

Report shows health savings with walkable growth

Staff reports

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Fresno County could save \$83 million a year in health costs alone with proper planning to reduce air pollution, according to a new report by the American Lung Association in California.

The report, Public Health at the Crossroads, explains how more compact and walkable development would likely lead to 4,600 fewer asthma attacks and other respiratory health impacts by 2035, along with 789 fewer lost work days.

For Fresno County, that means \$83 million less tax payers have to spend each year to deliver health care services to low income residents. Throughout the San Joaquin Valley, the total saved rises as high as \$416 million annually by 2035.

The report comes as Valley counties adopt growth policies to align development with SB 375.

Also known as the Sustainable Communities Act, SB 375 requires California counties to come up with blueprints for transportation and development that will limit vehicle use and greatly reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2035.

Some of the recommendations listed in the report calls on elected leaders to prioritize growth and transportation investments to serve existing downtowns and community cores rather than fringe areas and support a local government grant program to help make existing neighborhoods more walkable, bikeable and transit friendly.

The [American Lung Association in California](#) also wants Fresno County to support more efficient zero- and near-zero emission freight strategies and promote infill, transit oriented development and better access to transit as well as Bus Rapid Transit as cleaner air transportation options.

"Given the results of this report, the American Lung Association in California is calling on local leaders to move away from business-as-usual planning and toward a healthier vision," said Bonnie Holmes-Gen, senior director of Policy and Advocacy for the American Lung Association in California, in a release. "Air quality and health can improve greatly in communities that are more vibrant and active, with real walking, biking and transit opportunities."

[Bakersfield Californian Commentary, Sunday, March 23, 2014:](#)

Air board wants truckers to pay for its mistakes

By Lois Henry

There's the real world. And then there's the world the California Air Resources Board lives in.

In CARB's world it's perfectly acceptable to force trucking companies to buy expensive, shoddy equipment that not only doesn't work, but poses a serious safety risk and claim it's for the public good.

After having to, finally, recall that equipment, CARB now wants to make those companies pay a second time, with possibly some help from CARB, which created the problem in the first place.

The arrogance and incompetence of this massive agency never cease to amaze me.

In the real world, Jimmy Ehoff and his partners at Triple E Trucking operate their business on what's known as a budget . (Something CARB board members and regulators might want to look into.)

When CARB mandated that companies replace pre-2007 model trucks or retrofit them with filters to cut particulate matter (PM) from their emissions, the Triple E partners sharpened their pencils and worked out a way to pay for this expensive new regulation over time.

Because they jumped onto the compliance bandwagon early, in the summer of 2011, they earned a "one-for-one credit" from CARB. That means for every truck they retrofitted with PM filters, they could defer

retrofitting or replacing another truck until 2020 or 2023, depending on the engine model year. The object was to strike a balance between money and time.

They retrofitted 24 of their 48 trucks with the PM filters at a cost of \$340,000. That money came straight out of their pockets because CARB said they didn't qualify for any grants.

That's OK, they figured, since they had until 2020 or 2023, they could pay off the retrofit bill and work toward building up enough capital to start replacing the trucks that had been deferred on the one-for-one credit.

Even so, they anticipated having to downsize by 10 or 12 trucks, Ehoff told me. There was no way they'd be able to replace all 24.

"We figured we'd drop down and then work our way back to buying a few more trucks over time," he said. "That was the plan."

But Triple E forgot to factor CARB incompetence into its planning.

CARB had certified a number of PM filters by different makers. The top recommended model was the Cleaire LongMile (see: expensive, shoddy and unsafe above).

That's the model Triple E bought.

After that, the partners got back to work hauling gravel and road base.

"We're just a couple of Okies doing the best we can to run a business," Ehoff told me in his methodical, plainspoken way. They don't have a compliance officer to watch every move by CARB.

"Heck, we don't even have a human resources department."

Since they were busy working, they missed the news back in 2011 when a Washington State Department of Natural Resources investigation pinned the blame for a 3,600-acre fire in rural Washington that destroyed 100 structures and cost \$5.2 million on a Cleaire LongMile filter.

Then in May 2012 a representative for Cummins West, then Cleaire's parent company, showed up at Triple E and began removing the filters.

Triple E wasn't told the filters were being recalled. They were just told someone would be contacting them about replacements. To date, they've never received any follow up contact.

A few months later, in August 2012, the Cleaire filter was blamed for another brush fire. Then in September 2012 CARB announced Cleaire was voluntarily recalling the filters. A month later, CARB suspended all sales and installations of Cleaire filters.

In January 2013, Cleaire went bankrupt.

Ehoff said he was told of the bankruptcy. And again, a CARB representative told Triple E someone would contact them. Again, no one did.

(Cleaire is not the only filter causing problems. Truckers have long complained to CARB, blaming various filters for engine failures and other problems. CARB has shrugged off those complaints, blaming the engines.)

Ehoff began pecking away at the CARB monolith, trying to get answers.

He went to a "sub" CARB board meeting in Fresno this past December and brought up the Cleaire situation, along with a few other things he had on his mind.

He was told it was "being looked into."

Finally, on March 12, he got hold of a regulation change that will be considered at CARB's meeting in Sacramento on April 24.

That's where he discovered that CARB's proposed "fix" to the Cleaire disaster is to give companies like his, that have already paid once for defective filters, five years from the date of the recall to pony up and either buy another bunch of filters, or replace those trucks.

Wow, five whole years? How kind.

For Triple E, the delicate money/time balance it had worked out will be completely blown.

That's when Ehoff called me.

"It's too ridiculous to contemplate," he said. "We're still trying to gear up to comply with all our other trucks and now they're telling us the ones we've already done we're going to have to do again? It's impossible."

Adding insult to injury, CARB is also proposing to give smaller fleets even more time to comply with the new regulations.

Large fleets had to comply with the new rules by 2012, small fleets by 2013. Small fleets received an extension, taking them into 2014, and now another extension is being considered.

Ehoff didn't want to throw anyone under the bus. But the fact is, he competes with small-fleet companies that haven't had to lay out the kind of cash Triple E has. It's unfair.

"We wanted to do the right thing," he said. "We bought the top of the line filter. We complied early. And now we're being punished."

He's been trying to find out how many other companies are in the same spot. Seems like a simple question.

Actually, it's one I first asked CARB nearly a year ago when I heard about the recall. I was told then that "while Cleaire had a significant market share, we cannot say what the precise number of Cleaire retrofits were."

This time around I was told no one had time to find the answer. Oh brother.

CARB requires trucking companies to register everything but the material in the seat coverings on every truck they own, that includes the type of PM filter installed on the truck.

CARB clearly has access to that information.

In fact, last July the board approved a plan to spend up to \$6.3 million of Proposition 1B funds to replace one of the parts on the filters for "roughly 1,600 trucks" that had installed the faulty Cleaire filters. It wasn't clear how much paying for that part would take off the overall cost of replacement.

The California Trucking Association testified at that July hearing that it was concerned a part replacement wasn't adequate for many of those companies that had installed the Cleaires and insisted those companies should be "made whole."

Either way, knowing the numbers is important, particularly if the goal of all this malarkey has anything remotely to do with clean air.

As Ehoff points out, CARB has already allowed small fleets to "run dirty" longer and is contemplating giving them even more time. The number of trucks that make up small fleets is likely far more than the number of Cleaire trucks.

In terms of the greater impact on air quality, the poor schmucks caught up in the CARB-created Cleaire debacle aren't even a drop in the bucket.

The solution, to Ehoff, is simple:

"I want either the time I already paid for, a free replacement filter, or \$340,000," he said. "If I had tested and approved this filter, then OK, that'd be on me. But they did it. So it should be on them."

I agree.

But this is CARB we're talking about, the same people who gave us MTBE, a chemical it mandated be used in refineries that fouled several communities' drinking water for years (including Glennville) before it, too, was recalled.

Oops.