

REGIONAL AIR QUALITY PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING SUMMARY

Thursday, September 25, 2025 – 10:00 A. M.

Houston-Galveston Area Council

Virtual Teams Meeting

<u>MEMBER PRESENT</u> Harris County – Winifred Hamilton Harris County – Doug Peterson Port Houston – Trae Camble Air Alliance Houston – Jennifer Hadayia Environmental Defense Fund– Grace Lewis City of Houston–Nguyen Ly TXDOT–Qing Li METRO–Vincent Sanders Waller County–Brooke Bacuetes City of Dickinson–Travis Magliolo	<u>ALTERNATE PRESENT</u> METRO–Kenneth McGaughey Harris County Pollution Control–Stuart Mueller Environmental Defense Fund–Philip Martin East Harris County Manufactures Association–Christina Penrose League of Women Voters–Katie Campbell City of LaPorte–Johnny Morales Harris County Precinct 2–Jon Powell
<u>OTHERS PRESENT</u> Meredith Jennings	<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 – Ben Finley Houston-Galveston Area Council – Jamila Owens Houston-Galveston Area Council – Marcus Tucker Houston-Galveston Area Council – Bennie Chambers Houston-Galveston Area Council – Veronica Waller Houston-Galveston Area Council – Pamela Grady Houston-Galveston Area Council – Keehren Baah Houston-Galveston Area Council – Qun Zhao Houston-Galveston Area Council – Rosa Harris Houston-Galveston Area Council – Rodney Sigua Houston-Galveston Area Council – Ayo Jibowu EPA– Jeffrey Riley TERP– Ron Heiser TCEQ – Vanessa De Arman TCEQ – Denine Calvin TCEQ – Emily Wagoner TCEQ – Alison Stokes

BRIEFING

Overview

- RAQPAC Members and Alternates were presented with agency reports (EPA Update, TCEQ Update, and Regional Air Quality Monitoring update), and the meeting concluded with information items and no 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

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

ITEM 2A. Approval of Meeting Summary (08/28/2025)

Meeting summary approved.

AGENCY REPORTS

ITEM 2A. EPA Update – (Jeff Riley)

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

2024 Annual PM2.5 National Ambient Air Quality Standard – Designations/Implementation

On March 12th, EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin issued an [announcement](#) that the agency will undertake 31 deregulatory actions affecting a variety of sectors of the economy. Among the 31 deregulatory actions identified:

- Reconsideration of [EPA’s February 7, 2024, strengthening of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Particulate Matter \(PM NAAQS\)](#), setting the level of the primary (health-based) annual PM2.5 standard at 9.0 micrograms per cubic meter to provide increased public health protection, consistent with the available health science.

The Administrator’s announcement represents a statement of agency priorities for this administration, and a “path forward.” Since the March 12th announcement, EPA has issued no policy statements, press releases or other communications on status of the 2024 PM2.5 NAAQS.

A lawsuit filed in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit (DC Circuit) by Kentucky’s attorney general and 23 other state attorneys general in March 2024 to block implementation of the strengthened NAAQS could soon provide a status update on the NAAQS. The case has been fully briefed on both sides, and oral argument was back in December 2024.

More recently, on August 13, 2025, EPA filed a motion to the Court requesting an additional 45-day abeyance in the PM2.5 NAAQS litigation. On July 14, the DC Circuit directed EPA to include information in future motions about the progress of the PM NAAQS reconsideration, and a timetable for EPA’s decision. EPA’s August 13 motion reports that the Agency expects to sign a proposed reconsideration rule in the Fall of 2025 after review by the Office of Management and Budget and is targeting signature of any final rule by February of 2026. The Court can issue an opinion at some point even if EPA continues to seek an abeyance. On September 4, the DC Circuit granted EPA’s request to keep case in abeyance for another 45 days, directing EPA to file motions to govern further proceedings by October 20.

EPA will share information on reconsideration of the 2024 annual PM2.5 NAAQS as it becomes available.

Spring 2025 Unified Agenda of Regulatory and Deregulatory Actions

On September 5, EPA released an update to its [Spring 2025 Unified Agenda](#) of Regulatory and Deregulatory Actions, including an inventory of proposed actions related to the Clean Air Act. Some dates presented in the anticipated schedule have slipped, but the updated agenda should still serve as a useful roadmap and timetable for EPA priority regulatory and deregulatory activities.

Every item listed as EPA/OAR (Office of Air & Radiation) is a regulatory or deregulatory action that EPA OAR is currently working on; every entry has an individual link for more information/context about that action, and either an anticipated or actual schedule for the rulemaking. Many of these actions stem from EPA Administrator Zeldin’s March 12, 2025, announcement of 31 deregulatory actions to power the Great American Comeback.

ITEM 2B. TCEQ Update – (Vanessa DeArman)

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

Inspection and Maintenance Program (I/M) SIP and Rule Revisions

On September 24, 2025, the commission adopted revisions to 30 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Chapter 114, Control of Air Pollution from Motor Vehicles, and to the Texas I/M SIP to implement two bills passed during the 88th Texas Legislature, 2023, Regular Session: House Bill 3297 eliminated the mandatory annual vehicle safety inspection program for noncommercial vehicles, effective January 1, 2025; and Senate Bill 2102 extends the initial registration and inspection period for rental vehicles to three years.

For additional information, please visit the [Vehicle Inspection and Maintenance \(I/M\) Program](https://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/mobilesource/im.html) webpage (<https://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/mobilesource/im.html>).

Proposed Revisions to 30 TAC Chapter 17 and Chapter 18

- On August 20, 2025, the commission approved proposal of revisions to 30 TAC Chapters 17 Tax Relief for Property Used for Environmental Protection and Chapter 18 Voter-Approval Tax Relief for Pollution Control Requirements (Project No. 2023-123-017-AI).
- The public comment period opened on September 5, 2025, and closes on October 6, 2025. A virtual public hearing has been scheduled for the proposed rulemakings on September 29, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. The hearing will be conducted in English, and instructions for participating in the hearing will also be provided in Spanish.
- For more information, please visit the [Tax Relief for Pollution Control Property Program Hot Topics](https://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/taxrelief/prop2_hottopics.html) webpage (https://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/taxrelief/prop2_hottopics.html).

ITEM 2C. TERP Update (Ron Heiser)

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

Texas Emissions Reduction Plan (TERP)

- The new Fiscal Biennium (FY 2026-2027) officially began September 1, 2025.
- 3 grant programs will open this Fall:
 - [Light-Duty Motor Vehicle Purchase or Lease Incentive Program \(LDPLIP\)](#) opens **October 13**.
 - [Alternative Fueling Facilities Program \(AFFP\)](#) opens **October 15**. The TCEQ will host a live AFFP webinar free to the public at 2:00 p.m. Wednesday, October 1.
 - [Texas Clean School Bus Program \(TCSB\)](#) opens **October 29**. The TCEQ will host a live TCSB webinar free to the public at 1:00 p.m. Wednesday, October 15.
 - All TERP grant program opening dates will be announced one month in advance of the opening date. Announcements go out via GovDelivery and Electronic State Business Daily (ESBD).

Sign up for TERP updates by visiting www.terpgrants.org, and get the latest information on new program openings and other announcements, as well as program requirements, application processes, 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

The TxVEMP All-Electric Grant Program application period has been extended to August 31, 2026:

- The [TxVEMP All-Electric Grant Program](#) has approximately \$30 million in available funding 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.

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 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.
- TxMCW program development is still underway.

Upcoming Events

- The TxMCW team will present at the 2025 University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) Oil & Gas Conference, December 2-3, 2025. Conference will be held at the Hilton Americas, 1600 Lamar St., Houston, TX 77010.

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 via email, at TxMCW@tceq.texas.gov

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

Andrew DeCandis provided an update on regional air quality monitoring, noting a decrease in ozone exceedance days compared to the previous year. He highlighted that the Conroe Relocate site recorded the highest mean maximum ozone levels. In addition, he presented data on PM 2.5 concentration, with several monitors exceeding the newly established standards. Discussion continued with the importance of improving public communication regarding outdoor activity advisories during periods of elevated pollution.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

ITEM 4A.

A. Regional Clean Air Action Plan - (Dr. Meredith Jennings, Houston Advanced Research Ctr.)

Dr. Meredith Jennings provided an overview of the Regional Clean Air Action Plan, developed under an EPA grant awarded to the Houston-Galveston Area Council. The plan takes a comprehensive approach to reducing emissions, improving public health, particularly for vulnerable populations, and promoting regional collaborations. Discussion continued with a breakdown of emissions sources, noting that the region emits approximately 230 million metric tons of CO₂ equivalent annually, with Harris County contributing significantly due to industrial activity. The analysis also accounted for carbon sinks and land use changes, underscoring the need for conservation. She outlined sector specific greenhouse gas reduction strategies for building, transportation, and waste, recommending initial steps such as energy benchmarking for local governments. The Clear Path tool was introduced for tracking emissions reduction, and participants were encouraged to collaborate and identify additional funding opportunities to support implementation.

B. Transportation Conformity - (Andrew DeCandis, H-GAC)

Andrew DeCandis presentation provided an overview of transportation conformity, a requirement under the clean air act that ensures transportation plans and projects align with air quality goals set in the State implementation

plan. Conformity is triggered when regionally significant projects, such as those adding capacity to the road network or major transit expansions- are added to the Regional Transportation Plan or Transportation Improvement Program. The RTP is a long range 30-year plan, while the TIP covers near term projects within four years. Discussion continued with the conformity process includes travel demand modeling and emissions analysis, followed by a formal determination involving multiple partners including FHWA, TXDOT, and Houston METRO. The current conformity determination is based on updates to the RTP and TIP, with analysis for multiple years and demonstrates that emissions from all planned projects stay within the motor vehicle emissions budgets for both the 2008 and pending 2015 ozone standards.

INFORMATION ITEMS

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

- No updates today, except a big thank you to everyone who participated in and supported the Air Quality Summit.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ITEM 6A.

None

NEW BUSINESS

ITEM 7A.

Next meeting: October 30, 2025

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 11:28 A.M.