Vehicle Emission Control Farm Community Concern

The American farm community is part of the most mobile society the world has ever known thanks to the development of the automobile and of our great network of highways and feeder roads. And agriculture today is as dependent on our massive transportation complex as any other segment of American enterprise--in many respects more so.

With this tremendous blessing of mobility, however, has come the serious problem of air pollution. The largest single contributor to air pollution is the automobile. So the primary cure is to reduce the amount of pollutants emitted by individual motor vehicles or to reduce the number of vehicles on the road. Either cure--or a combination thereof (which is most likely)--certainly will be of concern to motor vehicle owners in the agricultural community. This is why the opportunity is taken to explain a complex and controversial decision by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The decision, made last April, sets the course for the next few years for Federal, State, and local officials in pursuing national transportation strategies.

First, some background to the decision. The Clean Air Act amendments of 1970 set strict standards for the emissions of hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide, and nitrogen oxides for 1975 and 1976 model cars. These pollutants, it has been shown, may have a harmful effect on human health. Congress decreed that hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide put out by 1975 and later model cars must be 90 percent less than emissions from 1970 models, and that nitrogen oxides put out by 1976 and later model cars must be 90 percent less than emissions from 1971 models.

Congress authorized EPA to suspend application of the standards for one year under certain conditions. In 1972, EPA turned down a request by several car manufacturers for such a suspension. In early 1973, in an appeal brought by the car manufacturers against the EPA decision, a Federal court ordered EPA to reconsider the suspension request. After public hearings, the EPA decision was issued on April 11, 1973. The request for a one-year suspension of the 1975 motor vehicle standards under the Clean Air Act of 1970 was granted. Essentially, the EPA decision provided for an orderly phase-in of new emissions control technology and set new interim standards that will mean substantially reduced automotive emissions. The decision insured against any disruption of the steady progress already being made toward cleaner emissions and toward the protection of public health.

Robert W. Fri, Acting Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, emphasizes strongly that the decision does not adversely affect air quality in any significant way. It does not add major burdens to States that already have to design and implement transportation controls. But the decision does offer the promise of insuring that efficient and durable automotive emission control technology will be available to the public nationwide by the fall of 1975 and that this technology will make a major contribution in cleaning up the Nation's air.

Mr. Fri presented a few figures to show what the decision aims to accomplish:

-- In all States except California, the emission standards for new 1975 model cars will be 1.5 grams per mile of hydrocarbons and 15 grams per mile of carbon monoxide.

-- Because of California's especially serious air quality problem, emission standards for new 1975 model cars sold in California will be more stringent -- 0.9 grams per mile of hydrocarbons and 9 grams per mile of carbon monoxide. (About one-tenth of new car production is sold in California.)

-- New 1976 model cars sold anywhere in the United States will have to meet the Clean Air Act's emission standards of 0.41 grams per mile of hydrocarbons and 3.4 grams per mile of carbon monoxide.

To underline the degree of progress manifested in these goals, consider that emissions from pre-control cars--before 1968 models--were 8.7 grams per mile of hydrocarbons and 87 grams per mile of carbon monoxide.

Nitrogen oxides are a third component of automobile emissions and the Clean Air Act states that these pollutants from 1976 and late model cars must be 90 percent less than from 1971 models. However, recently completed EPA studies of actual nitrogen oxide levels in the air, when compared with the air quality standards that have been set to protect public health, do not support the need for a 90 percent reduction in automobile emissions of nitrogen oxides. Accordingly, EPA, after further studies, may recommend that Congress amend the Clean Air Act to permit the Agency to fix whatever standard is necessary to achieve the degree of reduction needed.

A fundamental component of the EPA April decision was the conviction that oxidation catalysts to control emissions are workable and that the public interest dictated that the catalysts be phased into use by setting standards in California that would require their use on all conventional automobiles sold in that state in 1975. And the interim standard set for the rest of the Nation for 1975 models also would likely require the use of catalysts on some models.

We chose to phase in the catalysts because of the potential societal disruption involved in attempting to apply this new technology across all car lines in one year. Across-the-board introduction in one year would have involved real risks, says Mr. Fri. Our phase-in program, as suggested, will have significantly harmful effect air quality.

The April decision will not adversely affect the momentum of progress toward achieving the 1975 standards. Instead Mr. Fri stated he believes it is part of the evolutionary process toward cleaning up automobile emissions envisioned by the Congress when it molded and passed the Clean Air Act of 1970

Full-Employment Growth Anticipated By Bank of America

The pattern of consumer spending over the next six to nine months will largely determine the overall pattern of economic activity in the United States over the next two years, says a Bank of America economic forecast.

"The longer the current boom in consumer durables continues, the more severe will be the correction in 1974," says the current forecast, "Focus on the U.S. Economy: the Next 18 Months."

The big question facing the economy is whether the rapid expansion during the first half of 1973 can be slowed to more sustainable rates without causing an actual downturn in economic activity. The report indicates that it can.

"We believe a sustainable full-employment growth path will be achieved without a full-blown recession," the bank's economists say. "However, real output growth could be close to zero or even negative in one quarter in late 1973 or early 1974."

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