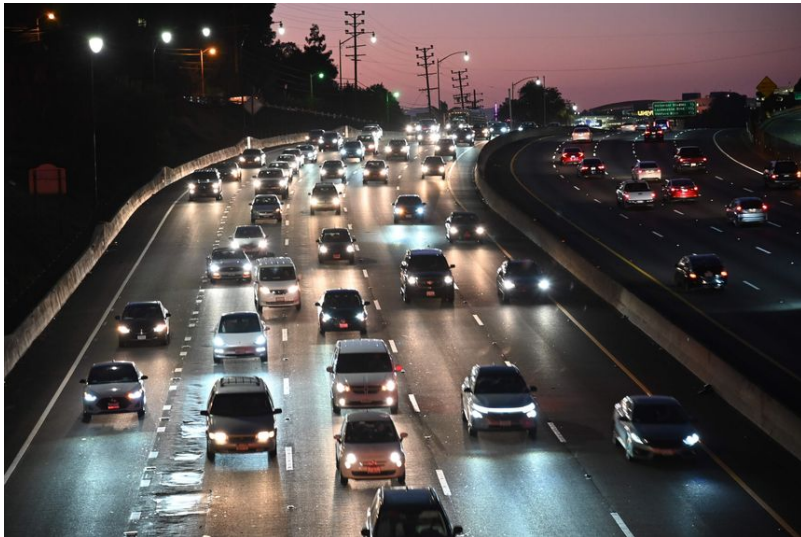


POLITICS

Trump Administration Threatens to Withhold California Transportation Funds

EPA cites state's lack of progress in addressing air-quality issues



The Trump administration's action comes less than one week after the Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Transportation Department moved to take away California's ability to set its own vehicle emissions standards. PHOTO: ROBYN BECK/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE-GETTY IMAGES

By Katy Stech Ferek

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The Trump administration accused California on Tuesday of failing to take steps to fix air-quality problems in several parts of the state, putting it at risk of losing federal funding for highways and other transportation projects.

The move is the latest salvo in the Trump administration's battle with the state over environmental issues, which California Gov. Gavin Newsom called "a threat of pure retaliation."

Officials at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency sent a letter to California air-quality officials about what they said were incomplete or unworkable air-pollution plans that state officials have submitted since the 1970s. Under the federal Clean Air Act, regulators review and approve those plans.

Failing to withdraw those plans could lead the state to lose federal money for transportation projects, they said. The state received \$4.4 billion in federal money for transportation in the fiscal year ending in 2018, the last period of available data.

EPA officials added that California has 34 million residents living in areas that don't meet national air-quality standards. They asked state officials to tell them by Oct. 10 whether the state will withdraw the old plans.

California Air Resources Board Executive Officer Richard Corey disputed the sincerity of the Trump administration's move, saying the "EPA has unclean hands: It sat on these documents for years and is now pounding the table about paperwork issues of its own creation."

He added, "The letter from the EPA contains multiple inaccuracies, omissions and misstatements."

The letter was sent less than one week after the EPA and U.S. Department of Transportation moved to take away California's ability to set its own vehicle emissions standards, a step toward easing tougher requirements set by the Obama administration. California later sued to protect that power.

Gov. Newsom, a Democrat, added "While the White House tries to bully us and concoct new ways to make our air dirtier, California is defending our state's clean air laws from President Trump's attacks."

"We won't go back to the days when our air was the color of mud," he said.

—*Alejandro Lazo and Ben Foldy contributed to this article.*

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