

Break ahead for bypass construction

Highway 65 project should
be completed in 2012

BY STEPHANIE DUMM
NEWS MESSENGER REPORTER

The Highway 65 bypass construction will take a six-month weather break, starting next month.

That's according to an update provided at the joint area Chamber of Commerce Government Affairs meeting Tuesday at Thunder Valley Hotel and Casino Resort.

Of the total bypass project cost of \$292 million, \$163 million has been spent so far on the project, according to Sam Jordan, Caltrans project manager.

Eight-hundred working days have been spent on the project so far, with 95 percent of the 17 bridges completed, according to Jordan.

The first four miles of the

• SEE UPDATE PAGE A18

UPDATE: Casino expansion goes on

continued from A1

bypass is a four-lane highway, reducing to two lanes at Nelson Lane, according to Jordan, and the project will have six sound walls, three retaining walls and traffic meters at Ferrari Ranch Road and Industrial Road.

The project should be completed by summer 2012 and construction will end for the wet season Oct. 15 and resume April 12, according to Jordan.

During the meeting, Thunder Valley Casino spokesman Doug Elmets gave an update about the expanded hotel and casino, saying the casino is now the "length of three football fields."

The meeting took place at the resort's recently-opened Pano Hall.

The casino's inaugural summer concert series brought in a variety of guests, according to Elmets, "which was good and bad for bringing in revenue" for Thunder Valley. That's because acts such as Adam Lambert sold out, Elmets said, "but brought in a younger crowd that didn't spend a significant amount in the casino."

Elmets said Chris Botti, a trumpet player, didn't sell out but brought in revenue for the resort.

"It goes to show marketing and having the right entertainment is the key to success," Elmets said.

As far as expansion goes, the resort still has room to grow, according to Elmets. He said a Mexican restaurant near the hotel "is in the works."

"We have room for additional restaurants and hotel rooms," Elmets said.

Bridge closures topic of open house

Hear about the project to raise local bridges over Interstate 80 at a Community Transportation Open House from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 13, at the Loomis Depot.

Caltrans plans bridge closures, which would be staggered, of up to 60 days during the raising of bridges at Horseshoe Bar, Brace, King, Penryn and Gilardi roads. Construction is slated to take place from the spring of 2013 to winter of 2014.

The open house is an opportunity to speak with local planners about the progress of current transportation improvement projects, transit programs, and planning underway to meet future transportation needs.

Doug Lange, project manager for Caltrans, and Celia McAdam, executive director for the Placer County Transportation Planning Agency, will be among officials present to talk with residents.

For more information, call town hall at 652-1840.

~ Staff report



PHOTOS BY BEN FURTADO • AUBURN JOURNAL

First-grader Eli Hantman leads a group of walkers while celebrating International Walk to School Month at Auburn Elementary School Wednesday morning.

Hoofing it to school is the healthy way to go

More than 1,900 students throughout Placer County participated in Safe Kids of Placer County and Way To Go programs in conjunction with International Walk to School Month. The program utilizes volunteers to educate students and parents about pedestrian safety in neighborhoods and around schools.

Safe Kids of Placer County targets pedestrian safety and Way to Go encourages alternative ways students can get to school, including walking, bike riding, carpooling or taking the bus. The Roseville Fire Department, Auburn Police, Auburn Fire, California Highway Patrol, Fed Ex, Placer County Sheriff's office, Sutter Auburn Faith Hospital and Sutter Roseville Medical Center volunteered their time to help further education.

~ Ben Furtado, Journal photo editor



Placer County Sheriff's officer Brad Gravelly hands out pieces of crime tape to Auburn Elementary students, from left, Elysia Anaya, Jenny Fugate and Eduardo Galvannice.

Overnight work will close freeway ramp

The loop ramp from eastbound Interstate 80 to northbound Highway 65 is now subject to intermittent night-time closures as Caltrans works on the overcrossing.

The ramp will be closed overnight from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m., on an as-needed basis.

The 10 p.m. closure time is approximate and changeable message

signs will be posted in the roadway to update motorists with short-term information. The night-time closures are expected to last through Oct. 31.

Project work is for maintenance and reinforcement of the overcrossing bridge.

Detours

Heading southbound on Highway 65 to westbound

I-80: Take southbound 65 to eastbound I-80, exit Rocklin Road, then re-enter freeway on westbound I-80

Heading southbound on Highway 65 to eastbound I-80: Take southbound 65 to westbound I-80, exit Eureka Road, then re-enter freeway on eastbound I-80

Heading eastbound I-80 to northbound Highway

65: Take eastbound I-80, exit Rocklin Road, then re-enter freeway on westbound I-80 to reach northbound Highway 65.

Heading westbound I-80 to northbound SR 65: Take I-80 west, exit Eureka Road, then re-enter freeway on eastbound I-80 to reach northbound Highway 65.

- Staff report

Eastbound loop from Eureka Road to I-80 closes this weekend

Closure is scheduled from 10 p.m. Friday to 5 a.m. Monday

Motorists are advised that the eastbound loop from Eureka Road to eastbound Interstate-80 will be closed this weekend for construction upgrades.

The closure, scheduled from 10 p.m. Friday, Sept. 24 to 5 a.m. Monday, Sept. 27, is part of ongoing improvements to I-80 as part of "The Bottleneck" expansion project, which is scheduled to be completed in 2011.

Drivers are advised to re-route by taking westbound I-80 to Douglas Boulevard and then entering eastbound I-80 from Douglas.

Signs will be installed surrounding the ramp notifying the public of the appropriate detours, dates and times that the ramp will be closed.

The closure is necessary to reconstruct the ramp as part of the Sacramento/Placer Interstate-80 Operational and Improvement Project, commonly known as "The Bottleneck" project. The \$54 million project by Caltrans, Placer County, the City of Roseville and the Placer County Transportation Planning Agency will add more than 5.5 miles of new bus and carpool lanes on Interstate-80 between the Douglas Boulevard and Lead Hill overcrossing and east of the Route-65 eastbound connector.

Offramp closures will typically occur during weekend and overnight intervals to minimize vehicle flow impacts. Construction times may change due to weather and other unanticipated conditions, so dates may change suddenly. Caltrans urges motorists to use caution in this area and to "slow for the cone zone." For more information on the I-80 project, go to www.pctpa.net.

~ Staff report

SACRAMENTO REGION

**Transit rides free today
to combat bad air quality**

Several suburban transit agencies will offer a second consecutive day of free fares today on their routes, including commuter routes to Sacramento.

The agencies in Sacramento, Yolo, El Dorado and Placer counties offer free rides when the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District issues a "Spare the Air" advisory because of high ozone pollution levels.

Today will be the sixth time this year that the free transportation has been available on El Dorado Transit, Auburn Transit, Lincoln Transit, Roseville Transit, Placer County Transit, Yolobus, Unitrans (at UC Davis) and the North Natomas TMA Shuttle.

- Carlos Alcalá

SACOG to rework transportation plan in light of economy, emissions bill

MELANIE TURNER | STAFF WRITER

Shrinking transportation funding and a new state regulation that aims to improve air quality are two big drivers of the next update to the Sacramento region's long-range transportation plan.

And while the existing plan, adopted in 2008, gave a boost to transit, transportation leaders say a bigger boost is necessary to achieve the region's vision for less traffic congestion and cleaner air.

The region's transportation planning agency, the Sacramento Area Council of Governments, this week starts the process of updating the plan, dubbed the Metropolitan Transportation Plan for 2035, with public workshops in Placerville and Davis.

The updated plan will take into account two major changes since 2008. First, the recession means there's less money for transportation projects. Transit agencies are particularly strapped from budget cutbacks.

Second, California just adopted Senate Bill 375, which requires a "sustainable communities strategy" to be added to transportation plans across the state. The bill offers incentives for strategies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions from motor vehicles. It gives SACOG a 16 percent emissions reduction target by 2035 and requires the agency to consider regional land-use and transportation plans together.

"For the first time, we'll put both on the table at the same time," SACOG executive director Mike McKeever said.

Regions across the state are using the bill to encourage the type of smart-growth development that SACOG's Blueprint document promotes. Adopted in 2004, the Blueprint set in motion a regional focus on more compact development patterns and infill development projects as an alternative to low-density sprawl.

Those changes in the economy and state regulations — and slower-than-expected growth in the region's population, jobs and homes — will be factored into an updated MTP 2035. The plan is expected to be adopted in December 2011.

The latest update will outline how the six-county region will invest \$35 billion in road, transit and other transportation-related funding through 2035. That's \$7 billion less than the 2008 plan, which details how the region would spend \$42 billion through 2035.

The difference reflects a planning period that is two years shorter, and the reality of less transportation funding now and into the future as a result of the economic downturn, SACOG spokesman Erik Johnson said.

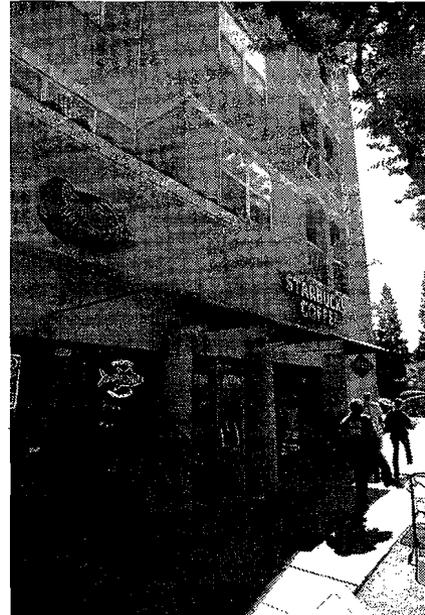
The current plan is consistent with the Blueprint, directing growth inward instead of sprawling outward. The 2008 plan's \$14.3 billion investment in transit was 21 percent higher than the previous version approved in 2002. And bicycle and pedestrian projects got \$1.4 billion, a 56 percent increase.

The work SACOG has done to redirect land-use patterns is "yielding benefits," with a greater mix of housing types, for example, McKeever said. So the idea will be to "refine" the existing plan, he said.

"Are there relatively small changes we can make that might create big benefits?" he said. "Can we take it from an A to an A+?"

SACOG is emphasizing ways to improve the viability of transit, McKeever said. Transit system operating costs are paid for by some mix of ridership revenue, taxes and fees. McKeever said SACOG will be looking for ways to boost transit ridership — and therefore transit funding.

"This is where a marriage of land use and the transportation system comes to life," he said, adding that medium-density housing mixed with retail does a better job of supporting transit than low-



NOEL NEUBURGER | SACRAMENTO BUSINESS JOURNAL

The Fremont building at 16th and P streets combines ground-floor retail with apartments, a good example of a mixed-use development.

density housing.

Relatively modest changes to land-use and transportation plans could lead to "small positive changes," he said, helping the region meet air quality targets and reduce congestion.

The region might dedicate more of its total housing stock to medium-density housing and shift more dollars away from high-way capacity and toward transit, he said.

"We think it would generate many more riders," by increasing ticket sales, McKeever said.

On average, riders in the region pay about 24 percent of the total cost of running transit systems. Three scenarios SACOG will present in public workshops this

MTP 2035 workshops

SACOG this month will host community workshops to solicit opinions on an update to the region's Metropolitan Transportation Plan for 2035. Participants will offer feedback on options for future transportation growth. All workshops but one are from 6 to 9 p.m. The following workshops are scheduled:

- **Wednesday** at the El Dorado County Office of Education, 6767 Green Valley Road, Placerville.
- **Thursday** at the University of California Davis Activities & Recreation Center Ballroom, corner of La Rue Road and Orchard Parkway, Davis.
- **Oct. 18** at Rocklin Sunset Center, 2650 Sunset Blvd., Rocklin.
- **Oct. 20** at Elk Grove High School, 9800 Elk Grove-Florin Road, Elk Grove.
- **Oct. 21** at Citrus Heights Community Center, 6300 Fountain Square Drive, Citrus Heights.
- **Oct. 27**, two workshops from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and from 6 to 9 p.m., Sacramento Convention Center, rooms 306 and 307, 1400 J St., Sacramento

month show the "farebox recovery ratio" ranging from 38 percent to 51 percent.

Since the Blueprint was adopted, a number of communities, including the city and county of Sacramento, have adopted general plans that put a greater focus on mixed-use development and expanded public transit, said Mike Wiley, general manager and chief executive officer of Sacramento Regional Transit District. The district last year adopted a plan for a more robust system, but faces budget shortfalls.

"It's critical that (the MTP) continue to focus on expanding public transit to match this new development pattern that seems to be widely supported," Wiley said. "Without a more robust transit system the Blueprint vision will not materialize."

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You've got places to go... how do you need to get there?

Attend a Metropolitan Transportation Plan 2035 (MTP2035) workshop in your community to help inform how money is spent on public transit, bicycle, pedestrian, and road improvements. MTP2035 is a 24-year plan for transportation throughout the six-county Sacramento region.

The workshops are FREE and food will be provided.

For more information or to register visit www.sacog.org/update or call (916) 321-9000.

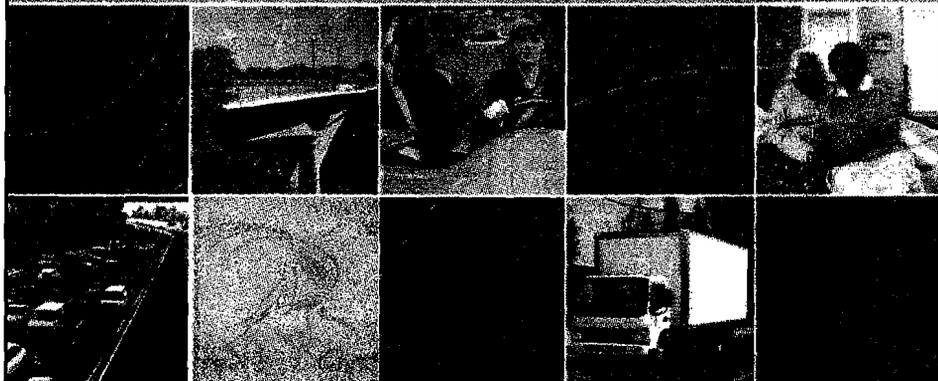
UPCOMING WORKSHOP

PLACER COUNTY

Monday, October 18 • 6-9 p.m.

Rocklin Sunset Center

2650 Sunset Boulevard, Rocklin 95677



LIGHT RAIL

Airport transit line gets new look

WITH FUNDS TIGHT, OFFICIALS THINK ABOUT TRAM INSTEAD

By TONY BIZJAK
tbizjak@sacbee.com

For years, Sacramento transit officials have struggled unsuccessfully to finance a light-rail line between downtown and Sacramento International Airport.

Is it time to downsize their plans to match their increasingly thin pocketbook? How about a streetcar or tram system instead?

That seemingly radical suggestion is on a list of transportation ideas the region's residents will be asked to consider this month in workshops to fashion a new regional Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

The Sacramento Area Council of Governments - the region's transportation planning agency - will host the first public work session tonight in Placerville, and another Thursday in Davis, followed next week by meetings in Rocklin, Elk Grove and Citrus Heights.

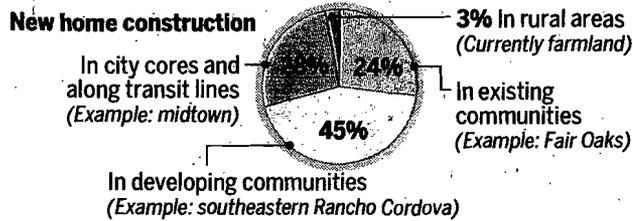
Residents will vote electronically on how they would like to see the region's multibillion-dollar transportation budget divvied up over the next quarter-century. They will also weigh in on how they think the region should grow.

SACOG head Mike McKeever said the street-

SACOG | Page B5

HOW SHOULD THE REGION GROW?

A snapshot of the Sacramento Area Council of Governments' middle-ground growth scenario, one of three regional growth scenarios the agency is asking the public to consider.



Other scenario components:

- 24% expansion of road system, 85% expansion of transit service
- 70 square miles of farmland converted to development
- 8% reduction in drivers' daily vehicle miles traveled
- 6% increase in drivers' time spent in congestion
- 16% reduction in drivers' weekday CO₂ emissions

Source: Sacramento Area Council of Governments

PROJECTED GROWTH

Each of SACOG's scenarios assumes the same increase in people, jobs and homes for the six-county* region.

Population (millions)	
2008	2.2
2035	3.1

Jobs (millions)	
2008	0.97
2035	1.33

Homes (millions)	
2008	0.89
2035	1.19

*Sacramento, El Dorado, Placer, Sutter, Yolo and Yuba

Sacramento Bee

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

El Dorado County

Today, 6-9 p.m.,
El Dorado County Office of Education gymnasium, 6767 Green Valley Road, Placerville

Yolo County

Thursday, 6-9 p.m.,
UC Davis ARC Ballroom, corner of La Rue Road and Orchard Parkway, Davis

South Placer County

Monday, 6-9 p.m., Rocklin Sunset Center - Main Hall, 2650 Sunset Blvd., Rocklin

South Sacramento County

Wednesday, Oct. 20, 6-9 p.m.,
Elk Grove High School cafeteria, 9800 Elk Grove-Florin Road, Elk Grove

North/East Sacramento County

Thursday, Oct. 21, 6-9 p.m.,
Citrus Heights Community Center ballroom, 6300 Fountain Square Drive, Citrus Heights

Yuba County

Monday, Oct. 25, 6-9 p.m.,
Yuba County Government Center - board chambers, 915 Eighth St., Marysville

Central Sacramento County

Wednesday, Oct. 27, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.,
Sacramento Convention Center - Room 306, 1400 J St., Sacramento

Wednesday, Oct. 27, 6-9 p.m.,
Sacramento Convention Center - Room 306, 1400 J St., Sacramento

Sutter County

Thursday, Oct. 28, 6-9 p.m.,
Feather River Academy, 1895 Lassen Blvd., Yuba City

SACOG: Agency isn't expressing a preference on the scenarios

FROM PAGE B1

car idea is merely a starting point for the type of discussion his agency wants to have with the public: "How in a more financially challenged environment can we make every dollar yield maximum benefit?"

The idea may not be as far-fetched as it seems. Regional Transit, the agency that runs light rail, has talked about using a smaller and less expensive European-style tram system instead of light rail through Natomas, where there will be numerous stops for commuters.

"We can build it less expensively, but also provide higher capacity," said RT head Mike Wiley.

A tram system into downtown from Natomas also might link seamlessly to a proposed lower-speed streetcar West Sacramento and Sacramento hope to build over the Tower Bridge, Wiley said.

The six-county Sacramento region's population is expected to grow from 2.2 million to 3.1 million by 2035, a recent analysis shows.

In that time, local govern-

ments are expecting to have about \$35 billion in local, state and federal funds at their disposal for transportation improvements.

In its workshops, SACOG will present three population growth scenarios matched with transportation improvement plans.

Each would decrease future residents' reliance on cars by following state mandates that push urban areas to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, offer more housing stock variety and encourage more urban infill projects, officials said.

In one SACOG-suggested scenario, 51 percent of the region's transportation dollars would go for fixing and widening roads, building bridges and adding major new thoroughfares, such as the Placer Parkway. That scenario does the best job of the three in reducing traffic congestion - an estimated 19 percent by 2035.

In a second SACOG scenario, non-car related transportation improvements, such as expanded bus service, would get more money, about 52 percent of funds. This ap-

proach would fund a few more express buses but fewer road widenings.

A third scenario pushes more strongly for denser growth in existing urban areas along key transit lines. Under that scenario, transit and other non-car transportation improvements would get 57 percent of the funds, allowing some trains or buses to arrive at faster than 15-minute intervals in peak commute times.

Transit service would more than double, and more money would be spent on maintaining and widening existing roads than on building new ones.

SACOG's McKeever said his agency is not promoting any of its proposed scenarios over the others.

All three meet the region's generally accepted, six-year-old "Blueprint" plan to limit but not eliminate growth on agricultural land.

A coalition of pedestrian and cycling advocates is arguing, however, that none of SACOG's scenarios goes far enough in creating healthier and safer new communities.

It is calling on SACOG to add a fourth scenario - "Safe Routes to School, Pedestrian & Bicycle Retrofit" - to be accomplished in the next 12 years.

A final decision on the region's transportation project list will be made by the SACOG board, comprising council members and supervisors

from the region's cities and counties.

Call The Bee's Tony Bizjak, (916) 321-1059.