.

The portion on land use got the most attention Tuesday. County Planning Director Ron Freitas said most of the population growth since 1990 has been within city limits.

He noted that the board in 2000 rejected much of the residential

development proposed for Salida over the next 20 years and specified that job-producing businesses be part of the mix there.

Supervisor Tom Mayfield said the visioning effort has not stopped cities from seeking to annex farmland at their edges.

"How are we going to protect all this land when the cities are continually saying, 'We need more, we need more, we need more,'" he said.

Freitas noted that the Turlock City Council last month rejected a buffer of farmland between that city and Denair, although he held out hope for a smaller zone. He cited Turlock's commitment to a northern boundary at Taylor Road as an example of sound land use.

The visioning effort is being kept alive in bimonthly meetings of city and county officials and other leaders, said its coordinator, Tom Van Groningen, former chancellor of the Yosemite Community College District.

The county executive's office listed recent efforts that follow the principles:

- Creation of the Stanislaus Farmland Trust, which aims to compensate farmers who forgo development.

- Sewers, sidewalks and other improvements in unincorporated areas at Modesto's edges.

- Habitat and park improvements along the Tuolumne River.

- Planning for flood control for Patterson and Newman.

- Campaigns to attract Silicon Valley employers and to advertise the county's tourist attractions.

- A county fund that will provide \$1.5 million a year in loans for economic development.

- Planning for business parks in Patterson and north Modesto and at the former Navy airfield near Crows Landing.

- Permits for several farming-related enterprises, such as nut hullers, fruit-drying yards, cheese plants and grain mills.

- Study of a possible county branch of the Altamont Commuter Express train service.

"This is a very active group," said Richard Jantz, a deputy executive officer for the county, "and there is a lot of meaningful discussion about how to achieve what is in the visioning statement."

County commissions jobs study

Stanislaus supervisors promise
results from this latest assessment

By JOHN HOLLAND
BEE STAFF WRITER

3-13-02

Stanislaus County leaders pledged Tuesday that a coming study on creating jobs will not be just another study.

The Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to have ESI Corp. of Phoenix do the study for \$408,700. The firm will assess vacant industrial sites, the work force and other elements of the local economy.

Supervisors acknowledged past complaints that job creation has been studied continually, yet many county residents remain unemployed. They

agreed, however, that the new study will be worthwhile if it provides clear direction on how to attract employers.

"If you can truly have us understand how we can market ourselves and how we can get from point A to point B, that's something we need to do, because we need a broader (economic) base," Supervisor Ray Simon told Judie Scalise, president of ESI.

Simon noted that he built his insurance claims business with the help of a marketing consultant. Gary Plummer, president and chief executive officer of the Modesto Chamber of Commerce, said the study will be similar to the "strategic planning" successful businesses do.

The ESI study, scheduled to be done by summer 2003, will look at the county overall and at eight of its nine cities. Riverbank officials opted to do a sepa-

rate study.

A total of \$642,880 is available for the study. The money not paid to ESI will be set aside for efforts to carry out the recommendations.

The state Department of Housing and Community Development provided \$500,000 of the funding. Another \$50,000 is coming from city and county general funds. The remaining \$92,880 is federal money channeled through the local Workforce Investment Board.

Scalise said the county's job growth has outpaced the state average over the past decade, but most of the jobs have been low-paying. She also said the county has too low a ratio of jobs to homes, reflected in the thousands of residents who commute to work in the Bay Area.

SEE PAGE D-4, JOBS

JOBS: 8 cities are included

CONTINUED FROM D-1

The study will include interviews with local leaders, a countywide meeting on economic development and an analysis of the types of employers that might move here. Representatives of a "fictitious" outside company will visit each city to gauge how local officials respond to inquiries, Scalise said.

The study will result in plans for the county overall and for Modesto, Turlock, Ceres, Oakdale, Patterson, Newman, Waterford and Hughson.

"I think more of this type of re-

search would help us develop strategies and, more importantly, deploy those strategies faster," said Richard Jantz, the county's deputy executive officer for economic development.

Critics have complained about frequent studies, many of which are by consultants from outside the county. Jantz said local experts have specific skills, but not "the confidence of working with companies in different states, and various types of companies."

Bee staff writer John Holland can be reached at 578-2385 or jholland@modbee.com.

02-13-02

Teamwork nears payoff with business park

Something significant is happening in Patterson and it's not just the promise of a business park. More important, we're seeing a working model of private-public cooperation that could be the key to more and better-paying jobs throughout the region.

With a little more teamwork, we can have a working example of the kind of economic development so sorely needed in the Northern San Joaquin Valley.

Credit North Carolina developer Pat Gavaghan with initiating plans for the KeyStone Pacific Business Park just west of Patterson. Credit city and county staffers, too, for working closely with him to get the project ready for approval. It took patience and professionalism all around, but the potential payoff for the community — thousands of jobs — could make it more than worthwhile.

Now it's the turn of planning, political and private-sector leaders to help bring the project on home. The Local Agency Formation Commission, Patterson City Council and Board of Supervisors all have key roles. We're confident that they understand how crucial job creation is and won't let the region's No. 1 priority — more and better jobs — get sidetracked by red tape.

There is strong support for such projects from the Stanislaus County Economic Development Corp., Private Industry Council, Workforce Investment Board, Stanislaus Council of Governments and local chambers of commerce. They should make that support clear by *testifying at upcoming public hearings on the project.*

Gavaghan and city and county staff have built a good foundation for the business park. As Bee reporter Jeff Jardine explained in his Feb. 3 story, the 28-building park would be designed to attract businesses that support Silicon Valley high-tech industries. The project ultimately could yield as many as 6,000 jobs.

Public dollars would be invested in water, sewer and road improvements. And Gavaghan would be allowed to build an accompanying 987-home subdivision. In turn, he would have to post a \$6 million

performance bond to back up his pledge to build the first campus-style office building whether or not he has a tenant under contract. And he would have to start construction on that building before any of the homes could be occupied in KeyStone's residential development. In addition, Gavaghan would pledge to repay the county for \$3 million in road improvements if he canceled the project after that work had begun. It is up to the county to make sure that those guarantees are included in the written agreement Gavaghan has agreed to sign, as well as bulletproof, ensuring prompt payment and-or reimbursement to the county if Gavaghan defaults.

Gavaghan, who has delivered results with his North Carolina business park, knows what he's doing. His worry is plowing ahead, not pulling out.

The park would consist of office, light industrial and warehouse buildings. Depending on the interest from companies looking to relocate, the park could create up to 6,000 jobs that should pay in the \$15- to \$25-an-hour range, according to Richard Jantz, the county's deputy executive officer for economic development.

The project is full of promise. Gavaghan said he seeks an early 2003 groundbreaking, with the first office building opening early in 2004.

In the coming months it is up to everyone with a role in job creation to show they can work together, not only to realize the promise of this project, but to get moving on other projects like it.

Economic luncheon

02-13-02

praises Turlock, county

By **PATRICK GIBLIN**
BEE STAFF WRITER

TURLOCK — This city and Stanislaus County are bucking the state's economic trend.

While other communities and businesses are concerned about the recession and the state's growing budget deficit, businesses here and throughout the county are growing at a tremendous rate.

That was the message shared with about 100 business owners, managers and city representatives at the 17th annual Economic Trends Luncheon at California State University, Stanislaus.

"There is no mistaking the expansions and growth of factories and industries, and the tax base of those businesses," Mayor Curt Andre said, putting the increase at more than 10

percent overall.

"We also see family investment, people improving their homes and their streets," Andre said. "This is a very key part of the overall economic health of the community."

The number of building permits issued in the city increased nearly 32 percent from 2000 to 2001, the audience was told, including 500 for new homes and permits to expand existing

buildings and homes.

"We see the continued renewal and preservation of buildings in the city," Andre said. "I remember when the Kmart building was shiny and brand new. Now it's the movie theaters."

He said that last year's completion of the downtown renovation has helped retain businesses in the city and attract new ones, too.

TRENDS: Construction jobs offset manufacturing losses

CONTINUED FROM A-1

The coming year will bring a new sports complex to Turlock, expected to draw tens of thousands of visitors each year, Andre said. That could attract an upscale, business-oriented hotel to the city.

Steve Smith, vice president of the nonprofit Stanislaus County Economic Development Corp., said the county also is reporting good news, despite the nation's recession.

Although the county lost 300 manufacturing jobs, mainly from the closure of the canneries in Modesto, construction jobs were abnormally high all last year.

"The numbers show we had about 10,000 construction jobs for each month last year, the highest number ever," Smith said. "When you add all the jobs together, we surpassed the number of jobs in 2001 that we weren't expected to reach until 2004."

County officials are aggressively pursuing 34 companies interested in relocating or expanding. While it is unlikely that all of them would come to the area, he said, county officials are optimistic that they will be able to get

nearly half of them.

Companies looking for property say Stanislaus County is in a prime location: a 90-minute drive to or from the Port of Oakland, San Francisco International Airport and Sacramento.

Also, the region has good schools, Stanislaus State University and Modesto Junior College, and housing that costs a third as much as in the Bay Area. And Yosemite National Park is nearby.

"We have a plan and we need to stick to that plan," Smith said. "The economic future of Stanislaus County is brighter than you think."

Guests at the luncheon also heard a presentation from Bruce Grogan, deputy secretary for economic development at the California Trade and Commerce Agency.

Grogan said the backbone of California's economy is small businesses and then listed dozens of programs that can help such businesses expand.

Grogan urged businesspeople to look to his agency's Web site, www.commerce.ca.gov, for assistance.

Bee staff writer Patrick Giblin can be reached at 667-1227 or pgiblin@modbee.com.

SEE PAGE A-12, TRENDS

SCEDCO braces for criticism over strategic plan

More than once SCEDCO has been accused of being willing to try something that might sound crazy and unnecessary. We are at it again. We are bracing ourselves for local criticism for considering hiring out of the area "consultants" to complete a five-year workforce and economic development strategic plan. Our futuristic vision will not be quashed. It is a beating we are willing to take.



SCEDCO

Charline O.
Speck

We think strategic planning is important because it is a systematic way to manage change and create the best possible future by integrating the needs of residents and businesses with municipal goals. It is a tool for making decisions and setting direction. How many times have we heard "we don't need another study?" We agree; therefore, the "strategic plan" we are envisioning will be task-ori-

ented. It is not our intent to ignore research and studies that have already been done. The idea is to update them and integrate them into one.

We believe that to enhance job creation and economic development, we have to do something different. Not to say that what we have been doing isn't right; it's not enough and many would say it is not working. The tasks identified in the strategy will aid in changing behaviors, decisions and conditions.

Strategic planning is done to identify specific actions and tasks that will address development potential which would broaden and stabilize the community's economic and financial base.

SCEDCO and local elected officials have consistently been accused of not doing enough to "attract high-paying jobs to Stanislaus County." There are also accusations about how taxpayer dollars are spent on all the wrong things. We are criticized for duplicating efforts and moving in different directions.

A good strategic plan will build an analytical framework for investment

of time, action and money. It articulates goals and values, defines objectives and targets. It proposes activities and tasks and provides timeframes.

What is most important about this planning process is people can get involved, if they choose to. This type of planning is an inclusive process that defines linkages, partners, identifies roles and responsibilities and provides the framework for evaluating performance and accountability.

Now the big questions: How much will it cost and why "consultants" from outside the area?

On December 1, 2000, the California Department of Housing and Community Development announced the availability of funding in the amount of \$4.8 million, under the Jobs-Housing Balance Improvement Program, for economic development strategic planning and/or business attraction/expansion efforts. Each jurisdiction was eligible for \$100,000.

Rather than have each city head in different directions, we wrote two grants and were awarded \$500,000. Including local matches and an infu-

sion of other dollars, we will spend approximately 61 percent of the funds on one countywide plan and eight city-specific plans. The remaining funds will be used for implementation.

The community should be rewarded for this level of cooperation. It was the perfect collaborative effort, including the county and the cities and members of the private sector. Collectively and through many debates they chose to hire the best team to meet the scope of work and move forward.

The consulting team selected is headed by the Phoenix-based ESI. It put together a team of experts from across the country, a multi-disciplinary team with a combined 100 years of economic development experience. Collectively they have provided consulting services to hundred of communities, counties and military bases in all fifty U.S. states. They are some of the most respected economic development strategic planning and

marketing plan development consultants in the business. Their team also includes one of two of the premier corporate site selection and relocation consultants in the country. Their expertise also includes real estate, market analysis and labor issues.

Besides being some of the best in the country, there are other advantages to hiring these out of the area experts. They are objective; they have nothing to lose and can be brutally honest and then go home. This type of planning isn't always pleasant. It forces issues to the forefront that are sometimes avoided for political reasons. It challenges a community about what they are really committed to. It forces us out of our comfort zones and areas of self-interest and encourages consensus.

So, we will take the beating. We will listen to the naysayers and invite them to participate because we know there will be more of those who will be open and confident and willing to do something different. This effort is truly about a commitment to do our very best at creating wealth, encouraging capital investment and facilitating the creation of job opportunities.

May 09-02

May 11-02

Why pursue triangle?

When land speculators want to increase the value of their holdings, they ask for

annexation to the nearest city. To gain favor, they promise jobs.

The Beckwith Triangle is the most recent entry in the speculation derby. The area isn't in Modesto's sphere of influence. The county and the Local Agency Formation Commission have said Modesto should not annex the area. It was added to Modesto's general plan by a previous City Council with no interest in preserving our agricultural heritage.

If the triangle is kept in the general plan, taxpayers will foot the bill for an environmental impact report and a plan update for an area that has little chance of developing any time soon. The speculators have no business prospects, no development plan and no money. They expect our city to pay much of the cost of development planning, take all the present risk and reward them for their promises. They have no jobs to offer.

The argument that job-producing development can only occur along Highway 99 is also bogus. If we build the Pelandale Expressway properly, it can become a powerful economic corridor. Downtown also has substantial potential.

Let's cut through the baloney and get down to business.

BRUCE FROHMAN,
City Councilman
Modesto

Double-digit unemployment rates continue to shame Stanislaus County. Joblessness crept to 11.8 percent last month, a 0.7 percent boost from April 2001.

Although thousands of new jobs — many of them low-wage retail slots generated by growth — were created last year in Stanislaus County, the county's jobless rate climbed instead of declined.

This disappointing trend highlights — again — this county's need for a more modern, diversified economy. High-wage job creation remains the No. 1 priority in the Northern San Joaquin Valley.

• • •
Government officials whose charge is promoting job growth note that Modesto does gain "jobs" at a fast clip. A study this year by the Amsterdam-based ING Group, a Fortune Global 500 financial services organization, found that of the United States' 125 largest metropolitan areas, Modesto placed 10th in job growth, at 4.3 percent a year.

But the same report ranked Modesto 121st of 125 for high unemployment and 116th as a place to earn and save money.

The reason for the apparent paradox: Modesto's rapid residential growth has spawned countless strip malls and retail clusters. These jobs, while not unwelcome, pay low wages and will never bring the broad prosperity of high-wage jobs that support middle-class families.

• • • DEC 15, 2001

November unemployment rates were released by the state Friday. It's no surprise, but still unwelcome news that Stanislaus County is back into double digits with 10.8 percent of its work force without jobs.

• • •

Loans, grants in Stanislaus target jobs and economy

By **JEFF JARDINE**
BEE STAFF WRITER

Dec 20th 2007

The Workforce Investment Board distributed \$865,000 in loans and grants this week to help stimulate economic and job growth in five communities.

The board is responsible for overseeing economic development and job-creation efforts in Stanislaus County. It also determines how money in the newly created Stanislaus County Economic Development Bank is dispersed.

"These first five projects exemplify what the Economic Development Bank funds were intended to do: create jobs and improve economic development in this county," said Kirk Lindsey, the board's chairman.

The bank was created by the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors, who funded it with \$1.5 million last February.

The largest amount went to the city of Modesto's business park master plan, which will get a \$405,000 loan to spruce up and redesign the 92-acre Kansas Avenue Business Park.

According to the board, the revitalized business park should create 1,500 new jobs and generate \$300,000 annually in tax revenues. The project will involve the city's redevelopment agency, the Stanislaus County Economic Development Corp., the Modesto Irrigation District, Modesto Junior College and the National Center for Eco-Industrial Development.

Other recipients included:

- The city of Patterson, a \$210,000 loan to improve Baldwin Road. The road will offer primary access to the proposed Keystone Business Park, a planned 800-acre development projected to create 14,000 jobs over a

SEE PAGE D-4, BOARD

Pat Paul, 59, Oakdale, chairwoman of the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors and health teacher at Beyer High School in Modesto: *For all Americans, that we feel a sense of peace and security once again. Countywide, that there would be a sense of cooperation and understanding among citizens, and that public*

JAN 1st 2008

SEE PAGE A-15, WISHES

CONTINUED FROM A-14

officials would be respectful and civil, not only toward each other, but to the public.

BOARD: Training grant lets laid off workers update skills

CONTINUED FROM D-1

20-year period. The first phase of the park is expected to create 300 jobs.

- The Denair Community Service District, which received a \$125,000 loan and a \$50,000 grant to increase the water flow into the city's business district. The expanded utilities could create new jobs for up to 10 years.

- The city of Waterford received a \$40,000 grant to refurbish the Grange Hall, turning it into a museum and visitors center.

- The Hickman Municipal Advisory Committee got a \$35,000 grant to prepare a community de-

velopment plan aimed at identifying economic development opportunities.

In a separate allocation earmarked for training, the board dispensed \$50,000 in Workforce Training Act rapid response funding for training as part of the Connecting Stanislaus Technology Assessment Program.

Lindsey said the training dollars will be used to help displaced workers update their technical skills so they find new jobs that pay at least as well as the ones they lost.

Bee staff writer Jeff Jardine can be reached at 578-2383 or jjardine@modbee.com.

County CEO's pay raised 7%

Supervisors also vote
to buy computer system

APRIL 17 -02

By JOHN HOLLAND
BEE STAFF WRITER

Stanislaus County's chief executive officer got a new five-year contract and a raise from the Board of Supervisors Tuesday night.

The board also voted to buy a new computer system for handling property taxes.

Supervisors voted in closed session for Reagan Wilson's new contract, which will run through June 2007 and pay a base salary of \$187,639 a year, 7 percent more than now.

Wilson also received a one-time 7 percent bonus — \$13,135 — based on his job performance.

"They felt he was doing an outstanding job," County Counsel Mick Krausnick said.

Wilson has been the chief executive since 1993. He oversees about 4,500 employees and a budget of about \$700 million.

Earlier, the board voted to spend an estimated \$908,410 on a computer sys-

tem for the assessor, tax collector and auditor-controller.

County officials said the new system, expected to be in use in July 2003, will save about \$2 million over 10 years because of increased productivity and other benefits.

"The current system is 11 years old, and it's showing its age," said project

SEE PAGE B-2, BOARD

BOARD: Computer system to specialize in property info

CONTINUED FROM B-1

manager Doug Harms, chief of administration in the assessor's office.

The system will allow home and business owners to use their own computers to pay property taxes by credit card. It also will allow Internet users to look up specific parcels for assessed value and other information.

Businesses could use the system to file their annual statements on the cost of equipment and supplies. Title companies, banks and other frequent users of property information could benefit, as well.

Harms, who will become asses-

sor in January, said the system will ease the process for correcting data and carrying out new state laws on property taxation. It also will help with building permits and other land use matters.

John Emerson, the county's chief information officer, said some of the features for the public might be available a little later than the July 1, 2003, rollout of the system.

It will come from Megabyte Systems Inc., which has sold similar systems to 17 other California counties.

Bee staff writer John Holland can be reached at 578-2385 or jholland@modbee.com.

Stanislaus leaders have a job to do

*It's long past time
to stop studying
and start acting*

APRIL 07-02

Timing, technology and population patterns being what they are, Stanislaus County is primed for meaningful job creation — but only if elected and appointed leaders start achieving more in their own jobs.

The Bee's recent special report on "The Valley's Economy" last week spotlighted some of the positive things happening in communities throughout our region. But it also pointed out some of the shortcomings standing in the way of long-term economic health and prosperity.

In a front page story, reporter Jeff Jardine identified a number of obstacles to higher-wage job growth in Stanislaus County, including very few appealing industrial sites, a pattern of repetitive job creation studies that create jobs only for a few consultants, and a prevailing attitude of risk-aversion, if not complacency. Jardine also found that Stanislaus County is five years behind San Joaquin County in promoting itself to Bay Area employers.

Meanwhile, San Joaquin County is raking in higher-wage jobs by the hundreds, and in the next decade, Merced County will realize an employment boom as the state's next University of California campus is constructed there. Both counties' economic successes will ripple through the Northern San Joaquin Valley, lifting the whole region.

But that won't be enough to slash Stanislaus County's shamefully high rates of poverty and unemployment. Only a broad mix of well-paying jobs in this county, supported by strong networks of education and training, can do that.

Stanislaus County leaders — both elected and appointed — can do much more to facilitate job creation here. For example:

- They can provide support — and perhaps temporary tax credits — for developers like Dan Andrade, who is erecting industrial buildings in Modesto on speculation, meaning that he pays for the structures with no tenants (or income) lined up.
- They can help prepare land for industrial development. Employers who need to

move quickly, perhaps because a lease is up or rents are escalating, are not interested in sites without water, roads and other essentials. The Board of Supervisors' infrastructure bank — which lends money to the county's cities to help make such improvements — is a start, but it's not enough.

- They can work closely with developers to get industrial parks built, as city and county leaders have started doing in Patterson.
- They can quit studying and start acting. As Jardine wrote, "Those entrusted with economic development have commissioned study after study over the years,

and are now studying the results of all the previous studies."

- They can reserve prime industrial locations — what's left of the Hammett Road interchange, for example — for jobs-rich industry, period. Many high-wage employers simply won't settle for sites not adjacent to the freeway.

- They can finally devise a meaningful transportation plan, both to improve key interchanges on Highway 99, particularly in North Modesto and Salida, and to create an east-west freeway in North Modesto. Companies need modern roads to move their goods and people.

- They can aggressively support diversi-

fication of the local economy. Agriculture is vital to this county, but it's only a slice of the solution. As astute high school student Miguel Quinonez told Bee reporter John Holland, "There's nothing wrong with farming. But you have to bring in new things as well."

Given the county's population growth and stabilizing local economy, the opportunity for sweeping job growth is here. Nothing could transform this county more, and nothing would be a better legacy for today's leaders, than to help create thousands of new high-wage jobs. Those jobs, more than anything else, are what this area and its residents need.

Sports fields: Big need, cost

Report estimates \$127 million for future projects in Modesto, county

By **JOHN HOLLAND** 3-26-02
BEE STAFF WRITER

Stanislaus County could build many of the sports fields it needs with state bond money, development fees, donations and other financial sources, local officials said Monday.

The Modesto City Council and the county Board of Supervisors held an informal meeting on a new report that estimates a need for \$127 million worth

of baseball diamonds, soccer fields and other projects over the next 20 years.

The officials did not discuss the report's suggestion that many of the projects be funded by a quarter-percent sales tax increase or an annual fee of perhaps \$20 on homes.

Instead, they urged that the county and its nine cities tap recent state bond measures for parks, development fees already charged on new homes, and contributions from foundations, leagues and other donors.

The report projects a need for 128 youth baseball fields, 76 youth soccer fields and much smaller numbers of adult softball fields and other sites. The

Beals Group of San Jose compiled the report on a \$134,895 contract with the county and Modesto.

"They've done an excellent job to go to the different communities to find out what they wanted," Supervisor Nick Blom said.

Later this spring, the county board and the City Council each will consider adopting the report as a guide to future projects.

Two-thirds voter approval would be needed for a sales tax increase or an annual assessment on homes.

"It's premature to even spend a lot of time talking

SEE PAGE B-2, PROJECTS

CONTINUED FROM B-1

Hatch Road, where a winter freeze had killed the ice plants. The relandscaping is now complete.

Caltrans also has completed a number of other projects, including:

- Repairing and painting a decaying wooden sound wall on the east side of Highway 99 just south of Vintage Faire Mall. Landscaping is being done along the wall.

- Landscaping along Highway 99 near the Central Modesto exit, with help from a Workforce Investment Board grant and the city.

- Doubling the number of Adopt-A-Highway litter pickups each year to once a month.

Still to come are:

- A master landscape plan for the Highway 99 corridor, an effort being led by the Stanislaus Council of Governments.

- A tree planting at the Highway 99 interchanges of Pelandale and Standiford, funded by a \$50,000 state Department of Forestry grant.

- A more attractive entrance to the city at Sisk Road-Briggsmore Avenue-Orangeburg Avenue, complete with landscaping and a "Welcome to Modesto" miniarch.

- A mass bulb planting. The

nonprofit America the Beautiful Foundation has promised Modesto 10,000 free daffodil bulbs. The city is working with the garden club to find a public place to plant them.

"I think we've made progress in some areas, and I think we failed in a lot of areas," Bakker said Tuesday. He said he still sees lots of illegal signs, for example.

"I think everybody's trying, but you've just got to be vigilant about it if you're going to do it," he said.

Bee staff writer Melanie Turner can be reached at 578-2366 or mturner@modbee.com.

Study targets funding of fields

County's needs over the next 20 years could cost taxpayers \$127 million

By JOHN HOLLAND
BEE STAFF WRITER

A new report suggests a sales tax increase or a levy on homeowners to pay for many of the sports fields needed in Stanislaus County.

The report, set for discussion at a public meeting tonight, outlines about \$127 million worth of baseball diamonds, soccer fields and other projects over the next 20 years.

Modesto alone would get a pair of major sports complexes, each with numerous fields and a swimming pool, as well as several smaller projects.

Around the county, the projects range from renovation of school and park fields to construction of multi-field complexes.

The report says major projects in the first five years could be funded by a quarter-percent sales tax increase, costing an estimated \$29 per county resident each year or an annual fee of perhaps \$20 on each home. Either would need two-thirds voter approval.

"Those are options that they're saying would be possible ways of funding," said Nathan Houx, project coordinator for Modesto. "They are not necessarily what we would go and do. Obviously, sales taxes are pretty hard to get passed."

The report suggests paying for smaller projects mostly from existing sources, including development fees, user charges, and city and county general funds. Private donations and state and federal grants also could help.

The Beals Group, a consulting firm based in San Jose, did the study under

CONTINUED FROM A-1

a \$134,895 contract with the county and Modesto. The City Council and Board of Supervisors could vote late this spring on whether to use the report to guide future projects.

"The Board of Supervisors' No. 1 priority is ensuring a safe and healthy community, and a component of that is a good park and recreation system," said Kevin Williams, director of environmental resources for the county.

The report cites a need especially for youth fields — 128 for baseball and 76 for soccer. It shows a moderate need for adult softball and soccer fields county-wide, as well as for swimming pools in and near Modesto. It says basketball, tennis and volleyball players could get by with today's courts, although major new complexes might include gymnasiums.

The report does not deal with the needs of school teams, but it suggests that nonschool leagues use campus fields where possible.

The consultants suggest lighting fields to increase the hours of use. On the other hand, they note that turf will wear out if it

does not have enough time to recover between games.

The county's 7³/₈ percent sales tax already includes a special library tax of an eighth of a percent, expiring in 2005. Some officials have suggested asking voters for a half-percent increase for transportation.

"The political feasibility of securing a sales tax increase (for fields) should be analyzed further," the report states.

A property assessment, on the

other hand, could have a better chance because it could be proposed only in the parts of the county where support is evident, according to the report.

The report projects that nearly \$40 million could be raised for small projects over five years if government charged a park development fee of \$1,360 for every new home in the county.

That is the average fee now assessed in eight cities; Waterford does not charge such a fee, nor

does the county for homes built outside cities.

The park fees in the eight cities range from \$463 in Hughson to \$2,206 in Modesto. These fees do not need voter approval.

The consultants did not offer details on possible funding beyond five years but did say that it could be hard to sustain voter support.

The report estimates that the new recreation sites would cost about \$6 million a year to operate. It suggests using general funds, part of the sales tax increase, user fees and other sources to cover the cost.

Turlock will take care of about a fifth of its projected field needs with a sports complex scheduled to open in August, with 10 soccer fields and two softball diamonds. Complexes also have been considered in Modesto, Salida, Oakdale, Ceres and Patterson.

Also, the master plan for Tuolumne River Regional Park includes a major sports complex in the Carpenter Road area of Modesto, but no detailed plan for it has emerged.

Bee staff writer John Holland can be reached at 578-2385 or jholland@modbee.com.

Four who will improve Stanislaus

FEB 10, 02
*Grover, Simon,
Dekliniski and
Harms endorsed*

■ Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors:
Ray Simon and Jeff Grover

Two seats on the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors — key decision-making posts when it comes to economic development, transportation, air quality and environmental issues — will be filled by Stanislaus County voters in the March 5 election. The winners will help guide Stanislaus County through its transition from an agrarian economy to a more diverse urban economy.

Four men are running: Incumbent Ray Simon, who is challenged by agribusinessman Mike Birch in District 4, and Modesto City Schools Trustee Gary Lopez, running against business owner Jeff Grover for the District 3 seat being vacated by Supervisor Nick Blom. It is a quality field; all have strengths that could well serve the public.



Grover



Simon

Supervisors control a \$701 million budget, oversee 4,736 employees and make policy decisions affecting 460,000 county residents. It is a job that calls for sound judgment and the willingness to make tough decisions with the overall good of the county — including its cities — in mind.

Simon has repeatedly shown an ability to do the job effectively. Having served on the Board of Supervisors since 1975 and on the Modesto City Council before that, he is a seasoned leader with a solid grasp of issues and good problem-solving skills.

His challenger, Mike Birch, would bring many fine attributes to public service. Simon has the edge, however, because of his experience and focus on high-wage job creation, this region's No. 1 priority. At his suggestion, the county created an economic development bank that provides loans and grants to Stanislaus County communities for the purpose of providing the water, sewer and other services required to attract job-producing businesses. Simon's goal if re-elected is to build the bank to \$5 million to \$10 million.

Though Jeff Grover has not held elective public office, his record of success in the private sector and community service make him well qualified for the job. He was co-chairman of the winning Modesto school bond drive in November; he served on the Modesto Planning Commission from 1988 to 1994; and he was foreman of the 1992 grand jury.

JAN. 15th 2002

O'Dell Engineering is building new offices on Scenic in Modesto

By **TIM MORAN**
BEE STAFF WRITER

O'Dell Engineering in Modesto is building a 6,600-square-foot office building on Scenic Drive next to Scenic Drive-in.

When completed next summer, O'Dell Engineering will move its offices, currently at 1101 M St., to the new building, said owner Randall O'Dell.

The building is the first phase of what will be three office buildings with a combined total of almost 20,000 square feet of space, O'Dell said.

There is no specific timetable to build the other two buildings, O'Dell said. "We just want to get the first one under our belt. We haven't marketed it at all," he said.

The buildings will be single story, designed to blend in with the residential areas to the north, O'Dell said. J.L. Bray & Son Inc. is the contractor on the project.

The buildings will have more parking space than the

city requires, he said, because there are not any other parking options in the area.

As the first tenant, O'Dell Engineering is anxious to move in. The engineering firm started eight years ago and has grown steadily since then, O'Dell said. It has outgrown the 4,500-square-foot space it occupies downtown.

"We wanted to be near downtown, we like the downtown. We do a lot of business with the city and county," O'Dell said.

Scenic Drive is "a little off the downtown core," he noted, but reasonably close, with good access to the freeway. "We have survey crews on the road all the time," he commented.

The traffic exposure on Scenic will not hurt either, O'Dell said. "A lot of cars go by there."

A final benefit may be the proximity to Scenic Drive-In. "The staff has joked about putting in a pneumatic tube to send cheeseburgers over," O'Dell said.

04-12-02

County transportation agency gets good, bad news

By **MELANIE TURNER**
BEE STAFF WRITER

Stanislaus County's transportation planning agency brought home some good news and some not-so-good news after the California Transportation Commission adopted the state's five-year funding program.

The Stanislaus Council of Governments succeeded last week in a request for \$25.3 million, most of which will complete the funding needed for a couple of major projects: the Whitmore Avenue-Highway 99

interchange in Ceres and the Highway 120 bypass in Oakdale.

The council asked for \$36.4 million from a state reserve fund and got none of it. The council wants the money for two Modesto-area projects: the widening of Highway 219 (Kiernan Avenue) between Highways 99 and 108 (McHenry Avenue), and an improved Peelandale Avenue-Highway 99 interchange.

The council will ask to have its five-year funding program amended in May to include money for Highway 219. If the council

does not secure \$22.1 million for right-of-way acquisition and construction, the project could be delayed two to three years, said Gary Dickson, the council's executive director.

The state commission is likely to consider the request June 12 or 13, he said.

Riverbank's Kirk Lindsey, a member of the state Transportation Commission, encouraged Stanislaus officials to "get that request in for an amendment."

Bee staff writer Melanie Turner can be reached at 578-2366 or mturner@modbee.com.

JAN. 9 02

Agency commits to air quality

Even small steps, transportation changes have impact, planners say

By MELANIE TURNER
BEE STAFF WRITER

Stanislaus County's transportation planning agency Wednesday made a formal commitment to regional ride sharing, better bicycle and pedestrian routes, and conducting business over the Internet — all in the name of air quality.

The Stanislaus Council of Governments board was the first among the local governments and transportation planning agencies to take such steps to improve air quality. Eventually, all governments and transportation agencies throughout the eight-county San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District are expected to follow suit.

Under the federal Clean Air Act, the transportation improvements must be included in the air district's plan to reduce ozone. They can range from adding turn lanes or roundabouts to reduce traffic congestion at major intersections to providing preferential

parking for carpoolers.

"We want to show we are trying to do as much as we can, taking every step we can to clean the air and release some of the pressure on business," council senior planner Debbie Whitmore said.

The San Joaquin Valley air basin was recently dropped from "serious" to "severe" nonattainment because of the level of ozone in the air. A plan to show how to get back with acceptable levels must be adopted this May. That goal must be reached by November 2005.

In order to share ideas about how to reach the goals, transportation planning agencies have been meeting with representatives from the air district, the California Department of Transportation, the California Air Resources Board and the U.S Environmental Protection Agency.

Members of the valleywide committee brainstormed a list of possible control measures last fall. The Stanislaus Council of Governments board selected three measures from the list. Two of the three already are in place and will continue.

SEE PAGE B-2, AIR

AIR: Board approves plan

CONTINUED FROM B-1

Last December, the council of governments allocated a federal grant to finance Commute Connection, the regional ride-share program, through 2003. The board will re-evaluate the program after that.

As for bicycle and pedestrian travel, the council of governments supported funding high-priority bike and pedestrian projects identified in its Regional Bicycle Action Plan.

In July, the board adopted the plan, which identifies funding for such projects.

The newest step toward reducing ozone was taken last fall. The

council of governments launched its Web site, which allows business to be conducted over the Internet. The council voted to encourage people to do business this way, rather than drive to the downtown Modesto office.

At least one policy board member, Stanislaus County Supervisor Paul Caruso, thought the control measures didn't amount to much.

"When the public sees we're going to prioritize bicycles. ... Let's get real," Caruso said.

But council of governments assistant planner Tiffani Fink said the board can only adopt control measures it can implement.

Not another study!

I read with disgust the article "County commissions jobs study" (Modesto Bee, March 14). Again, the supervisors have gone out of the area to use \$50,000 of taxpayers' money as our portion of the cost of another study. The supervisors voted again to hire an outside firm to spend over a year to "develop strategies and, more importantly, deploy those strategies faster." (Quotes attributed to Richard Jantz, deputy executive officer for economic development.) I am wondering how fast these strategies can be deployed if it is going to take until summer of 2003 to develop these strategies.

Jantz also insinuates that our local experts do not have the expertise to be hired for this study. I, as a resident of Modesto and Stanislaus County, will be watching with bated breath to see whether this study provides the strategies to bring new companies and another economic base to this area or whether this is just another costly study.

I truly wish for the study to be a success and we need more and better paying jobs. Good luck!

RICARDO GUZMAN
Modesto

JAN. 10 2002

Countywide effort to manage urban sprawl brings disappointment and a vow to do more

BRUCE FROHMAN

About three years ago, a Stanislaus County supervisor asked citizen activist Denny Jackman and me to discontinue the pursuit of our vision to establish urban limit lines within Stanislaus County.

We were introduced to the "Visioning Process." A committee had been formed to create a road map for the county's future. We were promised that the plan would be so great, our Future Options on Development — or FOOD — initiative would not be needed. Agriculture would finally be protected from the incessant taking of urban sprawl.

Last week, I met with committee Chairman Tom Van Groningen to ascertain exactly where we are.

The vision statement has essentially been completed, but the implementation strategy has come to a standstill because the stakeholder

political jurisdictions want to continue operating as independent kingdoms. We have a road map to the future with none of the roads connected.

Each city and Stanislaus County will interpret the vision in its own self-interest. Decisions will be made regardless of the harm that may be done to the county as a whole. For example, if the Board of Supervisors wants to build a multithousand-acre business park on the best soil in the county, they cite the section of the vision that says that jobs will be created. At the same time, they will ignore the harm to agriculture because they follow a different road on an incomplete map.

Jackman and I are determined to end the planning anarchy that dominates government in our county. We are tired of seeing maps drawn and redrawn whimsically by whoever holds political office.

We had expected a countywide land use master plan to come out of the vision. We had expected to see a long-term plan for the entire county and an end to the piecemeal short-term method of doing business.

Under able leadership, we had expected Van Groningen's committee to receive much greater support and cooperation than has been given. The visioning process has entered an endless dark tunnel.

Modesto City Council candidate Jackman and I are resuming our efforts to establish urban limit lines for the protection of one of the key elements of the vision: a viable agriculture industry.

With public support, we intend to put a clearly marked road for agriculture on the map and keep it there. Then, the rest of the map will be done.

Bruce Frohman is a city councilman in Modesto

02-11-02

County to woo Bay Area execs

Stanislaus group hopes event will lure employers

By **JEFF JARDINE**
BEE STAFF WRITER

Stanislaus County officials and employers will take their corporate recruiting campaign on the road, hobnobbing with about 100 chief executive officers from Bay Area companies during a reception Feb. 28 in San Francisco.

The invitation-only event, at Bloomberg News headquarters, will include a 2002 economic forecast by Dan Reichl, Bloomberg News bureau chief. The speech will be followed by a

reception hosted by Reagan Wilson, Stanislaus County's chief executive officer.

The reception is part of the county's "74 Miles, 74 Reasons — Stanislaus County Closer Than You Think" campaign. It is designed to attract employers who would bring higher-paying jobs to the county by relocating or expanding to the area.

Guests will view a five-minute videotape that includes endorsements for the county by John Mayol of Pacific Southwest Container, Tom Eakin of MTC Distributing and Frank Rimkus of Galaxy Theatres.

About 25 executives from Stanislaus County companies will answer

questions from the Bay Area executives about doing business with the county and its nine cities.

Virginia Madueno, marketing manager for the county's Department of Employment and Training, said the reception is part of an advertising package through sister radio stations KGO and KSFO.

She said the ads tout the advantages of doing business in Stanislaus County.

"We wanted to make sure we had some name recognition before we did the reception," Madueno said.

Bee staff writer Jeff Jardine can be reached at 578-2383 or jjardine@modbee.com.

Davis announces transportation project

Governor proposes
spending \$892 million
to reduce congestion

DEC 19 2001
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Davis has proposed spending \$892 million on 109 transportation projects to cut commute times and ease traffic congestion.

The governor's proposal, announced Monday, includes these projects for the 2002-03 budget year:

- Eight Highway 99 improvement projects adding a total of 35 freeway lane miles.
- Nineteen train service improvement projects on the Capitol, San Joaquin and Pacific Surfliner corridors, and the Metrolink rail line.

- Eight projects on Highway 101 between Sonoma and Los Angeles counties.

- Five projects on Highway 91 between the Inland Empire and Orange County.

The state has federal money from the Interregional Transportation Improvement Program to pay for the projects.

Last year, the state allocated \$636 million from the same federal program. And earlier this year, Davis allocated an additional \$5.3 billion in Traffic Congestion Relief Program money.

The record three-year capital improvement program is one of the largest in the nation and will create thousands of construction jobs in addition to cutting commute times, said Maria Contreras-Sweet, secretary of the state Busi-

ness, Transportation and Housing Agency.

The California Department of Transportation budget is 50 percent larger than it was three years ago, and is twice as large as any other state's, Caltrans Director Jeff Morales said. The state also spends about \$1 billion a year to maintain its transportation network.

Much of the spending proposed Monday is focused on the state's key commute and trucking routes, interconnections between highways and mass transit hubs, and helping rural communities that have less transit money, Morales said.

The list of projects nominated by Davis must be approved by the California Transportation Commission after a series of hearings. Approval is expected by April.

AT A GLANCE

These projects in the Northern San Joaquin Valley are part of Gov. Davis' transportation funding proposal:

■ **HIGHWAY 99** — Widening between Atwater and Livingston from four to six lanes. Estimated cost: \$75.9 million. Proposed funding: \$10.3 million. Existing funds: \$65.6 million.

■ **HIGHWAY 132** — A four-lane, divided highway in Stanislaus and San Joaquin counties. Estimated cost: \$18.6 million. Proposed funding: \$517,000. Existing funds: \$2.5 million.

■ **INTERSTATES 205 AND 580** — Widening I-205 between Interstate 5 and I-580 from four to six lanes in Tracy, and adding a truck lane on I-580. Estimated cost: \$96.6 million. Proposed funding: \$38.6 million. Existing funds: \$30.9 million.

■ **HIGHWAY 120 OAKDALE EXPRESSWAY** — Estimated cost: \$102 million. Proposed funding: \$19.7 million. Existing funds: \$75.8 million.

■ **HIGHWAY 49 ANGELS CAMP BYPASS** — A new two-lane-expressway that will take traffic off Main Street and move it to the east of town. Estimated cost: \$31.4 million. Proposed funding: \$15.3 million. Existing funds: \$11.3 million.

■ **SAN JOAQUIN PASSENGER TRAIN** — Track improvements between Stockton and Escalon. Estimated cost: \$36.2 million. Proposed funding: \$24.2 million.

■ **STOCKTON TRAIN DEPOT** — Renovating and reconfiguring tracks to get San Joaquin trains and Altamont Commuter Express trains on the same track. Estimated cost: \$18.6 million. Proposed funding: \$3.4 million. Existing funds: \$8.2 million.

OUR VIEWS

DEC. 21, 2001

Public, private sectors working together for jobs

Teamwork between government and the private sector paid off this week with more jobs for the area. And even more jobs may be on the horizon.

ConAgra announced that it is starting to distribute tomato products made at its Oakdale plant from a new 400,069-square-foot warehouse in South Modesto.

Although the distribution center opened with 15 workers, a 280,000-square-foot addition is under construction. The facility soon will have 80 warehouse workers plus four salaried employees, company officials said.

The Stanislaus County Economic Development Corp. worked with the county Department of Employment and Training and the state Employment Development Department to create a pool of qualified workers to staff the center. ConAgra initially planned to begin using the warehouse on Oates Court near Crows Landing Road next summer. But with the warehouse available, built as a speculative project by developer Buzz Oates, and workers ready with the necessary job skills, ConAgra moved its schedule up by at least six months. This job-hungry area is thankful for that.

We're impressed, too, with the initiative shown by Oates in building the warehouse before having an assured occupant. The private sector provided the enterprise for this project. And we applaud the teamwork among SCEDCO, state and county officials that helped make it happen. Jobs, the more and higher-paying the better, are essential to improving the valley's standard of living.

+ The Stanislaus County Workforce Investment Board, in the process of merging with SCEDCO, is aiming for more job growth and economic stimulation soon with \$865,000 in loans and grants. The money was provided through Stanislaus County's Economic Development Bank initiated by Supervisor Ray Simon. The purpose of the bank, seeded with \$1.5 million by the Board of Supervisors, is to help county communities draw jobs by stimulating economic development.

Modesto, with its \$405,000 loan to spruce up and design a 92-acre Kansas Avenue Business Park on the former FMC Corp. property, expects eventually to create 1,500 new jobs and generate \$300,000 a year in tax revenue. That project, spearheaded by City Manager Jack Crist, seems to be on track and should be showing results this coming year. The faster the better. Those jobs are needed.

Patterson also is likely to soon see the start of a new business park bringing hundreds, and eventually thousands, of jobs to the county. A \$210,000 loan to improve Baldwin Road, the site's main access road, will help make it happen.

Other money went to Hickman, Waterford and Denair for infrastructure and building improvements and economic development planning.

There is still a long way to go in creating the business parks and well-paying jobs required to bring broad prosperity to one of the poorest regions of the state. But toward that end, it is good to see some economic development shaping up.

State keeps economic balance

While north feeling tech pinch, south buoyed by jobs in defense

DEC 27-01
BEE STAFF REPORTS

SAN FRANCISCO — While it is widely accepted the United States has been in a recession since spring, California is doing its best to stay afloat.

It has succeeded so far because of a near-perfect balance between the northern and southern economies, according to Keitaro Matsuda, a senior economist for Union Bank of California.

In his latest report on the state's economy, Matsuda reports that the technology sector continues to

adversely affect Northern California. However, he has found the downward spiral is counteracted by improving employment in the Central Valley and Southern California's rise in defense-related jobs.

Matsuda concludes negative business conditions in Northern California, particularly the Bay Area, are balanced by positive ones in the south, hopefully enabling the state to withstand a recession.

The main culprit of the state's economic slowdown is the failing technology sector.

According to a study by the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, the Bay Area depends on information technology firms for 11 percent of nonfarm jobs and 32 percent of payroll dollars. The figures

for the entire state are 7 percent and 17 percent, respectively.

Another factor contributing to Northern California's struggles is the sharp rise in unemployment, most notably in Santa Clara County. Jobless figures have quadrupled to 6.4 percent in October from 1.6 percent last year at the same time.

Matsuda also cited the commercial real estate slump in the Bay Area, especially San Francisco.

"Office vacancy has jumped from the 2 percent level a year ago to 13 percent currently. Silicon Valley, which had practically no available office space a year ago, is now saddled with a 12 percent vacan-

CONTINUED FROM D-1

cy," Matsuda said.

Meanwhile, the central to southern portions of the state are faring better, he found.

Central Valley unemployment has fluctuated, but the trend suggests the situation is improving, according to Matsuda.

Also, the U.S. Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight reported California has the largest percentage rise in home prices of the fifty states, with the Central Valley leading the way.

"Surprisingly, Modesto had the highest price appreciation in the country with a 21.8 percent increase, followed by Stockton-Lodi with 20.3 percent," Matsu-

da said. "This is further evidence that the prosperity in the coastal area is finally spreading to the Central Valley."

In Southern California, Matsuda's forecast is positive because its economy is well-diversified and the technology sector represents less than 10 percent of the region's total payroll. Also, defense-related employment has risen since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, helping to stabilize the area's economy.

In real estate, the Los Angeles market has been stable and San Diego has the lowest office vacancy rate in California at only 8.5 percent, Matsuda said.

"The housing market also

shows a positive pattern with Los Angeles showing a strong gain of 13.3 percent and Orange County home prices increasing by 12.1 percent," Matsuda noted.

Heading into 2002, Matsuda feels the San Diego and L.A. economies will track the national trend and recover by midyear.

But the Bay Area will continue to struggle with unemployment and rising real estate vacancies, Matsuda added. And, he doesn't see the Bay Area's technology sector rebounding until 2003.

"Although it's stormy in the Bay Area, there are high clouds in Southern California. We're walking a fine line between recovery and recession," he said.

SEE PAGE D-4, ECONOMY

Train spill causes scare

Dec 28
2001

Stanislaus, San Joaquin
close some roads after
chemical falls along rails

By TY PHILLIPS, KEN CARLSON,
DARYL FARNSWORTH and PATRICK GIBLIN
BEE STAFF WRITERS

A caustic chemical that spilled from a freight train created a scare Thursday throughout the Northern San Joaquin Valley.

Law enforcement and fire officials briefly closed some roads in Stanislaus and San Joaquin counties until health officials identified the powder and how to deal with it. Most agencies decided simply to spray the chemical with water to dilute it.

The chemical, sodium hydroxide, can burn skin on contact and also can cause respiratory problems.

The full scope of the spill was not known Thursday night, but it spread at least between Manteca and the Merced County line.

No injuries were reported from the chemical, which was discovered in Stanislaus County about 4 p.m., sheriff's spokesman Kelly Huston said. Firefighters and law enforcement officers guarded affected areas to keep people from getting near potential hazards.

Union Pacific Railroad officials told the Sheriff's Department they did not know which train had dropped the powdered chemical, nor could they determine when it happened, Huston said. UP officials did not return calls from The Bee.

An engineer told deputies he no-

SEE PAGE A-20, SPILL

CONTINUED FROM A-1

ticed the powder on the tracks Wednesday.

Train traffic stopped briefly about 5 p.m., then resumed about 5:30, despite the objection of deputies who said the trains were stirring up chemical clouds that could be dangerous.

"Most of the spills on the tracks here were dustings," Huston said. However, an estimated 5 pounds of the chemical fell on the tracks between Kiernan Avenue in Salida and the San Joaquin County line. It appeared that the train dropped more

of the chemical when it hit bumps.

Authorities closed all of Salida's rail crossings at one point while health officials considered what to do.

Different agencies handled the problem in different ways.

In Turlock, firefighters went to Target and Wal-Mart and bought baking soda.

"We will mix the baking soda in the tanks of our firetrucks and then wash down the powder," said Jerry McDaniel, Turlock's fire marshal. "We are getting help from the city Parks Depart-

Every agency that has railroad tracks in its jurisdiction is on high alert tonight. We are monitoring areas where there is heavy foot traffic, trying to keep people off the tracks.'

— Steve Williams,
assistant fire chief,
Turlock Rural Fire
Department

ment and they are bringing their sprayers to help us reach areas that our trucks can't get to."

He estimated that city crews would be out until at least midnight cleaning up the powder.

Elsewhere in Stanislaus County, firefighters patrolled the tracks and sprayed the powdered areas with water. The rain that began to fall Thursday night helped.

"Every agency that has railroad tracks in its jurisdiction is on high alert tonight," said Steve Williams, assistant fire chief for the Turlock Rural Fire Department. "We are monitoring areas where there is heavy foot traffic, trying to keep

people off the tracks."

In downtown Turlock, city fire officials ordered taco trucks that park along the tracks to move their business onto the street.

Turlock Rural firefighters went to the Golden State Boulevard overpass to evac-

uate a tent city of homeless people living near the UP line.

San Joaquin County officials were the first to determine that the powder was a minor risk to the public. Rail crossings were closed only briefly to motorists in Manteca as emergency crews tended to

the spill.

"It's the equivalent of Drano," said Philip Cook, a hazardous-materials specialist with the county Office of Emergency Services. "It burns the skin. It's a hazard if you come into contact with it."

Railroad crossings in downtown Modesto remained open, but the crossings at Kansas and Woodland avenues were closed for a short time, said Terry Inderbitzen, a battalion chief with the Fire Department. The closures made a mess of rush-hour traffic.

UP is responsible for the cleanup, and railroad crews were supposed to be helping dilute the powder with water tankers, Huston said.

JAN 30-02

Chairman sets agenda for county

By JOHN HOLLAND
BEE STAFF WRITER

Stanislaus County should support business while improving roads and other services, Supervisor Tom Mayfield said in his State of the County speech Tuesday.

Mayfield, the board's chairman for 2002, also called for continuing the fight against methamphetamine, keeping development off prime farmland and guarding county finances against state budget cuts.

"To be a visionary is to project the big picture for the future and to provide a road map for change," said Mayfield, a farmer who has represented Turlock and the southeast county since 1993. "This board will continue to chart an impressive course."

He said a "small-business-friendly environment" would help the county keep employers and attract more. He urged simplifying the process for various permits, advertising the county's tourist attractions

and redeveloping downtowns.

Mayfield said the California Department of Transportation has been slow in improving roads, so the county should take on the engineering, environmental study and right-of-way purchases. He suggested issuing bonds to pay for road projects that aid job creation.

Mayfield urged the use of recycled tires in asphalt, as well as reopening the tire-

SEE PAGE B-2, COUNTY

COUNTY: Chairman says cities must protect farmland

CONTINUED FROM B-1

burning power plant near Westley, which has operated little since the 1999 fire in the tire pile adjacent to the plant.

The county should work on annexing unincorporated neighborhoods to cities, helping cover the cost of sidewalks and other needed work, he said.

Mayfield said the county board has strong policies against development of farmland, but the state needs to give the county more say on where schools can be built. He also said cities are not doing enough to protect nearby farmland.

"For all those who promote the preservation of agricultural land within Stanislaus County, you need to appear before the nine city councils and convince them of the importance of preserving agricultural land, since this is where it is being consumed," he said.

The chairman noted several recent accomplishments — purchase of land for a Fink Road dump expansion, opening of a drug-treatment center in Ceres, purchase of a site for a new Sali-

da library and use of equipment that can detect ingredients in methamphetamine.

"Last year alone, we busted 90 (meth) labs," he said. "On the average, it is reported that only 10 percent of lab producers are ever caught. That means that there could be as many as 900 operating labs in Stanislaus County alone. These labs need to be shut down."

Mayfield praised efforts by the county Health Services Agency to encourage patients to use its many clinics rather than seek expensive care in hospital emergency rooms.

He said county government so far appears to be safe from major cuts as California officials try to deal with a looming deficit in the state budget.

"As a county, we will strive to be the best in California," Mayfield concluded. "You can count on a continuously better county government and a stronger, healthier community as a result."

Bee staff writer John Holland can be reached at 578-2385 or jholland@modbee.com.

Ceres votes to annex land for park

By **BOB WHITE**
BEE STAFF WRITER

CERES — In recent years, the City Council and Ceres Redevelopment Agency have focused on providing more places to play in the community.

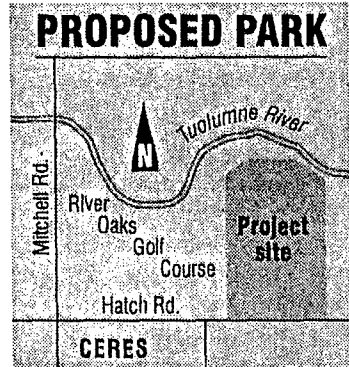
Monday night, the council took a big step in that direction by voting to annex 78.4 acres at the northeast edge of the city for development as a park. The Redevelopment Agency bought the acreage a year and a half ago for \$1 million.

Located on the north side of Hatch Road, just east of the River Oaks Golf Course, the property is on two levels — a flat area running north from Hatch to a bluff, which drops down to another relatively flat area in the Tuolumne River flood plain. The river is the northeast boundary of the acreage.

Randy Hatch, Ceres director of planning and community development, said the area in the flood plain would be left pretty much in its natural state, except possibly for picnic areas, playgrounds, hiking paths and boat access for emergency rescue personnel.

Tentative plans call for development of the upper portion of the property into soccer, baseball and softball fields, plus other recreational and park facilities.

Hatch said the city earlier sent



THE BEE

out a request for proposals from firms that might be interested in developing a master plan for the park, and the staff is now reviewing submitted proposals as a prelude to selecting an architect.

Before that can happen, however, the Stanislaus County Local Agency Formation Commission must agree to let Ceres annex the property.

City Manager Tim Kerr said he would be shocked if the commission denied the annexation application.

"The matter has been before LAFCO before," Kerr said, "when we asked last year that the property be moved from our secondary sphere to our primary sphere of influence.

"LAFCO approved that request, especially after they learned it wasn't going to be another housing subdivision."

Coordinating planning and de-

velopment of the new park will be time consuming, and the council took action Monday night that should take some pressure off Kerr, Hatch and public works Director Joe Hollstein.

The council hired longtime city of Modesto employee Douglas Lemcke as Ceres' director of parks, recreation and facilities.

His salary range will be \$6,812 to \$8,281 per month.

Among his duties will be developing, maintaining and managing parks and park sites. He also will be in charge of leisure and recreational programs and maintaining city facilities and buildings.

Lemcke worked for Modesto about 20 years, most recently as a recreation supervisor. Previously, he was executive director of the Sportsmen of Stanislaus Club in Modesto.

Bee staff writer Bob White may be reached at 578-2324 or bwhite@modbee.com.

June 27 02

County backs plan to widen Highway 219

Access to school from Kiernan still needs work; project start set in '05

By **ALEJANDRA NAVARRO**
BEE STAFF WRITER

A widening plan for Kiernan Avenue, a state highway just north of Modesto, gained support this week from the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors.

The city of Modesto voted its support in January.

The \$26.7 million highway project is in the design phase now. Construction is expected to start by the end of 2005, said Bill Sandhu, project manager for the California Department of Transportation.

Still undecided is how traffic will be routed in and out of Stanislaus Union School, which sits just off what is now a two-lane highway.

The upcoming project will widen Kiernan, or Highway 219, to four lanes with a center divider between

SEE PAGE B-4, WIDENING

WIDENING: Six-lane road is goal for Kiernan Avenue

CONTINUED FROM B-1

Highway 99 and McHenry Avenue. Eventually, the state plans to build a six-lane highway.

Under the plan, left turns would be permitted only at intersections with signals: Stoddard, Dale, Prescott and Tully roads, and McHenry.

Buses would not be able to make left turns into the elementary school.

Robert Serpa, a member of the Stanislaus Union School District board of trustees, said he favors building a school entrance off Carver Road, which is a county road.

"It's clearly the safest one," he said. "You don't have to contend with driving vehicles on and off a busy highway."

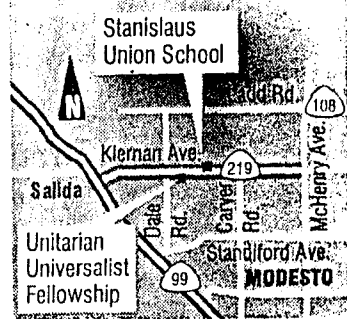
School officials also have concerns about highway noise. Caltrans is looking at alternatives to address the school district's concerns.

School officials saw some of the alternatives at a board meeting earlier this month, and Caltrans plans to present more.

"The (school) board is pretty staunch that it isn't going to accept an unsafe proposal, and we've yet to see anything that looks like it addresses our concerns," said Serpa, who noted

EXPANSION PLAN

Caltrans plans to widen Kiernan Avenue between Highway 99 and McHenry Avenue from two lanes to four lanes.



THE BEE

that not many Stanislaus Union School children walk to school.

Kiernan must be widened to accommodate north Modesto growth, Sandhu said.

"You can see a lot of development going on in that area and you have to relieve the traffic congestion somehow," he said.

The Stanislaus Union School District board of trustees is scheduled next month to continue its discussion of the highway project and what it means for Stanislaus School. The board meeting is set at 4:30 p.m. July 10 at Stanislaus School, 1931 Kiernan Ave.

Acronym remains the same for small business loan program

By **JEFF JARDINE**
BEE STAFF WRITER

The Stanislaus County Economic Development Corp. might, in effect, be history, but the SCEDCO acronym lives on.

The SCEDCO and Workforce Investment Boards have merged to form the Business and Workforce Alliance, which will oversee economic development and job training activities in Stanislaus County.

SCEDCO's small business loan program stayed behind and inherited SCEDCO's nonprofit exemption and its acronym. The program is now called Success Capital Expansion & Development Corp., or SCEDCO.

"We keep the SCEDCO acronym, but it widens the

scope so that it doesn't look like we just do business in Stanislaus County," said Susan Martin, who heads the agency that operates in Stanislaus, Tuolumne, Merced and Mariposa counties.

The agency will have a new board that approves loans and functions much like the model preferred by the U.S. Small Business Administration, which guarantees the small business loans, she said.

The agency had to separate from the Business and Workforce Alliance because it operates in four counties. The Alliance will concentrate only on Stanislaus County.

Contact the Success Capital Expansion & Development Corp. (SCEDCO) by calling 521-9372 or visiting the agency's offices at 1012 I St., Modesto.

NEW BOARD July 10 02

SCEDCO's new board of directors and loan review committee consists of 12 representatives from the four counties it serves:

- **STANISLAUS** — Supervisor Paul Caruso; bankers James. E. Giles, Marsha Carr and Mike Rodriguez; consultant Dennis Wilson; and SCEDCO president and chief executive officer Susan Martin.
- **MARIPOSA** — Title company owner Neil Stonum; banker Matt Foraker.
- **MERCED** — Phil Mulkey, Service Corps of Retired Executives; banker Michael German.
- **TUOLUMNE** — Economic development director E.J. Jones; economic development consultant Ken Wells.

June 20
02

In Brief

School moving to larger facility

June 27 02

Chapman University will have new home in Salida

By J.N. SBRANTI
BEE STAFF WRITER

Modesto's Chapman University campus plans to move into a new, expanded facility in Salida in January.

Ground symbolically will be broken today on construction of the three-story building in the Innovative Technology Business Park on Pirrone Road. Chapman will lease 20,000 square feet on its bottom two floors.

"It will be double the size of the buildings we are occupying now on Sisk Road, and we need it because our enrollment is growing," said Don Mikkelson, director of Chapman's Modesto campus.

About 800 students typically attend Chapman classes, which are offered in assorted graduate and undergraduate fields. Mikkelson said that's twice as many students as attended five years ago, and he predicts enrollment will double again in the next five years.

The college's staff also has expanded. It employs about 20 full-time employees and 60 part-time faculty members.

Chapman is a private university that teaches a secular curriculum but is affiliated with the Disciples of Christ Church. It has about 30 satellite campuses in California, with its main campus in Orange.

SEE PAGE D-4 CHAPMAN

Growth-limits bill gains

SACRAMENTO — A bill that would give the state government significant new power over how its 476 cities and 58 counties grow cleared an Assembly committee Wednesday. Voting 7-1, the Local Government Committee approved a bill that would give preference for millions of dollars in state grants to local governments that steer more growth to existing neighborhoods and less to suburban fringes.

CHAPMAN: Campus fits in with education, tech theme

CONTINUED FROM D-1

Since 1990, Chapman has offered classes inside a Sisk Road business park in northwest Modesto.

"The ambiance of the new facility will be very upscale and inviting. It will have a campuslike atmosphere," said Mikkelson.

Innovative Structures of Modesto, which is managed by James Daniels, is building the Innovative Technology Business Park.

Also under construction in the park is an 18,000-square-foot building that will be leased to Synovation Inc., a downtown Modesto software development company.

"It's going to give us room to grow," said Matt Frederick, Synovation's communications director. "Besides offices, we'll have a large conference and training facility there."

Synovation, which has 45 employees and is expanding its

staff, expects to move in in September.

The 10-acre Innovative Technology Business Park is at 5258 Pirrone Road. There was a cherry orchard on the land before construction began last year.

Two buildings at the park already are occupied — one by UGM, a precision machinery company, and the other by Microboard Manufacturing, which makes CD-ROM and DVD duplicating equipment.

Developer Daniels said he plans to build four more buildings. He said his lease rates range from 70 cents to \$1.65 per square foot.

"The park is going well, and we want to keep the right kind of tenants coming in," Daniels said. "We're trying to be selective, choosing tenants that are related to technology and education."

Bee staff writer J.N. Sbranti can be reached at 578-2196 or jsbranti@modbee.com.



The Modesto Bee

The Modesto Bee's opinion is expressed in the editorials on this page. The opinions expressed in columns, letters and cartoons are those of the authors and artists.

OUR VIEWS

June 17, 02

Williamson Act vital to preserving state's farmland

The battle to save the Williamson Act, a crucial piece of the effort to save valuable farmland from development, took a turn for the better last week in Sacramento. That was good news for the act's many supporters in the valley.

Gov. Davis' budget proposes to save \$39 million by ending payments made to counties under the act. But the Legislature's budget conference committee voted to restore those payments. The final decision is still to come, but the act's supporters are breathing a little easier, at least for the moment.

The Williamson Act is a mechanism to keep farmland in production and prevent — or at least postpone — its urbanization. Under the act, farmers who enroll their properties for a period of 10 years get a break on property taxes. The state funds are sent to the counties to make up for the loss of those taxes.

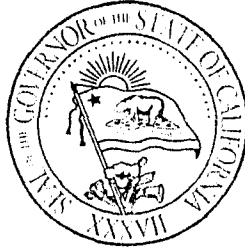
The \$39 million in Williamson Act funds is a drop in the bucket of the state's nearly \$24 billion budget shortfall, but it represents serious revenue for the counties involved. If Davis has his way, Stanislaus County will lose \$1.7 million and San Joaquin County will lose \$2 million. There is one other thing that makes the Williamson Act funds so attractive to counties: They come unencumbered by state mandates or other strings. Counties are free to spend the funds as they choose, a rare and welcome respite from state demands.

The pressures of urbanization are already taking a toll on valley agriculture. Dismantling this successful incentive would only make that worse. In the absence of the Williamson Act — which is what we're really talking about in this funding debate — counties would feel greater pressure to permit increased urban development, in the hope that property and sales tax revenues from new development would make up for the drop in funds from the state. That is a recipe for increased urban sprawl and more rapid loss of valuable farmland.

Support for the Williamson Act is bipartisan. It even crosses the great divide between agricultural interests and environmental activists. Davis is on record as supporting efforts to slow urban sprawl and make development more orderly. Shredding the Williamson Act would be at odds with that policy.

Tough choices are at hand for state and local leaders in this budget crisis. But the impact of this blow is too severe to contemplate. The Williamson Act — both its funding and its critical purpose — must remain intact.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
STATE OF CALIFORNIA



EXECUTIVE ORDER D-37-01
by the
Governor of the State of California

WHEREAS, California spends billions each year on goods, information technology, services, construction, and public works contracts; and

WHEREAS, California small businesses comprise nearly 98 percent of all businesses in the state, employing more than 50 percent of California's workforce and generating more than half of the state's gross domestic product; and

WHEREAS, small businesses are the principal source of new jobs in California's economy and are instrumental to the health of California's economy; and

WHEREAS, California should lead the nation in creating an optimum environment which affords all business equal access to state agency contracting opportunities, thereby enhancing and encouraging competition and preserving the free enterprise system; and

WHEREAS, disabled veterans have made incomparable sacrifices while serving and protecting our country and most disabled veteran business enterprises are also certified California small businesses; and

WHEREAS, enhancing opportunities for small business to participate in the state contracting process is "good business" for California;

NOW THEREFORE, I, GRAY DAVIS, Governor of the State of California, by virtue of the power and authority vested in me by the Constitution and the statutes of the State of California, do hereby issue this order to become effective immediately:

1. Increased small business participation in state contracting is a priority for my Administration; therefore, each Agency Secretary shall promote the use of small businesses in state contracting activities, review the small business participation levels within their agency and develop a plan for improvement within sixty days when participation levels are low.
2. All state agencies are required to pursue aggressively an annual 25 percent small business participation level in state contracting. Any state agency that does not achieve that level shall examine the reasons and submit to the Governor's Office an explanation for why the level was not achieved. The explanation shall include a plan for improving contracting opportunities for small businesses. The Department of General Services shall provide resources to state agencies in developing a plan for and taking the necessary actions toward achieving the 25 percent participation level.

3. I hereby authorize the Department of General Services to adopt and fully implement its statewide Small Business Plan (Plan). The Plan includes, but is not limited to:
 - Streamlining the small business certification process;
 - Increasing the pool of certified small businesses;
 - Establishing a Prompt Payment Advocate; and
 - Implementing a state-sponsored economic conference and opportunity fair focusing on enhancing contracting opportunities for small businesses.
4. The Department of General Services shall research and examine the best practices of both the public and private sectors in the utilization of small businesses in their contracting practices and programs. The Department of General Services shall prepare and present findings and recommendations to the Governor detailing changes to the state's business practices that will provide businesses with greater contracting opportunities with the State of California.
5. As required by current law, state agencies are directed to establish and properly utilize a Small Business Advocate or Liaison. Advocates and Liaisons shall be empowered to effect process changes that will improve small business access to contracting opportunities within their state agency.
6. It shall be the responsibility of each department director or chief executive officer to seek every reasonable means to ensure that state contracting programs are administered in a manner that promotes small business participation in state contracting.
7. State Constitutional Officers, the University of California, the California State University, the Lottery Commission, the Public Employees' Retirement System, the State Teachers' Retirement System, the State Compensation Insurance Fund, and other independent State entities are encouraged to take all necessary actions to comply with the intent and the requirements of this Order.
8. Nothing in this Order shall be construed to require any action that would result in the violation of a court order, or a loss of eligibility for federal funding.



IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have
hereunto set my hand and caused the
Great Seal of California to be affixed
this 30th day of May 2001.

Gray Davis

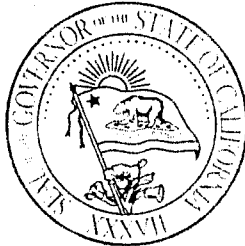
Governor of California

ATTEST

Bill Jones

Secretary of State

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
STATE OF CALIFORNIA



EXECUTIVE ORDER D-43-01
by the
Governor of the State of California

WHEREAS, the State of California spends billions of dollars each year procuring goods and services, and

WHEREAS, the State of California established the Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise Program in 1989 (Public Contract Code 10115) to promote self-reliance for California's disabled veterans by offering veterans the opportunity to gain experience in business, while sharing their expertise with the citizens of California; and

WHEREAS, existing law establishes the goal of awarding three percent of all state contracts to certified Disabled Veteran Business Enterprises; and

WHEREAS, most State departments and agencies have not met this goal; and

WHEREAS, it is my intent to keep California's promise to our veterans by increasing the participation of disabled veteran businesses in State contracting;

NOW THEREFORE, I, GRAY DAVIS, Governor of the State of California, by virtue of the power and authority vested in me by the Constitution and the statutes of the State of California, do hereby issue this order to become effective immediately:

IT IS ORDERED that each department director or chief executive officer shall take all appropriate action to ensure that the State's contracting programs are administered in a manner that promotes the participation of disabled veteran businesses to the greatest extent possible.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that each Agency Secretary shall promote the use of disabled veteran businesses in State contracting and shall review the participation levels achieved by the departments within their agencies. If a department's level of participation by disabled veteran businesses is less than three percent, or its participation rate is not reported, the Agency Secretary shall require the department to develop a plan for improvement.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that this review shall be completed, and any required plans shall be submitted to my Cabinet Secretary, no later than August 1, 2001. The review and plans required by this Executive Order shall be coordinated and included with the review and plans required by Executive Order D-27-01.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Departments of Veterans Affairs and General Services shall provide direction, assistance and resources to State agencies in achieving participation by disabled veteran businesses at the three- percent level.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that all State agencies shall make every effort to assure that disabled veteran businesses participate in at least three percent of State contracting annually by June 30, 2002. Any agency that does not meet this level shall report to the Governor by December 1, 2002 on the reasons why the participation was not achieved and options for improving contracting opportunities for disabled veteran businesses.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that, because virtually all disabled veteran businesses are small businesses, Agency Secretaries and the Department of General Services shall, to the extent possible, coordinate their efforts under this Executive Order with their efforts for small businesses under Executive Order D-37-01.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Department of General Services, in cooperation with the Department of Veterans Affairs, shall examine the current contracting programs for disabled veteran and small businesses and make recommendations to my office on how those programs could be improved.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that all Constitutional Officers, the University of California, the California State University, the Lottery Commission, the Public Employees' Retirement System, the State Teachers' Retirement System, the State Compensation Insurance Fund, and other independent State entities are encouraged to take all necessary actions to comply with the intent and the requirements of this Order.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that nothing in this Order shall be construed to require any action that would violate a court order or statute, or result in a loss of eligibility for federal funding.

I FURTHER DIRECT that as soon as hereafter possible, this order be filed in the Office of the Secretary of State and that widespread publicity and notice be given to this order.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of California to be affixed this 22nd day of June 2001.



Gray Davis

Governor of California

ATTEST:

Bill Jones

Secretary of State