

Air rules weighed

Modesto Bee, Thursday June 15, 2006

New rules aimed at reducing air pollution from large dairy farms could be approved today. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District board is scheduled to consider the rules, which would apply to farms that have at least 1,000 milking cows and were built before 2004, when tight standards for new dairies took effect. The proposed rules deal with volatile organic compounds, which can combine with other pollutants and sunlight to form smog. The rules would allow dairy farmers to choose from a range of measures, such as using pollutant-trapping devices in cattle enclosures, keeping feed covered and promptly tilling manure into fields. The board will meet in Fresno at 9 a.m. A live video link will allow the public to make comments at the district's Modesto office, 4800 Enterprise Way, off Bangs Avenue near Salida. More information is available at 557-6400 or www.valleyair.org.

Health risk called low at Tracy youth sports park site

Rick Brewer - Record Staff Writer

Stockton Record, Thursday, June 15, 2006

TRACY - The controversial site of a proposed youth sports park has been labeled safe for development.

A report published Tuesday by San Francisco-based Tetra Tech EMI Inc. found no health risks to children or adults who would potentially play at the proposed park, located on a 200-acre site along West Schulte Road known as the Antenna Farm. The land west of the Tracy city limits is located near the Tracy biomass, Owens-Illinois glass and GWF peaker power plants.

The assessment, prepared with help from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, determined that the possibilities for developing cancer are "well below the state standard" based on those developed by the California Office of Environmental Health Hazards. The report assumed a person would reside on the land 24 hours per day, seven days per week for 70 consecutive years, said Tracy senior planner Alan Bell.

The assessment cautioned that under worst-case weather conditions, about 4 acres at the property's southeast corner should be used for less than one hour at a time, because the air quality degraded by the industrial facilities in the area might cause some eye and or respiratory irritation. But no long-term health risks are evident.

The youth sports facility is expected to include more than 50 fields for football, soccer, baseball and softball, plus concession stands, lighting, parking and a 50-acre recreation area. Souza Development and AKT Development have agreed to spend \$20 million to build the facility in return for the future rights to build the 5,500-home Tracy Hills residential development project. That is in addition to more than \$8 million the city has invested in the project and money collected by the Youth Sports Alliance of Tracy, a group of youth sports organizations such as Little League and youth football.

The Antenna Farm land formerly was used by the Federal Aviation Administration as a radio transmission facility from 1952 to 1981. The FAA left a quarter-century ago, but 40 giant antenna poles still poke out of the ground. Rep. Richard Pombo, R-Tracy, arranged a deal in which the federal government will sell the city 50 acres at market value, then give away the remaining 150 acres if it is used for recreational or educational purposes.

In May, the U.S. Department of the Interior approved Tracy's site plan for the park. It was a major step in the city's efforts to consummate the deal and begin to transform the land into a facility filled with fields for Tracy youth teams.

Opponents of putting the sports park near industrial plants asked for the health assessment of the site. They have argued for the park to be built on city-owned land at Chrisman Road and 11th Street. The assessment took both sites into consideration.

"If the air pollution district signs off on (the Antenna Farm), then it must be OK," said Carole Dominguez, who has lobbied for the Chrisman site. "But from what I've seen, the Chrisman site is healthier, and there are other aspects that make it superior."

Air district engineers are still looking over the document, spokeswoman Kelly Morphy said. They may write comments about the report or attend a public hearing scheduled for Tuesday.

Fred Kruger, president of the Youth Sports Alliance of Tracy, said he is encouraged the report came back favorable.

"It's the last piece of the puzzle," he said. "The city should be able to close on the property fairly quickly now."

Historic Jackson fights big-box store plan Home Depot seeks to open in heart of Gold Rush area

Dana M. Nichols - Record Staff Writer
Stockton Record, Thursday, June 15, 2006

JACKSON - The view motorists get from the top of the hill as they descend into Jackson from the north is one of the most beloved in the Mother Lode. To the left towers the rusted head frame of the Kennedy mine. Eastward is the hulk of Butte Mountain. And below are the white steeple of St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church and rows of century-old homes along tree-lined streets.

Now, Home Depot wants to put a big box in the middle of it.

The idea that motorists may soon be looking at a 106,432-square-foot Home Depot and an accompanying 36,760-square-foot garden center has a lot of Jackson residents, as well as others from outside town, vowing to fight. Some will march in protest starting at 9 a.m. Saturday from Detert Park, near the proposed Home Depot site.

"We're still hoping to stop them," said Bob Devlin, a businessman and preservationist who formed the nonprofit group that cares for the historic Kennedy mine and also is chairman of Citizens for the Preservation of Historic Jackson, which is organizing Saturday's march.

"We treasure that feeling coming down (Highway) 49 that you are coming into the valley of a small town," Devlin said.

This isn't the region's first battle in California's long-running big-box wars.

Lodi voters in November 2004 rejected a ballot measure that would have set limits on the size of big-box retailers in that city. And plans for a 226,868-square-foot Wal-Mart Supercenter in Lodi are still on hold after a judge ordered the city to redo its environmental studies for the project.

But the debate in Jackson has its own distinctive flavor. In Lodi, like many other places, a leading issue was the threat that big boxes would drive out smaller, locally owned businesses. Some residents also objected to the sheer size of the projects.

In Jackson, most people are worried about history and views. Many here say they have no objections to growth, developers or to big-box stores as long as they are built away from Jackson's narrow roads and Gold Rush scenery.

"I don't know of one person who has a problem with Lowe's because of their location," said Jack Georgette, referring to the Home Depot rival that opened recently a few miles away in Martell near the intersection of Highways 88 and 49.

Georgette retired in Jackson after commuting by train to New York City for 18 years to his job as a printing salesman. For the past 14 years, he's been restoring a century-old house on North Main Street. Now he finds himself less than 100 yards from where cars would exit the Home Depot parking lot.

Historic preservation is the focus despite the fact that there are more than a dozen potential environmental problems with the project, including toxic mine waste on the site, worse traffic jams and increased air pollution, according to a city report. Work is beginning on an environmental impact report to study all those issues.

And there simply will be no way to alleviate some of those problems, especially worse traffic congestion on the section of Highway 88/49 that adjoins the project, said Susan Peters, Jackson's city planner.

"We just got a Lowe's in Martell, and the big question is, why does Amador County need a Lowe's and Home Depot?" Peters said.

One difference is that Lowe's is not within Jackson's city limits.

Home Depot said that on average, its California stores each yield about \$430,000 a year in sales tax revenue to their cities. The store would employ about 150 people, said Home Depot spokeswoman Romelia Edwards.

Peters said that once the full environmental study is done later this year, the City Council would have to decide that the value of the store outweighed the problems before they could approve it.

Edwards said that her company often encounters local resistance to its stores. She also said that it is willing to vary the design of store exteriors to better blend with the local community.

Peters, however, said it will be a challenge to modify a large building that will be visible from all four directions as well as to drivers above it on the highway.

"It will be the first thing you see when you come into Jackson and the last thing you see when you leave," Peters said.

So far, about 1,000 people, including 500 Jackson residents have signed a petition opposing the Home Depot, said Kathryn Devlin. That is more than one out of every five people in this town of 4,300.

In contrast, Amador Citizens for Smart Growth, another group opposing the Home Depot that focuses more on economic and traffic issues, has about 41 memberships, some of which include both members of a married couple, said Kathy Allen, chairwoman of the ACSG. Allen said members of her group also would be at Saturday's protest.

An environmental consultant finds ways to keep employees out of their cars as smog of summer nears.

By Gilbert Chan -- Bee Staff Writer

Sacramento Bee, Thursday, June 15, 2006

Most weekdays Terry Rivasplata heads into work putting foot to the pedal of his 27-speed mountain bike.

Co-worker Heather Hogan slaps on her inline skates and cruises down the street to the offices of Jones & Stokes, a Sacramento-based environmental consulting firm.

"I rarely ever drive to work," said Hogan, 27, a marketing specialist.

This summer, Jones & Stokes is stepping up a campaign to encourage more employees to bike, skate, run, walk carpool or take public transit to work, especially during the smoggiest days in the Sacramento region.

Moreover, the firm and the Sacramento Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce are recruiting other businesses to follow suit and launch programs to reduce auto emissions during unhealthy "Spare the Air" days.

"Clean air is good for business. Employers play a vital role in improving air quality. We're trying to ramp up that effort," Matt Mahood, the chamber's chief executive, said during a news conference outside Jones & Stokes' midtown headquarters.

With more than 61,000 businesses in the region, Mahood said, "you can really make an impact if you get these folks engaged."

The Sacramento area consistently ranks among the top 10 most smoggy regions in the nation.

Local officials are under the gun to clean up the air to meet federal air quality standards by 2013 or face tough smog controls on businesses and the possible loss of federal highway construction money.

During last year's smog season, the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District declared 14 Spare the Air days because unhealthy amounts of ground-level ozone were in the air -- up from six in 2004.

Over the years, public transit systems have offered free bus and light rail rides.

For the first time, business leaders are taking the initiative to get companies to change their practices and encourage employees to decrease auto travel.

"The chamber has come to understand that the business community has a definite benefit in reducing the air pollution in the region," said Larry Greene, executive director of the Sacramento air quality district.

Greene points to companies such as Jones & Stokes, which has an aggressive spare-the-air program.

An average of 30 of the firm's 180 Sacramento employees ride bicycles to work -- one from Davis.

Another 15 to 20 carpool, and 20 ride buses or light rail.

The company provides showers and lockers for cyclists such as Rivasplata, an environmental analyst.

During the year, he pedals to work at least twice a week and more frequently during the summer.

Some days, his wife drops him off at the office, and he runs 3 1/2 miles to his South Land Park home at the end of the day.

"It saves the air. It's good for health," Rivasplata said.

Jones & Stokes has a Spare the Air coordinator to tell employees when government alerts are issued.

The firm also allows employees to stay home and telecommute on dirty air days.

This summer, the company is buying bicycles for employees to run errands during the day and reimbursing employees for transit fares on official Spare the Air days.

"We're trying to use our example to show other employers what they can do," said Maggie Townsley, the firm's principal director of local government and transportation. "There are very low-cost options out there.

"If you only have a few employees, transit vouchers are a very cheap way to get your employees to take (public) transit."

SPARE THE AIR DAYS

The figures below show how often alerts were issued because of an unhealthy amount of ground-level ozone in the air.

1999: 12

2000: 6

2001: 15

2002: 22

2003: 14

2004: 6

2005: 14

YTD 2006: 0

Source: Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District

CLEAN AIR TIPS

Here are tips to encourage air-sparing qualities among employees:

- Encourage workers to sign up for free Spare the Air alerts that can be received by e-mail or text messaging.
- Appoint a Spare the Air coordinator to receive and distribute alerts.
- Establish a link on the company's home page or Intranet to www.SpareTheAir.com <<http://www.SpareTheAir.com>>, which displays the day's air quality forecast.
- Set up a telecommute or work-at-home program.
- Buy lunch for employees on Spare the Air days. Employers also can urge workers to bring their lunch or send one person to pick up meals for the staff.
- Offer passes for public transit.
- Purchase a bicycle or electric bike for employees to use on short errands.
- Support ridesharing programs.

- Purchase low-emission company vehicles.

Source: Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District

Planners OK large housing tract

By Chris Collins

Merced Sun-Star, Thursday, June 15, 2006

In another sign of how development is rapidly changing Merced County, the Planning Commission recommended Wednesday that the Board of Supervisors OK housing construction plans on a large chunk of land under a Williamson Act contract.

It would be the first time the county has canceled a contract since it started setting aside Williamson Act land in 2000. The contracts ensure that land won't be developed for certain periods of time.

If the county cancels the contract, then the 187-acre parcel would allow the Fox Hills development near Los Banos to expand by another 2,600 homes on 850 acres of land.

The new homes would surround an already approved 400-acre development that includes a golf course and spacious residential lots.

Fox Hills, billed as a retirement community for people 55 years or older, is three miles southwest of Los Banos on the Interstate 5 corridor.

The Planning Commission recommended that the development -- and the contract cancellation -- be approved.

"We're elated," said David Gould, one of three owners of Fox Hills Development. "It's smart growth for Merced County."

Preservationists were not elated. They said the contract cancellation could lead to a rush on Williamson Act property.

But developers said they have justifiable reasons for building on the farmland. They also said they would set aside money to help the county buy an easement -- a permanent restriction on development -- on an even bigger and better piece of land in exchange for canceling the contract.

Planning commissioners, who voted 3-0 to recommend approval for the project, didn't say anything at the meeting.

After the meeting, Vice Chair Lynn Tanner said he felt the deal would benefit the county because the land that would be put under an easement would potentially be better farmland than the land under the Williamson Act contract.

"When you're trading marginal farmland for good farmland, it's a good trade," he said.

But Diana Westmoreland-Pedrozo, the director of the Merced County Farm Bureau, said that even though she didn't have any objections to the development itself, she was concerned about the contract cancellation.

"If the Planning Commission were to accept the cancellation it would be easier for the Board of Supervisors to cancel land in the future and make it as easy as a zoning change," she said.

But Michael Groves, who is head of the firm that helped design the Fox Hills development, said nixing the contract wouldn't set a precedent for easy cancellations in the future.

"It's a uniqueness situation," he said. "It's basically a case-by-case basis."

The Planning Department initially said at a May 24 meeting that it didn't support canceling the contract because it would rather let the developers take the risk of "rescinding" the land through a state process instead of exposing the county to legal risk by canceling the contract.

"Staff believes a number of issues still need to be resolved," Planner James Holland said at that time.

But Holland said Wednesday that it was clear the state wouldn't allow a rescission on the contract, leaving cancellation as the only option available.

He also said Fox Hills developers would be willing to inherit any lawsuit penalties brought against the county for canceling the contract.

Holland also cited "new findings" his department had gathered over the past few weeks that would make the cancellation option more favorable.

He said those findings included more information gathered from developers and conversations with state and local agencies.

But Westmoreland-Pedrozo said she had not heard about the Planning Department's new conclusions and said it was "very disturbing" that the Farm Bureau was not told about the new findings before the meeting.

"This is just so out of the ordinary," she said. "Usually when you have people who raise legal issues, the department will tell them, 'This is what we're going to do.' "

Holland said his department's latest report had been available for the past week and that he wasn't responsible for checking in with the Farm Bureau before the meeting.

The 187-acre parcel under a Williamson Act contract is not considered prime farmland, Holland said.

He said the developers will pay the county a fee of 12.5 percent of the value of that property. The money will be used to help the Central Valley Farmland Trust purchase an easement on another chunk of county land.

Bill Martin, who is the director of the trust, said the money could potentially be used to buy an easement on a 278-acre piece of farmland a few miles away from the Fox Hills development.

Living with asthma

Valley air can be near lethal for some

By Jillian Daley, Staff writer

Tulare Advance-Register, Wednesday, June 14, 2006

Sherry Carson of Tulare has a mild case of asthma. Her 15-year-old son, Jacob, doesn't have it at all.

But a 2002 attack almost killed her 9-year-old daughter, Kali.

"She stopped breathing and collapsed at school," Carson said. "She stayed in the hospital for four days."

Kali is among 23 percent of Tulare County children ages 5-17 who have asthma — a figure provided by the 2003 California Health Interview Survey. About 13.7 percent of Tulare County residents ages 18-80 have asthma.

The national average for all ages is 8 percent.

To cope, Carson uses a HEPA filter to clean the air in her home and installed a 3 1/2-foot-tall, 8-inch-wide air purifier in her daughter's room. She also took out the carpeting.

Cats, walnuts, hay and large amounts of dirt or dust trigger asthma attacks for both mother and daughter. The episodes start with a cough and progress from there. With medication, the reaction is controlled.

They don't serve nuts in the Carson home.

"We didn't want to take any more chances with how close she came to losing her life over asthma," said Carson, who also looks for traces of nuts in other food. "We read labels now. [We're] a little more conscientious about that."

Carson has lived in Tulare since 1981 and has no intention of leaving. Her mother, father and one brother live in the area.

"My life is here," she said. "My kids' lives are here."

Kris Smiley of Fresno isn't going anywhere, either. She has asthma and is allergic to dust, grasses, mulberry/olive trees and cats. With medication, though, her asthma is under control.

Smiley has a special vacuum that uses water to keep dust out of the air. She also takes a few other precautions.

"Obviously, I don't mow the lawn," she said.

The view from the fields

Tulare County Farm Bureau president Keith Watkins handles a 3,000-acre farm for Bee Sweet Citrus but has neither asthma nor allergies.

He said he's not aware of any study that links farming to high rates of allergies or asthma.

When used correctly, he said, pesticides pose little threat to respiratory health.

"It's not like we're out here inhaling the stuff," he said. "It's something you don't want to breathe, and that's why you take precautions when you're farming."

Those who live near agricultural land are advised to close all doors and windows during spraying. Afterward, most shouldn't go into orchards for 10-12 hours, though the time may vary depending on the pesticide used.

Allergy sufferer Jason George works 1,500 acres of peaches, plums and nectarines with George Brothers of Sultana, a family farm. He simply tries to steer clear of orange blossoms, which send him into a sneezing frenzy.

Many Parents Unaware of Asthma Risk

By William J. Kole, Associated Press Writer

In the S.F. Chronicle, USA Today and other papers, Thursday, June 15, 2006

Vienna, Austria (AP) -- One in three fatal asthma attacks worldwide involves a child with a mild form of the disease, and nearly half of all parents are unaware of the risk, according to a global survey presented Wednesday.

The report said the findings exposed a critical information gap between doctors who treat asthma and parents of youngsters diagnosed with the condition.

"Many patients with asthma underestimate their disease severity and overestimate their degree of asthma control," the European Academy of Allergology and Clinical Immunology warned.

Dr. G. Walter Canonica of the University of Genoa in Italy said the survey underscored how effective treatment "is a shared responsibility requiring continuous communication among physicians and children with asthma and their parents."

Experts said that with each decade, the prevalence of asthma increased 50 percent. Worldwide, more than 300 million people are afflicted, the Global Initiative for Asthma says.

The World Health Organization said 255,000 people died from asthma in 2005 and that deaths are projected to rise by almost 20 percent in the next 10 years without urgent action.

"Asthma is an enormous global health problem," said Dr. Nikolai Khaltsev of WHO's chronic respiratory diseases department. He said the U.N. agency was looking forward to studying the new report.

Asthma is a chronic lung disease caused by airway inflammation, and certain stimuli cause the windpipe to become obstructed. Symptoms include wheezing, coughing and a tightened airway that causes shortness of breath and can be life-threatening. Allergies are responsible for more than 50 percent of asthma in adults.

Treatment for the condition costs society more than that for tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS combined, the European Academy said.

Its survey of 5,482 asthma patients, their doctors and the parents of young sufferers focused on cases in Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain, Switzerland and the United States.

The academy said the report - issued at its annual conference in Vienna - was the first sweeping global survey of what parents do and don't know about the hazards of asthma.

Many parents cut back on treatments such as drug inhalers when their children suffer side-effects, the study found. Others switch medications or discontinue treatment altogether, it said, cautioning that doing so "can be dangerous and greatly impact health outcomes."

Reducing or stopping treatment usually means a child's condition worsens, the report warned.

"More than three-fourths of children who are not compliant with their asthma treatment all the time experience at least one of the following: increased symptoms (66 percent), limited physical activity (48 percent), nighttime awakenings (46 percent) and more frequent asthma attacks or exacerbations (40 percent)," it said.

Patients who don't follow doctors' orders end up with 38 percent more visits to physicians and are 14 percent more likely to wind up in an emergency room or to be hospitalized, the survey said.

Experts said that although 59 percent of parents say they comply with their doctors' instructions all the time, only 9 percent of physicians believe them based on the child's symptoms.

Parents and doctors both complain that the other doesn't initiate discussions about treatment and side-effects.

"Patients with asthma, parents, and the physicians who treat them should pay close attention to the findings from this survey, which show that the way we currently treat asthma is unsatisfactory," said Dr. Erkkka Valovirta, a pediatrics specialist at Finland's Turku Allergy Center.

Khaltaev said asthma is a preventable chronic respiratory disease with the most important risk factors including air pollution, allergens and tobacco smoke.

WHO encourages the best possible relationship between doctor and patient in controlling asthma, he said.

"In the case of children the health care provider-parent-child relationship is key," Khaltaev told The Associated Press. "Knowledge and understanding is crucial, as well-educated parents will in turn create children who are well-educated about their disease and how to properly control it."

"With proper asthma control there is no reason why a child cannot live life to the full," he added. "There are many Olympic champions who have well-controlled asthma."

Associated Press writer Alexander G. Higgins contributed to this report from Geneva.

Winter night flights blamed for compounding warming

Limiting such air traffic called key to aiding fight

By Robert Lee Hotz, Los Angeles Times

In the L.A. Times, S.F. Chronicle and other papers, Thursday, June 15, 2006

Contrails from winter night flights may be most responsible for the global warming caused by air traffic, even though they make up a fraction of commercial flights, meteorologists at the United Kingdom's University of Reading reported Wednesday.

While there would be enormous practical problems, airlines could markedly reduce aviation's impact on climate by changing schedules to restrict night flying, the researchers said in the journal *Nature*.

"We get one-half of the climate effect from one-quarter of the year, from less than one-quarter of the air traffic," said Nicola Stuber, who led the research team. "If you get rid of the night flights, you can reduce the climate-warming effect of the contrails."

Overall, aviation accounts for a relatively small portion of the emissions involved in rising global temperatures, but international commercial air travel is among the fastest-growing unregulated sources of greenhouse gases and a growing topic of concern among climate regulators.

By its accounting, the International Air Transport Association says air traffic accounts for 2 percent of global carbon dioxide emissions. Jet exhaust, however, injected at high altitude can have two or three times the warming effect of carbon dioxide, researchers have concluded.

In particular, climate experts have worried about the impact of the trails of ice particles that quickly condense in the wake of jet exhaust, which can spread in hours from a few yards wide to thousands of square miles.

These shining clouds are mirrors in the sky.

From their upper surface, they reflect solar radiation, to cause slight cooling. At the same time, they also block heat rising from the earth below, to enhance the greenhouse effect. At night, that warming is especially pronounced, the researchers said.

To explore the climate effects of contrails, Stuber and her colleagues studied the air space over the south of England at the entrance to the North Atlantic flight corridor, perhaps the world's busiest skyway.

They looked only at those contrails that persisted for an hour or more, combining aircraft flight data with weather-balloon recordings of temperature and humidity. Contrails were almost twice as likely to form in winter as summer.

Stuber determined that night flights account for 25 percent of the daily air traffic but contributed 60 to 80 percent of the climate effect. Moreover, winter flights accounted for only 22 percent of the annual total but contributed half of the annual warming

[L.A. Times editorial, Thursday, June 15, 2006:](#)

Dig the 710

Completing the freeway through Pasadena underground is the best solution yet to an old problem.

Mega-tunnels for freeways are an idea whose time hasn't come for Southern California. They're expensive, often environmentally dubious (especially in a region crisscrossed by fault lines) and frequently proposed for routes better served by surface roads or expanded public transportation. But there is an exception: twin tunnels under South Pasadena that, if built, would be among the largest in the world.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority on Tuesday unveiled a preliminary study of the costs, environmental effects and possible funding of the 4½-mile tunnels, which would finally connect the Long Beach Freeway in Alhambra with the Foothill Freeway in Pasadena. In essence, it said the project was feasible in every way - even financially. Though it would cost about \$3 billion, up to half the money could be raised by turning the tunnels into toll routes.

The plan is more practical than two other tunnel schemes being proposed in Southern California - an expensive, 23-mile complex of mega-tunnels and surface routes between Palmdale and Glendale, and a geologically disastrous 12-mile tunnel under the Cleveland National Forest to connect Riverside County with the Laguna Freeway in Orange County.

It's also probably the only way to solve a serious traffic problem. Planners have been trying for 50 years to extend the 710 Freeway to Pasadena, only to hit fierce opposition from homeowners along the route. The result is gridlock through downtown L.A. and increased air pollution.

As officials continue to study the tunnel plan, they also should consider unknitting a public-policy tangle. During the half a century that transit officials have been planning the 710 extension, the state has been buying houses along the proposed route. The tunnels would save those houses from demolition, yet under a 1979 state law, they have to be sold under a formula that gives first priority to existing tenants and assures that most of them will be sold to low-income buyers at far below market rate. As a result, the 573 properties, which would fetch about \$500 million at market rate, are expected to go for only about a tenth as much.

The law attempts to use a highway project to help solve a housing problem, which probably wasn't the best idea in the first place. At any rate, the Legislature probably didn't intend to subsidize the purchase of

million-dollar homes. A new law that would exempt this project from the affordable-housing rules and assure that proceeds from the home sales would go toward building the tunnels would be the most direct and sensible way to benefit taxpayers.

[Letters to the L.A. Times, Wednesday, June 14, 2006:](#)

Steps urged to battle port's dirty air

Re "Pollution solution," editorial, June 10

As a resident of the harbor area, not-so-affectionately known to locals as "The Diesel Death Zone," I am thrilled to see some attention given this huge and chronic problem. As a social worker serving families, I have known many children in West Long Beach, Wilmington and San Pedro who suffer from severe asthma. Just about every family in some areas of Wilmington has at least one person with a lung disorder. I am so pleased that the Danish shipping firm Maersk Inc. is voluntarily stepping forward to take some responsibility to reduce harm to our local community. It would be much easier if all the shipping lines abandoned the attitude that it's OK to increase their profit margin off our backs - and lungs.

Andrea L. Bell, Long Beach

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I moved to Long Beach in the early '70s to enjoy the clean air and ocean breeze. I have developed pulmonary problems from breathing the dirty air. My husband and I worked years preparing for a comfortable retirement. Now that we have reached our goal, we are being told to move because of the effects of the container ships burning the cheap "bunker" fuel. Is anyone at the port being held responsible for allowing this situation to occur? Since when did life become so cheap that port and city officials ignore the effect this has had?

Linda Merrill, Long Beach

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We will never see a real difference in our air quality until every ship that comes into the Port of Los Angeles plugs into electricity. We have the technology to plug ships into electricity, called Alternative Maritime Power, which the port was the first in the world to use. Every day that a ship is plugged into electric power, emissions equivalent to 16,000 trucks are prevented from entering our air. Until the port requires every ship to do so, we will never see real benefits to the air we breathe.

Councilwoman Janice Hahn, Los Angeles