

Houston forms exclusive severe-smog club with LA

The Associated Press

In the Sacramento Bee, Washington Post and other papers, Friday, October 03, 2008

HOUSTON -- Houston has joined Los Angeles to become the second place in the nation classified as having a severe smog problem, the Environmental Protection Agency said Thursday.

The EPA reclassified the smog problem in the eight-county Houston area from moderate so that the region has an extra nine years to meet federal health standards set in 1997. The state was supposed to meet the requirements in 2010 but now has until 2019.

The EPA no longer considers the 1997 standard safe for public health, but agency spokeswoman Catherine Milbourn said progress toward it will protect the public and bring regions closer to meeting stricter requirements.

Texas Gov. Rick Perry had asked the agency for the extension last year in a move praised by the business association Greater Houston Partnership.

"The partnership believes that improvement in air quality is important in order to maintain a robust, viable economic climate and to improve public health in the region," spokeswoman Christina Garza said.

But clean air advocates were skeptical.

"What are we doing here?" said Matthew Tejada, executive director of the Galveston-Houston Association for Smog Prevention, in a Houston Chronicle story for Thursday's editions. "We've just done a bureaucratic dance, and we're not any closer to clean air."

State Assembly candidates contrast sharply on issues confronting Merced area.

By Jonah Owen Lamb

Merced Sun-Star, Friday, October 03, 2008

Trains and taxes were the two words at last night's debate that divided Democratic Assemblywoman Cathleen Galgiani and her Republican opponent Jack Mobley, a Merced businessman.

The debate in the Merced County Administration building between the two candidates vying for state Assembly District 17 covered a wide variety of topics provided by audience questions: Green jobs, water shortages, air pollution, affordable housing and health care were just a few.

And the candidates offered views from two different ends of the political spectrum.

Galgiani, who is fighting to hold her Assembly seat for a second term, rolled out her legislative record and bipartisan legislation as her strong points. But again and again she brought up the proposed high-speed rail line, up for vote in Proposition 1A, which she had a hand in creating. In fact, it seemed a panacea to the region's problems.

"Bringing a high-speed train to California will solve a tremendous amount of our problems," said Galgiani in the debate.

Galgiani said the rail would bring hundreds of thousands of green jobs, reduce pollution from car traffic and attract businesses.

Mobley, who opposes the rail plan, pulled out the GOP playbook as his solution to the region's problems: lower taxes, less regulation and less government. He said that these are the barriers to job creation and economic growth in a region where the main problems stem from its high unemployment rate.

"We have to get away from taxing our citizens to death in California," Mobley said.

When the debate turned to the subject of priorities, Galgiani pointed to the Valley's shortage of doctors. She said the solution would be to speed up the process of opening a medical school at UC Merced, which would bring more physicians to the area.

Mobley's priorities, on the other hand, were creating jobs through tax cuts and solving the state's water shortage through reservoir construction, conservation and reduced environmental protections for fish.

Both candidates agreed that there is a problem with health care for the poor and pointed to local hospitals that are closing their doors because of overuse by the uninsured.

But their solutions differed. Mobley, while making it clear that he wanted health care for all, said he didn't want businesses to have to foot the bill. He thought poor people should contribute more to their own health care costs.

Galgiani said expanding the Healthy Families Program could be one way to alleviate the crisis in health care for the poor.

They did not disagree on all fronts, though. Both saw common cause in bringing more federal dollars to District 17 to alleviate the area's mortgage default crisis. You could say they saw eye-to-eye when it came to one kind of train: a federal one filled with tax dollars.

The debate, which included a forum between two candidates for Merced County supervisor, was sponsored by the NAACP, The League of Women Voters and the Merced County Chamber of Commerce.

Vetoes anger many legislators

By Matthew Yi, San Francisco Chronicle

In S.F. Chronicle, L.A. Daily News and other papers, Friday, October 03, 2008

SAN FRANCISCO - A week after he signed the Legislature's tardiest budget in state history, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger set his own record: He vetoed the largest percentage of bills this year of any California governor in four decades.

Schwarzenegger declined to sign 415 of the 1,187 bills that had landed on his desk by Tuesday's midnight deadline, a rate of 35 percent, by far the highest since state officials began keeping that statistic when Ronald Reagan was governor.

Some lawmakers said Wednesday they are so angry that working with him next year could be a challenge.

"I think he's going to have a tough time regaining credibility in the Legislature," said state Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter.

Assembly Speaker Karen Bass, D-Los Angeles, said she's heard complaints from many lawmakers.

"I am concerned about how we work together," she said, adding that she hopes the interest of Californians would outweigh bitterness between lawmakers and Schwarzenegger.

Aaron McLear, a spokesman for Schwarzenegger, said "the governor weighed each bill on its merits and acted accordingly."

In August, with the budget impasse dragging on, Schwarzenegger threatened to veto all bills sent to him until the Legislature approved a budget. That happened on Sept. 19 - 81 days into the fiscal year that began July 1.

In interviews with The Chronicle and others, Schwarzenegger has said he wants to go after big-ticket measures and is not interested in approving what he called "Mickey Mouse bills."

He seemed to follow that logic in the past week when he signed high-profile legislation such as SB375 by Sen. Darrell Steinberg, D-Sacramento, which sets regional goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by discouraging sprawl.

Schwarzenegger vetoed many bills that sought to add new fees, such as a measure that would have added a \$60 fee per shipping container to raise money to clean up air pollution from the state's largest ports, including Oakland's.

The governor also vetoed several health care bills, arguing that the state needs comprehensive health-care reform, a goal he has failed to achieve.

Political pundits said Schwarzenegger's high veto rate shows the disconnect between him and the Democratic-controlled Legislature, which has often butted heads with the Republican governor.

"It certainly shows that the Legislature and the governor's office are not working well together," said Bob Stern, president of the Center for Governmental Studies, a nonprofit research center in Los Angeles.

Many lawmakers were livid in the wake of the veto bloodbath, saying they were especially angered by the governor's use of a generic veto message for about one-third of the rejected bills. It read:

"The historic delay in passing the 2008-2009 State Budget has forced me to prioritize the bills sent to my desk at the end of the year's legislative session. Given the delay, I am only signing bills that are the highest priority for California. This bill does not meet that standard and I cannot sign it at this time."

Florez said the statement shows the governor is "politically lazy. I mean, to write a generic veto message that applied to more than 100 bills."

Assemblyman Ted Lieu, D-Torrance, said it appeared that Schwarzenegger "didn't even read the bills ... and to me, it's dereliction of duty."

But while the late budget might be partly to blame for forcing the governor to face a heap of legislation in the last two weeks, he had a hand in receiving nearly 900 bills in short order after his blanket veto threat nearly two months ago.

Legislators responded by holding on to hundreds of bills rather than sending them down to the governor's office on the first floor of the state Capitol.

But lawmakers said Schwarzenegger could have started considering the bills before they landed on his desk because legislative staffers typically work with the governor's staff even as the measures wade through the Legislature.

"The governor's staff must have been in some sort of hibernation period and somehow did not have recollection of the bills that the governor had received," Florez said.

Controlled burn may mean smoke near Tahoe City

Modesto Bee, Friday, October 3, 2008

TAHOE CITY, Calif. — The U.S. Forest Service plans to conduct a controlled burn at Lake Tahoe to improve forest health on 115 acres of national forest near Tahoe City, Calif.

Agency officials say the prescribed fire treatment will be used to remove understory growth near Burton Creek State Park on California State Highway 89.

If weather conditions cooperate, the underburn could begin as soon as Friday. Crews plan to conduct the burn in units of 30 to 40 acres at a time, beginning at the top of the slope and working down.

The operation will consist of low-to-moderate intensity fire and will occur only on days allowed by the Placer County Air Pollution Control District.

A charged debate over Prop. 7 renewable energy plan

The measure would require utilities in the state to get half their power from renewable energy by 2025. Foes say it would actually hamper electricity production from alternate sources.

By Nancy Vogel, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer
L.A. Times, Friday, Oct. 3, 2008

SACRAMENTO -- Proposition 7 on the November ballot aims to hurry the day when more of California's electricity comes from windmills, solar panels and other oil-free sources, requiring the state's utilities to get half their power from renewable energy by 2025.

But it would actually hinder renewable electricity production, according to an unusual coalition of opponents that includes environmental groups, solar and wind companies that may appear to stand to profit from the measure, and the state's three biggest private utilities.

Existing law requires private utilities such as Southern California Edison to increase their renewable electricity by at least 1% a year until they reach 20% in 2010. All are falling behind. Last year, nearly 16% of the power Edison delivered to its customers was renewable.

Proposition 7 would change the law to require an annual increase of 2% a year. It would set targets of 40% by 2020 and 50% by 2025. The measure would extend the requirements to publicly owned utilities, such as the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power.

It would also fast-track the permitting of large renewable-power plants.

The initiative says it would raise electricity rates no more than 3%, although there is no language to enforce a price cap.

Proposition 7 was paid for almost entirely by Arizona billionaire Peter Sperling, son of the founder of the private University of Phoenix system. Sperling, who owns a home in Santa Barbara, is "deeply interested in the global warming and climate change debate," according to campaign spokesman Steve Hopcraft.

So far, the sole donors to the "yes" campaign are Sperling and former San Francisco Supervisor Jim Gonzalez, a political consultant who worked in 2000 on a drug treatment initiative campaign to which Sperling donated. Sperling and Gonzalez have contributed nearly \$7.4 million.

S. David Freeman, who has run some of the nation's biggest public utilities and is now president of the commission that oversees the Port of Los Angeles, strongly backs Proposition 7.

"As the climatologists advise us," Freeman told legislators at a Capitol hearing recently, "it's what we do in the next few years that's going to make the difference as to whether we have irreparable damage from global warming or not."

Opponents, who have sunk nearly \$28 million of shareholder money into a "no" campaign, say the measure is a false promise.

"There is not one single renewable energy developer that supports this proposition," said Laura Wiseland, energy analyst for the Union of Concerned Scientists. "That should tell you something."

The "no" side has been airing television ads statewide since August, some featuring solar company executives saying they will be shut out of the market if Proposition 7 passes. Backers of the initiative launched their first television ad Wednesday, criticizing the utilities funding the "no" campaign.

The foes list three major problems.

They say the measure would punish the smallest clean-energy producers because their output would not be counted toward Proposition 7 goals.

"It's good intentions, bad execution," said Raju Yenamandra, director of sales for SolarWorld California Inc. of Camarillo, the country's largest maker of solar panels.

He said it has taken the solar industry a decade of work to make utilities comfortable integrating the five-kilowatt and half-megawatt solar plants that people and businesses can install on their

roofs. Those mini-generators don't require major transmission-line construction, work hardest at hot times when electricity demand is highest and are close to where the power is consumed.

"The significant advantages we have with our technology is all of the sudden being diminished by this particular proposition," said Yenamandra.

The people who wrote Proposition 7 say they never intended to shut out small generators and dispute the charge that the measure would do so. Government lawyers have interpreted the ballot measure both ways.

In August a Sacramento County judge called both interpretations plausible. He refused to prohibit opponents from saying in their ballot arguments that "Prop. 7 forces small wind and solar energy companies out of the market."

A second flaw, opponents say, is the way it would require utilities to buy renewable-generated electricity that costs up to 10% above market price. Current law does not require utilities to buy such power if it is priced above a market rate set by state regulators.

Electricity rates will rise if Proposition 7 passes, predicted Wiseland, who said it would "create perverse incentives for developers to price their products at 10% above the market price of electricity instead of their true cost."

The initiative could be changed only by a two-thirds vote of the Legislature, which Wiseland called a difficult obstacle.

"We all know that energy policy is extremely complex and policymakers need the ability to revisit and redefine implementation strategies," she said.

Gonzalez, who helped write Proposition 7 with a team of lawyers from the Manatt, Phelps & Phillips law firm, said the initiative would entice more renewable developers and spur competition, which would ultimately lower prices.

"If these renewable producers overbid," he said, "other producers who have been given the opportunity by Prop. 7 to build plants are going to underbid. It's simple economics."

Opponents also say Proposition 7 could exacerbate one of the biggest obstacles to renewable generation: a lack of transmission lines linking the desert, where wind and solar plants are most feasible, to coastal cities.

The initiative would shift some authority for permitting transmission lines from the Public Utilities Commission to the California Energy Commission, which could spur litigation and turf fights, said Jan Smutny-Jones, director of the Independent Energy Producers, a trade group.

"I can assure you that any lawyer worth their salt who wants to stop a transmission project is going to be all over this section," he said. "It's a confused mess, we don't know actually what it will do, and it's a problem."

Gonzalez argued that California's transmission capacity troubles have been 30 years in the making and must ultimately be fixed by the federal government, which oversees interstate power lines. The backers of renewable energy projects kick-started by Proposition 7 will push for federal action, he said.

"Prop. 7 will create a reason why to upgrade the transmission system," said Gonzalez.

Pa. tires-to-energy plant has new emissions plan

The Associated Press

Contra Costa Times, Friday, October 03, 2008

ERIE, Pa.—A company planning a \$300 million tires-to-energy plant in northwestern Pennsylvania has submitted a revised emissions plan to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

Erie Renewable Energy LLC wants to build the 90-megawatt power plant on the site of the former International Paper Co. site in Erie. Plant officials say they'll burn about 30 million tires a year to produce enough electricity to power up to 80,000 homes.

The company already submitted an emissions plan. But the DEP wanted a revision that took into account how air pollution dispersed in a plant built so close to Lake Erie.

A decision on issuing an air-quality permit for the plant remains months away.

Mesquite fertilizer plant terminates air permit

The Associated Press

Contra Costa Times, Friday, October 03, 2008

MESQUITE, N.M.—Managers of a chemical company that owns a fertilizer plant near Mesquite say they will terminate an air quality permit with the state Environment Department.

Ed Brister, director of regulatory compliance and engineering for Helena Chemical Corp., says a study the company paid for showed that emissions from the plant are well below state limits. He says the existing air quality permit is unnecessary.

State Environment Secretary Ron Curry says Helena has no authority to terminate its permit and calls the move baseless and audacious.

Curry says Helena is a flagrant violator of state and federal air quality laws.

Helena's fertilizer plant was issued a compliance order by the Environment Department in July alleging 11 violations of the state air quality act.

A Fumeless Delivery Truck Plies Hunts Point Streets

By Manny Fernandez

N.Y. Times, Friday, Oct. 3, 2008

An electric-powered truck is on view in the Bronx. (Photo: Smith Electric Vehicles)

Edward Taylor was driving through the thick of Manhattan on Thursday, in the middle of his morning deliveries, when he looked down at the gas gauge. "It's on zero," said Mr. Taylor, 46, "but don't worry."

Mr. Taylor was not alarmed because he had plugged in the truck for a few hours the day before. By the end of his run, driving boxes of fresh seafood from the Hunts Point section of the Bronx to three sites in Manhattan, Mr. Taylor had used only about 20 percent of his battery power.

No gas.

No oil.

Just battery power.

"We're not making any pollution," said Mr. Taylor, the owner of Down East Seafood in Hunts Point and the operator of New York City's first all-electric, emissions-free medium-duty delivery truck. "I mean, there's no fumes coming out of this truck."

On Thursday morning, Mr. Taylor made his first deliveries on the truck, which was a conventional gasoline-powered vehicle that was retrofitted. Painted green, naturally, it ran smoothly and virtually silently through the streets of Manhattan and the Bronx. It runs on sodium-nickel-chloride batteries and a 120-kilowatt induction motor. After being charged for about eight hours, it can drive up to 150 miles at a top speed of 50 m.p.h. with a 12,339-pound payload.

The truck will be on display on Friday at the Alternative Vehicle Technology Conference at Lehman College in the Bronx. The annual conference, sponsored by the City University of New York's Center for Sustainable Energy, will showcase more than two dozen electric, compressed natural gas and hybrid trucks, vans and buses.

Even in New York City, the land of the white box truck, the sight of a green exhaust-pipe-free truck with California plates, smelling of fish and being driven by a Brooklyn-born former geology student, has the ability to turn a few heads. But many did not notice Mr. Taylor's truck at all, which sat silently at stoplights.

"I guess if we were louder people would notice us," Mr. Taylor said at one stoplight.

The curious who took notice peppered him with detailed questions about the truck. A security guard at the United Nations, where Mr. Taylor delivered halibut, red grouper and Chilean sea bass, smiled and asked, "Is this Schwarzenegger from California's innovation?" (No.) Another man asked: "How many cylinders?" (None.)

"Yeah, but how much did it cost to charge it up?" a hotel doorman asked Mr. Taylor.

"Pennies," he told the man.

In fact, in terms of "fuel" and maintenance, the truck costs him an estimated 11 and a half cents a mile. Purchasing the vehicle, however, has been costly.

The truck costs about \$216,000, though Mr. Taylor is paying only a fraction of that cost. With help from the Center for Sustainable Energy, Mr. Taylor received a \$135,000 grant from the New York State Energy and Research Development Authority. He also received a loan for about \$34,000 from the Bronx Overall Economic Development Corp.

Smith Electric Vehicles, the England-based company that makes the truck, plans to have similar trucks available in America in early 2009, said Mark Aubry, North American sales manager for Smith.

Mr. Taylor was inspired to get the vehicle after he watched the documentary "Who Killed the Electric Car?" one Sunday afternoon. It was more than an environmental issue, he said. It was a health issue.

Thousands of trucks rumble through or around the South Bronx each day, many of them driving to and from the bustling wholesale produce, meat and fish markets in Hunts Point.

A study by researchers at New York University found that a group of South Bronx schoolchildren who were outfitted with air pollution monitors were exposed to high levels of particulate pollution, a portion of which is produced by diesel engine emissions. Studies have linked fine-particle pollution to respiratory problems, nonfatal heart attacks and aggravated asthma.

The borough has high truck traffic, and also high asthma rates. Its asthma hospitalization rate for boys and girls under 14 is 8.9 per 1,000 children, higher than that of any other borough, according to state health data. At the Children's Hospital at Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx, 14 percent of the admissions in 2007 were asthma-related.

"If everyone puts a couple of these on the road, it makes a difference," Mr. Taylor said of the all-electric truck.

With help from various agencies and officials, including Jose E. Serrano, the Bronx congressman, Mr. Taylor's truck arrived this week. It is only a test vehicle; the trucks Mr. Taylor will regularly use — he has ordered two — have not yet arrived.

Emissions-free vehicles, as Mr. Taylor discovered on Thursday, are in many ways no different from conventional vehicles. At one point, he sat in the truck, stuck in traffic behind some city garbage trucks. "Usually, I'd be a little tweaked by it, but it doesn't seem to bother me today," he said with a shrug.

[Fresno Bee column, Thursday, Oct. 2, 2008](#)

Greenhouse gas emissions will change the Fresno we know

By Bill McEwen

California's love affair with cars and big backyards is about to end. Why? Greenhouse gas emissions.

It has been a grand and enduring relationship, attracting millions of people to the Golden State since World War II and helping build a world-class economy.

But now the state's elected leaders -- trying to neutralize the effects of global warming and temper demand for natural resources -- say we must love something different: smaller houses, mass transit and sticking closer to home.

And if we're not willing to take up this new social and economic tango, then Sacramento will force us it upon us.

Gov. Schwarzenegger has signed into law a bill by Democrat Sen. Darrell Steinberg of Sacramento that encourages communities to plan regionally, increase housing densities and cut vehicle miles.

"Encourages" is an understatement. Under the law, cities that don't embrace smart-growth concepts can be denied a piece of the state's annual \$5 billion transportation pie. The impact: Cities that sprawl must pay for their own roads and freeways.

Another hammer in the effort to remake California is state Attorney General Jerry Brown, who could be the state's next governor -- again.

You might have missed this development, but Brown is using the powers of his office and a 2006 greenhouse gas emissions law to anoint himself as California's environmental top cop.

Last year, he sued San Bernardino County because its updated general plan didn't properly consider global warming.

And last month, Brown intervened in Stockton's planning efforts and, with the Sierra Club, forced revisions in the city's general plan to require 4,400 homes to be built downtown -- 3,000 by 2020.

Brown's critics say that he is unfairly curtailing property rights and waging war on suburbia.

Such criticisms surely will be applauded in the conservative San Joaquin Valley, which is home to many families that fled Los Angeles and San Francisco for a little more elbow room.

Considering the reality of California politics and the need for continued growth to sustain the economy, however, local leaders would be wise to avoid Brown's wrath. They should craft and approve plans that give us a competitive edge for transportation funding and help maximize resources.

Last year, Brown told Fresno County transportation planners in a letter that they must pay more attention to air quality and global warming.

He also told them to consider measures such as diamond lanes, transit vouchers and ride-sharing incentives -- and to withhold infrastructure funds for development on the urban fringe.

But Brown, in a news release trumpeting his success in Stockton, also cited Fresno as an example of a community that is reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

"I haven't talked to [Brown] directly, but his office knows that we're making an honest attempt to put together a new template," says Keith Bergthold, the city's interim planning director.

Bergthold also says that plans for the Southeast Growth Area -- intended to accommodate as many as 120,000 people -- will surpass guidelines for the new law signed Tuesday by the governor.

Fresno ahead of the planning curve?

These days, that sounds like the only position to be in.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Thursday, Oct. 2, 2008:](#)

A strong barrier to sprawl

SB 375 has the power to alter the way cities grow for the better.

A landmark bill tying local planning decisions to reductions in greenhouse gas emissions has been signed by the governor. It will have profound impacts on the way cities and counties do business, and it's good news for all of us who live -- and breathe -- in California.

Senate Bill 375 will require the California Air Resources Board to set vehicle emission reduction targets for each region. The planning agencies in cities and counties would develop their own strategies to achieve those goals.

The carrot-and-stick is transportation funds: Cities that meet the requirements will be first in line for the \$5 billion or so in annual state funding for transportation. Those locales that continue to promote sprawling developments will be left out.

That's a powerful impediment against the sprawl that consumes thousands of acres of the state's precious farm lands each year, and creates longer and more costly commutes for millions of Californians.

SB 375, pushed diligently for two years by Sen. Darrell Steinberg, D-Sacramento, is a natural and necessary follow-up to the historic greenhouse gas initiative, Assembly Bill 32, passed in 2006.

"This legislation constitutes the most sweeping revision of land use policies since Gov. Ronald Reagan signed the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)," Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said upon signing the bill.

The legislation will relax CEQA requirements for residential construction projects that help meet the regional greenhouse gas goals. That's a strong incentive for homebuilders to produce projects that are denser and closer to transit systems. That, in turn, helps to increase the demand for transit alternatives, which makes those pencil out better for local governments.

Under AB 32, the state must reduce heat-trapping greenhouse gases 25% by 2020. But, according to Caltrans, if development proceeds along existing patterns, we'll see an increase of 60% in the total number of miles driven by Californians in the next 20 years. Clearly, something has to give.

That something is sprawl. And between SB 375, higher gasoline prices and a growing sense on the part of the public that much of what we've been doing isn't going to work any longer, we may be witnessing the beginning of the end of the classic pattern of suburban growth spreading farther and farther from city cores.

Let's hope so. The cost of suburban sprawl has been traffic congestion, increased dependence on oil, air pollution and the decay of older urban areas, and it has become a price too onerous for communities to bear.

SB 375 won't stop growth. That's not its intent. But it gives us the opportunity -- and powerful incentives -- to chart a new course in land-use planning, and we should welcome that.

[Sacramento Bee Editorial, Friday, October 3, 2008](#)

Editorial: A big step to cut sprawl, clean air GOVERNOR SIGNS STEINBERG'S BILL THAT REWARDS SMARTER GROWTH

He's no longer in the movies, but Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger still likes to engage in some drama.

As of Friday, it appeared that Schwarzenegger was ready to veto Senate Bill 375, a bill that aims to align the state's land-use policies with its fight against global warming.

Had the governor vetoed it, his environmental legacy would have been scorched, and his relationship with the bill's author -- incoming Senate leader Darrell Steinberg of Sacramento -- would have gone up in smoke.

But sometime between Friday and Tuesday, Schwarzenegger came to his senses. Perhaps he stopped listening to aides who were making spurious claims about SB 375. Perhaps the bill's advocates did an effective job of countering those claims. Or perhaps, amid the frenzy of vetoing and signing hundreds of bills, the governor and his top lieutenants finally had a chance to read this legislation and understand its historic significance.

More than any previous law, Steinberg's seeks to address one of California's nagging flaws – its Wild West patterns of development. Housing separated from jobs has led to traffic jams, smog, long-distance commutes, loss of valuable farmland and transit systems that can't easily build ridership.

SB 375, by itself, won't stop this kind of "dumb growth." But it will discourage it – and help create more sustainable communities – with a mix of incentives and regulatory relief.

Under the bill, the California Air Resources Board will work with each of the state's 18 metro regions on land-use strategies – similar to Sacramento's "Blueprint" – to reduce future greenhouse gases from cars and trucks.

Each region will be assigned a target for emissions reductions. If those targets are tough – CARB will decide on them in September – they will constrain the march of sprawl and reward new communities that are walkable and designed for transit. Developers will get a long-desired break from the California Environmental Quality Act, but only if their projects are aligned with a regional strategy for reducing vehicle emissions.

In signing the bill Tuesday, Schwarzenegger praised Steinberg for bringing together disparate interests for a "historic state-local partnership." He noted how the bill will help California meet its greenhouse gas rules. "Spending less time on the road is the single-most powerful way for California to reduce its carbon footprint," he said in a press release.

Unfortunately, the governor continues to press for "cleanup" changes to the bill that are unneeded. In particular, the governor wants stand-alone commercial developments to get the same relief from CEQA that smart growth housing projects would enjoy. Local governments have already zoned too much land for such retail projects (because of the tax revenue they generate). No additional incentive is needed, and Steinberg should resist pressure to immediately create one.

On the other hand, Steinberg has agreed to work with the governor on other forms of cleanup legislation, including language that would put to rest claims that SB 375 could affect the rewarding of transportation bond funds.

Steinberg should keep that commitment. This bill has generated enough drama already.