

PM_{2.5} Nonattainment Designation for Harris County

Background

Over the course of the last few years, concerns have risen within the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that Harris County is not attaining the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for annual particulate matter below 2.5 microns (PM_{2.5}) at a monitor on Clinton Dr. Designation as a non-attainment area for PM_{2.5} could require costly additional control measures for on-road and off-road vehicles, stationary sources and other measures designed to reduce fugitive dust. Progress toward attainment of the PM_{2.5} standard would require measurable progress as described in the State Implementation Plan, potentially including additional Transportation Control Measures. As seen in the enclosed correspondence, EPA has requested a recommendation in this matter from the Texas Governor.

The City of Houston, the Port of Houston Authority (PoHA), the Texas Council on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), Harris County, the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and have been investigating the cause of the PM_{2.5} violations at the Clinton Drive monitor near East Loop 610. Preliminary work performed by TCEQ and PoHA suggests that diesel particulate matter from Port traffic is not a major source of PM_{2.5}. Consensus is that the most likely cause of the PM_{2.5} near the monitor comes from the dust on Clinton Drive and nearby unpaved roads and parking areas.

Current Situation

It appears that the most beneficial mitigation measures could include:

- Rehabilitation and restoration of drainage structures along Clinton Drive. Because culverts and ditches appear dysfunctional, storm water normally carried by them runs onto the roadway, carrying soil from adjacent properties. Once dry, this material is re-entrained as dust by trucks traveling down Clinton Drive.
- Repaving of Clinton Drive and its shoulder areas. Moderate lane-widening and shoulder improvements on Clinton Drive could further reduce dust as large tractor trailers are often forced by the narrow lane width to drive on the unpaved shoulders of this roadway.

Action Required

Information only