Local transit moves to adapt to high fuel costs

Whitney Diaz  
SENIOR DAILY

With gas prices on the rise and more people turning to alternative modes of transportation, San Luis Obispo's transit system is struggling to adapt.

The county's public transportation system may not be able to accommodate everyone because there simply aren't enough buses, or seats, to go around.

"Everything you find in an urban city, like Los Angeles or San Francisco, is happening here now, as far as overcrowding," said John Bates, the county's Regional Transit Authority (RTA) interim regional transit manager.

"We've heard complaints from people at Cal Poly, and we're trying to explain that we don't have enough buses or seats, or even a flexible schedule, the officers, board of directors, executive cabinet and any other member who is elected or appointed gets priority registration each quarter."

A typical day in the life of an Associated Students Inc. officer usually starts around 9 a.m. and ends after 5 p.m. — but that's not including classes, campus involvement or personal time.

"We have a lot of meetings. A lot of meetings. A lot," ASI president Angela Kramer said.

Because being involved with ASI doesn't allow for a flexible schedule, the officers, board of directors, executive cabinet and any other member who is elected or appointed gets priority registration each quarter.

If gas prices continue to rise, commuters might see an increase in bus fares and pass prices. Unfortunately, fuel costs are not offset by the rise in ridership due to a lack of available buses.

"We've heard complaints from people at Cal Poly, and we're trying to explain that we don't have the equipment to put additional buses on routes and we don't have the funds to provide additional buses," Bates said.

If state funds were available, the RTA would apply for them, but the state is cutting funding for key areas of public transportation, Bates said.

What's more is that gas prices nationwide have increased by more than a dollar since this time two years ago, according to www.gasbuddy.com, a Web site that shows local, real-time gas prices in the US and Canada.

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"We're surprised to hear that even gas prices have increased," Kramer said.

"It's always a challenge to schedule class around meetings," said Cal Poly, the chairman of the University Union Advisory Board. "We're students, too. Classes are important — a No. 1 priority for us. Any spare time we have goes to meetings and projects."

According to Kramer, they get paid because working for ASI is a full-time job, and the officers shouldn't have to find another job.

"This is my full-time commitment," she said. "As far as priorities go, I'm like president, school, relationship... There is no way I could have a side job."

Students who work with the music building may have noticed a parking space that reads "ASI President." While Kramer and the other three officers receive a reserved spot, it doesn't mean that spot is free; they each have to pay the same $315 for an annual permit that every other student pays.

"We have meetings off and on campus," Payne said.

"There are times when we need to be continually leaving and returning... We have parking spaces so we can be on time for classes and for meetings in the community."

A common misconception on campus is that the ASI president is provided with a personal vehicle to occupy her reserved parking spot.

"We don't get any sort of car or anything like that. I wish that'd be sweet," Kramer said, laughing. "For ASI as a whole — not just student government, but all of ASI — we have a car and we have an electric vehicle. But those are used for when we travel to conferences."
Costs

SLO Regional RideShare costs were up via the Internet to Ride-On Transportation, a non-profit organization that provides affordable transportation to the people of San Luis Obispo County, officials said.

Ride-On Director Mark Shader said the hike in gas prices is affecting the organization "big time" in several ways.

"Monthly costs for fuel have been on a regular increase over time, but we've seen an increase from $90,000 to $30,000 per month on fuel in just a few months," Shader said. "This is money that could've gone to wage increases for our drivers, but luckily we're not on diesel like the RTA (Regional Transit Authority).

In the last six months, Ride-On has had to bump up monthly vanpool costs from about $150 to about $350 per month, Shader said. A vanpool seats about 14 or 15 people. "But that (cost) translates into about $100 per month per seat, and most of our customers are coming from long distances like Paso Robles and Santa Maria," Shader said.

Even the $100 per month is not as expensive as driving alone in a car from Santa Maria to San Luis Obispo on a daily basis, he said.

"We've seen a dramatic increase in demands for vanpools, and shuttle services are in high demand also," he added.

The RTA is working on finding solutions to the ever-growing problems facing public transportation. Some suggestions are for employees to change their work hours to suit bus schedules, begin carpooling, invest in vanpools and, for Cal Poly employees, use the university's vanpools.

Cal Poly currently has 10 employee vanpools in operation and the university plans to add another one soon, officials said. However there are currently no commuter programs for students, said Susan Rains, Cal Poly's Commuter and Access Coordinator.

"There are not any vanpools for students, because the student population changes so quickly that it's very hard to implement a program like that," Rains said, adding that as of right now, all of the employee vanpools are currently full except the Los Osos/Morro Bay run, which has a few openings left.

"Most of the Cal Poly vanpools have a waiting list exceeding 40 people, but that is expected to increase in September, she said.

"I would think (the numbers would increase), because there will be a lot of facility coming back, and there will be more staff members because Cal Poly Campus Village is opening, and I'm sure they'd be interested in alternative ways to get to work," Rains said.

There has been an increase in carpools, motorcycles and bicycles on campus, and campus parking has changed to accommodate this increase, Rains said.

Even with these projections, public transportation is still encouraged. "I think that our system is remarkable good and very cost effective," said Webster, who uses an RTA bus route to commute to and from work.

"It's one of the best deals out here," Webster added.

"Just being involved with the students is the best perk," he said. "I know facts before they come out in the open. I think that's a great thing.

And the sentiment seemed to hold true with most of the office workers. "The biggest incentive for all of us is just getting the opportunity to work with Cal Poly and make a difference," Payne said.

After their day-long schedule of meetings, they get down to what the heart of ASI is really about — taking part in all the experiences Cal Poly has to offer.

"What's great is it's usually done by 5 p.m., so I have the opportunity to go to all these events that are really what get me started in campus involvement," Kramer said. "I'll never stop."
**Briefs**

**State**

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The California High Speed Rail Authority has given its final approval on a route that would link the state's major cities and regions.

Environmental studies approved Wednesday clear the way for a high-speed rail system route that would connect San Francisco, Sacramento and the Central Valley with Los Angeles, Riverside and San Diego.

The next major hurdle for the project is a billion-dollar bond measure on the November ballot.

**National**

BOULDER, Colo. (AP) — Prosecutors cleared JonBenet Ramsey's parents and brother Wednesday in the 1996 killing of the 6-year-old beauty queen, saying they were "deeply sorry" for putting the family under a cloud of suspicion that hung heavy for more than a decade.

New DNA tests, which focus on skin cells left behind from a hair touch, point to a mysterious outsider. They came too late to clear the name of JonBenet's mother, Patsy, who died of cancer in 2006.

WASHINGTON (AP) — Boeing Co. and Northrop Grumman Corp. will submit new offers for a disputed $35 billion Air force tanker contract, and the Pentagon will pick a winner by the end of the year.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates said Wednesday that his office will oversee the competition between Boeing and the team of Northrop and Airbus parent European Aeronautic Defence and Space Co.

**WORD ON THE STREET**

"Where would your on-campus parking space be if you were ASI president?"

"Probably right outside of Dexter so that when I get out of the lab at four in the morning, I don't have to walk too far to my car."

-Amy Smith, art and design senior

"Since I'm a grad student and I pretty much live in one building it would be nice right in front of the new engineering building."

-Matt Muttera, industrial manufacturing engineering graduate student

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Angela Marie Watkins

There's something very disarming about Cal Poly student Logan Tavelli's smile. Perhaps that's why it was plastered across commercials for NBC's "Nashville Star." Maybe you've seen him. He looks earnestly at the judges and says, "to make my dreams come true."

Unfortunately, this communication studies freshman didn't make it on the show as part of the top 20 contestants. He did, however, make it to 32nd place and was told he would be flown to Nashville for the show only to have the promise retracted a few hours later, he said.

"The hardest part was they told me I was flunking there," Tavelli said. "I'm not gonna watch the show even though I might be on it. It's just too painful."

The young songwriter and guitar player said he stood in line for six hours, in scorching temperatures, with thousands of other country singing hopefuls waiting across several Los Angeles blocks. Once inside, Tavelli wowed the judges with his singing, guitar playing and his own original song while other songwriters were rejected early on and cover songs often struck a better chord with producers.

The song, "I love I'll iBiby," was written after Tavelli suffered a painful breakup with his high school sweetheart.

"I think the reason I sang so well (at the auditions) is because it was still so fresh," Tavelli said. Producers had Tavelli sing his song several times, with and without his guitar, before giving him a belt buckle to signify his high position among other contestants. After producers promised to call him to tell him if he'd be on the show, Tavelli went home to Santa Rosa to wait.

At first, producers allegedly told him that as part of the top 40 contestants, he'd be going to Nashville to compete; he even received a call from flight co-ordinators to plan the trip. Then Tavelli's dream-come-true came crashing down when another producer called him to tell him only the top 30 were going to Nashville and that NBC had determined Tavelli was too "young" and "green" for the music world.

"I was really bummed after I got rejected, so I got really motivated, and I think I got a really good shot for next year," Tavelli said.

In fact, Tavelli has been working on even more of his own songs and been trying to improve his voice, citing Garth Brooks as an inspiration.

"I had a dream last night were I was performing with Garth Brooks and he left the stage so I kind of had to fill his place," Tavelli said.

As far as the criticism involving his greenness, Tavelli admits his life has been free from calamity, that is, until now. Since his audition, Tavelli has endured getting over his high school sweetheart, having his car impounded and being kicked out of the dorms for a small infraction.

Despite this, Tavelli's mother expects big things from him, recalling as a baby how she knew he was destined for music when he began tapping to the beat of a song while in the grocery store.

"I think it was unbelievably amazing to get where he did in the lineup," Jill Tavelli said. "I'm very supportive of him pursuing music and along with that career I hope he also gets a college degree.

Tavelli is also optimistic, insisting all these hardships will only add to his country music star skills. If asked what he'd do if country music doesn't pan out, he was quick to answer, "I honestly think it will. When I was little I always said I'd be a country singer."

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We don’t care about the young folks

Chelsea Bicker
ARTS

Throughout the documentary you get to know the club members, though personal elements (e.g., their age) are deliberately withheld from the audience. They are all extremely passionate about what they do, and it is clear that the club members’ loyalty to each other is still vivid today. To them, singing popular song and rock tunes “expands their horizons.”

The story is packed with historical moments. It’s a hard task to match these moments which, however, have been skillfully handled. Perhaps the most striking moment is the adoption of the logo, a nod to the school of James Bond. “I Can See Your Voice,” “OMG – I FEEL GOOD!,” and the microphone and instruments.

At the start of the film it seems there is nothing that can bring down the morale of the group (or the audience), but as the storyline progresses we are inevitably interrupted by life’s harsh realities. Over the course of the film, two members face life-threatening health complications and the camera keeps smiling, showing the group’s reaction to the difficult times. The documentary becomes more than just a typical heartwarming tale about life and death. A sequel of Coldplay’s “Fix You” by a renowned member of the choir is performed during this time, providing the backdrop for the somber turn the film takes.

While the Young at Heart Chorus insists on being a non-profit organization, the members apply to the notion of dying. They can either choose to sit around and act “old” or they can live it up for as long as they still can. To them, age doesn’t just define a member.

Aside from their dedication to being alive, the film shows how some of the members strive to make others happy. They contact their families and friends, write letters, and plan trips to the hospital. They are tough on their friends and push them to be the best they can be. However, the film shows that the “old” should be helped by the younger generation.

This film resonates quickly between periods of joy and sadness. It’s well-crafted by the director. This film is the story of music, it’s the story of people, it’s a story of hope and vitality. While the songs themselves may not attract a General audience, it cannot be denied that the Young at Heart Chorus’s love for music outweighs its technical performances.

The film may be comprised of primarily elderly people aged 70 or older, but it is still open to anyone who appreciates life, love, and the power of music. Just don’t leave your tissues at home.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Education, not guns

I was rather appalled at your editorial on July 3 in regards to our right to bear arms as stated by the Second Amendment.

Considering the tragic tragedies that schools and universities across this great nation of ours are experiencing as a result of suicidal maniacs, our centuries-old justification lacks consideration for those recently murdered.

Ask any parent of those children innocently caught in the crossfire if they believe in what you cite and you may wake up to the reality of what (role) guns play in our lives. The gang violence that occurred on July 4 in nearby Santa Barbara heightened the socialills that are growing rather than waning in the U.S. today, and it'll be through education and diligence (not guns) that this problem can be peacefully resolve.

Edward T. Schmid
Visiting professor from Bellingham, Wash.

EDITORIAL

Déjà vu: columnist plagiarizes, Daily apologizes

After watching last year’s team of editors deal with the incident of a freelance columnist plagiarizing one of his cartoons for the Mustang Daily, we hoped to begin this year with a fresh date. Sadly, plagiarism has come to haunt the Daily again. And again, we’re apologizing to you, our readers, for unknowingly publishing plagiarized material.

Sarah Bailey was a freelance nutrition columnist who wrote 19 columns for us from fall 2007 to winter 2008. Her weekly columns, “Check Your Pals” dealt with nutrition issues. Her assignments would be presented in a format that a nutrition major and a member of student peer-health group PULSE, we had faith that she knew what she was writing about. The consistent writing style further led the fact that a large portion of Bailey’s writing was not her own.

Suspicion was raised when Cal Poly’s Policy Abuse Office notified the Mustang Daily that one of Bailey’s earlier columns, “Just a spoon full of sugar,” stolen from the copyright of a dietitian and online writer. Bailey’s column was confirmed as plagiarizing at least two full paragraphs from the writer’s Web site. Knowing that plagiarizers – like the proverbial little white lie that continues to grow – doesn’t usually begin and end with one instance, we investigated further. We simply took sentences from Bailey’s columns and put them through a Google search. Time and time again, the exact same words came back to us, copied straight from someone else’s article or essay.

We found various portions of plagiarized material in each of her columns, which led us to immediately pull all of her columns from our Web site. We removed all references and colloquial sign-off lines — parts of a column that give it personality or originality — were taken from other sources. It’s hard to even put into words the frustration, disappointment and embarrassment the editors at the Mustang Daily feel when something like this happens. We take immense pride in publishing one of the best college journalism newspapers in the country. We abide by the Society of Professional Journalists’ Code of Ethics, and more over by the universal understanding that plagiarism is never ethical.

In retrospect, readers often ask their newspapers how incidents like this happens in the first place. How did Washington Post reporter Janet Cooke fool readers and editors and manage to win a Pulitzer prize for her entirely imagined story? How did New Republic reporter Stephen Glass manage to make up entire events, sources and quotes for his articles? How did New York Times reporter Jason Blair manage to fabricate and plagiarize his way through the ranks?

Simple: because editors prefer to have to go in with an attitude that assumes some of their writers may not be honest. We respect our reporters and freelancers and don’t actually assume guilt. Rather, we go in assuming integrity and honesty, especially from writers who’ve gone through four or more years of college.

But with two plagiarism cases in such a short amount of time, the Mustang Daily has no choice but to take pro-active steps to avoid it in the future. All freelancers will have to sign a contract stating that they understand what plagiarism is. Moreover, all of our writers will be put on notice that we will be performing random plagiarism checks throughout the year. Luckily for us, the same Internet that makes copying so easy for some writers, makes searching for those copied words just as easy for us.

We want to emphasize that freelance columnists are volunteers who don’t receive compensation or academic credit for their writing. Their only commitment is to meet the deadline for the weekly column that they initially volunteered for. The Mustang Daily encourages non-journalism majors to write for us, because we value the knowledge and perspectives that come from different backgrounds. Although these two recent cases of plagiarism were committed by non-journalism freelancers, we expect all of our writers to abide by the basic principle of honesty that we all understand by the time we begin our adult lives.

The previous team of editors signed Bailey on as a columnist because they wanted a Cal Poly student who was knowledgeable enough about her major just to write — without having to gather other people’s words from around the Web. They could just as easily have put a syndicated national column in that place, but preferred to give a Cal Poly student a chance to voice her expertise. Sadly, that’s not what we got.

In a letter to Mustang Daily editors and readers, Bailey apologized: “I realize that there are really no excuses for letting this happen and if I could take it back I would in a heartbeat. All I can do now is offer my sincerest apologies to everyone who was inconvenienced and hope it prevents people from slipping into similar mistakes. I consider myself a hard-working and honest person and I would never again in a million years try to steal someone’s work and I would do it again. I truly regret this and will do all I can to make things right.”

She has already graduated from Cal Poly so the consequences, if any, from the university are unknown. We sincerely apologize to you that this incident has occurred. The Mustang Daily holds itself to the highest ethical standards, and we’re making the greatest effort to ensure that plagiarism never comes to tarnish our pages again.

Jon Kreise
Managing editor
Facebook

continued from page 7

the athletes' post-college lives. "The idea is that many of the business and busy with people; po-
tential employers are starting to look at this," Thurmond said. "This is not just something that is just for your friends. This is something that's wide open for everybody to see and it could affect how they're perceived."

In addition to talking to stu-
dents, each quarter, Stephens start-
ed an athletics orientation program, which also stresses the importance of representing Cal Poly positively. Coming from UCLA, Stephens witnessed firsthand the dangers social networking can pose.

"Athletes, I think, are tar-
ged because of their profile or became of the media," he said. Because the sites allow people to post contact information, housing locations and even class schedules, safety can be put at risk.

"There were some instances (at UCLA) where it was actually almost like stalking occurred," Stephens said. "It was a little bit scary."

Of course, the trend isn't exclu-
sive to colleges. In the professional ranks, athletes are more guarded in light of Web sites such as BadJocks.com and TheDirt.com

Conference

continued from page 8

have been in discussions.

However, Savannah State assistant

athletics director Kevin Gallimore ex-

pressed his school's strong desire to

hold out to eventually join the Big West Conference — in which Cal Poly plays 17 of 20 sports.

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hold out to eventually join the Big West Conference — in which Cal Poly plays 17 of 20 sports.
Cal Poly refrains from issuing Facebook, MySpace policies for student athletes

Lauren Rabaino

With the rise of social networking Web sites like Facebook and MySpace, it all takes on increasingly dramatic proportions ranging from haunts to toffee, and sometimes to a party where a student athlete was "wrongly" drinking at a party after a meet against Slippery Rock of Pennsylvania, the athletic department and the administration, "We get into this kind of freedom, but we don't want athletes to be hazed, but we don't want them to present themselves as representatives of Cal Poly."

"When we're putting up inappropriate photos for all to see, it starts embarrassing the institution," Rabaino said. "The mission statement doesn't mean school officials aren't re-evaluating their policies."

"We have a lot of things that are no different," Rabaino said. "We have every right to do," she said. "I know there are some athletics programs throughout the country were posting inappropriate photos for all to see, it started embarrassing the institution."

"We're all human, we make mistakes," Rabaino said. "I think they need to be aware.

Great West expansion to be announced today

Donovan Aird

An all-sports division under the large umbrella of Cal Poly's Great West Football Conference will likely be announced today, according to conference and school officials.

Small Dukes — reportedly one of 11 independent schools — GWFC commissioner Ed Grom previously told the Mustang Daily that the conference discussed the division with — has announced a 5 p.m. news conference "regarding conference affiliation." RGRTV-TX, a CBS affiliate located in Harlingen, Texas, will broadcast the conference via satellite to schools that have TV rights to their games.

"There are a lot of things that are clear, and still some things that need more time," he explained. "We're going to wait on a few (of the independent contacts) but they won't stop what we're trying to do."

South Dakota athletes director Joel Nielsen said Wednesday that the division is applying "on a number of levels" — most importantly consistent affiliation within the Great West, in which it is already a first-year football member.

"I have a great sense this is the right move for us right now," Niels said.

He added he wants to "encourage and entice others to join" the division, which he hopes will have a minimum of six teams.

Although Grom wouldn't identify the schools that have discussed the division, various reports throughout the country over the past three weeks have pinpointed a geographically disparate cast of potentially interested parties.

In addition to South Dakota and Texas-Pan American, the list includes New Jersey Institute of Technology, Chicago State, Utah Valley State (Orem, Utah), Seattle, Houston Baptist and North Dakota.

Of the latter seven, only North Dakota (in transition from Division II into the GWFC rover) is likely to be added. The rest were tabbed No. 10 by both The Sporting News and Phil Steele's Preseason Top 25, and No. 13 in the Any Given Saturday poll. For that reason, Lindy's has been the only significant disinterested, leaving the Mustangs entirely out of its preseason Top 25.

Three-time defending national champion Appalachian State was ranked first in all but Phil Steele's list, and North Dakota was awarded the honor by Florida State and Kentucky.

Cal Poly, the only Great West Football Conference team to be ranked in any poll, opens the season Aug. 30 at San Diego State.

USA Today 6th

The Sporting News 10th

Phil Steele's 10th

Any Given Saturday 13th

Lindy's NR

Coaches' TBA

Sports Network TBA

see Facebook, page 7