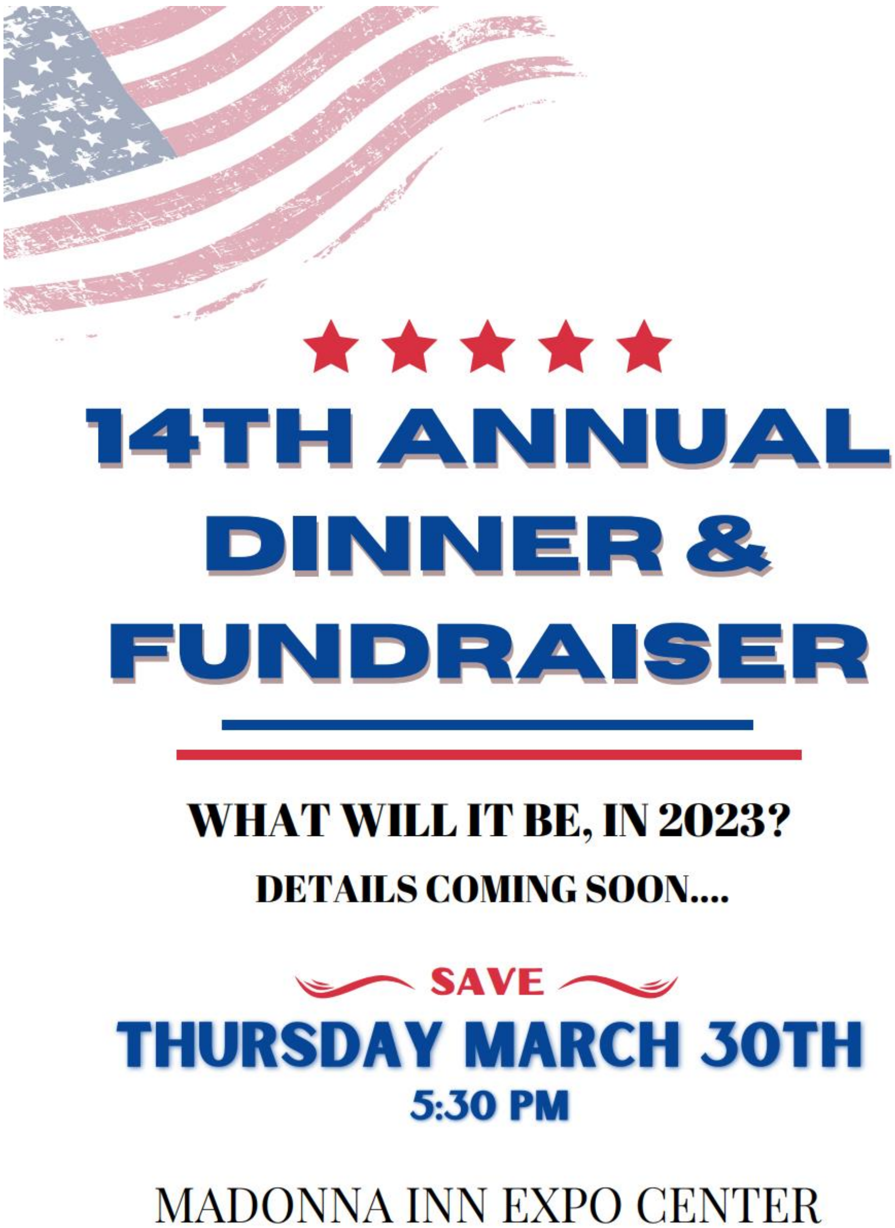
COLAB
San Luis Obispo County
The Coalition of Labor Agriculture and Business

WEEKLY UPDATE
January 29 - February 4, 2023



BOS MAJORITY LEFT BLITZKRIEG OFFICIALLY OPENED

THIS WEEK

ALERT

SPECIAL BOS MEETING ON SUNDAY JAN 29, 10:00 AM

TO INITIATE REPEAL OF PASO BASIN PLANTING ORDINANCE

PUBLIC COMMENT NOT PERMITTED ON THE ITEM

PUBLIC COMMENT ON CONSENT ITEM ONLY

NO REGULAR BOS MEETING THIS TUESDAY

LAST WEEK

BOS MEETING
LEFTIST MAJORITY BLITZKRIEG BEGAN

ARNOLD KICKED OFF PASO BASIN COMMITTEE, GIBSON TO REIGN

PASO BASIN PLANTING ORDINACE TO BE SACKED
SPECIAL SUNDAY BOS MEETING AS NOTED ABOVE TO SPEED CANCELLATION THROUGH

CAO FORCED TO CONDUCT HURRY-UP CONTRACT TO JOIN CENTRAL COAST COMMUNITY ENERGY

CAO AND PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTED TO PROCESS RE-JOIN TO CORRUPT INTEGRATED WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

PAULDING DIRECTS STAFF TO ANALYZE NEW FEES & TAXES AND TAX INCREASES, ESPCIALLY ROAD MEASURE & TOT

BOARD DECIDES TO ALLOW GIBSON TO "INFORMALLY" REPRESENT LOS OSOS & MORRO BAY AND PAULDING TO "INFORMALLY" REPRESENT OCEANO EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE NOT IN THEIR DISTRICTS

PAULDING SAYS THESE STEPS ARE TO BUILD "PUBLIC TRUST"

MUCH MORE WILL BE COMMING SOON!

MATTERS THAT WERE ACTUALLY ON THE AGENDA

FY 2023-24 BUDGET FORECAST – NOW A $12 MILLION PROBLEM MAY OR MAY NOT CAUSE PROBLEMS

WAIVER OF RESIDENCY FOR COMMISSIONERS APPROVED

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMITTEES ARNOLD KICKED OF PASO BASIN COMMITTEE

REDISTRICTING PLAN LAWSUIT TO BE SETTLED PROBABLY BY THROWING OUT CURRENT MAP

MULTI-MILLION FIRE DEPT EXPANSION REPORT RECEIVED

APCD

JOINT APCD/SLOCOG PLAN TO SELL VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED (VMT) CREDITS WILL BE DEVELOPED

PLANNING COMMISSION

15 LOT SUBSIVISION IN TEMPLETON APPROVED 3/1/0
NEIGHBORS SQUAWK, CAMPBELL VOTED "NO",
LEFT COMMISSIONERS SHOVED IT THROUGH

SLO PENSION TRUST

NOT AS BAD AS IT COULD HAVE BEEN

EMERGENT ISSUES

CAL WATER PROJECT LAKES STILL FILLING

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION REJECTS PG&E REQUEST TO REOPEN ORIGINAL RELICENSING APP.
REQUEST TO EXTEND CURRENT PERMIT PENDING

COLAB IN DEPTH

SEE PAGE 24

THE ENVIRONMENTALIST ASSAULT ON CIVILIZATION

With prosperity, we can adapt as we always have. With tyranny, we can do nothing. Climate alarmism is tyranny with green wrapping, delivered with terror.

BY EDWARD RING

THE FALSE PROMISE OF ELECTRIC CARS

Policy-makers should not push them harder than the market does

BY ANDREW STUTTAFORD

THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS
ALL MEETINGS ARE AT 9:00 AM UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

Special Board of Supervisors Meeting of Sunday, January 29, 2023 (scheduled) 10:00 AM

Item 1 - Request to 1) introduce the attached amendments to Title 8 and Title 22 of the San Luis Obispo County Code to rescind Ordinance No. 3483, the Paso Basin Land Use Management Area Planting Ordinance, and re-enact and extend until January 1, 2028 the previously adopted Agricultural Offset Requirements for New or Expanded Irrigated Crop Production Using Water from the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin; and 2) authorize the use of Alternative Publication Procedures for the attached amendments to Title 8 and Title 22 of the County Code. Exempt from CEQA. Hearing date set for February 7, 2023. Districts 1, 2, and 4. The new leftist Board majority has scheduled the Sunday, January 29, 2023 special meeting to set February 7, 2023 as the date to repeal the Paso Basin Planting Ordinance. Their urgency is based on their desire to repeal the ordinance before it actually goes into effect on March 2023. The repeal would restore the original provisions of the Paso Basin Water Moratorium until 2028 and would eliminate the ability of small users to apply for up to 25 acre-feet of water.

Were the ordinance to go into effect, the repeal process would be more complicated, as the environmental impacts would have to be considered. Also, removing the ability of a class of small users to drill for water on their property in actuality would be a taking, since the land is worth much less or worthless without enough water for a crop. The Board leftist majority is keenly aware of these issues and therefore wants to eliminate them in this pre-emptive strike.

It is outrageous that the Board has determined to forbid public comment on this item.

Date and Time of Special Meeting:	January 29, 2023, at 10:00 A.M.
Place of Special Meeting:	Board of Supervisors Chambers, 1055 Monterey Street San Luis Obispo, CA 93408
Business to be considered:	See agenda below

10:00 FLAG SALUTE

PUBLIC COMMENT ON CONSENT ITEMS ONLY

Items Set for Hearing:

1 Request to 1) introduce the attached amendments to Title 8 and Title 22 of the San Luis Obispo County Code to rescind Ordinance No. 3483, the Paso Basin Land Use Management Area Planting Ordinance, and re-enact and extend until January 1, 2028 the previously adopted Agricultural Offset Requirements for New or Expanded Irrigated Crop Production Using Water from the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin; and 2) authorize the use of Alternative Publication Procedures for the attached amendments to Title 8 and Title 22 of the County Code. Exempt from CEQA. Hearing date set for February 7, 2023. Districts 1, 2, and 4.

Consent Agenda - Administrative Office Items:

2 Request to amend the Board of Supervisors Rules of Procedure to allowing regular session meetings to be extended past 5:00 P.M. upon a vote of three Supervisors. All Districts.

ADJOURNMENT

Item 2 - Request to amend the Board of Supervisors Rules of Procedure to allowing regular session meetings to be extended past 5:00 P.M. upon a vote of three Supervisors. All Districts. For whatever reason, the new board majority wants to make it easier to extend Board meetings past 5:00PM. Currently, their rules require a unanimous vote. It is proposed that it only would require consent of three (3). No doubt the new majority has a great deal of legislation to move forward and will pack the meetings with supporters. This will make them longer and will enable them to tire out any opposition. It is the Berkeley City Council technique of going until 2:00 AM. People who have real jobs can't stay all night.

LAST WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

SLO County Pension Trust (SLOCPT) Meeting of Monday, January 23, 2023 (Completed)

Item 14 - Monthly Investment Report for December 2022. The fund lost $158 million over the 2022 calendar year. It is not so bad, considering the earlier declines in the financial markets. The actuarial report and recommendations for rates will come out in May 2023. Hopefully, the Chinese won't invade Taiwan and the US won't get deeper into the Ukraine war in the meantime. A recession could also negatively impact expected performance.

Meanwhile, the County continues to add staffing. Also see **Item 26**, below, in which a consultant recommends a substantial expansion of the County Fire Department.

Agenda Item 14: Monthly Investment Report for December 2022

	December	**Year to Date 2022**		2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Total Trust Investments ($ millions)	$1,617			$1,775	$1,552 year end	$1,446 year end	$1,285 year end	$1,351 year end
Total Fund Return	-1.8% Gross	**-7.9%** Gross		15.2% Gross	8.9 % Gross	16.3 % Gross	-3.2 % Gross	15.5 % Gross
Policy Index Return (r)	-1.6%	-9.3%		12.8%	10.0 %	16.4 %	-3.2 %	13.4 %

Board of Supervisors Meeting of Tuesday, January 24, 2023 (Completed)

NEW BOARD MAJORITY LAUNCHES ITS POLICY AGENDA

The new Board majority has wasted no time in initiating its agenda. This is smart of them because a new regime usually has about 6 months to implement its strategy. After that, random events, disasters, disloyalty, and other factors combine to suck the energy out of the movement.

During the 2022 election campaign COLAB pointed out the issues which the left progressives would push if they gained the Board of Supervisors Majority. So far and after only one real Board meeting, they are on schedule. The red check marks indicate those launched so far.

✓ **1**. The current redistricting plan will be "found" to be "illegal" and reversed. The Board majority can simply go into executive session and agree to surrender the issue.

✓ **2.** The County will join the Central Coast Community Energy Authority at the first opportunity. Admission to the Authority is allowed in 1.5-year cycles, based on its long-range energy acquisition situation. This will have the result of obligating the County and its citizens to be responsible for its proportionate share of the Authority's 40-year long term energy contracts.

3. The so-called housing in lieu fee, which is really a tax on home builders and developers, will be reinstated.

✓ 4. The Paso Water Basin will become subject to massive water banking of State water, thereby vitiating the overliers' primary water rights. It will also enable large outside corporate entities to dominate the water policies that impact the basin. The recently adopted planting ordinance will be revoked. Again, and if the promised lawsuit is filed, the new Board majority can go into executive session and surrender.

5. Permits for cannabis cultivation will be made easier to obtain, and cannabis grows will be allowed in more regions of the county.

6. The last remaining oil and gas production in the County will be driven out. New wells will not be permitted.

7. The use of natural gas appliances will be banned for all new construction, and an ordinance will be adopted requiring the phase out of existing gas appliances over time (particularly at replacement).

✓8. Stack-and-pack dense housing will be promoted in permitting and land use regulations, while larger lot free-standing homes will be subject to many barriers and will pay much higher fees. The first of many new regs was launched at last week's APCD meeting, as staff was directed to prepare a vehicle miles traveled regulatory and credit market scheme. See the article on page 20 below for the details.

9. The Sheriffs and DA budgets will slowly be starved in favor of expansion of homeless and mental health programs. Civil disorder in the name of the societal reset will be encouraged in the City of San Luis Obispo, as crowd control tear gas and light dowel and foam rubber munitions are banned.

10. Severe regulations related to climate change will be imposed in every aspect of County authority. For example, the permitting of new or renovated gasoline and diesel fueling stations will be prohibited.

11. The Board will attempt to impose a wide variety of environmental and social equity restrictions on the SLO County Pension Trust's investment policies.

12. The County will adopt a broad policy of requiring contractors to be part of a regional program labor agreement. This will cut out most local contractors from County projects and will severely increase the cost. Paulding has received tens of thousands in campaign contributions from the large trade unions.

✓13. Significant expansion of homeless programs in the form of patronage grants to not-for-profits will take place.

14. **One we didn't think of:** Supervisor Paulding directed staff to bring back a list of tax and fee increases which could be used to "expand programs". He particularly mentioned the TOT and a sales tax for transportation.

Businesspeople and agriculturalists who supported the new Board majority members during the election on a single-issue basis will soon regret their mistake as the new taxes, fees, and regulations close in around them.

Item 1 - Board of Supervisor Raises. The Board voted 3/2 with Paulding and Peschong dissenting to set the hearing to consider the Board salary raises on February 7th. Supervisor

Paulding stated he did not want his first vote on the Board to be to give himself a raise. Arnold indicated that her approval of conducting the hearing did not necessarily mean that she supported the raises. She stated that she simply wanted to hear the presentation and arguments.

Other actions by the Board majority, which subsequently took place during the meeting, may have destroyed any chance that Arnold will help with feathering the nest.

Background Details: Per prior policy, the staff is recommending salary increases for the Board members. The basic principle is that they should make 25% more than their Legislative Aides. Applying this formula results in the schedule below:

In order to bring the Board of Supervisors annual salary to be 25% above the annual salary of Legislative Assistants and to address the market position, the attached ordinance proposes to increase the Board of Supervisors' salary as follows:

• *Effective April 16, 2023: increase the annual salary from $90,417.60 to $103,979.20*
• *Effective June 25, 2023: increase the annual salary from $103,979.20 to $106,597.20*
• *Effective June 23, 2024: increase the annual salary from $106,597.20 to $109,241.60*
• *Subsequent to June 23, 2024, members of the Board of Supervisors shall receive the same percentage increase to their annual salary that is applied to the annual salary of the Legislative Assistant classification. This increase shall also be applied at the same time the increase is applied to the Legislative Assistant classification.*

The Board members post-retirement health benefits are also being increased:

County employees participate in one of two post-employment health plans (PEHP), which are funded either through a direct contribution by the County or by employees through their accrued sick leave balances once they leave County employment. The PEHP funded through direct contribution by the County can be used to pay for qualified medical expenses not covered by health insurance after separation of service. The PEHP funded through employees' accrued sick leave balances is an insurance premium reimbursement account, and can be used to reimburse for qualified health insurance premiums after separation of service.

Elected Department Heads and members of the Board of Supervisors participate in the PEHP that is funded through direct contribution by the County and which can be used to pay for qualified medical expenses not covered by health insurance, subject to IRS limitations. The current County contribution is $600 per year. It is recommended this contribution be increased from the current $600 annual contribution to $5,000 per full year of service, or a prorated amount for a partial year of service, as an elected official, up to a maximum County contribution of $50,000, which will be available upon the termination of the Elected Department Head's or member of the Board of Supervisor's term in office.

For years Alameda County had a better system under which the salaries were made equal to that of a Superior Court Judge. In this way they were actually dependent on the Legislature. At some point a court ruled that the process was illegal.

In any case, the salaries are not extravagant given the time and preparation required for all the meetings, including the County Board, SLOCOG, APCD, and other committee and delegate Board assignments. This is compounded by ceremonial duties, community meetings, and political duties within their respective parties. See also **Item 21**, below, for a discussion of additional committees and commissions on which Board Members serve.

Our hope is that Board members will not be so enamored of staff (or perhaps afraid of them). This would mean asking hard questions in public and refusing to accept non-answers and diversionary answers. Being an elected representative is not a team sport. Elected officials are here to represent the voters and to hold the elaborate and permanent organization accountable. This requires maintenance of a degree of distance and uncomfortable tension

Item 20 - Item 31 Postponed from January 10, 2023 meeting due to storm operations - Review of the FY 2023-24 Budget Goals and Policies, Budget Balancing Strategies and Approaches, and Board Priorities, and provide direction to staff as necessary. The Board received the standard presentation and did not seem particularly perturbed by the impending \$8-\$12 million revenue expenditure gap in the general fund. They hear this every year and nothing ever happens. Moreover, and as noted below, \$12 million is manageable in a \$671 million general fund budget and millions of dollars and Federal and state slush funds still pouring in.

Major Policy Introduced: As noted in the Policy Summary discussion above, this item was used by the new Board majority to introduce and lay out its major policy agenda. While we disagree profoundly with that agenda, the procedural use of the Budget formulation item is the perfectly appropriate place to initiate this program. In fact, this is the first time in 12 years that we have observed the Budget discussion to introduce major policy changes.

Bad Process Otherwise: At the same time and disturbingly, it was apparent that the staff had walked the Board informally to ascertain how the regular existing budget policies might be changed or retained.

Worse yet, the Board has never given the County Administrative Officer and senior staff an opportunity to independently recommend a comprehensive program of service. Instead, they continue the process of incrementalism each year and assume that the budget is base building.

Background: The staff is forecasting an \$8 to \$16 million estimated General Fund revenue - expenditure gap as it begins to formulate the proposed FY 2023-24 Budget. With a current FY 2022-23 General Fund Budget of \$671.0 million out of a total government funds Budget of \$807.0 million, the gap should be manageable. The high range \$12 million gap is only 2% of the General Fund.

State Controller Schedules County Budget Act	**County of San Luis Obispo** All Funds Summary Fiscal Year 2022-23						**Schedule 1**
	Total Financing Sources				**Total Financing Uses**		
Fund Name	**Fund Balance Available June 30, 2022**	**Decreases to Obligated Fund Balances**	**Additional Financing Sources**	**Total Financing Sources**	**Financing Uses**	**Increases to Obligated Fund Balances**	**Total Financing Uses**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Governmental Funds							
General Fund	$ 52,664,754	$ 337,555	$ 618,746,914	$ 671,749,223	$ 665,599,461	$ 6,149,762	$ 671,749,223
Special Revenue Fund	10,380,783	9,963,128	87,096,547	107,440,458	87,787,683	19,652,775	107,440,458
Debt Service Fund	471,873	---	20,310,490	20,782,363	16,937,692	3,844,671	20,782,363
Capital Projects	122,558	---	6,891,191	7,013,749	7,013,749	---	7,013,749
Total Governmental Funds	**$ 63,639,968**	**$ 10,300,683**	**$ 733,045,142**	**$ 806,985,793**	**$ 777,338,586**	**$ 29,647,208**	**$ 806,985,794**
Other Funds							
Enterprise Fund	$ ---	$ 3,570,144	$ 25,711,295	$ 29,281,439	$ 28,271,529	$ 1,009,910	$ 29,281,439
Internal Service Fund	---	7,225,304	66,631,536	73,856,840	72,378,097	1,478,743	73,856,840
Special Districts and Other Agencies	5,680,164	2,944	11,857,754	17,540,862	15,308,936	2,231,926	17,540,862
Total Other Funds	**$ 5,680,164**	**$ 10,798,392**	**$ 104,200,585**	**$ 120,679,141**	**$ 115,958,562**	**$ 4,720,579**	**$ 120,679,141**
Total All Funds	**$ 69,320,132**	**$ 21,099,075**	**$ 837,245,727**	**$ 927,664,934**	**$ 893,297,148**	**$ 34,367,787**	**$ 927,664,935**

Note that the total County Budget, when enterprise and County dependent special districts are included, is $927.7 million. The County had an unrestricted General Fund balance of $52.6 million on June 30, 2022.

The CAO is prudent in warning the Board to be restrained, as the national and State economic/social situation is volatile and moving toward disruption.

The Budget Goals and Policies, Budget Balancing Strategies and Approaches, and Board Priorities together provide the framework in which the budget is prepared. As highlighted in the financial forecast presented to the Board on November 1, 2022, the County's General Fund faces a budget gap of $8-$16 million in FY 2023-24. Given the projected gap, continued compliance with the Board-adopted Budget Goals and Policies will be important to assuring the ongoing fiscal health of the County.

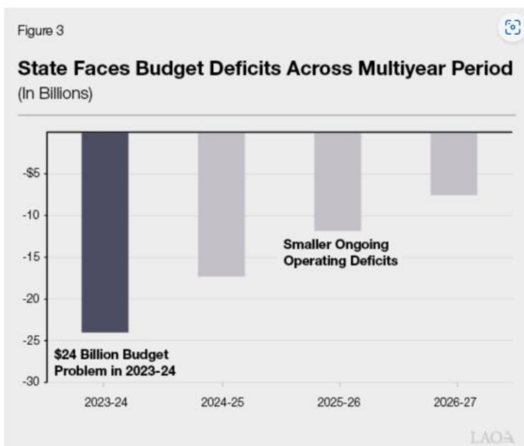
Substantive Board budget priorities have evolved over the years. The current version is summarized in the image below:

The Board on a 3/2 vote, with Peschong and Arnold dissenting, revised the priorities to make homeless prevention and remediation the top priority and to "fill" Behavioral Health service gaps as a top priority. The Roads priority was eliminated with some vigor by Gibson. Public safety was retained with sort of an "oh yeah we do that" attitude. No one mentioned that **Item 26**, below, recommends tens of millions of new dollars for the Fire Department.

Preventing and remediating homelessness has been an expanding priority in recent years. All levels of government are spending more and more each year. The nexus of the problem is that thus far, no one has figured out a way to make a large segment of the homeless population accountable. It is not illegal to be a vagrant. A significant portion (perhaps 70%) is suffering from a combination of mental illness, alcoholism, and drug abuse. These problems do not subside simply because people are provided with housing, medicine, and counseling. Most will never get better.

It will be interesting to see how the new Board majority adjusts the priorities and/or refines them. The Budget is the most significant tool for the Board of Supervisors to set priorities and overall strategic direction of the County.

Bigger Picture: The State Budget can have a major impact on counties, as they are the retailers of most State programs. The graph below displays the State Legislative Analyst's Office projections for the next 4 years.

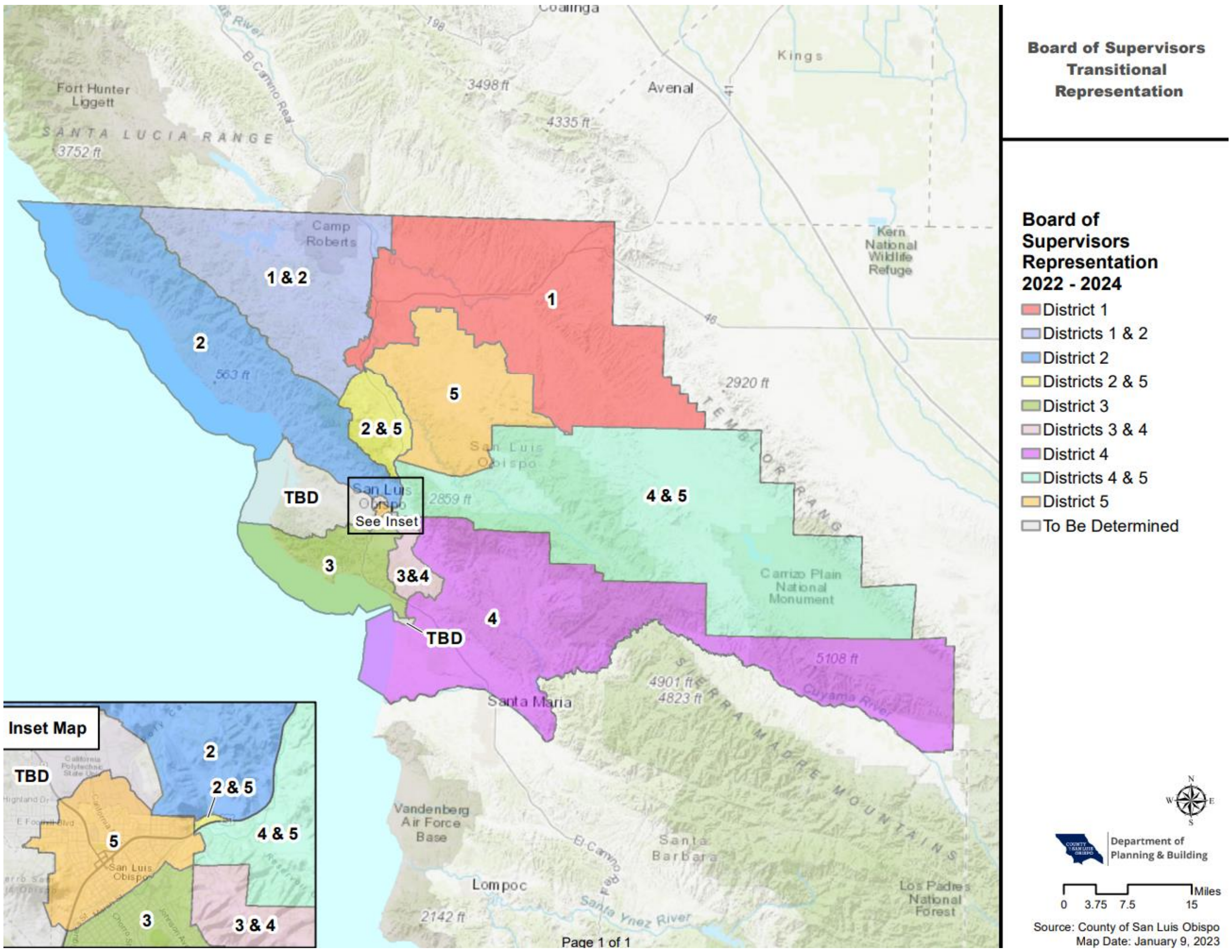


Item 21 - Waiver of District Residency Requirements for Members of Boards and Commissions. The waiver was approved unanimously and with no friction. As a result of Supervisorial Redistricting, some Board and Commission members now live in a district in which they were not originally appointed. Simultaneously, some districts will not take effect until the 2024 election. The write-up explains:

There are some Board appointed commissions and committees that require, either by ordinance or resolution, that the appointee resides in the same district as the supervisor nominating them for appointment. The general purpose of this is to achieve broad regional representation on commissions and committees. As a result of redistricting, district residency requirements have become difficult to achieve because of areas that overlap the old boundary lines and areas where there is no recently elected supervisor.

Therefore, it is recommended that the Board adopt a resolution to temporarily suspend residency requirements for Board appointed commissions and committees, as applicable, until the end of 2024. This allows Supervisors to appoint residents that reside in areas that may not otherwise be eligible to serve on a commission or committee because of district boundary changes. The result would suspend boundary restrictions for the Board's commission and committee appointments and allow flexibility for appointees to serve outside of their district jurisdiction if needed. Additionally, this will allow current appointees whose district residence has changed because of redistricting to serve until a new appointment is made.

The Planning Commission is an especially important body which is impacted by this situation.



Item 22 - Appointments to committees and commissions. The appointments went smoothly and with cordial cooperation except for the expulsion of Supervisor Arnold from the Paso Basin Coordinating Committee and her replacement by Bruce Gibson on a 3/2 vote with Peschong and Arnold dissenting. Notwithstanding that some big water users who hope for State water banking supported the move, tens of thousands of north County residents are totally offended. Paulding's vote to support Gibson will come back to haunt him in future years, as he was backed by some of the same water heavies as Gibson. Back in 2016, almost 80 percent of the voting Paso Basin voted against a prior attempt to set up an elite controlled AB 2453water district over the Basin.

Background: There are 30 committees on which Board members serve. Some of the most important include LAFCO, California State Association of Counties, REACH (Economic Development), Rural Counties Representatives of California, Regional Health Authority, Paso Basin Cooperative Committee, and CAPSLO. In reference to **Item 1**, above (Supervisor salaries), these assignment present a further study and attendance workload.

In SLO County the process of who gets which ones has been collegial in the past, at least publicly. However, this year Supervisor Gibson has expressed interest in being the County representative on the Paso Basin Cooperative Committee, which handles the coordination between the various jurisdictions over the Paso Basin Groundwater Sustainability Plan. He would replace Debbie Arnold if appointed. Back in 2016, Gibson supported the creation of the AB 2453 Water District over the Basin, which was rejected by almost 80% of the Basin voters.

Some of the key Gibson's key campaign contributors are major players in the wine industry and opposed the planting ordinance. Some supported the AB 2453 District.

Bruce Gibson for Supervisor 2022 | 1279202

DATE RECEIVED	FULL NAME, STREET ADDRESS AND ZIP CODE OF CONTRIBUTOR (IF COMMITTEE, ALSO ENTER I.D. NUMBER)	CONTRIBUTOR CODE *	IF AN INDIVIDUAL, ENTER OCCUPATION AND EMPLOYER (IF SELF-EMPLOYED, ENTER NAME OF BUSINESS)	AMOUNT RECEIVED THIS PERIOD	CUMULATIVE TO DATE CALENDAR YEAR (JAN. 1 - DEC. 31)	PER ELECTION TO DATE (IF REQUIRED)
09/24/2022	Matthew Turrentine Cayucos, CA 93430	☒IND ☐COM ☐OTH ☐PTY ☐SCC	Asset Management Grapevine Capital	5,000.00	5,500.00	
09/15/2022	Neil Cassidy Paso Robles, CA 93446	☒IND ☐COM ☐OTH ☐PTY ☐SCC	Chief Financial & Operating Officer DAOU Vineyards	3,000.00	3,000.00	
09/15/2022	Marjorie Curtsinger	☒IND	Retired	50.00	279.00	
08/24/2022	Randy Heinzen Paso Robles, CA 93446	☒IND ☐COM ☐OTH ☐PTY ☐SCC	President Vineyard Professional Services, Inc	900.00	900.00	
08/19/2022	Dana Merrill Paso Robles, CA 93446	☒IND ☐COM ☐OTH ☐PTY ☐SCC	President, owner Mesa Vineyard Management, Inc.	500.00	500.00	
08/20/2022	Stephen Austin	☒IND	Retired	100.00	100.00	
08/07/2022	Stephen Sinton Santa Margarita, CA 93453	☒IND ☐COM ☐OTH ☐PTY ☐SCC	Rancher Self Employed, No Separate Business Name	1,000.00	1,000.00	
08/02/2022	Kathleen Maas San Miguel, CA 93451	☒IND ☐COM ☐OTH ☐PTY ☐SCC	Vineyard & Winery Owner Pear Valley Estate Wine	1,000.00	2,000.00	
10/22/2022	Jerome Lohr Saratoga, CA 95070	☒IND ☐COM ☐OTH ☐PTY ☐SCC	Winegrower & Vintner J. Lohr Vineyards & Wine	5,000.00	15,000.00	
09/28/2022	James Ledbetter Lodi, CA 95240	☒IND ☐COM ☐OTH ☐PTY ☐SCC	Grape Grower, Partner Vino Farms, LLC	3,000.00	3,000.00	

04/01/2021	Bruce Gibson for Supervisor 2022	$1,000.00	RCPT	A	Dana Merrill	Paso Robles, CA 93446		self - Mesa Vyd Mgnt.Inc	winegrape grower	View
11/12/2021	Bruce Gibson for Supervisor 2022	$2,500.00	RCPT	A	Matthew Turrentine	Cayucos, CA 93430		Grapevine Capital	asset manager	View

What will Gibson’s control mean for the small operator who is trapped in the Paso Water Moratorium?

Item 23 - Pending Litigation. **Postponed from 2 weeks ago due to storm operations: Executive Session – Pending litigation - (3) SLO County Citizens for Good Government, Inc., Gomez, Maruska, Villa v. County of Luis Obispo Board of Supervisors, San Luis Obispo County Superior Court, Case No. 22CVP-0007.** The Board went into closed session for several hours. When they came out, County Counsel Rita Neal announced that the Board had directed her to seek settlement of the redistricting lawsuit. It is likely that she will report back that the plaintiffs will agree to version B of the redistricting map or perhaps the SLO Chamber of Commerce version. Another possibility is that the current districts would remain but a Redistricting Commission would be created.

Lawsuits Coming? Since the action, there has been considerable discussion of the potential illegality of overturning the legally adopted map currently in force. If the 3 Board members who wish to overturn that map (Gibson, Ortiz-Legg, and Paulding) vote in closed session or even openly to accept a settlement in which it is vitiated, they themselves could become targets of lawsuits. After all, the map was legally adopted in public and was supported by data from an expert redistricting consultant for which the County paid hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Background: After the Board majority voted to reform the Supervisorial District boundaries, the Citizens for Good Government (the “Citizens”) were formed to sue the County to compel adoption of a different version. In February 2022, the Court refused to issue an injunction to prevent the use of the new districts but did find that the plaintiff Citizens would be likely to prevail at trial on the grounds that the Board (majority at the time) did not consider evidence that the districts had been designed to favor Republicans. Presumably, the new Board majority could move to settle the case by adopting a version more acceptable to the “Citizens.” The “Citizens” are Democratic Party activists.

Although the new 2nd District was claimed to be especially favorable to the Republicans, Democrat Bruce Gibson still won with a 13-vote margin. In the prior 2nd District configuration, he usually won by a margin of 76%.

It is possible that the public will not know what is happening until a settlement is reached. Perhaps it already has, in ex-parte political discussions or illegal serial meetings, but we don’t know.

Supervisor Paulding is quoted in the New Times Weekly speculating on possible paths:
Again, going back to red flags, we had so many different community groups coming out saying, 'Don't do this. This map disenfranchises voters.' I am for enfranchising, not disenfranchising, voters.

"We have to, within the context of that litigation, develop a path forward that makes sense. That could entail an independent redistricting commission developing the boundaries for a future election. I think one of the things that has to be analyzed is—say you pick one community, Oceano: It had its right to vote in the 2022 election taken away. If we were to go back to the old lines, Oceano would then not be able to vote in the 2024 election again. So, it would be further disenfranchised for another two years.

"There is a discussion that our board will hopefully have in closed session that will revolve around how do we address those concerns? And maybe it will end up being that it makes sense to allow the 2024 election to proceed based on the current boundaries and then work toward the goal of an independent redistricting commission developing the outcome for the next election. I have no idea. We'll have to see where my colleagues are on that."

One thing for sure: Keeping the new Patten map is great for Supervisor Ortiz-Legg. Going back to the old map would be great for John Peschong.

Item 26 - Request to 1) receive and file the Strategic Plan for San Luis Obispo County Fire Department and provide direction as deemed necessary; 2) direct staff to conduct a Paid Call Firefighter program analysis; 3) direct staff to prepare an Information Technology Strategic Plan for County Fire; 4) direct staff to conduct a Special Tax/Benefit Assessment analysis; and 5) direct staff to develop a community outreach and education plan on fire protection. The Board heard a detailed presentation and asked many pertinent questions. Implementation of the Plan will take many years due to its costs (see details beginning on page 17 below).

Summary: The Plan is a comprehensive review and assessment of the current and future needs of the San Luis Obispo County Fire Department. The County contracts with Cal Fire to provide the services but determines the level of service it desires. The County pays for the actual staffing, operational, and capital costs through the contract as well as some functions directly. The Fire Department provides a variety of services, including fire, rescue, on-scene medical, disaster, air support, fire and safety inspections, and many others.

The report within the Strategic plan explores gaps and improvements and makes recommendations in many aspects. These are broadly divided as follows:

The recommendations are outlined in the following sections and summarized in the table below:

- Section 2 Recommendations: Management and Operations
- Section 3 Recommendations: Emergency Medical Services
- Section 4 Recommendations: Response Service Levels
- Section 5 Recommendations: Facilities
- Section 6 Recommendations: Finance and Administration

The report has also listed the annual operating and future capital expenses necessary to fund the recommended improvements.

FUTURE EXPENSES *This Strategic Plan has identified areas within the County Fire operation that are not meeting the recommended standards based on community demographics and service level criteria. As such, additional costs, both "one time" and ongoing have been identified. The following summary charts identify the areas in need of improvement/enhancement, associated projected costs, and estimated timelines for improvements.*

Capital Facility Projects				
Procure property: Santa Marg., Oak Shores, E A.G., SW Nipo	4,000,000	Asset	New	Capital improvement
Santa Margarita: New Fire Station	10,000,000	Asset	New	Capital improvement
Backup ECC	1,600,000	Asset	New	Capital improvement
Repeater upgrades	600,000	Asset	New	Capital Improvement
Oak Shores: New Rural Fire Station	10,000,000	Asset	New	Capital improvement
East of Arroyo Grande: New Fire Station	10,000,000	Asset	New	Capital improvement
SW Nipomo: New Fire Station	10,000,000	Asset	New	Capital improvement
Sub total	**46,200,000**			

New Costs: New capital expenditures recommended are displayed above. It is not known if any of these are included in the County's 5-year Capital Improvement Plan. They could be phased in over time.

New Operating Costs: The new recurring operating expenses would add $17.6 million to the County s current Fire Budget of $29 million per year. This number would grow over the years as salary, pension, health insurance, and the costs of supplies and materials grow. See the table below:

Additional Operational Costs				
Upgrade EMS manager to Battalion Chief	39,901	Operation	New	EMS
Add a Public Information Officer position Fire Captain	252,206	Operation	New	Fire Prevention
Augment Fire Prevention: Vegetation management/plan ch	541,540	Operation	New	Fire Prevention
Three new Battalion Chief positions: Operations	816,000	Operation	New	Operations
Replacement fund for vehicles/equipment	48,000	Operation	New	Operations
Heritage Ranch: Upgrade to ALS Paramedic	142,300	Operation	New	EMS
Avila Beach: Upgrade to ALS Paramedic	142,300	Operation	New	EMS
Office Technician: North Division staff support	121,741	Operation	New	Administration
Third firefighter staffing at two fire stations (9 FAE PM)	2,100,000	Operation	New	EMS
Estero Bay: Upgrade to ALS Paramedic	142,300	Operation	New	EMS
Shandon: Upgrade to ALS Paramedic	142,300	Operation	New	Operations
Added staffing for a full time County engine at Shandon	1,403,728	Operation	New	Fire Prevention
Add a Fire Prevention Inspector Fire Captain	252,206	Operation	New	Operations
Added services and supplies to operate Santa Margarita	395,000	Operation	New	EMS
Third firefighter staffing at two fire stations (9 FAE PM)	2,100,000	Operation	New	EMS
Santa Margarita: Upgrade to Paramedic	142,300	Operation	New	Operaions
Paso Robles: Upgrade to ALS Paramedic	142,300	Operation	New	Operations
Added Heavy Equipment Mechanic	178,730	Operation	New	Operations
Third firefighter staffing at two fire stations (9 FAE PM)	2,100,000	Operation	New	Operations
Added services and supplies to operate Oak Shores	395,000	Operation	New	Operations
Seasonal staffing at Oak Shores/Lake Nacimiento	1,050,000	Operation	New	Operations
Added staff for 3.0 staffing at E. Arroyo Grande	2,100,000			
Added services and supplies to operate at E. Arroyo Grande	395,000			
Added staff for 3.0 staffing at SW Nipomo	2,100,000			
Added services and supplies to operate SW Nipomo	395,000	Operation	New	Operations
Sub total	**17,637,852**			

New equipment would also be required per the table below:

Additional Equipment				
Heritage Ranch: ALS equipment upgrade	45,000	Asset	New	EMS
Avila Beach: ALS equipment upgrade	45,000	Asset	New	EMS
Staff vehicles and equipment to support new positions	480,000	Asset	New	Fire Prevention
Estero Bay: ALS equipment upgrade	45,000	Asset	New	EMS
Shandon: ALS equipment upgrade	45,000	Asset	New	EMS
Paso Robles: ALS equipment upgrade	45,000	Asset	New	EMS
Santa Margarita: ALS equipment upgrade	45,000	Asset	New	EMS
Add water tender in north county	571,500	Asset	New	Operations
Add water tender in south county	571,500	Asset	New	Operations
Added apparatus to new station East of AG	1,350,000	Asset	New	Capital Improvement
Add fully equipped Quint to new station in SW Nipomo	1,250,000	Asset	New	Capital Improvement
Sub total	**4,493,000**			

Current revenue sources, including the General Fund and Proposition 172, are not sufficient t to carry out the program.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

	FY 2021-22 Adopted	FY 2021-22 Actual	FY 2022-23 Recommended	FY 2022-23 Adopted	Change from FY 2021-22
Licenses, Permits, and Franchises	$648,558	$634,676	$656,815	$656,815	$8,257
Intergovernmental Revenue	$3,030,038	$3,756,697	$3,752,200	$3,752,200	$722,162
Charges for Current Services	$4,081,964	$3,724,295	$3,983,369	$3,983,369	$(98,595)
Other Revenues	$84,000	$133,399	$84,000	$84,000	$0
Interfund	$1,278,020	$1,112,573	$1,424,917	$1,424,917	$146,897
Total Revenue	**$9,122,580**	**$9,361,639**	**$9,901,301**	**$9,901,301**	**$778,721**
Services and Supplies	$27,131,206	$25,039,269	$26,878,597	$26,878,597	$(252,609)
Capital Assets	$3,081,880	$1,413,904	$2,039,821	$2,039,821	$(1,042,059)
Gross Expenditures	**$30,213,086**	**$26,453,172**	**$28,918,418**	**$28,918,418**	**$(1,294,668)**
Less Intrafund Transfers	$0	$(1,041)	$0	$0	$0
Net Expenditures	**$30,213,086**	**$26,452,132**	**$28,918,418**	**$28,918,418**	**$(1,294,668)**
General Fund Support	**$21,090,506**	**$17,090,493**	**$19,017,117**	**$19,017,117**	**$(2,073,389)**

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Special Tax Assessment: Accordingly, the consultants recommended that the County consider a special parcel tax to provide additional dedicated funds for the improvements. This might be done by implementing a special revenue district congruent with those parts of the County that are served by the Department. The voters would have to approve such a measure. This could compete with a likely ½ cent sales tax for roads in 2024.

A True Test: Fire and emergency services benefit everyone. They are paid for by basic taxes by everyone. Why should improving them be the subject of a voter tax override or special assessment? Instead, let the voters decide on the general fund over matches in health, addiction, and homeless remediation, and golf, subsidies to non-for profits, mass transit, and other discretionary services.

Not included in the study and recommendation is the idea of a county-wide consolidated fire district which would absorb and replace the existing fire agencies. The Cayucos Fire District went out of business 2 years ago as it could not survive on its tax base. The County had to largely pick up the costs in its annual budget. Other fire districts in the County are also at risk of collapse at some point in the future.

In any case, major policy considerations are embedded in this agenda item.

- What are the 5- and 10-year forecasts for the County's general fund revenues and expenditures? How does this proposal fit?
- Should other non-safety parts of the Budget be reduced?
- Should the County push to save Diablo indefinitely? It generated about $8 Million per year for the general fund.
- Determine how much of the revenue for proposed ocean wind turbine development is susceptible to County taxation.
- How much revenue is derived from the solar farms?

Eliminate a portion of the overmatches in:

- Social Services - $12.2 million
- Public Health - $12.8 million
- Behavioral Health - $18.5 million.

Set aside a growing portion of annual budget annually to develop a fire fund.

SLO Air Pollution Control District (APCD) Meeting of Wednesday, January 25, 2023 (Completed)

Item B-4: Request to Accept Funding from SLOCOG to Assist in the Development of a San Luis Obispo County Vehicle Miles Traveled Mitigation Program. Very unfortunately, the item was approved unanimously without question or comment on the Consent Agenda.

The APCD and SLOCOG have received a $300,000 grant to jointly develop a vehicle miles traveled (VMT) reduction credit market. Developers who build close to public transit, design car-unfriendly features, and otherwise conform to the doctrine will receive monetary credits that could be purchased by developers who don't conform. The program is designed to promote stack-and-pack housing, thus subjecting people to having to use public transit. You can move to the Bronx and enjoy all of this wonderful back-to-1900 lifestyle now.

Theoretically, the estate house on acreage will have to buy credits in order to be approved.

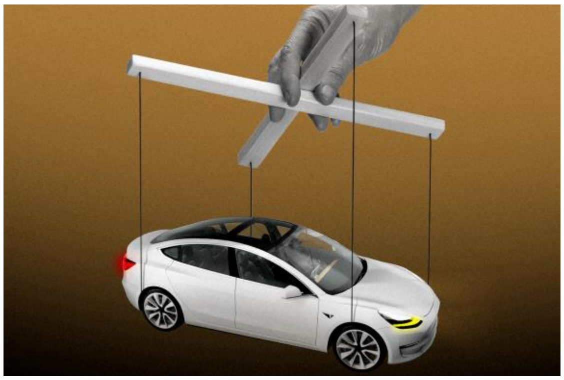
This could be a major disaster for agricultural development, such as wineries, event centers, rural cluster subdivisions, bed and breakfasts, etc.

The staff recommendation states in part:

The VMT Mitigation Program will develop a regional VMT banking or exchange framework that attempts to create a monetary value for VMT reduction. A developer could either implement a local predetermined VMT reducing project or purchase VMT reduction credits that would be used to secure VMT reduction from other projects or programs. VMT is a regional issue and through this coordinated approach, the jurisdictions in SLO County can reduce VMT by funding low emission transportation projects that would not be supported in a business-as-usual scenario.

The VMT Mitigation Program will also produce a Quick Response Tool (QRT) for developers to estimate project related VMT impacts. This tool will help incentivize development near existing urban areas and facilities and improve our regional jobs-housing balance. The QRT will help estimate a development's VMT mitigation cost and streamline the mitigation process.

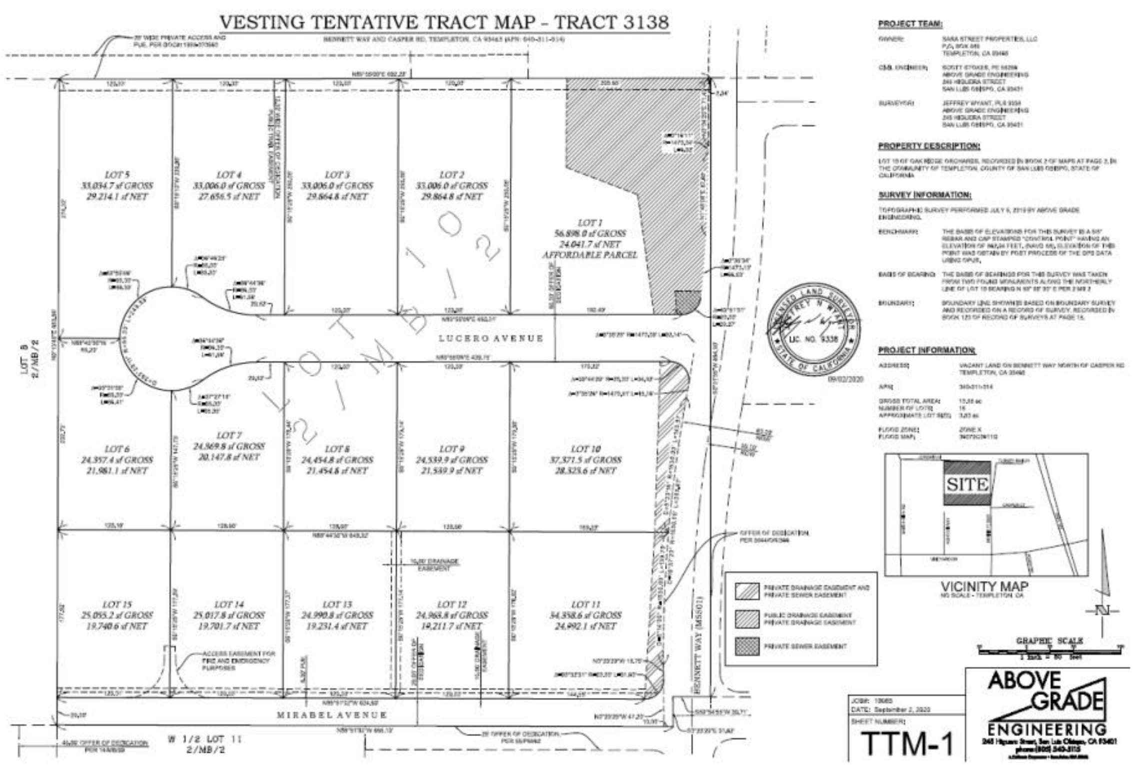
See the January 15 COLAB Weekly update at the link below for a full discussion of VMT in general. Weekly Update Jan-15_Jan-21_2023.pdf (colabslo.org)



Planning Commission Meeting of Thursday, January 26, 2023 (Completed)

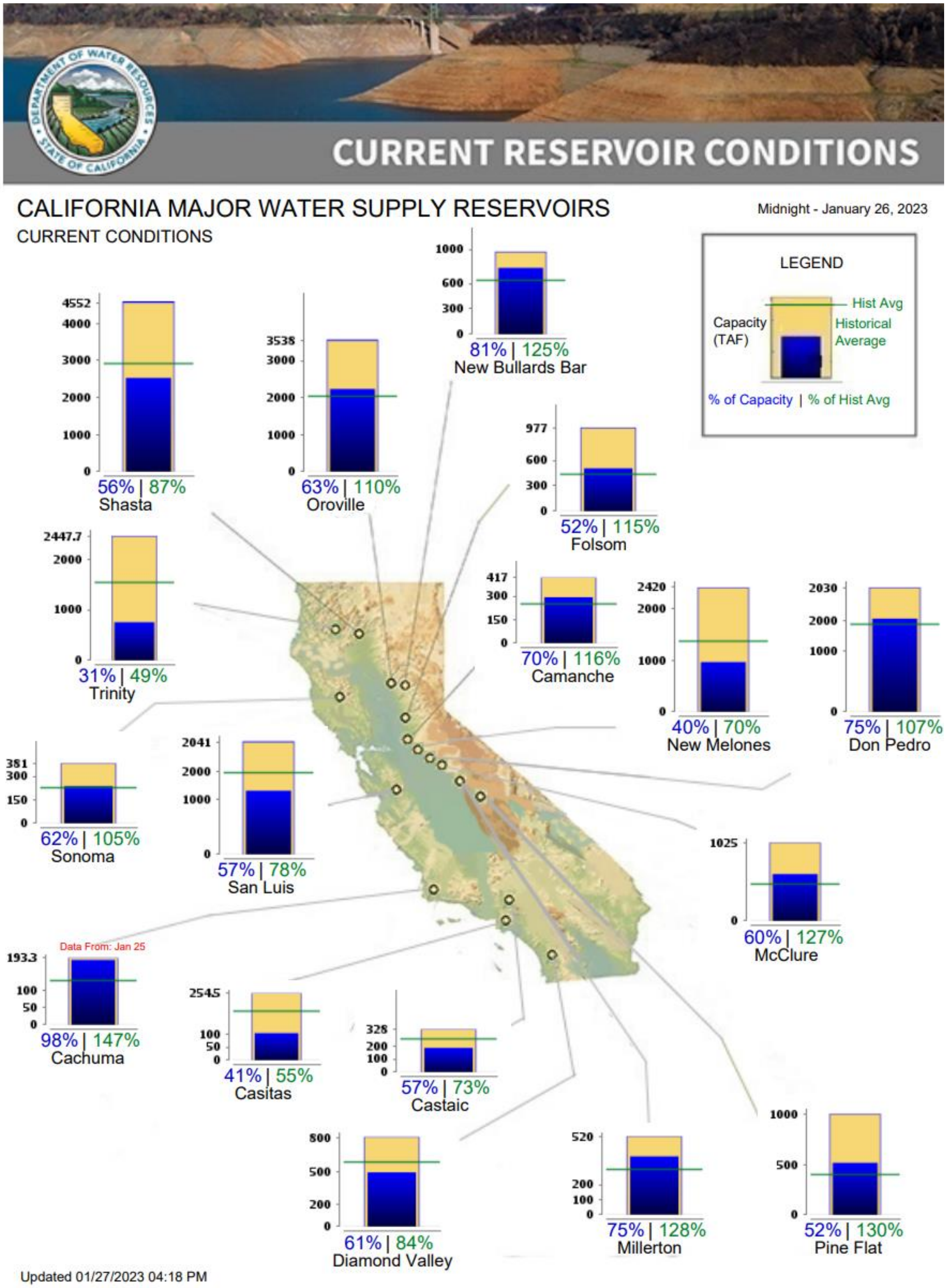
Item 7 - Hearing to consider a request by Sara Street Properties, LLC for a Vesting Tentative Tract Map and Conditional Use Permit (SUB2020-00027/Tract 3138) to subdivide an existing undeveloped 10.88-acre parcel into 15 parcels ranging between 0.56 and 1.30 acres each for the purpose of sale and future development of each proposed parcel for residential uses. The project is located within the Residential Suburban land use category on the west side of Bennett Way, at the northwest portion of the intersection with Casper Road, in the community of Templeton. The subdivision was approved 3/1/0 with Commissioner Campbell dissenting and Commissioner Villicana absent. It turned out that there was considerable opposition from the neighbors and the Templeton community Advisory Committee. Flooding, smaller lots, traffic, and lack of sidewalks in the neighborhood were all objections. In the end the Commission added a few additional conditions and approved the project. A major issue is that the surrounding neighborhoods contain homes on 1 acre each. The new subdivision will contain ½ acre lots to achieve higher density.

Commissioner Multari (Gibson's appointee) gratuitously opined that "Building homes on 1 acre lots is a relic of the past."



EMERGENT ISSUES

Item 1 - State Water Project reservoirs filling up.



Item 2 - Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) Rejects PG&E Request to Reopen its Original Relicensing Application. PG&E requested that the NRC allow the reopening of the application which it withdrew in 2018 and then build on that with any new information which would be required. The NRC responded in part:

After review of your request that the NRC resume the review of the withdrawn application, the NRC staff has determined that resuming this review would not be consistent with our regulations or the Principles of Good Regulation and that there is no compelling precedent to support your request to resume the review of your withdrawn application.

As an alternative, PG&E requested that the NRC exempt it from expiration of the current license in order to provide time to go through the relicensing process de novo. The NRC stated that it was still considering the matter:

The NRC staff is evaluating your alternative request for an exemption from 10 CFR 2.109(b) and will respond to that request in a separate letter.

And

Therefore, as described above, based on NRC regulations, NRC's Principles of Good Regulation, the lack of sufficient information to support your request that the staff resume its review of the withdrawn application, and the lack of relevant precedent to support that request, the NRC staff will not initiate or resume the review of the withdrawn DCPP application. This decision does not prohibit you from resubmitting your license renewal application under oath and affirmation, referencing information previously submitted, and providing any updated or new information to support the staff's review. The NRC staff has not made a determination on your request for an exemption from 10 CFR 2.109(b), which is included in your October 31, 2022, letter. The NRC staff is evaluating that exemption request and expects to provide a response in March 2023.

This is bad news that complicates and extends the time for the process.

COLAB IN DEPTH

IN FIGHTING THE TROUBLESOME, LOCAL DAY-TO-DAY ASSAULTS ON OUR FREEDOM AND PROPERTY, IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO KEEP IN MIND THE LARGER UNDERLYING IDEOLOGICAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC CAUSES

THE ENVIRONMENTALIST ASSAULT ON CIVILIZATION

With prosperity, we can adapt as we always have. With tyranny, we can do nothing. Climate alarmism is tyranny with green wrapping, delivered with terror.

BY EDWARD RING

No reasonable person would deny the importance of protecting the environment. The accomplishments of the environmental movement over the past 50 years are undeniable: cleaner air and water, protected wildernesses, and more efficient use of resources. The list is endless and illustrious. Environmentalist values are an integral part of any responsible public policy agenda. But the pendulum has swung too far.

Environmentalism, which once challenged corporate power, is now its useful puppet. And “climate change,” once a peripheral concern, is now a “climate crisis”—the self-proclaimed unassailable foundation of all environmentalism. Put another way, 60 years ago, environmentalism was a mostly good and courageous movement, but slowly transitioned to the point where today it serves as a front for plutocrats, relying on a big lie to sustain its momentum.

In an illuminating video posted earlier this month, Jordan Peterson interviewed Dr. Richard Lindzen on the topic of climate science. Lindzen, whose credentials are almost ridiculously germane and comprehensive, offered a withering perspective on contemporary environmentalism. He explained that in the 1960s, there was a lot of hunting around for an issue that would give environmentalists power over the energy industry. In the 1960s, environmentalists started tracking atmospheric carbon dioxide and determined it was increasing.

These CO2 measurements, initially begun out of mere scientific curiosity, gave environmentalists the issue they’d been looking for. As Lindzen put it, “If you wanted to control the energy sector, CO2 was the one pollutant that no matter how clean you make it, there will still be CO2. You can’t get rid of that if you burn fossil fuel.”

The essence of environmentalism today is to control and ration the energy supply on which human civilization depends. Since every amenity of civilization uses energy, this control and rationing extends to every human activity. It is a recipe for total control over every individual, every business, and every nation in the world. Which is the point.

It’s easy enough to speculate as to the identity of these ultimate puppeteers who have unleashed this grandiose plot on the world. We were just treated to a host of them flocking to Davos, Switzerland, for the annual conference of the World Economic Forum. It’s even easier to identify the hidden agenda; power and profit. Micromanage the world, and only the biggest or the most anointed players survive. It’s a gigantic trickle-up economic scheme, robbing the poor and giving to the rich.

Regardless of who pulls the strings behind the scenes, however, the marionettes are in plain sight. The entire state legislature in California, where nearly every "representative" is wholly owned by an alliance of public sector unions and tech billionaires, offers a perfect example. With every regulation, another unionized public bureaucracy is created, and another tech company finds new captive consumers.

The result is a soft fascism, a soul-destroying tyranny masquerading as an enlightened green utopia. California, sprawling across 164,000 square miles, has vast resources of farmland, timber, oil and gas, direct access to ocean fisheries, and valuable mineral resources. With barely 40 million people, the state is sparsely populated compared with most developed nations and should be delivering the most affordable cost of living in the world to its residents. The *opposite* is true.

In the name of protecting the environment and fighting climate change, California has declared war on its own people. The state's policymakers have neglected a once remarkable water infrastructure and as a result, millions of acres of the most productive farmland on earth are being turned into a dust bowl, driving thousands of farm operations out of business and destroying the livelihoods that sustained millions of people. They have reduced the timber industry to less than one-quarter the size it was as recently as the 1990s. They have declared war on oil and gas, banning most new drilling and tightening restrictions on existing wells.

Critics of California's authoritarian progressives too often focus on the easily mockable so-called woke agenda while safely refraining from challenging policies that derive from the alleged "climate emergency." This is understandable, and woke ideology and the policies it spawns *are* ridiculous, destructive folly that must be crushed. But the highly visible depredations of woke activists become even more dangerous if they distract us from the encroachments green policies are making into every detail of individual private lives. The harmful impacts of the green machine are, in many ways, far more substantial and comprehensive.

The Upside of Green Policies for Big Business

When California, and then the entire nation, bans the production of incandescent light bulbs, that is an obvious intrusion into the market and the quality of life for everyday Californians. But less obvious is the inversion of incentives that drive the push for energy efficiency at the expense of health or affordability. As Californians pay exorbitant prices to bathe themselves in high wavelength light, disrupting their circadian rhythms, and as Californians endure the unhealthy micro-flickers of LEDs hooked to inadequate transformers, manufacturers gain new customers and sell higher-priced goods.

A more subtle green inversion of economic incentives, but just as contrary to the public interest, is when electric utilities convert to "renewables" (i.e., wind farms, solar farms, and battery farms) at staggering cost, while decommissioning fully paid-for nuclear power plants, hydroelectric dams, and natural gas power plants. As the electricity price to the consumer soars, the regulated public utilities earn more profits, since their pricing and hence their profits are based on a percentage markup over their costs. If your profit is limited to 9 percent, you'll make a lot more money if you're billing 30 cents per kilowatt-hour than if you're billing 10 cents per kilowatt-hour. That's an easy business decision.

It is obvious when dams are removed instead of new ones being built that farmers get less water. But less obvious are the ripple effects. Without a guaranteed water supply, new housing construction can't get approved, limiting the supply of new homes and driving up the price for all housing. Then again, housing in California is too expensive anyway, thanks to green policies that limit where new homes can get built, absurdly overwritten building codes requiring "energy neutrality," obscenely expensive costs for building permits, a capricious approval process that—without exaggeration—can take decades to navigate, and the constant threat of litigation by environmentalists to stop any new construction.

For every fundamental necessity, gasoline, natural gas, water, electricity, and housing, California's green policies have created artificial scarcity. Everything costs more. The poor have lost all hope of achieving private financial independence, the middle class shrinks, and the rich get richer. A frustrated lobbyist in Sacramento recently summed it up: "Most environmentalists don't care about people," he said, "the old Democratic Party wanted to use government to make people's lives better, but today their solution is to use government to make life harder than hook them to make them dependent on government. They want to use government to destroy the incentive to be productive. But if you kill off all the productive people, eventually society collapses."

What's Happening in California Is Happening Everywhere

It's one thing to impose green scarcity on California, a state that can coast a while longer on the infrastructure investments of 50 years ago and rely on tapping the stupefying accumulation of wealth concentrated in its high-tech industry. But the marionettes that are implementing the green assault on civilization are everywhere.

One of the most recent fronts in their widening war on prosperity is the farming sector, from Canada and Spain to the Netherlands and Sri Lanka and elsewhere. Based on the contention that farm fertilizer is a factor in causing climate change, policymakers have decided to shut down huge sectors of commercial agriculture. The new regulations that will permit continued operations, of course, will be far too expensive for all but the largest global agribusiness concerns.

It's not hard to see what's happening here. There is no economic activity, anywhere, that doesn't create greenhouse gas. Make it impossible for all but the wealthiest corporations to comply with the new edicts, and you roll up the world.

Unfortunately, when a rare thunderstorm delivers atomic-sounding sonic blasts to uninitiated Californians whose only previous experiences with sound that kinetic were the occasional punk driving by with his subwoofer turned up, they're ready to believe the storm porn that pours out of every establishment news source. "Bomb cyclone." "Polar vortex." "Atmospheric River." "Supercell." "Snowpocalypse." It's all part of the "new normal," as we allegedly encounter more and more "extreme weather events."

Except we aren't.

Old-timers can remember the 1960s, when storms pulverized California, causing floods and freezes, but back then we didn't listen to climate agenda-driven news. Storms were "storms." And there weren't ubiquitous high-resolution satellite images and video editing tools to allow every local weatherman to splash terrifying images onto our screens of cloud formations covering half the Pacific Ocean. But that doesn't mean such cloud formations didn't exist.

Around the world, the same game is played. Pakistan's recent floods, despite the doomsday spin from PBS, were not abnormal because of "climate change." They were an abnormal catastrophe because in just 60 years, the population of that nation has grown from 45 million to 240 million people. They've channelized their rivers, built dense new settlements onto what were once floodplains and other marginal land, they've forests which took away the capacity to absorb runoff, and they've paved thousands of square miles creating impervious surfaces where water can't percolate. Of course a big storm made a mess. The weather didn't change. The landscape changed.

The disaster story repeats everywhere. And contrary to the narrative, the primary cause is not "climate change." Bigger tsunamis? Maybe it's because coastal aquifers were overdrafted which caused land subsidence, or because previously uninhabited tidelands were settled because the population quintupled in less than two generations, and because coastal mangrove forests were destroyed which used to attenuate big waves. What about deforestation? Perhaps because these nations have been denied the ability to develop natural gas and hydroelectric power, they're stripping away the forests for fuel to cook their food. In some cases, they're burning their forests to make room for biofuel plantations, in a towering display of irony and corruption.

The Biggest Big Lie in the World

And behind it all is a big lie: the "climate emergency." It's not true.

Anyone hoping to stop the environmentalist assault on civilization must realize that it isn't enough to challenge the individual policies that are supposedly designed to save the climate. It isn't even enough to expose the preposterous, nihilistic, catastrophic, civilization-destroying absurdity of them—as if it is possible to transition to nothing but biofuel, wind, and solar energy and still deliver prosperity to 8 billion people within a decade or two.

What could work, however, would be to challenge the core premise of the climate alarmist movement. Learn the facts, evaluate the arguments of contrarian experts, and make up your own mind. If you no longer believe we actually face a climate emergency, say so, without reservations, in every venue and to every person and institution you can possibly influence.

Doing this may be deemed antisocial, and it may be suppressed, but it is a healthy expression of sanity. It used to be that when someone ran about claiming the world is about to end, that person was considered a lunatic. Let's go back to those days. Human civilization could be entering a golden age of progress and prosperity, but it cannot get there without producing carbon dioxide.

With prosperity, we can adapt as we always have. With tyranny and poverty, we can do nothing. Climate alarmism is tyranny with green wrapping, delivered with terror.

Edward Ring is a senior fellow of the Center for American Greatness. He is also a contributing editor and senior fellow with the California Policy Center, which he co-founded in 2013 and served as its first president. Ring is the author of Fixing California: Abundance, Pragmatism, Optimism (2021) and The Abundance Choice: Our Fight for More Water in California (2022). This article first appeared in American Greatness on January 24, 2023.

THE FALSE PROMISE OF ELECTRIC CARS

Policy-makers should not push them harder than the market does

BY ANDREW STUTTAFORD

'THE more the state 'plans,'" wrote Hayek, "the more difficult planning becomes for the individual." This may resonate with the driver of an electric vehicle (EV) who has pulled up at a charging station in the middle of nowhere, only to find it broken.

In January last year, Carlos Tavares, the CEO of Stellantis, the world's fifth-largest carmaker (it has formed by the merger of Fiat Chrysler and Peugeot), described electrification as "a technology chosen by politicians" and said it was "imposed" on the auto sector. By contrast, the triumph of the internal-combustion engine (ICE) over a century ago was organic. Human ingenuity and the power of markets led to a product that swept almost everything else off the road. EVs (which first had a moment around 1900) were not banned, and neither was the horse. In due course, ICE horseless carriages for the Astors were followed by the Model T and its kin.

The automotive age had truly arrived.

The surge in demand for EVs (albeit from a low base) in Europe and the U.S. could be seen as evidence that, with the assistance of some taxpayer cash and nudges from government, EV technology could flourish without state interventions to either close down or hobble its wicked rival. But some policy-makers, faced with what they claim (and some may even believe) is a climate “crisis,” have clearly not been persuaded that EVs, for all their loudly touted wonders, should be relied on to overtake conventional autos. That has left coercion, and with it the opportunity to redesign much of everyday life in ways more in keeping with the standards of those who know best. The switch to EVs will lead, in the end, to a shrunken role for the car, a machine long resented by a certain type of authoritarian for the untidiness it creates, for the space it takes up, and for the autonomy it offers.

Bans on the sales of new ICE vehicles will be coming into force from 2035 in Europe and, with California having taken the lead, in parts of the United States. Europe’s ban will also cover hybrids, one of the better, less disruptive pathways to lower greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions.

But like many of the religious cults it resembles, climate fundamentalism is characterized by a perpetual quest for purity. Tainted by gasoline, the hybrid had to go. Japan is taking a different course. Its hybrids have done well, and their manufacturers argue that their technology has more to offer. Like, for instance, the chairman of India’s largest automaker, the Japanese tend to be skeptical that there is only one route to a more climate-friendly automotive future. Toyota, for example, sells a hydrogen-fuel-cell car. (BMW has also begun small-scale production of a hydrogen-fuel-cell SUV.) Hydrogen-fuel-cell vehicles have zero GHG tailpipe emissions and would be permitted under both European and Californian rules. Massive investments in EVs, though, will leave relatively little left over for hydrogen in Europe and the U.S.

Meanwhile, the West’s turn to EVs has given Chinese car manufacturers a chance to penetrate markets where they have never done well. EVs, basically a battery and a computer housed in a four-wheeled box, are fairly easy to make. They have eliminated much of the edge that the ICE had given long-established Western incumbents.

Using success in their home base as a launchpad, Chinese manufacturers were the source of some 5 percent of the new EVs sold in Western Europe last year.

It doesn’t hurt that Chinese EVs typically cost €10,000 less than their European counterparts, although not all compete on price. Moreover, Chinese manufacturers account for perhaps 55 percent of global EV-battery production. (An EV’s lithium-ion battery accounts for 30–40 percent of the car’s value.) And China’s domination of the EV supply chain includes production of battery-cell components such as anodes and cathodes, and it processes up to 75 percent of metals (such as lithium, cobalt, manganese, graphite, nickel, and various rare earths) used in making batteries.

While China is the world's largest producer of rare earths, many of the other minerals processed in the country come from elsewhere, a gap its companies have remedied by securing, one way or another, a good grip on their supply. It helps to be a major customer unbothered by environmental concerns or human rights, an area of comparative advantage that Chinese firms can also exploit in their EV-related businesses at home. That's something that the ESG-investment community ought to remember more often than it does.

Battery factories are being built in the West, too. Billions are already committed to, and beginning to be spent on, their construction in the U.S. But it's worth paying attention to Volkswagen's warning that, unless contained; high energy costs will render such plants "unviable" in Europe. Building a battery plant is one thing, but getting hold of the raw materials it needs is quite another. Ideally, they should come from friendly or friendly-ish nations (expect a surge in resource nationalism) or even — the ghost of John Muir cocks an ear — from within our borders. New mines will be necessary but will take years to open. Environmentalist litigation, an appropriately paradoxical irritant, will doubtless contribute to the delay. The prices of a number of raw materials used in EV production have risen and could continue to rise. There have already been signs of supply squeezes (some due to dislocations arising out of Covid and the war in Ukraine). If these persist, would-be EV buyers may have to wait longer and pay more. Others may prefer to walk away.

MANY of these difficulties flow from the speed of this transition, a gift to China with potentially serious industrial, economic, and geopolitical consequences. Chinese competition in the EV arena (which will be more of a challenge in Europe) is the last thing Western carmakers need as they wrestle with a change that will upend not only their business model but also those of their suppliers. In Germany, in particular, it could trigger a crisis: Auto manufacturing is the backbone of its giant industrial sector. A fear of job losses is one reason the Biden administration wants to base as much as possible of the EV supply chain in the U.S. But the hugely expensive incentives (thank you, taxpayers!) to encourage that result could lead to a trade war with Europe, where some political figures are starting to realize that another self-inflicted climate-policy disaster is on the way.

And there's more. The reckless pace at which vehicle electrification is being pushed through — a hallmark of central planning — will add to the pressure on electricity grids on both sides of the Atlantic, at a time when the grids are sinking deeper into the disorder brought on by their decarbonization. Europe's energy miseries are no secret, but there have been signs of trouble here too, including grimly amusing requests to EV owners not to charge their cars during a couple of extremely hot days in Texas and California.

The reluctance — that obsession with purity again — to invest enough in "dirty" sources of electricity (a category that, in the more progressive U.S. states, includes natural gas) to tide us over for now, together with the lengthy delays that are bound to accompany any expansion of nuclear power even in states where it is not rejected outright, will increase our reliance on wind and solar, technologies still unable to play the role that policy-makers have assigned to them. Once the necessary equipment has been manufactured and installed, electricity generated by the wind and the sun may be GHG-emission-free. But the wind doesn't always blow, and the sun doesn't always shine, so the energy they produce isn't as dependable as that generated by the technologies they're inadequately replacing.

In addition, it will be extremely tricky, certainly in the U.S., to build enough charging stations in time to cope with demand if EVs sell at the rate their boosters expect. On the other hand, by reinforcing the anxiety about the range of EVs that's now discouraging potential buyers (as it did in 1900), this problem may be partially self-correcting.

But only partially. The median EV range (how far a fully charged EV can go without a recharge) in the U.S. is currently a little over 200 miles. That is, if the numbers can be trusted (not always) — and if it's not too cold outside. This should suffice (if not necessarily psychologically) for drivers with their own

garage or private driveway, who use their EVs only for quick trips or commuting (the average American driver drives 40 miles a day). Urban car owners with access only to the curbside will have a tough time. That won't worry the city planners. They want those road hogs on public transport anyway. As for drivers traveling longer distances, read on.

Adding injury to insult: Public charging stations are not infrequently poorly maintained and out of order. Existing networks, such as Tesla's, account for more than 140,000 chargers today. It won't be easy to reach the total of 2 million chargers forecast to be needed by 2030. While the

Biden administration has committed to allocating $5 billion to the states to create a "national network" of 500,000 public chargers nationwide by 2030, $5 billion will probably not — of course — be enough. That's partly because of the administration's stipulation that a certain (although still insufficient) number of the chargers must be "fast chargers." These add some 90–120 miles of range in 30 minutes. (Compare the range that customers can get at the gas pump in a couple of minutes.) "Fast chargers" earned their misleading name by being *less slow* than far cheaper but almost infinitely indolent Level 2 chargers (10–20 miles of range in about an hour). These are suitable for home or office use or for a top-up while, say, on an errand, and not a lot else. It remains unclear who will be in a position to build and install the Biden chargers by 2030 (not least because of "Buy America" requirements).

Range anxiety does not seem to have been too much of an issue with existing EV owners, who have an estimated average household income of more than $100,000 a year. They needed it: The average new EV costs $66,000, over 40 percent more than the price of a new conventional car and a price level at which it would take the much-vaunted cost savings of EVs a long time to kick in, if ever. Based on some estimates, about 90 percent of EV owners own two cars or more, adding credibility to anecdata that they use ICE vehicles mainly for long-haul trips and EVs for driving locally.

Having had the patience to let market forces work would have been the best way of developing a cheaper EV (see the Model T). Instead, with time being, allegedly, of the essence as the climate clock ticks, governments are subsidizing buyers (and thus incentivizing manufacturers to keep prices up in the short term) while using varying degrees of bullying to force carmakers to produce cheap EVs — the latter an approach that made the Soviet refrigerator the marvel it was.

Meanwhile, auto companies are investing billions in EV production in the expectation that, whether compelled or otherwise, the demand will be there — a game of high stakes that they had little option other than to play. If, during a period of high capital expenditure, EV sales disappoint or ICE-vehicle sales drop off too soon (a recession could increase the chances of both), carmakers may find themselves in treacherous territory.

Making matters worse is that these billions — trailed and preceded by taxpayer money — are being invested in the development of a product that, at this point, is in some key respects inferior to what it is replacing, in ways that matter at several levels, ranging from the everyday to something grander. After all, EVs jeopardize the ability, so central to this country's idea of itself, however mythologized, to just get up and go.

AND all of this is for what?

In terms of GHG emissions, EVs are undoubtedly cleaner than conventional cars, but by less of a margin than is often understood. While an EV won't release any tailpipe emissions (or indeed have a tailpipe), that should not be the end of the calculation. The fairest way to compare the two is to look at the emissions associated with each type of vehicle over its entire life cycle. That will include the emissions released to generate the electricity that powers an EV (which will vary from country to country; India is not the U.S.) and the emissions associated with the manufacture of the car and its components, including the mining of the metals used. According to the International Energy Agency, after adding in all these factors, a midsize traditional car is responsible for a bit more than twice as much emission as an EV. That's not the most precise of comparisons, but it highlights another reason why the war against cars will not end with the end of the internal-combustion engine.

According to the EPA, in 2019 (the last pre-Covid year) transportation accounted for around 33 percent of U.S. GHG emissions. Some 58 percent of that was from cars and light-duty trucks. They were thus the source of about 19 percent of U.S. GHG emissions. The U.S. accounted for 11 percent of global GHG emissions that year. That means that cars and light trucks in the U.S. accounted for approximately 2 percent of global GHG emissions in 2019. They contributed even less in the EU. These are not the highest of numbers.

It would have made no material difference to the climate (and it would have been considerably less disruptive) if those governments that decided to ban the sale of new ICE vehicles from 2035 had refrained from taking that step until 2055, buying an extra 20 years in which electrification or any other replacement technology could have been put through its paces — and, if possible, improved — by a reasonably free market.

But that would not have done. The die had to be cast. There is a "race" to decarbonize, you see. Sadly, when it comes to cars, it's one in which all the participants will lose.

ANDREW STUTTAFORD *is the editor of NATIONAL REVIEW's Capital Matters. This article will first appear in the February 6, National Review*

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