

## Air Resources Board should slow down on deadline change

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The state's Air Resources Board will meet today to discuss the plan to extend the deadline for clean air in the Valley until 2024. We urge CARB to slow down.

The proposal to push the Valley into the "extreme" nonattainment category is based largely on calculations that the Valley can't possibly meet the original deadline, and would risk severe sanctions from the federal government for that failure.

In April, when the Valley's air district approved the ozone plan, those calculations showed a shortfall in cleaning up the air -- the "attainment gap" -- of about 100 tons of nitrogen oxides per day. Nitrogen oxides are a building block for the eye-watering, lung-searing smog we suffer every summer in the Valley.

But since then, a task force set up by CARB has found further reductions are possible, lowering the attainment gap to around 49 tons per day by 2017, and 33 tons in 2020. That suggests to us -- and others -- that more work by the task force may result in closing the gap altogether, perhaps allowing the Valley attain clean air years ahead of the proposed deadline.

When the relaxed deadline was first proposed, we were assured that every stone had been turned over looking for regulatory means of closing that attainment gap.

But as the task force's work has demonstrated, that wasn't so. And until it's evident to all of us that there is no more to be reasonably done, we shouldn't throw up our hands and surrender to a long delay.

There's too much at stake. We watch hundred of people die prematurely each year because of our foul air. One child in five in the Valley has asthma. Collectively, we spend an additional \$3 billion-plus each year in health care costs because of illness and disease directly attributable to poor air quality.

We've been encouraged by some of the steps CARB has taken under the leadership of its new chair, Mary Nichols. We hope that improvement continues.

CARB owes us all every ounce of effort before throwing in the towel and delaying clean air for the Valley.

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