

## Trend Analysis: California's Central Valley Profile

### Trend Statement

Air quality and roadway safety continue to decrease while traffic congestion and population increase throughout California's Central Valley (Valley). There are many planning efforts dedicated to tackling these issues. Among them, the San Joaquin Valley (SJV) Regional Planning Agencies Policy Council recently completed the San Joaquin Valley Interregional Goods Movement Plan (August 2013)<sup>1</sup> in order to address the Valley's existing conditions and needs as they pertain to freight. Other planning efforts underway include the San Joaquin Valley Blueprint Roadmap, Groundswell SJV, Smart Valley Places and the Sacramento Council of Government's Rural-Urban Connections Strategy for the Sacramento region.

### Background

The Central Valley of California, also known as the San Joaquin Valley, is made up of eight counties (Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Tulare). The SJV is home to a variety of transportation facilities for moving goods ranging from interstate and state highways, Class I<sup>2</sup> railroads and short line railroad facilities, intermodal terminals, inland ports and waterways, air cargo facilities, and other infrastructure that supports the movement of goods. Current conditions in the Valley contribute to trucks (therefore, goods) being slowed or diverted by poor road conditions and congestion. The air and water quality is poor, due in large part to goods movement activities. There are numerous and severe violations of environmental justice principles that need to be addressed. Despite current conditions, goods movement will answer to increased demand generated by forecasted growth in the Valley, while (if left unchecked) contributing to already poor environmental conditions and increasing the degradation of the roadways in the SJV.<sup>3</sup>

### Freight System Implications

Roadways that are not designed to accommodate large trucks will continue to decrease the efficiency of goods movement in the Valley. Air and water quality issues may harm future growth prospects for the region by making it less desirable. Environmental justice violations contribute to low levels of public health and increased public costs for health care and associated expenditures. Population growth, which drives increases in freight traffic and congestion (through heightened vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is continuing to climb). Figure 1 depicts the changes that occurred in the San Joaquin Valley between 1990 and 2003. It shows that population and vehicle miles travelled have increased dramatically while the number of days and hours exceeding ozone standards has also increased.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.sjvcogs.org/goods.html>

<sup>2</sup> Class I railroads. Railroads are classified by the Surface Transportation Board based on adjusted operating revenue for three consecutive years. To be classified as a Class I, a railroad must have operating revenue of \$250 million.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.sjvcogs.org/pdfs/2012/2012-03-26%20draft%20Task%20six%20draft.pdf>

According to the San Joaquin Interregional Goods Movement Plan, “Both [population growth and increased mean incomes] will contribute to greater freight demand [and] higher volumes of freight vying for space on the region’s system.” The growing population will also “exacerbate existing land use conflicts – as populations swell and encroach on goods movement land uses.” Furthermore, the SJV will experience greater freight volume “from 500 million tons in 2007 to over 800 million tons by 2040, an increase of over two-thirds [and] roughly 85 percent of this tonnage... is anticipated to be carried by truck.” (Cambridge Systematics, Inc. 2012a, pp. 2-6 – 2-8) Roadways that are not designed to serve the current demand will continue to see exponential growth in population and traffic and continue to degrade, threatening users in terms of safety and productivity.

Figure 1: Changes in the San Joaquin Valley, 1990-2003

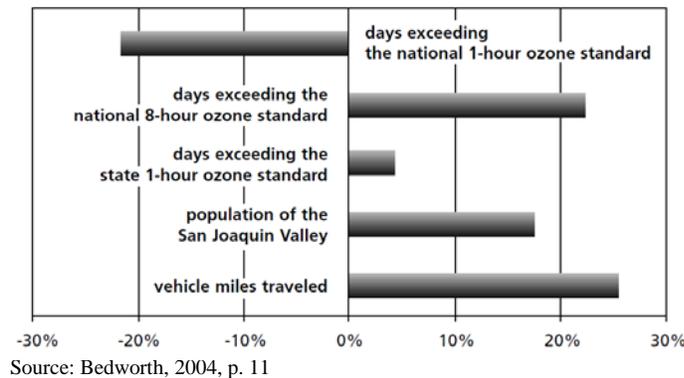
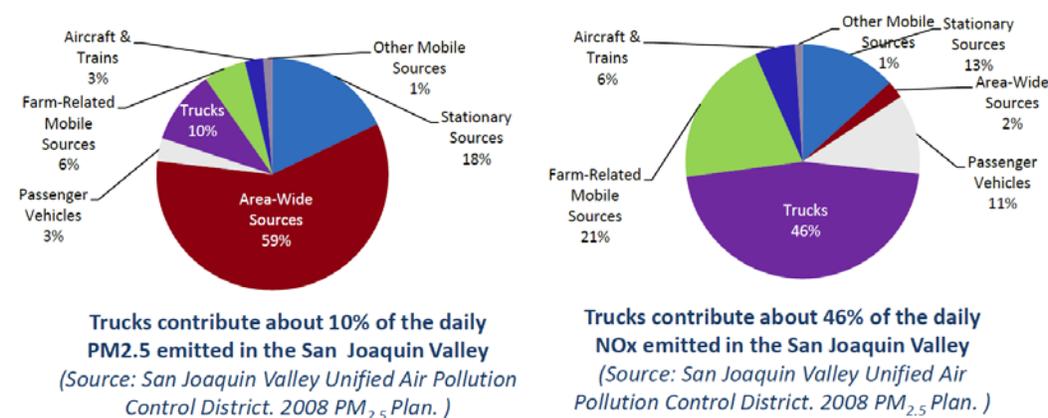


Figure 2 shows that trucks (freight) and passengers vehicles contribute significantly to pollution levels in the Valley. With the growth discussed above, this problem will continue to worsen without innovative planning.

Figure 2: Percent Pollution per type of Emitter



Source: Cambridge Systematics, Inc. 2012b, p. 3

The eight SJV metropolitan transportation agencies and Caltrans are addressing these issues identified through their San Joaquin Interregional Goods Movement Plan<sup>1</sup>. Topics covered in the final plan include:

- In depth analysis of existing conditions as they relate to freight
- Analysis of the importance freight plays in the Valley economy
- Ongoing stakeholder outreach activities
- Goods movement data reporting – including in depth reports for specific key Valley industries
- Analysis of growth in freight demand
- Evaluation of community environmental and economic freight impacts
- Identification of policy and project interventions
- A list of funding sources available

## Planning Considerations

Efforts to enhance air quality, increase quality of life and encourage economic development and prosperity in the SJV are underway. Much of the current effort to improve conditions in the Valley relates to transportation infrastructure and goods movement activities. Beyond the goods movement plan, mentioned above, the efforts of the various plans and strategies mentioned in the Trend Statement are contributing to a reduction in emissions and increased air quality, large scale regional land use planning and additional research regarding the effects of freight on the valley.

- The San Joaquin Valley Blueprint Roadmap is “a vision for the future of the San Joaquin Valley, in which less land is consumed for development, more resources are preserved for future generations, distinctive communities are enhanced, and more travel choices are available”<sup>4</sup>
- Groundswell SJV purpose is to will help encourage the kind of growth and development that strengthens the economy, improves health, conserves resources, causes less pollution, demands fewer tax dollars and better serves the region’s diverse population.”<sup>5</sup>
- Smart Valley Places (coordinated by the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley, etc.) is creating “a single integrated plan for regional growth that will guide the San Joaquin Valley for the next 20 years and even beyond”<sup>6</sup>
- The Rural-Urban Connections Strategy (RUCS) “is a look at the region's growth and sustainability objectives from a rural perspective.” The RUCS project is an economic and environmental sustainability strategy for rural areas.”<sup>7</sup>

## Resources

Bedsworth, Louise Wells. (2004). Clearing the Air in the San Joaquin Valley: Developing an Action Plan for Regulators, Legislators and the Public. Union of Concerned Scientists. Retrieved on June 13, 2012. Available at:

[http://www.ucsusa.org/assets/documents/clean\\_vehicles/central\\_valley\\_final-new.pdf](http://www.ucsusa.org/assets/documents/clean_vehicles/central_valley_final-new.pdf)

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.valleyblueprint.org/history-need.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://groundswellsjv.org/about-us/statement-of-intent-groundswell/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.smartvalleyplaces.org/project/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.sacog.org/rucs/>

Cambridge Systematics, Inc. (2012a). San Joaquin Valley Interregional Goods Movement Plan: DRAFT Task 6: The Community, Environmental, and Economic Impacts of Freight Movement. Retrieved May 29, 2012. Available at: <http://www.sjvcogs.org/pdfs/2012/2012-09-18%20task%206.pdf>

Cambridge Systematics, Inc. (2012b). San Joaquin Valley Interregional Goods Movement Plan: Goods Movement Issues. Retrieved May 29, 2012. Available at: <http://www.sjvcogs.org/pdfs/2012/2012-04-02%20PP%20gm%20issues.pdf>

Glossary of Freight Terms: <http://fmpglossary.wikispaces.com/>

Groundswell San Joaquin Valley <http://groundswellsjv.org/>

San Joaquin Valley Interregional Goods Movement Plan, San Joaquin Valley Regional Planning Agencies, (August 2013) <http://www.sjvcogs.org/goods.html>

Smart Valley Places: <http://www.smartvalleyplaces.org/>

The Rural-Urban Connections Strategy (RUCS): <http://www.sacog.org/rucs/>

San Joaquin Valley Blueprint Roadmap, Joint initiative with San Joaquin Valley Councils of Governments, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and the Great Valley Center. (September, 2010), Retrieved December 16, 2013,: <http://www.valleyblueprint.org>