REGIONAL AIR QUALITY PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING SUMMARY

Thursday, September 24, 2026 – 10:00 A.M.
Houston-Galveston Area Council
Virtual Teams Meeting

Participants

Alexander, Jamik
Alison Stokes (External)
Andrews, Pharr
Baah, Keehren
Bok Haeng Baek (External)
Brooke Bacuetes (Unverified)
Carlos Gamarra (External)
Chambers, Bennie
Charlie Gagen (External)
DeCandis, Andrew
Delroshan, Sara
Denine Calvin (External)
Douglas Peterson
Emily Wagoner (External)
Erin Connolly (External)
Eslami, Ebrahim
Finley, Ben
Grace Lewis (External)
Hamilton, Winifred J (External)
Heshmat, Kareem
Jen Hadayia (External)
Jibowu, Ayo
Kenneth Gathright
Kevin Hyatt (External)
Lugo, Carlos
Ly, Nguyen - HHD (External)
Marisa R (Unverified)
Marshall, Cassandra
Meyers, Heather
Mueller, Stuart (PCS) (External)
Mustapha A. Beydoun
Nelson, Delaney
Owens, Jamila
Qing Li
Rachel Melton (External)
Ron Hieser (External)
Statkewicz, Madeline
Tate, Darryl - HHD (External)
Vandervoort, Jessica
Vanessa De Arman (External)
Vetticadan, Priya T
Vincent Sanders (External)
Vu, Kieu-Vi

BRIEFING

Overview

a. RAQPAC Members and Alternates were presented with agency reports (TCEQ Update, TERP Update, and Regional Air Quality Monitoring update), and the meeting concluded with information items and 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 2A. Approval of Meeting Summary (8/29/2026)

Meeting summary was approved.

AGENCY REPORTS

ITEM 3A. EPA Update – (Jeff Riley, EPA*)*

- 2024 PM2.5 standard remains in effect: The D.C. Circuit upheld the strengthened annual PM2.5 standard of 9.0 µg/m³ on June 26, 2026.
- Supreme Court appeal sought: State and industry petitioners filed petitions on August 28 asking the Supreme Court to review the D.C. Circuit decision.
- EPA missed designation deadline: EPA did not issue attainment/nonattainment designations by the statutory February 7, 2026 deadline.
- Court ordered designations: A federal court in California ordered EPA to issue final PM2.5 area designations by February 6, 2027.
- EPA appealed that order: EPA appealed the designation deadline to the Ninth Circuit on September 2.
- Next steps remain uncertain: EPA is continuing its reconsideration of the 2024 PM2.5 standard while the related litigation proceeds.

ITEM 2B. TCEQ Update – (Vanessa DeArman, TCEQ*)*

- TCEQ Update Web Links and Contact Information:
- 2025 Non-Regulatory, State-Initiative Air Monitoring Network Changes – added two new sites: Houston-Pasadena-The Woodlands Metropolitan Statistical Area at Houston Finnigan Park and Houston Pleasantville Elementary – for additional information, please visit the Air Monitoring webpage: https://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/monops
- Texas Air Monitoring Information System Web Interface: data from these monitors are publicly available: TAMISWeb v6.8 - About
- Advanced Air Permitting Seminar at the Commons Conference Center in Austin and virtually on October 6 – to register, please visit the Advanced Air Permitting Seminar webpage: Advanced Air Permitting Seminar.

ITEM 2C. TERP Update- (***Ron Heiser, TERP***)
TCEQ provided an update on the Texas Emissions Reduction Plan (TERP), reporting that eight grant programs have launched since October 2025, with four programs still accepting applications as of August. Key funding opportunities included the Texas Natural Gas Vehicle Grant Program ($30 million), Seaport and Rail Yard Areas Emissions Reduction Program ($24 million), Emissions Reduction Incentive Grants Program ($62.8 million), and New Technology Implementation Grant Program ($16.5 million). The Texas Hydrogen Infrastructure, Vehicle, and Equipment Grant Program (THIVE) was expected to open in late September.

TCEQ also highlighted approximately $30 million available through the Texas Volkswagen Environmental Mitigation Plan (TxVEMP) All-Electric Grant Program to replace eligible vehicles and equipment, with applications extended through August 31, 2026. Additionally, TCEQ provided an update on the Texas Voluntary Marginal Conventional Well Plugging Program (TxMCW), supported by $134 million in federal funding to measure methane emissions and plug qualifying wells. The program is expected to support approximately 1,000–2,000 well-plugging projects over four years.

ITEM 2D. Regional Air Quality **Monitoring Update**– **(Ebrahim Eslami, H-GAC)**
Dr. Eslami presented regional air quality monitoring trends through September 23, 2026, noting that ozone concentrations remained similar to August, with stagnant weather conditions, low wind speeds, and increased traffic contributing to elevated levels. The highest ozone concentrations shifted from northern monitoring stations in August to more central locations in September. Fine particulate matter (PM2.5) concentrations decreased noticeably compared to August, largely due to cooler temperatures and improved wind conditions. However, long-term PM2.5 trends have shown limited improvement since 2021, particularly at stations near emissions sources. Preliminary data suggest that both ozone and PM2.5 conditions may improve in 2026 compared to 2025, although final assessments will depend on year-end monitoring results. Dr. Eslami also noted plans to improve future reporting by categorizing monitoring stations to better distinguish pollution trends and contributing factors.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Item 4A. Uncovering Emissions in Complex Petrochemical Environments: Lessons from the Gulf Coast – Dr. B.H. Baek

Dr. Baek presented emerging research using advanced air quality modeling, automated sensors, and machine learning to better characterize exposure to pollen and hazardous air pollutants in the Houston region. The research focuses on improving the spatial and temporal resolution of pollution data, including modeling air toxics such as benzene in Harris County and developing more accurate pollen monitoring and forecasting systems. Potential applications include supporting respiratory health research, improving community exposure assessments, and developing public health alert systems. The research remains in its early stages, with ongoing efforts focused on validating monitoring data and translating findings into tools that support environmental health research and community decision-making.

Dr. Baek's research used artificial intelligence to improve air quality modeling, emissions inventories, and regulatory decision-making. His team developed Deep CTM, a deep-learning model designed to significantly reduce the time and computing resources required for traditional chemical transport modeling. The research combines satellite observations, ground-based monitoring, and emissions data to improve estimates of nitrogen oxides (NOx), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and ammonia emissions. Dr. Baek highlighted discrepancies between traditional emissions inventories and observed conditions, particularly for agricultural ammonia emissions, and discussed ongoing collaboration with EPA and NOAA to improve emissions

estimates and forecasting. He also described potential applications in the Houston-Galveston region, including evaluating emission reduction strategies, improving ozone modeling, and identifying cost-effective pollution control measures. The research could ultimately support faster, more accurate, and accessible air quality planning and policy decisions.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

ITEM 5A. Port Houston Sustainability Update – Mustapha A. Beydoun

During the discussion following the Port Houston presentation, Mustapha Beydoun explained that Port Houston does not currently have on-site solar or wind generation, but purchases electricity under an agreement with Shell that guarantees 100% renewable power, primarily believed to be sourced from solar and wind. He described collaboration with the trucking industry to identify suitable locations and uses for electric truck charging infrastructure while reducing truck idling and operating time. Jen Hadayia of Air Alliance Houston expressed interest in community-organization participation. Beydoun noted the collaborative aims to include industry, research, and community partners. Grace Lewis suggested continuing questions at a future meeting if time permits. Beydoun agreed to provide his slide deck to Andrew DeCandis and Pharr Andrews for distribution to members.

MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS

ITEM 6A. Updates from Members

None

H-GAC Information Items

ITEM 7A.

Andrew DeCandis reminded members of the Air Quality Summit scheduled for October 8, 2026. Grace Lewis encouraged RAQPAC members to attend.

NEW BUSINESS

ITEM 8A.

Next meeting: October 29, 2026

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 A.M.