

Billions needed to clear Valley air

Valley must meet air quality deadline or face economic sanctions

By Farin Montañez, For The Times-Delta

Visalia Times-Delta, Wednesday, Oct. 4, 2006

No single drastic measure - taking every car and truck off the road, shutting down all agriculture, or ceasing all business - would be enough to get the San Joaquin Valley to meet new federal pollution regulations, the Valley Air District said Tuesday.

"If we shut down the entire Valley and kicked everybody out in the Valley, we would meet the standards," said Sayed Sadredin, the District's executive director. "But doing each one of those individually will not get us there."

Sadredin's comments came as the district released a draft of a \$7.5 billion plan to meet new federal, health-based regulations imposed by the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

In June 2004, the EPA established standards for ozone concentrations in the air averaged over eight-hour periods, according to the EPA Web site. The Valley was given a deadline of June 2013 to meet these new standards.

Sadredin gave an overview of its plan Tuesday, explaining how difficult it will be for the Valley to reduce ozone emissions by 60 percent - or 480 tons per day - to meet regulations.

"There is no place else in the nation that faces the same degree of difficulty that we face with our tall mountains surrounding the district, hot temperatures, stagnant weather conditions," Sadredin said. "These are perfect ideal conditions for generating pollution and trapping it for long periods of time."

Sadredin pointed out that improving the Valley's public health is the first of the plan's guiding principles.

The San Joaquin Valley has one of the highest rates of asthma in the nation, a condition associated with ozone exposure, according to the plan.

Key components of the plan are regulatory and voluntary measures, which will be the responsibility of the air district and local, state and federal governments.

The plan includes regulations to further reduce emissions from industrial, commercial and agricultural operations; stricter standards for cars, trucks, buses and trains; land-use decisions that reduce vehicle emissions associated with population growth; and public funding to help the private sector pay for replacing engines.

"This is the most far-reaching and ambitious plan ever put together to clean the Valley's air," Sadredin said.

The plan will rely on a lot of incentive-based programs to get companies to comply and do their fair share to improve the Valley's pollution, Sadredin said.

"To get there will be very costly," Sadredin said. "There is a possibility that with adequate funding and with the bold regulations that we have proposed we will get there. The question is really how soon can we get there."

The federal law gives the Valley until 2013 to attain these standards, Sadredin said. Meeting this deadline would have an estimated cost of \$7.5 billion.

If that deadline is not doable, there are alternate deadlines that would push compliance back to either 2020 or 2024, Sadredin said. But these alternate deadlines come with additional costs and the threat of federal sanctions.

In fact, failure to meet any proposed deadline would cause strict sanctions to kick in, making it more costly for businesses to locate and expand in the Valley or cause the Valley to lose \$2 billion in highway funding, Sadredin said.

Sadredin hopes that over the next six to nine months, the community will get involved and offer more suggestions for solving the pollution problem.

What is ozone?

- Ozone (O₃) is a colorless, odorless, reactive gas comprised of three oxygen atoms. It is formed when nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and volatile organic compounds (VOC) react in the presence of sunlight.
- Ozone is the primary ingredient of smog and can be harmful to humans in certain concentrations.
- Ozone concentrations are higher outdoors unless there is a significant indoor source of ozone.
- Inflammation and irritation of airway tissues
- Cough, chest tightness, shortness of breath, asthma
- Increase in permeability (leakiness) of lung cells, making them more vulnerable to environmental toxins
- Premature death in people suffering from chronic diseases of the lungs and circulatory system.

Source: 2007 Ozone Plan, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District

What's next?

In the next six to nine months, the community will have the chance to get involved and offer suggestions to help solve the pollution problem.

The first workshop about the 2007 Ozone Plan will take place on Oct. 17 at the Air District's central office in Fresno, 1990 E. Gettysburg Ave.

A public hearing before the Air District Governing Board is slated for March 2007. By June 15, 2007, the Valley Air District must submit a plan to the EPA to reduce emissions.

Information: 230-6000.

\$7.5b price tag put on cutting pollution

Critics call estimate to replace vehicles a scare tactic to delay Valley cleanup.

By Mark Grossi / The Fresno Bee

Wednesday, October 4, 2006

Local air officials on Tuesday proposed a hefty new cost to clean up the San Joaquin Valley's biggest pollution culprits — \$7.5 billion to help replace polluting cars, trucks and other vehicles by 2013.

The money, which would require new sources of government funding, is the major feature of a proposal to take 60% of smog-making pollution out of the Valley, which is one of the nation's dirtiest air basins.

Community activists criticized the cost estimate as a scare tactic to delay the federally set smog cleanup deadline of 2013. If the deadline is delayed eight years, the cost would drop by more than half, according to the district proposal, a 300-page draft cleanup plan.

Activists said residents will pay much more if the air is not cleaned up soon, referring to a 2006 study that showed Valley residents pay \$3 billion annually over air pollution-related illness, suffering and death.

"Why isn't that cost reflected in the price tag?" asked Carolina Simunovic of Fresno Metro Ministry. "We need real solutions that get us clean air."

But the new strategy would provide the fastest route to healthy air, said Seyed Sadredin, executive director of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. The district has made no decision about asking for extra time to clean up the Valley's air, he said.

Sadredin said the money would help pay for cleaner-running vehicles.

"Almost 80% of our problem is coming from these engines," Sadredin said. "We need new public funding for incentives to help people replace cars, trucks, public fleets and engines on many other kinds of vehicles. Otherwise, it could take decades for the kind of vehicle turnover that we need."

A meeting is scheduled Oct. 17 at district headquarters so the public can learn more and comment on the proposed plan. The district board must approve a smog cleanup plan next year and submit it to the federal government by June.

The 25,000-square-mile Valley, which is the nation's largest air basin, has long struggled with smog violations because pollutants are trapped between mountains and held by stagnant weather patterns.

The main ingredient in smog is ozone, a corrosive gas that triggers asthma attacks and other respiratory problems.

The Valley and the South Coast Air Basin were the worst places in the country for ozone pollution this summer. The Valley violated the federal health standard 85 times, and the South Coast had 86 violations.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency requires the Valley to reduce smog violations to only one per year by 2013. But the local air district controls only commercial, industrial and farming pollution sources, which do not contribute as much pollution as vehicles.

"If we shut down all businesses in the Valley, we still wouldn't make the goal," Sadredin said.

Cars, trucks, trains, planes, large off-road equipment, boats and other engines are under the control of state and federal agencies. In the coming years, state and federal rules will trim pollution from engines and fuels.

But many residents, businesses and fleet owners cannot afford new vehicles, Sadredin said. Older diesel trucks, for instance, will continue in use for many years, he said.

The \$7.5 billion, which probably would have to come from state and federal funding, would allow the Valley to meet the 2013 deadline, the proposed plan said.

The plan added that the cost would drop to about \$3 billion if the deadline were pushed to 2021. And the price tag would be about \$2 billion if the deadline were delayed to 2024.

"The figure drops because people will have more time to buy the newer products," Sadredin said.

The plan suggests a program to reduce vehicle trips by large businesses. Employers would be encouraged to promote vanpools, bicycling, transit and walking to work.

But activists said the plan lacks appropriate detail and relies too heavily on state and federal funding sources that do not exist.

"The district is passing the buck again," said Liza Bolanos, coordinator for the Central Valley Air Coalition. "This is another set of excuses on why we can't meet the deadline for clean air."

EPA Panel Challenges Air Quality Standards

News Brief in the Washington Post
Oct. 4, 2006

Pollution experts have "serious scientific concerns" that newly unveiled federal air quality standards may pose risks to human health and welfare, according to a letter made public yesterday.

The charter members of an Environmental Protection Agency advisory panel questioned the agency's decision to keep annual standards for fine soot particles at the same level they have been since 1997.

EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson announced on Sept. 21 the decision to leave the standard unchanged. He said it offered "cleaner air to all Americans" and would reduce premature deaths, heart attacks and hospital stays for people with heart and lung disease.

The panel's scientists objected in a Sept. 29 letter to Johnson, citing research that showed health risks from even small amounts of soot over the course of a year.

Summer was smoggiest since '98

Sweltering heat led to area's worst air in eight years

By Paul Rogers, MediaNews
Tri-Valley Herald, Wednesday, October 4, 2006

The 2006 summer smog season is winding down, but already the bad news is in: The Bay Area had more seriously smoggy days this summer than it has in nearly a decade.

Exacerbated by brutal heat waves in June and July, air pollution levels in the nine-county region exceeded federal health standards on

12 days this summer, the most since 1998.

Livermore, Concord, Los Gatos and San Martin had the worst air quality, a distinction caused by both hot weather and geography — smog tends to drift up against mountains and into valleys and stay there.

The fact that the smoggy summer of 2006 followed several years of spectacularly clean air is frustrating to Bay Area air quality officials, health groups and environmentalists. Last summer, for example, only one day in the Bay Area exceeded federal smog limits. And in 2004, there were none.

"We had two episodes this summer where it was unusually hot for this area. When it is hotter, the smog is worse," said Karen Schkolnick, a spokeswoman for the Bay Area Air Quality Management District.

From July 17 to 29, a heat wave caused as many as 164 deaths in California, according to a survey of county health officers by The Associated Press. The Bay Area sweltered, with tens of thousands of customers losing power when electrical transformers overheated. Some Bay Area cities experienced a record 10 days in a row of temperatures of more than 90 degrees.

Ground-level ozone, the main ingredient in smog, is formed

when emissions from burning gasoline drift skyward on hot days and mix with fumes from other chemicals, including solvents, industrial coatings and even natural chemicals from trees. The resulting brew of pollutants can reduce lung function and aggravate breathing problems, especially in children, the elderly and people with asthma. Diesel soot and other particles can make smog worse.

One piece of good news: Dr. Tom M. Dailey, chief of pulmonary medicine at Kaiser Permanente Medical Center in San Jose, said he didn't see increased emergency room visits for asthma, emphysema or other lung ailments.

"It's not what one would expect," he said.

The air district's "Spare the Air" public relations campaign, which tells people with respiratory problems to stay indoors and not exercise on the worst days, appears to have worked, he said.

"Spare the Air" also offered free transit rides on six days to lure people out of cars. Over those six smoggy days, 1.3 million people rode buses, ferries and BART for free.

An examination of the program, however, showed it cost \$13.3 million, and on four of the days — June 22 and 23, July 17 and 21 — Bay Area smog violated the standards anyway.

In addition, the air district doesn't know how many of the free riders would have driven that day anyway and how many were tourists, high school students, homeless people or others who took advantage of the free fares to go on outings. Nor does it know how many of those people became regular, paid riders. The district is evaluating the program and may make changes next year.

To be sure, the Bay Area still has among the cleanest air of any urban region in the United States. While it topped federal smog standards 12 days this summer, Los Angeles did so 86 days; the San Joaquin Valley, 85; and Sacramento, 41.

Bob Bornstein, a professor of meteorology at San Jose State University, said a high-pressure zone that normally sits over the Pacific Ocean until autumn came ashore in summer, sparking the heat wave. That caused winds to slow down, trapping smog over the region, he said.

"It was all over the West this year. It was boiling this summer all the way up in Vancouver," he said.

Scientists aren't sure whether the trend is driven by global warming, but are tracking it closely, he added.

Smog has steadily decreased in most major U.S. cities over the last 30 years because of tougher regulation of factories, the banning of unleaded gasoline, smog checks for vehicles, catalytic converters and other advances. Add global warming to population growth and longer commutes, and the trend toward smoggier skies is potentially ominous.

"I hope this is a wake-up call," said Margo Leathers Sidener, president and CEO of Breathe California of the Bay Area, a nonprofit group that was formerly a chapter of the American Lung Association.

"What if this isn't just an anomaly?" she added. "Let's do more to educate people, and to encourage people to take transit. It's going to take a lot of creative people working together."

\$37 billion in bonds could lift Kern County

BY SARAH RUBY, Californian staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Wednesday, Oct. 3, 2006

From school construction to more than \$100 million to improve Highway 99, Kern stands to gain from the \$37.3 billion infrastructure bond package on the ballot in November.

Here's how it breaks down for Kern:

Proposition 1B:

Highway Safety, Traffic Reduction, Air Quality and Port Security Bond Act of 2006 -- \$19.97 billion

Transportation:

The legislature is still figuring out how most of the transportation money would be allocated, but a few certainties are written in.

- As much as \$140 million for four projects along Highway 99. That money would: 1) widen the road from six to eight lanes from Wilson Road to Taft Highway, a five-mile stretch; 2) widen a

stretch from six to eight lanes between Airport Drive and 7th Standard Road; 3) build an interchange at Taylor Avenue in McFarland; and 4) reconfigure the Woolomes Road interchange in Delano.

- Nearly \$40 million for public transit.
- \$50 million or more to fund Kern's transportation wish list, which includes work on Highway 46, Highway 58, Highway 119, Highway 178 and a new beltway system around the city of Bakersfield, among other projects.
- About \$43 million to rehabilitate streets in Kern and cities within.
- Possible funding to ease congestion on major roads, diminish the impact of trucks traveling from California's ports, fix highway-rail grade crossings and retrofit bridges.

Air Quality:

The state Air Resources Board would decide how to divvy up \$200 million to retrofit polluting school buses, and Kern would likely get some funding. Another \$1 billion would be spent cleaning up the ports.

Security and Disaster Preparedness:

About \$1.1 billion would most likely be spent on transit safety, disaster preparedness and port security.

Proposition 1C:

Housing and Emergency Shelter Trust Fund Act of 2006 -- \$2.85 billion

Housing:

Almost \$2 billion would be spent on homes and shelter spaces for more than 37,000 families statewide, and local projects would compete for portions of the money. Kern has competed successfully in the past, netting \$43 million from a previous bond.

Eligible projects would include low-income housing, help for first-time homebuyers, housing for field workers, homeless youth housing and domestic violence shelters.

The rest of the money, about \$1 billion, would be spent on infrastructure for housing development.

Smart Growth:

Although still uncertain, \$1.35 billion is intended for smart growth divided into projects to protect open space, purchase agricultural easements, promote infill development and build parks.

Proposition 1E:

Disaster Preparedness and Flood Prevention Bond Act of 2006 -- \$4.09 billion

Much of this money would help shore up the levees in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. It would also fund urban flood control, mapping and management projects. Exact allocation of this money is still to be determined.

Proposition 1D:

Kindergarten-University Public Education Facilities Bond Act of 2006 -- \$10.42 billion

With swelling enrollment and a need for more than \$1 billion in new or refurbished facilities, Kern districts stand to clean up if the bond passes.

- Local districts with students in kindergarten through 12th grade would get \$316 million for new construction and \$47 million for modernization projects. The money would match local funds raised by property taxes and bond measures. For a full list of what individual districts stand to gain from the state bond, see the accompanying chart.

- Delano Union School District could get \$55 million in hardship funding, which helps less-affluent districts complete construction projects.
- Cal State Bakersfield would be in line for more than \$4 million to build or renovate nursing labs, math and computer science facilities and a new art center, among other projects.
- Taft College would get \$3.6 million to modernize its computer lab, art lab and various classrooms and lecture rooms and \$8.8 million for its independent living program, which teaches college-aged students with developmental disabilities to live on their own.

Two state transit initiatives, local measure on ballot

By Rick Brewer

Stockton Record, October 4, 2006

For the past 15 years, motorists have become accustomed to the sight of orange cones, loose asphalt, pavement graders and hard-hat-wearing road crews changing the driving landscape in San Joaquin County. After Nov. 7, the same might be said for drivers throughout California.

Voters across the state will decide two transportation initiatives, Propositions 1A and 1B, during the general election. Meanwhile, members of the San Joaquin County electorate will have the chance to reauthorize Measure K, the countywide half-cent sales tax that funds road and rail projects.

Proposition 1A is written to amend the California Constitution. If passed, it would further limit how gasoline-tax revenue can be used for purposes other than transportation, such as balancing the state budget. It would treat all nontransportation uses of gas-tax revenue as loans to the state's general fund and would require repayment, with interest, within three years. Also, Proposition 1A would forbid the gas tax to fund nontransportation uses more than twice in any 10-year period and would allow a second such use only when a previous loan had been paid back in full.

According to the legislative analyst's report, the measure would "increase the stability of funding to state and local transportation in 2007 and thereafter." But the initiative would make it harder to fund other programs "in the event the state faces fiscal difficulties."

Proposition 1B is the newest statewide bond measure for transportation projects. It also is by far the largest bond ever presented to California voters.

If it passes, the state will float a \$19.9billion bond - nearly four times the amount state voters have approved since 1990 - to fix roads, rails and ramps. Of that, 55 percent (\$11.3billion) would be used specifically to increase capacity on state highways and local roads. The rest would be used for public transportation improvements (\$4billion), air-quality measures (\$3.2billion), and securing ports, harbors and ferry terminals from terrorists and/or natural disasters (\$1.5billion).

It is expected to cost the state \$1.3billion annually for three decades to satisfy the debt. That's why Assemblyman Michael Villines, R-Fresno, voted against putting the measure on the ballot. He said today's children and grandchildren will be the ones stuck with this enormous bill.

"Every member of the Legislature who voted against this bond measure supports restoring our state's crumbling transportation system," he said in his argument against Proposition 1B. "However, this measure fails to achieve these important goals in a fiscally responsible manner."

San Joaquin County transportation planners say it's not only fiscally responsible but imperative that countywide voters reauthorize Measure K. In April, the San Joaquin Council of Governments, which oversees regional transportation projects, decided the time was ripe to ask for a renewal of the countywide sales tax that was passed in 1990 and is set to expire in 2011.

Officials say renewing Measure K would generate about \$2.5billion during the next 30 years and pay for numerous projects. They include further widening of Highway 99 and Interstate 5 as well

as expanding commuter train service. The county would have difficulty tapping into Proposition 1B money, if that initiative passes, without Measure K's sales tax to serve as matching funds.

"If the renewal passes, we'll be able to start doing design work the day after the election," said Andrew Chesley, COG's executive director. "If it doesn't, we're out there with everybody else waiting to get what's left from the state."

Under the adopted spending plan, 35 percent of future Measure K money will be distributed among cities and the county for street repairs, 32.5 percent will pay for highway widening projects, and 30 percent will fund transit services. The final 2.5 percent will be used to improve rail crossings countywide.

Not everyone favors Measure K, which must be approved by a two-thirds supermajority to gain passage. San Joaquin County Supervisor Dario Marengo has argued that despite more than 30 major countywide projects since 1990, Measure K has been ineffective in reducing traffic jams, notably the backlog of cars that travel through Tracy along Interstate 205, and should not be renewed.

Marengo, who leaves the board in January because of term limits, told board members of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce that Measure K was "the biggest con job I have seen against the voters in a long time."

A Clean, Green Machine

A California company wants to improve air quality by using a smokestack scrubber on idling trains and cargo ships.

By Ronald D. White, Times Staff Writer
L.A. Times, Wednesday, October 4, 2006

A small California company that makes sure businesses don't cry over their spilled milk — or whatever mess might need cleaning up — is trying to make some green from going green.

In a typical week, Advanced Cleanup Technologies Inc. fields about 30 calls for emergency spill cleanup — soaking up a flood of milk from a delivery tanker before it can clog the gills of fish living in a nearby stream, for example. The Rancho Dominguez company took part in the 2005 cleanup of an oil pipeline spill in the Pyramid Lake area.

The 14-year-old business also wants to clean the air, armed with a smokestack scrubber that reduces emissions from locomotives and cargo ships.

The pollution control device, which is still being tested, makes an airtight seal over a vehicle's or vessel's emission stack. The pollutants are channeled through a scrubber and a converter, leaving behind water vapor and a thick black paste.

The apparatus is generating a lot of excitement in places where the air has long been fouled by idling trains and ships.

"This could be a major breakthrough in our efforts to improve air quality," said Richard D. Steinke, executive director of the Port of Long Beach, the nation's second-largest port.

After a recently completed test at Union Pacific's Roseville, Calif., rail yard, the cleanup equipment will be deployed at Metropolitan Stevedore Co.'s cargo terminal at the port.

"This technology makes sense," said Rob Waterman, assistant vice president of bulk operations at Metropolitan. "One way or another, the pollution has to be controlled, and this looked like a good opportunity to get out in front on it."

Getting out in front has been a motto of Advanced Cleanup Technologies President Ruben Garcia, but usually he's talking about something that has leaked, spilled or exploded out of a pipe, truck or ship.

In 2004, Garcia became interested in developing a line of business to address increasing concerns about port pollution. An unexpected surge in international trade that year caused a huge traffic jam of cargo ships and trains, and port neighbors were complaining about the increase in emissions from the idling engines.

"Emissions control was something coming down the pipeline and we wanted to be involved," said Garcia, who grew up in the hazardous-spill business under the tutelage of his father, Armando, who ran a company called A.M. Environmental.

After his father sold the business in 1991, Garcia saw an opening for the kind of trained emergency response mainly performed by fire departments. His company has about \$39 million in annual sales, about 250 employees and additional offices in California in San Diego, Bakersfield, Oxnard, Benicia and Colton.

To deal with disasters, the company maintains a fleet of boats, a jet, a helicopter and custom-made trucks, some of which were fashioned out of beer delivery trucks with sliding panels on either side.

"No one builds hazmat trucks, so we designed our own. These are perfect because we have compartments for all of the equipment we need," Garcia said.

Not all of it has been smooth sailing.

In 2004, the company agreed to pay \$33,361 in a settlement with the California Department of Toxic Substances Control for holding waste at a Rancho Dominguez transfer facility longer than the 10 days allowed by law. It did not admit wrongdoing.

In 2005, the company worked in Louisiana after hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated the Gulf Coast. Garcia said the company provided drinking water, ready-to-eat meals, rubber boats, respirators and hazmat suits as well as training several hundred local residents to assist in the cleanup. To date, Garcia says his company has been paid just \$1.8 million of \$27 million owed, mostly by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. "It's been a mess," Garcia said.

To venture into the realm of emission control, the company hired engineers to develop a pollution-cleanup device after it was unable to find what it wanted on the market.

Three firms provided components for the device. Tri-Mer Corp. of Owosso, Mich., made the scrubber, the first stop for the emissions-heavy exhaust. The second stop, an emissions-cleaning catalytic converter, came from Argillon Corp. in Alpharetta, Ga. S.A. Robotics of Loveland, Colo., designed the robotic boom and a bonnet-like device that fits over the exhaust pipe.

As originally designed, the machine sits on a barge next to a ship, and the boom raises and lowers the exhaust-collecting bonnet, said Matt Stewart, chief engineer and executive vice president of Advanced Cleanup Technologies.

When Roseville, Calif., officials asked whether the device could be configured to work with locomotives, another version was designed. The bonnet was built into an elevated trolley that could move along with a locomotive as it entered a maintenance facility for servicing.

The system greatly reduces pollutants, removing 95% of the nitrogen oxide, more than 90% of the particulate matter and 99% of the sulfur oxide emissions, Stewart said.

But the device must reduce emissions without slowing the normal routine of loading or unloading a ship or servicing a locomotive.

"Yes, it seems to work as advertised, but it has to integrate functionally," said Tom Christofk, Placer County air pollution control officer. "If it is slowing down the line and ... locomotives are sitting in people's backyards idling, that's not good."

The device could be a practical pollution-fighting option for ships that haven't been retrofitted to plug into the port's electrical grid when they are idling at dock, Metropolitan Stevedore's Waterman said.

Said Heather Tomley, an environmental specialist with the Port of Long Beach, "If it works out, we want to try it with several other terminals."

Which leads to the last and perhaps most frustrating phase of a radical new business plan: the waiting.

"It's frustrating because you are spending money all the time and no money is coming in," Stewart said.

"But everything is moving incredibly fast. Normally it takes longer," he said. "This has people excited. It's cleaning up the air. If you are an environmentalist, you're going to want this."

[Editorial in the Merced Sun-Star, Oct. 4, 2006](#)

Our View: Work still needed on our air

We've made progress but another deadline is ahead and we probably won't meet it

Last Updated: October 4, 2006, 01:21:05 AM PDT

The Valley faces a tough new standard for reducing emissions of smog-creating chemicals in four years. We're not likely to make it. But then, we never reached the less rigorous old standard, either.

It's a sobering message about how much further the Valley has to go before we attain what we honestly can say is clean air.

Officials at the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District estimate that we'll have to cut emissions by 60 percent before April 5, 2010, when the new standard takes effect. Seyed Sadredin, the district's executive director, gave this bleak assessment of the chances: "We couldn't get there if we shut down every business in the Valley."

So what do we do?

New state and federal standards for emissions from auto engines and the fuels they burn will be in effect in coming years, and that will help. It also would help if the Bush administration quit playing games with rules about the fuel efficiency of vehicles sold in this country.

The Corporate Average Fuel Economy standards are too low, and there's little evidence this administration ever will be serious about raising them.

The standards have been 27.5 miles per gallon since 1990. The average for 2005 model year cars was 28.9 mpg, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. While it's true that cars and trucks are much cleaner than when the standards were established, in the wake of the Arab oil embargo of the 1970s, there now are many more of them.

We only recently have celebrated a small victory in the fight for cleaner air. The air district has asked the EPA to declare that we are in compliance with the rules on small particles of dust and soot called PM-10 (particles measuring 10 microns), which are implicated in many respiratory and cardiovascular diseases and deaths.

That is a milestone, but more bad news is coming. We are a long way from reaching compliance on PM-2.5, much smaller particles, which ultimately may prove to be an even greater health risk than the larger particles.

It always comes back to vehicles, which account for much more than half of our air pollution. Getting out of our cars and trucks seems difficult, largely because we have so few alternatives. Buses are slow and too often inconvenient; the Amtrak service is useful but not convenient to get to the Bay Area. There aren't enough bike paths and the roads aren't safe for those on two wheels.

No one ever said this would be easy.

[Visalia Times-Delta, Editorial, Wednesday, Oct. 4, 2006:](#)

Vote Measure R for county's future

Unless you are the type of Visalia resident who drives only on city streets and highways 198 and 99, you are well aware of the condition of Tulare County roads:

They're dreadful. Worse, they're dangerous, riddled with potholes, crumbling shoulders, poor striping and hazardous cracks. There is simply no debate on that score.

How the county's roads got into such dilapidated condition can be debated, but the exercise is pointless at this stage in the game. They need to be fixed. Measure R, a half-cent sales tax increase, will be the vehicle to get it done.

Tulare County's transportation infrastructure needs to be modernized for the 21st century, in which efficient transportation for growing numbers of people with minimal effects on the environment will become increasingly important. An efficient road system does more than get people around safely: It's essential for a thriving economy, especially in Tulare County, where getting produce to market is essential.

Those arguments have been valid for years, of course, and for many years, county leaders have agreed that fixing and building roads is a priority. In each case, however, they have encountered the same obstacle: lack of money.

Measure R is the remedy for that obstacle. Measure R would establish an additional half-cent of sales tax in the county. It would raise about \$650 million over the next 30 years, when the tax would expire or need to be renewed. The money must be spent on roads, and an oversight committee of citizens will keep the county on task.

Not coincidentally, Tulare County is about \$650 million behind in scheduled road improvements and repair. The county already has a list of projects: Some regional, such as improving Road 80 from Visalia to Dinuba and Highway 65 from Exeter to Lindsay (Spruce Street) and south of Porterville; some are local, such as expanding Caldwell Avenue in Visalia or the improvement of the Lovers Lane/Highway 198 intersection; many are major improvements to existing roads under the "Farm to Market" program; and [the list also includes many projects designed to mitigate air quality](#), such as public transportation improvements and bicycle lanes.

Every area of the county, and every city, would share the Measure R revenue and have a proportionate number of road projects paid for. The city of Visalia alone would be allocated nearly \$350 million for more than 30 projects.

There are many reasons for voters to approve Measure R, which requires two-thirds voter approval.

First, it finally allows Tulare County to control its destiny in building and maintaining infrastructure. The county has been shortchanged for years by the state's system of returning tax dollars to local government, which is one reason why the county's roads are in such sad shape.

Another reason is simply the cost of road repairs. Like other expenses, they have risen sharply, along with the asphalt, which is made from petroleum.

Most other counties in California have solved this by passing their own versions of Measure R. More than 80 percent of California has its own "self-help" measures to raise local revenue, which allows them to leverage more funding from the state. That is how highways 180 and 41 were built in Fresno County, which this November is seeking to renew its own very successful Measure C.

There simply is no other way to raise money for roads in California these days.

Tulare County voters have shown a willingness in the past to approve a tax when the money will be used to meet a pressing need. That is how the county built a new juvenile hall. This is a similar situation: Tulare County's roads are close to being in a state of emergency. Meanwhile, the county is also on the verge of unprecedented growth, with a vision of a bright, prosperous future.

We won't be able to travel into that bright future without the highways to get us there.

Tulare County voters should cast a ballot in favor of a prosperous future for themselves and their children and approve Measure R.

[Bakersfield Californian, Commentary, Tuesday, Oct. 3, 2006:](#)

Local sales tax measure benefits all in Kern County

This November, Kern County voters will have the opportunity to approve a plan that will improve the safety of our roads, reduce traffic congestion, fix potholes and damaged road surfaces, [improve air quality](#), and provide expanded transportation services for seniors and persons with disabilities.

To accomplish this, we must vote yes on Measure I, which has been placed on the November ballot by the Board of Supervisors and approved by cities throughout Kern County. Measure I is a countywide initiative, which includes significant taxpayer safeguards, that has been carefully constructed over the course of the past four years by a broad-based coalition of community organizations and concerned citizens. They include the Automobile Club of Southern California, Kern County Taxpayers Association, Kern County League of Women Voters, Kern Economic Development Corporation, Golden Empire Association of Realtors and Kern Transportation Foundation, among others.

Working closely with transportation officials, the Kern Taxpayers for Safety and Traffic Relief Committee developed a balanced plan that will generate roughly \$1 billion in local revenues over the next 20 years to be spent on transportation projects throughout Kern County. Each area of the county will see the benefits of these revenues in the form of new freeway projects and interchanges and the expansion of our existing transportation infrastructure. In addition, this local revenue source will have a multiplier effect because it gives Kern County the ability to leverage millions of dollars in critical matching funds from the state and federal governments, funds that typically go to other "self-help" counties in Northern and Southern California.

Keep in mind that these are transportation dollars which we already pay to the state but are disbursed to other areas. Measure I is funded by a half-of- one-cent increase in our local sales tax (going from 7.25 percent to 7.75 percent). It is important to note that this increase does not impact the price of food items purchased in a grocery store or the price we pay for medicine, which are exempt from sales tax.

In addition, this funding mechanism will create an opportunity to generate revenue from those who do not live in Kern County, but regularly use our roads or pass through on Highway 99 or I-5.

You may be asking how we ensure that this plan and these revenues actually go to what they are intended for? The answer is found in the specific taxpayer safeguards built into Measure I:

- The formation of an independent taxpayer oversight committee.
- The requirement that local government maintains existing funding for transportation purposes.
- The requirement that all funds be spent only on transportation projects in Kern County.

- A "poison-pill" clause that prevents the state from siphoning funds away.

I will close by asking all voters in Kern County to learn more about the benefits of Measure I by reviewing the details at <http://www.saferoadskern.org> and please join me on Nov. 7 in voting yes on I.

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