CAR LINES

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EUROPE

1. Landmark Ruling Allows German Cities to Ban Diesel Cars

Germany’s Federal Administrative Court in Leipzig has ruled in favor of allowing cities to impose diesel driving bans, in a landmark decision that campaigners say could shake up the car industry and revamp transport policies.

The court did not however impose such bans itself, leaving that up to city and municipal authorities. Nevertheless, the judges urged such authorities to “exercise proportionality” in enforcing the bans.

The case centered on an appeal brought by two German states (Baden-Württemberg and Rhine-Westphalia) against bans imposed by local courts in Stuttgart and Dusseldorf to bring nitrogen dioxide (NO2) pollution down as quickly as possible.

Judges said today that they “largely rejected the leapfrog revisions of the federal states of North Rhine-Westphalia and Baden-Württemberg against first instance court decisions of the administrative courts of Dusseldorf and Stuttgart” in relation to their clean air plans.

The outcome marks a major victory for the environmental group Deutsche Umwelthilfe (DUH), which took legal action against Stuttgart and Dusseldorf to force them to act against the nitrogen oxides and fine particles emitted by older diesel engines.

Lower-level judges had already backed their demand for driving bans, but the states of Baden-Wuerttemberg and North Rhine-Westphalia appealed the rulings, saying such curbs should be decided at the federal level.

The states’ appeal has now failed, as judges at the nation’s top administrative court again sided with the environmental campaigners.

DUH and activist lawyers ClientEarth welcomed the judges’ decision.

In their ruling, the judges said any diesel bans should be imposed gradually, with exceptions granted to certain vehicles.

Nitrogen oxide (NOx) and fine particle emissions from diesel motors have been a top priority for German environmental groups since Volkswagen admitted in 2015 to installing software to cheat regulatory emissions tests in millions of cars worldwide.

Bans could potentially affect 9.4m vehicles in Germany not meeting the latest Euro 6 standards.

Of the 15 million diesel cars on Germany’s roads, only 2.7 million have the latest Euro-6 technology, data by the KBA motor vehicle watchdog showed.

Germany was one of nine member states recently summoned to an EU air quality summit to outline what measures it was taking to tackle its air pollution problem. Two weeks ago, the EU executive said it was examining the responses received from all nine governments and would “come back to the issue mid-March”.

Separately, in January, Bavaria’s environment minister Ulrike Scharf was fined for the third time by the Bavarian Administrative Court for failing to tackle air pollution in Germany’s third largest city, Münich. The minister, from the ruling conservative CSU, was given four months to act.


The European Commission has published a draft regulation to improve EU car emissions tests, in the latest move to roll out more stringent controls on NOx and other pollutants in the wake of the dieselgate scandal.

A new monitoring regime has been in place since September last year, when real driving emissions (RDE) testing became mandatory under EU law, along with a more effective World Harmonized Light Vehicle Test Procedure (WLTP) for lab-based trials.

"Now the Commission is tightening the screws further by improving these tests and introducing more controls to guarantee that vehicles already in circulation are in conformity with the emission limits," the EU executive said on opening a public consultation on its draft proposal.

The document notes that in-service conformity tests performed by manufacturers had revealed very few fails despite recall campaigns and other voluntary actions related to problems with emissions. "Therefore, it is necessary to introduce more transparency and control the in-service conformity checks," it states.

"The Commission also proposes to improve the WLTP procedure by eliminating test flexibilities and introducing for the first time on-board fuel consumption monitoring, thereby making it possible to compare laboratory results for CO2 emissions with the average real driving situation," it said.

The EU executive last month criticized national governments and regulators for failing to apply the rules on car emissions, while in January it was revealed that car maker Volkswagen had fallen short by some two million cars in its undertaking to recall some 8.5 million vehicles whose emission levels were called into question following the dieselgate revelations of cheating by manufacturers.

The new draft legislation comes just days after EU transport commissioner Violetta Bulc called for more ambitious measures to improve air quality in Germany - one of nine countries recently threatened with court action for breaching EU limits on NOx - in the wake of a court ruling allowing local authorities to ban diesel cars. However, in an interview with the Middeutscher Zeitung newspaper, she described all-out bans as potentially "very frustrating". Bulc called instead for a system to make drivers pay for their pollution, based on Commission proposals for a Europe-wide electronic road toll system.

The Commission plans to table a legal proposal for tighter emissions testing after the consultation closes on 5 April. The executive has said it will respond by "mid-March" to undertakings received from the nine countries threatened with legal action over urban air pollution.

3. Swedish Fuel Pumps to Get Eco-Labels

The Swedish government has put forward proposals that aim for all petrol stations in the country to carry new eco-labels to inform consumers about the greenhouse gas emissions of the fuel they buy. In a statement, the Swedish government said that the plans will be covered in its Fuel Act, which will come into force on 1 January 2019.
The eco-label will cover liquid, gas-based fuels and alternative fuels and could also have information about the “origins of the fuel”, the Swedish government said.

Under the new proposals, fuel suppliers will also have to follow new rules on calculating and reporting the greenhouse gas emissions of their fuels.

The new plan aligns with measures outlined in the EU’s fuel quality directive, which aims to yield greenhouse gas reporting of sufficient accuracy so that the Commission can assess the performance of fuel suppliers in meeting their obligations under the directive.

The new plan will involve Sweden’s Energy Agency developing a method to standardize the calculation of the CO2-impact of fuel. This calculation will be used to evaluate each fuels “environmental declaration”, which could end up being posted beside fuel pump’s at most gas stations in Sweden.

4. VW Secures $25 Billion in Battery Supplies in Electric-Car Push

Volkswagen AG secured 20 billion euros ($25 billion) in battery supplies to underpin an aggressive push into electric cars in the coming years, putting pressure on Tesla Inc. as it struggles with production issues for the mainstream Model 3.

The world’s largest carmaker will equip 16 factories to produce electric vehicles by the end of 2022, compared with three currently, Volkswagen said March 13 in Berlin. The German manufacturer’s plans to produce as many as 3 million electric cars a year by 2025 is backstopped by deals with suppliers including Samsung SDI Co., LG Chem Ltd., and Contemporary Amperex Technology Ltd. for batteries in Europe and China.

With the powerpack deliveries secured for its two biggest markets, a deal for North America will follow shortly, Volkswagen said. In total, the Wolfsburg-based automaker said it plans to purchase about 50 billion euros in batteries as part of its electric-car push, which includes three new models in 2018 with dozens more following.

As of next year, the 12-brand group will roll out a new battery-powered model “virtually every month,” Chief Executive Officer Matthias Mueller said at the company’s annual press conference. “This is how we intend to offer the largest fleet of electric vehicles in the world,” he said.

As part of Volkswagen’s 20 billion-euro push into electric cars, it’s setting up a standalone sub-brand for battery-powered vehicles. The first model with the I.D. nameplate will be the Neo hatchback that goes on sale in 2020. Audi is set to begin deliveries later this year of the all-electric E-Tron SUV.

Even with the battery-supply deals, one of the largest purchasing tenders in the auto industry, Volkswagen’s power-supply issues are still far from over. The company, which has struggled to secure sources of cobalt, a critical component for modern batteries, said that it’s working on ways to reduce the amount of the element needed for its electric cars.

Producing the powerpacks itself is not in the cards. “This is not one of our core competencies,” said Mueller, who has faced pressure from employee representatives to invest in battery-cell production. “Others can do it better than we can.”
Chinese manufacturer CATL, which Mueller confirmed today as one of Volkswagen’s future battery providers, is considering a site in Europe for its first overseas plant, Chairman Zeng Yuqun said.

5. ICCT Says European CO2 Emission Standards Still Feasible despite Diesel Decline

The current decline in sales of diesel light duty vehicles in Europe does not put EU CO2 targets out of reach of automakers, according to a new analysis by the International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT). Other technologies—such as efficiency improvements in gasoline engines as well as the rollout of hybrid electric power trains—offer compelling and cost-effective pathways to reducing CO2 emissions from European passenger cars, the ICCT says.

The share of diesel vehicles among new car registrations in the EU decreased from a peak of 55% in 2011 to 49% in 2016; recent data suggests that diesel shares continue to fall.

The ICCT projects that a decline in diesel shares down to 15% in 2025 would not prevent attainment of EU CO2 standards and would decrease costs of meeting CO2 standards.¹

The ICCT notes that while diesels generally consume less fuel than comparable gasoline vehicles, CO2 emissions from diesel engines are not lower in the same proportion, for various reasons. The combustion of 1 liter of diesel fuel produces approximately 11% more energy than gasoline fuel, but the diesel fuel also releases approximately 11% more CO2 due to its higher carbon content.

On top of the higher energy density of diesel fuel, diesel engines historically possessed several efficiency advantages over gasoline engines. But gasoline engines are gaining ground against diesel engines thanks to a suite of efficiency technologies, such as direct injection, turbocharging and downsizing, cooled EGR, and variable valve timing. Additional advances in gasoline-vehicle design, such as variable compression-ratio engines, will further erode the efficiency advantages of diesel.

In addition, vehicle manufacturers increasingly use electric motors to complement conventional combustion engines in cars. Hybrid electric vehicles can provide efficiency gains over diesel power trains at lower CO2 abatement costs. For instance, hybrid electric vehicles and diesel cars in the small (e.g., Renault Clio) and lower medium (e.g., VW Golf) market segments are, on average, similarly priced (±1%), but hybrid electric vehicles have approximately 20% lower CO2 emissions. The cost advantage of hybrid electric vehicles is expected to grow as battery prices decline and diesel engines require increasingly complex exhaust aftertreatment technology. In contrast to diesel engines, hybrid electric vehicles also function as a logical stepping-stone toward fully electric power trains, which will ultimately be required to decarbonize road transportation.

6. EU 2020 Renewables Target Under Fire

The EU’s 2020 target for renewable energy in transport has contributed to a rise in the use of unsustainable crop biofuels, campaigners have said ahead of negotiations between MEPs and member states due to begin in the next few weeks. Under the EU’s renewable energy directive

(RED), member states are required to have at least 10% of their transport fuels come from renewable sources by 2020 and some countries have used crop-based biofuels to reach this.

Clean fuels manager at campaign group Transport & Environment Laura Buffet told reporters that the target “pushed an exponential increase in the use of unsustainable crop biofuels”. “The majority of the EU biofuels market today is crop biodiesel, which is on average worse for the climate than fossil diesel and brought loads of palm oil imports that drive deforestation,” she said. “Focusing on quantities of renewables in transport and not on their quality has proven to have a devastating impact for the climate.”

Buffet’s comments come ahead of ‘trialogue’ meetings between policymakers on the EU’s post-2020 renewable energy targets, which are due to take place in late March and early April.

The renewable energy debate so far has focused on the role of biofuels, with lobbyists rallying on either side of a European Commission proposal in November 2016 to reduce the contribution of crop-based biofuels in transport from a maximum of 7% in 2021 to 3.8% in 2030. Earlier this year, the European Parliament also made proposals to phase out palm oil-based fuels after 2021 as part of plans to revise the RED.

Earlier this year, the EU’s statistical office Eurostat published results that showed that Sweden and Austria were the only two-member states to reach a 10% of renewable fuel energy target for transport in 2016.

7. **Commissioner Hints at Further Dieselgate Action**

The European Commission will “probably” move to the next stage of infringement proceedings against some members states over breaches of European rules in response to the dieselgate scandal, the industry commissioner has hinted.

Elżbieta Bieńkowska was appearing before the Parliament’s environment committee to discuss recommendations made a year ago by MEPs in the wake of dieselgate. The commissioner said that after sending letters of formal notice to seven member states the executive was considering their responses. “There is a will on our side to make a further step”, she said, suggesting the Commission could move to the next stage of the legal process in some cases.

There are ongoing infringement procedures for breaching EU type approval legislation against Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Luxembourg, Spain, United Kingdom and Italy.

The Commission sought further clarification from five-member states in July 2017.

Two years on from the dieselgate scandal ENVI legislators were critical of the Commission’s response. Greens/EFA member Bas Eickhout said the commissioner had previously indicated there would be further infringement proceedings. “European law is clear: defeat devices are prohibited”, he said. If member states are not following that law the Commission “should take action through infringements.”

Liberal ALDE group member Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy said that while millions of diesel cars which do not comply with EU law were still on the road, just seven-member states had mandatory recalls. Gerbrandy condemned the “lack of action” by member states and the absence of fines for manufacturers and compensation for consumers.
Miriam Dalli of the Socialists and Democrats said Euro standards were failing to reduce real world NOx emissions. It was, she added, “unacceptable” that recall delays meant two million Volkswagen cars had still not been repaired and were “still polluting our air”.

Was it true, she asked the commissioner, that “certain member states” had been “unwilling to cooperate” with the recall and repair process. Bieńkowska said she was “not happy” with “unacceptable” levels of recalls. A new Recall Information Platform launched last month, she said, which member states must supply data to, would help the Commission increase political pressure on members states to pressure the companies.

Problems with Euro 6 would be resolved with the new type approval rules, the commissioner said. Recently the executive published draft regulations to improve real driving emissions tests.

8. **Low Emission Zones ‘Let Dirty New Diesels Off the Hook’**

European cities’ low emission zones are failing to effectively limit polluting diesel vehicles, campaigners have said following analysis of existing schemes. The Transport and Environment group (T&E) said restrictions on polluting vehicles in EU cities were “letting dirty new diesels off the hook” with blanket exemptions for Euro 6 diesel vehicles which the campaigners said are “mostly dirty”.

T&E found large differences in low emission zones and restrictions implemented in 11 European cities, including Athens, Berlin, London, and Oslo. A key weakness in schemes introduced so far, the campaign’s researchers said, is a blanket exemption for Euro 6 emission standard cars.

As demonstrated by the Dieselgate scandal, the green group said, Euro 6 cars emit much higher levels of NOx in real world conditions than in official tests, with fewer than 10% on sale today meeting EU limits.

Cities should abandon blanket exemptions and instead provide access based on real-world NOx and PN emissions. Vehicles with emissions levels above EU limits should either be fixed at the expense of the manufacturer or banned from city centers, the report said.

Unless carmakers fix “dirty diesels”, said clean vehicles manager at T&E Julia Poliscanova, cities are left with no option but restrict them. “To be effective, the inclusion/exclusion criteria of these measures should be based on vehicles’ real-world emissions that are now widely available,” she said.

The group also called for cities with large numbers of imported second-hand cars to increase restrictions on the numbers of “dirty diesels” which can enter circulation.

Cities should also be given powers to permanently restrict vehicles, they added, and for the use of remote vehicle emissions sensing to help exclude polluting cars.

9. **VW Boss Predicts ‘Renaissance’ for Embattled Diesel Cars**

Toyota Motor Corp. announced plans to drop diesel models from its European portfolio this year even as Volkswagen AG, which sparked the fury over the technology, predicts a rebound.

The diverging views of the world’s two largest automakers reflects the uncertainty over the future of diesel, which has faced a steady drumbeat of bad news since Volkswagen’s cheating scandal
erupted in September 2015. The German auto giant is expecting consumers to forgive and forget soon, as cleaner diesels hit the streets. “Diesel will see a renaissance in the not-too-distant future because people who drove diesels will realize that it was a very comfortable drive concept,” Chief Executive Officer Matthias Mueller said at the Geneva International Motor Show. “Once the knowledge that diesels are eco-friendly firms up in people’s minds, then for me there’s no reason not to buy one.”

The comments are bold considering Volkswagen put aside about $30 billion in provisions to cover fines, retrofits and legal costs stemming from rigging diesel-emissions systems to dupe government pollution tests.

The fallout has been wide ranging. Germany is now considering potential bans of diesel vehicles from cities, and governments including China, France and the U.K. have put in place plans to phase out the internal combustion engine. Consumers have also begun to shun diesel, with its share of German car sales tumbling to a third from half since VW’s cheating scandal.

In contrast to VW’s upbeat prognosis, Toyota is getting rid of diesels in Europe, the main market for the technology. After refraining from a diesel variant of the C-HR crossover in 2016, Toyota will extend that decision across its portfolio, including offering the redesigned Auris compact with two hybrid powertrains and one turbocharged gasoline engine.

There’s more at stake than consumer choice. European carmakers have been counting on diesel -- a profitable and fuel-efficient alternative to gasoline vehicles -- to meet tighter environmental regulations until electric cars become more viable. “We need diesel to get to the CO2 goals,” Herbert Diess, who heads Volkswagen’s namesake mass-market brand, said after presenting the all-electric I.D. Vizzion concept car that’s capable of driving as far as 650 kilometers (404 miles) on a single charge. “Electric vehicles in many cases won’t keep frequent drivers happy.”

While Ford Motor Co. still backs diesel, the technology’s role may be further diminished by tighter environmental rules, as regulators target the fuel’s emissions of smog-causing nitrogen oxides, according to Steven Armstrong, chief of the automaker’s European operations.

“We still see a future for diesel, although on some smaller vehicles I do believe it will progressively disappear,” Armstrong said in an interview. “We have to work hard to gain consumer trust to make sure they believe the messaging” that new diesels are clean.

Toyota, a pioneer in hybrid technology, has had doubts about diesel’s ability to meet modern environmental rules since 2011, Didier Leroy, executive vice president at Toyota, said in Geneva. Now, there’s a risk to consumer sentiment, with a “real potential” for driving bans to hit diesel cars in European cities beyond Germany, he said.

While VW and other proponents argue diesel’s merits from a regulatory and technology perspective, it’s uncertain how customers will react to the threat of driving restrictions and falling prices for used vehicles.

“At the end of the day, consumers have the final word,” Carlos Tavares, CEO of PSA Group, the maker of Peugeot, Citroen and Opel vehicles, said in an interview. “We have a very clear strategy in terms of multi-energy platforms, which means we can assemble on the same assembly line petrol cars, diesel cars, electric-powered cars.”
German manufacturers like Volkswagen are more exposed to diesel’s demise than European rivals because they make more powerful vehicles. Mercedes-Benz parent Daimler AG said the CO2 emissions of its vehicles rose last year, as buyers traded up to bigger models. The hurdles are only getting tougher.

Carmakers in the EU need to lower fleet emissions to average 95 grams of CO2 per kilometer by 2021, from an average of 118 grams CO2 in 2016. Lower demand for diesel cars -- which emit about a fifth less carbon dioxide compared to equivalent gasoline vehicles -- could force automakers to aggressively push unprofitable electric cars to meet these targets.

“The rules of the game in the EU in relation to climate protection and emissions goals on CO2 are so challenging that governments cannot do without diesel,” VW’s Mueller said. “We’re doing everything to avoid” coming up short, but “if there’s less diesel, then getting to that goal just gets tougher.”

10. Lawmakers Say Britain Needs Tougher Law to Tackle 'Air Quality Catastrophe'

Britain should introduce new, more ambitious legislation to tackle poor air quality after failing to deal with the problem, lawmakers said recently. In a joint report, four parliamentary committees said air pollution was a national health emergency and the government has still not produced a plan which adequately addresses it.

Under the European Union’s Air Quality Directive, member states were supposed to comply with nitrogen dioxide emission limits in 2010 - or by 2015 if they delivered plans to deal with high levels of the gas, which is produced mainly by diesel engines. The European Commission is reviewing whether to take legal action against nine member states, including Britain, for breaching the rules after they submitted plans to address the issue.

“The government’s latest plan does not present an effective response to the scale of the air quality catastrophe in the UK,” said Neil Parish, chairman of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee. “We are concerned that the government is treating air quality as a box-ticking exercise. Real change will require bold, meaningful action.”

Parish’s committee issued the report along with the parliamentary environmental audit, health and social care, and transport committees.

Recently, the High Court ruled that the government plan was inadequate, following a legal complaint from environmental lawyers Client Earth.

The report said the government should introduce a new Clean Air Act which improves existing legislation and enshrines the right to clean air in law. It should also establish a fund for clean air initiatives, to be partially financed by the private sector, by the end of this year.

The committees also said that although the government has promised to end the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2040, the target is too late to bring about changes in industry and local government planning and should be brought forward.

The government said it will consider the report and respond in due course. “Air pollution has improved significantly since 2010, but we recognize there is more to do which is why we have a 3.5 billion pound ($4.9 billion) plan to reduce harmful emissions. We will set out further actions through a comprehensive clean air strategy later this year,” a government spokesman said.
11. Ban New Petrol and Diesel Cars In 2030, Not 2040, Says Thinktank

Ministers have been urged to bring forward their 2040 ban on new diesel and petrol car sales by a decade, a move which an environmental thinktank said would almost halve oil imports and largely close the gap in the UK’s climate targets. The Green Alliance said a more ambitious deadline of 2030 is also needed to avoid the UK squandering its leadership on electric cars.

While the number of electric cars being sold in the UK has rocketed in the past four years, Germany overtook the UK last year in its rise in the registrations of new plug-in hybrids and 100% battery-powered cars. A 2030 ban on combustion engine models would boost sales of electrified cars in the UK and even raise the prospect of the country becoming a net vehicle exporter, the Green Alliance said.

While the UK lags behind Germany on conventional car manufacturing, a fifth of the electric cars sold in Europe in 2016 were made at Nissan’s Sunderland plant in north-east England. BMW has pledged to make its electric Mini at its plant in Oxford, but UK-headquartered Jaguar Land Rover chose to build its first flagship electric car, the i-Pace, in Austria.

Dustin Benton, policy director at Green Alliance, said: “The government’s recent industrial strategy cites clean growth as one of the biggest economic opportunities for the UK, but if we keep building and buying dirty cars we’ll miss the growth opportunity of the century.”

The transport sector overtook energy in 2016 as the UK’s single biggest source of carbon emissions, as power generation has switched away from coal and towards renewables. Carbon emissions from the average new car also rose last year for the first time in nearly two decades, as drivers opted for bigger models.

The Green Alliance found that an earlier phase-out for new diesels and petrol cars would affect the looming gap in the UK’s legally binding 2030 climate target. A 2030 deadline would cut the gap by 85%, or 98 million tons CO2e.

Sticking with a 2040 date would also lead to fossil-fueled cars causing air pollution until the second half of the century, the thinktank said, given the average UK car is scrapped after 14 years. Four committees of MPs last week warned that air pollution is a “national health emergency” and called on the government to take tougher action.

Earlier action would also ease the UK’s reliance on oil imports at a time when oil and gas production from the North Sea is declining. Imports would be cut by nearly 50% by 2035, saving up to an estimated £6.63bn each year, the thinktank said.

While ministers last summer followed France by pledging to halt new petrol and diesel car sales by 2040, other countries are looking to ban them years earlier. Scotland is aiming for 2032, India wants to only sell electric models by 2030 and Norway, the world leader on the take-up of battery-powered cars, has set a 2025 deadline.

The Green Alliance said the government could take several other measures to sustain the UK’s leadership on electric cars, including public procurement. A grant of up to £4,500 to buyers of electric cars should also be extended, the group said, and government could further help by setting manufacturers sales targets for electric cars, starting at 15% of all cars sold in 2022 and rising to 45% by 2025.
The car industry body, the SMMT, said outright bans on petrol and diesels risked harming the new car market, and the sector could be undermined if not given enough time to adjust.

**12. Paris: Legal Challenge to Car-Free Promenade by Seine**

When pedestrians reclaimed a stretch of once traffic-clogged dual carriageway on Paris’s right bank a year-and-a-half ago, it was a symbol of the leftwing mayor’s anti-pollution fight to push cars out of the French capital. But a court ruling has raised the specter of traffic potentially being forced back on to the newly popular, car-free promenade by the river Seine – the latest battle in the city’s ongoing “car-wars” between the left and right.

The move to pedestrianize 3.3km (2 miles) of prime Paris riverside stretching from the Tuileries tunnel to the Henri IV bridge in autumn 2016 was met with approval from many Parisians and green groups but was furiously contested by right-wingers and car-owners. Several rightwing politicians and motorists’ groups went to court against it. A recent ruling found the pedestrianization process had not followed correct procedures because an impact study was open to dispute.

Refusing to countenance the riverside walkway and playgrounds being turned back into a dual carriageway, Paris’s Socialist mayor Anne Hidalgo vowed to appeal and keep the pedestrianization in place. She said of the opponents to the promenade: “For them, car traffic takes priority over public health: an urban motorway is worth more than a park in the center of the city.”

Hidalgo had made the pedestrianization and “reconquest of the right bank of the Seine” a focal point in a battle against Paris’s serious problem of air pollution. After saying that there were 2,500 deaths a year in Paris linked to air pollution, she has promised to cut the number of private cars in the French capital by half, eradicate diesel by 2024 and double the surface of cycle lanes by 2020.

Christophe Najdovski, Paris’s Green deputy mayor in charge of transport, said: “Cars will not be back on the right bank of the Seine: not in the coming days, not in the coming weeks, not in the coming months.”

But there will now be a legal battle for Paris city hall to protect the walkway.

Before the pedestrianization, 43,000 cars a day passed over the stretch of road on the Seine’s right bank, which used to close in summer for the annual Paris-Plages artificial beach project.

Unlike London’s strategy to charge drivers to enter the city center, Paris is focused on pushing out cars by limiting accessible roads and parking. But the bank of the Seine was always a political flashpoint. Right-wingers said the pedestrianization would damage people who needed to drive to work from the suburbs. Those on the left pointed out that studies showed few of the drivers on that stretch of road were from Paris’s suburbs and the majority were high earners, with Paris-registered cars.

The group 40 Million Motorists, which went to court against the pedestrianization, said: “This is a first victory for road-users from Paris and the surrounding area, whose mobility had been jeopardized since this measure came into place and who hope that these roads will be quickly reopened.” Local politicians from the rightwing Les Républicains party hailed the court ruling,
criticizing what they called Paris city hall’s “lack of consultation, evaluation and coherence” and said the pedestrianization had been forced through too fast.

The row comes as the city is also under fire over a fiasco surrounding Paris’s rental bike scheme, Vélib, currently undergoing long delays and a dearth of bikes as management changes hands to the firm, Smovengo.

13. BMW Admits Irregularities in Exhaust Gas Software

Last fall at the International Motor Show IAA BMW boss Harald Krüger publicly stated: "We have not manipulated the vehicles, we have diesel, they are clean." The chairman of the Bavarian automaker added in the chest tone of conviction even more: "There is no defeat device at the BMW Group."

Even more recently, BMW development chief Klaus Fröhlich was quoted as saying: "As a general rule: BMW Group vehicles are not tampered with - our diesel engines are clean, which can be used by the public and the public, and above all by our customers and employees."

But both the eloquent manager and his development chief seem to have been wrong. Because according to information of SPIEGEL, the Group has admitted to the Federal Motor Vehicle Office (KBA) to have installed a software in two models, which manipulates the exhaust system of diesel. Such a software is in the luxury model, the BMW 7 Series, and also in diesels from the 5 Series.

BMW explained on request that these are vehicles with a six-cylinder engine whose exhaust system "does not function optimally" by the software.

This affects 11,000 vehicles alone in the German market. BMW is currently examining whether this software is also on vehicles that have been exported abroad. The concern of the car maker is mainly the US market, where threatening fines could be imposed. However, a BMW spokesman told the SPIEGEL, "We do not consider this software as a ‘defeat device’."

The Bavarians have confirmed the use of the faulty software at a hearing at the KBA in Flensburg.

At the end of last year, the German Environmental Aid (DUH) had alleged that significantly higher nitrogen oxide emissions had been measured with a diesel of the 3 Series, but the KBA rejected this suspicion after its own investigations.

The ministry now must decide whether to order an official recall or if BMW sends out a voluntary recall. BMW states that the KBA has been warned about the irregularities in the software of the car.

14. BMW HQ Raided in Diesel Emissions Cheating Probe

German prosecutors have raided BMW's headquarters in Munich as part of a probe into possible diesel emissions cheating software in BMW cars. Around 100 investigators searched the German car giant's Munich offices as well as another site in Austria. Prosecutors say they have reason to believe that 11,400 diesel models may be fitted with "inadmissible defeat devices" to pass laboratory tests. The cars in question are said to be the 750d luxury limousine and the M550d saloon.

BMW confirmed the raid and said the software had been "mistakenly allocated" to the 11,400 vehicles and is now planning a recall. A BMW Group statement read: "The BMW Group realized
that a correctly developed software module had been allocated in error to models for which it was not suited. Therefore, the BMW Group plans to recall 11,400 vehicles, for which corrected software will be made available as soon as it has been approved by the relevant authorities."

The company added: "Many of the affected vehicles were initially sold with the correct software and ran correctly for over two years. The incorrect software was employed a significant time after these models originally started production."

However, this isn't the first time BMW has faced an inquiry from public prosecutors. Last October, the company's Munich headquarters were also raided by officials from the European Commission's antitrust arm over allegations that the carmaker colluded with rivals from VW Group and Mercedes-Benz over vehicle emissions. The raid took place on 16 October, according to the Commission, with BMW confirming it is "assisting the European Commission in its work." The Munich-based carmaker pointed out that "the European Commission has not opened formal proceedings against the BMW Group."

Earlier last year the German newspaper Der Spiegel said BMW, Daimler, Volkswagen, Porsche and Audi met to discuss AdBlue tanks, which deliver the urea that purifies diesel emissions in many diesel cars. The report alleged that the companies decided to avoid expensive larger tanks and instead fit smaller ones that can’t clean exhaust gases sufficiently.

In a statement issued earlier last July, BMW said: “BMW vehicles are not manipulated and comply with respective legal requirements”, adding, “The BMW Group categorically rejects accusations that Euro 6 vehicles sold by the company do not provide adequate exhaust gas treatment due to AdBlue tanks that are too small.”

The report said that collusion had been happening since the 1990s and involved over 200 employees in 60 working groups.

The firm says that its Euro 6 cars employ a NOx-storage catalytic converter alongside AdBlue injection, which means that it can reduce emissions using less AdBlue. Thus, the size of the AdBlue tank is dictated by requirements, and not by an agreement between manufacturers.

15. ING and EIB provide EUR 300m to finance green shipping

The European Investment Bank (EIB) and ING have signed an agreement to support green investments for the European shipping market for a total value of EUR 300m. ING and EIB will each contribute EUR 150m to the facility. This agreement will ensure that sponsors of green and sustainable projects in the maritime transport sector can benefit from advantageous financial terms.

The facility is available to clients with significant European interests and can be used for projects with a green innovation element covering the construction of new vessels or retrofitting of existing vessels. It applies to both inland shipping and seagoing operators.

This agreement forms part of ING's wider sustainability strategy, which aims to facilitate and finance society’s shift to sustainability – environmental, economic, and social. To this end, it is helping to develop and promote sustainable business models and explore how sustainable financing can help support energy transition and combat climate change.
To create a diversified portfolio, the EUR 300m facility will be invested with the EIB gradually over the next three years, with ING’s shipping team leading and managing the commitment. The deal also benefits from the guarantee of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the central element of the Juncker Plan.

“I think it’s no secret that the shipping sector is a major contributor to CO2 emissions. Climate action is one of the EIB’s top priorities, and this type of financing should be an incentive for ship owners to consider doing things differently.” said EIB President Werner Hoyer. “The facility was set up after numerous discussions with Dutch counterparts from the public and private sector and aims to help the shipping sector transition to a greener future.”

Isabel Fernandez, Head of Wholesale Banking at ING, added: “Sustainability is an important strategic priority for ING and we are very proud to partner with the EIB to encourage our shipping clients to think about more green and sustainable financing options. This agreement helps us support our shipping clients into making changes to their business models by adapting for the future in increasingly sustainable way and supports them throughout their green journey.”

This sector risk-bearing facility is meant for projects that will improve the environmental performance of transport vessels in terms of reducing the emission of pollutants as well as increasing fuel efficiency. Projects should be presented to ING and will be subject to ING’s financial and non-financial risk acceptance criteria.

16. Electric Cars Rise in Value After Year’s Use Amid Growing Demand

Second-hand electric cars are selling for more than they were bought for because of a rise in demand for green vehicles, according to research. Amid a shortage in the number of eco-friendly vehicles on the market, experts said that drivers could run cars for a year and add thousands of miles to the clock but still sell the vehicle for more than the purchase price.

The trend flies in the face of the rest of the car market where uncertainty over new pollution charges in cities combined with increases in vehicle excise duty has hit sales.

Recent figures published by the motor industry showed that new car sales dropped by more than 6 per cent last month, with the number of diesels being purchased falling by a quarter year-on-year. Sales of alternatively fueled vehicles, including pure electric cars and hybrids, rose over the period by 24 per cent but still account for only 5.5 per cent of the overall market.

However, researchers said that demand for green cars has reached such a level that it is also driving a rise in prices for second-hand vehicles. Analysis from Cap HPI, the automotive data company, found that some models increased in value after being bought at one year old, accumulating 10,000 miles and then being resold 12 months later. It found the Peugeot Ion rose in value by 8.6 per cent between January 2017 and January 2018, adding £425. The Vauxhall Ampera, a petrol-electric hybrid, increased by an average of 5.3 per cent or £725 while the Nissan Leaf, the most popular electric car on the market, rose by 4 per cent or £456. The Toyota Yaris hybrid had an average of 2.6 per cent or £292 added to its value and the Lexus GS hybrid increased in value by 0.7 per cent or £178.

Cap HPI said that, as well as demand, the move was likely to be partly driven by a rise in the number of roadside chargers, making it easier for drivers to travel long distances, combined with concerns over pollution charges. The government has already said that it wants to ban the sale of new petrol or diesel cars by 2040. In London, a £10-a-day toxicity charge has been levied on
drivers of older diesel and petrol cars entering the center. Councils in other parts of the country are under pressure to introduce their own measures to improve air quality.

17. EU Member States Rolling-Out Electric Charging Infrastructure In 2020 And Beyond

The aspirations of the member states to support alternative fuels varies greatly – but 10 Member States (Austria, Denmark, France, Finland, Sweden, Germany, Netherlands, UK, Ireland, and Luxembourg) clearly prioritize electromobility. Only 3 countries (Italy, Hungary and Czech Republic) have ambitious goals for the roll-out of natural gas vehicles. Three countries have proposed unrealistically high estimates for future number of EVs on the road by 2020 (Germany, France, Austria) given there are only 36 months of sales and are unlikely to achieve their goals.

The national plans show that the current level of recharging points available in the EU is sufficient for the number of vehicles on the road – based upon the European Commission recommendation of 10 EVs for each recharging point. National plans for rollout of public charging infrastructures by 2020 EU-wide are also expected to keep pace with the anticipated growth in the number of vehicles. There will also be sufficient fast chargers alongside the principal highway routes with at least one fast recharger every 40km. Accordingly, there is not likely to be any widespread shortage of recharging points if Member States deliver on their plans – although there may be local areas of over and under supply. After 2020 there will need to be a significant further investment, beyond existing plans, to match the number of EVs expected to be on the road. Some further EU funding will be essential particularly in less developed markets.

18. New Limits for Trucks to Cut EU Transport Emissions By 3%

Forthcoming proposals to cap CO2 emissions from heavy duty vehicles will contribute a 3% cut in Europe's overall road transport emissions by 2030, the EU's climate and energy commissioner has indicated. Miguel Arias Cañete was addressing environment ministers during a debate on a recent proposal to cut emissions from cars and vans by 30%, which he said would reduce overall road transport emissions by 22%.

This would count towards the overall cut of a quarter of emissions from road transport expected under the Effort Sharing Regulation covering sectors outside the scope of the EU emissions trading system.

"The remaining 3% will be provided by the standard for trucks that we are going to present in May," Cañete said.

With trucks and buses estimated to contribute about a quarter of road transport emissions, the figure mentioned by Cañete implies that the entire fleet of heavy duty vehicles (HDVs) on Europe's roads will have to be emitting around 12% less CO2 by 2030 compared to 2005. The new standards to be proposed in early May are set to apply to newly-built vehicles only, so new trucks and buses would have to deliver most of the required reduction.

The EU executive is slated to present its proposals on 2 May as part of a 'third mobility package' of transport related policy proposals.

The debate over the emissions limits for cars and vans proposed in November as part of an earlier package saw national governments divided over the headline 30% CO2 emissions cut. Ministers from Ireland, Sweden and Portugal were among those who said the 30% goal was insufficiently
ambitious. French ecology minister Brune Poirson advocated a cut of up to 40% by 2030, and spoke in favor of a zero emissions goal, noting France had introduced one for 2040.

Others were less enthusiastic, with ministers from Spain, Italy and Romania advocating a balance between climate goals and the need to protect manufacturing jobs. In a brief intervention, German minister Jochen Flasbarth approved the goal of emissions cuts then added Berlin would “welcome special incentives for zero-emission vehicles”.

19. German Electric Bus Scheme Clears State Aid Hurdle

A German scheme to support the purchase of electric buses is in line with EU rules on state aid, the European Commission has announced. The Commission has also announced that German plans to fund the construction of related charging infrastructure required for the operation of the buses is also in line with EU state aid rules.

With a budget of €70m, Germany hopes the scheme it has set up will support public transport operators until the end of 2021. The funds will help operators buy electric and plug-in-hybrid buses rather than conventional diesel buses. To qualify for the support, public transport operators must ensure that their electric and plug-in hybrid buses are operated with electricity from renewable sources.

The measure is intended to increase the number of electric buses in Germany and help to reduce CO2 and air pollutant emissions, in particular in cities.

The Commission said in a statement that the scheme is in line with the European strategy for low-emission mobility, and its support for the move towards zero-emission vehicles in cities and for creating a market for such vehicles.

The Commission added that energy efficiency will help Europe’s clean energy transition and help the bloc to meet its Paris agreement targets.

Speaking about the electric bus initiative, competition commissioner Margrethe Vestager said the scheme was a positive example of how to fight global warming. “In line with the EU environmental goals, it will give public transport operators an incentive to invest in low or zero emissions vehicles with the clear objective of reducing CO2 emissions and improving air quality,” she added.

State aid is prohibited as a matter of principle under EU law, but Commission guidelines allow exceptions in cases where market distortion is minimized, and support is aimed at achieving energy and climate policy goals.

20. MEPs Take Aim at UN’s CORSIA Scheme

MEPs have told the European Commission to push harder for robust environmental standards in the UN aviation agency ICAO’s controversial offset scheme ahead of the publication of criteria in June. In a meeting of the EU’s ENVI committee attended by Commission officials, a string of EU lawmakers took aim at a lack of transparency and enforcement in the CORSIA scheme, demanding that the EU’s executive insist on the reinsertion of sustainability criteria for offsets and biofuels once the pilot phase ends in 2023.

“I’m disappointed by what I’ve heard today. We appear to have thrown in the towel and the EU is not taking sufficient action,” Dutch centrist MEP Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy told the ENVI meeting.
“The aviation industry and sector are growing and growing - what happens in Montreal is crucial, but nothing is made public. It's scandalous that this is not more transparent,” he added.

Commission officials pointed out that it is only countries that can sit on ICAO's 36-member council (of which only eight are EU member states), and not the EU, requiring the Commission to coordinate its input on CORSIA through the European Civil Aviation Conference.

Moreover, the draft criteria due in June would also reflect the needs of developing countries with rapidly growing aviation sectors and biofuels industries, Commission officials added.

Peter Vis, an adviser to the Commission (DG MOVE), said EU countries will make clear their acceptance of CORSIA package when they are sent for consultation. “These countries don’t want the criteria to be reopened, as current draft is fruit of long negotiations. The EU is isolated on key issues. We should strive for robust rules and governance,” Vis added.

MEPs only have a direct input on CORSIA though a delegated act related to the monitoring, reporting and verification of offsets, but are also putting direct pressure on the Commission to deliver environmental safeguards for CORSIA once it enters into force in 2023.

Vis said that if the draft measures agreed in June are “reopened” for discussion during the pilot phase, the EU should be prepared to press for tighter standards, although there is a danger that this reappraisal could also enable some countries to weaken green criteria.

It has been reported that ICAO is on a collision course with MEPs concerned about the removal of 10 of 12 environmental criteria related to alternative jet fuels, and the determination of the UN aviation agency to include forest offsets as part of an overall target to cap aviation emissions at 2020 levels by 2050.

Mark Demesmaeker, a Belgian conservative bloc MEP, pointed out that the ICAO criteria had so far failed to establish rules for non-compliance, heightening the potential that countries will flout requirements under CORSIA.

Andrew Murphy, an expert on aviation with NGO Transport & Environment, said if CORSIA is to be effective, it would require sufficient safeguards on environmentally credible offsets. “While the rules as drafted contain some important principles, we’ve yet to find out how they’ll be enforced. The danger is that some states may go their own way and allow their airlines to buy cheaper and lower quality offsets,” he said in a briefing note.

21. Rome To Ban Diesel Cars from City Centre by 2024

Rome, one of Europe’s most traffic-clogged cities and home to thousands of ancient outdoor monuments threatened by pollution, plans to ban diesel cars from the center by 2024, its mayor has said. Virginia Raggi announced the decision on her Facebook page, saying: “If we want to intervene seriously, we have to have the courage to adopt strong measures”.

Her comments followed a court ruling in Germany that cities there can ban the most heavily polluting diesel cars from their streets. About two-thirds of the 1.8m new cars sold in Italy last year were diesel, according to industry figures.

Rome has no major industries, so nearly all the air pollution in the Italian capital is caused by motor vehicles.
The city often tries to ban older, more polluting vehicles from roads on days pollution reaches critical levels. It has also tried to reduce pollution by allowing only cars whose number plates end in either odd or even numbers to circulate on alternate days.

But both regulations are widely flouted and lightly enforced by traffic police. To skirt the alternate days regulation, many families buy a used car with a different number plate.

Apart from health issues, pollution from combustion engines causes severe damage to Rome’s many ancient outdoor monuments. According to a study last year by a branch of the culture ministry, 3,600 stone monuments and 60 bronze sculptures risk serious deterioration because of air pollution.

Ahead of celebrations marking the start of the new millennium in 2000, the darkened facade of St Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican was cleaned as part of a project that lasted several years, but fresh signs of pollution-related stains are visible again.

Before the German court’s ruling, officials in highly industrialized Milan, in northern Italy, had already announced plans to make the city diesel-free by 2030.

22. Air Pollution from UK Shipping Is Four Times Higher Than Previously Thought

Toxic nitrogen dioxide emissions around major ports and sea routes in the UK are four times higher than previously suggested, according to a report for the Government. Levels of sulfur dioxide, another harmful pollutant, are three times higher.

Experts say shipping pollutants, which are concentrated around major port cities such as Southampton, Grimsby and Liverpool, are a significant cause of concern for the health of local populations.

Long-term exposure to pollutants like nitrogen and sulfur oxides (NOx and SOx) can contribute to a range of health problems, from asthma to cancer, and has been linked with the deaths of around 40,000 people in the UK annually.

The Government is currently facing heavy scrutiny and potential legal action from the European Union after failing to curb its air pollution levels. However, the conversation surrounding toxic pollutants has focused largely on road vehicles, and little effort has been made to address the pollution coming from ships that pass through UK waters.

“Cars are not the only sources of emissions in our air. Ships are more fuel efficient than road vehicles, but they use fuels which produce greater levels of emissions than road diesel,” said Dr Matt Loxham, an air pollution toxicologist at the University of Southampton.

“This, in combination with the concentration of vessels in relatively small port areas and shipping lanes, is the reason why there is concern around shipping emissions.”

New analysis presented in a National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory (NAEI) report to the Government concluded shipping is a far greater source of pollution in Britain than estimates made in 2014 suggested, with about 10 per cent of the country’s NOx emissions coming from ships.
The increase in estimated air pollution has arisen from a more thorough analysis that found the amount of fuel being consumed by domestic ships is 2.5 times that of previous figures.

“These latest figures, which show a significant uprating in air pollution from ships, were snuck out ahead of Theresa May’s speech on the environment where she claimed to not be ‘complacent’ on air quality,” said Alan Whitehead, Labour MP for Southampton Test and shadow minister for energy and climate change.

Shipping is a major contributor to both air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, but one that is often overlooked by policymakers.

Global estimates suggest ships are responsible for 15% of NOx and 8% of sulfur gas worldwide. International shipping also produces around 3% of human greenhouse gas emissions – roughly double that of aviation.

“The reason for this is that ships burn the dirtiest fuel – they essentially run on the lowest grade waste product that you get from a refinery, called heavy fuel oil,” said Dr Tristan Smith, a shipping researcher at University College London who contributed to the report. Despite this, Dr Smith said regulations on shipping pollution are insufficient, and its greenhouse gas emissions are not even accounted for in the Paris climate agreement.

Not only does ship fuel itself contain high levels of sulfur that is emitted as SOx, ship engines are not controlled to anywhere near the same extent as road vehicles, resulting in high levels of NOx. “The only good news here is that a lot of these emissions are happening out at sea, meaning less human impact,” said Dr Smith.

“But still, anyone who is living in a port city is getting badly impacted at the moment because there is such light regulation on the exhaust.”

“Air pollution is having a major effect on public health in the UK. Air pollutants damage our health, causing cancer, asthma, stroke and heart disease, among others,” said Laurie Laybourn-Langton, director of the UK Health Alliance on Climate Change.

While it’s difficult to disentangle the contribution that shipping makes to health problems from other sources of air pollution, researchers estimate that up to 30% of the pollution in UK port towns can come from ships.

As nations strive towards ambitious targets to cut air pollution from more well-established sources – by switching to electric cars, for example – shipping looks set to be left behind as a dirty relic of the past. “It’s much harder to do anything about than cars,” said Dr Loxham.

“Obviously you can reduce the amount of car emissions just by reducing the number of journeys that are made, whereas ships are responsible for the vast majority of the goods trade.”

Around 90% of products we buy will at some point have crossed the sea. Shipping is such a cornerstone of global trade that making significant changes to its infrastructure poses a significant challenge.

Further complications arise because shipping is not primarily regulated by national or EU legislation but by the United Nations’ International Maritime Organization (IMO), which Dr Smith said “does not have a track record for moving fast on environment regulation”.

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However, that does not mean the UK is powerless to stop shipping pollution, and experts say the Government’s attitude to shipping emissions has been far too relaxed.

Professor Mikis Tsimplis, an expert in maritime law at the University of Southampton, said the UK has actively fought for international shipping pollution standards that are the lowest acceptable by all states. This action “serves only the interests of ship owners,” said Prof Tsimplis.

“There are other aspects of ship pollution that have consequences not only for the human health of the UK population but also the global environment,” he said. “But they are admittedly secondary when compared with the very serious health issues and the scandalous way UK policy prioritizes the interests of a global industry and subsidizes it by making the tax payer cover the health cost for it.”

A spokesperson from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs said: “We have consistently pressed for the most stringent international controls in high risk areas such as the North Sea and English Channel and have seen shipping emissions fall through regulatory standards.”

“This year we will publish a comprehensive clean air strategy which will set out further steps to tackle air pollution across all sources, including emissions from ships.”

While the NAEI report does predict a slight reduction in NOx emissions in some UK ports – around 20 per cent between 2014 and 2035 – it also exposes the divide between east and west coast UK ports. The emission control area in the North Sea and English Channel that was introduced in 2015 reduced the sulfur content allowed in shipping fuels throughout the region, however, it provides no coverage for cities in the west of the country.

That means western ports have received no extra protection from high polluting ships, as evidenced by the report’s prediction that NOx levels in Liverpool will not change at all.

In April the IMO will meet to discuss a climate deal that also has the potential to alleviate air pollution. It is possible to make shipping greener and safer, say experts, but there is a need for national as well as international action.

Prof Tsimplis said the Government is fully capable of implementing pollution limits for ships visiting UK ports. “Even if they want to stand by the argument that they wish to facilitate international shipping and make the UK ports attractive to them, there is no excuse for why they did not implement much lower limits for ships which either only trade within the UK or are providing assistance in ports,” he said.

Dr Smith said there is a need to quickly move beyond fossil fuels in shipping. “The UK Government has chosen to place the regulation of our coastal shipping pollution, and health of coastal communities, in the hands of the IMO,” he said. “As this report shows this leaves several key pollutants from ships uncontrolled and with little prospect of change.” “But this is a sector with huge potential and growing commercial appetite to move to become zero-emitting both of pollutants and greenhouse gases.”

He noted that other nations are both pursuing a transition away from fossil fuels in shipping and setting aggressive targets that go beyond IMO regulation. “It is therefore really important that we do the same or we will be increasingly left behind,” he said.
“Pollution from shipping receives significantly less attention than it deserves,” said Dr Whitehead. “As we grapple with building a low carbon economy which averts climate change it is an issue that we will need to look at long and hard.”

NORTH AMERICA

23. EPA Is Said to Side with Carmaker Calls to Ease Efficiency Rules

The EPA has concluded that a landmark Obama-era effort to cut vehicle greenhouse-gas emissions is too aggressive and agrees with automakers that the standards should be revised, according to people familiar with the matter.

The agency has reportedly completed a draft decision outlining the rationale for easing fuel efficiency regulations for model-year 2022-2025 cars and light trucks. Bill Wehrum, chief of the agency’s Office of Air and Radiation, reportedly plans to meet with environmental regulators in California to discuss the draft decision ahead of an April 1 deadline to make it public.

EPA spokeswoman Liz Bowman confirmed the agency has sent a draft of the decision on the standards to the White House’s Office of Management and Budget, and that the final determination will be signed by April 1. Bowman did not describe the contents of the draft.

Press reports indicate that the administration plans to declare that the Obama administration’s vehicle efficiency rules through 2025 are “not appropriate”. The “not appropriate” declaration will allow the Trump administration to reopen the vehicle emissions rules announced in 2011 and agreed to by automakers.

The EPA has not determined what the new tailpipe-emission standards should be. However, the move is widely expected to result in weaker targets that will be easier for automakers to achieve as sales skew toward SUVs, pickups and other light trucks.

The decision will set in motion a longer-term EPA process needed to re-write the tailpipe rules enacted by President Barack Obama’s administration. The rules aimed to slash carbon emissions from cars and light trucks by boosting fuel economy to a fleet average of more than 50 miles per gallon by 2025. That’s equivalent to roughly 36 mpg in real-world driving.

It has been reported that the timing of proposing revisions for automakers remained in flux. EPA officials suggested a proposal could come in late May or June, while the Transportation Department is pushing for a speedier proposal, automakers and officials said.

Heidi King, the deputy National Highway Traffic Safety Administrator, told a Senate panel recently that the agency expected to propose fuel economy standards in April for a five-year period and is working “to make sure that the federal family is aligned in the path forward.”

The EPA’s so-called final determination marks the culmination of a yearlong re-evaluation of the Obama-era rules that was announced by President Donald Trump in March 2017. He touted the move in his State of the Union address in January, saying, “In Detroit, I halted government mandates that crippled America’s autoworkers—so we can get the Motor City revving its engines once again.”
Reopening the review nullified an EPA decision during Obama’s last days in office to issue the rules without changes after a lengthy analysis that found automakers could meet the standards at a reasonable cost.

Automakers aggressively lobbied the Trump administration to reopen the review, saying it was ended prematurely without an adequate consideration of how gas prices, consumer preferences and other issues had changed the auto market since the rules were agreed upon in 2011.

The EPA’s decision also raises the specter of a legal battle with California regulators, who in 2011 agreed to align their own vehicle greenhouse-gas emissions standards with the federal rules. The deal, which had the support of nearly every major carmaker, ensured consistent mileage and greenhouse-gas rules nationwide.

Trump officials have been in talks with California Air Resources Board officials about the future of the rules but there have been no signs of an agreement. A spokesman for the agency did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

If a deal to maintain that consistency can’t be reached, automakers could face a regulatory patchwork with EPA tailpipe rules in most states and California-set efficiency rules in that state and several others that have adopted California’s rules. Those states together account for about a third of the U.S. auto market.

24. Pruitt's Rebuff of Post-2025 Vehicle GHG Rules Highlights California Clash

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt appears to be rebuffing California’s call to negotiate joint passenger vehicle greenhouse gas rules out to 2030 -- while reiterating claims that the state cannot “dictate” strong vehicle standards -- offering another sign that EPA and the Golden State appear headed for a major clash over pending revisions to federal requirements.

Pruitt’s latest remarks underscore his prior claims that California is wrongly seeking to control national vehicle GHG policy, remarks seen as publicly confrontational with the state as the agency in the coming weeks is poised to issue a formal finding that its GHG standards out to model year 2025 should be softened.

The remarks point to the possibility that California and EPA might pursue two different GHG regulatory programs, an outcome automakers reportedly strongly oppose.

“California is not the arbiter of these issues,” Pruitt said in an interview published March 13, referring to the pending changes to vehicle regulations being contemplated by EPA and the Department of Transportation (DOT). California regulates GHGs “at the state level, but that shouldn't and can't dictate to the rest of the country what these [federal] levels are going to be.”

The statements broadly echo his prior remarks that California should not be allowed to “dictate” federal rules. Pruitt during the recent interview also continued to hedge on whether his agency would seek to revoke California’s special Clean Air Act waiver allowing it to enforce its own vehicle GHG limits.

But he also downplayed EPA's interest in working with California on a post-MY25 program -- which the state officials say is a prerequisite for their agreement on near-term regulatory flexibilities. “Being predictive about what's going to be taking place out in 2030 is really hard. I
think it creates problems when you do that too aggressively. That's not something we're terribly focused on right now," Pruitt said.

Pruitt did not totally rule out such discussions, adding that the agency is not “presently” looking at post-2025 standards.

One industry source says Pruitt's comments brushing aside talk of post-2025 requirements signal a “really significant divide” between EPA and California, since discussion of a post-2025 program is “the price of admission” for California to talks about relaxing pre-2025 limits. “I think it signals we are headed for a fight,” the source says.

Safe Climate Campaign's Daniel Becker offered a similar appraisal. “I don’t know what there is to talk about [in such negotiations] if all there is to talk about is asking California to weaken their standards,” Becker added.

At the same time, Becker points to another part of Pruitt's comments -- where he referenced California's ability regulate GHGs at the state level -- as leaving open a scenario in which EPA and California diverge and adopt two separate vehicle programs.

Automakers stridently oppose that scenario, though EPA air chief Bill Wehrum has suggested that such an outcome could theoretically occur, even if it is not ideal.

More broadly, Becker argues that EPA's lack of engagement with California on a post-2025 program runs against the interest of automakers who could view EPA's involvement as a way to “temper” California's regulations.

The California Air Resources Board in response to a query from the press on Pruitt's comments made clear the state would continue to press forward with its efforts to implement post-2025 rules, and characterized that effort as aligned with automakers' long-term plans.

Because reducing GHG and conventional emissions from transportation is needed to achieve “California's challenging air quality challenges and climate goals,” the statement said, “California will continue with development of post-2025 vehicle standards.” The state's efforts align with automaker plans to “significantly increase production of electric cars,” as well as with projections showing advanced fuel economy technology is “feasible and appropriate,” the statement added.

The auto sector has sent mixed messages about whether it supports discussion of post-2025 regulations, but in general terms industry officials have called for such talks as part of an effort to explore near-term EPA rule flexibility.

The Association of Global Automakers, for example, in its formal comments to EPA on its reopened mid-term review of its rules urged a focus on post-2025 regulation as part of an effort to anticipate trends such as electric vehicles. It noted that “much of the world and California are already looking ahead to 2030, and even to 2035 and beyond. The undeniable trend in both the market and in the regulatory environment is away from the use of fossil fuels and toward greater electrification."

The Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers did not raise the post-2025 issue in its comments, but did acknowledge it during a December House hearing, where its president, Mitch Bainwol, said “that conversation needs to happen.”
More recently, a new coalition of automobile suppliers publicly called for EPA and DOT to “examine the feasibility” of regulations between MY26-30.

Global Automakers in a March 13 statement neither praised nor criticized Pruitt’s statement, but made clear it would prefer that EPA and California continue to align their GHG rules. “There are benefits to a consistent national approach to regulating greenhouse gas and fuel economy standards. Global Automakers will continue to work with regulators in Washington and in California to achieve that goal.”

The auto alliance in a similar statement reiterated its support for a “proper mid-term review. We are not prejudging it.”

25. California Gears Up for Trump Battle on Car-Emissions Rules

California is prepared to fight back if the Trump administration tries to take away its right to stay tough on emissions, according to the state’s top clean-air regulator. The state has special authority under the 1970 Clean Air Act to make its own pollution and greenhouse-gas rules. Allies of President Donald Trump have said his administration may decide only the federal government can regulate car emissions and fuel economy, excluding California from such rule-making.

“I think there would be a war with many states lining up with California” if the state’s waiver is revoked, Mary Nichols, chairman of the California Air Resources Board, said recently at Bloomberg New Energy Finance’s The Future of Mobility Summit in Palo Alto, California.

The Air Resources Board, which is charged with setting emissions mandates for the country’s largest economy, is expected to go head-to-head this year with the White House’s conflicting views on automotive regulations. Although Trump has made no substantive proposal to disconnect federal clean-air targets from the state’s greenhouse gas and zero-emission vehicle rules, he said during the State of the Union that halting government mandates would “get the Motor City revving its engines” again, the latest signal of a potential showdown.

“We are defending our policies, values and way of life,” Nichols said on the sidelines of the event, “but we are not looking to aggressively pick fights with this administration.”

The Trump administration will reveal its plans soon. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration will propose new federal fuel economy standards for cars and light trucks by March 30, while the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency plans to decide by April 1 whether tailpipe emissions standards for model years 2022 through 2025 should be revised.

The U.S. rules are today aligned with California’s as part of a deal struck by Obama regulators to raise the average fuel economy of new cars and light trucks to more than 50 miles per gallon by 2025. That translates to roughly 36 mpg in real-world driving.

But if Trump softens the federal rules, California will have to decide whether to keep its stricter regulations unchanged. Doing so would force auto manufacturers to deal with a patchwork of regulation. Bill Wehrum, the assistant administrator of the EPA’s Office of Air and Radiation, said the Trump administration is working closely with California to avoid that.

Nichols said she hasn’t yet seen anything concrete from the Trump administration about its plans. She added that she’s “not yet ready to release our battle plan” for if the federal government does try to revoke California’s special authority.
“The EPA would have to take unprecedented legal action to try to revoke that waiver,” Nichols said in the on-stage interview at BNEF’s summit. “Our best legal judgment is that that can’t be done.”

California hasn’t signaled interest in relaxing its strict stance on pollution. In fact, just days before Trump’s State of the Union address, Gov. Jerry Brown announced plans to have 5 million zero-emission vehicles on California roads by 2030, up from a planned 1.5 million in 2025. The state has a legislative mandate to cut carbon dioxide emissions to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030.

The Air Resources Board will also propose in the second quarter that California transit agencies be required to buy zero-emission buses, Nichols said. Mayors of some of the state’s largest cities wrote a letter to the board encouraging incentives and regulatory measures to spur a shift toward electric buses from ones that spew diesel and natural gas emissions.

“California, independent of the Clean Air Act, has some degree of control over the uses of its streets and highways. There are some positive incentives we can put on the table for cleaning up fleets, ports and heavy-duty trucks,” Nichols said. “We actually think global warming is an overwhelming environmental problem that we need to be doing something about.”

26. Carmakers Miss U.S. Tailpipe Goals While Seeking Trump Relief

Model year 2016 cars and light trucks sold in the U.S. for the first time failed to achieve the EPA’s greenhouse gas emissions standards, despite a small efficiency improvement from the prior year. The vehicles averaged emissions of 272 grams of carbon dioxide per mile, 9 grams per mile worse than the regulatory standard set for the 2016 model year, according to a report released Jan. 11 by the Environmental Protection Agency. The industry overall had outperformed the carbon emission targets in each year since 2012, when the efficiency targets took effect.

EPA regulations establish annual targets for carbon dioxide emissions, which are closely linked to fuel economy, and get tougher—that is, lower—each year. Despite the miss, all automakers were in compliance with the regulations, the agency said in a statement. Credits accumulated in prior years offset the industry’s 2016 shortfall.

Luke Tonachel, director of the clean vehicles and fuels project at the Natural Resources Defense Council, wrote in a Jan. 11 blog post that the 2016 results illustrate how the U.S. government’s auto efficiency regulations are “designed to work this way precisely because there will be years when automakers have lulls in their vehicle redesign cycles and apply less technology.”

“Manufacturers still have ample credits in their accounts to draw on for future years if needed,” he said.

In a separate Fuel Economy Trends report, also released Jan. 11, the EPA said 2016 model year vehicles averaged 24.7 miles per gallon. The average was a record, but the pace of gains has slowed, partly because more Americans are buying larger, less fuel-efficient vehicles. The 2016 average was up 0.1 mpg from 2015, compared to a 0.5 mpg gain from 2014 to 2015, the EPA said.

The EPA’s emissions standards grow tougher each year through 2025 under a plan enacted by the Obama administration to boost average fuel economy to more than 50 mpg by that time.
Those rules are under review by President Donald Trump’s administration. Automakers have pushed for relief considering low gas prices and booming sales of light trucks.

Automakers lobbying the administration will likely use the industry’s 2016 shortfall to bolster their case for easing vehicle efficiency standards for 2022 through 2025.

27. Vehicle Rule Rollbacks Could Block 'Energy Dominance'

The Trump administration's forthcoming effort to weaken fuel economy and greenhouse gas standards for passenger vehicles could become a major impediment to the administration's broader goal to achieve “energy dominance” by sharply reducing oil exports, according to one official with the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR).

Trump's “dominance” agenda -- as espoused by Energy Secretary Rick Perry, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt and other top officials -- aims to maximize domestic production of oil, natural gas and other fossil fuels to boost exports and the United States' geopolitical stance.

However, CFR research associate Dylan Yalbir in a March 13 blog post argues that the Transportation Department's (DOT) corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) standards “are quite pivotal to enhancing the United States' net oil exports levels.” “Proponents of an 'energy dominant' America policy have so far focused mainly on the role of growing domestic production. If that production is not accompanied by the expected decrease in consumption, however, the United States will wind up a much weaker net oil exporter,” he adds.

Using Energy Information Administration (EIA) data, Yalbir notes that with current CAFE standards, the U.S. could become a net oil exporter by 2021, assuming EIA’s projection of “maximum” potential for domestic production. Under that scenario, the country could export 4 million barrels per day by 2030.

But in a “counterfactual” scenario in which fleetwide fuel economy reverts to pre-2007 levels -- pegged to the last statutory CAFE revisions, which occurred before the Obama administration's moves to further strengthen the requirements in 2010 and 2012 -- the country might only export 1.47 million barrels in 2030, a “paltry fraction.”

Further, using EIA’s reference case for domestic oil production would prevent the country from being a net exporter at all through 2030.

Trump DOT and EPA officials are not considering rolling back their joint CAFE and GHG rules to pre-2007 levels, though some observers say they could nevertheless be mulling an aggressive rollback -- potentially freezing model year 2021 requirements that are set to significantly increase through MY25.

Yalbir argues that the CAFE's program original intent was to become less reliant on foreign oil, and it “would be misguided to undo all the progress on this front right when the United States has reached the home stretch.”

Further, he says weakening the standards would “make it more difficult for the United States to achieve the second component of Trump's energy dominance vision: leveraging U.S. energy strength to expand U.S. global leadership and support its allies.”
Coupled with the Trump administration's rollbacks of clean energy policy -- by pledging to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, proposing to slash clean energy research funding and "generally deemphasizing renewables" -- Yalbir says "Trump has already set the stage for China to become the energy leader of the future," given that the Chinese are doubling down on clean energy efforts.

“If anything, the administration should push Detroit to be more ambitious to meet foreign competition. Taking away yet another avenue enabling U.S. energy leadership would render President Trump’s energy legacy as subordinate, not dominant,” he says.

28. Wehrum Said to Favor Quick Ozone NAAQS Review Over Reconsideration

EPA air chief William Wehrum is said to be leaning against reconsidering the Obama-era decision to tighten the ozone national ambient air quality standard (NAAQS) from 75 parts per billion (ppb) to 70 ppb, instead aiming to speed up the next Clean Air Act-mandated NAAQS review as a potential vehicle to weaken the limit, sources say.

Pursuing a regular review of the standard rather than reconsidering the science underpinning a prior review could make it easier for EPA to rely on new science to justify weakening the limit. A reconsideration would require the Trump EPA to reexamine the science behind the October 2015 decision to tighten the standard, and the onus would be on the agency to explain why its prior scientific conclusions for tightening the NAAQS were not accurate.

In contrast, the Clean Air Act mandates that EPA review its six NAAQS -- including the ozone standard -- every five years, and the agency can perform this review by relying on a new body of scientific evidence. Therefore, it could declare that more-recent data suggest it is acceptable to weaken the standard from the existing 70 ppb limit.

But to achieve this, EPA would have to accelerate its work on the review because the air law's five-year review cycle means the agency would have to finalize its next ozone decision by October 2020. Agency staff have suggested that on the current schedule, a target of 2021 or 2022 is more realistic for completing the review.

To speed up the process, Wehrum could try to shorten the scientific review process, overseen by EPA's Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC), that must precede issuance of a revised NAAQS.

Such a move would be sure to draw legal threats from environmentalists, who argued that scientific data supported tightening the NAAQS further than 70 ppb. Under the air law, EPA is required to set its NAAQS at a level requisite to protect human health and the environment with an adequate margin of safety.

Yet EPA might fare better in a legal challenge over a new review of the NAAQS because the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit has often deferred to the agency's interpretation of scientific data underpinning NAAQS reviews. The agency might find it easier to defend such a case rather than pursuing a reconsideration, where it would have to justify legally why the Obama EPA's 2015 decision was wrong.

Litigation is pending in the D.C. Circuit in Murray Energy Corp. v. EPA in which coal firm Murray Energy and other industry groups claim the 2015 standard is unlawfully stringent. But that case has been put in abeyance while the agency pursues a potential reconsideration of the Obama-
era decision at Administrator Scott Pruitt's direction. EPA is poised to update the court by April 6 on the status of its reconsideration process.

The agency is moving to implement the 2015 standard albeit on a significantly delayed schedule, a delay caused by Pruitt's decision to weigh a reconsideration of the rule.

Reports indicate that Wehrum has already decided against a formal reconsideration of the October 2015 decision. Reconsideration would rely on the existing rulemaking record for the 2015 NAAQS, which would include key studies the Obama EPA relied on in its decision to strengthen the standard. Under a new review, however, the scientific record could be different, and EPA would be able to give weight to different studies.

During Wehrum's Senate confirmation process, he wrote to senators that he would “endeavor to meet all statutory deadlines” for implementing the 2015 NAAQS. But he added, “I am not familiar with the record for the 2015 ozone NAAQS decision, so cannot comment on the decision to change the standard.”

In a subsequent interview with the press after his confirmation, Wehrum said, “[W]e're going to take a hard look at 2015 NAAQS and one possibility is we decide it needs to be revised or rescinded. That is just a possibility. I have a lot to learn about the science behind the 2015 standard, and I have already started a series of briefings to try to get my arms around that science, so I can advise the administrator on my recommendation to what I think we should do.”

In terms of procedure, issuing a final ozone NAAQS rule would require EPA to alter the current review process to meet the air law’s October 2020 deadline. Wehrum's previous tenure as acting EPA air chief during the George W. Bush administration may give some clues as to steps EPA could take to speed things up.

For example, he might try to reinstate a policy memo that elevates the agency political leadership's role in NAAQS reviews earlier in the process -- although it is unclear if this would actually accelerate the process.

During the Bush administration, Wehrum and then-EPA Deputy Administrator Marcus Peacock in a series of policy memos shifted the review process to involve input of political leadership earlier, by substituting an “advanced notice of proposed rulemaking” (ANPR) for the agency staff's traditional “policy assessment” document. The ANPR expresses the views of agency leadership, rather than staff, and invites stakeholder input as a precursor step to a formal proposal. Wehrum and Peacock justified the shift in part as an effort to speed up NAAQS reviews, but their critics say it had the opposite effect, further delaying the already slow proceedings.

This change provoked concern among CASAC members over the integrity of the scientific review and independence of EPA staff's positions that would ordinarily be presented in the policy assessment.

President Barack Obama's first EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson in 2009 rescinded the review policy change, saying it in fact slowed the process and introduced political bias into agency science review. “I believe this step has complicated and delayed the NAAQS development process and made it vulnerable to the introduction of policy options that are not supported by the relevant scientific information. We must address these concerns by reinstating the use of a policy assessment document which presents a transparent staff analysis of policy options for senior
management to consider prior to rulemaking,” Jackson said in a May 21, 2009, memo to senior EPA managers.

Jackson's own bad experience with an attempted NAAQS reconsideration may also be informing Wehrum’s thinking. Jackson reconsidered the Bush 2008 NAAQS of 75 ppb, concluding that it was not sufficiently stringent to protect public health with the Clean Air Act's required “adequate margin of safety.” But she was forced to withdraw a proposal to toughen the standard to 70 ppb in face of White House opposition, and President Obama justified the move by arguing that the reconsideration was discretionary and a needless burden to states and industry.

The Obama EPA under the next Administrator Gina McCarthy ultimately tightened the standard to 70 ppb, at the top end of the range of 60 ppb to 70 ppb then recommended by CASAC.

Any new review of the ozone NAAQS will also hinge to a large degree on the composition and views of CASAC, which EPA must consult when setting the standards. CASAC’s membership is in flux, and the body has yet to convene a panel to formally begin its review of the 2015 ozone NAAQS.

The seven-member chartered CASAC that makes official recommendations on NAAQS to EPA is now chaired by Tony Cox, a consultant criticized by Democrats and others for his past work for industry groups, and EPA is now recruiting additional candidates to serve on the panel as well. Critics say the Trump administration is attempting to re-make the advisory panel to be more industry-friendly, while administration supporters say it is merely trying to redress a bias toward ever-tougher NAAQS on the chartered CASAC and its various specialized panels, which include a wider membership.

Also, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt has announced he will institute a policy to ensure that agency policy decisions are based on publicly-available, “reproducible” science. The policy would be based on a prior bill by Rep. Lamar Smith, (R-TX) banning the use of “secret science.” The issue has the potential to heavily impact NAAQS reviews, as several of the most influential studies used in setting NAAQS have contained proprietary information not available to the public.

29. Air Pollutant Reviews Stalled; EPA Advisers Haven’t Met in Months

Three required scientific reviews for federally regulated air pollutants are on hold due to EPA delays and Administrator Scott Pruitt’s November shake-up of the external air quality science board that advises the agency. Not only is the Environmental Protection Agency behind in giving the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC) the review documents underpinning its air pollution standards that panel members evaluate independently of the agency, the board still lacks a functioning chair.

The committee and review panels are expected to convene about once a month, but members haven’t met since September, when they discussed the last stages of their review of sulfur dioxide, an air pollutant that contributes to respiratory diseases and the formation of particulate matter.

The EPA is responsible for updating six air standards every five years under the Clean Air Act—carbon monoxide, particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, lead, and ozone. Written into the CASAC charter is the expectation that the board and its subgroups meet about once every four weeks, or 12 to 15 times each year.
CASAC review panels also are waiting for documents from the EPA so they can assess the standards for fine particulate matter—microscopic pollutants found in nature and formed during combustion—as well as standards for the ambient oxides of nitrogen and sulfur.

The clean air advisory board reviews emerging science and recommends whether six existing standards for air pollutants must be updated to protect public health. The administrator then sets the standards, which determine the extent to which emitters must control their pollution especially in areas that don’t meet air quality standards.

It’s not unusual for the EPA to take longer than five years to review its regulated air pollutants. The health-based standards for fine particulate matter were last reviewed by the agency in 2012.

Scientific literature published since then has associated the microscopic particles—formed from the combustion byproducts of coal-fired power plants, industrial facilities, and automobiles—with serious and sometimes fatal respiratory and heart diseases at concentrations below the current standards.

“We’re finding, even in the last five years, these particles are a lot more toxic than we thought,” George Thurston, professor of environmental medicine at New York University School of Medicine, told the press.

“If [committee members] are not meeting and they’re falling behind their deadlines, it means we’re not using the latest science to evaluate whether people’s health is being protected,” said Thurston, who studies how exposure to air pollution including diesel pollutants and fine particulate matter affects human health.

Based on the anticipated schedule for fine particulate matter review, the EPA should have provided the air advisory board with the first drafts of the science assessment by spring 2017 and the risk and exposure review plan by summer of 2017.

A representative for the oil and gas industry said he’s less concerned about a delay in reviews because there is no need to tighten air quality standards, which would require industry to install more stringent pollution controls. “All the easy controls have been put in place and those that aren’t are more costly,” Howard Feldman, senior director for regulatory and scientific affairs at the American Petroleum Institute, told Bloomberg Environment.

Tony Cox, whom Pruitt appointed to be the new chair, is a Denver-based consultant with a specialization in risk analysis. He has consulted for clients including oil and gas giant Exxon Mobil, the American Petroleum Institute, the American Chemistry Council, and tobacco company Philip Morris International.

After the air quality review panel last met in September 2017 to complete one of the final steps in the evaluation, the policy assessment review, panel members submitted written comments to the EPA liaison and the CASAC chair. Then the chair at the time, Ana Diez Roux, and another CASAC member’s terms ended in September and Pruitt rotated a third member off the board two years before her first term was up. Pruitt also banned EPA Science Advisory Board members who receive agency grants from serving due to what the administrator considered was a conflict of interest.

This put the sulfur dioxide review comments, which are supposed to be compiled into a report to be discussed at a public teleconference scheduled by the chair and the staff liaison, in limbo.
30. Automakers Raise Doubts About Climate Science

At auto shows and on dealership floors, automakers are quick to talk about the latest green technology — electric vehicles, hybrids, even hydrogen cars. But in Washington, the industry is sending a different message. Last month, one of the largest lobbying groups argued in a regulatory filing that the basic science behind climate change is not to be trusted. In the same filing, the lobbying group, the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, also cast doubt on the negative effects of tailpipe pollution on human health.

Both arguments go against well-established, widely accepted scientific research. And they represent a significant escalation of the industry’s fight to roll back aggressive rules adopted by the Obama administration to rein in tailpipe emissions, a major contributor to air pollution and global warming. The industry argues those rules cost too much and must be relaxed.

Quoting news articles and studies, the Alliance’s filing suggests that climate scientists may be “tuning” their models to achieve desired results. “Nearly every model has been calibrated precisely to the 20th century climate records — otherwise it would have ended up in the trash,” reads a quote from a 2016 story in Science magazine on climate modeling. “Choices and compromises made during the tuning exercise may significantly affect model results,” reads another quote from a 2017 study in the Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society.

But the Alliance appears to have cherry-picked such quotes to support its argument against the tailpipe emission standards. “Those quotes are accurate, but they are selective and do not accurately represent the entirety of the news story,” Paul Voosen, the author of the Science article, said in an email. Any uncertainty in climate modeling, he said, “is about the speed of warming — how fast sea level and temperature will rise — not uncertainty about warming’s direction or cause.”

“No, climate scientists do not tune their data to support their conclusions,” added Frédéric Hourdin, the lead author of the Bulletin study and a researcher at the Laboratoire de Météorologie Dynamique in Paris.

The Alliance’s document also quotes a study in the journal Regulatory Toxicology and Pharmacology, which says that “most of the hundreds of papers on the relationship between air quality and mortality have serious statistical problems.” Regulatory Toxicology and Pharmacology has been criticized for publishing studies funded by the tobacco industry that blur the links between tobacco smoke and health. The publication lists Dr. Gio B. Gori, an epidemiologist and former tobacco industry consultant now at the Health Policy Center in Bethesda, Md., as its editor. Calls to the center, a private company with no website, went unanswered.

“This is a deliberate attempt to cast doubt on this science,” said Janice Nolen, assistant vice president for national policy at the American Lung Association. “It’s well established that particulate matter shortens human life. It’s a settled issue.”

Automakers have a long history of fighting regulations on tailpipe emissions. But in 2009, they seemed to turn over a new leaf, working with the Obama administration to design new emissions standards that are some of the toughest in the world.

But just a day after Donald J. Trump’s election in 2016, the Alliance wrote to the president-elect and urged a reassessment of emissions rules the group said posed a “substantial challenge” for
the auto industry. The Trump administration is now reviewing those rules, with a decision expected at the end of the month.

“Automakers have invested billions of dollars to address the climate challenge by successfully increasing fuel efficiency and reducing carbon emissions,” Gloria Bergquist, a spokeswoman for the Alliance, said in a statement. She declined to comment on whether automakers accept climate science.

Reporters asked the automakers the Alliance represents for their own positions on climate change. General Motors, Ford, Fiat Chrysler, Volkswagen, Toyota, Mazda, Mitsubishi Motors, Mercedes-Benz, Jaguar Land Rover and Porsche all either did not respond or referred the query to the Alliance.

A BMW spokeswoman, Rebecca Kiehne, said the automaker was committed to reducing emissions through improvements in fuel economy but did not address climate science.

Honda, which is not an Alliance member, was the only automaker the press contacted that clearly acknowledged the reality of human-caused climate change. A spokesman, Chris Martin, said Honda supported the stricter Obama-era rules as well as “efforts to curb climate change caused by carbon emissions.”

31. EPA Gets Budget Reprieve in FY18

EPA appears to have largely escaped Trump administration plans to cut its budget by 31 percent in fiscal year 2018 after lawmakers unveiled a spending bill for the remainder of the year that funds the agency at essentially FY17 levels while also increasing funding for key infrastructure programs. And in a victory for Democrats, environmentalists and their allies, the bill also drops most policy riders and omits funds requested by the Trump administration for staff buyouts that many feared would have quietly gutted the agency.

Former Obama EPA Region 2 Administrator Judith Enck called the bill “the best environmental news since President Trump was elected” and argued that it also “calls into question [EPA Administrator Scott] Pruitt's early buyout of hundreds of senior EPA career staff who left the agency last year.”

But it remains to be seen whether the FY18 package is more than a temporary reprieve from attacks on the agency budget in FY19, with the Trump administration having already pledged to unveil more details of its federal reorganization plans in coming months.

“There are many fights to come,” Environmental Defense Fund Action said in a March 22 press release, calling the FY18 bill a victory for now but citing Trump administration “attacks” on EPA and the agency's critics in Congress.

The massive omnibus spending bill provides a total of $8.058 billion -- essentially flat funding for most EPA accounts, according to an explanatory statement accompanying the bill text.

But additional infrastructure-related spending brings agency funding up to about $8.8 billion -- with $703 million more for water infrastructure and $63 million more for Superfund cleanups in addition to base funding levels, according to a summary released by Sen. Tom Udall (D-NM), the ranking Democrat on the Appropriations interior subcommittee.
Accordingly, Udall says, the bill “protects key investments in environmental programs and grants within the EPA budget that were targeted for crippling budget cuts by the Trump administration as well as the House and Senate Republican proposals.”

The funding levels -- and the omission of several controversial proposed policy riders -- underscore the impact of a recent two-year budget deal that boosted allowable domestic spending, as well as the political reality that Hill Republicans need the vote of EPA's Democratic defenders to approve the FY18 spending package.

And the spending measure is also an indicator of Hill Republican impatience at the most drastic proposals for paring back the agency.

The bill's explanatory statement notes that the spending package “does not include any of the requested funds for workforce reshaping” -- a reference to proposed buyouts -- in a notable contrast to prior draft versions of spending bill language that included as much as $79 million for that purpose.

In addition, the statement says Congress “does not support reductions proposed in the [Trump administration's EPA] budget request unless explicitly noted,” according to the text. And it notes that Hill spending committees do not expect the Agency to consolidate or close any regional offices in FY18.

EPA's environmental programs and management (EPM) account, which funds the bulk of the agency's regulatory work, was among those that escaped steep proposed cuts, receiving level funding of $2.597 billion. That includes a $12 million boost from FY17 enacted levels for EPA's popular geographic programs that fund protections in areas like the Chesapeake Bay, Great Lakes and Puget Sound.

The bill also includes level funding for EPM enforcement activities of $240.6 million as well as flat funding for EPA's science and technology account of $706 million, considering a budget rescission.

Udall in his summary says the funding levels “protects all EPA staff, including all scientists, experts and support personnel, and rejects funding for large scale agency wide buyouts. "

Udall also touts preservation of existing funding for EPA's Integrated Risk Information System -- and language to ensure it remains in EPA's research office -- full funding for EPA state and regional grants with increases for programs such as diesel engine retrofits.

The final spending package also omits the most controversial policy riders that would formally restrict EPA activities, riders that Republican appropriators recently suggested were not needed given the Trump administration's plans to ease regulations.

The omitted proposals include language that would have: barred EPA from enforcing a methane rule on oil and gas facilities; delayed submission of state implementation plans to control ozone; blocked federal payment of legal fees related to suits under the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act and Endangered Species Act; denied funds to implement the social cost of carbon; blocked enforcement of Total Maximum Daily Load limits for the Chesapeake Bay; and expedited withdrawal of the Waters of the U.S. rule without public comment.
However, the spending package does retain several previously adopted riders, including language prodding EPA to treat biomass as carbon neutral and barring EPA from requiring Clean Water Act permits for some agriculture practices, and a prohibition on use of funds to regulate lead ammunition.

32. Senate Democrats Sharply Criticize EPA Rationale for Glider Rule Repeal Plan

Two Democratic senators with primary oversight responsibilities over EPA are boosting pressure on the agency to reconsider its proposed repeal of emissions limits on high-emitting “glider” trucks, sharply criticizing the agency’s legal and technical reasoning behind the proposal and requesting an array of documents related to the measure. Those documents could shed light on how EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt and other top officials embraced the idea despite concerns it could significantly boost emissions.

The lawmakers’ concerns, outlined in a March 12 letter to Pruitt, appear to represent the most pointed Capitol Hill critique of EPA’s glider plan to date, including the agency’s legal justification, with potential relevance to both EPA’s pending proposal and to the near-certain legal battle that would occur if EPA finalizes the plan.

“We urge you to withdraw this dangerous, legally questionable proposal immediately,” write Senate Environment & Public Works Committee (EPW) ranking member Tom Carper (D-DE) and Senate appropriations interior subcommittee ranking member Tom Udall (D-NM), seeking responses on numerous issues by April 2.

EPW has direct oversight of EPA’s efforts to implement the Clean Air Act, and the interior panel writes EPA’s spending bills.

The Obama EPA’s 2016 Phase 2 greenhouse gas rule for trucks regulated gliders for the first time as “new” vehicles. It also capped the number of gliders with older engines produced annually. Specifically, the rule restricts small manufacturers starting in 2018 to 300 gliders with older engines that meet weaker emissions limits, or a cap equal to their 2010-2014 glider production -- whichever is less.

Beyond that cap, all glider manufacturers starting in 2018 must meet up-to-date emissions standards in effect as of the year the glider vehicle was built. The small business exemption ends in 2021.

Pruitt's proposal would scrap those limitations, based on the claim that EPA cannot regulate gliders as “new” vehicles under the air law.

The Senate letter comes after two former EPA Administrators -- Republican Christine Todd Whitman and Democrat Carol Browner -- urged Pruitt to withdraw the proposal, highlighting in particular the agency’s partial reliance on a widely panned Tennessee Tech University (TTU) study funded by Fitzgerald Glider Kits that purported to indicate gliders with old engines could be as clean as modern trucks with state-of-the-art emissions controls.

“Throughout our tenures as Administrators, our policy decisions were centered on the best available research and scientific protocols,” Browner and Whitman write. “We are deeply troubled that the Agency’s steadfast commitment to public health and environmental protection based on the best available science is being undermined, putting at risk air and water quality and endangering children and families.”
“EPA has failed to rely on the best scientific analysis” in its glider limit repeal plan, the former administrators write, citing the agency's reference to the TTU study. Both TTU and study sponsor Fitzgerald Glider Kits are now distancing themselves from the study, now the subject of an investigation into possible research misconduct.

“Not only does it appear that the [TTU] study failed to follow proper research protocol, the conclusions of the study are contrary to a well-established understanding of the pollution from older diesel engines,” Browner and Whitman write. “In light of the serious questions raised about the study, we urge you to withdraw the glider proposal.”

The two senators include in their letter a demand for all documents in EPA's possession related to that study, including any concerns raised by the agency's own staff and correspondence between the glider sector and EPA.

But the letter also includes numerous citations from the Pruitt EPA -- and questions back to Pruitt -- seeking to poke legal and political holes in the agency's justification for its repeal plan, including the agency's chief legal claim that gliders are not subject to regulation as “new” vehicles and the more recent claim by EPA that its proposal relies on that legal analysis instead of the Fitzgerald-funded study.

EPA's legal reasoning that the vehicles are not regulated relies in part on the assertion that a 1958 statute -- the Automobile Information Disclosure Act -- written decades before the Clean Air Act enables a narrow interpretation of the law by restricting regulation of “new” vehicles to “showroom new” vehicles.

Proponents of the proposal to repeal limits on gliders include the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association, which in a Jan. 25 letter to EPW Chairman John Barrasso (R-WY) and Carper praised gliders as low-cost alternative, noting they are typically 25-30 percent cheaper than a new truck. They say that “no limitations of any quantity should be placed on American manufacturers” of gliders.

But numerous trucking sector interests, including the American Trucking Associations and Truck and Engine Manufacturers Association, are sharply opposed to the repeal plan. These groups' members have invested heavily in emissions control technology and are concerned that EPA's legal rationale could undercut the entire basis for emissions enforcement by allowing vehicles with a few used parts to evade regulations.

Carper and Udall sharpen their pens on this question with a barrage of queries, asking Pruitt if the 1958 law includes requirements for “either air pollution or . . . heavy-duty commercial trucks? If yes, please provide a citation to the provisions.”

They also ask Pruitt to respond to how the air act treats two scenarios: one in which a new Volvo dealer sells a brand-new Volvo VNL heavy-duty truck with a new powertrain to the vehicle's first purchaser, and another where the dealer sells the same vehicle, but with a refurbished part or two.

With respect to the first scenario, “Would that Volvo be a new motor vehicle under [Clean Air Act] section 216(3)? If you answer is anything other than yes, please explain your answer and cite any provisions of the CAA upon which your answer relies.”
And with respect to the second scenario, the senators write, “would the same [truck] be a new motor vehicle if all characteristics from the hypothetical vehicles were the same, except that at the time of the sale” the truck had “pre-owned, refurbished tires” from an older truck or a “pre-owned, refurbished windshield installed?”

They also ask Pruitt whether the amount of emissions from gliders -- and their human health consequences -- are “at all relevant in determining whether Congress intended to allow EPA to regulate emissions” from new gliders. If so, they ask him to show how such emissions information “influenced” the proposal.

The senators also appear to scoff at EPA’s effort to downplay its reliance on the TTU emissions study to justify its repeal plan, after Fitzgerald cited its study in its original administrative petition EPA, and the agency in an August response letter referenced it.

The Democrats' letter references language in EPA's response to the petition, writing that “the petition raised 'significant questions' about EPA's legal authority 'as well as the soundness of the EPA's technical analysis' regarding glider emissions. You told the petitioners that EPA had, for both legal and technical reasons, 'decided to revisit' glider rules.”

And the senators also issue a barrage of additional questions related to emissions concerns, including information about what EPA political appointees knew, and when, about emissions testing by EPA's Office of Transportation and Air Quality (OTAQ) in October and November showing “extraordinary levels” of particulate matter (PM) and nitrogen oxides (NOx) pollution coming from several tested glider vehicles.

“Your proposal was . . . published on November 16, 2017 -- four days before the OTAQ study was purportedly finalized (November 20), and six days before it was released to the public (November 22). Did you or any other political appointees know that OTAQ was conducting the study before it was finalized? If so when were those political appointees aware of any final or pulmonary results of the study?”

Carper and Udall also catalog numerous omissions from EPA's proposal on the plan's emissions implications, while requesting any and all documents related to EPA's scientific, legal and cost-benefit analysis associated with the repeal.

“Absent from EPA's proposal is any mention of agency estimates that every 10,000 glider trucks can lead to the premature deaths of 1,600 people. Absent is the fact that a single year of glider vehicle sales produces more than 10 times the NOx emissions of Volkswagen's entire criminal defeat-device scheme,” the senators add,” referencing the VW diesel emissions scandal.

Other statistics the senators amplify is the OTAQ study's finding that gliders with rebuilt engines not certified to modern emissions limits can emit as much as 450 times the PM pollution and 43 times the NOx pollution of modern trucks; claims that EPA's proposal by 2025 would “undo -- four times over -- the interstate NOx reductions achieved by power plants under the Cross State Air Pollution Rule; and prior EPA estimates that gliders impose costs to society of $6 billion to $14 billion every year.

33. Environmentalists Ramp Up Pressure on EPA To Withdraw Glider Plan

Environmentalists and industry critics are ramping up pressure on EPA to withdraw its proposed repeal of production caps on high-emitting “glider” trucks that combine a new chassis with used
engines, in the wake of an ongoing “misconduct” investigation over a university study EPA has cited as part of its justification for repealing the restrictions. “Emerging information regarding possible research misconduct related to a study cited in the Proposed Rule raise[s] further concerns regarding this deeply harmful rulemaking,” the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) writes in February. 14 supplemental comments on EPA’s glider proposal.

“We accordingly call upon EPA to withdraw its flawed proposal, or, at a minimum, the agency should not take any further action on the proposal until it has thoroughly investigated the circumstances explained herein,” the group adds.

The EDF comments come in the wake of an investigation, first reported by the Tennessee newspaper the Herald-Citizen, into a Tennessee Tech University (TTU) emissions study funded by Fitzgerald Glider Kits -- which petitioned EPA to scrap the rules.

The TTN study suggested that rebuilt glider kit engines could be as clean or even cleaner than truck engines with modern emissions controls. And EPA cited the study as part of its argument - based largely on a legal theory that the agency never had the authority to regulate gliders as “new” vehicles in the first place -- in its November proposal to scrap the glider production caps included in the Obama EPA's Phase 2 greenhouse gas rule for heavy-duty trucks.

The fact that the study is now the subject of an investigation supplements an existing chorus of opposition to EPA's proposal from state air officials, environmental groups and much of the trucking sector, who have cited numerous concerns over potentially large increases in air pollution as well as harms to an array of manufacturers, dealers and fleets that have invested in clean vehicles.

EDF in its comments notes that the TTU study results are “at odds with both recent EPA testing of glider vehicles and emission factors for the model year diesel engines that glider vehicles use, which show that uncontrolled glider vehicles have nitrogen oxide and particulate matter pollution emissions numerous times that of other new freight trucks.” EPA is pushing ahead with its proposal despite numerous concerns over increased air emissions, prompting accusations that the agency plans to grant special breaks to just a handful of glider kit companies, particularly Fitzgerald, given that the company has close political connections with the Trump administration and key members of Congress.

Fitzgerald in August 2016 hosted a campaign event for then-candidate Donald Trump, met with EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt early in his tenure and appears to have won over the agency despite opposition from most of the trucking sector, these critics have noted.

And those political connections were recently outlined in a front-page New York Times article, “How $225,000 Can Help Secure a Pollution Loophole at Trump’s EPA,” which highlights at least $225,000 in political contributions from Fitzgerald “business entities, executives and family members” to Rep. Diane Black (R-TN), who has advocated for the company as a home-state manufacturer and is running for governor.

The company in September hired its first full-time lobbyist, a former aide to Black, the story notes.

The article also describes one of Fitzgerald's owners, Tommy Fitzgerald, as defending both Pruitt's and Black's effort to secure exemptions for gliders as good public policy, not special favors. “I don’t know why anyone would want to kill all these jobs,” he told the paper.
EDF in its supplemental comments cites the pending investigation of the study launched by TTU President Philip Oldham, attaching a letter from Oldham announcing both the investigation and a suspension of research activities with Fitzgerald, as well as a request for peer review of the study.

“TTU’s decision to investigate possible research misconduct related to the glider vehicle study and to seek peer review of the study is significant,” EDF writes, noting that it and other groups have already raised concerns over the study in comments to the agency.

“These developments provide further reason why, as our earlier comments urged, EPA must withdraw its flawed repeal proposal. At a minimum, . . . it would be inappropriate for the agency to take any action on the Proposed Rule until the facts and circumstances surrounding the study are fully understood,” the group says.

Numerous groups have argued in comments that EPA's proposal could not only upend years of pollution control efforts by states, industry and Congress in a popular diesel engine retrofit program, but potentially undercut EPA's broad ability to regulate vehicle emissions by opening a legal loophole that could allow any vehicles with used parts to escape emissions control requirements.

**34. California Adopts EPA’s Glider Kit Loophole Rule for Trucks**

A new California rule will allow only 2010 and later model year heavy-duty truck engines in glider kits. The measure is part of broader rulemaking to align California’s greenhouse gas standards for medium- and heavy-duty trucks and trailers with the federal Phase 2 standards for 2018–2027 model year trucks.

Approved by the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in 2016, the greenhouse gas and fuel efficiency standards marked the first-ever emissions standards for glider kits—which are new truck chassis and cabs that can house used engines and transmissions. The EPA is weighing removing glider kits from the rule.

If repealed, an unlimited number of trucks with older, high-emitting engines will be traveling on California roads, California Air Resources Board staff said at its Feb. 8 meeting in Sacramento.

CARB also said it will consider challenging repeal of the federal requirements and need to increase enforcement of glider trucks not complying with the stricter California rule.

Truck engine makers supported CARB’s move to preserve the gilder kit standards, saying they objected to the effort to repeal the federal requirement. “A nationwide standard is needed,” said Tim Blubaugh, executive vice president of the Engine Manufacturers Association.

The agency also adopted the federal Phase 2 greenhouse gas standards for tractor trailers, which require aerodynamic features and low resistance. A federal appeals court stayed the rules challenged by truck trailer manufacturers and the EPA also is consider repealing those requirements.

While California’s new rule aligns the bulk of the state requirements with the federal Phase 2 standards, it does include stricter engine certification standards, use of low-emitting air conditioning refrigerants, and new vehicle label requirements.
The Energy Department has cut its clean energy communications contract—after spending $41.6 million over the past four years—to $1.47 million in the coming year, according to the Bloomberg Government contracts database.

The move to reduce the number of contractors who provide external communications about the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Office comes after the White House and Energy Secretary Rick Perry proposed a 66 percent cut to the office in fiscal year 2019, following a 69 percent proposed cut last year. The Trump administration has focused on boosting fossil fuel use and nuclear energy.

The reduction of the contract reflects a movement away from highlighting the agency’s clean energy work to the public, three former DOE contractors whose contracts ended on March 13 as part of the downsizing, and who asked to remain anonymous, told Bloomberg Environment.

The clean energy communications contract is a joint venture between The Hannon Group and BCS Inc. The contract was awarded on March 14, 2014 and extended until March 13, 2018. It supported approximately 70 EERE communications contractors, the former DOE contractors said. The DOE and the contractors did not provide the number of contractors cut.

The contract dropped to approximately $1.47 million through March 13, 2019, with an option to increase spending.

Considering budget constraints, the DOE is working on finding greater efficiencies within the agency for its communications work, an Energy Department spokesperson told reporters, speaking on condition of anonymity about the reason for the reduction in contract spending. The DOE spokesperson said the department was working to increase collaboration between the program offices and the Office of Public Affairs.

With fewer contractors writing press releases and blog posts, the public will learn less of the department’s “clean energy successes,” Jamie Nolan, founder and principal of Nolan Strategic Communications, told reporters. She formerly was the communications director for the SunShot Initiative, a solar energy program within EERE.

“What you’ll see as a result of this decision is the volume will significantly be dialed down in the amount of communications to the public about the important work happening at EERE to make renewable energy more affordable and accessible for every day Americans,” Nolan said.

The contract originally was intended to “provide services to enhance EERE’s capability for communicating its technology programs, initiatives, successes, and accomplishments to the American public, the media, industry sectors, Congress, and other stakeholders,” according to a March 14, 2014, statement from The Hannon Group.

The Energy Department has tried “specifically within EERE to downplay the importance of clean energy initiatives and their potential effects at mitigating climate change,” Andrew Bergman, a volunteer member of the website monitoring team at the Environmental Data and Governance Initiative, told reporters. EDGI is a nonprofit corporation that works to archive public environmental data and ensure its continued public availability.
Attorneys and other long-time Washington insiders who have worked with EPA are raising concerns about Administrator Scott Pruitt and other top agency officials' ethics and conduct, comparing it to actions taken by first-term Reagan EPA officials, which resulted in jail time for one and the resignations of many others.

However, they note that a major difference between then and now is that Democrats controlled the House in the 1980s and their oversight resulted in the house cleaning of the first crop of President Ronald Reagan's EPA officials. If Democrats were to take back the House following November's midterms, they note that Trump administration officials are unlikely to get a free pass from Congress as they have been.

Questionable actions by current EPA officials include first-class travel and round-the-clock security for Pruitt as well as installing a secure phone booth in his office, which the Washington Post recently reported cost nearly double the previously reported $25,000 figure, when related expenses are included. Also, the White House recently revealed that EPA communications official John Konkus received an unusual waiver last August by an EPA ethics official that allows him to perform paid media strategy work for outside, unnamed organizations.

Additionally, press reports found that a top Pruitt security official owns a company that won a no-bid contract to perform security sweeps of Pruitt's office, prompting a March 6 letter to Pruitt from top Senate environment committee Democrats demanding conflict-of-interest information.

All of this is in addition to Pruitt's general refusal to make his schedule public, his reluctance to respond to requests for information by congressional Democrats, and his unwillingness to meet with those who do not share his deregulatory views.

Pruitt has recently said he would curb his first-class flights, when security allows. He told CBS recently that he would consider “alternate ways, up to and including flying coach” if security threats could be accommodated.

And EPA spokesman Jahan Wilcox recently dismissed criticisms of the additional expenses stemming from installation of Pruitt's secure phone line. That's “old news,” he said, noting that the agency has previously discussed why the installation is needed.

Even so, Pruitt's travel expenses have already sparked ongoing investigations by the agency's inspector general and Government Accountability Office. His travels also resulted in a recent Freedom of Information Act request from the Democratic National Committee, signaling it could become a campaign issue this year.

Pruitt's job at EPA is not considered in jeopardy since Trump is reportedly happy with his deregulatory work. Pruitt, the former Oklahoma attorney general, is even rumored as a replacement for embattled Attorney General Jeff Sessions, should Trump fire him over his recusal from the investigation into the Trump campaign's alleged involvement with Russia.

The Environmental Protection Agency recently turned over documents to Congress detailing nearly $68,000 in newly disclosed travel costs for Administrator Scott Pruitt during the past seven months. The records, which came at the request of House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Trey Gowdy (R-S.C.) and were obtained by The Washington Post, show dozens of first-class domestic and overseas flights for Pruitt and other trip expenses between
August and last month. That figure, which includes stays at high-priced hotels in New York City and Paris, does not include the travel expenditures of the personal security detail and aides who typically accompany him.

EPA officials attribute the elevated costs of Pruitt’s travels to the security precautions they have undertaken because of the number of threats he has received — especially compared to his immediate predecessors — since joining President Trump’s Cabinet in February 2017.

The administrator has received round-the-clock security protection since shortly after he took office, and after a protester made vulgar and threatening remarks to Pruitt last spring, the head of his security detail recommended that he fly in first or business class to provide a buffer between him and the public.

Gowdy requested the latest information after The Post reported in February on Pruitt’s regular first-class travel. EPA officials initially indicated they had obtained blanket approval for him to buy premium-class tickets due to security concerns. A two-week stretch of travel in June by the administrator and his aides cost more than $120,000, according to records obtained by The Post and the Environmental Integrity Project under the Freedom of Information Act.

Pruitt’s aides later clarified that they clear each first-class ticket purchase with appropriate federal officials.

A journey to Morocco in December, where Pruitt and his aides promoted U.S. natural gas exports, ranked as the costliest trip detailed in the agency travel vouchers. They show that just Pruitt’s travel for the four-day trip — expenses for his roughly 10-person staff and security entourage were not disclosed — amounted to $17,631. The charges appear to include a $500 overnight stay in Paris on the way to Morocco. An EPA official said the trip was affected by weather delays, which prompted the group to stay in Paris on December 10 before arriving in Rabat the next day.

Closer to home, Pruitt rang up hefty travel bills last summer and fall. After Hurricane Harvey, Pruitt spent more than $3,900 on a one-day trip in late August to Corpus Christi, Tex., to visit with the city’s mayor and view damage at its port. Two weeks later, he returned to the state to visit a Superfund site in Houston that had been damaged by the storm and to participate in a roundtable at a technology company. After a weekend at home in Tulsa, he flew to New York to participate in the annual Cordoba Summit. Those first-class flights cost $3,330, and records show he also spent $669 on a hotel room in Manhattan.

A five-day trip in October to Colorado Springs, Phoenix, Tulsa and Lexington, Ky., where he announced the rollback of President Barack Obama’s Clean Power Plan, cost taxpayers nearly $5,000 in airline tickets. A one-day trip that month to Jackson, Miss., to meet with the governor and tour farms cost nearly $3,200. Soon after, a one-day stop in Nashville to meet with the state’s governor and speak to a farm group entailed a $2,774.40 flight.

The records also underscore how often and to what lengths Pruitt traveled to speak to industry groups. He addressed the Texas Oil & Gas Association in October before heading to Nebraska for media stops. First-class flights: $3,610. He headed to New Orleans to speak to the Louisiana Chemical Association. First-class flight: $2,265. In November, he flew to Chicago to address the Society of Independent Gasoline Marketers annual conference, at a cost of $1,172. The next day, he headed to Charleston, S.C., for the American Chemistry Council. That brief trip cost $3,155.
Travel in early December to Louisville, Des Moines and Tulsa cost $3,250. Days later, he headed to Florida to meet with Disney executives about food waste. His first-class seat cost $2,162.

Pruitt picked up 2018 where he left off. In January, he headed to Dallas for a day to meet with EPA regional administrators. His flight was $1,689.

Records show that at the end of January, he returned to New York for a day of interviews with Fox News, Fox Business, the Wall Street Journal, CBS News and the New York Times. Then it was back to Florida to visit a nursery near Tallahassee. That two-night trip cost $3,767.

A separate trip to Reno and Las Vegas in February to visit Superfund sites and do media interviews cost another $3,635. Later in the month, Pruitt took a brief trip to New England to visit another Superfund site and visit with New Hampshire’s governor, among other stops. His first-class flight to Boston: $1,428.

On one occasion, according to the new batch of travel vouchers, even a trip the administrator did not take ended up costing the government. The records show he had been scheduled to visit Australia for almost 10 days late last summer, meeting environmental officials and making site visits in Sydney and Melbourne. The journey ultimately was canceled, but records show that it cost the agency $1,927 to undo various flights and hotel reservations for Pruitt.

In Gowdy’s Feb. 20 letter, the lawmaker asked EPA to provide an array of documents by March 6 that would outline the circumstances under which Pruitt obtained permission from agency officials to eschew coach class. “Clearly, federal regulations prohibit a blanket waiver to fly first class except to accommodate disabilities or special needs,” Gowdy wrote. “Instead, a waiver is required for each flight in order to fly first or business class when traveling on official government business.”

The communications director for the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform said members “are in the process of reviewing and evaluating the documents and information, which will determine the committee’s next steps.”

37. California Adopts Rule to Ban Refrigerant Causing Climate Change

The California Air Resources Board adopted a rule to ban hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs)—refrigerant chemicals that are greenhouse gases. The state rule allows California to preserve and continue in the state some of the Environmental Protection Agency’s prior bans on the chemicals.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit in August vacated the Obama-era EPA rules banning certain HFC refrigerants. CARB said that due to the court decision, California passed its own rule to ensure it could meet a state law cutting HFC emissions by 40 percent below 2013 levels by 2030.

California sees the rule adopted March 23 leading to an estimated 3.4 million metric tons of carbon dioxide-equivalent emissions being cut each year by 2030.

38. FEMA Strips Mention of Climate Change from Its Strategic Plan

The Federal Emergency Management Agency, responsible for dealing with the effects of disasters like hurricanes and floods, has stripped the words “climate change” from the document meant to guide its actions over the next four years. On March 15th, FEMA March 15 released its
strategic plan for 2018-2022. It replaces a version issued under former President Barack Obama that repeatedly cited the challenges caused by a changing climate, and the need for FEMA to incorporate those risks into its long-term plans.

By contrast, the new document doesn’t mention climate, global warming, sea-level rise, extreme weather, or any other terminology associated with scientific predictions of rising surface temperatures and their effects.

“Disaster costs are expected to continue to increase due to rising natural hazard risk, decaying critical infrastructure, and economic pressures that limit investments in risk resilience,” the plan states, without saying what might be causing that natural hazard risk to rise.

The document notes that hurricanes and wildfires in 2017 represented “historic disasters,” but it makes no mention of the conclusions by other federal agencies that such disasters are likely to get worse as the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere increases.

Brock Long, whom President Donald Trump appointed to run FEMA last year, has equivocated on whether climate change is real and man-made. “The term climate change has become such a political hot button that, I think, I keeps us from having a real dialogue,” he told Bloomberg in an interview last summer.

Could climate change and global warming have had an impact on any of these events?

Fiat Chrysler was denied a quick escape from a lawsuit that accuses the carmaker of rigging diesel engines with emissions control defeat devices like those installed in 11 million Volkswagen vehicles. A federal judge in San Francisco ruled that owners of 150,000 Dodge Ram and Jeep...
Grand Cherokee models across eight U.S. states can proceed toward trial over allegations that software in their vehicles was designed to hide emissions up to 20 times the legal limit.

Fiat Chrysler promised in court to provide a fix for the vehicles.

FCA US was the first American carmaker to be sued after VW admitted to malfeasance in September 2015 and committed to spending more than $24.5 billion on fines and penalties including vehicle buybacks across North America.

The Hagens Berman Sobol Shapiro law firm in Seattle has filed similar complaints against Ford Motor Co. and General Motors, along with their supplier Robert Bosch.

ASIA-PACIFIC

40. Unlimited Term for China’s Xi Could Mean Green Push Continues

China’s war on pollution and campaign for stronger ecological protections could continue for decades, now that President Xi Jinping has been approved to remain in power past his original two-term limit. Xi, who took office in 2013, has launched aggressive air and water pollution reduction efforts that created havoc for factories and supply chains across China, particularly in the past year, when thousands of small polluting companies were fined, suspended, or shuttered. In the second half of 2017, Beijing witnessed its cleanest air in years due to intense targeting of airborne pollution.

China will stay the course and continue to “fight three major battles” in 2018: managing financial risk, targeting acute poverty, and preventing and controlling pollution, said Premier Li Keqiang, who outlined a course of environmental action at the March 5 opening of the annual National People’s Congress, the country’s legislative body.

As it continues its fight against air pollution—namely, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and particulate emissions—China also will try to halt the practice of dumping construction waste and soil from inland sites to reclaim coastal lands along Eastern China, according to Li. This activity has been going on for more than a decade without much oversight or concern over damage to marine ecosystems.

Besides enforcing its newly amended Water Pollution Law and a forthcoming Soil Pollution Law, China will undertake the integrated management of rivers and other water bodies that could force officials to maintain and improve water quality or face possible demotion. Cities also will have to improve their management of residential waste and stop imports of foreign plastic and other scrap material under an updated solid waste law, Li said.

The country realizes that its unbalanced advancement based on three decades of rapid economic development led to environmental problems, and under Xi’s green goals, China will solve its environmental problems by 2035, Li Ganjie, minister of environmental protection, said in a March 14 editorial in the People’s Daily.

Xi’s visions for what’s known as “ecological civilization,” his catchall phrase for cleaning up the environment and reaching a point of balancing economic stability and green sustainability, is advancing throughout China. These visions also are inscribed into the country’s constitution.
Including Xi’s concept of ecological civilization in the Constitution has “become a serious binding force for party laws and regulations,” and it’s now one of the party’s main political pursuits, said Chang Jiwen, deputy director of the Institute of Resources and Environmental Policy at the State Council Development Research Center, according to a March 12 report from China Environment News.

Besides a “war on pollution” launched in 2014, Xi has produced an updated Wildlife Protection Law, a ban on ivory imports and production, and a promise for nearly a dozen major national parks to be established by the end of 2020.

In addition, the party’s “red-line” policies seek to restrict development and establish fines for companies that pollute sensitive environments, according to a notice from the Ministry of Environmental Protection. Another campaign includes stronger enforcement against illegal mining, forestry, and other activities in protected nature reserves, China’s National Development and Reform Commission said.

An intensive propaganda campaign that took over prime-time TV for several days in midsummer, with one night dedicated to his environmental policies, paved the way for what’s known as the Xi Jinping Thought that will be incorporated into the constitution along with Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, and possibly include his ideas into the preamble.

The campaign followed an enforcement push, initiated in early 2017, against illegal coal and copper mining operations and illegal small hydropower facilities in the Qilian Mountain Nature Reserve area of Gansu Province in Western China that led to the arrest of 16 people. They were charged with criminal activity, and the former Communist Party secretary of the province, Wang Sanyun, was expelled from the party. The action triggered investigations in 446 other nature reserves and more than 1,000 arrests, fines, or other punishments for illegal activities in the reserves.

The Qilian Mountain fiasco was evidently the last straw for Xi.

41. China Plans Tougher Goals, Beefed-Up Inspections in War on Smog

China will set more stringent targets for improving the nation’s air quality under a new three-year plan, as Beijing prepares to beef up a nationwide crackdown on polluters in its years-long campaign to clear its notoriously toxic skies. The new targets for concentrations of PM2.5 will be lower than those in the country’s current five-year plan that was due to end in 2020, environment minister Li Ganjie said at a briefing on the sidelines of the country’s annual Parliament.

In January, the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) said it was drawing up plans for tougher curbs on smog during the next three years to 2020 after a five-year crackdown on pollution helped it attain air quality targets in December.

Li declined to give further details of the new goals as they are still being worked out.

By the end of 2017, the country had already cut PM2.5 concentrations by around 15.8 percent, not far from the target of reducing average levels for cities by 18 percent by 2020. “So, we will set a lower target for the new three-year plan,” he said.

The government will also set up a nationwide inspection system this year, which will give responsibility for regular checks on polluting companies and factories to local authorities, in
addition to central government, he said. The government will also punish local authorities who do not enforce the regulations correctly, he said. In some regions last year, regional governments issued blanket orders for companies to close even if they complied with tough emissions rules, he added.

The “one size fits all” strategy by some local authorities will not be tolerated, he said.

His comments come after the government announced this week the 10-year old MEP will be transformed into a more powerful Ministry of Ecological Environment, absorbing duties overseeing river, marine and soil pollution as well as climate change held by other ministries and departments. It was announced as part of the biggest shake-up of government in years.

Li said the bigger ministry would help push environmental protection, which is a hot-button social and economic issue for the world’s No. 2 economy, but he did not give any other details.

42. Li Ganjie Selected to Serve as Minister of Ecological Environment

According to the nomination of Premier Li Keqiang of the State Council, after a vote at the First Session of the 13th National People's Congress, President Xi Jinping signed the Chairman's Order and appointed Li Ganjie as Minister of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment.

Comrade Li Ganjie's resume:

Ganjie, male, Han nationality, was born in November 1964 in Changsha, Hunan. He joined the Communist Party of China in 1984. He has a master's degree, a master's degree in engineering, and a senior engineer.

In September 1981, he studied nuclear reactor engineering at Tsinghua University. In July 1986, he studied postgraduate of nuclear reactor engineering and safety at Tsinghua University.

After graduating from the graduate school in July 1989, he took part in the Beijing Nuclear Safety Center of the National Nuclear Safety Administration. He successively served as Deputy Director of the Department of Nuclear Safety and Radiation Environmental Management of the State Environmental Protection Administration, Director of the Nuclear Safety Center of the State Environmental Protection Administration, and Deputy Secretary of the Party Committee. Level), Director of the Department of Nuclear Safety, State Environmental Protection Administration and other positions.

In December 2006, he served as deputy director of the State Environmental Protection Administration, member of the Party Group, and director of the National Nuclear Safety Administration.

In March 2008, he served as Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, member of the Party Group, and Director of the National Nuclear Safety Administration.

In October 2016, he served as Deputy Secretary of the Hebei Provincial Party Committee and President of the Provincial Party School.

In May 2017, he was appointed Party Secretary of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, and in June 2017, he was appointed Minister of the Ministry of Environmental Protection.
In March 2018, he served as Minister of Ecology and Environment.

The minister also reflected on the ministry reshuffling and the creation of the new Ministry of Ecological Environment, which he will head. The new ministry will bring separate departmental responsibilities, such as land and ocean protection, urban and rural environment, and climate change and air pollution, together, in the hope of more coherent government action. He also commented that China is committed to the greening of the Belt and Road and is looking to form an international alliance, including UN Environment, that will work to ensure high environmental standards are met in other countries.

43. China’s Hainan To Tighten Motor Vehicle Emission Control

South China’s Hainan Province will implement stricter emission control measures on motor vehicles this year to control air pollution, the provincial government said. The island province plans to implement the stricter State VI emissions standard, which is equivalent to the Euro VI standard, on all new cars by September this year. Petrol and diesel products meeting State VI standards will also be available province-wide beginning July.

In addition, the provincial government will take measures to limit the number of vehicles in the island, including restricting registration transfers of out-of-province vehicles and controlling the number of cars traveling to Hainan. It will also speed up efforts to phase out obsolete motor vehicles.

With no major factory pollution, Hainan has better air conditions than most parts of China. Haikou, the provincial capital, topped Chinese cities with best air quality in 2017, according to China’s Ministry of Environmental Protection.

The new emission control measures come amid Hainan’s efforts to become a world-class tourist destination. The island received more than 1.1 million overseas tourists in 2017, up nearly 50 percent year on year, according to the provincial tourism development commission.

A three-year plan will be rolled out this year to make the island a top-tier destination, with preferential policies such as visa-free services, ticket promotions and upgrades in service quality.

44. China Raises Subsidies to Reward Longer-Range Electric Cars

China is increasing subsidies for electric vehicles that can travel farther on a single charge, while also making it more difficult for battery-powered vehicles to qualify for any new incentives under a central government plan. The central government incentive for EVs with a range of 400 kilometers (249 miles) and beyond on a single charge has been raised to 50,000 yuan ($7,900) from 44,000 yuan, the finance ministry said in a statement. At the same time, vehicles must be able to go at least 150 kilometers on a single charge to be eligible for incentives, up from 100 kilometers before.

Incentives have been key to making EVs more affordable in China, helping the market pass the U.S. as the world’s biggest in 2015. The Chinese government reportedly is leaning toward letting provinces continue with local subsidies for EVs to sustain the rising demand for new-energy vehicles in the country.

The new rules also cut subsidies by varying degrees for cars with a driving range of less than 300 kilometers, according to the statement. Separately, only EVs with battery energy density above
105 watt-hours per kilogram are eligible for the subsidies under the new rule. The threshold was raised from 90 watt-hours per kilogram.

The government also cut subsidies by as much as half for buses that qualify as new-energy vehicles, depending on the length and nature of the powertrain.

BYD Co. and other Chinese automakers including BAIC Motor Corp. and Anhui Zotye Automobile Co. have benefited from subsidies given by China as the nation tries to encourage production of less-polluting vehicles.

45. China Puts Responsibility for Battery Recycling on Makers of Electric Vehicles

China will make manufacturers of electric vehicles (EV) responsible for setting up facilities to collect and recycle spent batteries, as part of its efforts to tackle mounting waste in the sector, say new rules.

China, which began promoting electric cars in 2009, aims to become a dominant global producer as it bids to curb vehicle emissions, boost energy security and promote high-tech industries. But with lithium battery production already up by half in 2017 and waste set to hit as much as 170,000 tons this year, the government is racing to improve its recycling capabilities and stamp out what could become a growing source of pollution.

China’s industry ministry issued “interim” rules that hold carmakers responsible for the recovery of new energy vehicle batteries and require them to set up recycling channels and service outlets where old batteries can be collected, stored and transferred to specialist recyclers. The carmakers must also establish a maintenance service network allowing members of the public to repair or exchange their old batteries conveniently, the ministry said.

Measures aimed at spurring good practice among consumers, including subsidies or battery repurchase pacts, should also be adopted, the notice said.

Together with battery makers and their sales units, carmakers must also set up a “traceability” system enabling the identification of owners of discarded batteries.

The battery makers are also encouraged to adopt standardized and easily dismantled product designs, to help automate the recycling process. They must also provide technical training for car makers to store and dismantle old batteries.

46. China Leaps Ahead in Race to Secure Cobalt for Electric Vehicles

China is first out of the blocks in the global race to secure raw material supplies critical for the batteries that will power the electric vehicles of the future. Glencore Plc, the world’s top cobalt producer, agreed to sell about a third of its output of the metal to Chinese supplier of battery chemicals GEM Co., the Shenzhen-listed company said in a filing.

The three-year deal is set to shake the car industry as the biggest brands rush to lock down battery supplies essential to their survival in the coming electric-vehicle era. It also bolsters China’s dominance in the battery industry, coming a day after Volkswagen AG signed $25 billion of contracts with three of the biggest Chinese and Korean producers.
The biggest automakers are caught in an arms race to develop technology and supply chains needed to overhaul their gasoline and diesel fleets and roll out more electric cars over the next decade. Key to that are two huge mines run by Glencore in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Glencore plans to double its output over the next two years in the country, which already produces about 65 percent of the world’s cobalt. The commodity giant has held talks with VW, Tesla Inc., and Apple Inc., as well as major battery makers, but GEM’s agreement is the first major supply deal to be made public.

Under the accord, GEM and its subsidiaries will lock in 13,800 metric tons of cobalt contained in hydroxide from Glencore this year. That rises to 18,000 tons in 2019 and 21,000 tons in 2020. The numbers represent about 35 percent of Glencore’s planned cobalt output this year, 28 percent for the next, and 33 percent in 2020.

With an almost four-fold jump in prices in the past two years, Glencore Chief Executive Officer Ivan Glasenberg said the company would only sell on a floating-price basis that allows it to benefit from further gains. GEM didn’t disclose the pricing for its deal, and a Glencore spokesman declined to comment.

Volkswagen on March 13 said it seeks to produce 3 million battery-powered vehicles a year by 2025. The plans are backstopped by deals with leading battery suppliers Samsung SDI Co., LG Chem Ltd., and Contemporary Amperex Technology Ltd., sufficient for the first wave of production, Chief Financial Officer Frank Witter told the press.

Businesses including Apple and BMW—as well as VW—have previously tried to strike deals directly with miners, an unprecedented step in such companies’ efforts to source manufacturing materials. This week’s deals may signal that sales from mine site to car plant will end up being more complicated.

GEM turns cobalt hydroxide from mining companies into other cobalt chemicals, which it sells to manufacturers that build the batteries. The company is a major supplier to CATL, one of the battery-makers backing up VW’s supply deal, CATL said in its IPO prospectus this month. GEM didn’t say whether it has signed onward contracts with makers of batteries or cars.

47. Teijin Plans More China Plants in Bet on Electric-Vehicle Boom

Teijin Ltd., a Japanese supplier of carbon fiber used in planes and premium cars, is planning to increase its capacity in China as rising sales of electric cars boosts demand for its composites products that help cut vehicle weight.

The company, which counts carmakers including General Motors Co. and BMW AG as customers in China, is targeting to add two to three plants in the country by 2023, Akio Nakaishi, head of the company’s composites business unit, said in an interview in Tokyo. Teijin, which only has one plant owned by its Chinese joint venture, could either buy existing facilities from other manufacturers or build new ones, Nakaishi said.

Global carmakers are looking for ways to build lighter cars to extend the driving range of EVs or to improve fuel efficiency of conventional vehicles. China is the world’s biggest market for electric cars, and its government has set an annual sales target of 7 million new energy vehicles by 2025, a sevenfold increase from the current year’s goal. That has triggered a race among established manufacturers as well as startups.
“The market demand for light-weight composites products could pick up very rapidly in China,” said Nakaishi. “We want to add manufacturing capacity to capture demand from the automotive industry so much that I’d be happy if we could have one plant ready by tomorrow.”

Teijin set aside 300 billion yen ($2.8 billion) for capital expenditure and acquisitions in the three years through 2019 to expand its business globally. The company will consider locations near its clients’ manufacturing plants to build new facilities, Nakaishi said.

The Osaka-based firm’s biggest market is North America, where it has more than 10 plants. Its only China plant is in Tangshan city in Hebei province. It also plans an expansion in Europe and has set its sights on India for future growth, Nakaishi said.

Battery module covers in hybrid cars or plug-ins such as GM’s Volt model contribute to more than half of Teijin’s sales to the auto sector in China, according to Nakaishi. Teijin’s mainland customers include Great Wall Motor Co., Guangzhou Auto Group Co. and China’s largest EV battery maker, Contemporary Amperex Technology Co., and the company is in talks to add more, he said.

Composites products can be as light as aluminum, yet far stronger than aluminum or steel. They boost fuel efficiency and won’t corrode or degrade when chemically exposed. Carmakers use Teijin’s components made from glass fiber reinforced plastic in vehicle hoods and trunk lids.

Teijin acquired U.S. manufacturer Continental Structural Plastics Inc. in September 2016 to expand in the auto composites product business. It is targeting to more than double sales to the auto industry by 2030 to $2 billion, a goal Nakaishi said will be achieved before schedule. The company had $6.86 billion in total revenue last year.

48. India’s Supreme Court Proposes Roll Out of BS VI Fuel by Next Year In 13 Metros

The Supreme Court (SC) has proposed a roll out of Bharat Stage-VI (BS-VI) fuel across 13 metros by April 1, 2019. The top court directed the central government to consult the Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) and get their reply on this proposal.

Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Dharmendra Pradhan had earlier said: "We plan to launch BS-VI compliant fuel by April 2020".

Earlier the apex court had slapped a ban on all BS-III vehicles, which came as a big blow to the automobile companies, as they were sitting on an inventory worth Rs. 12,000 crore. March 31, 2018, had been set as the deadline to take all these vehicles off the roads.

With pollution in Delhi reaching alarming levels, the Petroleum Ministry had earlier decided to prepone the introduction of BS-VI grade auto fuels in the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi from April 1, 2018, instead of April 1, 2020.

The measure is expected to help mitigate the problem of air pollution in NCT of Delhi and surrounding areas by reducing vehicular emissions and improving fuel efficiency.

"The decision to leapfrog directly from BS-IV to BS-VI is also in line with the Prime Minister's commitment at @COP21 to voluntarily cut our carbon emissions," said the minister.
Delhi has already switched to Bharat Stage-VI (BS-VI) fuels, ahead of the scheduled April 1 launch for the capital.

State-run fuel retailers have been pushing cleaner petrol and diesel — similar to, but not exactly the same, as EuroVI fuels — since February to flush supply pipelines and tanks at petrol pumps. Almost all the 397 petrol pumps in the capital are now selling BS-VI fuels.

This makes Delhi the first city in the country to run on BS-VI fuels, two years ahead of the 2020 deadline the Centre had set for rolling out cleaner fuels across the country. The decision to jump the deadline for Delhi was taken in November when smoke from burning of crop stubble by farmers in neighboring states choked the capital.

The blame was also put on vehicular emissions, especially from ill-maintained commercial vehicles with old engines crowding the city.

Amid a public outcry over the capital’s poor air quality, oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan stepped in by ordering state-run fuel retailers to supply BS-VI fuels in Delhi from April 1, 2018 and examine introducing these fuels in NCR by April 2019.

Oil company executives claimed that BS-VI fuels will have “better” emission than vehicles running on CNG. But auto experts said introducing BS-VI fuels without the vehicles tuned for such fuels will only yield partial benefit since these will be used by vehicles with BS-IV or BSIII engines plying on Delhi’s roads.

Currently, only Mercedes sells BS-VI cars, while the certification process is on for other auto manufacturers.

The Saumitra Chaudhuri report, the forbearer of fuel quality standards, had in 2014 projected an increase of 70-80 paise per liter — at costs and taxes prevailing then — in the price of cleaner fuels. Dealers are yet to hear from the oil companies on whether prices will rise after April 1 or not. But with the daily fuel price revision, oil companies can stagger any upward revision required due to the quality upgrade as it can be subsumed into the routine increase because of global oil prices.

In November, the Society of Indian Auto Manufacturers (SIAM) had welcomed the move to advance the introduction of BS-VI fuels in Delhi, saying it was in line with international practices where the higher grade of fuel is generally introduced a couple of years before higher emission standards for vehicles kick in.

“Early introduction of BS-VI fuel gives confidence to the auto industry that these will be available across the country from April 1, 2020,” a SIAM statement had quoted its president Abhay Firodia as saying. It could be another story for automakers who may find it difficult to start supplying vehicles with BS-VI engines at such a short notice, should the government pressure them to do so.

49. India Not Really Prepared for Electric Vehicles at The Moment: Volkswagen

German auto major Volkswagen says India is not “really prepared” for a leap towards full electric vehicles (EVs) although the government’s move to put it on the agenda is a good step. The company, which has announced plans to expand production of EVs worldwide on a massive scale
with 16 locations to produce battery-powered vehicles by the end of 2022, also said India should be clear about what kind of technology it wants.

"I believe it was a good step from the government to put it (EVs) on the agenda. It is absolutely necessary for India," Volkswagen India President and Managing Director Andreas Lauermann told when asked about the company's plans for EVs in India. He, however, added, "...but we all know that India is a not really prepared for a such a step at the moment. Also, in terms of technology, India should be clear what kind of technology it wants."

On the compatibility of the company's existing EVs with the Indian market, he said, “When we look at our EVs at the moment with the technology, it is little bit too early there (in India)."

Recently, the Indian government think tank Niti Aayog had said there was no need for an electric vehicle policy, and technology should not be trapped by rules and regulations.

Another factor, which is also deterring VW from accelerating launch of its EVs in India, according to Lauermann, is the "new import duties (as) they are absolutely not fitting in our strategy". "There is no plan visible for the future development in term of technologies," Lauermann said.

On hike in import duties on automobiles imposed by India, he said, "It was clearly against European auto firms and this is not acceptable." However, he said VW hasn’t taken a final decision on increasing product prices in India.

In the Budget for 2018-19, Indian government increased the custom duty on CKD (completely knocked down) imports of motor vehicles, motor cars, motor cycles from 10 per cent to 15 per cent. Further, duty on CBU (completely built units) imports of motor vehicles (trucks and buses) had been hiked from 20 per cent to 25 per cent.

50. India’s Electric-Vehicle Subsidy Standoff Sparks Inventory Worries

Electric-vehicle manufacturers and dealers in India could be stuck with inventory they can’t sell if EV subsidies expire before the next phase of a government program to promote their use can be put in place. India’s Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric-Vehicles (FAME) program ends March 31, and the Society of Manufacturers of Electric Vehicles, which represents India manufacturers, wants assurance that if the next phase isn’t established by then, a “customer walking into an EV showroom would continue to get the same incentive as on 31st March.”

Cash discounts under current subsidies range from 7,500 Indian rupees ($115) for some kinds of two-wheelers to 6.1 million rupees ($94,000) for buses. A typical subsidy on an electric car is 124,000 rupees ($1,900), but in India cars make up just a small fraction of all electric vehicles. Nearly 80 percent of the market is slow-speed two-wheel vehicles.

Discussions between manufacturers and government agencies have yet to yield a cohesive plan for what India will do after March 31.

“Investors have run away. Businesses had lined up investment in technology and components, but now that is all gone,” Sohinder Singh Gill, CEO at EV maker Hero Eco and director of corporate affairs at the Society of Manufacturers of Electric Vehicles, told the press. In a March 13 letter to India’s Department of Heavy Industry, the group asked for a “sunset clause” in case incentives are to be discontinued or reduced, allowing time for clearing out inventories in the supply chain.
During the past few weeks, the group met with ministries and government agencies to discuss a February announcement that no integrated, nationwide EV policy would be created, as widely expected, and instead smaller “action plans” would be introduced. This was a step back from ambitious plans to go all-electric by 2030.

Government officials shared details of a plan to remove subsidies for vehicles using lead-acid batteries, in a purported move to encourage lithium-ion batteries and higher-end vehicles that use them, Gill said. “This would wipe out 75 percent of the current market,” he said, adding that low-speed two-wheelers that use lead-acid batteries are the largest selling of all EVs in the price-conscious Indian market. “They say they want to focus on public transport more than two-wheelers,” Gill said.

While electric buses get a higher subsidy, the association believes “it is low-speed two-wheelers that yield more bang for the buck in terms of reduction in emissions and fossil fuel use over time,” he said.

Earlier this month, the government of Uttar Pradesh, India’s most populous state, proposed a policy with incentives for electric vehicles, battery manufacturing and assembling, and charging and swapping infrastructure. In addition, Maharashtra, India’s most industrialized state, completed a more comprehensive policy for manufacturing and infrastructure, as well as purchase of electric vehicles.

“States are competing on attracting investment, which is good for manufacturing,” Gill said, “But to create demand takes an altogether different scale of planning and implementation. That is what a national policy could have done.”

Twenty-five thousand EVs were sold in India from April 2016 to March 2017, and the Society of Manufacturers of Electric Vehicles expected this to increase to 200,000 in 2018-2019 with supportive government policy. But even that ambitious prediction would leave electric vehicles still very much in the minority in India. From April 2017 to February 2018, 2.6 million fossil-fuel-powered vehicles were sold in the country.

51. India Tops Germany, Ranks 4th Largest Auto Market Now
India has overtaken Germany to become the fourth largest automobile market in the world, latest global data show. Automobile sales, including passenger and commercial vehicles, in Asia’s third largest economy grew 9.5%, the fastest among major global markets, last year to more than 4 million units, outpacing Germany’s 3.8-million vehicle sales, which rose by a modest 2.8% in the same period.

Sales volumes for Maruti Suzuki Vitara Brezza and Hyundai Creta remain strong, new launches in segment include: Tata’s Nexon, Jeep Compass, VW’s Tiguan & Skoda’s Kodiaq.

52. Commercial Vehicles Over 20 Yrs. To Be Deregistered From 2020

The Indian government has decided to cap the life of commercial vehicles to 20 years. This means commercial vehicles such as taxis, trucks and buses that were registered before 2000 cannot ply on road from 2020. There will be no age limit for private vehicles, sources said. This means private vehicles will be allowed to ply if they clear fitness test.

The decision was taken at a high-level meeting in Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) which was attended by officials from Niti Aayog, transport, heavy industries, finance and environment ministries.

The government expects at least seven lakh commercial vehicles registered before 2000 will be out of the road in 2020. Since there will be a mechanism in place capping the age starting from 2020 older commercial vehicles will be automatically deregistered.

Since this will be a regulatory mechanism, the government will give some tax relief to those who scrap their old vehicles and buy a new one against it.

There is a proposal to keep the sale of old vehicle as scrap out of the GST (Goods and Services Tax) regime. Subsequently, when the owner of scrapped vehicle goes for a new one, he may get 10% discount.
These proposals will be put before the GST Council.

53. Cars Wouldn’t Meet Australian Emissions Standards Without Cheat VW

Lawyers representing Volkswagen owners launching a class action against the car maker over Dieselgate claim the company has conceded its cars would not have passed Australia’s emissions testing standards had they not contained a cheat mode.

Maurice Blackburn, the legal firm fighting the case on behalf of disgruntled owners, said that almost 100,000 versions of VW’s EA189 1.6-litre and 2.0-litre engines sold here and affected by the Dieselgate scandal failed the required emissions standards tests unless they were operating in cheat mode – known internally as the “customer” or “comfort” mode.

The trial – which includes separate court action from Australia’s consumer watchdog, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission – has entered its closing submission phase. Volkswagen has denied it has broken any Australian laws relating to the scandal.

According to Mr. Blackburn, the car maker’s closing address “conceded on the major point that only its test mode was able to pass Australia’s emissions testing standards”.

Class action principal Jason Geisker said the alleged admission was a major bombshell and a pivotal point in the trial. “This belated concession was only wrested from the company after sustained pressure and in the face of overwhelming evidence put before the court against VW on this issue,” he said.

“This entire Dieselgate scandal, as it impacts on Australian consumers, could and should have been resolved a long time ago. Australian motorists deserve far better from VW.”

Volkswagen Group Australia has consistently denied the class action’s claims. "Volkswagen maintains its defence that all affected vehicles complied with Australian vehicle standards and continue to do so," it said in a statement.

“The stage one trial is the first step in the case and the determination of the questions in stage one will not determine the case finally. Stage two has been set down for 9 September. “Volkswagen has not conceded anything which fundamentally alters its vigorous defence of the proceedings.”

The class action against Volkswagen is split into two parts. The first will help the court decide if Australian Audi, Skoda and Volkswagen owners should be compensated by Volkswagen Group Australia, like what the company has had to do to customers in North America and Europe.

The final part of the trial will take place in September and is expected to seek answers to questions including why the defeat device was installed, and how Volkswagen Group Australia’s fix that it has made to the recalled cars affects fuel economy and performance.

The car maker faced further scrutiny after the Australian Automobile Association, the group representing motoring groups such as the RACQ, NRMA and the RACV, claimed the car maker’s fixes for the emissions cheats increased fuel use by up to 14 percent, and did not affect the vehicles’ noxious emissions.
The AAA study looked at a 2010 Volkswagen Golf, measuring its economy before and after the recall work had been carried out. In urban areas, the car was found to use two percent more fuel than before, but this rose to 14 percent on motorways. According to the AAA, the study also found that though emissions of carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and particulates were all reduced after the recall, nitrogen oxide emissions were still more than four times the laboratory limit in real-world driving conditions. However, the study also found that both power and torque had been increased slightly after the recall fix.

The AAA concluded that: "The results show that VW may have found a fix for reducing the level of noxious emissions, but as a result, the amount of fuel used has increased."

Volkswagen has reacted angrily to the claims, saying the published data "highlights glaring inconsistencies" in the testing methods. Michael Bartsch, the managing director of the Volkswagen Group in Australia, said: "While the testing procedure used by the AAA may in principle be appropriate for testing emissions of nitrogen oxides, due to the high tolerances of plus or minus 10 percent, it is simply not suitable for testing fuel consumption and CO2 emissions."

Bartsch also claimed that the pre- and post-recall tests were incomparable as the first test was conducted in warm, dry conditions, while the second was performed in cooler weather with light rainfall.

"Major flaws that render the tests wholly unfit for purpose included substantial variations in the test runs and atmospheric conditions both on the same vehicle and different vehicles, and even the performance of different vehicles being compared," he said. "As far as VW vehicles are concerned, on-road testing by reputable motoring organizations in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria show the opposite results to those arrived at by the AAA."

54. Vehicle Exhaust Test, Green Sticker to Go Nationwide in Nepal

The government is set to introduce the mandatory vehicle emission test across the country from next month. After imposing a ban on 20-year-old vehicles for controlling air pollution, the Department of Transport Management (DoTM) has decided to enforce the emission test nationwide from April 14.

The department has purchased 40 emission testing machines for the purpose, DoTM Director General Rup Narayan Bhattarai said. The machines will be installed at 20 locations outside Kathmandu Valley, bringing all the vehicles plying across the country under watch. The supplier would finish installation of the machines by April 3.

“We’ve already issued a notice warning that vehicles not complying with the emission standards will be banned from the Nepali New Year,” said Bhattarai, adding that the rules would first come into force in Kathmandu Valley and all the metropolitan and sub-metropolitan cities.

The machines will be installed at Transport Management Offices and Service Centers under the DoTM. Only three sets of emission testing equipment are currently available in Teku, Sano Bharyang and Ekantakuna.

Besides widening the emission test coverage, the DoTM is working to strictly enforce the green-sticker rule. Green stickers will be made mandatory for vehicles in all the metropolises and sub-metropolises across the country once the emission standards and action plans are upgraded, according to DG Bhattarai.
“We are trying to ensure that the green sticker is not distributed haphazardly, but only to those vehicles passing the test,” said Bhattarai. Each green sticker will have a specific serial number and the name of official issuing it.

If a vehicle is found to have breached emission standards, the official issuing the sticker will be held accountable, said Bhattarai. “The proposed changes include penalizing officials.” The department is waiting for the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport to approve the changes.

55. China’s Cosco Shipping to Build Methanol Plants in US With IGP, Eyes Bunkering Use

China’s Cosco Shipping Energy Transportation Co Ltd has inked a deal with IGP Methanol and Jinguotou to build two methanol plants in the US eyeing methanol as bunker fuel for newbuilds, IGP Methanol said this week.

The plants, with an annual capacity of 1.8 million MT each, will be in IGP Methanol’s US Gulf Coast Methanol Park and will supply feedstock to Jinguotou’s methanol-to-olefins facility at China’s Jin Zhou port, IGP said in a statement.

A recovery in oil prices is prompting continued investment in methanol-to-olefins plants, particularly in China. In addition, upcoming regulations in shipping such as the International Maritime Organization’s global sulfur cap from January 1, 2020, may lead to methanol being used as a marine fuel in the future.

The companies will discuss the feasibility of building new ships that can run on methanol, supporting the use of cleaner fuels, it added.

Methanol is a biodegradable, clean-burning marine fuel that reduces smog-causing emissions and those caused by sulfur and nitrogen oxides. It is also similar to bunker fuel specifications because it is a liquid, making it easy to transport and store.

The production cost of methanol is much higher than alternative fuels such as LNG. Conversion costs of using methanol are much lower, however, according to industry sources.

SOUTH AMERICA

56. Peru to Require Climate Change Adaptation, Mitigation Strategies

Peru’s Congress has cleared environmental legislation that would require local, state, and national governments to include climate change adaptation and mitigation in their investment policies, strategies, and projects.

“This legislation is important because it establishes guidelines and defines what the different state levels need to do about the impact of climate change,” Congressman Wilbert Rozas of the Broad Front coalition told the press on March 19.

The country would be one of a handful of countries in Latin America, including Honduras and Mexico, with specific climate change framework laws.
The legislation, cleared March 15, is a compilation of bills the 130-member unicameral Congress has been working on for three years. If signed into law by President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, the measure will serve as a kind of umbrella for future laws about climate change.

The 23-article text mandates that subnational governments report climate change decisions they’ve adopted to the Environment Ministry. The ministries that form the Cabinet must provide the Environment Ministry with an annual inventory of greenhouse gases and carbon reserves.

The legislation has a specific section on deforestation and forest degradation, a nod to the fact that the land-use change, and forestry category is the leading cause of emissions in the country. Peru emitted the equivalent of 159 million metric tons in 2012.

Land use and change in land use accounted for 67 percent of emissions, Deputy Minister of Environment Fernando Leon told the press March 19. The country is able to address “the problem of change in land use, which allows for deforestation. We will be able to meet our national target of reducing emissions by 30 percent by 2030,” he said.

Peru lost 4.86 million hectares (12 million acres) of forest between 2001 and 2016, the years for which Peru’s National Forestry and Wildlife Agency has statistics. The amount of land deforested increased by 5.2 percent in 2016.

The legislation requires Kuczynski’s signature, something Leon said was a given. The next step would be approval of the implementing bylaws, which must be completed within 120 days of the law’s publication. “We are already working on the implementing bylaws. We want this legislation implemented as soon as possible,” Leon said.

The legislation also establishes a High-Level Climate Change Commission that will design adaptation and mitigation measures to meet Peru’s nationally determined contributions, which are promises submitted to the United Nations and the cornerstone of the Paris Agreement on climate change. “The commission is the backbone of the legislation. It has the power to make concrete decisions regarding climate change,” Leon said.

The legislation requires Peru’s Economy and Finance Ministry to incorporate climate-risk and vulnerability analysis in public investment projects, Rozas said.

“Requiring the government to include the impact of climate change when it designs public works projects and the annual budget is a major step forward,” he said.

MIDDLE EAST

57. Knesset Approves Regulations that Will Reduce Pollution from Diesel Exhaust

Israeli lawmakers have approved regulations that will require owners of old, heavy-duty, diesel-fueled engines to install particulate filters. The regulations were passed by the Knesset Internal Affairs and Environment Committee on March 12, 2018; they’ll go into effect on November 1, 2018. Those who are required to install the filters but do not do so will be unable to renew their vehicle’s license.

The main principles of the regulations:
Owners of old, heavy diesel vehicle are required to install diesel particulate filters (DPFs). Those who are required to install filters and do not, will not be able to renew their license. Particulate filters remove particulate matter (PM), or soot, from exhaust gases of diesel engines; they reduce emissions and improve air quality.

Vehicles defined as "polluting" will be marked with a sticker during their annual vehicular license test, and ultimately, will not be allowed to enter low-emission zones in Israel.

Every vehicle license will include a rating, in accordance with its impact on air pollution. The rating system is as follows:
- Clean (electric vehicles)
- Reduced pollution vehicle
- Normal
- Polluting vehicle (those that do not meet Euro 4 standards)

Diesel vehicles will receive a "reduced pollution" rating once a particulate filter has been installed.

Implementation of these regulations is expected to reduce vehicular air pollution in Israel by 30%.

The diesel program is part of the Ministry's Clean Car Revolution, which also includes funding for cities that create low-emission zones, support for transportation companies that acquire electric buses, encourage the purchase of hybrid taxies, and more.

Alongside the regulations, the Ministry will launch a program that includes two main elements:
- Up to 100% financial support to install a particulate filter, which will reduce air pollution
- Grants of up to NIS 22,000 for the scrapping of polluting diesel vehicles

GENERAL

58. Cutting Carbon Emissions Sooner Could Save 153 Million Lives

As many as 153 million premature deaths linked to air pollution could be avoided worldwide this century if governments speed up their timetable for reducing fossil fuel emissions, a new study finds. The study is the first to project the number of lives that could be saved, city by city, in 154 of the world's largest urban areas if nations agree to reduce carbon emissions and limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C soon rather than postponing the biggest emissions cuts until later, as some governments have proposed.

To conduct the study, they ran computer simulations of future emissions of carbon dioxide and associated pollutants such as ozone and particulate matter under three different scenarios. The first scenario simulated the effects of having accelerated reductions of carbon emissions and almost no negative emissions over the remainder of the 21st century. The second scenario simulated the effects of allowing slightly higher carbon emissions in the near term, but with still enough overall reductions to limit atmosphere warming to 2°C by century's end. The third scenario simulated the effects of an even more accelerated approach, in which near-term emissions are reduced to a level that would limit atmospheric warming to 1.5°C.

The researchers then calculated the human health impacts of pollution exposure under each scenario all over the world -- but focusing on results in major cities -- using well-established epidemiological models based on decades of public health data on air-pollution related deaths.
Premature deaths would drop in cities on every inhabited continent, the study shows, with the greatest gains in saved lives occurring in Asia and Africa.

Kolkata and Delhi, India, lead the list of cities benefitting from accelerated emissions cuts with up to 4.4 million projected saved lives and up to 4 million projected saved lives, respectively. Thirteen other Asian or African cities could each avoid more than 1 million premature deaths and around 80 additional cities could each avoid at least 100,000 deaths.

Nearly 50 urban areas on other continents could also see significant gains in numbers of saved lives, with six cities -- Moscow, Mexico City, Sao Paolo, Los Angeles, Puebla and New York -- each potentially avoiding between 320,000 and 120,000 premature deaths.

Drew Shindell, Nicholas Professor of Earth Sciences at Duke's Nicholas School of the Environment conducted the new research with Greg Faluvegi of Columbia University's Center for Climate Systems Research and NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies; Karl Seltzer, a PhD student in earth and ocean sciences at Duke; and Cary Shindell, an undergraduate student in civil and environmental engineering at Duke. They published their peer-reviewed findings March 19 in the journal Nature Climate Change.²

59. Countries Falling Short of Modest Paris Promises.

Barely two years ago, after weeks of intense bargaining in Paris, leaders from 195 countries announced a global agreement that once had seemed impossible. For the first time, the nations of the world banded together to reduce humanity’s reliance on fossil fuels to hold off the most devastating effects of climate change.

“History will remember this day,” the secretary general of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, said amid a backdrop of diplomats cheering and hugging.

Two years later, the euphoria of Paris is colliding with the reality of the present.

Global emissions of carbon dioxide are rising again after several years of remaining flat. The United States, under President Trump, is planning to withdraw from the Paris accord and is expected to see emissions increase by 1.8 percent this year, after a three-year string of declines. Other countries, too, are showing signs they might fail to live up to the pledges they made in Paris.

Even as renewable energy grows cheaper and automakers churn out battery-powered and more efficient cars, many nations around the world are nonetheless struggling to hit the relatively modest goals set in Paris.

The reasons vary. Brazil has struggled to rein in deforestation, which fuels greenhouse gas emissions. In Turkey, Indonesia and other countries with growing economies, new coal plants are being planned to meet the demand for electricity. In the United States, the federal government has scaled back its support for clean energy and ramped up support for fossil fuels.

There’s still time for the world to set itself on a more sustainable track; many countries have until 2030 to meet their initial targets. But when policymakers from around the world gather at a key

Even if all countries hit their targets under the Paris agreement, global carbon dioxide emissions will still far exceed what is needed to keep temperatures from rising above 1.5 or 2 degrees Celsius. The Paris agreement laid out ambitious goals to limit the planet’s warming — world leaders knew they would be difficult to achieve. The deal called for finding ways to remain “well below” a rise of 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) above preindustrial levels, and if possible, not above 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit). A rise of about 1 degree Celsius already has occurred.

But at the same time, the emissions-cutting pledges that countries brought to the table in Paris were nowhere near sufficient to meet such goals, which world leaders acknowledged at the time. The plan was for nations to ramp up their ambition over time.

Now, after the United States has said it will withdraw from the process and as many other nations struggle to meet even the modest pledges they made, the world must begin to wrestle with the forces that have so far prevented climate action from matching climate rhetoric.

In many corners of the world, emissions have continued virtually unabated, raising questions about how countries — even well-intentioned ones — can make bolder promises down the line when they have so far been unable to follow through on their current ones.

The struggles of Germany, one of the globe’s most progressive nations when it comes to embracing renewable energy, illustrates the problem. The country’s “Energiewende,” or “energy transition,” aims to generate 80 percent of energy from renewable sources by 2050. The country also has set an aggressive near-term goal of cutting greenhouses gas emissions by 40 percent below 1990 levels by the year 2020. But Germany is struggling to meet its goals. The country’s emissions rose slightly in 2015 and 2016 because of continued coal burning and emissions growth.
in the transportation sector. That failing trajectory won’t change without “massive and rapid efforts,” according to the German Environment Agency.

The European Union faces a similar quandary. Third after China and the United States in total world emissions, the bloc has pledged a 40 percent cut below 1990 levels by 2030. Time remains for the E.U. to meet that promise, but according to the European Environment Agency, it is on track to fall well short of its goal.

Then, of course, comes Trump’s rejection of the Obama administration’s pledge in Paris to cut the nation’s emissions by more than a quarter below its 2005 level by 2025. Instead, the Trump administration has encouraged the ramping up of oil and gas drilling while slapping tariffs on imports of solar panels.

Largely because of the United States’ dramatic changes in policy, a group called the Climate Action Tracker recently raised its prediction for how much the planet will warm even with the current Paris promises — upping it by 0.3 degrees Celsius, or more than half a degree Fahrenheit. In other words, the United States’ rejection of its pledge could push the entire globe backward on its goal of lowering temperatures.

The news isn’t all bad. China and India, which together produce about 24 percent of the world’s emissions, have encouraged the rapidly growing renewable energy markets in their countries. If they exceed their emissions-cutting targets, that could offset failures elsewhere around the world.

Yet another major developing nation, Brazil, has struggled to further reduce deforestation of the Amazon — one of the top ways in which the nation contributes to climate change — amid economic struggles that have weakened law enforcement in the world’s largest rain forest. Deforestation has actually risen since the record-low year of 2012, with 2016’s total of almost 8,000 square kilometers close to double the level seen four years earlier.

As for other challenges, there are fast-growing nations such as Turkey, with a population almost equal to Germany’s (about 80 million) but only about half the emissions. That won’t last, though. Turkey is expected to roughly double its emissions by 2030 as it continues to grow. Much of that could come in the form of building new coal plants, according to the Climate Action Tracker.

The U.N. Environment Program found in its latest “emissions gap” report that many Group of 20 countries would require further steps to meet their Paris pledges. The list included the United States, Japan and Australia. The Climate Action Tracker, meanwhile, lists several major countries that have both insufficiently strong pledges and too little action to meet them. That includes the United States, Mexico, Brazil, South Africa and Turkey, among others.

Erik Solheim, UNEP’s executive director, said world leaders can be a major impediment to more rapid action. “Political resoluteness is the main obstacle... Change is always difficult, and politicians are risk-averse,” Solheim said. “Some people still believe going green creates fewer jobs, when the opposite is actually the case. . . . It comes from this old-fashioned thinking that you have less jobs and economic growth if you change, when the opposite is the case.”

That said, he remains optimistic that the world can bend its trajectory in the right direction — and in time. “There’s a much more rapid shift than people tend to believe,” Solheim said, citing the falling price of wind and solar technologies, as well as climate action on the part of states, cities and some of the world’s largest corporations. “The good news is the changes are happening much
faster than anyone thought. . . [But] we have a long way to go. The challenge is huge, and if we fail, the consequences for people will be dramatic.”

This year, countries will officially begin to grapple with how off target they are through the “Talanoa dialogue,” which refers to a process used in Fiji and other Pacific islands for finding consensus and building trust without laying blame. Culminating at the December U.N. meeting in Poland, the dialogue will nudge world leaders to assess where they stand on the need to cut emissions and how far they must go.

By 2020, countries are expected to ramp up the promises they made in Paris. The problem, experts say, is that if the world’s emissions don’t start declining decisively by then — and declining fast — it may be too late to stave off devastating sea level rise, crippling droughts and storms, and other catastrophic effects of climate change.

60. Last Year Dashed Hopes for A Climate Change Turnaround

After three flat years that had hinted at a possible environmental breakthrough, carbon dioxide emissions from the use of energy rose again by 1.4 percent in 2017, according to new data released by the International Energy Agency. The increase in emissions of the greenhouse gas came as global energy demand itself increased thanks to strong economic growth — and that demand was sated by all types of energy, including renewables but also oil, coal and natural gas.

“The growth in energy-related carbon dioxide emissions in 2017 is a strong warning for global efforts to combat climate change and demonstrates that current efforts are insufficient to meet the objectives of the Paris Agreement,” the IEA said.

Global coal demand increased 1 percent last year, following two years of declines, the IEA found. Demand for oil and gas surged even more, at 1.6 percent and 3 percent, respectively.

All of this happened even though renewable energy also increased, affirming that the pace of change in the global energy sphere is not fast enough to reduce greenhouse gases, which have long been closely tied to economic and population growth.

The IEA data matched a preliminary finding released late last year by a scientific group, the Global Carbon Project, which also reported that greenhouse gas emissions had risen in 2017 after three flat years.

The failure of emissions to rise between 2014 and 2016 had suggested to analysts that something may have finally changed in the global energy economy — a possible “decoupling” of emissions growth from steady economic growth, thanks to the proliferation of renewables and increasing energy efficiency. But now, that hopeful assumption is being called into question.

The IEA’s findings will undoubtedly feed into an increasingly urgent international climate dialogue about how to strengthen countries’ promises under the Paris climate agreement. A key meeting on this will occur this December in Katowice, Poland.

The IEA results came even as a somewhat more optimistic report emerged from three environmental organizations that closely monitor the global coal industry. Coal is the fossil fuel that has drawn the most ire from environmentalists simply because emissions from burning coal are higher than from burning oil or natural gas.
The new annual report from CoalSwarm, the Sierra Club and Greenpeace found that while the global fleet of coal plants grew by 2 percent in 2017, a declining rate of construction suggests the fleet could soon begin to shrink. “With declining deployment and high levels of retirement, coal power capacity is now caught in a squeeze: if current trends continue, by 2022 yearly retirements will exceed new capacity and the global coal fleet will begin to shrink,” said the report, whose lead author was Christine Shearer, a senior researcher for CoalSwarm.

That change, however, isn’t happening fast enough to save the climate, the report found — in effect echoing the IEA’s findings.

The group presented some stark numbers illustrating a declining pipeline for new coal plants, including the fact that in the past two years, coal plant construction starts have declined by 73 percent (they declined 29 percent just for the year 2017). Newly completed plants also declined 28 percent in 2017.

The coal industry responded quickly to the environmentalists’ report. While it did not directly dispute the basic findings provided by CoalSwarm (which are provided by plant-watchers around the world), the industry presented a considerably more optimistic (from the coal industry perspective) take, noting the groups’ own numbers show that coal capacity is still increasing.

“As with large infrastructure projects, the journey from announcement to completion can be a complex process with various challenges — this helps to explain why some energy projects may not come to fruition including coal stations,” World Coal Association CEO Benjamin Sporton said in a statement. “I’ve just returned from India and China, where coal will continue to act as the base load for the foreseeable future — in China and India coal provides more than 50% of the energy mix,” Sporton said.

“In the last five years as China became the largest solar and wind market in the world — it also added 229GW of coal power. Thus, increasing coal generation by a third. Renewables complement rather than displace coal — a trend that we continue to see across Asia.”

Indeed, the environmental groups’ report finds that a net number of new coal plants were added in 2017, including 34 gigawatts of total capacity in China, nine gigawatts in India and 18 gigawatts in the rest of the world.

But CoalSwarm and its fellow environmental groups nonetheless predict worse days ahead for the industry. “We would argue, all indicators suggest it’s going to begin to contract,” said Shearer, who led the report. “Which really goes against a lot of the forecasts that the coal fleet is going to continue growing for decades.”

Most significant, the new report charges that there is still too much coal for the climate to handle, and change isn’t happening fast enough. The report finds that if one combines the implied emissions from the operating coal plants over their lifetimes with emissions from those under construction now and from just a fraction of those that are proposed, the emissions would more than eat up coal’s share of the “carbon budget” for holding the planet’s warming below 2 degrees Celsius.

“What makes all of this so alarming is that we have such a short amount of time to turn all this around,” Shearer said. “So, while the trend is going against coal, it’s still not happening fast enough for international climate goals, or for a livable climate.”
Scientists already knew that Greenland’s ice sheet is melting as the climate warms, but a new study published in Nature indicates the process is speeding up. “We’ve observed for some time that meltwater lakes form on the surface of the ice sheet in the summer, and then over the course of a couple days—they’re all disappearing,” said Poul Christoffersen, a glaciologist at Cambridge, and lead author of the study published in Nature.

According to Christoffersen’s research, this chain reaction caused by the rapidly draining lakes threatens to further destabilize the ice sheet, sending hundreds of billions of tons of water and ice into the ocean.

These “draining events” were previously considered to be isolated incidents, but new data suggest they are interconnected events, transferring huge quantities of water and heat to the base of the ice sheet, Christoffersen said.

“In the past we thought there was a limit on how far this meltwater would travel down,” Christoffersen said. But now, that limit seems to have disappeared. Christoffersen’s research recorded 124 lakes draining over the course of a few days. He said the meltwater can travel down through a kilometer of ice, where it then spreads out, lubricating the bottom of the ice sheet, increasing its ability to flow and move.

“All ice flows,” he said, “But now we’re seeing these rapid draining events move much farther inland than before, and at much higher altitudes.” “This suggests that all of these phenomena might be part of a feedback loop, where one drainage event leads to more cracks, which then spreads out to other areas.”

The Greenland ice sheet is seven times the size of the United Kingdom and up to two miles thick in spots.

At the current melt rate, the sheet is contributing to slightly less than one millimeter of global sea-level rise per year, according to the National Snow and Ice Data Center, at the University of Colorado. If the Greenland ice sheet melted entirely, scientists estimate that sea level would rise about 20 feet.

“At the fastest rate of global warming, that would still take more than 1,000 years get to that to point,” said Ted Scambos, senior researcher at the data center. Still, Scambos said, all indications are that the melt appears to be accelerating. In 2016, scientists found the ice sheet was melting 7 percent faster than previously thought.

“And even at just one meter of sea level rise, [there] would be a big impact on places like Miami, Bangladesh, and Shanghai or Rio de Janeiro,” he said.

The Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets—the world’s biggest—also influence weather and climate. The white snow and ice reflect a significant portion of the sun’s energy back out toward space.

“People call Greenland ice sheet the refrigerator of the Arctic,” said William Colgan, a senior researcher at the Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland. Because the polar ice caps lose more energy than they absorb, Colgan told the press that they play a critical role in sucking heat
and energy away from the equator. “That forms the fundamental conditions for much of the oceanic and atmospheric currents that are so important to everyday life,” Colgan said.

Another effect of increased melting in Greenland: As the ice sheet retreats, it exposes permafrost, which is itself melting in Greenland and in places like Alaska. Permafrost is a layer of permanently frozen soil that covers 25 percent of the Northern Hemisphere, where it acts like a giant repository by locking up microbes, carbon, and even mercury.

A February study by the American Geophysical Union found that Arctic permafrost is actually the largest repository of mercury on Earth. Scientists now think there are around 15 million gallons of mercury—a neurotoxic heavy metal—frozen in permafrost soils. That is nearly twice the amount of mercury found in all other soil, ocean, and atmosphere combined, according to Geophysical Union.

“This discovery is a game-changer,” said Paul Schuster, a hydrologist at the U.S. Geological Survey, and lead author of the Geophysical Union study. “We’ve quantified a pool of mercury that had not been done previously, and the results have profound implications for better understanding the global mercury cycle,” Schuster said in a Geophysical Union press release.

Mercury is found naturally because of volcanic eruptions, forest fires, and the weathering of rock, where it eventually finds its way to the poles through atmospheric currents.

Industrialized and developing nations also contribute about 2,000 tons of mercury into the atmosphere every year—primarily through small-scale gold mining and coal-burning power plants, according to the United Nations’ 2013 Global Mercury Assessment.

According to the American Geophysical Union, the mercury bound up in Arctic permafrost may be 10 times greater than all the mercury humans have pumped into the atmosphere from coal-burning and other pollution sources over the last 30 years.

A possible solution posed to the problem of disintegrating glaciers was also posed recently in another Nature publication. Geoengineering solutions could “buy us a few centuries to deal with climate change and protect coasts,” wrote John Moore, chief scientist at the College of Global Change and Earth System Science at Beijing Normal University.

Given the costs associated with widespread displacement of people from coastal regions, Moore argued geoengineering could be cost competitive.

The concepts he proposed included a network of pumps to remove subglacial water, a system of “ice shelves” to buttress the sheet in place, even a series of underwater dams to hold back currents of warm water eating away at edge of the sheet.

While theoretically possible, other scientists said such solutions would needlessly divert money and resources from the true source of the problem.

“In general, the thing to worry about is what’s driving the melting in the first place,” Scambos said. While these issues of glacier mechanics and hydraulics are important, he said, the basic problem remains rising temperatures. “At the end of the day, it’s a block of ice melting in the sun. We know where that is going.”
62. Fuel Cells Could Be Next Big Thing for Transportation Sector

Jostein Bogen, Vice President Product Manager Maine and Ports told the MarEx that fuel cells have higher efficiencies than do combustion engines. Meanwhile, the U.S., the E.U., Japan and China are rapidly moving towards hydrogen fuel technology in various applications.

Bogen is optimistic about fuel cells in the marine transportation industry and envisions a hybrid solution for cruise, with traditional fuel for propulsion and fuel cells supplying the hotel functions.

Royal Caribbean Lines recently announced plans to work with Meyer Turku in Finland on hydrogen fuel cell use on its LNG-powered cruise ships. Bogen offers that shipowners will use hydrogen fuel cell marine applications much in the same manner when they accepted LNG onboard vessels.

With the IMO establishing January 1, 2020 as the date for a massive reduction in sulfur emissions from marine fuels, ABB believes that hydrogen fuel cells will emerge as a new business for greener ships and that the ideal ship would be hydrogen electric.

“We have had lots of assistance from shipowners in advancing fuel cell technology from cruise and ferries operators in marine applications,” Bogen said. “And, since there are no moving parts, fuel cells can also offer a huge savings in maintenance as well. There is too much to be accomplish and the entire value chain needs to mature, and the rules and regulations for fuel cell in marine applications still needs to be developed.”

63. IMO Answers Questions on the 2020 SOx Regulation

The IMO has launched a document answering frequently asked questions about the upcoming sulfur emissions regulations taking effect in 2020. IMO regulations to SOx emissions from ships first came into force in 2005, under Annex VI of the MARPOL Convention. Since then, the limits on sulfur oxides have been progressively tightened. From January 1, 2020, the limit for sulfur in fuel oil used on board ships operating outside designated emission control areas will be reduced to 0.50 percent m/m (mass by mass). This will significantly reduce the amount of sulfur oxides
emanating from ships and should have major health and environmental benefits for the world, particularly for populations living close to ports and coasts, says the IMO.

Answers to some frequently asked questions are:

*Limiting SOx emissions from ships will have a very positive impact on human health: how does that work?*

Limiting sulfur oxides emissions from ships reduces air pollution and results in a cleaner environment. Reducing SOx also reduces particulate matter, tiny harmful particles which form when fuel is burnt.

A study on the human health impacts of SOx emissions from ships, submitted to IMO’s Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) in 2016 by Finland, estimated that by not reducing the SOx limit for ships from 2020, the air pollution from ships would contribute to more than 570,000 additional premature deaths worldwide between 2020-2025.

So, a reduction in the limit for sulfur in fuel oil used on board ships will have tangible health benefits, particularly for populations living close to ports and major shipping routes.

*Why are ships already less harmful than other forms of transport?*

Ships do emit pollutants and other harmful emissions. But they also transport large quantities of vital goods across the world’s oceans – and seaborne trade continues to increase. In 2016, ships carried more than 10 billion tons of trade for the first time, according to UNCTAD.

So, ships have always been the most sustainable way to transport commodities and goods. And ships increasingly becoming even more energy efficient. IMO regulations on energy efficiency support the demand for ever greener and cleaner shipping. A ship which is more energy efficient burns less fuel so emits less air pollution.

It has sometimes been quoted that just a few ships (all using fuel oil with maximum permitted sulfur content) emit as much harmful air pollutants as all the cars in the world (if the cars were all using the cleanest fuel available).

Not only is this the very worst-case scenario, but this does not consider the amount of cargo that is being carried by those ships and the relative efficiency. It is important to consider the amount of cargo carried and the emissions per ton of cargo carried, per kilometer traveled. Studies have shown that ships are by far the most energy-efficient form of transportation, compared with other modes such as aviation, road trucks and even railways.

It is also relevant to remember that shipping responds to the demands of world trade. As world trade increases, more ship capacity will be needed.

*How can ships carry so much cargo so efficiently?*

Ships are the largest machines on the planet and the world’s largest diesel engines can be found on cargo ships. These engines can be as tall as a four-story house, and as wide as three London buses. The largest marine diesel engines have more than 100,000 horsepower (in comparison, a mid-sized car may have up to 300 horsepower). But the largest container ships can carry more
than 20,000 containers and the biggest bulk carriers can carry more than 300,000 tons of commodities, like iron ore.

So powerful engines are needed to propel a ship through the sea. And it is important to consider how much energy is used to carry each ton of cargo per kilometer. When you look at the relative energy efficiency of different modes of transport, ships are by far the most energy efficient.

Ships can reduce air pollutants by being even more energy efficient, so they burn less fuel and therefore their emissions are lower.

*What is the current regulation on SOx in ships emissions, and by how much is that going to be improved?*

For ships operating outside designated emission control areas the current limit for sulfur content of ships’ fuel oil is 3.50 percent m/m. The new limit will be 0.50 percent m/m which will apply on and after January 1, 2020.

There is an even stricter limit of 0.10 percent m/m already in effect in emission control areas (ECAS) which have been established by IMO. This 0.10 percent m/m limit applies in the four established ECAS: the Baltic Sea area; the North Sea area; the North American area (covering designated coastal areas off the U.S. and Canada); and the U.S. Caribbean Sea area (around Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands).

Fuel oil providers already supply fuel oil which meets the 0.10 percent m/m limit (such as marine distillate and ultra-low sulfur fuel oil blends) to ships which require this fuel to trade in the ECAs.

*What must ships do to meet the new IMO regulations?*

The IMO MARPOL regulations limit the sulfur content in fuel oil. So, ships need to use fuel oil which is inherently low enough in sulfur, to meet IMO requirements.

Some ships limit the air pollutants by installing exhaust gas cleaning systems, also known as “scrubbers”. This is accepted by flag States as an alternative means to meet the sulfur limit requirement.

Ships can have engines which can use different fuels, which may contain low or zero sulfur. For example, liquefied natural gas or biofuels.

*Could the 0.50 percent limit be delayed?*

No. There can be no change in the January 1, 2020 implementation date, as it is too late now to amend the date and for any revised date to enter into force before January 1, 2020.

*Will new fuels be needed to meet the 2020 limit? Will there be enough?*

It is likely that new blends of fuel oil for ships will be developed. For example, a gas oil, with a very low sulfur content can be blended with heavy fuel oil to lower its sulfur content.

These new blends are likely to cost more initially than the heavy fuel oil bunker fuel used by the majority of ships today. Ships can also choose to switch to a different fuel altogether. Or they may
continue to purchase heavy fuel oil but install scrubbers to reduce the output of SOx to have an equivalent means to meet the requirement.

Of course, some ships are already using low sulfur fuel oil to meet the even more stringent limits of 0.10 percent m/m when trading in the already-established emission control areas. So those fuel oil blends suitable for ECAS, will also meet the 0.50 percent m/m limit in 2020. However, there is a cost differential, and these blends are more expensive than heavy fuel oil.

A study commissioned by IMO into the "Assessment of fuel oil availability" concluded that the refinery sector has the capability to supply sufficient quantities of marine fuels with a sulfur content of 0.50% m/m or less and with a sulfur content of 0.10 percent m/m or less to meet demand for these products, while also meeting demand for non-marine fuels.

Consistent compliance with the new limit is vital. What is IMO doing about that?

Monitoring, compliance and enforcement of the new limit falls to Governments and national authorities of Member States that are Parties to MARPOL Annex VI. Flag States and port States have rights and responsibilities to enforce compliance.

IMO is working with Member States as well as industry (including the shipping industry and the bunker supply and refining industry) to identify and mitigate transitional issues so that ships may meet the new requirement.

For example, developing guidance, developing standardized formats for reporting fuel oil non-availability if a ship cannot obtain compliant fuel oil and considering verification and control issues.