

Air Resources Board Delays Decision on Clean-Air Rules Affecting MTA, Others

(Jan. 28) With some members saying its proposed rules weren't tough enough, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) on Thursday delayed until at least February a decision on new clean-air regulations that would affect the MTA and other transit agencies.

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**Read Tough
AQMD Rule
Forcing Clean-
Air Buses
Could Hinder
Efforts
to Reduce Air
Pollution
and link to 'MTA
Testimony'**

CARB's regulations would permit agencies to follow one of two "paths." The alternate fuel path would require 85 percent of new buses purchased to be powered by alternative fuel engines. It would allow an agency until 2007 to meet more stringent clean-air standards.

Meet higher standards

The diesel path would allow agencies to buy new diesel buses until 2004, when they would have to start buying buses that are 87 percent cleaner. In 2007, these agencies would have to buy buses that

are 95 percent cleaner.

Some of CARB's proposals, such as reductions in NOx emissions and a requirement to use low-sulfur fuels, would have little or no impact on the MTA with its growing CNG fleet. But the MTA Board, at its January meeting, Thursday, ordered a report on the fiscal impact the regulations would have on the MTA.

CARB's proposed regulations, as currently written, are less stringent than those being considered by the South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD).

Buy only clean-fuel vehicles

If adopted at its April 21 meeting, the AQMD rule would require transit agencies with 15 or more buses immediately to buy only clean-fuel vehicles. Fleets of 100 or more vehicles - including the MTA's non-revenue fleet - would have to meet that rule by Jan. 1, 2001.

These rules, according to an MTA staff report, would mean a \$54.7 million capital expenditure for the MTA and an increase of \$7.8 million in annual operating costs. The rules also could leave the agency vulnerable in the event of a major earthquake that disrupted CNG fueling.

And, according to MTA testimony at a Jan. 12 AQMD hearing, requiring all fleets of public vehicles to convert to alternative fuels could actually hinder the MTA and other transit agencies in their efforts to reduce air pollution.

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