

Mayor calls for end of I/M program even before deadline

'END OF THE ROAD': Sullivan proposes to end emissions tests before grace period expires.

By KYLE HOPKINS

Anchorage Daily News

Published: January 12th, 2012 09:59 AM

Last Modified: January 12th, 2012 10:00 AM

The I/M program that requires Anchorage drivers to pay for an emissions test that the Environmental Protection Agency says is no longer necessary may end even sooner than you think.

Mayor Dan Sullivan announced a proposal Wednesday to kill the program six months earlier than scheduled.

"We're hitting the brakes and we're taking steps to end the program as soon as we legally can," Sullivan said in a pun-filled City Hall briefing.

"It's the end of the road for the I/M program," Sullivan said.

The EPA on Tuesday agreed to allow the city to jettison the program. But while the EPA approval is effective Feb. 9, current city law calls for the emissions testing program to linger for an additional six months.

That's because when the Assembly agreed to kill the program in May 2010, Assembly members added a "grace period" under which the testing would continue for half a year. The idea: Give businesses that sell the tests, which cost up to \$68, time to prepare for the change.

Sullivan says he will ask the Assembly to remove that grace period.

"We're confident that Anchorage residents will no longer have to worry about I/M tests by March 1 of this year," he said.

It's taken nearly two years for the program to end, likely giving businesses ample time to ready for the loss of I/M test business, he said.

The anti-pollution program requires that drivers get their vehicles tested every two years.

The program -- "I/M" is short for vehicle inspection and maintenance -- began in 1985 in an effort to help Anchorage meet federal clean-air standards for carbon monoxide. Anchorage has not violated the standard since 1997.

The drop in city carbon monoxide levels can be attributed to the emergence of more efficient cars and trucks that create less pollution, EPA officials in Seattle and Anchorage said this week.