

Encourage delivery trucks to go electric to clean the air

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I live in West Oakland. From my apartment window in a two-story affordable-housing complex, the sounds of passing BART trains add to the other impacts of living on 7th Street, especially the trucks from the [U.S. Postal Office Distribution Center](#) and Port of Oakland, less than a mile away, that pass 24 hours a day.

In the two decades I've lived in West Oakland, I've had nearly one neighbor a year die of some form of cancer. Children in my neighborhood are seven times as likely to be hospitalized for asthma than those in other parts of Oakland - one of the highest rates in California. I suffer from asthma myself.

It probably doesn't surprise you that I don't drive a Tesla electric sports car. So why would a person like me care that Gov. [Jerry Brown](#) wants to invest millions of dollars this year to put more electric vehicles on California's roads?

It's because I work to increase awareness of the health crisis around the port, and galvanize grassroots support for solutions. The good news: There are solutions.

A soon-to-be-released technical study commissioned by the [California Cleaner Freight Coalition](#) will show that using electric-transportation technologies for local and short-haul trips could eliminate tailpipe emissions in communities like West Oakland that are heavily burdened by freight traffic.

Think about all the smaller diesel vehicles that serve neighborhoods: the FedEx vans that deliver packages to our doors, the beverage trucks that stock local supermarkets and grocers, the [AC Transit](#) buses that get people to work, and the tour buses at Jack London Square. What if whole fleets like these were replaced with emission-free electric vehicles?

Switching to electric would not only make life better in neighborhoods like mine, but also save bus and truck owners' money, replacing pricey petroleum with less-expensive, clean electricity. The technology is ready today, but rebates and loan assistance are needed to deliver the technology to the mainstream.

And while you're at it, California, please help communities like mine by changing all types of polluting vehicles on our highways. Some 40 percent of Californians live close to a freeway or a busy road - more than in any other state. This is true of almost everyone in West Oakland. So even without the port and its diesel traffic, we'd still be at higher risk for pollution-related illnesses.

By prioritizing the use of electric trucks, we can meet the state's goal of reducing diesel-particulate-matter emissions by 85 percent by 2020. California already has more electric vehicles on the road than any state, but the transition is slow and not nearly enough.

Charge Ahead California, a statewide campaign led by major environmental justice, conservation and health groups, is working to put a million electric cars, trucks and buses on the road in the next decade. Groups working to reduce road pollution in specific neighborhoods are joining the campaign.

In his State of the State address, Gov. Brown heralded the state's march to 1 million electric cars, trucks and buses as one of his administration's priorities. The approximately \$200 million that he has proposed spending on low-carbon provides the infrastructure to assure equity for truck drivers. The plan is also going to require support from the Legislature to fund the clean-vehicle incentive programs and put in place other policies that make it easier and more attractive for people - including people in my neighborhood - to buy and own a cleaner car.

Thanks to people speaking up, the port already has taken some important steps to reduce its effects on the surrounding community. We've helped curb pollution by requiring old trucks to be retrofitted with air filters. We've put in place programs to reduce truck idling; and helped electrify docks so that vessels don't need to run their diesel engines to power ship systems.

West Oakland, and other portside neighborhoods like it, have disproportionately suffered the consequences of air pollution so that everyone can enjoy the benefits of international trade. As California shifts to electric transportation, isn't it only fair that our communities also have a chance to enjoy the benefits of that?

Resources for California motorists

The Clean Vehicle Rebate Project offers rebates of up to \$2,500 for plug-in electric vehicles. Buyers may also qualify for federal tax incentives of up to \$7,500 for the purchase of a clean electric automobile. Utilities provide rate options that reward drivers who charge at night.

California rebates

cvrp.energycenter.org

U.S. tax incentives

fueleconomy.gov

PG&E incentives

pge.com/pev

Resources for truck fleets

The California Hybrid and Zero-Emission Truck and Bus Voucher Incentive Project helps fleet managers reduce the cost of clean-vehicle purchases on a first-come, first-served basis with rebates calculated to ensure fuel savings provide a payback within a three-year time frame. The governor's proposed budget provides funding to restart the program in 2014. Buyers can sign up for the wait list at californiahvip.org.

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