

Development vision for Kern River bluffs beginning to coalesce

By JAMES BURGER, Californian staff writer

The Bakersfield Californian

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Land surrounding the Kern River bluffs in northeast Bakersfield may be some of the most unique in the city when its hills and ridgelines are filled with homes, schools, stores and streets.

It will take 20 years or longer for the transformation.

But what the area will become is being born out of what has happened in the last three years.

City officials, hikers, motorcyclists, landowners and environmentalists have been busy since the City in the Hills project got city approval to convert a square-mile along Highway 178 into a southwest-style development.

The project got people thinking about what the area should eventually look like.

Squabbles followed as trail enthusiasts pushed for preservation of their recreation area and landowners complained that everyone was trampling on their property rights.

But a concerted effort to create a vision for the area has created a great deal of agreement.

That agreement, and the growing vision for what northeast Bakersfield can become, has been shared with *The Californian's* editorial board during a series of meetings over the past two months.

What came out of the meetings was a sense of the area as a dynamic new area for the city to grow into.

On the Kern River bluffs, unlike other developing areas of Bakersfield, the city is taking more control of development plans than it has before.

City Councilman Mike Maggard, playing off of concerns from hikers, mountain bikers, equestrians and environmentalists, has called for advance planning of the area.

"What began as a vision of what could be is becoming a specific plan," Maggard said.

"It's evolving into a set game plan so we will have uniformity in how this will be implemented," he said.

City planners have drafted a plan that would create an interconnected system of parks that preserves scenic spots and creates trails that will give the public access to what some residents consider some of the most beautiful ground in the city.

Maggard is pushing for open space to be added to development and for that space to be landscaped in an oak and river boulder theme.

At the same time the city is talking about ways to handle traffic, air pollution and park locations -- and talking about it in a regional scope rather than looking at the growth of the area on a project by project basis.

That's a new way of thinking, said Dave Dmohowski, a private consultant for developers who is helping plan many of the development projects in the area.

"This is the first chance in a long time for the city to weigh in on the planning issues (of an area)," he said.

Usually a single big landowner comes in with a massive, comprehensive vision for an area -- as Tenneco West and Castle & Cooke did in southwest Bakersfield.

City of Bakersfield Development Services Director Jack Hardisty said he sees the process of pre-planning the growth of the northeast as a moment of maturation for the city.

"Some people would like to see this city remain like a little municipal town," he said. "I think what you're watching is the city step up one more level (in its) evolution."

There are problems to confront in the northeast.

The area's transportation backbone, two-lane Highway 178, will need dramatic improvements before it can handle thousands more cars each day.

The Sierra Club has launched legal challenges against most of the projects planned in the area -- citing air pollution and traffic congestion from development as drastic impacts that must be handled before building happens.

And the trails plan, which will integrate public space with development, must be approved and implemented on projects.

But the people who are working to build a vision for the Kern River bluffs say the area's future will be unique because the community is involved.

Board approves air basin study 4-0

By MELANIE TURNER, Modesto Bee, Aug. 6, 2003

Stanislaus County supervisors voted 4-0 Tuesday to ask the valley's air pollution control agency to study a plan to put Stanislaus, Merced and San Joaquin counties into a separate air quality planning area.

"We could potentially avoid many of the additional federal sanctions and regulations," said Richard Jantz, deputy executive officer for the county.

Supervisors Paul Caruso, Tom Mayfield, Pat Paul and Ray Simon voted yes. Jeff Grover was absent.

San Joaquin County supervisors already have approved such a request, and Merced County supervisors are expected to consider it Aug. 12. The requests are to go before the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District board on Aug. 21.

The district stretches from San Joaquin County in the north to Kern County in the south, and districtwide sanctions -- such as withholding transportation funds -- are possible if the valley does not meet a 2005 deadline to clean up smog.

Critics of a separate planning area point out that pollution generated in the northern valley is blown south, where smog problems are worse.

"We all are in this together," Caroline Mitton of Modesto told the Board of Supervisors. She reminded the board that the valley complains of pollution blowing in from the Bay Area.

In each of the past three years, Stanislaus and Merced counties violated the health standard for ozone on specific days, according to air district data. And San Joaquin County is among the top generators in the valley for nitrogen oxides, a critical ingredient of smog.

Former county Supervisor Nick Blom, who commented after the meeting, said talk of a separate planning area is a "waste of government time." Blom once sat on the air district board.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency would have the final say on the new planning area, provided the California Air Resources Board forwards the request.

"We know there are questions we all have that need to be studied," said Gary Plummer, Modesto Chamber of Commerce president, endorsing the study for a separate planning area.

The Stanislaus County Farm Bureau and the Stanislaus Council of Governments also backed the proposal.

Gary Dickson, executive director of the government council, said: "This is not an attempt to secede from the district. We want to avoid going to (that) extreme."

Valley air quality officials acknowledge that the district will not make the 2005 cleanup deadline. The district board, in a bid for time, could vote as early as next month to downgrade the valley's air quality designation from severe to extreme, pushing the cleanup deadline to 2010.

Under the extreme designation, new and expanding businesses would be subject to increased fees.

Jantz, of the county executive's office, said the worst part of such a designation would be the stigma of being only the second "extreme" air basin in the nation, which could hurt efforts to attract business.

Only the South Coast Air Basin, which includes Los Angeles, carries the extreme designation.

Modesto resident Daniel Marsh said the valley's northern counties should work with the more polluted counties in the southern valley to fix the smog problem, "but if it would help with economic development, you should do it."

Simon said he sees no downside, since the air in the south would not get any worse as a result of a separate planning area in the north.

Mayfield said: "All we want is a study. We never said we want to pull out. We just want to know if we could reach attainment before they can."

EPA officials say the northern counties would have a tough time proving that they are a separate air basin. Such a designation for eastern Kern County did not come easy, they say.

When the EPA downgraded the valley from serious to severe air quality status two years ago, officials agreed to divide Kern County and maintain the severe air designation for the desert basin beyond the Tehachapi Mountains.

"There's not a mountain range between the northern and southern counties," said Kerry Drake, air division associate director for EPA Region 9.

County contemplating joining new, northern air pollution district

Merced Sun-Star, August 6, 2003

By Cynthia Neff, staff writer

An effort that would spare Merced County from tighter and more costly air pollution regulations is picking up steam.

San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties recently voted in favor of a proposal that could lead to new air pollution regulations for themselves - and Merced County is on the verge of joining them.

On Aug. 12, the Merced County Board of Supervisors will consider asking the local air district to study severing Merced, as well as San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties, from five more-polluted counties to the south.

The three northern counties would form their own planning area with the help of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and would have their own set of rules and regulations for reducing air pollution.

"I don't know if it's feasible, but there's nothing wrong with looking at it," said Merced County Supervisor Mike Nelson, who is also a member of the air district's governing board.

Currently, the Valley's air is classified as being in "severe" noncompliance with federal clean air standards and if the situation doesn't improve by 2005, federal sanctions could take effect.

Those sanctions include losses of highway funding.

The Valley air district is charged with regulating air pollution from Bakersfield to Stockton and has indicated that it wants to be classified in "extreme" noncompliance - the lowest of all classifications.

The downgraded classification would buy the air district an extra five years to improve their air quality.

But the classification will also bring additional regulations.

"What 'extreme' brings with it are additional rules, regulations and fees that are more costly for businesses," said Merced County Association of Governments Executive Director Jesse Brown. "There is more economic benefit for the three northern counties," if they split from the five southern counties, he added.

"Personally, I think it is an opportunity for Merced County and Stanislaus and San Joaquin counties to show that they've attained the federal clean air standard," he said.

Tuesday, the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors unanimously voted to ask the air district to consider creating a separate planning area. Supervisor Jeff Grover was absent.

"We decided that it would be of value to do a study," said Stanislaus County Supervisor Pat Paul, who represents the communities of Empire, Knights Ferry, Oakdale, Riverbank, Valley Home and Waterford.

Paul said her biggest concern is to make sure that splitting from the southern counties wouldn't do anything to hurt industry and local businesses.

"Meanwhile, I like this idea of the three of us sticking together," she said.

Similarly, on June 10 the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors voted to ask the air district to entertain the idea.

Now it's Merced County's turn to vote.

If supervisors approve the proposal, the three counties' requests would be scheduled to go before the Valley air district on Aug. 21.

A report published last October by the Sierra Nevada Air Quality Group said that if the three northern counties formed a planning area within the existing Valley district, that area "would likely have an easier time attaining the state standards" for air pollution.

But, before such a proposal could be approved, three regulatory agencies would have to sign off on it.

First, the local Valley air district would have to approve it, then the California Air Resources Board and finally the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

According to U.S. EPA spokeswoman Lisa Fasano, the three counties may have a tough battle ahead.

She said that all counties in the air basin affect each other with their individual air pollution.

"We're obligated to look at it, and we'll do so," she said of the proposal, adding that, "it's going to be very difficult for the counties to prove they're a separate air basin."

Josette Merced Bello, a spokeswoman with the air district, said nothing has come before the board and no position has been taken.

Also, the California Air Resources Board has not taken a position on the matter.

Spokesman Jerry Martin said the board isn't opposed to the proposal but said there's an "equity issue" to be considered.

He noted that air pollution travels from the north end of the Valley to the south end.

"From a technical standpoint it's all one air basin," Martin said.

Cleanup begins at the site of Crippen fire

(Aug. 4) The Business Journal (Fresno) -- The California Integrated Waste Management Board and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have mobilized this week to begin removing about 75,000 tons of charred debris from the Archie Crippen Excavation site. The City and County of Fresno along with the property owner are providing additional assistance to the State and the EPA during the removal effort.

Together the State and the EPA have allocated more than \$3 million to remove the 5-acre pile that remained after the Crippen fire, which burned for 30 days in January and February this year. The State also is retaining an additional \$1 million in reserve in case the debris piles ignite again during the cleanup.

"On behalf of the Citizens of Fresno, I sincerely appreciate the financial assistance for the Crippen cleanup that has been provided to us by the County, State, and EPA," said Fresno City Manager Daniel Hobbs.

"Not only has the Integrated Waste Management Board committed significant resources to the clean up of this illegal disposal site; we have recently implemented regulations that will, with the help of our local city and county partners, send a strong message that will resonate across the state. Illegal disposal sites that pose a threat to the public's health and safety will no longer be tolerated in California," said Integrated Waste Management Board Chair Linda Moulton-Patterson.

"This continues to be a multi-agency effort, drawing on resources from all levels to deal with the massive debris pile," said Dan Neer, EPA Superfund Branch Chief for the Pacific Southwest region. "We have to ensure that this problem does not reoccur and pose a threat to residents in the Fresno area."

Recyclable concrete, metals, and other materials will be separated from the piles and sent to facilities that can use them. Unsalvageable items will be sent to a disposal site. The cleanup is expected to last 8 to 12 weeks with more than 100 truck trips per day working 8 to 10 hour days, 5 days a week until all the debris is removed.

The CIWMB determined that the most timely and cost-effective remediation of the Crippen site was to load, transport, and dispose the debris in a State permitted landfill. The debris was tested and does not contain hazardous chemicals and is therefore acceptable at a landfill facility. The debris will be transported to a waste management facility in Kettleman City.

The Fresno City Fire Department will help develop a contingency plan to respond to the potential of another fire should the piles re-ignite during clean up. Mr. Crippen has agreed to handle steel and concrete left at the site, allow the use of his scale facilities, and perform the site's final grading after the removal work has been completed.

The Archie Crippen site caught fire on January 11, 2003, after decomposing wood and other organic materials spontaneously combusted. The blaze was not completely extinguished until one month later. The material now stands in three distinct piles of charred soil, ash, and construction and demolition debris separated by access roads.

Fresno wins federal funds to clean air, water

(Aug. 1) The Business Journal (Fresno)- Environmental efforts in the Valley received an added boost from Rep. George Radanovich (R-Mariposa) this week.

The Congressman has announced \$200,000 to fund Fresno's Operation Clean Air and \$500,000 for the city's water treatment facilities.

"These funds will help create a cleaner environment for the City of Fresno," Radanovich said. "We must have cleaner air and water for future generations."

Operation Clean Air is a broad base coalition of San Joaquin Valley leaders dedicated to cleaning the Valley air. The purpose of the campaign is to engage the public in voluntary air-quality

improvement efforts. Outreach will involve media advertising campaigns and school presentations. The effort will be funded by the EPA.

The City of Fresno Conveyance Program will use the funds for water treatment facilities to construct a five mile pipeline to be utilized after the construction of a new surface water treatment plant. The EPA Water and Wastewater Treatment Program will provide the funding.

The funding will be provided in next year's appropriations bill.

Senate passes energy bill pushed by Democrats

The Business Journal (Fresno)

(Aug.1) Chamber of Commerce - In an unusual 11th-hour deal, the Senate ended months of stalling and bickering over energy policy after Republicans agreed Thursday to pass the same comprehensive energy bill approved overwhelmingly last year when the Senate was controlled by Democrats.

The bill would require drivers to use more ethanol, despite complaints by California lawmakers that shipping the corn-based fuel additive from Midwestern plants could drive up the price of gasoline. The measure also includes billions of dollars in tax breaks for energy production and conservation, but would not open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska to oil drilling.

The agreement, made as lawmakers were preparing to leave for a monthlong vacation, seemed like a sweetheart deal to Democrats -- passing a bill that focused more on conservation than production-oriented GOP leaders wanted.

"In our fondest dreams, we never thought we'd be able to pass a Democratic bill in a Republican Congress," said Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle, D-S.D.

But Republicans, who control the House and Senate, will appoint and control the conference committee that combines the Senate-approved measure with a House bill passed in April. GOP leaders already are boasting they will rewrite the Senate measure to meet the goals set out by President Bush and the White House energy task force headed by Vice President Dick Cheney.

"I guess you wonder why I am smiling," a giddy Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., told reporters Thursday night. "The reason I'm happy is because I'll be rewriting that bill."

However, GOP leaders acknowledged they won't likely be able to muster enough support to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The House voted in April to open the refuge, but proponents of drilling don't have the 60 votes needed to override a filibuster threatened by Senate Democrats.

Whatever the shape of the final bill, it still must return to the Senate and win approval in the body with a slim 51-48 Republican majority. The Senate, which also has one Independent member, often fractures more along regional lines rather than party lines when it comes to energy policy.

California's two Democratic senators, Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, were among the few lawmakers to vote against the energy bill, which passed 84-14.

"I opposed this energy bill in 2002 because it did not offer the sound and innovative policy that we need to reduce our dependence on foreign oil, protect the environment, improve our energy and fuel efficiency and protect consumers from Enron-like scams," Boxer said. "All of these reasons still stand."

The bill would require refiners to double the amount of ethanol in gasoline by 2012. The measure also would ban MTBE, a smog-reducing additive that has been found to contaminate drinking water. California and 16 other states have already banned or restricted its use. California's ban on MTBE takes effect Jan. 1.

California lawmakers have argued that the environmental benefits of ethanol are overstated and that the requirement will lead to price spikes at the gas pumps.

The measure also provides about \$16 billion in tax breaks to increase production of oil, natural gas, nuclear power and coal, as well as subsidies to consumers who purchase energy efficient appliances, homes and hybrid vehicles.

However, Republicans were forced to give up another \$16 billion in subsidies to the nuclear industry to build six new power plants. Domenici, who led the charge for the loan guarantees, vowed to make sure other subsidies for the industry are included in the final bill.

The measure also would lift a 1935 law that limited the ability of utility holding companies to merge, which is likely to spur a consolidation in the industry that supplies the nation's power.

The Senate bill would require utilities to increase their use of renewable sources of energy to 10 percent by 2010, but the provision was opposed by many Republicans and could be stripped from final bill.

"It's just going to go from bad to worse in conference," said Sharon Buccino, a senior attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council. "The folks at the table there do not have environmental protection as their priority."

But in a bright spot for environmentalists, the Senate also dropped a recently approved study of offshore oil and gas reserves, which California officials warned could be the first step toward ending a 20-year moratorium on offshore drilling in federal waters. The House rejected a similar provision.

As tallow reek worsens in heat, county rep urges use of hot line

By JULISSA McKINNON
and MELANIE TURNER
Modesto Bee, Aug. 6, 2003

On the hot days, there is no escaping the smell of rotting carcasses permeating the Shackelford neighborhood in south Modesto.

Students pull T-shirts over their noses when they are on the playground, Shackelford Elementary School Principal Pam Able said.

Homemaker Azucena Mendoza feverishly sprays her house with deodorizer every half hour.

But the fragrance cloud is quickly overpowered by the stench of carcasses from Modesto Tallow Co., Mendoza said.

Her friend Blanca Cortez swears that closing all the doors and windows is the only solution. But turn on the air conditioner, and the smell is in the air, the carpet and her clothes, said Cortez, a 25-year-old mother of two.

In recent weeks, some residents living in the neighborhood bordered by Crows Landing and Hatch roads say the smell is the worst that it has been in years.

Officials from Modesto Tallow were not available for comment Tuesday.

In July 2002, Modesto Tallow installed odor-reduction equipment after facing hefty fines or a shutdown. An abatement hearing before the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors was canceled after company officials pledged to fast-track the oxidizer installation.

The thermal oxidizers, designed to burn away odor molecules, dramatically reduced the smells until recently, residents said.

Jami Aggers, compliance manager for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, said several factors may be causing the intense smell.

High temperatures, especially those exceeding 100, increase the animal mortality rate, Aggers said. The plant then has more product to burn and the odors hang heavy in hot, motionless air, she said.

Extra work from another plant

And for several days recently, Modesto Tallow took on some of the load from another tallow company in Stanislaus County that had an equipment failure.

On July 8, the plant started cooking and processing feathers for the first time in years, Aggers said.

The company has turned livestock carcasses into ink, glue and other products along the Tuolumne River since 1917.

Houses and businesses were built around it over the years, most notably during a post-World War II construction boom, according to county Supervisor Paul Caruso, who grew up in the neighborhood.

Supervisors heard a report about the tallow plant Tuesday from Sonya Harrigfeld, assistant director of the county Department of Environmental Resources.

She said that in the first six months of 2003, there were 25 complaints to the air district about the smell from Modesto Tallow, compared with 76 complaints during the first six months of 2002.

In July, the number of complaints spiked to 56.

"The last time I drove out in that area, it was just putrid," Supervisor Pat Paul said. She has heard that many neighborhood residents are afraid to speak up.

Aggers said complaints are one way the air district gauges odor levels. When a "significant number" of complaints comes in, an investigator is sent to the plant to assess and hopefully correct the problem, she said.

In 2002, the tallow plant received 16 citations for odor violations. So far, in 2003, the tallow plant has received two odor citations.

Caruso, the county supervisor, said a feeling of helplessness keeps many residents from complaining. They believe that their phone calls will not lead to any real change, he said.

But if individuals do not call in to report the odor, the air board will assume it is not an issue, he said.

"We have to keep pushing for better and better technology," Caruso said. "It's the year 2003. There's no reason we can't get the odor under control."

People with complaints about the tallow company can call the air pollution control district, 557-6400 during business hours, and (800) 281-7003 after hours.

[Lodi News Sentinel, Editorial, Aug. 6, 2003](#)

Let's build a roaring, crackling mess

News item: The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, taking a break from adding extra words to their name, voted this month to designate some winter days "No Fireplace" days, when residents will receive stern lectures, interspersed with coughing fits, if they dare to build a fire.

Though district officials did say the move was totally unrelated to the recent death of Barry White, they did admit the move will result in a 75 percent drop of "getting your groove on" compared with last year. To compensate, they suggested serving more alcohol and/or lowering one's standards.

Driving down Parker Avenue the other day, I saw why many people equate local governments with the eastbound ends of morning Altamont commuters. On that street, three trees were planted sometime ago, and then had their root structure thoughtfully covered by cement.

Now, because the roots have started cracking the sidewalk -- the nerve! --- and because the city is in the process of importing Baghdad Public Works to improve Parker Avenue, a city crew came along and practiced their French Revolution reenactments on the trees. Then they put out a sign with a helpful notice: Free Firewood!

This, of course, comes as another local government -- the air district -- has decided that excess firewood burning is bad, and so you shouldn't be allowed to burn it whenever you want. Rather, you should gather up the city-supplied lumber -- yet another benefit of homeowner's taxes you were totally unaware of, I bet -- and store it in your garage next to the spiders. If you don't have spiders, stacking lumber in your garage is a terrific way to attract them.

One thinks there could've been some communication between the city and the district, to where at least the city could've put out a sign instead for Free Crude Building Materials! or Unwieldy Paperweights!

The ban on fireplace burning, at least some nights, is very sad for some people, because they really enjoy the process of making little balls of newspaper, then putting blocks of kindling -- or wooden blocks, if someone's careless child happened to leave them out -- in the stove, then cursing at the "instant lighter" that will by no means light unless you are holding it near a set of drapes or a \$300 trip to the beauty salon. This is followed by picking out the right block of wood, smashing your finger at least once while trying to wrestle it into the house and finally, finally, screaming at someone that NO, WE'RE NOT GOING TO TURN ON THE HEATER BECAUSE THIS IS BETTER.

Yes, there are people who like this kind of activity, but let's be frank: These people are nuttier than an overturned Blue Diamond truck. As a veteran of many built fires, I can share that building fires is messy, hot, dangerous work, not unlike cooking, another activity I quit when I moved into my own apartment.

As a youngster growing up in the foothills of Northern California, I frequently had to make fires in a wood-burning stove at the behest of my mom, so that we could all sit around and sweat while we ate dinner. This happened because wood-burning stoves lack both a thermostat and a timer, so that their warmth output goes from tax audit to condo on Mercury in about 30 seconds, which you have spent at the sink trying to wash off soot streaks like fraternity brandings on your arms.

I grew to loathe building fires so much that friends would come over and build fires for me, probably because feeling numbness at the ends of your fingers as you grip your video game controller makes it difficult to get your friend to throw a diva-like fit after a pummeling at "Street Fighter 2." My friend, Loaf, perhaps feeling insanely primordial, once built a fire of such intensity that the stove itself changed color, from its normal dull black tone to an eye-catching shade of red that screamed, "LUMBERJACK STORE WARRANTY NOW VOID."

Thankfully, my mom was asleep at the time, or this surely would've been grounds for a quick and furious end to Loaf's visit, as in, "Maybe your friends' parents let them melt the wood-burning stove at their houses, but there is NO WAY it will happen in my house! Now go get the tongs, and clean that up!" Rather, my friends got sent home the next day by their preferred method: Beating up my brother because, duh, he was my brother.

All this may lead you to say, "Hey, I still want to build my fire. What am I supposed to do when the chimney Nazis come to my door?" To which I say, chase them away with those instant lighters you've got lying around. Watch the drapes.

Ben van der Meer is the news editor of the Tracy Press.

[The Bakersfield Californian editorial](#)

Congress strikes out

Tuesday August 05, 2003, 07:45:12 PM

"How can you have a serious energy bill and not ... address the fuel efficiency of vehicles?"

-- Sen. Richard Durbin, D-Ill.

The frustrated senator raised that question after the Senate voted 65-32 against a proposal in the energy bill to increase fuel-mileage standards for motor vehicles.

Tougher fuel economy rules would be a key ingredient in reducing United States dependence on foreign oil and emissions of carbon dioxide.

The proposal was hardly Draconian. The measure would have required cars and sport utility vehicles to meet a 40-miles-per-gallon standard by 2015.

Presently, cars must meet an average fuel economy standard of 27.5 mpg. This has been the standard for the past decade. The standards for light trucks, including SUVs, minivans and pickups, is 20.7 mpg, which will rise to 22.2 mpg for the 2007 model year.

California Sens. Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer voted for the tougher standards, noting that the state has more registered vehicles than any other state and that the proposal would help reduce carbon dioxide emissions, one of the factors that causes smog.

During the oil shortage crisis of the 1970s, tougher fuel-mileage standards for vehicles were implemented.

But because of the popularity of SUVs, overall fuel economy in U.S.-produced vehicles has declined since the 1980s.

President Bush, unfortunately, opposes efforts to promote more fuel economy. Instead, he backs a plan in which tax incentives would be set up to encourage consumers to buy gas-electric hybrid vehicles.

He also wants to spend more than \$1 billion to hurry up the development of cars that run on pollution-free hydrogen fuel cells.

But that is a head-in-the-sand approach. Development of such cars is questionable and may prove to be impractical.

In any event, it could take decades before such a plan could prove popular with consumers.

The quick-fix solution to reducing our dependence on foreign oil is to approve tougher fuel-economy standards for vehicles.

