

Public input set to begin on smog plan

By Seth Nidever, Sentinel Reporter
Hanford Sentinel, Thursday, Oct. 5, 2006

HANFORD - A Central Valley smog reduction plan is likely to place new requirements on agriculture and cost billions of dollars.

But the 2007 Ozone Plan may still not be enough to meet federal air quality requirements.

The 350-page draft document, released this week by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, shows it will cost at least \$2 billion -- and as much as \$7.5 billion -- to meet strict federal ozone guidelines.

The cost will be generated by the expense of replacing old motor vehicles.

The air district will hold a public meeting on the draft plan at 2 p.m. Oct. 17 at the district's central office in Fresno, 1990 E. Gettysburg Ave.

At certain concentrations, ozone, a major ingredient in smog, causes lung damage and exacerbates respiratory conditions. It is produced by a variety of sources. Foremost among them are internal combustion engines.

Agriculture will likely face a more stringent set of control measures, along with other businesses under the ozone plan. Dairies as small as 500 cows could be regulated, according to Tony Barba, a Kings County supervisor who serves on the air district's board of directors. The current threshold is 1,000 cows.

The Kings County Farm Bureau and the California Farm Bureau Federation weren't immediately available for comment this morning.

Dairies produce volatile organic compounds, which are key ingredients in ozone formation. But car and truck emissions are the linchpin of the plan.

Virtually every vehicle will have to be replaced or somehow made more efficient.

"If we did nothing about motor vehicles, this plan would have no chance of success," said Scott Nester, the air district's planning director.

Any changes will go through a series of public meetings before being finalized, district officials said.

"I don't want to give anybody the impression that the die is cast at this point," Nester said.

One possible plan -- in which the district meets the target by the year 2024 -- calls for \$130 million a year in incentive programs mainly targeted toward cleaning up cars. The district generates about \$50 million from state and local sources for all of its incentive programs combined.

The federal standard the district has to satisfy is based on ozone readings over an eight-hour period. Levels of the pollutant soar in hot, stagnant air, making the problem more difficult to address in the Valley than in ocean-cooled San Francisco and Los Angeles, according to a draft of the plan.

Valley regulators need to come up with a 480-ton-per-day reduction in nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds, the two main ingredients in ozone formation.

District officials estimate that if all motor vehicles in the Valley stopped operating, the standard wouldn't be met.

If all stationary sources being regulated were shut down, the standard wouldn't be met because the district has no power to regulate fuel composition or tailpipe emissions.

"I don't think we can meet it, myself, the way things are now. We've eliminated all the freebies," said Barba.

Under a series of measures suggested in the draft, the district would achieve 371-tons-per-day of reduction by 2014. The biggest chunk -- 177 tons -- would come from normal turnover of older vehicles to newer, more efficient ones. Tied into that would be an additional 80-ton cut from strict new tailpipe emission standards from the California Air Resources Board.

Automakers have sued to block those standards.

"If we could somehow reduce the ozone put out by tailpipes, that would really help. But it doesn't seem like people really want to hear that," Barba said.

News in brief from the San Joaquin Valley

The Associated Press

in the SF Chronicle and the Sacramento Bee, Thursday, October 5, 2006

San Joaquin Valley air officials said it would cost \$7.5 billion to reduce the region's smog enough to meet federal air standards by 2013.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District on Tuesday announced its plan to cut smog-making pollution by 60 percent by replacing polluting cars and trucks with cleaner-burning vehicles in one of the nation's dirtiest air basins.

In the 300-page draft cleanup plan, the district said the program would require new sources of government funding. But it estimated the cost would drop by more than half if the deadline was delayed eight years.

Community activists said the district's hefty pricetag was a scare tactic to delay the federal government's smog cleanup deadline of 2013.

The Central Valley Air Coalition and other groups said pushing back the deadline would cost residents even more. They pointed to a recent study that found that Valley residents pay \$3 billion annually for air pollution-related illness, suffering and death.

The district plans to hold a public hearing on the plan on Oct. 17. The board must approve a cleanup plan next year and submit it to the federal government by June.

\$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

in the Modesto Bee, Thursday, October 5, 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."

City Hall OK'd after scare

Discovery of asbestos spurred closure of old city building, but testing revealed toxic substance was not circulating in air ducts

BY DAVID BURGER, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, Oct. 5, 2006

An asbestos scare closed City Hall on Wednesday, sending 50 city employees home for the day before tests determined the building was safe.

City worker Danny Brinson stands outside City Hall, which was closed Wednesday morning so maintenance crews could test for the presence of asbestos. Brinson was handing out letters explaining the closure from the office of City Manager Alan Tandy.

A sign informed visitors that City Hall was closed Wednesday morning.

City Hall will be open today.

Tests for asbestos at City Hall came back negative - meaning the toxic material wasn't circulating throughout the building - late Wednesday morning, City Manager Alan Tandy said.

Air testing at 12 locations was done Tuesday evening and the test results showed that the ventilation duct where asbestos was detected was not distributing the substance, Tandy said.

Asbestos was found late last week during a routine check. Some duct lining had collapsed inside one of the air ducts on the first floor between the finance and human resources offices, Tandy said.

The samples were sent to a lab, and the confirmation that it was asbestos resulted in the closure.

A public meeting with nearly 50 people in attendance held Tuesday evening in council chambers went on as scheduled, Tandy said, because the ventilation ducts that supply air to the chambers are different from the one where the problem was seen.

The scare prompted new questions about the adequacy of City Hall, which opened in 1954. It was built after two earthquakes in the summer of 1952 destroyed the previous building. A 7.6 temblor hit Tehachapi and a 5.8 tremor struck Bakersfield, according to the Kern County Historical Society.

Four years ago, the city started a study to see how it could handle its need for more space, whether by adding on or buying or renting out space in nearby buildings.

The state financial crisis shut down those talks.

But now that the city's coffers have swelled with money from sales taxes and development fees, city officials have resumed those talks.

Abandoning City Hall at 1501 Truxtun Ave. has never been part of its discussions, which means that city officials' prayers for negative test results were answered.

The air testers, Dresser Services, were shocked that contamination hadn't spread.

"The results are that no asbestos ... (was) found in the samples," Glenn Plaskett of Dresser wrote to the city. "This is surprising to me, but certainly good news."

Tandy held a news conference at 2 p.m. in front of City Hall to declare the building safe.

"It's a clean test result," Tandy said.

Removing the asbestos in that location and repairing the duct will cost about \$100,000, he said.

Tandy dismissed the idea of closing down City Hall late last week, when the "suspicious" material was first found.

"If I started closing down (the building) every time something suspicious was found in the hallway, there'd be a scandal of (the) work ethic of city employees," Tandy said.

Bill Wilbanks, county General Services director, said the county checks all its older buildings routinely, especially when inspecting tiles and roofs, where asbestos is usually found.

While the County Administrative Center on Truxtun Avenue and the Public Services Building on M Street are relatively newer buildings built after asbestos was found to be harmful, the county still owns some buildings with asbestos, Wilbanks said. They include the Kern County Public Defender's office on Truxtun Avenue.

City employees were as prevalent as media at the news conference, looking relieved.

"I came down to see what the deal is," said Luis Peralez, streets superintendent, whose office is at the corporation yard at 4101 Truxtun Ave. He said he came earlier in the day to deliver some documents and was surprised to see the warning notices posted on the door.

Planners to tackle issues tonight

Seven Oaks West, trail location, policy on agenda

BY DAVID BURGER, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, Oct. 5, 2006

Several changes to Bakersfield's landscape -- and how neighbors are told about new developments -- are up for discussion at tonight's Bakersfield Planning Commission meeting.

The public will have the chance to share their views on two major additions to Bakersfield.

And there are at least four issues in the jam-packed agenda that could draw opposition.

The beginning of the meeting features a 1-2-3 punch: three public hearings concerning the Seven Oaks West expansion; then a squabble over the parks and trails plan for Old River Ranch; and finally, a change to how developers have to notify neighbors of additions like these.

West Ming

The seven commissioners will take comments from the public on the "adequacy" of the environmental report that is usually done before areas are developed.

The report of this huge expansion assesses the impact a development will have on traffic, [air quality](#) and animal habitats, among other things.

Tonight is the first opportunity for the public to go on the record about how they feel about this project, which would stretch the western boundaries of the city.

Castle & Cooke hopes to start construction in late 2007, but the city pegs it at 2008.

Old River Ranch

This large project has also already been approved by the City Council, but its parks and trail plan has hit a snag.

A lawyer for Barbara Grimm-Marshall and her family are upset that a trail plan for the development includes a trail alongside the north side of Berkshire Road.

Grimm-Marshall is the co-owner of Grimmway Farms, the world's largest grower, packer and shipper of fresh, processed and frozen carrots. She is the widow of Rod Grimm.

The family lives on 45 acres at the northeast corner of Berkshire and Buena Vista roads, and they want the intended public trail to be moved. They want it on the south side of Berkshire Road.

"It is probably not productive to speculate why the applicant tries to push the trail off their property onto other people's property," lawyer Thomas Fallgatter wrote to the city. "It seems blatantly unreasonable and unfair."

Notification change

The commission will vote on whether the city should change its notification process when new developments are proposed.

The proposed text would require a developer to post a 4-by-8-foot sign on their property at least 20 days but no more than 60 days before a public hearing.

Posting requirements have been discussed by city officials since 2003, but have never been enacted.

The revised ordinance is similar to Palmdale's requirements.

Privacy at stake?

Residents of a northeast neighborhood are opposed to a 310-house development that might include two-story homes that provide future neighbors the chance to peek into their neighbors' yards.

Porter-Robertson Engineering is submitting to the commission a tract map that contains 310 lots on 84 acres located about one half-mile south of the southwest corner of Miramonte Drive and Highway 178.

City planners have recommended that the commission approve the project, where its zoning allows two-story homes -- with shallow backyards -- to be built near already existing one-story homes.

At least three nearby residents have protested the possibility of two-story homes, worried that future neighbors will invade their privacy.

Making the air shipshape

Maersk's cleaner fuel is reducing pollution

George Raine, Chronicle Staff Writer

Thursday, October 5, 2006

Maersk Line, the largest containerized cargo carrier in the world, is taking the lead in cutting deadly air pollution at California's ports.

In March, Maersk became the first shipping company to begin switching the engines on its vessels to cleaner-burning fuel as they approached California harbors.

Now the captains of the 35 Maersk ships that call at California ports start to use the cleaner fuel in main and auxiliary engines when 24 miles out of port.

As a result, Maersk has substantially reduced emissions that drift ashore. And today at a news conference at the Port of Oakland, the company will announce that it is doing better than projected at cutting harmful air pollution.

That will be applauded by environmental advocates who commonly have lambasted shipping companies for contributing to deadly pollution near the state's giant ports of Los Angeles, Long Beach and Oakland.

Cleaning the air around those ports is no small matter.

The California Air Resources Board in April found that approximately 2,400 premature deaths each year can be attributed to the movement of goods at ports, the result of air fouled by diesel-powered ships, locomotives, trucks, harbor craft and cargo handling equipment. That pollution contributes to roughly 62,000 cases of asthma and 5,100 cases of bronchitis every year, the air board calculates.

In December, the air board proposed a regulation to take effect in January 2007 requiring approaching cargo vessels to reduce emissions beginning 24 miles out at sea. The state said it

can save more than 1,500 lives each year by 2020 when fuel and other port anti-pollution measures are implemented.

The regulation requires switching only auxiliary engines to low-sulfur fuel. Maersk went beyond that, switching all engines to less-polluting fuel.

As a result, the company says, it expects to remove some 400 tons of vessel-related emissions annually at California ports beginning immediately.

"We as the company advancing this are committed to the environment. And, as the leader in the industry, it sends a message that we are committed to making a difference," said Eugene Pentimonti, senior vice president of government relations at Maersk.

"Normally we criticize. Not this time," said Diane Bailey, a scientist with the Natural Resources Defense Council in San Francisco. "Maersk has taken a real leadership role on clean fuel."

Cargo vessel engines use what is called bunker fuel, which is very dense and heavy, and has a high sulfur content. It's "one step before tar," Pentimonti said.

Maersk projected that switching to low-sulfur fuel would cut emissions of particulate matter by 73 percent, sulfur dioxide by 92 percent and nitrogen oxide by 10 percent. The company said Wednesday that it is doing better than those projections.

"I applaud them because they have gone beyond the regulation. That is something no other company has done," said Jerry Martin, spokesman for the California Air Resources Board. "Maersk is among the biggest shipping companies in the state and they set a great example. For California, this is a big step forward."

The air board uses a standard of 24 miles from shore in several anti-pollution initiatives. It was developed after finding emissions on land from ships that far out to sea.

Maersk uses the low-sulfur fuel when its vessels approach the state's ports, while they are docked and until they are 24 miles out to sea.

No major adjustments to ship engines were necessary for the fuel switch. The change is costing Maersk from \$2 million to \$3 million annually in increased fuel costs for 35 vessels, the company said.

Meanwhile, the Pacific Merchant Shipping Association, a shipping industry trade group, questions whether the state has jurisdiction so far out to sea, said John McLaurin, its president. Maersk will not be a party to a possible industry challenge of the state regulation, Pentimonti said.

Some Baltic and Black Sea ports already require engines to be fueled by low-sulfur fuel, said Lee Kindberg, director of Maersk's environment, health and safety division.

Cargo ships that steam into Oakland and Los Angeles-Long Beach are backed by winds that blow pollution on shore. The problem worsens as trade grows and ship traffic increases. Maersk's business this year is up 10 percent over last year and is predicted to rise 9 percent in each of the next three or four years, Pentimonti said.

"California is fortunate to have a thriving economy and to serve as a national gateway for goods movement," said Dr. Robert Sawyer, the air board chairman. "However, we also need to address the problems that accompany this growth. Protecting the health of Californians must be at the top of our agenda."

Shipping's health impact

This chart displays the estimated premature deaths and other health outcomes that can be associated with particulate matter and ozone exposure from port-related goods movement and other port activities for 2005. It's estimated that there have been 360,000 lost workdays and 1.1 million school absence days due to these effects.

830 - Hospital admissions (cardiovascular causes)

2,000 - Hospital admissions (respiratory causes)

2,400 - Premature deaths

5,100 - Acute bronchitis

62,000 - Asthma and other lower respiratory symptoms

Container ship company to cut emissions

By Paul T. Rosynsky

Tri-Valley Herald, Thursday, October 5, 2006

OAKLAND — Every day, a half-dozen container ships sail to the Port of Oakland spewing black soot into the air as they burn tons of sulfur-filled bunker fuel.

The fuel, made from the leftovers of refined crude oil, has a sulfur content of 3 percent and is one of the major contributors to pollution at the state's port complexes.

But one shipping firm hopes to change this dirty tradition.

With an eye toward new state regulations and awareness of the growing political determination to reduce air pollution at ports, Maersk Inc. will announce today the completion of a pilot project to help reduce emissions.

Under the program, the company's 35 ships that call on California ports will no longer burn bunker fuel as they approach the coast. As soon as they get within 24 miles of the coast, the ships will switch to a cleaner burning, low-sulfur fuel.

The move will remove about 400 tons of emissions from the state's air each year by reducing sulfur oxides by 92 percent, particulate matter by 73 percent and nitrogen oxides by 10 percent.

"We are not overlooking our obligations," said Gene Pentimonti, senior vice president of government relations for Maersk Inc. "We are concerned about some of the emissions problems that are here, in a more severe way than any other place in the United States."

State ports have long been at the center of efforts to reduce pollution. With hundreds of diesel trucks moving through them each day and dozens of ships

at their docks, ports are a main source of the state's airpollution problems.

While programs to reduce

pollution from port vehicles have made headway, getting companies to reduce ship emissions has been tougher.

Even after ships dock, they continue to burn fuel to power auxiliary engines that keep the lights on while containers are loaded and unloaded from the cargo hold.

The continued burning of bunker fuel in auxiliary engines has angered many environmentalists, who argue ships could use other sources of power to keep the lights on.

They've suggested everything from changing fuels to having ships hook up to local electric sources while at the dock.

Until now, most shipping companies and ports had been resistant to change.

Many argued changes would be too costly and hamper the state's ability to attract shipping.

But a state Air Resources Board decision to institute new regulations requiring ships to burn fuel with .5 percent sulfur when at the docks has many scrambling to find a solution.

Maersk found its solution earlier this year after more than a year of studies.

The company, a subsidiary of world shipping giant A.P. Moller, found that it would only cost \$2 million to \$3 million more a year to burn the lower-sulfur fuel as their ships approach the docks.

In addition, the company does not have to retrofit engines or change holding tanks on ships to accommodate the new fuel.

Maersk's program goes a couple of steps further than the new requirements as well. The fuel Maersk will burn has .2 percent sulfur content, and the company will begin to use it 24 miles from the coast, not just at the docks.

Mike Scheible, deputy executive officer with the Air Resources Board, heralded the company's decision to move forward before regulations are enacted.

"It demonstrates the economics are not so horrible," he said. "They stepped out and showed that they are willing to do something on their own."

And the fact the company's new program will surpass the regulations could start a trend that will soon have all ships approaching California burning the new fuel, he said.

"Look, the biggest shipper in the state found out how to do it," Scheible said. "It's a very worthy program."

Although Maersk has outfitted all of its California-bound vessels with the fuel, it has no plans at this point to use the fuel for its entire fleet.

But it is working on other technologies, including using catalytic converters, to ensure its ships will not produce as much emissions.

"The industry is looking to make sure that we get some performance standards and do everything we can to bring down emissions," Pentimonti said.

Clean-Air Settlement to Cost ADM \$1.35M

In the N.Y. Times, S.F. Chronicle and other papers, Wednesday, October 4, 2006

Chicago (AP) -- Archer Daniels Midland Co. must pay \$1.35 million under a settlement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency resolving allegations that it violated federal clean-air violations, the EPA said Wednesday.

The settlement requires ADM to undertake two environmental projects totaling \$1.02 million and pay a \$325,000 penalty over allegations involving its Vitamin E production facility in Decatur, Ill., where the company is based.

The EPA said ADM violated federal hazardous air pollutant regulations for pharmaceutical manufacturing by failing to do equipment testing, monitoring and reporting. It said the company also violated rules to protect stratospheric ozone by, among other things, failing to track leaks of chlorofluorocarbon refrigerant from chillers at the facility.

The agency discovered some of the alleged violations during an inspection of the plant last December, and said ADM disclosed others after the inspection.

Under the settlement, ADM must install 58 seal-less pumps and 15 seal-less agitators at the facility at a cost of at least \$1 million and must also undertake an enhanced leak detection and repair project there. The two projects are designed to reduce emissions of hazardous air pollutants not caught by an air pollution control system, called fugitive emissions.

ADM said the agreement did not relate to emission violations but focused on ADM's testing and reporting procedures.

"At no time has the EPA alleged violations regarding actual emissions," spokeswoman Jessie McKinney said in a statement. "The agreement will bring the testing and reporting procedures at this facility in line with the new federal guidelines."

WHO Calls for Improved Air Quality

By The Associated Press

N.Y. Times, Thursday, October 5, 2006

MANILA, Philippines (AP) -- The [World Health Organization](#) on Thursday called on governments to improve air quality in their cities, saying air pollution prematurely kills two million people a year, with more than half the deaths in developing countries.

Reducing the kind of pollution known as PM10 -- or particulate matter with particles of smaller than 10 micrometers -- could save as many as 300,000 lives every year, according to a statement issued by the WHO's regional office in Manila.

PM10 pollution is caused primarily by the burning of fossil and other types of fuel. Its particles are too small to be filtered in the nose and throat, and they settle in the lungs where they cause health problems.

The WHO said that in many cities, the average annual levels of PM10 exceed 70 micrograms per cubic meter (yard) while recent new WHO guidelines called for lowering that level to less than 20 micrograms to prevent ill health.

That could cut the deaths from air pollution by about 15 percent, said Maria Neira, the WHO director for public health and the environment.

It could also cut the global burden of disease from respiratory infections, [heart disease](#) and lung [cancer](#), she said.

Particulate matter pollution is considered the biggest health risk. But the WHO Air Quality Guidelines also recommended lowering the daily allowed limits for ozone from 120 down -- under previous WHO guidelines -- to 100 micrograms per cubic meter (yard).

That represents a challenge especially for developing countries with numerous sunny days when ozone concentrations reach the highest levels, causing respiratory problems and [asthma](#) attacks, WHO said.

The guidelines also cut the sulfur dioxide limits from 125 to 20 micrograms per cubic meter (yard).

Many countries around the world do not have regulations for air pollution, which makes control virtually impossible.

WHO said the new guidelines, which were established after worldwide consultation with more than 80 leading scientists, provide the basis for all countries to build their own air quality standards and policies supporting health.

[Sacramento Bee, Guest Commentary, Thursday, October 5, 2006](#)

Another view: Move to cleaner air, cheaper energy

By Terry Tamminen - Special to the Bee

California has an oil addiction. As every self-help professional knows, to break an addiction you have to face the problem and admit you're hooked. The arguments against Proposition 87 sound as hollow as an alcoholic promising to stop after just one more drink.

Proposition 87 would develop cleaner, cheaper fuels for our vehicles and build new energy industries and jobs here at home, in places such as Stockton, Salinas and San Diego.

Despite valiant efforts and significant improvement for decades, the state still has the nation's worst air pollution, causing asthma, lung disease, cancer and crop damage, and exacerbating the conditions that result in devastating forest fires. Central Valley communities suffer most: One in five San Joaquin Valley children have asthma so badly they miss school regularly. California also has the nation's highest gas prices, which hurt families with modest incomes and small businesses the hardest.

But all that is a mere down payment on the true cost of our oil addiction. Using conservative estimates, Americans pay nearly \$10 per gallon when all of the costs that oil companies impose on taxpayers are added in -- health care, lost tax revenues, pollution cleanup, tax breaks and a host of other subsidies. Federal tax breaks and other direct subsidies cost American taxpayers as much as \$113 billion every year. The federal 2005 Energy Policy Act delivered another \$6 billion in subsidies to the world's richest corporations just as oil company profits hit record levels.

Yes, we "addicts" have a problem, but we didn't get hooked alone. Just as tobacco companies lied to the public and regulators about the harms of smoking for decades, oil and auto companies have done likewise. As a result, today it is the particulate matter from burning diesel fuel in buses and trucks that penetrates deep into our lungs, causing respiratory illness and premature death in the thousands.

So a few brave addicts have admitted the problem and proposed one modest step toward solving it -- Proposition 87. But the oil companies are up to their old tricks, bankrolling a massive campaign with ads that TV station KGO called "misleading" and "not accurate." Consumers would pay nothing under Proposition 87 -- the money to invest in these new alternative fuels would come from enormous oil company profits instead.

Moreover, the authority charged with meeting Proposition 87's goal of reducing our oil dependence by 25 percent over the next 10 years would be subject not only to existing state conflict of interest and accountability laws, but also to tougher additional rules enacted by the proposition. Every dime would be audited by outside accountants, the state Controller's Office and an independent citizens' committee. All clean energy investments would be awarded through a public, competitive bidding process.

Proposition 87 presents a simple choice to California voters -- do we keep doing things the oil company way, with rising gas prices, more air pollution and increased imports of foreign oil, or do we move forward with cleaner air and cheaper energy with Proposition 87? Or put another way, do we admit our addiction and face up to the problem, or do we take another shot of petroleum and pass out under the nearest gas pump?

About the writer:

Terry Tamminen is the former secretary of the California Environmental Protection Agency and a policy adviser and author. His book "Lives Per Gallon: The True Cost of our Oil Addiction," will be released soon.

[Sacramento Bee, Guest Commentary, Thursday, October 5, 2006](#)

Work together for a sunnier future through solar use

By Kevin Hanley

The old paradigm for energy purchasers didn't require a lot of thinking. You bought power from the big utility in your region and didn't ask too many questions about price, reliability or the impact on regional air quality. But that is beginning to change. We have seen steep increases in the price of energy generated from fossil fuels, unstable oil-producing nations controlled by dictatorships and fanaticism and the returning threat of blackouts in California.

Living in the Central Valley and Sierra foothills impels us to be concerned about the burning of fossil fuels and the impact on regional air quality. The status quo ante is no longer acceptable. There must be a better way.

The new paradigm for energy purchasers includes a more expansive bottom line that is congruent with all our values. It is not just about price. Of course, the price of energy is important. Low-cost power is good for creating jobs and wealth.

But we also want a more dependable energy supply. The more that we can generate power from local sources and from renewable forms of energy, the less dependent we are on unstable foreign nations and financially shaky utility companies.

Lastly, we also want more clean energy. Like any other asset in our portfolio, we must strive to improve the air that we breathe every day, rather than treat it like it has no value.

Momentum is increasing for implementing this new energy paradigm in Placer County. Several weeks ago, many city and county officials gathered at Roseville's Civic Center to hear an impressive presentation on the city's aggressive solar energy program.

The city is in the initial stages of developing incentives to meet a goal of 10 percent to 20 percent of all new homes being built with solar panels. It also intends to install solar panels on all city buildings. There are various state and federal tax incentives and loan programs to implement these kinds of ideas.

During the question-and-answer period, Dave Breninger, executive director of the Placer County Water Agency, mentioned that solar panels installed on some of the agency's buildings are paying off much sooner than the 15-year projection. That because of the rapid rise in energy costs for fossil fuels.

Breninger suggested to the assembled city and county officials that local governments in the region work together, perhaps even forming a collaborative, to maximize the cost-effectiveness of purchasing and installing solar panels on government buildings.

That's a good idea. We need to explore it.

Earlier this year, the county Board of Supervisors approved a \$1.74 million contract with a private company to install solar-power generation systems at several buildings in the DeWitt Center. Currently, 160 photovoltaic panels on the southern side of the Larry Oddo Finance Administration Building at DeWitt helps fulfill electricity needs. Auburn-based companies such as Ceronix and Nello Oil are winning awards for their aggressive installation of solar panels on the roofs of their buildings.

I believe the city of Auburn needs to fully analyze whether we can install state-of-the-art solar photovoltaic panels on city buildings. We should look at whether we should implement such a program on our own or in collaboration with other local governments in our region.

Would the increased use of solar power help us save Auburn taxpayers money through lower Pacific Gas and Electric Co. bills? Would the increased use of solar power help us pay for the expected rising costs in the future to disinfect wastewater as we move toward using power-consuming ultraviolet lamps instead of chlorine? Would the increased use of solar power help us increase the reliability of providing city services 24/7 to residents?

We have many talented and smart people in our region. Many of them are problem-solvers. I believe the burgeoning consensus is that we need to apply new thinking to secure our energy supplies and maintain our quality of life. And that consensus is getting stronger every day. Now is the time to work cooperatively toward a sunnier future.

About the writer: Kevin Hanley has served on the Auburn City Council for nearly four years. He can be reached at hanleykn@jps.net

[Visalia Times-Delta, Editorial, Thursday, Oct. 5, 2006:](#)

Pass the state transportation measures

California's highway system needs just as much attention as our local roads, and the remedy is much the same: spend some money.

We have recently endorsed Measure R, the half-cent sales tax addition for transportation projects in Tulare County. It only follows logically that we also urge voters to approve the two statewide ballot measures for transportation, Propositions 1A and 1B.

Proposition 1A would require the state to spend money collected on sales tax on gasoline on transportation projects.

Proposition 1B would borrow about \$20 billion to build new transportation projects that would relieve traffic congestion and improve air quality.

We understand there are drawbacks to both measures: Proposition 1A would reduce lawmakers' flexibility to adopt a budget. But the voters have already approved the sales tax on gas as a constitutional amendment. This proposition merely restricts lawmakers' ability to make exceptions.

As for the transportation bond, most of the highway projects would go to the major population areas in Northern and Southern California. However, state infrastructure is a statewide issue, and passage of this bond would provide matching funding for some of the projects scheduled in Measure R.

California needs to get its infrastructure in order if it is going to sustain itself as an economic engine in the future. Those projects cannot be accomplished on a pay-as-go basis from the general fund, and they need to begin now.

Voters should approve Propositions 1A and 1B to get California moving again.

[Modesto Bee, Letter to the Editor, Thursday, October 5, 2006](#)

Now I understand asthma, allergies

I have suffered from allergies and asthma for most of my life. Never has it been as bad as when I moved to Newman. Your article "Valley reaches air milestone" (Sept. 21, Page B-1) really caught my attention. I have lived from San Jose to the high desert of Nevada, but my allergies and asthma have never been this bad, and now I know why.

I never really considered how many different factors are contributing to the poor air quality in the Central Valley. Vehicle exhaust is obvious, but ammonia from dairies and dust from agriculture are pollutants that would never have occurred to me.

I can breathe a little easier knowing that the San Joaquin Valley Pollution Control District is working hard to meet federal air quality standards. However, I don't see the air ever being truly clean because the dairies and agriculture will always be here.

NUNO MIGUEL CORREIA, Newman