

[The Fresno Bee - May 4, 2004](#)

Farmers seek help to clean Valley air

State fund could aid in switch to engines that pollute less.

By Jennifer M. Fitzenberger

SACRAMENTO -- Nearly 800 San Joaquin Valley farmers have used Carl Moyer Program money to refurbish or replace 1,500 pollution-spewing agriculture engines. Until now, farmers have voluntarily updated their dirty engines. But a new clean-air law by Democratic Sen. Dean Florez of Shafter makes switching out some of the engines mandatory, disqualifying farmers from using money from the Carl Moyer Program, which can only be used for changes not required by law.

A Pittsburg Democrat who battled with Florez over the strict new air standards has introduced a bill to smooth out the funding wrinkle. Assembly Member Joe Canciamilla's AB 2953 would allow farmers to use Carl Moyer money until 2010 even though they will be required to change some of their engines.

Opponents say it creates a dangerous precedent and threatens to further deplete a fund that is nearly dry. They empathize with farmers but say those in the industry should look elsewhere for money to help them adapt to the new rules.

Florez's SB 700 ended agriculture's exemption from air-operating permits and requires farmers to use more up-to-date, clean-air technology. "I know the agricultural industry needs help in order to make ends meet," said Assembly Member Jenny Oropesa, a Long Beach Democrat who voted against AB 2953 in committee last week. "The problem is that the Carl Moyer Program was set up to assist those who want to voluntarily reduce the emissions that their vehicles are emitting. ... The effect of the bill will be to have less money available for the voluntary program."

Farmers say losing Carl Moyer money will further burden the state's struggling \$27 billion agriculture industry. They are quickly having to adapt to rigid regulations, and they can't pass on the cost to people who buy their fruit and vegetables.

Don Weber, who grows grapes, peaches and nectarines on 300 acres between Sanger and Fresno, used Carl Moyer money to help switch out two older engines that pump water. He hopes to replace two more engines this year. "This enabled me to get some new John Deere motors, which supposedly are clean-burning engines," Weber said. "I thought, well, we're improving the air condition, so this is probably worth a little extra money."

But Weber said new clean-air regulations are taking their financial toll. "I don't think the politicians stop and think about that," he said. Shirley Batchman, director of industry relations for California Citrus Mutual, said Carl Moyer money is crucial because older engines can cost thousands of dollars to replace. "There are so many things that are imposed on a grower right now," Batchman said. "When does that particular grower reach the level where he says, 'I can't do it anymore?'"

Roger Isom of the California Cotton Ginners and Growers Associations said farmers will suffer without financial help: "You're going to start seeing some fallowed land ... or guys out of compliance because they can't afford to switch their engines. Hopefully, we don't get to that point."

The state Legislature created the Carl Moyer Program in 1998 with a \$25 million budget allocation and named the fund in honor of a key figure in developing state air-quality measures. The state continued to feed the pot until 2002, when voters approved Proposition 40, giving \$50 million to the California Air Resources Board to distribute to local air districts. So far, about \$25 million has been distributed to about 30 air districts, including the Valley's. In late June, the state board will begin handing out the second \$25 million, and local districts will have until June 2006 to ration the money.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has about \$1.3 million in its Carl Moyer coffer. It is expecting about \$3.2 million in the coming fiscal year. In all, more than \$100 million has been distributed to local air districts, leading to the replacement or retrofitting of about 4,900 engines statewide. The change has kept about 4,650 tons of nitrogen oxides -- an ingredient in ozone -- from the air each year, which is equivalent to emissions from 37 large power plants.

When the money is gone, the program will be broke until the Legislature funds it. Gov. Schwarzenegger's 2004-05 budget proposal includes no money for Carl Moyer, largely because the state is billions of dollars in debt, but a handful of bills to fund it are moving through the Legislature.

Oropeza's AB 2526 would set aside one-quarter-cent per gallon from the tax on diesel fuel to fund the program. SB 1247 by Sen. Nell Soto, a Pomona Democrat, would establish a trust fund to finance Carl Moyer, and SB 403 by Florez could dedicate part of a \$4.6 billion bond measure to it.

Canciamilla understands the fund's future is shaky, but he wants to make sure -- if it survives -- that farmers won't be left out of the loop.

"Compliance with SB 700 is not optional. It isn't something they can dispute simply because there isn't any funding," Canciamilla said. "This just gives them an opportunity to continue to obtain a limited amount of access to financing." Florez and environmental advocates fought with farmers for days over the details of SB 700. When the bill hit momentary snags, Florez blamed moderate Democrats -- including Canciamilla -- for stalling it to keep farm lobbyists happy and Assembly Member Nicole Parra from having to cast her vote. Parra, a Hanford Democrat, barely won her last election and is considered politically vulnerable. Eventually, Parra supported Florez's bill.

SB 700 was one of five clean-air measures last year by Florez that became law. Canciamilla said politics are not fueling his Carl Moyer bill, adding that he and Florez worked together on amending and passing SB 700. "Because everything was done so quickly, this was one of the areas that was not dealt with," Canciamilla said. Agriculture advocates said they first asked Florez to carry the Carl Moyer bill, but he declined because he had a full bill load. Florez could not be reached to comment.

Weber said he believes Florez's air bills were driven by politics. "He didn't stop to think of the consequences," Weber said. "They're big consequences that I don't know how we're going to deal with." The reporter can be reached at jfitzenberger@fresnobee.com or (916) 326-5541.

[Los Angeles Times - May 4, 2004](#)

State Smog Battle Plan to Target Clunkers

By Miguel Bustillo, Times Staff Writer

The Schwarzenegger administration, working with business groups, legislators and environmentalists, is promoting an ambitious anti-smog initiative to eliminate the largest contributors to dirty air in California — heavy-polluting, older model cars, trucks, buses and farm vehicles.

The plan would cost \$200 million to \$400 million a year, and some lawmakers have proposed raising fees on gasoline and vehicle registration to pay for it. Rising gas prices threaten to scuttle that proposal, however.

Although the governor has yet to endorse a funding plan, administration officials are considering numerous options. They include raising fees, but also a proposal — similar to the check-off

system to help finance elections — whereby consumers could voluntarily pay higher vehicle registration fees and their employers could provide matching funds.

Administration officials say the governor is committed to finding a way to pay for the initiative, which would significantly help fulfill a campaign promise to cut California's air pollution in half. Roughly 5% of the state's cars and heavy-duty buses and trucks, typically older models, are responsible for half of the air pollution from motor vehicles, the leading cause of the state's chronically dirty air, according to air quality officials. The initiative would seek to remove those vehicles from California's roads by offering their owners financial incentives to junk them. "We need to get the dirtiest cars off the roads and move to cleaner vehicles," said Terry Tamminen, Schwarzenegger's environmental protection secretary. The expansion is one of Schwarzenegger's main environmental priorities, along with reducing fuel consumption and creating a "hydrogen highway" of filling stations to help promote the alternative fuel, he said.

"Obviously, we want to generate serious money for this, but it can't be an economy-buster," Tamminen said. "We are trying to find some creative ways of doing this. We are bringing unusual suspects to the table." Getting older cars off the road is one of the few ways that California can significantly address motor vehicle pollution, which is largely regulated by the federal government, environmentalists and air quality officials noted.

Last week, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Southern California air quality officials had overstepped their bounds by enacting rules that required operators of large vehicle fleets to buy low-polluting vehicles. The rules were part of an effort by the local air officials to expand their authority in light of what they see as an inadequate response to smog by federal authorities. "Everyone seems to be coming to the understanding that mobile sources [such as cars and trucks] represent 70% of the smog problem, and we need to do something like this if we are ever going to deal with that in a real manner," said Barry Wallerstein, executive officer of the South Coast Air Quality Management District, who has taken part in the negotiations. "The business community is participating in a very progressive manner, and I am cautiously optimistic that we will be able to arrive at a consensus."

The recent spike in gas prices, however, could make a one-cent a gallon wholesale gasoline fee, advocated by some lawmakers, a tough sell. The Schwarzenegger administration has been involved in discussions for weeks, but has not declared support for fee increases proposed by lawmakers. The gasoline fee is opposed by truckers while car dealers are against a hike in registration fees.

"If we can reach something that all of society thinks is good, we have a good chance of moving this along," said K.C. Bishop, a lobbyist for ChevronTexaco Corp. "The big problem I see is trying to do this at a time when the price of gas, especially diesel, is so high. It's the biggest risk we have in all of this — bad timing."

The relatively small \$2 vehicle license fee increase — which is important to oil industry representatives, who assert that consumers should share some of the costs — also could sink the proposal, given the volatility of the car registration issue in California politics.

"You are making everyone pay for the few who are driving clunkers," said Brian Maas, director of government affairs for the California Motor Car Dealers Assn., adding that the registration fee increase should be placed on the ballot for voters to consider. "Someone who buys a [hybrid Toyota] Prius would have to pay more to register their car under this proposal, which makes no sense."

Groups active in the discussions of the initiative said it would take a decade to remove grossly polluting vehicles from the road or fix them. The funding would then be discontinued. California already has cut harmful exhaust by more than 100,000 tons per year with programs to replace old diesel-powered school buses, farm equipment and other heavy-duty engines. But those programs are financed with bonds and will soon run out of money. The initiative would keep them running. Those programs have been shown to be a relatively cheap way to cut air pollution

— from \$6,000 to \$15,000 per ton of unhealthful exhaust compared with \$100,000 for similar reductions from smokestacks.

"We still have not reached a consensus on how to pay for all of this, or what is going to be in the mix, but the tone of the discussions right now suggests that this could be an investment of some magnitude," said Bob Lucas, a lobbyist for the California Council for Environmental and Economic Balance, a business group. "What we are talking about is a significantly expanded program that includes not only diesel but also older gasoline vehicles."

Several lawmakers already are carrying legislation to enact various pieces of the expansion. Assemblywoman Fran Pavley (D-Agoura Hills) is sponsoring a bill that would allow local air district officials to raise vehicle license fees by \$2 to help finance air programs, raising an estimated \$45 million annually. A \$4 portion of each registration fee is already allocated to fight air pollution.

Assemblyman Marco Firebaugh (D-Los Angeles) has written a measure that would raise gasoline prices at the wholesale level, not the pump, by at least a cent a gallon, which would generate more than \$185 million a year. "Year in and year out, we have a discussion — sometimes a fight — about funding for air pollution programs," he said. "This time, we have tried to achieve a consensus position that would take us 10 years into the future."

"I think they have clearly gotten the message from the administration that this is one of the governor's priority areas," he said of business groups. "Rather than being dragged into a fight that they could lose, I think they are making a good-faith effort to be a part of the solution."

[Los Angeles Times - May 4, 2004](#)

**BEHIND THE WHEEL - MTA Hopes to Convert More Drivers to Pedal Power
Upcoming 'Bike to Work Week' aims to show that bicycling makes sense in L.A.**

By Caitlin Liu, Times Staff Writer

In this epicenter of traffic, where the rich and famous are usually stuck in congestion like everyone else, actor Ed Begley Jr. has found a humble, two-wheeled way to travel faster. Since Begley was a boy with a paper route, he has loved riding bicycles. The actor, now 54, still pedals everywhere — to deal-making meetings on the Westside, to visit friends in Ojai, even to a recent film festival in Hollywood.

"My No. 1 form of transportation, the first thing I do, is to get on my bike when I need to get somewhere," said Begley, who lives in Studio City. "It's quicker than being in a car during rush hour ... It's an hour and 10 minutes to Santa Monica. It's 25 minutes to Beverly Hills." Begley and dozens of cycling enthusiasts, riding 10-speeds, mountain bikes, beach cruisers and tandems from all corners of Los Angeles, joined transportation officials downtown recently to promote May 20 as "Bike to Work Day" and to advocate pedaling as an alternative to driving solo. Begley, who bicycled from his home to the Metro Red Line's Universal City station and then rode the subway to downtown during the morning rush hour, said his entire trip took 22 minutes. Bicycling also improves one's cardiovascular health, reduces air pollution and saves money, others say.

"We hope more commuters will give bicycling a try and stick with it," said Frank Roberts, vice chairman of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority board and mayor of Lancaster. When California began "Bike to Work Week" a decade ago, 20,000 to 25,000 people participated, said K.C. Butler, the state coordinator for the event. Last year, the event drew up to 75,000 commuters throughout the state. This year, the state's Bike to Work Week is May 17-21. Surveys of past participants showed that 30% were new to commuting by bicycle and that 70% of the new cyclists kept pedaling to work, at least every once in a while, more than a month after the event, Butler said.

Within Los Angeles County, 2.4% of all trips people make — whether commuting to work or going to the store — are made on a bike, according to the MTA. The agency hopes to double that figure by 2025.

Driving is such an integral part of the Southern California lifestyle that most people go to their cars to run every errand, even though biking can be faster and cheaper, cycling advocates say. People also tend to view cycling as an option only for short neighborhood trips, although it can often be combined with public transit to travel longer distances.

But the biggest deterrent is fear of mingling with traffic, especially if it's heavy, Butler said. To ease safety concerns, transportation agencies have been setting aside land and road space for bicyclists. In the last nine years, the MTA provided \$83 million for 109 bikeway projects. The county now has about 500 miles of bicycle lanes and paths, with more than 300 miles of routes within the city of Los Angeles.

Some cyclists say the region still has far to go toward creating a network of bike lanes. Howard Hackett of Culver City enjoys riding the Ballona Creek bike path to the Pacific Ocean. But if the 73-year old retiree wants to ride to the nearby Playa Vista bike path, he has to venture into car traffic for about half a mile because the two routes don't connect, he said. "The planners of L.A. are doing a lousy job. They need to plan better for bike lanes," he said. Transportation officials say better connectivity is their goal and that they are adding more miles of bike lanes and bike paths every year.

Recently completed projects include an eight-mile landscaped bike path between Lancaster and Palmdale. A 2 1/2-mile bike path parallel to San Fernando Road in the Sylmar area is expected to be completed this month. Next year, when the 14-mile Metro Orange Line busway opens, a parallel bike path will also open. It will go from Woodland Hills to North Hollywood, connecting such places as Pierce College, the Sepulveda Basin Recreation Area, the Van Nuys Government Center and Valley College.

Local transportation agencies also have been installing amenities for bicyclists. Many buses are now equipped with racks for carrying bikes. Most train stations also offer racks as well as large lockers for parking bicycles overnight. The city of Los Angeles, which currently has 1,800 bicycle racks, plans to add 1,600 more this year. Although riding on sidewalks is prohibited in most cities, Los Angeles permits it almost everywhere. One exception is the Venice boardwalk, where bikes are prohibited because of the pedestrians and skaters, said Michelle Mowery, the bicycle program manager for the Los Angeles Department of Transportation.

Finally, a memo to the image-conscious, courtesy of Los Angeles City Councilman and MTA board member Tom LaBonge: All you need is a willingness to pedal; spandex shorts are not required.

Just off a bike, LaBonge lifted his leg to show how he tucked the bottoms of his slacks into knee-high dress socks — evoking a knickers-like effect — to prevent his pants from getting caught in the bike chain. "I have style!" the councilman said. "This is how you ride to work."

[Tri-Valley Herald - Tuesday, May 04, 2004](#)

Life rated 'good' in Central Valley

But survey finds concerns about air quality, schools

By Ken McNeill, STAFF WRITER

SAN JOAQUIN -- Most Central Valley residents believe that life is good in their local communities, according to a survey by the Public Policy Institute of California. But residents expressed concerns about such vital regional issues as air pollution, quality of schools, traffic congestion and affordable housing.

The Central Valley Survey has been conducted by the institute since 1999 and is meant to provide a comprehensive, advocacy-free study of the political, social and economic attitudes and public policy preferences of Central Valley residents. The Central Valley is the inland area of California stretching 400 miles from Redding south to Bakersfield, and is home to 5.7 million residents.

San Joaquin County residents are considered to live in the North San Joaquin Valley in the survey, as are Merced and Stanislaus counties. Seventy-one percent of North San Joaquin Valley residents considered their communities as "good or excellent" places to live, the survey said.

However, the biggest drop in the survey regarding public schools comes from those same residents. Only 46 percent considered their public schools "good or excellent," while five years ago, 58 percent of residents gave their schools positive ratings. Across the entire Central Valley, air pollution is considered the No. 1 issue and those seeing it as a problem have increased 17 points in five years, going from 28 percent to 45 percent.

However, in North San Joaquin Valley, more people see traffic as a major issue -- 49 percent -- and loss of farms and agricultural lands -- 45 percent -- over air quality -- 39 percent. Focusing on politics, 41 percent of North San Joaquin residents consider themselves to be conservative, 32 percent moderate, and 27 percent liberal. The survey showed that 44 percent of North San Joaquin Valley residents rated their city governments as "fair" and 36 percent as "good or excellent."

If they could choose, 53 percent of North San Joaquin Valley residents would support a bigger government that provides more services and 38 percent smaller government providing fewer services.

The Public Policy Institute of California is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving public policy through objective, nonpartisan research on the economic, social, and political issues that affect Californians. It was established in 1994 with an endowment from William R. Hewlett.

[th--To read the entire results of the survey or for more information on the Public Policy Institute of California, visit www.pplic.org <<http://www.pplic.org>> or call (415) 291-4400.

[Merced Sun-Star - May 3, 2004](#)

Ag workshops for farmers scheduled for May, June

Staff reports

Workshops on agricultural air quality regulations will be held in May and June for farmers throughout the state. The workshops will assist farmers with new air quality reporting and permitting requirements.

Morning and evening workshops are planned throughout the San Joaquin Valley from May 25 through June 10. They will address how to comply with on-farm rules for PM10 emission reductions, and new permitting requirements passed last year by the state.

Free workshops are planned in Merced County on Thursday, June 3. At 8 a.m., a workshop will be held at the Los Banos Fairgrounds in Los Banos; a 4 p.m. workshop is set for the UC Cooperative Extension Service office in Merced.

Farmers with 100 acres or more of contiguous farmland must implement Conservation Management Practices Plans (CMP Plans) for the control of PM10 emissions by the July 1 deadline. The deadline for submitting the completed CMP Plans is Dec. 31.

All farms and animal-feeding operations must obtain SB 700 local permits from the local air district if the facilities exceed half of the Clean Air Act Title V threshold -- or 12.5 tons of NOX emissions or more. The deadline to apply for that permit is June 30. Both stationary and portable internal combustion engines of all sizes (excluding tractors) must be included, as well as natural gas and propane engines.

Experts from the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District, as well as from agricultural organizations, will be at the workshops to answer questions and assist farmers with the reporting requirements. The workshops are being hosted by Agriculture Improving Resources, a coalition of agricultural and governmental agencies formed to educate farmers and ranchers about air quality issues. To sign up for the workshops, contact the Merced County Farm Bureau at 723-2001.

[Editorial - Modesto Bee, May 4, 2004](#)

Ruling cripples state's air regulators

Clean air standards don't mean anything if regulators can't enforce them. Last week the Supreme Court snatched away an important tool used to clean Southern California's dangerously dirty air. The high court ruled 8-1 that the South Coast Air Quality Management District cannot require private fleet operators to buy cleaner-running vehicles. That regulation was responsible for replacing 5,500 smog-forming, soot-spewing buses, trucks and taxis with clean-burning vehicles.

But the court said the rule amounts to setting an emission standard in violation of the Clean Air Act, which reserves the power to set standards to the federal government. There is a glimmer of hope. While the air district can't impose its own standards, the state can. The state regulated vehicle emissions even before the federal government moved in, so California retains special authority to set its own standards. That authority allows California, alone among the 50 states, to require zero-emission vehicles, hybrids and other clean-car technologies.

Using the state's authority, the California Air Resources Board could apply to the federal Environmental Protection Agency for a waiver to reimpose the purchase rule. Admittedly, it's a long shot. The Bush administration joined the engine makers and oil companies that sued the South Coast regulators, so it's unlikely it would grant such a waiver. Still, it's worth the effort.

[Letter to the Editor - Modesto Bee - May 2, 2004](#)

No excuses for bad air

Our family has lived in Modesto for almost six years. We are from Washington. When we first moved here, I was comforted by how friendly Modesto is and what a strong community there is. There are a lot of people that have raised generations of families here.

The fact that we are not able to breathe air as clean as the rest of our country's is wrong. I understand why our air quality is difficult to control, but that doesn't excuse it. This is a serious problem, and more needs to be done.

Every time I research our air quality it seems that the deadline for cleanup has been moved further down the road. As much as I love this community, I love my children and their health more. Both my daughter and my husband have just recently been diagnosed with allergies. How many people do you know that don't suffer from some sort of health issue due to our air quality?

SHANNON BRAILLARD

Modesto