

## **Electric vehicles in Fresno surveyed**

**They can legally operate only in zones with speed limits of 35 mph or less.**

By Jim Davis / The Fresno Bee

Monday, November 29, 2004

Fresnans could zoom to the grocery store, the dry cleaners and even to work in neighborhood electric vehicles under a plan percolating at City Hall.

The city is establishing a pilot program to promote electric vehicles that are billed as being more than a golf cart but less than a car.

Fresno director of transportation Bruce Rudd said the vehicles could help alleviate the city and region's air quality woes if enough people use them.

But several hurdles remain.

One is that these vehicles can legally operate only on streets with speed limits of 35 mph or less, and most major city streets have higher speed limits. Another is persuading owners such as Bonnie and Ed Nachtigall to use their electric vehicles on city streets. The Nachtigalls bought a neighborhood electric vehicle about a year ago but use it only at their home on the coast.

"They're great, but here in Fresno, I think, the trucks would run over me," Bonnie Nachtigall said.

Still, Rudd said he believes people will use the vehicles as they become more widely accepted.

"It's going to be tough, but I think it's a time that is coming with more people seeing them," Rudd said.

The idea for promoting neighborhood electric vehicles came out of a City Council meeting a little more than a year ago when Lew Solomon, who owns Central Valley Golf & Utility Vehicles, suggested that people could use the vehicles for short neighborhood trips to cut down on air pollution. "I told the city, 'I'm not trying to sell vehicles, but the situation is the housewives of America could use these things to go to the grocery store,'" Solomon said.

He said his business gets calls every week from older people who don't drive cars anymore but want an electric vehicle to drive to the store or the library or to run other errands.

Rudd and his staff explored the issue and brought their findings to the City Council this month.

Neighborhood electric vehicles can typically reach speeds of about 25 mph and can travel up to 30 miles per battery charge. The vehicles cost between \$6,000 and \$9,000.

To operate on city streets, the vehicles must have seat belts, turn signals and headlights.

The biggest hurdle Rudd and his staff found is that the vehicles cannot be used on most major streets because of speed limits. That means people can drive them around their neighborhood but can't drive them to the nearest grocery store.

"I think the biggest concern is having cars operating at 45 mph and having electric vehicles operating at 25 mph coexist on the same corridor," Rudd said.

But these vehicles have zero emissions and would be a good alternative for short trips. Gas-powered cars and trucks emit the worst pollution on short trips before the catalytic converter warms up enough to operate effectively.

"A lot of the trips that we take, especially on the weekends, are short little trips to school, to the grocery store, to the dry cleaner," Rudd said. "Those trips are probably some of the worst as far as air quality is concerned."

Rudd came back to the City Council this month with a plan to work with Operation Clean Air - a nonprofit group that aims to balance cleaning the Valley's dirty air with protecting the economy - to develop legislation to expand the use of these electric vehicles in Fresno and other parts of the San Joaquin Valley.

In the interim, the council authorized Rudd to start a pilot program that would include compiling a fact sheet and marketing survey, a commuter map and potential signage. The signs - and the cost - would need to be approved by the council later.

Maroa Avenue, Rudd said, is one of the few major streets in the city with a posted speed limit of 35 mph. Rudd said the city will focus its survey on that street to see how many people have neighborhood electric vehicles and how many would use them on that street if they did.

Police Lt. Andy Hall, in charge of the Fresno Police Department's traffic enforcement bureau, said his only concern about the pilot program is the safety of allowing electric vehicles to share the road with gas-powered cars and trucks.

"I think we can get there. I just think we need to get a lot of people in the same room together ... and sit down and think, 'What do we want to do with these vehicles?'" Hall said.

Builder Gary McDonald will promote electric cars at the 2,837-home Copper River Ranch development, which will include outlets for the vehicles in the garages. He did the same - and offered discounts on neighborhood electric vehicles - at Country Club at the Fort, a 123-home development, also in north Fresno.

He said they were successful at that development. But he hopes the cars will be more successful at Copper River, because it's a larger development that will have commercial and shopping areas within the development.

Anything that gets people out of large cars, particularly sport utility vehicles, is going to help clean the air, said Dr. David Pepper of the Fresno-based Medical Alliance for Healthy Air, an advocacy group.

"I'm very partial to bicycling because it also addresses the obesity and diabetes issues," Pepper said. "But a lot of people won't get on a bicycle. But they will get on an electric vehicle."

## **Around the Valley**

### **Workshops for farmers on dust control planned**

The Fresno Bee, Monday, November 29, 2004

Farmers throughout the Valley are invited to attend workshops designed to help them develop dust-control plans as required by new regulations.

Valley air district rules now require farms comprising 100 or more contiguous acres of land to adopt plans for controlling airborne particulates. Plans are due by Dec. 31.

Representatives from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, county farm bureaus, the ag industry and the air district will help farmers select conservation practices to include in their plans. Workshops are scheduled as follows:

- 2 p.m. Tuesday at Los Banos Fairground. RSVP: (209) 723-3001.
- 9 a.m. Wednesday at Kerman Community Center. RSVP: (559) 237-0263.
- 2 p.m. Wednesday at Kings District Fairground, Hanford. RSVP: (559) 584-3557. <2 p.m. Thursday at Tulare County Ag Commissioner's Office, Tulare. RSVP: (559) 732-8301.

Details: (559) 230-6000 or on the Internet at [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org) <<http://www.valleyair.org>>.

## **Fireplace usage discouraged**

### **Holiday typically brings wood burning, which could make for unhealthy air.**

By Mark Grossi / The Fresno Bee

Thursday, November 25, 2004

Consider warming up with a steaming cup of tea or a hot toddy for Thanksgiving rather than burning wood in your fireplace.

There are enough tiny, airborne bits of soot and chemicals for local air officials to discourage residents from burning wood in Fresno and Kern counties. Officials stopped short of a one-day ban on burning.

"But if everybody burns wood in their fireplaces today, it could overwhelm the conditions and make it an unhealthy air day out there," said supervising meteorologist Evan Shipp of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

It is the 16th time this month that the district has asked Fresno County residents to refrain from burning wood in their fireplaces. The same request has been made nine times for Kern County.

Last Saturday, Kern County residents were banned from burning for the day because particle pollution, known as particulate matter, had risen to unhealthy levels. It was the Valley's first and only ban so far during the cold weather season, running from Nov. 1 to Feb. 28. As the result of a lawsuit settlement, the air district last year began enforcing a two-tiered rule on wood burning, based on air quality predictions in each of the eight Valley counties from Stockton to Bakersfield.

In one tier, officials discourage people from burning on days when people with sensitive lungs are affected by air pollution. In the other tier, burning is banned on days when air quality is predicted to be unhealthy for the general public.

The rule exempts residents whose sole source of heat is wood.

It also excludes those who live above 3,000 feet and those who don't have access to natural gas.

If you live in Fresno or Kern counties and you want to burn today, officials advise using pellet-fueled heaters, manufactured firelogs in open fireplaces or EPA Phase II-certified devices.

Officials say the holidays - Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Eve - are the times when they see the most wood-burning around cities such as Fresno, Bakersfield and Modesto.

The Valley's often-stagnant air patterns suspend microscopic soot, ash and chemical specks in the air. Medical researchers have connected such pollution with heart disease and early mortality.

Meteorologists anticipate the approach of a storm today. Shipp said it probably would not reach the Valley until late in the day. The National Weather Service is calling for mostly sunny conditions, with breezes picking up later in the day and clouds possibly following.

"It's not the best day to burn, and it's not the worst day," he said.

"But even with relatively good dispersion in the air, there could be problems if everyone lights up."

## **News in brief**

S.F. Chronicle, Thursday, November 25, 2004

A Bay Area agency is asking residents to refrain from burning wood in fireplaces and stoves for the holidays in hopes of reducing air pollution.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is asking those getting together for Thanksgiving to set a new tradition of a smoke-free holiday, said district spokeswoman Terry Lee.

Lee said that the pollution, called particulate matter, that is released when burning wood can cause breathing difficulties as well as aggravate existing health problems like asthma and heart disease.

The pollution released from several homes in a cul-de-sac burning wood at the same time is comparable to the level of pollution North Bay residents experienced during the Rumsey fire that burned in Yolo and Napa counties in October.

Lee said that district surveys show that one third of Bay Area residents don't use their fireplaces, one third use them only during holidays, and one third use them three to four times a week. The district aims to reduce the number of residents that both use them regularly and during holidays.

The district is offering the following guidelines for a smoke-free Thanksgiving:

- Retrofit your fireplace to burn natural gas rather than wood.
- Burn dry, clean, seasoned wood rather than moist wood that can smolder.
- Never burn garbage, chemically treated wood or wrapping paper, which can produce noxious smoke and fumes.
- Check the chimney for excess smoke, which could indicate a improperly burning fire.

## **U.S., Arctic nations at odds on warming Talks in Iceland bring no common strategy on curbing emissions**

Andrew C. Revkin, New York Times

in the S.F. Chronicle, Thursday, November 25, 2004

The United States and the seven other countries with Arctic territory expressed concern Wednesday about profound changes in the Arctic climate and said they would consider new scientific findings concluding that heat-trapping emissions were the main cause.

But in a move that disappointed environmental and Arctic indigenous groups, they did not agree on a common strategy for curbing such emissions.

The joint statement on Arctic climate, emerging after several days of negotiations in Reykjavik, Iceland, reflected the continuing opposition by the Bush administration to anything other than voluntary measures to slow the growth in such gases. This put the United States at odds with the other Arctic countries, all of which are among the 128 nations that have ratified the Kyoto Protocol, a treaty poised to take effect in February that requires participating industrialized countries collectively to cut emissions below levels measured in 1990.

The other Arctic countries are Russia, Canada, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Sweden and Finland.

The talks took place at a meeting of the Arctic Council, which was created in 1996 to foster cooperation among the world's northernmost countries and six Arctic indigenous groups that participate in sessions but do not vote.

The statement followed the release on Nov. 9 of "Impacts of a Warming Arctic," a summary of a four-year assessment of high-latitude climate shifts done by 300 scientists at the request of the council.

The study documented an array of shifts in climate, ecosystems and ice conditions and concluded that "human influences, resulting primarily from increased emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, have now become the dominant factor."

The report said the changes could imperil traditional native communities and many species while offering some benefits such as longer growing seasons and new shipping routes in ice-free waters.

In a speech to other senior officials at the meeting, the U.S. undersecretary of state for global affairs, Paula Dobriansky, said that after the release of the science report early next year, "the United States will take the findings into account as it continues to review the science on climate change."

Environmentalists and representatives of Arctic traditional cultures said that the science was clear enough to justify stronger actions to stem gases linked to the changes.

"In terms of what the planet needs, this is far from enough," Sheila Watt- Cloutier, chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, told Reuters. The group says it represents 155,000 Arctic residents in Canada, Alaska, Greenland and Russia.

## Lawsuit keeps work on Padre Hotel at standstill

By JAMES BURGER, Californian staff writer  
[Bakersfield Californian, Monday, Nov. 29, 2004](#)

The Padre Hotel still sits silent and unfinished in the middle of downtown.

But the people who control its future are in talks that could return the sound of renovation to the Bakersfield landmark.

The venerable hotel's rebirth as a four-star icon in downtown Bakersfield has been stalled for months by charges that asbestos was removed illegally from the hotel.

Paul Holling, spokesman for hotel owner Pacifica Enterprises, said the project is still in limbo.

He said the company isn't ready to continue investing in a project that is clouded by uncertainty.

But his company is talking with the Kern County District Attorney's office about terms that could settle a lawsuit blocking construction.

The San Diego-area development company has been renovating the Padre since it purchased the legendary old building in April 2002 for \$1 million.

Deputy District Attorney John Mitchell filed a lawsuit against Pacifica in May that claimed the company knowingly hired unskilled workers to rip out asbestos from the 76-year-old hotel at 18th and H streets.

Then, his suit claims, Pacifica hired another company to dump the fibrous fire-retardant in a local landfill.

Asbestos, if airborne, can be inhaled and is believed to cause cancer.

Pacifica officials have rejected Mitchell's claims, saying they never knowingly violated asbestos rules.

Right now, Mitchell said, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, his office and attorneys for Pacifica are poring over boxes of documents and talking about the facts of the case.

"We want to do everything we can to make sure the public is protected," Mitchell said.

It may take a few months before the two sides have an idea whether a settlement is possible.

In the meantime, further work on the Padre is on hold.

"We don't want to be spending on something we don't have a clear vision for," Holling said.

The Padre is currently envisioned as an upscale hotel like nothing else in Bakersfield, he said.

City of Bakersfield Economic Development Director Donna Kunz said it is hard for her to watch the Padre project languish. She thinks Pacifica has been above-board in its dealings and deserves a chance to finish the hotel.

"I hope they hang in there," she said. "As much as I respect air quality and their right to enforce, I think they need to work with (Pacifica) and try to settle this as soon as possible and not try to make an example."

Kunz is a big believer that bringing people's living spaces into the center of shopping and entertainment areas is key to building a vibrant community.

The Padre is a perfect example of how that could be done, she said.

"It's a centerpiece downtown," Kunz said. "If you could get that up and running -- imagine the vitality it could bring downtown and to the theater district."

Holling had previously said that work on the Padre would be done by the end of 2004. It is uncertain when work will be done now.

## **Dairies can't get power trip started**

### **Waste into electricity? Sounds great -- but it's just not working**

By GRETCHEN WENNER, Californian staff writer  
[Bakersfield Californian, Sunday, Nov. 28, 2004](#)

Kern County dairyman John Bidart wants to install pollution-cutting technology that many air regulators and environmentalists have been clamoring for: a so-called "methane digester" that can use some waste gases to make electricity.

But, like other large California dairy farmers considering the systems, Bidart has been hung up by an unlikely source -- the electric grid.

The problem, dairy farmers say, is they can't get paid a decent rate for power they produce. They need the money to repay loans for the expensive equipment.

What's needed now is legislation tweaking agreements between dairy farmers and the big utilities, dairy industry officials say.

Numbers don't fly

From Bidart's point of view, it pencils out this way:

He's considering spending \$4.3 million on a digester for his state-of-the-art facility on Old River Road, southwest of Bakersfield. There, he'll eventually milk about 7,000 cows when the farm reaches full capacity. He'll also have about as many support animals.

The system he's eyeing uses methane gas captured by a covered manure lagoon to generate electricity. The systems will keep some greenhouse and smog-forming gases out of the valley's dirty air basin.

An agreement with Pacific Gas and Electric Co. would allow Bidart to hook into the electric grid. Manure-powered electricity would then, in essence, run his meter backward and lower his electric bill.

Those bills are big. Gleaming equipment in the milk barn, from snakelike milking equipment to massive steel storage tanks, sucks up watts.

Bidart now pays about \$25,000 a month for electricity; he expects that to reach \$33,000 at full capacity. During peak summer hours, when fans and cooling systems run nonstop, the figure will double.

But in trying to figure finances for a digester system, Bidart keeps plowing into a tangle of red ink.

Legislation that took effect last year for connecting to the grid isn't working out the way he and other dairymen hoped.

That's because the utility will only credit a portion of his electric bill, not the whole amount.

Even though Bidart pays PG&E about 11.8 cents per kilowatt, he figures the electricity he produces would be credited, in essence, at around 6.5 cents.

"At 11 1/2 cents ... it flies," Bidart said last week of paying for a digester system. That figure would cover a system without using grants currently available.

Even with grant funding, the 6.5 cents-per-kilowatt rate is "tenuous at best," he said.

### **Making pollution pay**

Bidart made news recently as one of nine Kern County dairymen to receive more than \$37 million in controversial tax-exempt bond money through the state Pollution Control Financing Authority. A \$6 million loan he received in 2002 helped build his new dairy.

A second loan for \$3 million would have helped pay for Bidart's digester. But the loan has been frozen while state officials review how the bond money is spent.

Controversy erupted last month when the *Los Angeles Times* reported that funds earmarked for solid-waste reduction had essentially been used to build mega-dairies in the San Joaquin Valley.

Dairy officials say the new facilities are more environmentally sound than the older dairies they replaced.

Regardless, Bidart said he's no longer interested in money from the pollution authority. With low interest rates available from banks, he said, the loans -- which ended up costing much more than the 1 percent rate quoted in media accounts -- aren't worth the trouble. He said he'll find a different lender if he goes forward with the digester.

### **Not all green is green enough**

When it comes to compensation for kilowatts, PG&E officials say they're just following the law.

"The Legislature makes whatever decision the Legislature makes," said Susan Buller, senior regulatory analyst with PG&E.

Assembly Bill 2228, which created the hookup agreement, was designed "in conjunction with the dairy industry," Buller said.

Like similar agreements with many other so-called "distributed generation" facilities, the mini-power-producers are only compensated for part of their bill.

Even those credits, Buller said, amount to a subsidy from other ratepayers, including residential, business and other agricultural users.

Some critics have said the utilities are backing away from a good source of "green" energy, or power from renewable sources. California's utilities are required to grow their cache of such green sources.

But the hookup agreements with dairy farmers don't count as green sources for utilities, Buller said. Only dedicated producers who bid for contracts under an altogether different system count toward the utilities' green portfolios.

Peter F. Moreno, who manages digester and other small-source projects for Southern California Edison, agreed that the utility is simply following regulations.

So far, only about five or so digesters are running on California dairies, said Michael Marsh, executive director of the industry group Western United Dairyman.

And only a dozen are operating nationwide among the country's 92,000 dairy farmers, Marsh said.

If all of California's large dairies put in digesters, he said, they could produce about 45 to 50 megawatts. That's about enough power to light up Bakersfield, he added.

But with an average installation cost of \$1.2 million, or about \$700 to \$800 per milking animal, the industry needs to smooth existing hurdles to get more systems running.

"We need to find a means to pay farmers for power," Marsh said.

The industry is focusing first on extending the law now covering grid hookups. It's set to expire in January 2006.

In addition, rate schedules and other technicalities need tweaking.

Marsh said his group is working on possible legislation with state Assemblywoman Gloria Negrete McLeod, a Democrat from the Chino area who co-sponsored the previous hookup bill.

And state Sen. Dean Florez, the Shafter Democrat, agrees changes are needed.

"We may be carrying legislation this year" that allows for better hookup agreements for digesters, Florez said.

Bidart, the dairyman, said California is lagging behind Iowa, New York, Minnesota, Ohio and other states in terms of compensation for manure power.

"It's not anything groundbreaking, nothing other states haven't already put into effect," he said.

What's needed is a formula modeled after one of those other states, one that would allow dairy farmers to offset system costs with a reasonable power payment rate.

For now, Bidart is looking at other options, including selling power to another utility.

"I've kind of been on hold with the thing, just because of the rate," he said.

## **News from the San Joaquin Valley**

The Associated Press

[Bakersfield Californian, Monday, Nov. 29, 2004](#)

MADERA, Calif. (AP) - Acres of farmland could become the site of the Central Valley's next casino if an environmental study ordered by federal officials is approved.

The North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians' plan of building a hotel and casino complex on 305 acres of agricultural land alongside Highway 99 north of Madera depends on the study, which could take one or two years to complete, officials said.

The casino would cost about \$250 million to build, but once it is operating it is expected to bring in funds to the tribe.

The plan already has a list of detractors, among them other gaming tribes in the region.

Representatives from the Picayune Rancheria of the Chukchansi Indians spoke against the proposed casino at a meeting of the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs held earlier this month. They said they were worried about the impact the new development could have on the area's air and water quality. The tribe runs its own casino on Highway 41 in Madera County.

Representatives from the North Fork tribe suggested that the opponents were speaking out of a fear that the new casino would create competition.

"They are simply focused on maintaining a monopoly. What North Fork believes is that a synergy can be created among the casinos that are in the Central Valley so that it creates a tourist destination," said Doug Elmetts, a spokesman for the North Fork tribe.

The complex could cover 472,000 square feet, and would include a gaming hall, a hotel, restaurants, bars, shops and a meeting room.

## **Air District to help farmers with dust-control requirements**

[Monday, Nov. 29, Tracy Press](#)

Press Staff Report

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District aims to help farmers decide what conservation practices to include in the plans they have to come up with to meet new air quality requirements.

The new Air Pollution Control District rules requires anyone with 100 or more contiguous acres of farmland to file a plan for controlling airborne particles by Dec. 31.

The rule is designed to help reduce dust and particulate matter pollution in the region.

It is part of a regulatory scheme that was set up because San Joaquin Valley's air quality does not meet federal Environmental Protection Agency standards.

The conservation management plans, which farmers will have to submit to the air district, detail the pollution-prevention measures they plan to take.

Acceptable practices include harvesting at night, when soil humidity is higher than during the day; setting speed limits on the property; and restricting access to private roads.

Joe Peterson, program director for the San Joaquin County Farm Bureau Federation, said most farmers he knows in the county have submitted a plan.

The bureau is an association of more than 56,000 farmers.

The new plan, he said, is a new burdon on farmers.

San Joaquin County's air was good when there was a lot more agriculture.

He said agriculture has since become more efficient and thus reduce pollution.

"Are we pointing the finger to the right polluter?" Peterson asked.

The Air Pollution Control District, which monitors air quality in eight San Joaquin Valley counties, including San Joaquin and Stanislaus, will also sponsor workshops in Los Banos, Hanford, Kerman, Bakersfield and Tulare

## **Put brakes on gas tax idea**

**If the state needs more gas taxes it should make its case, not scrap the system.**

[Bakersfield Californian, Editorial, Saturday, Nov. 27, 2004](#)

Someone needs to pull the new director of the Department of Motor Vehicles over and stop her from speeding heedlessly into the future.

Joan Borucki wants to put global positioning devices in cars to track the mileage they travel. The idea is to more closely tie gas taxes to where cars go, the routes they take and the mileage they rack up, rather than the fuel they use.

The problem inspiring this potentially Orwellian notion is that as more new and fuel-efficient cars take to the state's highways, the less the state gets in gas taxes to maintain highways.

As far as it goes, that makes some sense -- but the potential pitfalls of the idea ought to bring it to a screeching halt.

Oh, we can hear the civil liberties reassurances already -- we'll only download odometer readings at the gas pump. Don't buy it. You do not need a GPS to do that. And how few government programs can one name that didn't expand beyond their original intent.

In fact, one variation of the idea is a differential gas tax -- you would pay more per mile on badly impacted roads and less on lower-traffic routes.

And for that you do need GPS. It is none of the state's (or anyone else's) business whether you go to a jazz concert on Saturday night or go to a porno flick to get jazzed on Saturday night.

And can't you just imagine lawyers, private eyes, ex-wives and others salivating to get hold of the information?

And what happens if you take a long out-of-state trip? When you return, the difference between the odometer reading at the start and at the end will hit you with a whopping bill -- even though you would have paid gas taxes in the other state.

Besides, every single gas pump in the state would have to be redesigned and remanufactured no matter how you rig the system. Guess who pays for that, too?

Almost as bad is that the idea is as wrong-headed from a social policy standpoint as you can get. If Gov. Arnold racks up as many miles in his five Hummers as someone does in a hybrid vehicle, they would pay the same amount, even though the hybrid vehicle owner is doing more to help clean up the air.

Is government suddenly giving up on the idea of rewarding people for good deeds?

The present system is simple, straightforward and it works. Only a bureaucrat would think that is a recipe for change.

Part of the price a bulk distributor charges retailers includes 36 cents per gallon -- the combined federal and state gas tax -- that the retailer passes on to consumers at the pump.

And don't lose sight of the fact this is DMV we're talking about. It has one of the worst records for technology implementation of major state agencies.

We're hardly inclined to discourage people -- public officials or in the private sector -- from thinking outside of the box, but this is one idea that should not be unwrapped.

## **Sierra Club strikes again**

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Thursday, Nov. 25, 2004](#)

I recently read that our local environmentalist watchdog is at it again. The Sierra Club is after residential developers whose projects it contends will further degrade our already poor air quality.

Is there any type of new construction that doesn't contribute to air pollution? And God forbid we forget about the 500,000 dairy cows that will soon be fouling our environment with 7.5 million tons of waste annually thanks to our comatose supervisors who obviously have no common sense or sense of smell either.

Home building accounts for 16 percent of our national economy. There is a severe housing shortage in California evidenced by skyrocketing prices fueled by insatiable demand. Home ownership is the cherished American dream that provides a strong socioeconomic foundation that is vital to our nation's faith and belief in a strong family structure. Sadly, it has become economically unachievable for many Americans.

Unquestionably, we should improve our air quality. However, it is irresponsible to continually attack home builders and seek to impose onerous fees upon an industry that is already overburdened with excessive governmental levies that significantly contribute to eroding housing affordability.

If money is the primary solution, then we need to find a methodology that will equitably spread the cost to all polluters that contribute to the problem.

A place to begin would be the fast-food industry with its long lines of emission-spewing vehicles whose occupants anxiously await their daily fix of unhealthy food and drink.

-- JACK BALFANZ, Bakersfield