

Community Air Protection Program

South Central Fresno

Community Emissions Reduction Program

Staff Report

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Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the California Air Resources Board (CARB or Board) approve the South Central Fresno community emissions reduction program developed pursuant to Assembly Bill (AB) 617¹ and direct CARB staff to work with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD) to take action to strengthen implementation.

Background

CARB established the Community Air Protection Program to implement AB 617, which requires new community-focused action to reduce air pollution. On September 27, 2018, the Board selected South Central Fresno to develop a community emissions reduction program and a community monitoring plan as one of ten initial communities. The Board also approved the *Community Air Protection Blueprint* (Blueprint), which, among other things, establishes criteria for developing and implementing community emissions reduction programs, contained in the *Blueprint Appendix C* and summarized in the *Checklist for Community Emissions Reduction Program Evaluation*².

CARB staff reviewed the *South Central Fresno Community Emissions Reduction Program (Program)*³ that was adopted by the SJVAPCD Governing Board on September 19, 2019. This staff report summarizes the results of CARB staff's review and evaluation of the Program to determine if it meets the criteria established in AB 617⁴ and the Blueprint, reflects community priorities, and is likely to reduce exposure to air pollution in the community.

Program Overview

SJVAPCD convened a community steering committee and developed the Program in coordination and consultation with the community steering committee. The community steering committee is composed of 48 members of whom 24 are residents, and is supported by 6 governmental participants. The community steering committee has met 18 times between December 2018 and January 2020. At the request of the community steering committee, SJVAPCD also organized two meetings of a community air monitoring subcommittee composed of community steering committee members interested in participating in more detailed discussions and planning regarding the Community Air Monitoring Plan.

The Program focuses on reducing exposure to fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), toxic air contaminants (TAC), as well as oxides of nitrogen (NOx). Reduction strategies target a variety of sources including heavy duty vehicles, passenger cars, residential wood burning activities, new industrial developments, and stationary sources of concern, such as power plants, glass manufacturing, and gas distribution facilities. The community steering committee and SJVAPCD identified 46 specific strategies that include community-centric

¹ Assembly Bill 617, Garcia, C., Chapter 136, Statutes of 2017.

² Begins page C-41.

³ To review the Program and associated documents, visit <http://community.valleyair.org/selected-communities/south-central-fresno>

⁴ California Health and Safety Code §44391.2.

investments, enhanced enforcement, increased outreach and training, cross-agency collaboration, and regulatory measures. The following are examples of emissions and exposure reduction strategies included in the Plan:



Heavy Duty Trucks

- Incentives for replacement of diesel-powered trucks and school buses
- Support development of zero and near-zero clean fueling infrastructure
- Statewide actions to reduce emissions and enhanced enforcement efforts



High Polluting & Idling Cars

- Sponsor local car repair events
- Incentives for passenger car replacement



Residential Wood Burning

- Replacement incentives
- Enhanced enforcement of wood burning curtailments



Land Use/Industrial Development

- Provide assistance during environmental review
- Collaboration with other State and local agencies



Illegal Burning

- Outreach and education on illegal burning
- Enhanced enforcement of illegal burning



Industrial Processes

- Incentivize emissions control technology
- Enhanced inspections
- Evaluation of current regulations

Summary of CARB's Evaluation

CARB staff's review of the Program follows the framework established in the Blueprint. In addition to the Program itself, staff also reviewed meeting materials, public comment letters, and responses to comments posted to SJVAPCD's website. During the Program development process, CARB staff attended every South Central Fresno community steering committee meeting, the two air monitoring subcommittee meetings, and met regularly with SJVAPCD staff. Finally, CARB also hosted a community meeting in South Central Fresno on November 13th, in coordination with SJVAPCD, to solicit additional community input to inform CARB staff recommendations.

State law gives communities and air districts 12 months to develop a community emissions reduction program following CARB community selection. One year is a very short amount of time to organize a community steering committee, develop a process for operation of the steering committee, establish the technical foundation for understanding the community's air quality status, and develop the strategies to reduce air pollution emissions and exposure.

To ensure that the Program successfully delivers on the identified strategies, CARB has identified elements of the Program that need additional clarification and detail as the Program moves from the short time frame provided for development into the implementation phase. While each of the initial communities and their community emissions reduction programs have now been approved by the air districts, the need to focus on strengthening the programs during implementation is a theme that applies to all communities, not just South Central Fresno.

Therefore, CARB staff is recommending approval of the Program with additional Board direction to CARB staff, SJVAPCD, and the community steering committee to begin Program implementation immediately, while taking specific steps to strengthen implementation of the Program. These recommendations draw directly from the core principles of the Board-approved Blueprint.

Staff has organized the results of this review into three categories:

- Key strengths of the Program, which highlights areas staff found particularly noteworthy;
- Coordination with other agencies in which there are combined authorities; and
- Recommended actions to strengthen implementation, including areas where additional discussion, information, clarification, and detail will help ensure the Program is successful and achieves emissions reductions in South Central Fresno.

Key Strengths

CARB staff recognizes SJVAPCD and the community steering committee for their commitment to work together while meeting the ambitious deadlines required by AB 617. The identification of specific funding amounts and number of projects for each incentive measure allowed for an iterative process with the steering committee to determine community-based investments, and also provided clear metrics associated with these measures. The Program also details estimated emissions reductions for CARB and district

measures that provide an aggregate emissions reduction target.⁵ In addition, the design of the community air monitoring plan was done through an interactive and community-driven process to identify and implement steering committee priorities. The formation of the monitoring subcommittee contributed to the success of the monitoring plan design.

The introduction and refinement of professional facilitation throughout the steering committee process contributed to the development of the Program. The SJVAPCD has also begun to co-host recent meetings with members of the community steering committee which is providing an important mechanism for enhanced collaboration in the development of agendas and co-leadership in the running of meetings.

To respond to community steering committee concerns regarding accessibility for the monolingual Spanish-speaking members, the SJVAPCD provided real-time interpretation services to facilitate community steering committee member and public participation. The SJVAPCD also livestreamed the community steering committee meetings via Facebook, and provided high quality audio and video recordings of the meetings that are publicly available on SJVAPCD's South Central Fresno Community website.⁶

CARB staff also recognizes the coalition of well-established community based organizations that provided strong leadership, working directly with residents to educate, clarify, and build capacity within and outside of the regular meeting structure, which helped support the level of resident engagement and participation.

Coordination with Other Agencies

Successful implementation of many of the strategies outlined in the Program will take focused coordination between multiple public agencies. Two areas of significant community concerns include the air quality and exposure impacts of land use and heavy duty truck traffic. SJVAPCD has brought city, county, and regional land use and transportation decision makers into the process and is collaborating with the City of Fresno's Department of Planning and Development on land use and truck re-routing solutions in South Central Fresno.

South Central Fresno community members are also concerned with pesticide use in the agricultural areas bordering the community. One strategy of the Program (AG.2)⁷, aims to reduce exposure to pesticides in the South Central Fresno Community. The California Department of Pesticide Regulation and CARB are committed to working together to continue to reduce emissions and exposure to pesticides in the community.

⁵ Table 4-3: Estimated Emissions Reductions for District Measures, pages 153-154, <http://community.valleyair.org/media/1516/01finalscfresnocerp-9-19-19.pdf>

⁶ <http://community.valleyair.org/selected-communities/south-central-fresno/steering-committee-meetings/>

⁷ South Central Fresno Community Emissions Reduction Program, page 73. <http://community.valleyair.org/selected-communities/south-central-fresno>

Recommended Actions to Strengthen Implementation

CARB staff recognizes that the Program is a culmination of an extensive amount of work over a compressed timeframe by SJVAPCD, the community steering committee, and members of the public. SJVAPCD staff and steering committee members have put significant effort into ongoing adjustments to the steering committee structure and meeting formats to develop an effective forum for working together, and this combined effort is reflected in the progress made to date. The need to work through a new process under tight timeframes has been challenging, and steering committee members have been appreciative of the progress made, but some members have also identified several issues to continue to work on as the Program moves forward. This includes aspects related to ongoing process improvements, as well as Program strategies.

For example, a number of steering committee members have asked for greater collaboration on the development of meeting agendas, and have voiced concerns about the accessibility of the final Program document to the monolingual Spanish speaking committee members. Steering committee members have also requested further opportunities to refine the funding devoted to different incentive measures, additional discussion on specific implementation steps for individual measures, and how Program metrics will effectively track progress and identify quantifiable emissions targets on an enforceable timetable. The committee has also requested future consideration of additional approaches to address land use decision making, particularly warehouse expansion in the South Industrial Priority Area,⁸ and heavy duty truck traffic routing.

The SJVAPCD has taken a number of steps to address these concerns, including as noted earlier, the recent addition of community co-hosts for each meeting and discussion of meeting formats and committee membership to foster active participation of the steering committee during meetings. The committee has also begun detailed discussion of the next steps on implementation of groups of strategies. These focused efforts and discussion formats provide a pathway for continued adjustments and collaborative decision making moving forward into Program implementation.

To support successful implementation of the Program, CARB has developed a set of recommendations in two key areas: reduction strategies and process. CARB staff recognize the progress that has been made and the staff recommendations are intended to reinforce these efforts while providing direction on continued strengthening of the Program within the framework of implementation. Progress in implementing these recommendations should be included in the annual progress report required by the AB 617 statute. CARB staff also recommend that the SJVAPCD annually review the charter with the steering committee.

⁸ South Industrial Priority Area Specific Plan, https://www.fresno.gov/darm/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2019/05/SIPA_doc_v4-pressready-1.pdf

Reduction Strategies

The community steering committee had a number of discussions about the types and funding amounts for individual incentive measures, but also expressed the desire to continue to discuss potential adjustments to these incentive measure funding amounts. Recognizing that the Program will evolve as implementation is a five-year process, CARB staff recommends the SJVPACD and CARB staff continues to work with the steering committee on any further adjustments needed to funding allocations, measure prioritization and project selection process and criteria, and continued discussion and documentation of how the individual strategies will be implemented in coordination with the steering committee.

Therefore, to help clarify and enhance strategy development, staff recommend that CARB staff, SJVPACD, and the community steering committee work together to undertake the following actions:

1. Include a process for making adjustments to incentive measure funding amounts based on ongoing discussions with the community steering committee, and continue engaging the committee on prioritization of incentive measures and project selection.
2. Develop and provide specific criteria for project funding amounts and project selection, and clarify in the "Metrics to Track Progress" the process for adjusting allocations when projects are undersubscribed or oversubscribed.
3. Continue to update the emissions reduction targets as new information becomes available for the regulatory and other strategies that do not yet have defined benefits.
4. Discuss current permitting and rule-making processes, as well as next steps in the implementation of the seven industrial source strategies in a transparent and expeditious manner with the community steering committee members.
5. Continue to strengthen the working relationship with the agencies that have land use and transportation authority in South Central Fresno to address community steering committee concerns, including further discussion of the specific approaches and mechanisms to facilitate this coordination. To support these efforts, CARB staff will continue to move forward on development of the Freight Handbook.

Process

The community steering committee has requested clarification on the implementation process and next steps on how CARB and the SJVPACD will continue to work with the steering committee on individual strategies. To help transition the Program from the development to implementation phase, CARB staff, the SJVPACD, and the community steering committee should work together to undertake the following actions:

1. Continue to improve communication between SJVPACD and the community steering committee by developing clear objectives, setting mutually agreed upon deadlines, and providing information and feedback within defined timeframes, including the time needed for translation of materials into Spanish.
2. Define a process for continued discussion of any additional community steering committee strategy ideas that are not currently included in the Program, and potential mechanisms for updates through the annual progress reports.

3. Include the community steering committee in the agenda setting process, while continuing the rotation of community steering committee members as meeting co-hosts, so that members can continue to actively participate in meeting development and management.