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Days may be numbered for solo drivers
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Is there a car pool or bus ride in your commuting future?

The chances are good, if you drive to work alone, that you'll be abandoning — either by choice or otherwise — your solo commute in the next few years.

Santa Cruz County transportation planners are now scrambling to meet a Jan. 1, 1993 state deadline to implement a Congestion Management Plan — part of Proposition 111 approved by voters two years ago to raise gasoline taxes and fund billions of dollars in new highway, mass transit and other transportation improvements in California.

They plan to hold a public hearing tomorrow at 9 a.m. in the Santa Cruz City Council Chambers, 809 Center St., Santa Cruz, on the Congestion Management Program.

Prop. 111 was a compromise between those who believed Califor-

nians should begin to move away from their love affair with the gasoline-powered automobile and those who were tired of sitting in miles-long traffic jams and who believed the state should build more and wider freeways and roads.

Voters bought the compromise, overwhelmingly approving Prop. 111 in an era when it is difficult to get any consensus on raising taxes.

State gasoline taxes have already jumped a nickel a gallon and they'll continue to rise for the next four years.

Now, it is time for the second part of Prop. 111 to begin. Part of the Congestion Management Program is the Trip Reduction Ordinance.

Transportation Commission executive director Linda Wilshusen said yesterday that the Trip Reduction Ordinance's goal is to increase the per-vehicle ridership to an average of 1.5 persons per au-

tomobile during the peak evening commute hours.

To do so, transportation planners and officials of the Monterey Bay Air Pollution Control District are looking at requiring medium-size and large companies to get their employees out of single-occupancy cars and into alternative programs such as car-pooling, buses, vans, bicycling, flexible work-hours or even telecommuting.

Wilshusen said the ordinance is still in the drafting stage and won't be released for public comment until May. It will not, she said, apply to small businesses. The cut-off will probably be in the range of 75 to 100 employees, she said.

Other parts of the Congestion Management Plans include requirements on local governments to adopt plans to keep traffic flowing relatively freely on the county's major freeways and arterials.

Streets and intersections are rated on their "Level of Service"

with letter grades of A to F, with A the least congested. Watsonville, she said, has a policy of maintaining its traffic flow at a "C." The Congestion Management Plan specifies a minimum of "D."

Cities and the county won't lose control over their land-use planning but, for the first time, they'll have to submit major development plans to the Transportation Commission for comment. The local jurisdiction can ignore the transportation planners, Wilshusen said, but if traffic gets too bad in their jurisdictions, the commission can ask the state to withhold the city's or the county's gas tax money.

It will be up to the cities and the county to adopt and enforce the plan.

The Transportation Commission can't enforce its recommendations. But the Air Pollution Control District does have enforcement power and could force an recalcitrant city to heel, if necessary, she added.