

REGIONAL AIR QUALITY PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING SUMMARY

Thursday, January 26, 2023 – 10:00 A. M.

Houston-Galveston Area Council

Virtual Teams Meeting

MEMBER PRESENT

City of Houston – Win Colbert
Fort Bend County – Joel Patterson
Waller County – Brooke Bacuetes
Harris County Pollution Control – Latrice Babin
Harris County – Winifred Hamilton
Environmental Defense Fund – Grace Lewis
American Lung Association – Charlie Gagen
Exxon Mobile Corporation – Sherman Hampton
ECHMA – Mary Jane Mudd
City of Texas City – Gary Scoggin

ALTERNATE PRESENT

TxDOT – Charles Airiohuodion
Houston Advanced Research Center – Ebrahim Eslami
METRO – Vincent Sanders
Harris County – Pernell Davis
Air Alliance – Harrison Humphreys
Port Houston – Kenneth Gathright
Harris County Pollution Control – Stuart Mueller

OTHERS PRESENT

STAFF PRESENT

Houston-Galveston Area Council – Andrew DeCandis
Houston-Galveston Area Council – Emanuel Andrews
Houston-Galveston Area Council – Cassandra Marshall
Houston-Galveston Area Council – Susan Jaworski
Houston-Galveston Area Council – James Garland
Houston-Galveston Area Council – Francis Rodriguez
Houston-Galveston Area Council – Ayo Jibowu
Houston-Galveston Area Council – Carrie Evans
Houston-Galveston Area Council – Craig Raborn
Houston-Galveston Area Council – Caroline Bailey
Houston-Galveston Area Council – Maria Theresa Servillon-Sigua
Environmental Protection Agency – Jeff Riley
TCEQ – Vanessa De Arman
TCEQ – Nate Hickman
TCEQ – Alison Stokes
TCEQ – Jamie Zech

BRIEFING

Overview

- a. 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.
- b. 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

Grace Lewis called the meeting to order, and members were introduced.

ITEM 1B. Approval of Meeting Summary (8-25-2022 & 12-08-22)

Meeting summaries approved.

AGENCY REPORTS

ITEM 2A. EPA Update (Jeff Riley)

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

Reconsideration of the EPA's December 2020 Decision to Retain 2012 Particulate Matter (PM) National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS)

On January 6, 2023, EPA Administrator Regan signed the Agency's proposed decision to strengthen the primary (health-based) annual PM_{2.5} standard from the current level of 12.0 µg/m³ to within a range of 9.0 to 10.0 µg/m³. (soliciting comment low as 8 µg/m³, high as 11 µg/m³). EPA also proposed not to change the current:

- The secondary (or welfare-based) annual PM_{2.5} standard,
- The primary and secondary 24-hour PM_{2.5} standards (current level 35 µg/m³, EPA is soliciting comment on revising level to as low as 25 µg/m³), and
- The primary and secondary PM₁₀ standards.

In addition, EPA proposed revisions to other key aspects related to the PM NAAQS, including revisions to the Air Quality Index (AQI) to improve public communications about PM risks (revised breakpoints of good, moderate, unhealthy for sensitive groups, etc. based on proposed revised levels), and revisions to monitoring network design criteria to require monitoring in at-risk communities with anticipated effects from sources in the area contributing to poor air quality.

EPA's [informational webpage](#) contains the [signed & published proposed decision](#), as well as:

- Fact sheets detailing the proposed revisions.
- [Maps of counties](#) not currently meeting lower annual NAAQS values (at 9 & 10 µg/m³ based on 2019-2021 monitoring data), and.
- An [overview presentation](#) providing a summary of the proposal and other PM information.

The proposed decision was published in the Federal Register on January 27, 2023, with a 60-day public comment period (January 27 – March 28). Public hearings will be held mid-late February (likely) and announced through a separate Federal Register document providing specific dates, times, and contact information for the hearings. After close of the comment period, EPA will work to respond to comments and issue a final rulemaking which would determine if & how the PM NAAQS would be revised. Final rulemaking is anticipated late 2023/early 2024. In the event of a revised PM NAAQS, the final rulemaking begins a 2-year process of designating areas nonattainment (1 year for state recommendations, 2nd year for EPA evaluation & designations).

DERA Grants 2022-2023 Notice of Funding Opportunity

On January 17, 2023, EPA [announced](#) that the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act/(DERA) National Grants 2022-2023 Notice of Funding Opportunity is expected to open early 2023, although the exact opening date is currently to be determined. More information & specifics are forthcoming and will be shared with RAQPAC as soon as available to allow the Houston area to take full advantage of the funding opportunity.

Of note: the DERA National Grants are moving to a 2-year competition cycle, in order to reduce the administrative workload associated with grant competitions for both applicants and EPA. EPA anticipates that the change will facilitate long term planning and budgeting for our applicants and allow for more realistic project timelines, thereby reducing the need for amendments and extensions later in the funded project.

AVERT 4.0 Introductory Webinar, January 31, 2023: New functionality to analyze the energy, emissions, and equity impacts of electric vehicles

Join EPA for a [webinar](#) on January 31st at 1PM ET to learn about a major update to the [Avoided Emissions and generation Tool](#) (AVERT), a free tool designed to evaluate greenhouse gas (GHG) and other pollutant emissions from the power sector displaced by energy efficiency and renewable energy (EE/RE) policies and programs.

The update consists of an expanded version—titled AVERT 4.0—which responds to stakeholder interest in quantifying the emission impacts of electric vehicles (EVs). AVERT 4.0 can now model the “tailpipe to smokestack” energy and emissions impacts of EVs. With these capabilities, the tool helps users to model EVs and EE/RE together as a portfolio, demonstrating the impact and importance of deploying multiple energy strategies together. Results from AVERT 4.0 are presented at county, state, and regional level, which can be easily exported into EPA’s [COBRA](#), or the Co-Benefits Risk Assessment air quality & health impacts screening & mapping tool. With these two tools together, model results can help demonstrate how energy policies and programs can meet air quality, health, equity, and economic goals.

Speakers:

- Alejandra Nunez, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Mobile Sources, US EPA Office of Air and Radiation
- Colby Tucker, Senior Policy Analyst, US EPA State and Local Climate and Energy Program
- Pat Knight, Senior Principal, Synapse Energy Economics, Inc.

2023 EJ Collaborative Problem-Solving Cooperative Agreement Program (EJCPS) Request for Applications

EPA is soliciting applications for projects that support community-based nonprofit organizations (CBOs) in their collaboration with other stakeholders (e.g., local businesses and industry, local government, medical service providers, academia, etc.) to develop solutions that significantly address environmental or public health issue(s) in communities disproportionately burdened by environmental harms. This competition is being launched to meet the goals and objectives of the Biden Administration’s Executive Orders 14008 & 13985, demonstrating EPA’s and the Administration’s commitment to achieving environmental justice and embedding environmental justice into Agency programs. For more information, see [EPA’s informational webpage](#).

To apply for this opportunity, [view the RFA on Grants.gov](#). Applications packages must be submitted on or before April 10, 2023 at 11:59 PM (Eastern Time). Applicants should plan for projects to begin on October 1, 2023.

ITEM 2B. TCEQ Update (Vanessa De Arman)

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

PM_{2.5} NAAQS Proposal Released on January 6

Using preliminary data, TCEQ reviewed the 2022 PM_{2.5} design values relative to the proposed new annual standard.

Based on this analysis, Harris and Montgomery Counties could potentially be impacted by the new standard.

TCEQ is coordinating virtual outreach meetings for these counties. If you would like to be included in these meetings, please contact Vanessa De Arman at vanessa.dearman@tceq.texas.gov or at 512-239-5609.

2023 Environmental Trade Fair and Conference (ETFC)

The ETFC will be held May 16-17, 2023, at the Austin Convention Center. During the two-day ETFC, 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 now open. For more information, please visit the Environmental Trade Fair and Conference webpage (<https://www.tceq.texas.gov/p2/events/etfc/etf.html>).

ITEM 2C. TERP Update (Nate Hickman)

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

Texas Emissions Reduction Plan (TERP)

The Texas Natural Gas Vehicle Grant Program (TNGVGP) is accepting applications on a first-come, first-served basis

until 5:00 pm CST on March 31, 2023. The TNGVGP provides vehicle grants to replace heavy-duty or medium-duty motor vehicles with natural gas vehicles or repower them with natural gas engines. Eligible natural gas fuels include compressed natural gas, liquefied natural gas, and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG or Propane).

Coming Soon: The New Technology Implementation Grant Program (NTIG) will be opening soon. This program offers grants statewide to implement new technologies that reduce emissions of pollutants from facilities and stationary sources, which may also include energy storage projects in Texas.

Coming Soon: The Emissions Reduction Incentive Grants (ERIG) Program will be opening soon. The ERIG program provides financial incentives to repower or replace older locomotives, marine vessels, stationary equipment, or select non-road equipment to reduce NO_x emissions in ozone nonattainment areas and affected counties in Texas.

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

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. Contact TxVEMP staff by phone at (833) 215-TXVW (8989) or by email at VWsettle@tceq.texas.gov.

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

Since our last meeting in December, there have been no exceedances of the 2008 75 ppb ground-level ozone standard or 2015 70 ppb standard.

So far, this year, the region's maximum 4th highest value remains at 84 ppb located at the Houston Bayland Park monitor. Moving on, the current regional design value for the 2020 through 2022 remains at 78 ppb as measured at the Houston Harvard Street monitor and 76 ppb at the Clinton monitor.

For the year, 2020 to 2022 the Houston design value is 78 ppb as measured at the Houston Bayland Park monitor. This is an increase from 2021.

ACTION ITEMS

ITEM 3A. RAQPAC Vice Chair Election (Grace Lewis)

Vice -Chair	Joel Patterson
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ITEM 3B. PM_{2.5} Advance Report Request for Approval – (Andrew DeCandis, H-GAC)

Request for approval to submit reports to EPA- **Motion approved to submit to EPA.**

DISCUSSION ITEMS

ITEM 4A. H-GAC Commute Solutions 2023 Initiatives – (Emanuel Andrews, H-GAC)

Emanuel Andrews updated the members on Commute Solutions upcoming initiatives. The Regional Bike Encouragement program has partnered with- Love to Ride. Love to Ride has a cloud base platform to engage the participants. Our team was especially impressed with the Atlanta outcome. They expressed positive changes and attitudes towards cycling. Their efforts rely heavily on local stakeholders' involvement. Discussion continued that this fall will be the launch of ozone action campaign with the objective to report an increase in ridership and improvement in air quality.

It was further discussed the Connect Smart App was launched last fall. They worked with TxDot to suggest comfortable routes, and carpool groups. Also, join groups to form a carpool. Also, they will be expanding the emergency ride home.

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This will be available to make everyone feel secure. The co-promotional campaign has begun with Metro to encourage the use of the new application. Also, to encourage the community to make use of the new resources. How to combine transit along with riding your bike. As well as integrate ozone action month.

In closing, Emanuel discussed AECOM is one of Commute Solutions leaders to determine the quality of the services and effectiveness of the program. As well as assist with implementation in order to serve more people.

INFORMATION ITEMS

ITEM 5A. H-GAC Update (Andrew DeCandis)

Andrew proposed a question to members to find out their thoughts on returning to in-person meetings. Discussion continued that if each member would let him know their thoughts on how they would like to move forward

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ITEM 6A.

None.

NEW BUSINESS

ITEM 7A.

Next meeting: February 23, 2023

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 10:59 A.M.