

## Reverse Commuters: Specialized Workforce Drawn to High Desert

Editor's note: For a look at the experience of commuters who live locally and leave the High Desert for work, visit [www.VVDailyPress.com](http://www.VVDailyPress.com) .

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Commuters headed both down and up the hill for work may drive the same roads, but their experiences are markedly different.

Those heading south each morning through the Cajon Pass are much greater in number and face long hours of traffic. Many live in the High Desert for its affordable housing, but cannot find work locally.

In contrast, a much smaller group of people commute to the High Desert for work every morning. These commuters tend to be professionals.

"The people that do come up here are professionals because they can afford to drive up here," says Joseph Brady, president of The Bradco Companies. "It's for something very specific."

Peter Allan, an economics professor at Victor Valley College, agrees with this assessment.

"Most people commute up here when there isn't anyone qualified in the High Desert to hire," Allan says.

According to Allan, 30 to 40 employees at VVC commute from down the hill — some from as far away as San Diego. The vast majority of the college's teaching positions have a minimum requirement of a master's degree, which is not common in the High Desert.

In other cases, commuters are drawn to the High Desert for jobs so specialized that the High Desert does not have a large enough workforce to fill the need.

United Furniture hired 45 production workers from down the hill because the company could not find enough qualified people in the High Desert, according to Brady. Many of these workers commute together in vanpools.

"I never, ever thought I would see a reverse commuter for a company up here that was production oriented," Brady says.

Whatever brings them to the High Desert, these commuters have the advantage of going against traffic.

Dr. Joseph Selveraj, who lives in Loma Linda and commutes to Hesperia for work at LaSalle Medical Clinic, finds the commute to be relaxing and enjoyable.

“Fortunately the traffic is going the opposite way when I’m coming up. I don’t have much traffic to fight with, and I enjoy my drive,” Selveraj says.

Albert Hsueh lives in the Los Angeles basin and works at the Victorville courthouse.

“I have a lot of things to think about, whether it’s work or my personal life,” Hsueh says. “The commute gives me time to contemplate things.”

While traffic is not a problem for Greg White, who lives in Beaumont and works at Four-D College in Victorville, the miles he commutes takes a toll on his vehicle. White jokes that he is in the repair shop more than the mechanics who work there.

While they all have reasons to stay down the hill, these reverse commuters enjoy the High Desert and the people who live here.

“The patients up here are country folks and more relaxed,” Selveraj explains. “The patients are very forgiving. People appreciate that I’m coming up the hill to take care of them.”

Selveraj bought his dream home 38 years ago in Loma Linda and has completely paid off his mortgage, giving him no reason to consider moving.

White faces an opposite problem: While he wishes he could move to the High Desert, he is tied to a home in Beaumont that is upside down because of the crash of the housing market.

In his two years at the Victorville Superior Court, Hsueh has split his time between the High Desert and the L.A. basin. He enjoyed living in the High Desert for one year, but then decided to move down the hill for a change of scenery.

At the end of the day, White notes that commuting is a reality of living in Southern California.

“People commute everywhere,” he said