

REPORT ON AIR QUALITY INITIATIVES

Background

The eight-county Houston-Galveston-Brazoria (HGB) area is currently designated as “nonattainment” for ground level ozone under the Clean Air Act. A nonattainment designation requires H-GAC to develop and administer air quality programs that contribute to emission reductions.

Current Situation

The HGB Area has attained the One Hour Standard and the 1997 Eight Hour Ozone Standard (80 ppb). Due to a recent Washington DC Circuit Court Decision the Texas Council on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) is in the process of preparing a State Implementation Plan (SIP) for Re-designations of the area to attainment for these two standards that includes anti-backsliding measures. The HGB eight county area is not attaining the 2008 Ozone Standard (75 ppb) and it is anticipated that the area will be reclassified to Serious this summer. Additionally, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has proposed a Marginal Designation for the 2015 Ozone Standard (70 ppb) for six of the HGB nonattainment counties, deleting Liberty and Waller Counties. Designations for the 2015 Standard are expected to be finalized by this fall. Due to commitments in previous SIPs, the region has implemented ongoing voluntary mobile emission reduction programs. The H-GAC currently funds or administers many of these air quality programs using federal, state, and private sources of funding. Current programs include the Clean Vehicles, Clean Cities, and Commute Solutions programs.

Clean Vehicles focuses on reducing emissions for heavy-duty vehicles by assisting with the purchase of new vehicles or the replacement of the original engines with new, cleaner ones. The Clean Cities program works directly with fleets to educate them about the benefits of cleaner lower emission alternative fuel technologies and provides tools to increase the use of these fuels within the region. Annually the Clean Cities Program surveys fleets within the region to track the expansion and use of alternative fuels and idle reduction activities. The Commute Solutions program works to improve air quality by educating residents and businesses within the region about alternatives that can improve air quality. These programs include carpool ridesharing, METRO STAR Vanpool, Commuter and Transit Pilot Projects, and the afore mentioned public outreach and education programs.

The 2017 Air Quality Initiatives report includes a detailed description of these programs and shows that these H-GAC-related programs resulted in the reduction of approximately 281 tons of NO_x, a reduction of over 52 million vehicle miles traveled and the replacement of 75 school buses and 44 heavy-duty vehicles during 2017.

Action Requested

For information only