

# SCAG rejects air pollution reduction targets

Neil Nisperos, Los Angeles Newspaper Group, 9-3-10

The Southern California Association of Governments on Thursday rejected stronger greenhouse gas emission reduction targets recommended by the state's clean air agency.

The standards set by the California Air Resources Board aimed to help reduce air pollution. The board requested that greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles be reduced by 6 percent by 2020 and by 13 percent by 2035.

SCAG's Regional Council voted 29 to 21 to reject the targets and favored lower emission reduction targets of 6 percent by 2020 and 8 percent by 2035.

Officials from the California Business Industry Association and other state business organizations said they were pleased with the council's vote.

"I think today's decision is a victory for all the hard-working Californians that are struggling in this economic downturn," said Carlos Rodriguez, chief executive officer of the association's Baldy View chapter based in Rancho Cucamonga.

CARB will have the final say in emission reduction standards. Board members at their Sept. 23 meeting will vote on the final emission reduction targets.

The SCAG vote is expected to influence the final emission reduction standards put in place by CARB as requested in Senate Bill 375.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger approved the bill in 2008 as supplementary to The Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, which aims to reduce state greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020.

SB 375 provides incentives for local agencies and developers to move away from the automobile-fueled, urban-sprawl development that dominated the 20th century in California.

Instead, the bill favors growth patterns where people live closer to where they work and shop and are less reliant on automobiles.

Incentives include additional transportation funding and California Environmental Quality Act waivers for projects. The act, which was passed in 1970, introduced a statewide policy for environmental protection.

The massive reduction targets could result in draconian measures such as gas over \$9 per gallon, and increase travel costs by 460 percent, according to a Business Industry Association news release. Emission reduction strategies would cause an increase in taxes and fees, which would encourage fewer people to reside outside of a dense urban core and force people to adopt more of a non-motorized lifestyle, according to the association.

"People can rest easier knowing that the leaders on SCAG have sent a loud and clear message that you can have a more realistic and attainable goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and, at the same time, not jeopardize further unemployment and further deepening of the economic recession that would have occurred had the vote not gone the way it went today," Rodriguez said.

American Lung Association representatives attended Thursday's meeting at SCAG's office in downtown Los Angeles to show support for the higher emission reduction targets.

"We're a supporter of strong targets because it's an important step to reducing air pollution from motor vehicles," said Paul Kneprath, vice president for advocacy and health initiatives for the association's California chapter. "These emissions contribute to global warming and climate changes. We've been a proponent of this and local government taking steps to reduce global warming emissions to improve the quality of life for all Californians."