

REGIONAL AIR QUALITY PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING SUMMARY

Thursday, February 29, 2024 – 10:00 A. M.

Houston-Galveston Area Council

Virtual Teams Meeting

<p><u>MEMBER PRESENT</u> Fort Bend County – Joel Patterson Baylor College Medicine – Winifred Hamilton American Lung Association – Charlie Gagen EHCMA –Mary Jane Mudd City Of Houston –Nguyen Ly Harris County Pollution Control– Latrice Babin Environmental Defense Fund– Grace Lewis Air Alliance Houston– Jennifer Hadayia</p>	<p><u>ALTERNATE PRESENT</u> Houston Advanced Research Center – Ebrahim Eslami METRO –Vincent Sanders Port Houston –Kenneth Gathright Harris County–Pernell Davis Liberty County –David Douglas City Of Houston –Darryl Tate Associated General Contractors of America –Marc Anderson</p>
<p><u>OTHERS PRESENT</u> TTI– Joe Zietsman Air Alliance Houston– Inyang Uwak Harris County – Shannay Baradaren Harris County – Billy Rash</p>	<p><u>STAFF PRESENT</u> Houston-Galveston Area Council – Andrew DeCandis Houston-Galveston Area Council – Carrie Evans Houston-Galveston Area Council – Cassandra Marshall Houston-Galveston Area Council – Ben Finley Houston-Galveston Area Council – Vincent Polignano TCEQ – Vanessa DeArman TERP – Nate Hickman EPA – Jeffrey Riley TCEQ – Denine Calvin TCEQ – Alison Stokes TCEQ – Stephanie Frederick TCEQ – Eugenia Reynoso Moreno</p>

BRIEFING

Overview

- RAQPAC Members and Alternates were presented with agency reports (EPA Update, TCEQ Update, TERP Update and Regional Air Quality Monitoring update), and the meeting concluded with information items and no announcements.
- Go to <http://www.h-gac.com/board-of-directors/advisory-committees/regional-air-quality-planning-advisory-committee/meeting-material.aspx> to view the meeting materials for this meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

ITEM 1A. Introduction

Joel Patterson called the meeting to order, and members were introduced.

ITEM 1B. Approval of Meeting Summary (12-14-2023)

Meeting summary approved.

AGENCY REPORTS

ITEM 2A. EPA Update – (Jeff Riley)

Regional Air Quality Planning Advisory Committee
February 29, 2024,

A representative from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) briefed the committee:

Revised Particulate Matter (PM) National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS)

On February 7, 2024, EPA revised the level of the primary annual PM_{2.5} NAAQS from 12.0 micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) to a level of **9.0 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$** . EPA's final action is based on scientific evidence showing previous annual PM_{2.5} standard did not protect public health with an adequate margin of safety.

- EPA retained primary 24-hour PM_{2.5} standard at level of 35 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.
- EPA retained primary 24-hour PM₁₀ standard.
- EPA retained current secondary (welfare-based) PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ standards.

EPA also modified PM_{2.5} monitoring network design criteria to include an environmental justice factor that accounts for proximity of populations at increased risk of PM_{2.5}-related health effects to sources of air pollution. For more info, see: ([2024 PM NAAQS Fact Sheets, Presentations, Maps, Data Tables](#)) / ([Air Monitoring Fact Sheet](#))

In accordance with the CAA, EPA will make initial attainment/nonattainment designations no later than 2 years after new NAAQS finalized. Dates below are projected from promulgation date of the new NAAQS (February 7, 2024).

- State recommendations due within 1 year of final NAAQS (February 7, 2025).
- EPA initial designations within 2 years of final NAAQS (February 6, 2026).
- 3 most-recent years of certified monitoring data will be used for designations. Anticipated to be **2022-2024** data, but states can early-certify data.

All PM_{2.5} nonattainment areas are initially designated with a "Moderate" nonattainment classification. Nonattainment area State Implementation Plans (SIPs) (e.g., attainment demonstration, reasonable further progress) due within 18 months after EPA makes designations (mid-2027). SIPs must provide for attainment as expeditiously as practicable but no later than end of 6th calendar year after nonattainment designations ("Moderate" area attainment date, end of 2032). For more designations info, see: ([2024 PM NAAQS Designations](#))

2020-2022 annual PM_{2.5} design values for Houston area monitors exceed the revised annual PM_{2.5} NAAQS (**9.0 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$**):

- Harris County, Houston North Loop monitor – **11.4**
- Harris County, Clinton Drive monitor – **10.4**
- Harris County, Houston East monitor – **10.2**
- Harris County, Baytown monitor – **10.1**
- Harris County, Houston Aldine monitor – **10.0**

EPA Clean Ports Program Notice of Funding Opportunities

On February 28, 2024, EPA announced the [Clean Ports Program](#) grant competitions. Two Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs) are **OPEN NOW** until the application window closes on **May 28 at 11:59 PM (ET)**. \$3 billion in funding is available from the Inflation Reduction Act to fund zero-emission port equipment and infrastructure, as well as climate and air quality planning at U.S. ports. Please note that these funding opportunities apply to both **water ports** (places on land alongside navigable water (e.g., oceans, rivers, or lakes)), and **dry ports** (intermodal truck-rail facilities included in the 2024 FHWA Intermodal Connector Database based on meeting the criteria set in 23 CFR 470).

- The *Zero-Emission Technology Deployment Competition* will fund zero-emission port **equipment and infrastructure** to reduce mobile source emissions (criteria pollutants, air toxics, and greenhouse gases) at U.S. ports, delivering cleaner air for communities across the country. [View the Zero-Emission Technology Deployment NOFO here.](#)
- The *Climate and Air Quality Planning Competition* will fund climate and air quality **planning activities** at U.S. ports; including emissions inventories, strategy analysis, community engagement, and resiliency measure identification, all of which will build the capacity of port stakeholders to continue to reduce pollution and transition to zero-emissions (ZE) operations over time. [View the Climate and Air Quality Planning NOFO here.](#)

Both NOFOs will be open for 90 days. Applicants must submit all grant application materials to Grants.gov by: **May 28 at 11:59 PM (ET)**. We encourage prospective applicants to begin the registration process for [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov) and [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov). Both accounts are required to apply for federal grants, and the registration process can take at least 10 days to complete. For both competitions, the EPA requests submittal of an optional informal notice of an Intent to Apply by **March 28, 2024** to cleanports@epa.gov. Please use the subject line “Notice of Intent to Apply: Zero-Emission Technology Deployment” or “Notice of Intent to Apply: Climate and Air Quality Planning.” Please include in the body of the email the name of the applicant, the estimated dollar amount of the anticipated funding request, and a sentence or two summarizing the project (if known). Submission of Intent to Apply is optional and non-binding.

EPA will host informational webinars regarding these NOFOs to provide potential applicants with an overview of the NOFOs, how to apply, and EPA resources that will help with project development. **Our next webinar will be on March 13, 2024, 2 – 4 PM (ET)**. See the [Ports Initiative Events webpage](#) for more information. [Register for the March 13 webinar now!](#) For more information, including eligibility information, frequently asked questions, and resources for applicants, please visit the [Clean Ports Program webpage](#). You may also send questions to our helpdesk at cleanports@epa.gov. The deadline to submit questions about the Clean Ports Program funding opportunities is **May 6, 2024**.

Climate Pollution Reduction Grants (CPRG) Program Updates

A friendly reminder that Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP) deliverables under the CPRG planning grant are due **March 1, 2024** for States, Municipalities, and Air Pollution Control Agencies.

The CPRG Planning Grants Program Questions and Answers, from the Technical Assistance Forums and PCAP Office Hours, will be posted and updated monthly on [CPRG Training, Tools and Technical Assistance webpage](#) for the duration of the forums. **Click here for the latest Questions and Answers from the Technical Assistance Forums:** [Climate Pollution Reduction Grants Planning Grants Program Questions and Answers \(pdf\)](#) (Updated February 27, 2024).

ITEM 2B. TCEQ Update – (Vanessa DeArman)

TCEQ staff gave an update to the members on the latest information:

Houston-Galveston-Brazoria (HGB) 2008 Eight-Hour Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) Attainment Demonstration and Reasonable Further Progress State Implementation Plan (SIP) Revisions, and Associated Rules

On November 29, 2023, the commission approved the proposal of the executive director’s recommended HGB severe area attainment demonstration and reasonable further progress SIP revisions and proposed rulemakings to 30 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Chapter 115 and Chapter 117.

The HGB 2008 eight-hour ozone NAAQS SIP proposal documents are available at the [HGB Latest Ozone Planning Activities](https://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/sip/hgb/hgb-latest-ozone) webpage (<https://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/sip/hgb/hgb-latest-ozone>).

The TCEQ held a public hearing in Houston on January 4, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. at the Houston-Galveston Area Council. The public comment period closed on January 16, 2024 and staff are evaluating comments received during the public comment period.

The anticipated adoption date for these SIPs is April 24, 2024.

Revised Fine Particulate Matter (PM_{2.5}) NAAQS

On February 7, 2024, EPA finalized its revision of the annual PM_{2.5} NAAQS to 9.0 µg/m³.

Estimated timeline as provided by EPA (https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-02/pm-naaqs-designations-memo_2.7.2024_-_jg-signed.pdf).

- Final NAAQS revision promulgated: February 7, 2024
- State designations due to EPA: February 7, 2025
- 120-day letter from EPA to Governor: Early October 2025
- Anticipated final designations: February 6, 2026
- Attainment date: December 2032

TCEQ plans to hold informational meetings after EPA publishes the final NAAQS. Staff also plan to take informal public comment on the state designations considered by the commission before being sent to the Governor for his consideration for submittal to EPA.

Environmental Trade Fair and Conference (ETFC)

The ETFC will be held May 14-15, 2024, at the Austin Convention Center. During the two-day Conference, agency staff will lead over 100 courses and discussions. Topics include air and water permitting, oil and gas, industrial and solid waste management, compliance and enforcement, and remediation programs.

Attendee and exhibitor registration is open. For more information, please visit the [Environmental Trade Fair and Conference](https://www.tceq.texas.gov/p2/events/etfc/etf.html) webpage (<https://www.tceq.texas.gov/p2/events/etfc/etf.html>).

Quadrennial Review

The TCEQ is conducting a review of agency rules in the Texas Administrative Code (TAC). This process is undertaken to comply with statutory requirements at Texas Government Code, Section 2001.039 and the regulations at 1 TAC Chapter 91, Subchapter D. The purpose of rule review is to determine if the need for TCEQ's rules continues to exist and is limited to consideration of its rules for re-adoption, re-adoption with amendments, or repeal every four years. During this review, the commission will assess whether the reasons for initially adopting its rules continue to exist. Recommended changes to the rules in each applicable chapter of the TAC will not be considered for rule amendments as part of this review. Any such changes may be considered in a future rulemaking action by the commission.

To view the TAC chapters the commission is currently taking comment on, please visit the *Comment Online with TCEQ Public Comments* link on TCEQ's [Rules and Rulemaking](https://www.tceq.texas.gov/rules/rules_rulemaking.html) webpage (https://www.tceq.texas.gov/rules/rules_rulemaking.html). Thirty-day public comment periods for the chapters being reviewed open as notices are published in the *Texas Register*.

To view the complete rule review schedule, please visit the *View TCEQ's Rule Review Plan* link on TCEQ's [Rules and Rulemaking](https://www.tceq.texas.gov/rules/rules_rulemaking.html) webpage.

ITEM 2C. TERP Update (Nate Hickman)

TERP staff gave an update to the members on the latest information:

Texas Emissions Reduction Plan (TERP)

TCEQ began the FY 2024-2025 TERP grant cycle with the [Light-Duty Motor Vehicle Purchase or Lease Incentive Program \(LDPLIP\)](#), which offers first-come, first-served grants statewide for the purchase or lease of a qualifying new light-duty electric (EV) or natural gas vehicle. **As of February 29, 2024, TCEQ has no remaining grants available for light-duty EVs available under the program this biennium. However, TCEQ will continue accepting applications for light-duty natural gas vehicles until March 22, 2024.**

TCEQ launched the new [Texas Hydrogen Infrastructure, Vehicle, and Equipment Program \(THIVE\)](#) on November 29, 2023, and will continue to accept applications until March 30, 2024. THIVE grants will be awarded competitively in eligible counties for hydrogen vehicles, equipment, and refueling infrastructure.

TCEQ is currently accepting applications under the [Alternative Fueling Facilities Program \(AFFP\)](#) until March 22, 2024, with \$12 million in competitive grants available for the construction or expansion of electric charging or alternative fueling stations.

TCEQ is currently accepting applications under the [Texas Clean School Bus Program \(TCSB\)](#) until the earlier of October 14, 2024, or all available funds have been requested, with up to \$20 million available on a first-come, first-served basis to upgrade or replace older diesel school buses with new models.

Coming Soon:

- TCEQ plans to open the Diesel Emissions Reduction Incentives (DERI) listed below in May of this year, with an estimated \$150 million in grants available across the two programs:
[Emissions Reduction Incentive Grants \(ERIG\)](#) will offer grants to repower or replace older locomotives, marine vessels, stationary equipment, or select non-road equipment to reduce NOx emissions in ozone nonattainment areas and affected counties in Texas (competitive selection).
[Rebate Grants Program](#) will offer grants in eligible counties to upgrade or replace diesel heavy-duty vehicles and non-road equipment on a first-come, first-served basis (first-come, first-served selection).
Visit www.terpgrants.org for the latest information on new program openings and other announcements, as well as program requirements, application forms, and project summary reports. Contact TERP staff by phone at (800) 919-TERP (8377) or by email at terp@tceq.texas.gov.

Texas Volkswagen Environmental Mitigation Plan (TxVEMP) Program

Currently Open: [TxVEMP All-Electric Grant Program](#) with over \$50 million remaining to upgrade or replace qualifying vehicles and equipment operating in eligible areas with new electric models. Grants can reimburse up to:

100% of the cost for government entities

75% of the incremental cost for non-government entities

Eligible project categories include the replacement or repower of:

Class 8 Local Freight Trucks and Port Drayage Trucks

– Class 4-8 School Bus, Shuttle Bus, or Transit Bus

– Class 4-7 Local Freight Trucks

– Airport Ground Support Equipment

– Forklifts and Port Cargo Handling Equipment

– Applicants purchasing on-road vehicles or non-road equipment may request additional funding for electric charging or hydrogen refueling infrastructure.

- [Sign up for TxVEMP updates](#) to learn more about this program. Please contact us at 1-800-919-8377 or VWsettle@tceq.texas.gov with any questions.
- Visit www.txvwfund.org for the latest information on new program openings and other announcements, as well as program requirements, application forms, and project summary reports.

ITEM 2D. Regional Air Quality Monitoring Update– (Andrew DeCandis)

Andrew notified the committee members that all of these charts can be found on the “RAQPAC Meeting Agendas and Materials” website under the heading for today’s meeting. Since our last meeting in December, there have been no exceedances of either the 2008 75 ppb ground-level ozone of the 2015 70 ppb standard.

As a result, I can talk a little bit about the final numbers for the year 2023. In 2023, the region’s maximum 4th highest value was 90 ppb as measured at the Houston East monitor. Also, the final regional design value for the 2021 through 2023 period was 83 ppb as measured at the Houston Bayland Park monitor followed by 79 ppb at the Houston East monitor. Here is a chart of regional design values over the last 25 or so years. You can see that after a long downward trend, design values have been rising for the last several years.

Moving on to monitoring of PM2.5 values, you can see the monthly PM2.5 concentrations for all of the region’s regulatory particulate monitors over the last year compared with the current NAAQS standard in solid black as well

as the readings for those same stations over the last 22 years, since 2001. I have also added a dashed line to represent the new 9 micrograms per cubic meter standard.

Finally, and relevant to the new PM_{2.5} standard, now that we have another full year of data, I wanted to present a chart of the tentative PM_{2.5} design value for the 2021 through 2023 period. In this chart, the red design values exceed the 12 micrograms per cubic meter standard, while the yellow design values exceed the new 9 micrograms per cubic meter standard. The monitors with green design values do not exceed any existing or upcoming standard. One additional note: while the North Wayside and Westhollow a both on their third year of data collection, neither of these sites have the required three full years of data, so they do not yet have an official design value. I did, however, feel that it could be helpful to provide the design value so far for comparison's sake.

ACTION ITEMS

ITEM 3A.

None

DISCUSSION ITEMS

ITEM 4A. TTI's Center for Advancing Research in Transportation Emissions, Energy, and Health – (Joe Zietsman, Texas A&M Transportation Institute)

Dr. Zietsman discussed the next steps between health and transportation and presented the consortium's work on electric vehicles, integrated modeling platforms, health equity evaluations, and emissions mitigation. The section revolved around the plans and partnerships related to the CARTEEH Center, with Joe Zietsman providing details on the timeline for completion and the upcoming grand opening in early fall.

ITEM 4B. H-GAC Air Quality Program Update – (Andrew DeCandis, – H-GAC)

Andrew DeCandis provided a detailed overview of the air quality and climate projects at HGAC, emphasizing the organization's involvement in a wide range of initiatives.

During the discussion, Winifred J. Hamilton emphasized the importance of educating the public about the health consequences of air pollution, particularly in relation to particulates, aerosols, and other pollutants. She raised concerns about specific hot spots, such as areas with generators emitting diesel exhaust, and suggested addressing the health effects of transportation planning projects. The conversation also touched on the need to involve experts in health and transportation planning, with plans to discuss the topic further at the next executive steering committee meeting.

INFORMATION ITEMS

ITEM 5A.

None

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ITEM 6A.

- a. H-GAC is cohosting with Environmental Defense Fund as community meeting at the Hobart Taylor Community Center to discuss the North Wayside Monitor and the and the high PM_{2.5} readings. Grace Lewis has graciously put together a flyer for this event that I will send out to the membership following this meeting.
- b. As you know, H-GAC has been working with regional partners over the last several months to develop a priority climate action plan for the region as part of the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant. We are wrapping up the development of this document and first CPRG deliverable and anticipate submitting it to EPA tomorrow. Once this report has been posted on our website, we will send an announcement out to the RAQPAC membership.
- c. With the completion of this Plan, we are beginning to pivot towards developing a regional application for the implementation phase of the CPRG program. As part of our outreach for the plan, we accepted project proposals from local stakeholders. Based on these proposals and measures included in the plan, H-GAC anticipates being the Regional Air Quality Planning Advisory Committee

lead applicant and will work with a stakeholder coalition to develop a list of projects. We intend to provide a presentation at the next RAQPAC meeting discussing our activities on both the planning and implementation aspects of this effort. If you are interested in talking about either side of this effort, please feel free to reach out to me.

NEW BUSINESS

ITEM 7A.

Next meeting: March 28, 2024

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 11:35 A.M.