

ARB moves to limit greenhouse gas from development, transportation

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The California Air Resources Board is taking the first steps to implement a new state law that will eventually require local governments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by better coordinating land-use planning, development and transportation.

The board is considering targets for each region that would require the four largest metropolitan areas in the state to reduce their per-capita emissions in 2020 to 5 percent to 10 percent below the levels that existed in 2005.

By 2035, those same areas — Los Angeles and Orange County, San Diego, the Bay Area and Sacramento — would have to reduce emissions related to transportation by as much as 19 percent per capita below 2005 levels.

The targets, which the board expects to finalize in September, will force regional planning boards in those areas to coordinate road construction and transit with development in a way that minimizes vehicle traffic. Generally that will mean more transit and car pool lanes, more infill development on vacant or underused lots in urban areas, and denser suburban development in communities where it will be possible to walk or bike to work, stores and schools.

The targets are the result of SB 375, the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008. SB 375 is the lesser known but still important sibling to AB 32, the state's landmark greenhouse gas reduction law. AB 32 will be challenged in a November ballot measure that calls for its suspension until unemployment is reduced to 5.5 percent for four consecutive quarters.

But even if AB 32 is suspended, SB 375 will live on, and it will soon be affecting how cities and counties plan and approve new development and transportation projects.

The ARB is holding a series of workshops this summer for the public to comment on its draft regional targets.