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## Valley air council on right track

*Group has made clear, fair suggestions for Legislature*

Earlier this month the Treasure Valley Air Quality Council settled on a final version for its recommendations to clean up the valley's air.

Its findings have shown that council members have taken seriously their job to identify broad solutions instead of getting bogged down in the minutiae that can be hammered out at a later date.

The council, which first met about a year ago after it was appointed by then-Gov. Dirk Kempthorne, spent several months gathering data and considering policies that would make the largest difference on air quality for the least cost. It published a draft report last summer, and after public hearings, it adjusted some of its recommendations. Overall, the council suggests the following:

-- Require gas stations to capture fumes that rush out of large tanks when they get filled by tankers. This "vapor recovery system" would cost about \$1,000 per tank, and would be enforced by the Department of Environmental Quality. Responding to concerns by gas stations, the council recommends the DEQ enter into a negotiations with retailers to bring stations into compliance by 2011. This measure was seen as the most cost-effective measure to reduce the largest amount of dangerous pollution in the valley's air.

-- Launch a public education campaign to encourage alternative commuting and employer programs to reduce trips. Remote sensing devices, or "smog dogs," would be placed at some on-ramps to detect cars that are big polluters. The device would take a picture of the license plate and send a notice to the owner, mandating an emissions test.

-- Encourage uniform rules for all municipalities in Ada and Canyon counties to address open burning, burn bans and dust control.

-- Encourage land use planning that reduces excess trips by adhering to the goals spelled out by the Communities in Motion study sponsored by the Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho. On-board diagnostic checks would be required for vehicles newer than 1996 and older than five years. The council reasoned that many older cars don't have on-board computers, and newer cars don't pollute much.

Money to pay for all these measures would come from a fee on annual vehicle registration in Ada and Canyon Counties. The council's report says it will be under \$10 per year.

These recommendations reveal that the council is on the right track when it comes to identifying solutions to the valley's air quality problems.

Now, with some clear goals put forward, a more definitive plan with more specifics can be hammered out by residents, air quality experts and government officials. And then, hopefully, we can all breathe a little easier.