

Region to Step Up War Against Smog

New regulations and fees on development, boats and jet-skis are sought under an AQMD plan to reduce pollutants by 50% in 10 years.

By Janet Wilson, staff writer

L.A. Times, Wednesday, October 11, 2006

Southern California air quality officials may impose fees on new development as part of a tough strategy that also calls for more frequent smog inspections of cars and stricter regulations of everything from motorcycles and cargo vessels to hairspray.

State and regional air experts are warning that despite years of effort and billions of dollars, Southern California, the San Joaquin Valley and other pollution hot spots won't meet federal smog targets without slashing key pollutants by 50% or more.

As part of a 10-year plan unveiled Tuesday, South Coast Air Quality Management District officials, for the first time, proposed fees on housing and commercial developments, which generate hundreds of thousands of additional car trips across the region. Passenger cars are one of the state's top sources of air pollution.

"We've come so far, sometimes the public thinks, 'What's the rush, what's the problem?' " said AQMD Executive Director Barry Wallerstein. "Well, in spite of all the improvements in air quality ... at the current rates we will have accelerated illness and increased mortality for years.... We need a no-holds-barred campaign to meet the formidable challenge of achieving clean air."

Figures compiled by the California Air Resources Board show 6,500 premature deaths annually from smog and soot-related exposure, 1.7 million cases of respiratory illness and 2.8 million lost work days, with an average 60% of those effects in the Los Angeles Basin.

Speaking with obvious frustration, Wallerstein said, "I've been reading about *E. coli* and spinach. Certainly the loss of a couple people and a few hundred illnesses is of concern. But this is occurring each and every year in Southern California. If this isn't going to be a priority for us, I don't know what is."

Both AQMD and the state air board this week are releasing proposals to show how they intend to meet new standards set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for fine particulate matter by 2015, and for ozone by 2021.

Fine particulates are tiny soot particles that lodge deep in the lungs, and ozone is the main component of smog. Both arise from a stew of pollutants from vehicle fuels, smokestack emissions, chemical cleansers and other sources.

Data released by the state board shows that hundreds of tons of nitrous oxides, sulfur oxides and reactive organic gases — all hazardous components of diesel soot and ozone — continue to be released every day by cars, heavy-duty trucks, trains, ships, recreational boats and off-road vehicles, construction equipment and other sources.

AQMD officials discussed their plan Tuesday, and the state air board will hold a symposium Thursday morning in Sacramento. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District released its ozone draft plan last week, showing it needs to cut ozone by 60%, and estimating it needs \$7.5 billion in funds by 2012 to help replace aging trucks, cars, locomotives and agricultural equipment.

Last March, the San Joaquin district was the first in the nation to target pollution generated by developers. The district assesses fees based on how much a project exceeds emissions thresholds. Several groups are suing to stop the rule, including the California Building Industry Assn., the Coalition for Urban Renewal Excellence, the Modesto Chamber of Commerce and the

Valley Taxpayers Coalition.

Wallerstein said the AQMD would look at a similar fee program or work more closely with local and county officials to require tougher air pollution controls during environmental reviews.

Mark Grey, environmental affairs director for the Building Industry Assn. of California, said he had not read the proposals. But he said that though the group favors continued voluntary measures, "given the current market conditions in California and the lack of affordability, we are very concerned about a new fee added onto the costs of a new home."

Wallerstein said that despite an average \$5 billion to \$8 billion spent to carry out regional air quality plans in recent decades, Los Angeles last summer again led the nation in smoggy days.

State air officials have estimated that it will cost at least \$6 billion to implement a commercial transportation plan, including replacing aging diesel trucks and locomotives.

Wallerstein criticized both state and federal officials for repeatedly "rolling back the goal line by 40 yards" and causing years-long delays in cleaning up local air.

He said that although the district would do everything within its power, most regulatory authority lies with the state or federal government.

"We need more than to hear 'we feel your pain,' " he said, saying the district might seek special legislation to go after developers, for instance. "If you're not willing to do what needs to be done, give us the authority and we'll do it."

Air board spokesman Jerry Martin said state officials agree with Wallerstein that much still needs to be done, although there might be differences of opinion on strategies.

Both men noted that though huge improvements have been made, new research in the last decade has exposed the risks of fine particulate that no one knew about previously.

"We have cut spikes of ozone in L.A. by half at least. That's no excuse; we know we need to do more," said Martin. "The air is not as healthy as it could be, and as the science gets better we learn more and more about things like particulates, especially, that we didn't know in the past, how devastating they can be."

To meet looming federal deadlines in coming years, the state estimates the South Coast alone will need to reduce sulfur oxide by at least 50%, nitrous oxide by at least 25% and reactive gases by at least 10%. That means, for instance, that the 282 tons of volatile gases released by cars will need to be cut to just 88 tons by 2023 while the population is expected to soar by millions.

Similarly, emissions of nitrous oxide from heavy-duty trucks will need to be cut from 226 tons in 2005 to just 78 tons — over a period when goods movement is expected to double, if not triple.

The AQMD staff said the state estimates were actually low. Nonetheless, officials insisted that with the proper political will and funding, the daunting challenge could be met.

"These goals are achievable," Wallerstein said. But he acknowledged that many of the proposals would be controversial, and could face stiff legal opposition from powerful industries as well as complaints from consumers.

"Jet skiers and boat owners may not be happy," said Wallerstein. "But pleasure craft generate ... tons of pollution, and they're used mostly on warm, sunny summer days when smog forms."

SoCal plan would seek 50 percent drop in smog to meet rules

In the S.F. Chronicle, Bakersfield Californian and other papers, Tuesday, October 10, 2006

DIAMOND BAR, Calif. (AP) -- Southern California would have to cut smog emissions in half by 2020 to meet federal clean air standards, according to a proposed plan released Tuesday.

Regulators with the South Coast Air Quality Management District unveiled the draft blueprint for cleaning up what it called the worst overall air quality in the nation.

It called for tightening pollution standards on everything from cars to lawn mowers, providing incentives for businesses to replace aging diesel equipment, and reducing pollution from ships at the sprawling Los Angeles-Long Beach port complex.

"We need a no-holds-barred campaign to meet the formidable challenge of achieving clean air," Barry Wallerstein, the AQMD's executive officer, said in a statement.

The plan addresses clean air issues in all or parts of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties. It contains nearly 60 ideas for reducing emissions. But many changes would require approval from state or federal regulators.

It must first go through a public comment period and win approval by the AQMD board.

The plan is an update of the latest plan passed in 2003.

The new version is intended to meet federal emissions standards for fine dust, grit and other particulate matter known as PM-10 by 2015, and ozone over an eight-hour period by 2021.

The region could face sanctions such as losing federal transportation funding if it continues to violate smog standards after that.

"We're talking many, many billions of dollars," AQMD spokesman Sam Atwood said in an interview.

Port pollution has received a lot of attention from the AQMD, which said ships, trucks, trains and cargo-hauling equipment at the docks produce an estimated 100 tons of nitrogen oxides daily — more than all the cars in the region.

The region's air has violated federal standards on 86 days so far this year. In 1976, it exceeded federal standards for more than half the year.

While air quality generally is better, improvement has slowed since the late 1990s, the AQMD said.

Recent steps to reduce emissions by tightening regulations have faced court challenges.

Earlier this year, the Association of American Railroads and two railroad companies sued the AQMD, claiming it overstepped its authority by setting rules to reduce smog from locomotives.

In March, a state appeals court upheld an AQMD rule requiring refineries to reduce the amount of smog-forming emissions the facilities release into the air.

Senator fights the tide, calls warming by humans a hoax

Zachary Coile, Chronicle Washington Bureau

In the S.F. Chronicle, Wednesday, October 11, 2006

Washington -- Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger says the debate whether humans are changing the climate is over. Sen. John McCain, an Arizona Republican, says the science linking human activity to global warming is overwhelming.

President Bush recently called global warming "a serious problem." He said there is still uncertainty over how much of the warming is natural and how much man-made, but he added that it was time to "get beyond the debate" and deploy new technologies to curb greenhouse gases.

But in the U.S. Senate, one prominent lawmaker isn't buying it.

Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., has argued repeatedly that the idea that humans are warming the climate is a hoax. In a speech on the Senate floor last month, he declared that the "greatest climate threat we face may be coming from alarmist computer models."

"We're going through a warming period. No one's denying that," Inhofe said on CNN last week. "The question is, is it due to man-made gases? And it's not."

Inhofe, who chairs the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, has emerged in recent years as America's most outspoken skeptic of global warming. He's not the only lawmaker to raise questions about climate change, but he's the most forceful in questioning the science and opposing legislation to limit greenhouse gases.

To his critics, Inhofe's views make him a charter member of the Flat Earth Society. They say his assertions are contradicted by ice core samples and other evidence showing a link between the increased burning of fossil fuels, growing levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, and rising temperatures. Some scientists share Inhofe's skepticism, but the majority of climate researchers have rejected his views.

Even some of his Republican colleagues in Congress say Inhofe's views on global warming are wrong.

"The evidence, in my view, is more compelling than ever," McCain said in an interview, professing a "respectful disagreement" with his GOP colleague on the issue.

"The scientists have become more and more definitive. ... Sooner or later we will recognize that climate change is taking place and it's serious and it's generated by human activity causing greenhouse gas emissions," McCain said.

Rep. Wayne Gilchrest, R-Md., who has joined McCain in sponsoring legislation to cap U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, said he was aghast at Inhofe's latest comments.

"How do you say, ridiculous? How do you say, failing future generations?" Gilchrest said.

"I don't mean to defame anybody, but the state of the science on global warming is top-notch, and it says we are nearing a critical tipping point in devastation, in creating a world that will be hard to live in," he said. "This is not Chicken Little, this is not 'The sky is falling.' The fundamental physics of the atmosphere as it has been degraded by human activity and the burning of fossil fuels is clear."

To his supporters, Inhofe is showing political courage by challenging scientific predictions of dire consequences from global warming and opposing calls for strict limits on greenhouse gas emissions.

"I think it's incredibly important that we have someone who is aggressively offering another point of view," said Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, R-Huntington Beach (Orange County), a fellow skeptic who has called global warming "baloney."

"This is a man who is standing up to an avalanche of nonsense that is being fed to the American people every day, and he's standing up to a system that has rewarded scientists if they will just verify global warming."

The National Academy of Sciences, which includes many of the country's top climate scientists, has been asked repeatedly by the White House and Congress to help resolve the question of whether humans are behind the recent spike in temperatures worldwide. In March, the academy issued a summary report with this conclusion:

"In the judgment of most climate scientists, Earth's warming in recent decades has been caused primarily by human activities that have increased the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere."

Greenhouse gases have increased significantly since the Industrial Revolution, mostly from the burning of fossil fuels for energy, industrial processes, and transportation."

The report also warns of rising sea levels, severe storms and impacts on agriculture, water supplies and certain species -- although it notes that there is "legitimate debate regarding how large, how fast, and where these effects will be."

In a recent interview with The Chronicle, Inhofe rejected the academy's view that the consensus among climate scientists on human-caused global warming is hardening.

"Oh, no! Just the opposite," Inhofe said, seizing on portions of the report that highlight the uncertainties in the science of climate change.

He cited a letter 60 scientists sent recently to Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper saying there is no scientific consensus on climate change and urging him to drop out of the Kyoto Protocol, which Canada signed in 1998. Critics noted that the letter was organized by Friends of Science, a group that has long opposed Kyoto and has ties to the oil and gas industry.

"You guys in the media all want to believe so badly that the science is settled, and it's just totally wrong," Inhofe added. "It's kind of humorous, and the funny part is the media is starting to panic because the public is now realizing that it's a media-hyped, liberal-type program."

The 71-year-old, third-term senator from Tulsa hasn't always been so engrossed in global warming. A former Army private who later earned his commercial pilot's license, he spent his career as a real estate developer and insurance company executive before being elected as an Oklahoma state legislator, Tulsa mayor and, in 1986, a member of the House of Representatives.

In the Senate, since 1994, he's been a staunch conservative who fought for a missile defense system, wrote a bill to make English the national language, and called the Environmental Protection Agency a "Gestapo bureaucracy." He opposes abortion and gay rights, and he gave a floor speech in June backing a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage in which he showed a photo of his 20 children and grandchildren and boasted that "in the recorded history of our family, we've never had a divorce or any kind of homosexual relationship."

He opposed U.S. ratification of the Kyoto Protocol on climate change (along with 94 other senators) and became the chief critic in Congress of climate change science in 2003 after taking over as chair of the Environment and Public Works Committee. That year he drew headlines with a speech calling global warming "the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people." Environmentalists blasted the comment, which later was featured in former Vice President Al Gore's documentary, "An Inconvenient Truth."

Last month, Inhofe gave two major floor speeches on climate change, his eighth and ninth on the issue since 2003. The topics of the last two were efforts by the media and Hollywood to "hype" global warming.

What critics often miss is that he is talking right past his colleagues in Congress and the mainstream media. His staffers always post transcripts of his speeches, which are quickly picked up by conservative bloggers, radio talk show hosts and others who share his skeptical views on climate change. After his recent addresses, Inhofe received more than 500 e-mails lauding his contrarian position, his spokesman said.

Still, environmentalists argue that Inhofe is slowly losing the public relations battle over climate change.

Last year the Senate passed, by 55 votes, a nonbinding "sense of the Senate" resolution stating that human activity is contributing to global warming and that Congress should rein in greenhouse gas emissions. Inhofe noted, however, that legislation to cap those emissions continues to fail in the Senate, losing last year on a 60-38 vote.

His claims of a liberal conspiracy to push global warming have been undercut as Republicans from McCain to Schwarzenegger to New York Gov. George Pataki have championed the cause.

Inhofe complained recently that McCain's presidential ambitions were behind his stand on climate change. He said Schwarzenegger was pushed to sign a recent bill to curb greenhouse gases by campaign pressures and lobbying by "Hollywood elitists."

"I love Schwarzenegger, and I wish him luck in his campaign," Inhofe said. "I'm sure the public in California think it's an issue they ought to jump on. So I think it's all political."

A day after the interview, his press aide called back to say the senator wanted to clarify his position: He believes Schwarzenegger has been too busy to "adequately review the science" on climate change.

To read Inhofe's speeches, go to: www.epw.senate.gov/speeches.cfm?party=rep.

A warming climate or a hoax?

Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee, has said the idea that humans are causing global warming is the "greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people." Here are some of his key assertions:

Temperatures are rising as part of a natural warming trend.

His view: Inhofe says the world is in the midst of a natural warming period that started in 1850 as we came out of a 400-year cold spell known as the Little Ice Age. He cites studies suggesting that rising temperatures might be linked to variations in the amount of energy emitted by the sun.

Counter-argument: Most scientists say natural variability is a factor in climate change but that it can't explain the rapid warming in recent decades. The National Academy of Sciences said recently the "Earth's warming was not due to changes in the sun." The academy, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the American Meteorological Society, the American Geophysical Union and the American Association for the Advancement of Science have all concluded that increased greenhouse gas concentrations resulting from human activities are the likely cause of rising temperatures. The Bush administration, in a 2002 U.S. Climate Action Report by the EPA, said global warming was "likely due mostly to human activities" but said natural variability could play "some significant part."

Temperatures actually declined between 1940 and the 1970s, even as carbon dioxide levels rose.

His view: Inhofe says this fact shows that human activities, especially the burning of fossil fuels, can't be blamed for global warming. The senator notes that media stories in the mid-1970s warned of the negative effects of a global cooling trend, including crop failure.

Counter-argument: Mean temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere cooled somewhat during that period, after having risen steadily since the mid-1800s. Many climate scientists say it's more significant to look at the long-term pattern of warming across the globe. Records show that surface temperatures have risen by 1.4 degrees since the early 20th century, including a 0.9 degree increase since 1978.

Computer models that predict drastic temperature increases and sea level rises are unreliable.

His view: Inhofe, citing uncertainties in modeling, said last month: "The science is simply not there to place so much faith in scary computer model scenarios which extrapolate the current and projected buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and conclude that the planet faces certain doom."

Counter-argument: Scientists agree that computer models can't predict precisely what the effects of climate change will be, mostly because of the many variables that affect projections, such as population and economic growth, and energy usage. But the National Academy of Sciences noted that computer model predictions of temperature changes in the 20th century have closely matched observed temperature changes.

WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT GLOBAL WARMING

"During the past year, the American people have been served up an unprecedented parade of environmental alarmism by the media and entertainment industry, which link every possible weather event to global warming. The year 2006 saw many major organs of the media dismiss any pretense of balance and objectivity on climate change coverage."

-- Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., chairman, Senate Environment and Public Works Committee

"When it comes to global warming, for whatever reason, my friend Sen. Inhofe just seems irrational to me. ...This is one of the biggest issues we're facing, and maybe the biggest one. And to put your head in the sand about it, as I say, it's a very dangerous gamble that the scientists are wrong."

-- Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-San Francisco, top Democrat on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee

"Despite remaining unanswered questions, the scientific understanding of climate change is now sufficiently clear to justify taking steps to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere."

-- National Academy of Sciences, March 2006 Report on Climate Change

Sources: National Academy of Sciences; Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Chronicle staff report.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the 2007 Air Quality Management Plan released by the South Coast Air Quality Management District . The plan shows smog-forming emissions will need to be cut by 50 percent by 2020 to reach clean air standards. For more information, contact Maricela \(559\) 230-5849.](#)

Exigen acción contra contaminación

Plan propone medidas severas para mejorar la calidad del aire en el sur de California

Alejandro Cano

La Opinión, Wednesday, October 11, 2006

DIAMOND BAR.— Tanto el gobierno federal como el estatal deben adoptar medidas severas para reducir la contaminación del aire en el sur de California y evitar que millones de habitantes desarrollen enfermedades fatales.

Así lo expresó ayer Barry Wallerstein, director ejecutivo del Distrito de Administración de la Calidad del Aire de la Costa Sur (SC-AQMD), durante la presentación del plan Air Quality Management 2007, que pretende mejorar la calidad del aire en la región.

"Mientras el gobierno no catalogue el problema como prioridad y brinde la ayuda que necesitamos, nunca podremos cumplir con los estatutos federales y más gente seguirá desarrollando problemas respiratorios", dijo Wallerstein. "Existen estudios que afirman que la contaminación está causando estos problemas. En realidad, no sé qué espera el gobierno [para actuar]. La tecnología para reducir los niveles de contaminación existe, solamente es cosa de que nos la provean".

Mientras las zonas costeras cuentan con niveles aceptados de contaminación, los cuales oscilan entre los 15 microgramos por metro cúbico, estudios recientes indican que secciones de los condados de Ventura, Riverside y San Bernardino, cuentan con niveles que sobrepasan los 65, suficientes para ser considerados como las regiones más contaminadas en el país y para ocasionar daños al embrión y muertes prematuras.

Daños al embrión, muertes prematuras, aumento en mortandad, incremento de visitas a las salas de urgencias para tratar problemas respiratorios, subdesarrollo de los pulmones en menores, posibilidad de contraer deficiencias inmunológicas y desarrollo de falta de tolerancia al ejercicio son algunos de los efectos que ocasiona el aire contaminado, según un estudio de American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine.

La Junta de Recursos del Aire de California (CARB) reportó que en 2005 el estado registró 7,200 muertes prematuras, 700 más que en 2004, mientras que los hospitales atendieron a 1.78 millones pacientes con problemas respiratorios, 80 mil más que el año anterior, lo que atribuyen a la contaminación.

Para evitar que los números aumenten, SC-AQMD propone reducir los niveles de partículas finas emitidas por las fuentes estacionarias (refinerías, plantas de energía y puertos) de 147 toneladas al día a 74 toneladas diarias y de las fuentes móviles (camiones, carros, trenes aeroplanos y barcos) de 1,001 toneladas diarias a 361 toneladas.

Además, el plan intenta persuadir a CARB y a la Agencia de Protección Ambiental de Estados Unidos (Environmental Protection Agency, EPA) a crear nuevos reglamentos de emisiones para el sistema ferroviario, de transporte (incluyendo camiones, carros, camionetas y vehículos de recreación tales como motos de agua, yates y botes) y estaciones de servicio como gasolineras.

El plan también obligaría a manufactureras de artículos eléctricos a diseñar productos con motores que requieran menos energía.

Wallerstein agregó que en los puertos deberían imponerse tarifas de costo por cada contenedor procesado y exigir a las empresas automotrices que diseñen automóviles con menor emisión de gases.

"Tenemos la idea, pero no los recursos. La EPA tiene la capacidad de cambiar los estatutos para que las emisiones sean menores. Mientras eso no ocurra, la región nunca verá disminuir su contaminación", indicó. "Tener los contenedores menos tiempo en los puertos, contar con carreteras en óptimas condiciones para acelerar el traslado de cargamento y tener la opción de adquirir vehículos híbridos pueden ayudar a resolver el problema", agregó.

La propuesta de ley SB 760, del senador estatal Alan Lowenthal, obligaría a las navieras a pagar 30 dólares por cada contenedor para costear medidas de reducción a la contaminación, medidas adicionales de seguridad y para reducir la congestión de tráfico.

De ser aprobada la propuesta, generaría aproximadamente 120 millones de dólares en el primer año que financiarían el incremento en seguridad en los puertos, la construcción y reparación de carreteras, y la elaboración de estudios ambientales.

Laki Tisopulos, director ejecutivo de la Oficina de Planeación de AQMD, advirtió que de rechazarse el plan colocaría a la región a merced de multas federales. "Si el plan falla, la contaminación en la región aumentará. Si eso ocurre, reprobaremos los exámenes a nivel

federal. Si reprobamos, corremos el peligro de perder dinero que estaría destinado para la construcción y reparación de carreteras, y rieles de tren", indicó Tisopulos. "Los únicos afectados serían los residentes pero a la larga el país entero perdería ya que la economía del estado se vería en serios problemas".

Por su parte, Francisco Arcaute, vocero de EPA en California, afirmó que la agencia "trabaja arduamente para controlar las emisiones de contaminantes a través de reglamentos estrictos, sin embargo, entendemos y reconocemos que hay mucho por hacer. Estamos dispuestos a trabajar y apoyar a los grupos locales porque a fin de cuentas tenemos el mismo objetivo: respirar aire limpio".

[Fresno Bee columnist, Wednesday, October 11, 2006:](#)

Valley's bad air is everyone's problem

By Eddie Jimenez / The Fresno Bee

I've had this cough and congestion for more than three weeks.

The run-down feeling and persistent hack have taken a lot out of me.

Hey, I'm not seeking sympathy. I haven't missed a day of work, and I'm able to get by at the office and at home and with my other commitments. But it is getting old.

My doctor checked me out and said the lingering effects were probably because of the air. This too will pass, just not quickly enough.

Part of my ailment was probably viral, but our Valley air also is a factor.

We're not in the midst of the heavy smog season, but our ever-present bad air exacerbates respiratory conditions. Recent fires around the state haven't helped.

We've all heard these depressing facts: Asthma rates in the Valley are among the worst in the state and nation, and about one in six people suffer from asthma in Fresno County.

My wife, five children and granddaughter also have had spells of cough and congestion in the past month. None of us has asthma, but that doesn't mean all the gunk in the air doesn't affect us and many other families. (My son-in-law was diagnosed with asthma about a year after moving to Fresno in 2003.)

I've dealt with sinus problems for more than 20 years. Usually once a year, the sinus headaches and congestion get so bad that I see my doctor. Mostly I make do with over-the-counter medications. I've told my wife that we ought to buy stock in the antihistamine companies and at least get some of our money back.

I rely far more than I care to on the store-bought medications, but if I don't take them semiregularly, I pay for it. And I've noticed that I have to take the antihistamines more than I used to.

It's a price to pay for living in the Valley.

Sure, it gets blazing hot in the summer and way too foggy in the winter. But you cope with the extreme seasons and savor the fall and spring — though not so much anymore.

Spring is allergy season, and fall can bring what we're going through now.

Living in a small community — I've always proudly said Reedley is God's country — with crops surrounding the town has been wonderful. A great place to raise kids, I've heard over the years and repeated as a parent.

I'm not trying to sound naive. The Valley has many blemishes — high poverty and unemployment and graffiti and gangs. Still, I've always liked living here.

But the bad air is testing me.

Asthma sufferers are the poster children for our poor air — and understandably so. But so many others like myself also feel the effects of the nasty air.

Technology — newer vehicles are far less polluting than older vehicles — will eventually help clear the air. It just may not be soon enough for asthmatics and others with respiratory problems.

The longer we wait — individually and collectively — to clean up the air, the more we pay.

Heck of a way to live in God's country.

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Wednesday, October 11, 2006:](#)

'No to Measure C'

Recently I went to a forum that included a debate on Measure C. Michael Becker, a teacher at California State University, Fresno, speaking for "no" on C asked us: Will Measure C take us out of our cars and get us to use public transportation, and will it improve our air quality? The answers were clearly "no" for both questions.

Fresno was recently rated with the second worst air quality in the U.S. Do we want to continue sprawling like Los Angeles, the city with the worst air quality, or go in a different direction? Measure C continues to fund the expansion of freeways, which will continue to cause more sprawl and pollution.

Mr. Becker suggested a different model -- Portland, known for its comprehensive public transportation system. Just one of its systems, the Yellow Line, has a daily ridership of more than 300,000.

The question we need to ask ourselves is what kind of life do we want? Do we want to limit our options to either dying from poor air quality or having to move from the Valley? Or do we want to have a bold vision and do what Portland did?

Let's say "no" to Measure C.

Stephen Sacks, Fresno