Need for custom-made ozone solutions cited

The Baton Rouge area ozone air pollution problem may require solutions custom-made for conditions in the area, Rep. Billy Tauzin, D., Thibodaux, said Friday. The state is supposed to submit a plan to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 1990 to bring ozone pollution into compliance with federal levels set under the Clean Air Act. But, proposed changes to the Clean Air Act are being set before Congress.

Tauzin said the ozone task force's initial report to him was that federal legislation needs to allow solutions to fit the particular mix of conditions in various areas with ozone problems. "If we can permit states, in developing plans, to implement different fixes that fit different problems... we might get speedier results," Tauzin said.

He said such factors as chemical processes, weather, naturally occurring hydrocarbons, heat, sunlight, weather and terrain could mandate different approaches in different areas. LCA president Dan Bornes said the ozone task force is a group representing a seven-parish greater Baton Rouge area.

"The basic message on the ozone situation is that we feel Congress should permit some flexibility in the way different areas are permitted to solve the ozone problem," Bornes said. "There are about 100 areas in the country that are out of compliance with respect to ozone. Some of these areas have no industry at all and they still cannot attain compliance."

"It is pretty obvious that ozone formation is not identical in all the 100 areas of the country," he said.

Borne said the local ozone task force is trying to develop information to show what the true ozone picture is in the Baton Rouge area. "In other words," Bornes said, "what part does industry play, what part do emissions from automobiles play, what part do emissions from small sources such as print shops and dry cleaners play? It is also important to know what role natural vegetation plays in ozone." "Our situation in Baton Rouge may be different from Atlanta or Washington, D.C."

Bornes said the problem in the Baton Rouge area is complicated by the fact that ozone emission levels continue to exceed federal ozone standards. He said the state is putting together a plan to ease the ozone problem that will be filed with the EPA in 1990, a requirement of current law.

Bornes said the federal law governing ozone levels is likely to be changed by Congress and it is "not likely to be any less stringent than our current law." The Baton Rouge area consistently exceeds federal ozone pollution levels.

Ozone is created when nitrogen oxide from such sources as industries and automobiles combines with some hydrocarbons from vehicles, natural sources and industry in a reaction with sunlight.

High ozone levels can cause sore throats, nausea and chest pains, according to the EPA.