



Newsletter

Environmental Connection

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Sponsored by the Utah Department of Environmental Quality

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2008 Legislative Session: Environmental Bills Await Gov's Pen

Fighting pollution took center stage during the 2008 Legislative Session on Capitol Hill where several environmental bills that include money for cleaner school buses and tax credits for alternative-fuel cars are expected to become law with the Governor's signature.

"This is one of the best sessions for environmental issues," said Rick Sprott, executive director of the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). "I commend Legislative leadership for tackling some tough issues and ultimately passing bills that will have a positive impact on Utah's environment."

Funding for air quality (see related story) was a top priority for many lawmakers and Governor Jon Huntsman, this session. Successful passage of DEQ-requested bills will help keep both the Waste Tire Recycling and the Underground Storage Tank programs going and provide the Water Quality Board greater oversight over wastewater lagoons. Those bills, and many others, await Governor Huntsman's signature.

School Bus Retrofits and Clean Vehicles

School buses would get a makeover under HB 146, a bill that provides \$100,000 from the Uniform School Fund to the State Board of Education to retrofit diesel-powered school buses with pollution control devices to make them cleaner for the children who ride them and the air quality better for the community residents around them.

The bill's chief sponsor, Rep. Christine Johnson (D-Salt Lake), included provisions that would encourage bus drivers to avoid idling while waiting for the kids. The bill, <http://le.utah.gov/~2008/bills/hbillamd/hb0146s02.pdf>, directs the State Board of Education to work with the local school districts and the Air Quality Board to implement an idling reduction program as

well as providing matching funds for grants awarded by the Environmental Protection Agency to help retrofit school buses.

Another bill, HB 106, sponsored by Rep. Roz McGee (D-Salt Lake), would provide a \$750 tax credit for the purchase of a vehicle meeting air quality and fuel-economy standards, a measure that failed last session but sped through this session. The bill, <http://le.utah.gov/~2008/bills/hbillamd/hb0106s01.pdf> , also would provide up to \$2,500 or 35 percent of the purchase price, whichever is less, for vehicles retrofitted with conversion equipment to allow them to use cleaner-burning fuels.

Senate Majority Leader Curtis Bramble (R-Provo), won passage of SB 202, <http://le.utah.gov/~2008/bills/sbillint/sb0202s01.pdf> , a bill that targets 20 percent of Utah's power to come from renewable energy sources by 2025. The bill is seen as a compromise from others that failed.

DEQ Bills

A bill that zooms in on keeping the Waste Tire Recycling program going passed both Houses midway through the legislative session with no roadblocks. HB 132, <http://le.utah.gov/~2008/bills/hbillint/hb0132.htm>, sponsored by Rep. Neal Hendrickson (D-West Valley) reduces the reimbursement paid to recyclers who burn or shred the tires for rubber by \$25 per ton. The reduction was needed to make sure the program remains solvent because the amount of money paid to recyclers was more than the fees collected.

Utah lawmakers also passed two other tank-related pieces of legislation. When the federal Solid and Hazardous Waste Disposal Act was amended in 2005 it placed several requirements on the states to implement additional federal requirements in the Underground Storage Tank program. HB 50's Chief Sponsor Rep. Sylvia Andersen (R-Sandy) incorporated the changes in the bill: <http://le.utah.gov/~2008/bills/hbillint/hb0050.htm>.

The other bill, HB 79, reauthorizes the Underground Storage Tank Act 10 more years, until 2018. Chief Sponsor Rep. David Clark (R-Santa Clara) carried the legislation for all programs needing reauthoriazation this year. <http://le.utah.gov/~2008/htmddoc/hbillhtm/hb0079.htm>.

A water-related bill sought by DEQ rose to the surface towards the end of the session after it was thought dead in the water. HB 222's Chief Sponsor Rep. Patrick Painter (R-Nephi), <http://le.utah.gov/~2008/bills/hbillamd/hb0222.pdf> , grants the Water Quality Board greater oversight over lagoons to issue "aquifer protection permits" to non-discharging wastewater treatment facilities like municipalities that operate lagoons. It also adds a representative from the local health departments to the Water Quality Board.

In addition to these measures, other environmental-related bills:

- HB 51 relaxes municipalities from water-right forfeiture by extending the nonuse period of water right from five to seven years. The current law requires those who hold water rights that aren't put to use to apply for a non-use permit to retain the right. The new law makes it much tougher for forfeitures.
- HB 303 would make it illegal to sell any dishwasher detergents with high concentrations of phosphorus, which can be detrimental to aquatic life.

- HB 40 requires counties to adopt ordinances restricting development near groundwater sources of public drinking water.
 - SB 46 would allow municipal waste to continue to be disposed of at municipal facilities until 2013 after which private operators can enter into agreements to compete for commercial waste disposal.
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Air Quality and Employees Get Additional Money

The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) will be able to make strides to improve the air quality in Utah, thanks to an additional \$2 million annual appropriation lawmakers approved by the end of the 2008 Session.

“We’re very pleased,” said Rick Sprott, executive director of DEQ. “The Legislature recognized the need for additional money to address the air quality concerns.”

In addition to the \$2 million increase for the Division of Air Quality (DAQ), another \$200,000 was provided for the 2008-09 fiscal year, which begins July 1, to help kick-start the process of planning for tougher air quality rules.

The Legislature also allocated \$100,000 to DAQ to purchase a much-needed dry deposition mercury monitor that will help track the mercury emissions. Mercury is a toxic chemical that builds up in the environment, especially in fish, and can cause brain damage. The risk has prompted the state to issue fish consumption advisories for certain species of fish at various rivers and lakes throughout the state. For more information on fish advisories, visit: <http://www.fishadvisories.utah.gov>.

Nearly all DEQ’s funding request was approved, with the exception of \$62,000 in ongoing General Fund money to help the Division of Water Quality conduct more fish sampling and analysis to help identify the mercury “hot spots.” Water Quality plans to continue testing but may have to reprioritize its budget to do so.

The Division of Drinking Water was given a \$450,000 pool of money to match with grants to help resolve a long-standing drinking water issue with Antimony and pay for a much-needed treatment system.

State employees also can expect a 5 percent jump in pay. The Legislature approved a compensation package that provides state employees with a basic cost of living adjustment. But employees may be persuaded to switch to lower-cost insurance plans because of a substantial increase in premium payments under the preferred care plan provided by the Public Employees Health Plan.

All Aboard, UTA Frontrunner Commuter Train Arrives in April

Everyone knows the price we pay driving to and from work. Peer pressure aside, we all contribute pollution to the inversion, empty our wallets to rising gas prices, and lose years off our lives dealing with nerve-racking traffic. This April some relief is on the way, at least for those in Weber and Davis counties, with the arrival of the Utah Transit Authority's (UTA) Frontrunner Commuter Train.



A January test-ride by the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) provided a first hand look at the once mythical Frontrunner, and a glimpse into the future way of commuting to work by rail. Fellow travelers met at the Woods Cross Station and hopped aboard for a short trip at speeds reaching 79 miles per hour to Kaysville.

"I am impressed with the smoothness of the ride," said Brandon Smart, the Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) webmaster who lives in Ogden and commutes by bus into the office. "In the summer, I'm looking forward to catching Frontrunner to the Salt Lake transfer station and riding my bike into the office."



The red, white and blue, bi-level train carried two rail cars (three rail cars when regular service begins) with 130 seats per car and a 200 person capacity. More comfortable than other mass transit options, the Frontrunner seats offer more leg and elbow room than the average bus or plane. Large windows offer a great view and may tempt you to wave to the automobile drivers left to battle I-15. Passengers also have free access to wi-fi internet, center tables on the upper floors, a bathroom, and additional room for bikes at entry floor levels. The high-speed diesel-electric powered engine was noise free and returned us back before we knew it.

There are eight stops from Pleasant View to the Salt Lake City Inter-Modal Hub located at 250 South 600 West (see map <http://rideuta.com/files/CommNorthFactSheet0807.pdf>). A second phase is planned to extend commuter service from Brigham City to Payson for service by 2012.

Frontrunner officials feel connecting bus routes will accommodate the Salt Lake workforce efficiently and UTA will make assessments as operations begin. Trains will operate every 30 minutes between 5:00 a.m. and 11:00 p.m., Monday thru Friday; from 7:30 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. on Saturday, and will not run on Sundays.

“I can see riding Frontrunner a lot,” said Steve Higley, director of Support Services for DEQ who lives in Kaysville. “It will be a great way to travel to Salt Lake City to Jazz games and other events.”

Fares may seem expensive until compared with costs associated with fuel and parking. The cost of the Frontrunner is \$2.50 to travel between two stations and an additional 50 cents for every station after that. A monthly Frontrunner pass goes for \$145.

UTA and many State Agencies encourage mass transit with a discounted Eco-Pass.

Rick Sprott, executive director of DEQ, purchased Eco-Passes for all employees. And for a mere \$20, employees can purchase the premium Eco-Pass with a Frontrunner fare that includes passage on Trax light rail and express buses.



“This will give our employees an opportunity to practice what we preach about driving less in order to improve the air,” Sprott said.

Additional information is available on the UTA Frontrunner commuter train website at: <http://www.rideuta.com/projects/commuterRail/default.aspx> or by calling the hotline at 1-877-UTA-RAIL.

The article was written by David Allison, community involvement specialist with the Office of Planning and Public Affairs.

DEQ Helping to Cure the Problem of Discarded Pills

We now know that it is environmentally unsafe to flush expired medications down the toilet or throw them into the trash. Yet, keeping unwanted drugs in unlocked medicine cabinets can also pose a risk of accidental contact with children or animals, or an invitation for illicit use. So what do we do?

The Department of Environmental Quality is offering a cure.

Law enforcement agencies are eligible for one-time grants, of up to \$1,000, to establish a “Drug Collection for Proper Disposal” program modeled after the two that already exist in Utah. The Salt Lake City Police Department and the Salt Lake County Sheriff’s Office each have a highly secure collection bin in the lobbies of their stations where consumers bring unwanted medications and drop them in the box. The materials are then transported to a hazardous waste site for incineration.

“The collection programs that exist are hugely successful,” said Leah Ann Lamb, director of DEQ’s Planning and Public Affairs, which administers the grants. “We are encouraging more law enforcement agencies across



the state to take advantage of these grants to help in a statewide effort to have more medicine disposal sites.”

Here’s the problem. Flushing medicines down the toilet or sink enter the water because wastewater treatment facilities are not designed to remove them. Evidence of the medication’s harmful effects has been surfacing in our waterways. Putting medicines in the garbage or keeping them in an unlocked medicine cabinet create an invitation for abuse. One in five teens report intentionally misusing someone else’s prescription drugs to get high, many of these are obtained by raiding a medicine cabinet or obtaining them from a friend.

Local health departments welcome the idea of collection bins. Because of the strict laws governing the handling of prescription drugs, the take-back collection programs must be administered by law enforcement agencies. Otherwise, the options for disposal of drugs are limited to the trash, if it is mixed with kitty litter or coffee grounds and put in a sealed container before throwing them away.

A more painless way is to drop the drugs off at a collection bin. To apply for the grant, law enforcement agencies must simply:

- Establish a “Drug Collection for Proper Disposal” policy, which includes handling protocols and final destruction of the drugs through incineration at an approved hazardous waste facility;
- Place a clearly marked, highly secured collection bin that is accessible to the public;
- Residents be allowed to drop off the drugs free of charge with no personal information provided;
- Report to DEQ the pounds of medications collected; and
- Advertise the program to the public.

“We think this is a win for the health and safety and a win for the environment,” Lamb said. For more information on the proper disposal of unused medications go to: www.medicationsdisposal.utah.gov.

Meals on Wheels Needs Volunteers: DEQ Secretary Saves Man from Heart Attack

On Christmas Eve, Terry Montgomery was delivering a hot lunch to Alton and Marilyn Gilliands at their Rosepark home as part of her “Meals on Wheels” semimonthly route. But when she arrived, Alton was upstairs clutching his chest. It was Montgomery’s quick action that spared him his life.

“I could see from his discomfort that he wasn’t going to be able to eat right then, so I suggested I put their lunch in the fridge,” Montgomery said. “Alton kept saying he didn’t know what to do and was still holding his chest.”

In a few heart-pounding moments, Montgomery called 9-1-1, which arrived in time to save him from a fatal heart attack.

“It was kind of hectic trying to answer the 9-1-1 dispatchers’ questions about Alton but somehow I managed to do that. The ambulance and the fire department arrived very



quickly and immediately gave Alton four baby aspirins,” she said. “They took him to the hospital and he underwent surgery that night. The doctor said if he had gotten there any later he would have died.”

While the ambulance took Alton to the hospital, Montgomery stayed behind to comfort Alton’s wife, Marilyn. Montgomery had called some friends who came over shortly after the incident.

Montgomery’s heroic actions have prompted the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and Meals on Wheels to nominate Montgomery for the “Vital Volunteer” award to be presented by Salt Lake County Mayor Peter Corroon. She also was recently featured in the Salt Lake Tribune.

To Montgomery, however, the best reward was being able to deliver another hot meal to the Gilliards and seeing Alton alive and well.

“I guess it was just a matter of being at the right place at the right time,” she said.

Montgomery is one of about 23 DEQ employees who volunteer once or twice a month for Meals on Wheels, best known for delivering hot entrees to thousands of housebound seniors in the Salt Lake Valley.

But Meals on Wheels could use more volunteers.

Anne Jewett, the volunteer coordinator for Meals on Wheels program for Salt Lake County, said the program serves over 1,100 people daily in the Salt Lake Valley, over half of which are delivered lunch by approximately 1,000 volunteers from their jobs, churches or organizations. “The DEQ volunteers are a wonderful and vital part of that service,” she said.

“Volunteers make such an incredible difference,” said Jewett. “It’s more than just a meal. The volunteers are a ray of sunshine, they go and check on their clients, they say, ‘Hello’ and see how they are doing. They are also a security check. The seniors are so appreciative of the volunteers giving of their time for them. I get many calls from people who are so thankful for their caring and concern,” she added.

It’s a hugely successful program, Jewett said. “So much so, we do not have a waiting list because of the strong volunteer program we have. It’s really a privilege for me to work each day with both the volunteers, and the seniors.”

Kaye Crawford, analyst for the Office of Human Resource Management and the Meals on Wheels coordinator for DEQ, says about 40 DEQ employees have participated over the years and many find it rewarding.

“Volunteers use their own time and resources, such as their lunch hour and their own vehicles to deliver the meals.” Crawford said. “In good or bad weather, employees have been dedicated to provide the meals knowing that people really depend on them. The volunteers are really wonderful.”

Montgomery has been volunteering for Meals on Wheels for six years since DEQ began enlisting participants for the program. She says it’s well worth her time.

“Giving up your lunch hour a couple times a month is well worth it,” Montgomery said. “It makes me feel really good inside to know I am helping people that are unable to provide for themselves a hot meal at least once a day. The people you deliver to become like an extended family. You really care

for them and wonder and worry when for some reason one of them is not on your list of deliveries anymore.”

How to Volunteer

Employees interested in volunteering for Meals on Wheels are encouraged to contact Kaye Crawford at 536-4415 or kcrawford@utah.gov.

Salt Lake County requires background checks before volunteers are authorized to deliver meals to people’s homes. Forms are available in DEQ’s Human Resources Office in Building #2. Current volunteers are trained on certain protocols such as what to do in emergency situations.

“We are many times the only people that the recipients of the meal see each day. So volunteers help them with little things, like getting their silverware, opening their milk, putting the food in the refrigerator or just staying a few minutes to visit,” Crawford said.