

[Fresno Bee editorial, Tuesday, Feb. 26, 2008:](#)

Air fees win in court

Charges for new construction will continue to pay for fixes.

A judge has upheld a unique fee that developers in the Valley air district must pay on new construction to offset its impact on air quality. That's good news, especially since the fee appears to be working.

The California Building Industry Association, which sued shortly after the fees were imposed in 2006, is considering an appeal. A better course would be to accept the ruling and get about the business of building smarter and cleaner new structures.

When the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District first set up the fees, it also laid out a list of mitigating efforts developers could employ to reduce them. These included all sorts of air-friendly amenities, such as better insulation, outdoor outlets for electric lawn mowers, more pedestrian and bike lanes and energy-efficient water heaters.

The money that is raised is used for such purposes as replacing older school buses, which are a major source of air pollution. That's a worthy effort, especially since replacing or retrofitting expensive school buses is usually given a very low priority by cash-strapped school districts.

The real payoff from the pollution fees comes from cleaner and greener structures.

Evidence that the fees are doing their job is the fact that the district now feels it will collect less than \$10 million over the next two years. The district's initial estimate was that it would raise more than \$100 million in the first three years. The builders claimed the total would be closer to \$200 million in the first five years.

Some of that reduced intake can be attributed to the housing slowdown, but much of it comes from developers adopting better building practices and thus getting off the hook for the fees. Many developers are also finding that energy-efficient and air-friendly construction can be a useful marketing tool, as public awareness of those issues rises.

Builders complain that the fees are unfair because they hit only the owners of new properties. Existing homes and businesses don't pay the fees.

They have a point, but the air district is bound by a 2003 state law that mandates the fees be imposed only on new construction. And homes and businesses in older city cores typically generate fewer vehicle miles -- the chief culprit in the Valley's bad air -- than newer developments on the city's edges, farther from employment and other destinations.

It was predictable that builders would object to the fees. Raising the price of their product might dissuade some buyers. But the impact of the fees isn't that great -- less than \$800 per house now, rising to nearly \$1,800 over time. That's a tiny fraction of the cost of a median-priced Fresno home, which goes for about \$230,000 now. And that presumes the developers ignore all the opportunities to mitigate the cost of the fees, in some cases to zero.

New development creates new pollution. It's appropriate to charge for that in the struggle to clean up the Valley's air. All of us have a responsibility in that effort.

Plan may boost no-burn days

BY STACEY SHEPARD, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, Feb. 26, 2008

The number of days you can't burn wood in the fireplace may go up under a new plan to reduce wintertime air pollution in the San Joaquin Valley.

The changes could result in up to 36 no-burn days each winter, according to San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District staff, who discussed them in a public meeting on the plan Monday.

Kern County has had 12 no-burn days so far this season, which ends Thursday, and eight last winter.

The rule is one of many the plan calls for strengthening over the next several years to meet federal standards for microscopic soot and combustion dust by 2014.

Regulators will hold a second workshop tonight and take written comments on the plan through March 5. The district will issue a final draft and hold more public meetings before its governing board votes on the plan on April 30.

The small particles, known as PM 2.5, are some of the most harmful air pollutants. In addition to triggering asthma attacks and lung ailments, researchers say the tiny specks pass through the lungs and into the bloodstream, where they can clog arteries.

Studies have shown that when particle pollution is high, deaths from lung diseases, heart attacks and strokes rise.

A prominent Cal State Fullerton study in 2006 estimated that particle pollution costs valley residents \$3.2 billion annually in doctor's visits, lost productivity and early death.

Heavy-duty diesel trucks are the largest source of PM 2.5. Other major contributors include burning of forests, orchard and agricultural fields and industrial machinery burning liquid fuel and natural gas. Air district officials say no-burn days have helped curb PM 2.5 but residential wood burning is still one of the largest sources of particles in the air.

Air District Planning Director Scott Nester said industry will likely oppose the plan because it calls for minor reductions that come at a high price. That's because valley industries have been regulated nearly to the extent possible, Nester said.

Mike Kelly of Western States Petroleum Association, an oil industry trade group, urged regulators Monday to drop one of the rules, saying it would be "extremely costly" for a "relatively insignificant" reduction.

Plan aims to gauge LAX's effect on area's air quality

Unprecedented project will examine air quality in Westchester, El Segundo, Inglewood and Lennox.

By Tami Abdollah, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer
L.A. Times, Tuesday, Feb. 26, 2008

The Los Angeles Board of Airport Commissioners unanimously agreed Monday to spend \$2.2 million to look at the effect of airport pollution on communities around LAX.

The ambitious study, said to be the largest of its kind, will monitor Westchester, El Segundo, Inglewood and Lennox to identify the sources of pollution there and determine how much of it can be attributed to airport activities.

"This is the most comprehensive air quality study that's ever been taken on by an airport in the United States," said Roger Johnson, deputy executive director for environmental services at Los Angeles World Airports, the agency that runs the airport.

Some of the airport's toughest community critics, who have been battling the airport commission over expansion and renovation plans, praised the decision to begin the study as "trailblazing."

"It's critical to understand that what they're doing is useful for not only this airport, but for all airports," said Denny Schneider, vice chair of the LAX-Community Noise Roundtable and president of the Alliance for a Regional Solution to Airport Congestion. "The United States has been delinquent in assessing how to reduce the impact of environmental pollution from airports."

The first two phases of the study, expected to cost about \$2.2 million, will develop an inventory of potential air pollution sources and monitor and analyze emissions on the airfield. Those phases should be finished by the end of the year, officials said. A third phase would involve yearlong monitoring of as many as 11 sites in the communities and is expected to cost an additional \$3 million to \$5 million.

"Obviously we don't know until it comes in what it gives us," said Alan Rothenberg, airport commission president. "It's an incredibly complex issue to find out what pollutants come from what sources, but the attempt to seriously measure it is commendable. And I hope that we can show the way to airports everywhere and other public entities that are faced with situations where pollutants are from multiple sources."

A UCLA study commissioned by the California Air Resources Board about three years ago and released last year also looked at the airport's effect on air quality. That study, however, was done on a smaller scale, analyzing ultra-fine particulates.

The study will be independent of the environmental impact report currently underway that includes possible reconfiguration of the airport's northern runways.

It also satisfies a number of the airport's previous agreements with local communities.

Environmental activists say there is ample anecdotal evidence that increased pollution from the airport has caused a higher incidence of asthma and other respiratory illnesses in neighboring communities. But airport officials say offshore shipping, freeway and roadway traffic, among other sources, may play greater roles.

Martin Rubin, 61, who lives about five miles north of the airport in Los Angeles, said on some nights the odor of jet exhaust is pervasive.

"Somehow in this process, it'd be valuable to follow where the odors go," said Rubin, director of Concerned Residents Against Airport Pollution. "Actually, I'm a bit proud that Los Angeles is taking leadership in this. In many studies around the country, they have missed the mark."

Although air quality studies have been performed at airports in Chicago, New Jersey and Rhode Island, they have not been as comprehensive as the one proposed by this plan, Johnson said.

The study is a coordinated effort that involves the California Air Resources Board, the South Coast Air Quality Management District, Federal Aviation Administration and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

"If we have the knowledge we'll be able to develop policy tools to mitigate those effects," said Laurie Kaye, a policy analyst for Environmental Defense and a member of the LAX Coalition for Economic, Environmental and Educational Justice.

"But right now we can't tell the airport to do anything because we can't tell what caused it; we don't know what's out there."

The three-year contract was awarded to Jacobs Consultancy.

Rail chief thinks 'green' at ports

Executive wants to build a \$300-million facility where cargo containers would be loaded onto trains.

By Jeffrey L. Rabin, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

Tuesday, Feb. 26, 2008

The chief executive of one of the nation's biggest railroads spent Monday promoting a plan to build a \$300-million rail yard close to the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, where cargo containers would be loaded directly onto trains instead of being trucked up the Long Beach Freeway.

Matthew K. Rose, chairman, chief executive and president of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway, touted the project, which would be located four miles from the ports. Proponents say the plan would substantially reduce air pollution and chronic traffic congestion on the 710 Freeway.

Rose pushed the plan in a variety of locations -- aboard a posh, private dining car at Union Station, in a closed-door meeting with officials from the Port of Los Angeles and during a speech at a cargo industry conference in downtown L.A. Rose said the project would enhance the environment while expanding the ability to handle a tidal wave of goods flowing through the ports from Asia.

"We need to grow, but grow green," Rose said, echoing remarks by Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa at the same meeting.

If the Southern California International Gateway facility is approved for industrial land in west Long Beach, Wilmington and Carson, Rose said the cleanest trucks available would be used to haul containers up the Terminal Island Freeway from the ports. There, the steel containers would be loaded onto rail cars using state-of-the-art electric-powered cranes. Yard locomotives and vehicles would be powered by cleaner-burning natural gas.

"It is BNSF's commitment to build the cleanest and greenest [truck and rail] facility in North America," Rose said.

A report on the environmental effects of the project has yet to be finished by the Port of Los Angeles.

But S. David Freeman, president of the Los Angeles Harbor Commission, said in an interview that the facility would do "tremendously beneficial things in terms of the environment."

Freeman and Michael Christensen, deputy executive officer of the Port of Los Angeles, met privately with railway officials a short time later.

Environmental groups are skeptical about building a vast rail yard in an area near a high school and elementary school.

"Even if you have the cleanest trucks possible, if you're dropping 750,000 of them into a heavily impacted community, I'm thinking that's not going to be good," said David Pettit, senior attorney at the Natural Resources Defense Council.

The environmental group has filed suit against other port projects and recently warned Long

Beach officials that it would go to federal court unless that port moves quickly to clean up the air.

Although railroad officials say the project will dramatically relieve truck traffic on the Long Beach Freeway, Martin Schlageter, campaign director for the Coalition for Clean Air, said the new rail yard could still have a major effect on harbor-area communities.

"The closer you are to it, the more worrisome it is to you," he said. "The reality of increasing trade is these trucks are nearer to your neighborhood and your school."

Schlageter said locomotives that would haul the trains up the Alameda Corridor and through the Inland Empire need to be upgraded with the cleanest technology possible to cut nitrogen oxides that contribute to the Los Angeles area's smog problem and to reduce microfine particulates that can cause cancer and respiratory disease.

Railroad officials have met with residents in the area around the proposed rail yard and say they have addressed some of their concerns in designing the facility. A sound wall would be built and trees planted between the rail yard and the neighboring community.

A professionally produced DVD in English and Spanish has been distributed to residents and officials, promoting the importance of the project in providing jobs and keeping the ports at the forefront of expanding international trade.

Farms May Be Exempted From Emission Rules

By Elizabeth Williamson

Washington Post, Tuesday, Feb. 26, 2008

Under pressure from agriculture industry lobbyists and lawmakers from agricultural states, the Environmental Protection Agency wants to drop requirements that factory farms report their emissions of toxic gases, despite findings by the agency's scientists that the gases pose a health threat.

The EPA acknowledges that the emissions can pose a threat to people living and working nearby, but it says local emergency responders don't use the reports, making them unnecessary. But local air-quality agencies, environmental groups and lawmakers who oppose the rule change say the reports are one of the few tools rural communities have for holding large livestock operations accountable for the pollution they produce.

Opponents of the rule change say agriculture lobbyists orchestrated a campaign to convince the EPA that the reports are not useful and misrepresented the effort as reflecting the views of local officials. They say the plan to drop the reporting requirement is emblematic of a broader effort by the Bush-era EPA to roll back federal pollution rules.

"One of the running themes we have seen is they have taken numerous industry-friendly actions that are shot down in the courts, but they buy time for industry" in appeals and reviews that could extend years into the next administration, said Frank O'Donnell, president of Clean Air Watch, a nonprofit environmental group based in Washington.

The EPA requirement that farms report large emissions of ammonia and hydrogen sulfide from animal manure has been on the books since the 1980s. The EPA does not set limits for the releases; it merely requires that farms disclose emissions over certain levels. Local public health officials say that if people in an area started getting sick with symptoms pointing to emissions, knowing who was reporting big releases of the gases would be most helpful.

The EPA proposed dropping the farm emissions reporting requirement in the aftermath of lawsuits brought by communities against several big farms sought damages and stricter controls of emissions.

The livestock industry has lobbied for years for the rule change. The EPA posted the proposal in the Federal Register while Congress -- which is deeply divided on the issue -- was on its December holiday recess. The change would take effect in October.

"Every major air pollution regulation that affects the agriculture industry has been weakened or delayed by this administration," said S. William Becker, executive director of the National Association of Clean Air Agencies, which represents local and state air-quality agencies. "These are not inconsequential pollutants. In large concentrations, they kill people."

Rep. Albert R. Wynn (D-Md.), chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee's subcommittee on environment and hazardous materials, called the proposal a "gift from the Bush administration to big corporate animal-feeding operations that denies the public of knowledge that serious contaminants are in the air."

The rule change would eliminate ammonia emissions reporting for big animal-feeding operations such as Threemile Canyon Farms in Boardman, Ore., where waste from tens of thousands of dairy cows releases more than 15,000 pounds of ammonia into the atmosphere each day, according to the EPA.

The agency estimates that livestock operations generate two-thirds of the ammonia emissions reported in the nation. The National Association of Clean Air Agencies blames manure-pit emissions containing hydrogen sulfide and ammonia for the deaths of at least two dozen people working or living near the operations in the Midwest over the past three decades.

In a February 2004 memo to EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson obtained by congressional investigators, agency scientist Roy L. Smith called the ammonia reporting requirements "appropriately protective, though not overprotective," of public health. In tests of the air downwind of factory farms, he found that ammonia concentrations slightly over the reportable levels caused respiratory irritation and that the minimum reportable emissions of hydrogen sulfide "could cause acute respiratory irritation and effects to the central nervous system."

In a petition hand-delivered to Johnson in 2005, however, the National Chicken Council, the U.S. Poultry & Egg Association and the National Turkey Federation called the ammonia reporting rule "inappropriate, unwise public policy, which does not reflect the nature of poultry management practices, and does not improve environmental or public health outcomes in any way." The groups also said the reports put farms at risk for lawsuits.

Lawmakers from farm states have repeatedly tried to attach provisions exempting farms from emissions reporting. Last March, House Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin C. Peterson (D-Minn.) and more than 130 lawmakers from agricultural states sponsored a bill that would delist manure as an environmental pollutant under the Superfund law.

The measure came after the cities of Waco, Tex., and Tulsa, Okla., and the state of Oklahoma filed lawsuits charging factory farms nearby with polluting water sources.

Lawmakers who oppose the bill, led by Rep. John D. Dingell (D-Mich.), chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, and House Transportation Committee Chairman James L. Oberstar (D-Minn.), wrote in a May letter to colleagues that the bill "would protect bad actors" and "eliminate all existing authorities from the Superfund statute that have been used by [cities and states] to protect local watersheds and drinking water supplies."

Peterson responded that "Congress never intended for Superfund to apply to farms, but the judicial system has done just that, threatening the livelihood of farmers and ranchers everywhere."

One point of contention in the dispute involves a conference call with state and local air pollution control agencies, organized by the EPA in the fall of 2006, that discussed lifting the reporting requirements.

Becker of the National Association of Clean Air Agencies said that in the call, the association's members told the EPA that the health risks posed by the emissions argued against a blanket exemption.

But when Johnson testified before Congress last year on the proposed exemption, the association said, he did not tell lawmakers of the local officials' opposition. Asked why by the House Energy and Commerce Committee, the EPA responded in writing, saying that the agency "did not interpret the discussion as representing an opposition of state and local air pollution control agencies to our proposed plan."

The EPA said support for the rule change was expressed in 26 "very similar" letters it received from local governments whose emergency responders said they "do not believe such notifications would be of value."

The leadership of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, believing that the letters were part of an industry-orchestrated campaign, asked the Congressional Research Service to review them. In a Jan. 28 report, the service said that most of the letters were identically worded and that they "represent only a small fraction of the 4,491 [local emergency responders] that are included in EPA's database."

On Dec. 28, with Congress away for the holidays, the EPA published a notice in the Federal Register of its plan to proceed with the rule change. The public comment period ends March 28.

Study to look closely at Fairbanks air pollution

The Associated Press

In the Contra Costa Times, Tuesday, Feb. 26, 2008

FAIRBANKS, Alaska—A study will be looking at air pollution in Alaska's second largest city, specifically where the mixture of dust, soot, dirt and other airborne particles comes from in Fairbanks.

The Fairbanks North Star Borough and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation are cooperating on the study. The project will continue through the end of this year and into next winter before the results are presented in 2009, said borough air quality specialist Jim Conner.

It looks like Fairbanks—plagued by particulate pollution on many winter days—will be included on a soon-to-be-released list of places that chronically violate health standards developed by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The \$2 million testing project represents a major step as the borough prepares to manage its pollution concentrations.

"The plan is to identify the problem and then get the people together who can contribute to the solution," Conner said.

Federal health officials have linked particulate pollution to short-term and long-term health problems. It is prevalent in places like Fairbanks due, at least partly, to weather patterns that trap cold, stagnant air close to the ground. The problem could translate into control measures being placed on certain products including household wood stoves within four years.

Particulate pollution consists largely of bits of airborne dust tiny enough a fraction of the diameter of a human hair to find their way deep into the lungs.

Fairbanks North Star Borough Mayor Jim Whitaker told transportation officials last week that the solution—whatever form it takes—will likely be met with resistance from the public. But he said the testing program, which has already begun on some fronts, will help the community take the reins in an effort to get its air-pollution problem under control.

Whitaker suggested that if local officials don't take the lead the state will likely impose restrictions that may or may not fit well for Fairbanks.

"Particles are killing people," said Tom Rosendahl, an engineer and particulate specialist with the EPA. "They're not good to breathe."

Three years ago, the EPA tightened the threshold on the level for particulates.

Conner said the borough isn't sure what steps will be needed for Fairbanks and it won't know until the wintertime testing program is complete.

The testing will be funded solely by the federal government, Conner said.

Among other things, the project will involve taking close-up tests of tailpipe emissions. The team also plans to outfit cars with monitors to take on-the-road air samples during rush hour and to stake out specific locations around town, Conner said.

The borough also plans to sample exhaust from space-heating systems.

So far, answers to the question of where particulate concentrations in Fairbanks come from have presented borough officials with a moving target. Literally.

"People can see this fog in their neighborhood in the morning, and then it's gone later. But it's just moved. It's still around," Conner said.

Plug-in cars could actually increase air pollution

By James R. Healey, USA TODAY
Tuesday, Feb. 26, 2008

The expected introduction of plug-in hybrid electric vehicles could cut U.S. gasoline use but could increase deadly air pollution in some areas, two reports say.

That's because a plug-in's lower tailpipe emissions may be offset by smokestack emissions from the utility generating plants supplying electricity to recharge the big batteries that allow plug-ins to run up to 40 miles without kicking on their gasoline engines. Plug-ins, called PHEVs, are partly powered, in effect, by the fuel used to generate the electricity.

About 49% of U.S. electricity is generated using coal, so in some regions a plug-in running on its batteries is nearly the equivalent of a coal-burning vehicle. The trade-off is one that even plug-in backers acknowledge. It could undercut the appeal of vehicles that appear capable of using no gasoline in town and hitting 50 to 100 mpg overall fuel economy.

If large numbers of plug-in hybrids were being recharged with power from the least-sophisticated coal plants, "There is a possibility for significant increases of soot and mercury," says a report by environmental advocacy group Natural Resources Defense Council. Soot particles can make it hard to breathe, especially for asthmatics. Mercury is toxic.

"Plug-in hybrids are perhaps not good for all areas," says Howard Learner, executive director of the Environmental Law & Policy Center, a Chicago-based advocacy group. In "states that are heavily coal, that equation doesn't work out very well for the environment."

After PHEVs drain their stored energy, they operate like conventional hybrids, triggering their gasoline engines to help drive the wheels and recharge the batteries. Conventionals can't be plugged in; their batteries are recharged only while driving.

The longer a plug-in is designed to operate on just the batteries, the less gasoline it uses, but the more electricity it needs to recharge the larger batteries.

Thus, the better the PHEV — that is, the longer it goes just on its batteries — the greater the charge required and the more the pollution that might result from an electric utility's power generation.

Learner calls PHEVs "really important emerging technology — where the cleaner technologies are used to charge them."

Sulfur dioxide also may be an issue

A study by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency found plug-ins also could result in more sulfur dioxide (SO₂) emissions. SO₂ is toxic in large amounts and is a component of corrosive acid rain.

The Minnesota study found that use of PHEVs would lower most emissions compared with other vehicles, but that resulting SO₂ emissions would be more than double those from gasoline vehicles and about three or four times greater than from driving a regular hybrid. Exactly how much depends on how far the PHEV can run on battery power alone.

The Minnesota study also found that PHEVs would emit more carbon dioxide (CO₂) than driving a conventional hybrid. CO₂ is a greenhouse gas thought to contribute to global warming.

The Minnesota numbers are striking because they predict the big jump in SO₂ even if 40% of the state's electricity were generated by wind power, not coal or other polluting fuels. About 4% of the state's electricity now is from wind, according to state officials.

The state's PHEV study concludes: "Alternative vehicles offer benefits, but no single technology currently stands out as a clear choice."

The NRDC calculus shows that a plug-in charged from a power plant burning the dirtiest type of coal still has an overall pollution level less than a conventional gasoline car. But it would produce 11% more greenhouse gas emissions than a regular, non-plug-in hybrid, according to Luke Tonachel, vehicles analyst at the NRDC and co-author of the group's report on plug-ins. The report was produced jointly with the non-profit Electric Power Research Institute.

He says, however, that charging a plug-in with electricity from renewable resources — wind or water, for instance — cuts overall greenhouse gas emissions to as low as a conventional gasoline car getting 74 mpg. No current gasoline car does that.

The NRDC and Minnesota studies were published last year but have yet to trigger alarms. PHEVs still are experimental; their possible threat is distant.

"It seems a little premature to think of it being a problem — but there are a lot of issues we should have been thinking of sooner," says Charles Griffith, auto project director at the Ecology Center, an environmental non-profit based in Michigan. He cites as an example debate over use of land to grow crops for ethanol fuel vs. for food.

Even so, Griffith says, "The scenario where there are so many plug-in hybrids plugged into the (electric power) grid that you'll see a change in air quality just doesn't sound true to me."

Plug-ins may be on streets soon

Automakers say PHEVs could be on the streets in significant numbers within five years. Prototypes being tested by car companies suggest they should be able to go up to 40 miles on battery power, which could enable them to deliver average mileage in the neighborhood of 100 mpg in general driving.

The first plug-in vehicle in production, however, is likely to be General Motors' Chevrolet Volt, which is not a hybrid. Due in 2010 or 2011, Volt runs entirely on battery power. Like PHEVs, its battery pack can be recharged by plugging into a normal outlet, using electricity from a utility generating plant. A small gasoline engine recharges Volt's batteries when an outlet isn't handy, but unlike in a hybrid, that engine never directly powers the car. GM could sell 60,000 or more a year, forecasts consultant J.D. Power and Associates, if the price is \$30,000 or less.

GM said at the Detroit auto show in January that it also will produce a plug-in hybrid version of its Saturn Vue SUV near the same time Volt is to launch.

Toyota Motor and Ford Motor each showed a prototype plug-in hybrid at auto shows this year and will test the designs. "It will come," says Toyota's Jaycie Chitwood, senior planner at the automaker's advanced technologies unit in the USA. "It's more a question of 'when' than 'if.' "

Ford's Greg Frenette, chief engineer of zero-emission vehicles, says it should take no more than five years to decide if plug-ins can be made reliable and inexpensive enough.

The U.S. Energy Department is backing PHEVs.

In January it offered \$30 million for projects to "deliver up to 40 miles of electric range without recharging" and to make plug-ins "cost-competitive by 2014 and ready for commercialization by 2016."

"We look at plug-in hybrids as the next generation of hybrids. They run cleaner, they save oil and they can save consumers money at the pump," NRDC's Tonachel says. But, he says, "Until our oldest power plants are replaced or upgraded, there could be increases in local particulate matter and ozone."

Memos Show Pressure on EPA Chief

The Associated Press
Washington Post and other papers, Tuesday, Feb. 26, 2008

WASHINGTON -- Internal documents from the Environmental Protection Agency indicate staff members believed Administrator Stephen Johnson might have to consider resigning if he turned down California's request to reduce vehicle greenhouse gas emissions.

Johnson denied the waiver request in December, blocking California and at least 16 other states from implementing the reductions.

Democratic Sen. Barbara Boxer of California, who is investigating the decision, released new transcripts from internal EPA documents Tuesday.

Among them is a staff memo prepared for a senior official in the air quality division to present to Johnson. It urged Johnson to grant the waiver or find a compromise. The memo warns Johnson that he "has to find a way to get this done," adding that if he could not, he would face a decision about whether to step down.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses California's incentive program for electric or alternative fuel automobiles. For more information on this clip or other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Incentiva California consumo de vehículos eléctricos o de combustible alternativo

Noticiero Latino
Radio Bilingüe, Tuesday, February 26, 2008

El gobierno de California ofrece desde hoy nuevos incentivos para los californianos que prefieran adquirir vehículos eléctricos o que consuman combustibles alternativos.

La Oficina de Recursos del Aire de California, y la Agencia de Protección Ambiental del estado, la CAIEPA, por sus siglas en inglés, ofrecen conjuntamente un reembolso de 500 dólares por cada compra de ese tipo de vehículos en el estado.

Ambas instituciones cuentan con un presupuesto de un millón 620 mil dólares para reembolsos.

Adicionalmente, los vehículos eléctricos y de combustible alternativo se traducen en menos gastos de transporte a sus propietarios.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the ratification of fees for polluters in the San Joaquin Valley by the Supreme Court.](#)

Ratifica corte superior multas a contaminadores en el Valle de San Joaquín, California

Noticiero Latino
Radio Bilingüe, Monday, February 25,

Una Corte Superior en Fresno, California ratificó el derecho de autoridades del Valle de San Joaquín, la segunda región más contaminada en el país, para imponer multas a empresas e individuos que contaminen el aire.

La Asociación de la Industria de la Construcción de California había demandado a la oficina de Control Distrital de La Contaminación del Aire en el Valle de San Joaquín por recidir unilateralmente las multas.

La corte determinó que la oficina ambientalista está en su derecho. La industria de la construcción contamina por lo menos con camiones que consumen diesel, y polvos en transporte, incluidos los del cemento que son altamente nocivos.