

[Fresno Bee editorial, Friday, June 24, 2016:](#)

## **Thumbs up, thumbs down**

Thumbs up to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District for challenging the federal government with a petition calling for a national standard requiring truck and train manufacturers to produce new engines that are 90 percent cleaner. It also seeks 50 percent to 80 percent emission controls on recently remanufactured and existing trains.

The petition is a response to new Environmental Protection Agency air quality standards that give the Valley virtually no chance to be in compliance. Trains and trucks contribute 85 percent of our emissions. If the EPA does not respond, the district is considering taking legal remedies to force air quality partners to join us at the table.

## **Valley air officials seeking federal support for cleaner air**

By Monica Velez

Merced Sun-Star, Friday, June 24, 2016

The air quality throughout the San Joaquin Valley is a serious health burden for residents, according to the State of the Air 2016 report released by the American Lung Association.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has asked the federal Environmental Protection Agency to adopt stricter national vehicle standards in an effort to reduce air pollution. The new petition asks the federal government to mandate that cars to be 50 percent to 90 percent cleaner than before, according to Seyed Sadredin, executive director of the Valley Air District.

In the San Joaquin Valley, Sadredin said, businesses account for about 15 percent of the air pollution, while about 85 percent comes from mobile sources that fall under federal jurisdiction. Out of that 85 percent, 60 percent are trucks and trains, he said.

The Valley suffers from stagnant air, experts have said. Pollutants become trapped here while breezier cities on the coast have pollutants filtered out frequently. A frequent lack of rain and wind also is a factor, allowing pollutants to linger for days, resulting in higher health risks, according to the American Lung Association.

Sadredin said to meet the federal standard in air quality, pollution needs to cut an additional 90 percent, and without stricter national vehicle standards in place, the Central Valley won't get there.

"It's important to point out national standards will even out the playing field," Sadredin said.

## **Cap and trade fund concerns heating up**

By Alex Breitler, Record Staff Writer

Stockton Record, Friday, June 24, 2016

A stumble in California's new carbon cap and trade program could make it more difficult for Stockton advocates to compete for hundreds of millions of dollars, money that would help protect residents in one of the state's most environmentally vulnerable cities.

The concept of cap and trade is simple: Make polluters reduce their emissions or pay for carbon credits. Take a portion of the proceeds and invest them in the neighborhoods hardest-hit by pollution.

Large swaths of Stockton are eligible for this new pot of money. And local interests want a share for projects such as affordable downtown housing, new bus routes through the city's poorer neighborhoods and significant rebates giving lower-income residents a crack at owning newer, cleaner vehicles.

These hopes remain, but they've been jolted a bit after the state's most recent carbon credit auction in May generated just \$10 million in proceeds, down from \$516 million in February.

"I think it was a splash of cold water in the face. The expectations now have dropped dramatically, and we're coming back to Earth on this," said Andrew Chesley, director of the San Joaquin Council of Governments, which is involved in promoting transportation and sustainable housing projects.

Since 2012, cap and trade has collected close to \$4 billion in revenue from big polluters across the state. And starting last year, transportation fuel suppliers were required to participate as well, meaning everyone who pumps gas is helping pick up the tab for California's war on climate change.

One-quarter of the proceeds goes to Gov. Jerry Brown's high-speed rail project. And by law, another quarter goes to fund projects to slash pollution in the state's most disadvantaged communities. Stockton already has benefited, perhaps most notably with the approval last year of \$5.8 million in cap and trade money for the 51-unit Anchor Village downtown housing project.

But cap and trade remains controversial. The California Chamber of Commerce has sued in an effort to block the program. And the law upon which cap and trade is based is set to expire in 2020.

"I think there's a lot of uneasiness about the future of the whole program," said Katelyn Roedner Sutter, who heads an environmental justice program within the Catholic Diocese of Stockton. "Past 2020, we have no legislation. And that's scary."

Earlier this month, Stockton-based Visionary Home Builders applied for about \$9 million in cap and trade money to help pay for 76 units of affordable housing for veterans in a building near Hunter and San Joaquin streets.

Visionary's CEO, Carol Ornelas, knew the competition would be intense. The Strategic Growth Council received \$1.1 billion in requests for sustainable housing projects across the state, with only \$320 million available.

But things might now be even more competitive. Ornelas said she received a letter last week saying that the state would not be able to distribute as much funding as expected because of the recent slump in sales.

"It's sad," Ornelas said. "This program could be dead on arrival. And there was so much hope. That pool of money was supposed to grow this year, and now we don't know what lies ahead."

Dave Clegern, a spokesman with the California Air Resources Board, said not to read too much into the results of one auction.

"We don't think there's any reason to conclude there's some trend there," he said.

Funding concerns aside, cap and trade has reduced greenhouse gas emissions as it was intended to do, he said. From the board's standpoint, Clegern said, it's working.

And the money hasn't been exhausted. The state Legislative Analyst's Office reported this month that there's still \$1.4 billion left over from previous auctions. Advocates want that money spent at a faster clip.

The San Joaquin Regional Transit District has big plans, including a new all-electric bus route along the Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard corridor in south Stockton. Last year, the district received \$6 million in cap and trade funding to plan that route and build necessary improvements.

Also with cap and trade money, the district has expanded “metro hopper” bus service into disadvantaged southeast Stockton. Metro hopper buses are able to deviate from their routes to help handicapped passengers get to their destinations.

The district still will need money in future years to operate both of those services. If cap and trade fizzles, other sources of funds probably can be found, spokesman Max Vargas said.

But make no mistake: They’ll be watching Sacramento closely.

“We’ll have to get a little more creative,” Vargas said.

Last week, air quality officials voted to accept roughly \$35 million in cap and trade money for clean transportation initiatives across the Valley, including electric buses, electric U.S. Postal Service delivery trucks in Stockton and Fresno, and electric linen delivery vehicles.

Seyed Sadredin, head of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, said this week that about \$20 million of the \$35 million may be in jeopardy.

If cap and trade money vanishes or is somehow redirected, he warned, “The Valley and disadvantaged communities will be the prime victims.”