

REGIONAL AIR QUALITY PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING SUMMARY

Thursday, January 30, 2025 – 10:00 A. M.

Houston-Galveston Area Council

Virtual Teams Meeting

<u>MEMBER PRESENT</u> Fort Bend County – Joel Patterson Harris County Pollution Control – Latrice Babin Environmental Defense Fund – Grace Lewis Waller County – Brooke Bacuetes City of Houston – Win Colbert City of Houston – Nguyen Ly Harris County – Doug Peterson Houston Advanced Research Center – Ebrahim Eslami American Lung Association – Charlie Gagen Port Houston – Trae Camble Air Alliance Houston – Jennifer Hadayia	<u>ALTERNATE PRESENT</u> Port Houston – Kenneth Gathright Metro – Vincent Sanders City of Houston – Darryl Tate Air Alliance Houston – Inyang Uwak Harris County Pollution Control – Stuart Mueller
<u>OTHERS PRESENT</u> Pope Strategies Group – Clay Pope Christina Penrose Rachel Melton Jorge Gonzalez Emily Wagoner	<u>STAFF PRESENT</u> Houston-Galveston Area Council – Andrew DeCandis Houston-Galveston Area Council – Pharr Andrews Houston-Galveston Area Council – Cassandra Marshall Houston-Galveston Area Council – Rodney Sigua Houston-Galveston Area Council – Vincent Polignano Houston-Galveston Area Council – Jamila Owens Houston-Galveston Area Council – Ben Finley Houston-Galveston Area Council – Ayo Jibowu Houston-Galveston Area Council – Maggie Isied TCEQ – Vanessa DeArman TERP – Nate Hickman TCEQ – Denine Calvin EPA – Jeffrey Riley

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 no information items and 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 (12-12-2024)

Meeting summary held for quorum.

AGENCY REPORTS

ITEM 2A. EPA Update – (Jeff Riley)

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

Review of the Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS)

On December 20, 2024, EPA made available to the public Volumes 1 and 2 of the “Integrated Review Plan for the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Ozone and Related Photochemical Oxidants” (IRP). The NAAQS for photochemical oxidants are set to protect public health and public welfare from these pollutants in ambient air. [Volume 1 of the IRP](#) contains contextual background material for EPA’s current review of the air quality criteria and the NAAQS. [Volume 2 of the IRP](#) identifies policy-relevant issues in the review and describes key considerations in the EPA’s development of the Integrated Science Assessment (ISA). The IRP is one of the initial deliverables/documents of the NAAQS review process as per Clean Air Act sections 108 & 109 requirements.

Volume 1 of the IRP includes the first publicly released schedule for the current Ozone NAAQS review. See *Table 2-1. Projected timeline for the review of ambient air quality criteria and NAAQS for Ozone* (pg. 2-2) for milestones/deliverables and associated target dates.

More information about EPA’s current review of the Ozone NAAQS can be found at: <https://www.epa.gov/naaqs/ozone-o3-air-quality-standards>

EPA NAAQS Review Process Document

On December 20, 2024, EPA posted its [Overview of the EPA’s Process for Reviewing the NAAQS](#) document to the [Process of Reviewing the National Ambient Air Quality Standards](#) informational webpage. The Overview does not make any changes to the existing NAAQS review process; rather, it simply summarizes in a clear and concise manner the steps and process for review of a NAAQS.

Review of the Secondary NO_x/SO_x/PM NAAQS

On December 27, 2024, EPA published in the Federal Register the [Final Decision to Revise the Secondary SO₂ NAAQS and Retain Secondary NO₂ and PM NAAQS](#). The final decision strengthens the secondary Sulfur Dioxide (SO₂) NAAQS from the current level of 0.5 parts per million (ppm)/3-hour average, not to be exceeded more than once in a year, to an annual standard of 10 parts per billion (ppb)/3-year average. The existing secondary standards for Oxides of Nitrogen (NO_x) & particulate matter (PM) are retained, without revision. EPA issued a [January 16, 2025, memo](#) to support the area designations process by outlining the process and schedule of designations. The process follows a 2-year schedule from promulgation of the revised NAAQS for EPA to issue final area designations (1 year from promulgation for state recommendations to EPA, 2 years from promulgation for EPA’s final area designations). Based on a December 11, 2024, promulgation date (EPA Administrator’s signature of the final decision), December 11, 2025, is the deadline for state recommendations to EPA and December 11, 2026, is the deadline for EPA’s final area designations.

More information about EPA’s review of the Secondary NO_x/SO_x/PM NAAQS can be found at: <https://www.epa.gov/so2-pollution/secondary-national-ambient-air-quality-standards-naaqs-nitrogen-dioxide-no2-and>

ITEM 2B. TCEQ Update – (Vanessa DeArman)

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

PM_{2.5} NAAQS State Designations

Due to pending litigation over the validity of the PM_{2.5} NAAQS, the Executive Director will not be providing recommendations regarding the PM_{2.5} NAAQS to the commission for consideration and transmittal to the Governor. Under the federal Clean Air Act, Governors make designations, which EPA must then act upon.

If you have additional questions, please reach out to Alison Stokes at alison.stokes@tceq.texas.gov.

Mass Emissions Cap and Trade (MECT) and Highly Reactive Volatile Organic Compounds Cap and Trade (HECT) Programs

Allowance trades for 2024 compliance with the MECT and HECT Programs are due by January 30, 2025. Trades must be submitted electronically through the [State of Texas Environmental Electronic Reporting System \(STEERS\)](https://www3.tceq.texas.gov/steers/) (<https://www3.tceq.texas.gov/steers/>). STEERS will issue a confirmation letter via e-mail once your trade has been successfully completed and verified by the system.

TCEQ's Emissions Banking and Trading (EBT) section will host a webinar on the MECT and HECT programs on February 25, 2025, 9:00–11:30 am CST. It will include information on annual compliance reporting, submission of applications through STEERS, and other related topics. To register, please complete the [Event Registration Form](https://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/banking/emissions-banking-and-trading-ebt-webinar) (<https://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/banking/emissions-banking-and-trading-ebt-webinar>). Registration closes at 5:00 pm CST on February 21, 2025.

STEERS is also accepting 2024 MECT and HECT Annual Reports submissions for 2024 compliance by March 31, 2025.

For more information, please visit the [EBT](https://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/banking) webpage (<https://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/banking>) and for questions, please contact ebt@tceq.texas.gov.

ITEM 2C. TERP Update (*Nate Hickman*)

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

Texas Emissions Reduction Plan (TERP)

- In the current Fiscal Biennium (FY 2024-2025), TCEQ has fully implemented the [Light-Duty Motor Vehicle Purchase or Lease Incentive Program \(LDPLIP\)](#), the [Alternative Fueling Facilities Program \(AFFP\)](#), the [Texas Hydrogen Infrastructure, Vehicle, and Equipment Program \(THIVE\)](#), the [Rebate Grants Program](#), the [Emissions Reduction Incentive Grants \(ERIG\)](#), the [Texas Clean School Bus Program \(TCSB\)](#), and the [Seaport and Rail Yard Areas Emissions Reduction Program \(SPRY\)](#).

Currently Accepting Applications:

- [New Technology Implementation Grant Program \(NTIG\)](#), offering grants statewide through January 31, 2025, to implement new technologies that reduce emissions of pollutants from facilities and other stationary sources.
- [Governmental Alternative Fuel Fleet Grant Program \(GAFF\)](#), offering grants statewide through February 5, 2025, to assist with purchasing or leasing new vehicles that operate primarily on compressed natural gas, liquefied natural gas, liquefied petroleum gas, hydrogen (fuel cells), or electricity.
- [Emissions Reduction Incentive Grants \(ERIG\)](#), has been re-opened through February 14, 2025, to offer grants 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 (competitive selection).
- [Texas Natural Gas Vehicle Grant Program \(TNGVGP\)](#), offering grants in eligible counties on a first-come, first-served basis through March 4, 2025, to repower heavy-duty or medium-duty vehicles with natural gas engines or replace the vehicles with natural gas vehicles.
- [Texas Clean Fleet Program \(TCFP\)](#), offering grants in eligible counties through March 21, 2025, to replace heavy-duty and light-duty on-road diesel vehicles with alternative fuel and hybrid vehicles.

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 Accepting Applications:

- [TxVEMP All-Electric Grant Program](#) (through August 31, 2025) has over \$30 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.
- [TXVEMP Ferry, Tug, and Switcher Grant Program](#) (through February 14, 2025) similar to the TERP ERIG program, this program is offering grants replace or repower older locomotives or repower marine vessels to reduce NO_x emissions in Texas, with the option to request additional funding for on-site electric charging infrastructure.
 - Up to 100% for governmental entities; 75% for non-governmental entities.

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.

Texas Voluntary Marginal Conventional Well Plugging Program (TxMCW)

Background

- May 8, 2024: TCEQ received \$134 million in grant funding from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) – Methane Emissions Reduction Program (MERP) for Mitigating Emissions from Marginal Conventional Wells (MCWs), overseen by the Department of Energy (DOE) / National Energy Technology Laboratory (NETL).

Program Description

- TCEQ is implementing the MERP grant through TxMCW, a program that will cover the costs of measuring methane emissions at participating well sites and plugging those wells.
- At an estimated \$60,000 and \$120,000 per well, TCEQ may award between 1,000 and 2,000 grants for qualifying wells in Texas over a four-year program period.
- Outreach and program development in Spring 2025.

Visit <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/txmcw> for the latest program information, and [sign up for updates](#) to learn more about this program, or contact us directly:

ITEM 2D. Regional Air Quality Monitoring Update– (Vinnie Polignano)

Vinnie Polignano presented the latest air quality monitoring data, comparing January 2024 and January 2025 readings for ozone and PM 2.5. He highlighted that ozone levels were lower in 2025, potentially due to climatic conditions, while PM 2.5 levels increased across most monitors. Polignano emphasized the need for ongoing updates and feedback on the monitoring process.

ITEM 2E. Health Impacts Subcommittee– (Maggie Isied)

Maggie Isied notified the committee members that RAQPAC is working to organize a health Impact Subcommittee. Discussion continued that they are in the process of brainstorming some members that would be interested. Members were encouraged to reach out, if you're interested or you have anyone you think would be interested and represented from any local communities, please contact me.

ACTION ITEMS

ITEM 3A. RAQPAC Officer Elections (Joel Patterson)

Elections held for Quorum.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

ITEM 4A.

1. Quality Preview of Upcoming Legislative Session- (Clay Pope, Pope Strategies Group)

Clay Pope presented on air quality legislation, noting recent changes in the House that have led to a decrease in bill filings. He identified education vouchers and property tax reductions as key legislative priorities, while also discussing the need for funding for water projects and the potential allocation of surplus funds for air quality initiatives. Concerns were raised about the prioritization of vouchers over air quality issues, and Pope suggested focusing on reducing precursor emissions from fleets.

2. The American Lung Association's "Something in the Air" Report – (Charlie Gagen, American Lung Association)

Charlie Gagen gave an overview to the committee members regarding the report that is released every year called the state of the air, which looks at air quality and counties and metro areas. This last year we released a supplement to that report called something in the air. Discussion continued with a supplement to our state-of-the air report, and it's an attempt to address the fact that, as you notice in that report, the vast majority of counties don't have enough data to be graded for their air quality. So while Harris County and your big counties in Texas, you know, have great air quality monitors and great data, we can get the vast majority of people, the vast majority of counties do not have an air quality data in their in their area, so they're really unable to identify what their actual air quality is. He noted that in Texas only 26 counties report data on particle pollution. And so, this report looked at the use of using satellite technology to help improve data coverage and public health insights. And so, we really tried to focus on unmonitored counties that likely had higher levels of particulate matter, PM 2.5 and the goal again is to help fill in some of the gaps. A more complete picture of what the air quality is. So again, the goal of using this data is to help individuals protect themselves from air pollution and give communities a better way to advocate for healthier.

INFORMATION ITEMS

ITEM 5A.

- 1. Tuesday, February 18-Board of Directors Meeting -10:00a.m.-11:00a.m.**
- 2. Friday, February 28 -Transportation Policy Council -9:30a.m.-11:30a.m.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ITEM 6A.

None

NEW BUSINESS

ITEM 7A.

Next meeting: February 27, 2025

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 11:33 A.M.