

Nevada County Transportation Commission

The Nevada County Transportation Commission (NCTC) is the Regional Transportation Planning Agency for Nevada County. NCTC coordinates state and federal transportation programs for Nevada County, the City of Grass Valley, Nevada City, and the Town of Truckee.

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The Nevada County Transportation Commission Newsletter is published quarterly. If you would like to be added to the mailing list, please write or call the Nevada County Transportation Commission office.

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Upcoming NCTC Meeting

The next meeting of the Nevada County Transportation Commission is scheduled on: **Wednesday, July 16, 2008 at 9:30 a.m., Truckee Town Council Chambers, 10183 Truckee Airport Road, Truckee, CA.**

NEVADA COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION NEWSLETTER

Issue 36

"Creating a better future by building upon successes of the past"

June 2008

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Air Quality Grant Funding

The Nevada County Transportation Commission (NCTC) has \$842,984 of Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds available for transportation projects in western Nevada County that can demonstrate emission reductions to help attain federal air quality standards. A call for eligible projects has gone out for FY 2008/09. The focus will be to fund projects that bring the most effective rate of public benefit for improved air quality with the least amount of cost.

A wide and diverse variety of projects and programs are eligible for funding. Eligibility is defined by the FHWA (Federal Highway Administration) under SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users). Priority is given to certain diesel engine retrofits, and to cost effective congestion mitigation activities that help achieve NAAQS (National Ambient Air Quality Standards) for ozone, carbon monoxide (CO), and particulate matter.

Projects requesting CMAQ funding must have a government agency sponsor that has an existing Master Agreement with Caltrans. Qualifying agencies must notify NCTC staff by July 7th of their intent, and project application forms must be in the NCTC office by 5:00 p.m. on August 1, 2008.

If you have questions, call Mike Woodman at the NCTC office: (530) 265-3202. 



Sierra Ozone – The Air We Breathe

Living in a foothill community such as Nevada County with an abundance of trees and open spaces may create the perception that this is a healthy environment to live in, raise your family, and retire in. That mind set is being challenged in western Nevada County as we face high ozone levels.

In 2004, western Nevada County was classified as "non-attainment" for 8-hour Ozone Standards by a federal law that was established to maintain health-based air quality standards. Our community and its leaders have been focused since then on identifying and understanding the factors that contribute to our ozone conditions. "Ozone" is a harmful gas in smog that is invisible. It is formed when oxides of nitrogen (NOx) chemically react with volatile organic compounds (VOC) in the presence of heat and sunlight.

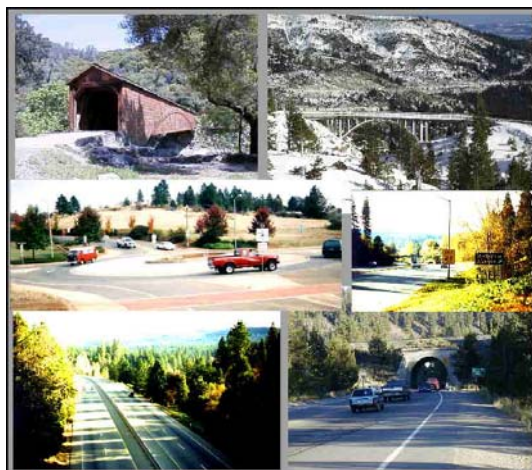
Smog is a contributing factor to our unhealthy ozone levels. Most of our smog is produced by car and truck exhaust that is transported by wind from the Sacramento and Bay Areas. Gas from oak trees and pine trees combine with other pollutants locally to create more smog (see diagram below). Smog stops forming when the sun goes down, but levels in the foothills tend to increase instead of decrease during the night. Folsom, Placerville and Auburn actually experience some relief in the evening and early morning hours, but in Grass Valley the bad air often lingers through the night. One of the issues at hand is that tailpipe emissions of nitrogen oxides (NOx) forms smog during the day, but actually destroys smog at night. Grass Valley has fewer cars so there is not enough nighttime NOx to lower the ozone levels. Night winds at the mountain summit also push the smog back down into the cooler night air of the foothills.

A Sierra Ozone Summit was held on June 4th in Grass Valley to discuss regionally based strategies and solutions needed to address ozone pollution in Nevada County and surrounding communities. The event was

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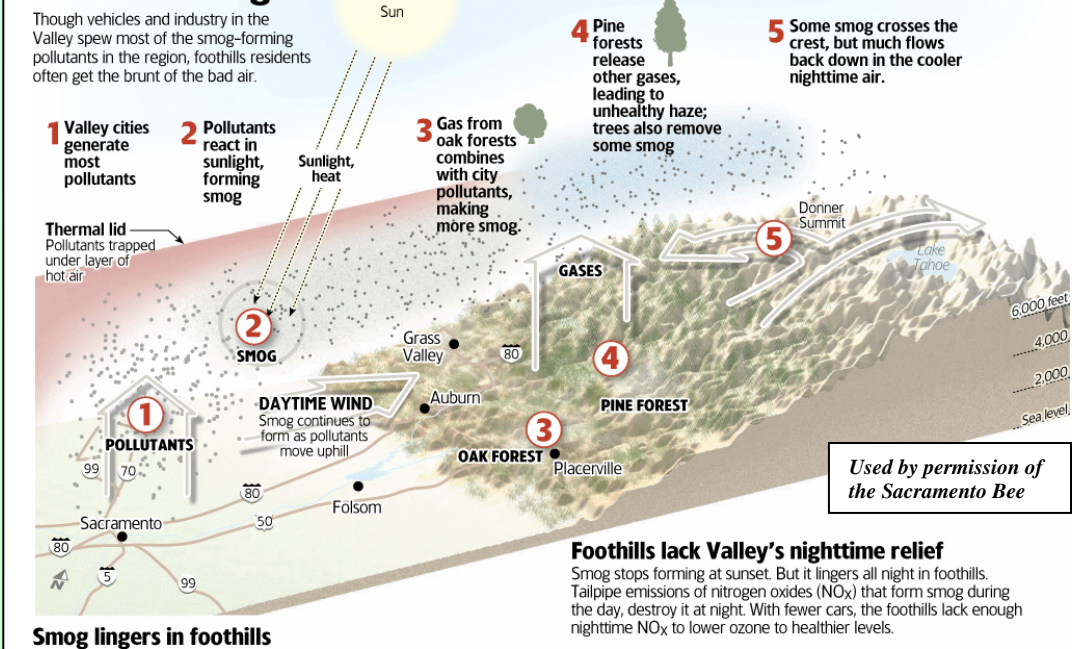
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Foothills smog

Though vehicles and industry in the Valley spew most of the smog-forming pollutants in the region, foothills residents often get the brunt of the bad air.



Used by permission of the Sacramento Bee

Smog lingers in foothills

Smog stops forming at sunset. But it lingers all night in foothills. Tailpipe emissions of nitrogen oxides (NOx) that form smog during the day, destroy it at night. With fewer cars, the foothills lack enough nighttime NOx to lower ozone to healthier levels.

Diagram shows the progression of pollutants and smog transported by winds to western Nevada County.

Sierra Ozone Summit – Continued from Page 1

hosted by the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District (NSAQMD), and the Nevada County Transportation Commission (NCTC) helped to sponsor the event. Presentations were made to a sell-out crowd of two hundred people. The director of the regional U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) started off the event. Then strategies for emissions reductions were shared from representatives of the California Air Resources Board, Bay Area Air Quality Management District, Sacramento Air Quality Management District, and the local NSAQMD. A Transportation Planning Panel Discussion took place between staff from Caltrans, Sacramento Area Council of Governments, and the Nevada County Transportation Commission.

The Ozone Summit also had panel discussions pertaining to Health Impacts, Economic Impacts, and Environmental Impacts with representatives speaking from the California Air Resources Board, Mariposa County Health Department/Air District, UC Davis, Nevada County Economic Resource Council, Grass Valley City Council, Nevada County Board of Supervisors, UC Kearney Air Quality Effects Lab, USFS Pacific SW Research Station, and an Air Quality Specialist from the U.S. Forest Service. A panel drew the event to a conclusion by discussing “Strategies for Change – Where do we go from here?” Panel participants consisted of representatives from the Nevada County Board of Supervisors, Central Valley Air Quality Coalition, Save the Air Nevada County, Planning and Modal Programs of Caltrans, and the Sacramento Air Quality Management District.

NCTC’s Executive Director Dan Landon encouraged western Nevada County to do its part in decreasing the number of cars on the roads. He reported that 5,000 cars per day travel to work in Placer County, 3,000 to 4,000 go to other counties in the area, and approximately 800 cars depart the county daily for the Bay Area. Gregg Albright of Caltrans said single occupancy vehicles on the roadways adds tremendously to the problem, therefore a greater awareness of carpool opportunities could help. Mr. Landon also encouraged transit use and stressed the importance of residents working from home.

The reality for western Nevada County is that even if we took all of our cars off the road, we would not reduce our ozone enough to reach acceptable levels. We cannot attain 8-hour ozone standards by our efforts alone. We need the cooperation of regional stakeholders to assess needs and set goals, organize efforts, capitalize on opportunities such as air quality funding, and focus our energies on implementing the plans and strategies agreed upon to achieve mutual goals. Participants of the summit were enthusiastic that the event provided the opportunity to develop relationships between federal, state, urban, and local representatives that will benefit our county as everyone works together in a cohesive partnership to reduce ozone levels throughout Northern California. [NCTC](#)

Federal Air Quality Information

The Federal Clean Air Act sets requirements for non-attainment areas. Western Nevada County is required to prepare an Attainment Plan that outlines steps being taken to lower ozone levels. Federally funded transportation projects, such as highway improvements, are required to prove they will not increase ozone impacts. Western Nevada County and the Sacramento area are required to reduce its emissions of ozone by 3% per year. The Bay Area has strict pollution controls and strategies they have established in response to their non-attainment status that will eventually contribute to western Nevada County’s ability to lower ozone counts.

The EPA has proposed a more stringent standard, based on health data, to be finalized in 2008. If federal requirements are not fulfilled, several things could happen, depending on which requirements are not met. Federal highway money could be withheld, construction of transportation projects could be restricted, pollution ratios could increase, additional pollution control measures could be mandated, and the EPA could specify additional requirements.

Air Quality Index rankings are based on air measurements of ozone. High ozone levels reduce the elasticity of lungs and cause breathing difficulties, sore throats, headaches, and burning eyes. It contributes to the development of asthma and decreased lung function. Those affected the most are the elderly, children, individuals with heart and lung ailments, and people who work or exercise outdoors for an extended time. Lowering levels of smog and ozone will benefit all the residents of Northern California. Let’s all work toward that goal. [NCTC](#)

Air Quality Guide for Ozone

| Air Quality Index | Protect Your Health |
|---|--|
| Good (0-50) | No health impacts are expected when air quality is in this range. |
| Moderate (51-100) | Unusually sensitive people should consider limiting prolonged outdoor exertion. |
| Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups (101-150) | The following groups should limit prolonged outdoor exertion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with lung disease, such as asthma • Children and older adults • People who are active outdoors |
| Unhealthy (151-200) | The following groups should avoid prolonged outdoor exertion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with lung disease, such as asthma • Children and older adults • People who are active outdoors Everyone else should limit prolonged outdoor exertion. |
| Very Unhealthy (201-300) | The following groups should avoid all outdoor exertion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with lung disease, such as asthma • Children and older adults • People who are active outdoors Everyone else should limit outdoor exertion. |

A New Roundabout in Grass Valley

The East Main Street/Idaho-Maryland Road Intersection is one of Grass Valley’s busiest intersections. The movement of traffic through this location impacts the traffic flow into and out of downtown Grass Valley, on and off the Golden Center Freeway, and throughout the Brunswick Basin. Currently this intersection operates at a Level of Service (LOS) F during peak hours.

In November 2006 the East Main/Idaho-Maryland Intersection Improvement Project conceptual design proposal was approved by the Grass Valley City Council to allow environmental documentation and the final design to proceed. A public workshop was held on December 12, 2006 to introduce the project to all interested stakeholders. The project will replace the existing all-way stop signs with a modern roundabout, including pedestrian and bicycle facilities, updated lighting, drainage improvements, and landscaping in the center of the roundabout. The new design of the intersection provides safe and efficient movement of existing traffic volumes, and also provides additional capacity for future traffic growth.

A contract for construction of the project was awarded at the June 10, 2008 City Council meeting to local contractors Hansen Bros. Enterprises with a bid of \$1.4 million. Most of the construction activity affecting traffic flow will be performed at night to avoid any traffic delays. The construction schedule estimates eighty working days to complete the project, so we could be driving “round-about” in this newly constructed intersection by mid-fall.

Photo courtesy of the City of Grass Valley



Roundabout to be constructed this summer at the E. Main/Idaho-Maryland Rd. intersection

How to Drive In Roundabouts

There are general rules of thumb and common sense that play a big part in successfully driving in roundabouts:

- Always yield to pedestrians, bicyclists, emergency vehicles, and traffic already in the roundabout.
- Slow down as you approach and drive through the roundabout. Speeds typically are 15 to 20 mph, unless yielding for a vehicle.
- One way traffic flow only – always keep to the right of the center-island and travel in a counter clockwise direction.
- Once in the roundabout, you travel around to the street you want to exit on, signal your intent, and make a right turn to exit.
- If you miss your exit, just “go around” one more time.

Above all, relax, drive courteously, and enjoy the improved traffic flow. [NCTC](#)

Ten Steps To Cleaner Air

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) provides ten simple steps for drivers on their “It All Adds Up” website that encourages smarter ways to travel about that will help to reduce air pollution:

1. “Trip Chain” more often [make a list before you leave home and do all of your errands in one trip]. It reduces traffic congestion and air pollution.
2. Take public transit, share a ride, or car pool. Even if you do it once or twice a week, you reduce congestion and pollution, and save money.
3. Have fun! Ride your bike. It’s a great way to help you and the air get into condition. Vehicles create more than 25% of all air pollution nationwide.
4. Take things in stride. Walk instead of driving. It’s an easy way to get exercise and it’s easy on the air.
5. Care for your car. Regular maintenance and tune-ups, changing the oil, and checking tire inflation can improve gas mileage, extend your car’s life, and increase it’s resale value. It could reduce your car’s emissions by more than half.
6. Get fuel when it’s cool. Refueling during cooler periods of the day can prevent gas fumes from heating up and creating ozone.
7. Don’t top off the tank. It releases gas fumes, which cancels the pump’s anti-pollution devices.
8. Telecommute. Work at home sometimes. You’ll save time and money, and reduce emissions and traffic congestion.
9. Know before you go. Get travel and transit updates before you leave home so you won’t get stuck in a traffic jam.
10. Spread the word. If everyone took a few of these simple, easy steps, it could make a big difference because ...

It all adds up to cleaner air! [NCTC](#)

Found on FHWA Website: italladdsup.gov