

Greenhouse gas law could bring more efficient plans

Jim Schultz, Redding Record Searchlight, 4-27-10

Regional planners Tuesday raised questions about whether the north state's rural lifestyle can mesh with the kinds of changes experts say are necessary to combat global warming.

The questions came as members of the Shasta County Regional Transportation Planning Agency met in a workshop with Kurt Karperos, chief of air quality and transportation for the California Air Resources Board.

Karperos told them the law is geared toward controlling greenhouse gas emissions by curbing sprawl.

But, he said, those who are unable to comply with its requirements won't be penalized.

"Then why are we doing this?" asked Chairman Dick Dickerson.

For one thing, Karperos said, it's the law.

But, he said, there are also benefits of following that law — including more efficient planning that could help benefit the economy.

"You (also) have a lot of quality-of-life opportunities," he said, adding that those in compliance with the legislation's requirements can gain relief from strict and cumbersome environmental review for some development projects.

"It's incentive-driven," Karperos said following the meeting.

Under the state law, the greater Redding area, like 17 other metropolitan areas around California, is required to try to hold greenhouse gas emissions below 2005 levels as population grows through 2035.

Noting that passenger vehicles are responsible for one-quarter of greenhouse gas emissions, Karperos said finding ways to reduce vehicle trips through more efficient transportation planning is a key to fighting the problem.

With Shasta County too thinly populated to support a robust mass transit system, RTPA planner Dan Wayne has said that any changes in driving habits for Shasta County will likely come over the long term through planning that puts more homes closer to work and shopping — or at least closer to the major transportation arteries that link homes with work, shopping, schools and other destinations.

"We're talking about manageable change to get us going in the right direction," Wayne has said. "We're not necessarily changing 180 degrees from what we are doing right now."

Still, Shasta Lake Mayor Greg Watkins, who sits on the RTPA board, said it's certain that the quality of life for many Shasta County residents does not equate to denser development.

In fact, he said, that denser development "might go contrary to the quality of life" for some residents.

The state Air Resources Board is facing a June 30 deadline to produce draft so-called greenhouse reduction targets, as well as a Sept. 30 deadline to generate final targets.

Shasta County's targets have yet to be defined.

Shasta County already has begun to identify an approach to changing development patterns in a way that would cut the long-term need for driving, and Shasta Forward, a three-year, a \$597,000 campaign to involve ordinary citizens in long-range planning, has concluded that county residents want to see more compact development that preserves the identities of cities and towns.