

## Opinions offered on air fee

Some home buyers could pay to fight pollution.

By Mark Grossi

The Fresno Bee

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If you charge buyers of new homes an extra \$1,000 or more to fight dirty air, you shouldn't spend the money on pollution control two counties away from the neighborhood, says one city official.

Sandy Brock of the Fresno Planning Department told the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District that the money should stay at home. She added that it should go toward the basic problem -- vehicle pollution.

"The bulk of the problem is coming from vehicles," she said. "We would hope you would make money available for road improvements and [traffic] light synchronization."

Brock was among 20 people who attended a public meeting on writing rules to require a fee from home buyers in new neighborhoods at the city's edge. The fee would compensate for pollution created when residents drive to stores, jobs and other places.

The rules would affect new development of all shapes. Owners of trucking distribution centers, commercial buildings, industrial complexes and shopping malls would have to pay because of the vehicle traffic they attract.

Vehicle pollution is the No. 1 contributor to bad air in the Valley, which is the second-worst air basin in the country. South Coast Air Basin in Southern California is the nation's smog king, but it does not yet have fees on new development.

Such fees would hardly be unique in California. Colusa, Mendocino, Placer and Shasta counties all enforce some form of air pollution fee on development. Two Valley cities, Turlock and Stockton, also have these fees.

The air district must answer many potentially thorny questions before the final rules come before its governing board next July. Workshops are tentatively scheduled in January, March and May.

Some of the major questions: How much money would be fair to charge? Will people get credit for buying cleaner-running hybrid vehicles? Who will handle the money -- cities, counties, the air district? How will it be spent?

Officials Wednesday outlined a few general options, then listened to reactions from the audience, many of who were from local government agencies.

Aside from reminding air officials about legal and practical constraints, Brock said it wouldn't "sell well" if district officials decide to spend such a fee on rebates for people who buy electric lawn-mowing equipment.

Vehicles are the target, she said.

Officials explained they have a long list of pollution-reduction measures, such as treating the soil on the shoulders of Valley roads to prevent dust pollution. Some reduction measures relate to vehicles, and some don't.

"It's like buying a commodity," said project coordinator Tom Jordan. "We would be getting the most reduction per dollar."

Sierra Club member Kevin Hall said a lot of reductions might come in areas where trucking distribution centers locate. Some are planned near farm fields where old diesel engines are used to pump irrigation water.

The fee money could be used to replace the older diesel engines on farms, Hall said.

The engines are a significant source of smog-making pollution.

"I think we will be geographically close to a big opportunity for pollution reductions," he said.

## Tracy power plant on course

By Alex Gronke, Record Staff Writer, October 9, 2003

TRACY -- State officials Wednesday morning rejected a bid by environmentalists to stop a 1,100-megawatt power plant slated for open land east of Tracy.

Three members of the California Energy Commission voted unanimously to deny a request for reconsideration filed by Bob Sarvey shortly after the commission approved the natural-gas-fired plant in late August.

Sarvey, a longtime opponent of power plants in the Tracy area, argued that the Energy Commission violated state law by accepting \$1.2 million in exchange for pollution the plant would release, although a report written by Energy Commission staff recommended that Calpine LLC pay much more for permission to build.

Sarvey was not surprised his request for reconsideration was denied.

"I knew they weren't going to reject the project, but I want them to provide what they felt was necessary to make the project benign to San Joaquin County," Sarvey said.

Sarvey said he wants Calpine to give Tracy Fire Department \$500,000 to offset the cost of emergency service to the 50-acre site.

Chris Davis, a spokesman for the Energy Commission, said nothing new was presented at Wednesday's hearing.

"As far as the commission is concerned, the plant is approved, and we are done with it," Davis said.

Calpine officials also weren't surprised by the commission's ruling.

"It wasn't unexpected; the briefs filed didn't add any new information," said Michael Hatfield, director of business development.

In late September, Sarvey and Californians for Renewable Energy, a Santa Cruz-based environmental group, filed a lawsuit in the state Supreme Court, which used similar positions to those they presented Wednesday to argue that the power plant should not be built.

The Supreme Court has not decided if it will hear the case.

## Excerpts from Schwarzenegger press conference as governor-elect

The Associated Press

In The Bakersfield Californian

Wednesday October 08, 2003, 06:15:22 PM

"It doesn't matter where the oil comes from. The bottom line is that we need alternative fuel, hydrogen fuel. We need to clean our air, we have to clean our pollution. I campaigned on that issue. I said that everybody wants to enjoy clean air and clean water. And so I think we can fight for that. I don't believe in what people say that you can only fight for the environment or for jobs. I think we can fight for both. I think that we can create jobs, more jobs, and at the same time and provide a clean environment."

[Fresno Bee Editorial:](#)

### Choo-choos, too

New EPA rules must reduce off-road diesel engine pollution.

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Diesel engines and the fuel they burn are major contributors to the Valley's bad air quality. They emit particulate matter, nitrogen oxides and sulfur oxides, adding significantly to the presence of those health risks in the air we breathe.

And all that damage isn't entirely coming, as some might expect, from the tailpipes of big rigs whipping up and down the state's highways. In fact, the diesel fuel sold for cars and trucks in California is the cleanest available anywhere in the nation.

A good deal of the diesel pollution comes from so-called off-road engines used in agriculture, construction and industry. That adds to ozone problems in warm months and higher particulate matter (PM) levels in the winter. Fully half -- or more -- of the PM pollution from diesel fuel in California comes from these off-road sources.

And there is another important source of diesel pollution -- railroad locomotives.

Much of the issue of agriculture's diesel pollution has been addressed legislatively in the package of clean air bills recently passed and signed in Sacramento. Programs will be established or strengthened to upgrade diesel engines used on farms -- or replace them altogether -- and new funds will be provided to help farmers pay the costs of those changes. It's a good start.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency has proposed creating new rules for off-road diesel pollution sources. State Sen. Dean Florez and U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer, among others, have written the EPA to urge new limits on such pollution. That's an effort that deserves the support of all who breathe the Valley's air, and particularly our entire local congressional delegation, regardless of party affiliation. It wouldn't hurt for other state legislators to chime in as well.

It will surprise some to learn that locomotives are a significant source of PM pollution hereabouts, but the figures bear out the assertion. This year, some 5.5% of all nitrogen oxide emissions in the San Joaquin Valley will be spewed from train engines moving people and freight.

Just over 5% doesn't sound like much, and that's an argument used by many interests to rationalize a failure to address these problems. In fact, if we can knock off 2% of our pollution here and another 5% there, and cobble together a few more "insignificant" decreases elsewhere, pretty soon we're talking about reducing air pollution by a quarter, or a third, or even half.

That's a prize worth working for.

**Fresno Bee Letter to the Editor:**

## **City's leaders get on board in effort to improve Valley air**

By Bryan Apper, Fresno

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Thanks to the mayor of Fresno and City Council members for riding the bus to promote "Ride-the-Bus-to-Work Week." If more of us would leave the car at home (or get rid of the second or third car) and ride the bus, we could make significant air quality gains.

Thanks to The Bee for putting free newspapers on Fresno Area Express buses last week. It is a good trade-off to use the extra 10 or 15 minutes it takes to ride the bus to catch up on the news and help clean the air.