

[Fresno Bee editorial, August 8, 2002](#)

Baby step on clean air

Bay Area drivers won't like it, but the Valley needs their help.

A little piece of the Valley's air quality puzzle is a little closer to falling into place after a vote by a state Senate committee on Tuesday. A bill that would bring San Francisco Bay Area drivers under the same vehicle emission standards as most of the rest of the state advanced toward a full Senate vote and, we hope, a signature from Gov. Gray Davis.

AB 2637, authored by Assembly Member Dennis Cardoza, D-Merced, would require vehicle owners in the nine-county Bay Area to pay for the more expensive Smog Check II emissions test on vehicles more than six years old. It moved from the Senate Transportation Committee on a 12-1 vote. The sole "no" was cast by Sen. Tom McClintock, who is the Republican nominee for state controller. Sen. Dick Monteith, R-Modesto, Cardoza's rival for a congressional seat in November, skipped the vote entirely. This was a crucial vote for the Valley, and Monteith went missing in action.

The measure is important because, while the Bay Area generally enjoys clean air, by contemporary standards, some of its airborne pollution blows through the Altamont Pass and into the Central Valley, exacerbating the already dreadful air quality here.

There is much controversy about the amount of pollution that the Bay Area sends our way. One study found that Bay Area pollution accounted for as much as 27% of the smog that afflicts Stockton, Modesto and Merced on the worst summer days. The same study produced a figure of 11% for Fresno and 9% for Kern County.

But the study is a decade old, and has drawn criticism even from some state air officials, as well as the expected protests from Bay Area interests who don't want to have to pay for the more expensive smog checks.

Yet that narrow focus on numbers misses the point. It may not be known how much smog is blown into this area from up north, but we know that some of our foul air is imported. Bay Area drivers argue that they shouldn't have to pay more to achieve only a slim improvement in the Valley's air. Most of the Valley's problem, they say, is caused by people in the Valley.

They're right about that. Most of the filthy air we breathe we manufacture ourselves, and thus most of the responsibility for cleaning it up is ours. But every little bit helps. It's easy to say a 10% reduction isn't worth the effort or the cost, but when it's 10% here and 10% there and 10% somewhere else, it adds up to a significant improvement.

And significant improvement is an understatement of what's required here in the Valley. The motorists of the Bay Area may complain about this legislation costing them a few bucks more at the smog check station, but that's nothing compared to the federal hammer that will fall on the Valley in a few years if we don't start getting serious about improving air quality here.

[Letter to the Editor, Fresno Bee, August 8, 2002](#)

'Cleaner vehicles'

Jeff Findley, Supervising Air Quality Planner, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District

We at the Valley air district were delighted to read Rev. Roger Minassian's letter (July 31) singing the praises of his new, air-friendly hybrid vehicle. We were particularly gratified that he obtained funding for his car through the Valley Air District's Light- and Medium-Duty Vehicle Incentive Program.

I want to clarify that the funds are intended to give Valley car buyers who would not otherwise consider alternative fuel vehicles the needed push to buy them. For that reason, the program offers pre-purchase incentives rather than rebates.

Anyone thinking of buying a gasoline-electric hybrid Honda Insight or Toyota Prius or Ford's compressed natural gas Crown Victoria or Ranger pickup should contact the air district first. They may be able to obtain incentives ranging from \$1,000-3,000 for their purchase. For program guidelines and the short application, visit the Web site at www.valleyair.org <<http://www.valleyair.org>> or call the air district at 230-5859.

Auto dealers who sell alternative fuel vehicles provide program information to customers and refer them to the air district. There have been instances, however, when some buyers have not received program information at their dealerships. The Valley air district cannot provide funding after a vehicle has been purchased. Therefore, I encourage anyone interested in the program to contact us before shopping.

We hope many more Valley residents take advantage of these incentives to invest in cleaner vehicles and a clearer future.

Tougher Bay Area Smog Check II bill advances

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