

Local plan to improve air quality

By CHELA ZABIN
STAFF WRITER

Synchronization of traffic signals, improved public-transportation commuter programs, high-density land-use policies and ordinances that would require businesses to implement a plan to reduce employee driving and schools to reduce student driving are some of the steps the local Air Pollution Control District could take to reduce pollution in the Monterey Bay Area, as required by state law.

These were among the eleven recommendations made in a recently-released report prepared for the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District by the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments.

By law, the district is required to adopt a plan to reduce auto emissions. The law requires that all "reasonably available" transportation-control measures needed to achieve air-quality standards be adopted.

Under its plan, the district hopes to reduce daily auto emissions by 2 tons per day, or 8.4 percent of what is currently emitted, by 1994.

The recommendations made by the report will be considered by the Air Pollution Control District for adoption into its air-quality management plan. After the plan is adopted, the district will work with cities and counties to implement the plan's measures. Public comment on the recommendations is being taken and will be considered at the district's Feb. 13 meeting.

Following is a summary of the report's recommendations and annual public cost estimates. The report concentrates on how much public money each recommendation would cost and doesn't give conclusive information on the costs to businesses, schools or consumers:

- Implementation of trip-reduction ordinances that would require employers of 50 or more to reduce the number of employees who drive to work alone through such measures as car pools, company vanpools, public transportation, compressed work weeks, working at home and flex time. The ordinances would be phased

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in over a three-year period, beginning with the largest employees. Estimated public cost: \$425,000.

- The creation of a regionwide network of "transportation management agencies," or voluntary associations of businesses working together to coordinate the transportation needs of employees and customers in order to reduce driving. Such an organization has already been proposed for Santa Cruz County. Estimated public cost: \$225,000.

- A commuter transit service that would be designed with the specific needs of commuters along "commuter corridors" such as Highway 17. According to the report, both Monterey-Salinas Transit and the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District have indicated their willingness to design and implement service for specific employers. Estimated public cost for projects specified in the report: \$600,000.

- General public-transit improvements and maintenance of current services. Funding needed to reduce the emissions to goal already received.

- Implementation of a trip-reduction ordinances for high schools, community colleges and universities. The ordinances would be aimed at reducing student driving by 50 percent by 1994 through measures similar to the ones pro-

posed for employers. Public cost (other than schools): \$125,000.

- Parking management that would increase the cost of public parking or reduce parking as an incentive to reduce driving. Such measures would apply to all major new commercial and industrial developments, and all large existing parking areas with the exception of residential sites. No cost estimate available.

- Tourist shuttles that would operate between hotels and motels and major visitor attractions. Public cost: \$295,320.

- Traffic-signal synchronization. Idling and stop-and-go traffic produce more emissions than freely flowing traffic. Public cost: \$22,050.

- Street and highway improvements. No cost estimate available.

- Development of bicycle routes and parking for intercity and intracity travel. No estimate available.

- The construction of more park and ride lots. Cost: \$2,000 per parking space.

The report acknowledges that many of the recommendations cannot be carried out at the current funding levels available to public agencies. It lists the most cost-effective measures as public transportation, park and ride lots, signal synchronization and the trip-reduction ordinance for employers and schools.

Copies of the report are available at the AMBAG office. Further information is available by calling 373-6116.