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SCAG 98 Regional Transportation Plan Community Link 21 Summary

— by Jim Stewart [member of SCFS
Trans.Task Group and So. CA Council on
Environment and Development (SCCED)]

The SCAG 1998 Regional Transportation Plan, CommunityLink 21, provides a plan for the six-county Southern California region (Los Angeles, Orange, Ventura, San Bernardino, Riverside, and Imperial Counties) to spend an anticipated revenue of \$84B to support regional auto, bus and rail transportation in the period 1997 - 2020. The Plan has many positive features, listed as follows:

- 1). Current air quality standards are projected to be met.
- 2). It maintains current levels of average work trip travel time.
- 3). It recommends plans for improved bus and "smart shuttle service".
- 4). It expands auto and truck capacity through \$10B in tolls.
- 5). It anticipates a benefit of over \$5 per \$1 of capital invested.
- 6). It identifies an extensive set of future transportation corridors that need to be preserved for transportation after 2020.

However, there are also major problems, some of which are listed as follows:

- 1). Increased traffic congestion. The current SCAG computer model predicts extreme freeway congestion (average speed of 10-16 m.p.h.) during the evening peak period will increase nine-fold. Total hours of delay for drivers will nearly triple from 1.7

million per day in 1994 to 4.3 million in 2020. The Riverside County Transportation Commission (“CTC Physics Alternative Modeling Process”, January 1998) found projections exceed the 24-hour carrying capacity of some freeways.

2). Increased truck traffic. Truck traffic forecasts for 2020 indicate up to 100,000 trucks per day on certain corridors.

3). Dangerous air quality. The plan projects (on the basis of optimistic projections) that pollution emissions will meet current Federal and State air quality standards for reactive organic gases (ROG) or volatile organic gases (VOC), both formerly known as unburnt hydro-carbons or HC, and oxides of nitrogen (NOX), which cause ozone (O₃), but the Plan does not meet Federal standards for dangerous particulates (PM10), nor the proposed standards for PM2.5.

4). Insufficient funding for public transit. Public transit, which now handles about 2% of the region's trips, will increase slightly, but still meets less than 2.5% of the total by the year 2020. Some 59% of the flexible money is slated for roads, and only 41% for public transit and livable communities.

5). Global climate change. According to SCAG projections for increased gasoline use, CO₂ emissions will rise to 65 million tons by 2020, making significant contributions to global warming.

6). Unassured financing methods. There is no assurance that the state legislature will approve a revenue-neutral 2 cents per mile vehicle use fee starting in 2010 to replace the state gasoline tax. There is no signed contract that private funding of \$6.2 billion is available for a projected high speed rail system. The trucking industry may not agree to pay tolls for dedicated truck lanes.

Transportation Task Group

This group consists of John Bachar, Bennett Ramberg, and Shel Plotkin plus one non-SCFS member, Jim Stewart (from Southern California Council on Environment and Development or SCCED). Efforts are being made to do something about the Los Angeles transportation system. In the past (~ 1972) a car pooling project was pursued, but the Southern California AAA was controlling Commuter Computer and apparently did not really desire a reduction in the

number of automobiles on the freeway.

In recent years, the Southern California Association of Governments, SCAG, which represents six Los Angeles region counties, has been pursuing development of a better transportation system. It seems that nearly everyone now has recognized the basic error in trying to build a subway. While the squandering of so much money is sad, the fact that the project is now being phased out is good news.

As far as this SCFS task group, there is good news and bad news. The bad news is that the AAA appears to still control Commuter Computer and all car pooling efforts. But even more important is that the discovery on one of our Wizard Shows that the Metropolitan Transit Authority, MTA, has had no long-range planning committee also applies to SCAG.

Not only does our SCFS task group believe it knows the basic long-range configuration of a truly adequate and appropriate Los Angeles regional transportation system, but also that we know how to maximize its use. The former involves a core system of high speed vehicles. Eventually, the entire system would be electric as well as all other motorized transport.

Maximizing system utilization requires instituting a fare-less system, i.e. no money exchange to ride the trains or buses. While all transportation engineering people agree this would be ideal, the problem of replacing the revenue normally collected from fares has to be solved. “Innovative financing” are the operative words and is the key. Of the numerous alternatives, one fundamental aspect is inherent or common to all of them. People or companies with more money will have to give up some for the transporting of people with less money. This can be in the form of extra gasoline taxes, lower automobile insurance rates to reflect the reduced liability exposure but with motorists simply paying the difference toward the regional transportation system costs, or simply increase proportionately vehicle registration fees to cover the lost revenue from fares. Whichever technique is used, there appears to be a requirement for massive grassroots political pressure to overcome that of the vested interests, all being in the higher financial strata.

With all the good ideas our SCFS Transportation Task Group possesses, it will be for naught unless

some small amount of support funding is obtained. Thus far one very wealthy foundation changed its areas of interest after receiving our proposal. Another much smaller foundation is presently considering funding our efforts and plans are being made to establish a Los Angeles Regional Transportation Coalition. This grassroots group would have to have representatives from every ethnic and nationality in the entire six county region — not an easy task.

Neither the technical efforts nor the grassroots political efforts can apparently be successful without the active support of the other group. Another apparently obvious aspect is that unless these SCFS and community grassroots efforts are successful, Los Angeles will not have an adequate transportation system in 2080. As can be seen in Jim Stewart's article above, SCAG plans for 2020 are grossly inadequate as well as being in the wrong direction from a grassroots community standpoint.

"Stay tuned", we'll keep you posted on future developments. It's high time SCFS had some type of major definitive impact on society. ###

Ward Valley Update: Is the End in Sight?

— **Bennett Ramberg**

The battle over the Ward Valley nuclear dump may be entering the end game as a result of the recent elections of Gray Davis and Senator Barbara Boxer. If Governor-elect Davis is true to his commitment to the environment he must now come up with a strategy to extradite the State from the Wilson Administration's ill founded promotion of the Ward Valley site. Still, even a well-intentioned governor will have to overcome the efforts by nuclear generators — notably nuclear utilities and the proposed dump operator, US Ecology — to press on with efforts. Fortunately, Senator Boxer's re-election will help block congressional action to open the dump.

Over the past year, Ward Valley has been subject to court and California legislative review as well as an important study of the dump's economics. In U.S. District Court in Washington, DC, dump proponents have brought two actions. In one action the State of California and US Ecology claim that Sacramento

entered into a binding contract at the end of the Bush Administration to acquire the federal land upon which the dump would sit. In another action before the Court of Federal Claims, also in Washington, DC, US Ecology and the State of California are suing the federal government for \$80M for the failed land transfer. At the time of this writing neither case has been adjudicated. It remains to be seen how Governor Davis will handle the litigation.

On the legislative front, Committee to Bridge the Gap uncovered some embarrassing new information that early in the Ward Valley battle, Governor Wilson attempted an end run around the State Legislature's appropriation responsibilities. The Wilson Administration illegally accepted a \$500K gift from US Ecology to purchase the proposed site from the Federal Government. As a result three senior Democratic state legislators — Senate President Pro-Tem John Burton, Assembly Speaker Antonio Villaraigosa and Assembly Speaker Pro Tem Sheila Keuhl — issued a letter to the White House urging Vice President Al Gore to "stop all activity which could lead to eventual transfer." A staff report commissioned by Kuehl revealed an internal Wilson administration memo from October 1991 that conceded, "While DHS (Department of Health Services) has the authority to hold title to the land, it does not have authority to make a purchase." As a result of this finding, the Interior Department ruled that DHS "lacks authority and is ineligible to purchase the land." The Wilson Administration contests this interpretation.

Finally, over the past year, University of Nebraska Professor Greg Hayden's remarkable economic evaluation of Ward Valley continue to resonate. In his findings released in December 1997, Dr. Hayden concluded that new radioactive waste dumps, such as Ward Valley, are no longer needed because the volume of radioactive waste has fallen dramatically while existing dumps have excess disposal capacity. Furthermore the cost of disposal at any new facility would be many times greater than current disposal costs. Hayden's economic assessment did not stop with his December findings. In July, 1998, Hayden issued a report appearing in the Wall Street Journal establishing that US Ecology may lack the financial resources to operate the dump.

As the battle over Ward Valley proceeds, reports emerging from Beatty, Nevada where US Ecology

operated a twin facility for decades, indicates that the radioactive subterranean plume continues to rapidly expand offsite illustrating the risks associated with the California site. This finding underscores the importance of putting a favorable end to the Ward Valley controversy. Governor-elect Davis is now in a position to do just that. ###

Rocketdyne Cleanup Coalition (RCC)

— by **Shel Plotkin**

The RCC is still at it, combating Rocketdyne (now owned by Boeing, having changed from Rockwell), Department of Energy, and CA Department of Health Services. Besides having an SCFS member on the Advisory Panel for the UCLA Epidemiology Study, SCFS also provides a representative on the Santa Susana Field Lab (SSFL)EPA Task Group. This latter is supposed to coordinate dissemination of technical material and facilitate some oversight of the SSFL clean-up. The property suffers from both radioactive and toxic chemical contamination, the thrust of clean-up activity being to eventually release the property for unrestricted use.

Some years ago the DOE insisted over the RCC's vehement objections that Rocketdyne characterize the clean-up requirements. Essentially "the fox" was assigned the job of specifying the clean-up of the "chicken coop". Finally, after much behind the scenes effort, an EPA environmental specialist was allowed to review the present clean-up efforts. Naturally, all the RCC fears were realized when it was discovered that Rocketdyne and DOE are proceeding on a faulty course, the seriousness of which now having to be evaluated.

Supporting legislators include Sheila Kuehl, Cathy Wright, and Barbara Boxer. Hopefully, the deficiencies in the clean-up effort can be rectified so that the area can, within a few years, be made safe for future generations. Of note is the fact that the underground water has been contaminated and the present clean-up process will probably take as much as fifty or sixty years, after which time the water may or may not

be cleaned up.

Original contamination of the area can be attributed to inadequate oversight by DOE, DHS, and NASA plus a propensity to maximize profits by first North American Aviation and then the Rockwell Corporation. However, not to clean-up the property properly at this time is very difficult to understand. Rocketdyne made extra profit contaminating the land initially and is now profiting from cleaning it up. The aspect that is so difficult to understand is why Rocketdyne, along with the assistance of the government agencies, cannot simply do the job right and engender public confidence in the process.

As for the UCLA epidemiology study, the radioactivity exposure of workers from accidents at SSFL caused a number of premature deaths. This was released some months ago to the general public. Of international significance is that the health impact from very low levels of ionizing radiation is far larger than that believed by the majority of the scientific community. The amount of error was computed by UCLA to be 6X to 8X normally accepted values for low level exposures. This tends to confirm similar results from a Hanford Study done by Alice Stewart (a member of the UCLA Advisory Panel also) and an Oak Ridge Study done by Steve Wing. The UCLA results made for very large headlines in the Daily News when they were released but was essentially "blacked out" by the L.A. Times (which has a Boeing corporate officer among its board of directors).

Within several months, hopefully, UCLA results of the toxic chemical exposure part of the study should be released. Perhaps it will be released simultaneously with the dissemination of this newsletter. Actually the Advisory Panel knows what the results are at this time but there is a confidentiality agreement until UCLA releases its final version.

In the meantime the DHS has been trying to disband the Advisory Panel and thereby cease all future epidemiology work. Originally, it was agreed that if the studies showed that workers had not been effected by all the accidental toxic releases over the years, it could be reasonably concluded that the community, likewise, had not been seriously effected either.

Now that the workers are known to have suffered adverse effects from the accidental releases, the question arises "what about the community?". The RCC

was assured by DHS and DOE originally that funding would be forthcoming if/when epidemiology results indicated the necessity for evaluating community effects. Today, with all the adverse publicity against Rocketdyne plus a multitude of law suits pending in the courts initiated by workers and residents, DHS and DOE are trying to cut off the funding for any more work.

At present it is not certain how this matter is going “play out”. Panel members, in general, are extremely disturbed at the prospect of stopping all future epidemiology studies in Simi Valley. The technique used to thwart this work is to simply cut off support funding, with the excuse that money is just not available. Needless to say, community pressure on the legislators is the key factor toward obtaining support for the work that needs to be done.

In the past, it was Terry Friedman, Richard Katz, and Cathy Wright that provided the political clout we needed. Today, it is again Cathy Wright, this time as a Senator, and Assembly member Sheila Kuehl who we are relying upon. A California Legislative bill that included \$150K for this work was vetoed by Governor Wilson. Thus far there doesn't look as though the AP will be able to continue. However, as they say, “it's not over till it's over, and there might well be a turnabout in the political atmosphere caused by an increase in concern over environmental pollution. ###

SCFS Office Changes

Hansel Cassadyne has obtained full employment, so he will only be working occasionally of for us. Fortunately, in his place we have managed to obtain an excellent replacement, Masaaki Sakai, who is visiting here from Japan. In fact, in keeping with his activities, he's classified as an SCFS Intern and been dubbed the SCFS Disarmament Coordinator.

Besides doing the small amount of office work needed, he will be spending much additional time promoting Abolition 2000. In fact, he organized a coordinating meeting held October 26 at the MSB. Much discussion indicated a need for an activity to rejuvenate public interest in the possibility of an accidental nuclear war. The statistics and mathemat-

ics hasn't changed in the last 50 years, even though the general public seems to think that it has. We have a job to do properly educating the public regarding the basic facts.

It is just appalling that this worldwide effort is not receiving the publicity and support from the peace community that the issue deserves. The U.S. is still exploding underground bombs and apparently developing new types — rather than laying plans for dismantlement and abolition of these uncivilized and barbaric devices.

The down side of this new SCFS appointment is that Masaaki's student visa expires in January, 1999; he obtained an MA from the University of Pittsburgh in International Relations. Some type of funding or other employment is necessary for him to remain in the U.S. Unfortunately, SCFS finances are such that we cannot provide support for such purposes. [Any suggestions from members would be appreciated!] A full time Abolition 2000 worker is something we sorely need. Hopefully, some satisfactory funding source or employment can be found, and Masaaki will be able to continue his work.

SCFS Lecture Series at the Midnight Special Bookstore (MSB)

Slowly, it seems, we are achieving a consistent audience at our monthly Science in the Public Interest lectures. SCFS members are given a 20% discount at the MSB upon presentation of their membership cards, so don't forget to use yours! Future lectures are as follows:

- December 8 — “L.A. Regional Transportation”
by Jim Stewart.
- January 12 — “Marine Eco System: Our Fragile Ocean” by Bryan Lasky.
- February 9 — “Distributions and Averages”
by John Bachar.
- March 9 — “Gambling and Game Theory”
by Jim Stein.

Please note that we need suggestions for speakers and topics, noting that it is OK for our own members to volunteer !!!

Please help the **Southern California Federation of Scientists** provide the scientific and technical knowledge that will enable the public and it's officials to better understand the issues affecting science, society and public policy.

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