



Health in All Policies Task Force

2011-2016 Action Report: Housing Siting and Air Quality

Presented to the Strategic Growth Council on August 9, 2016

This Action Report has been created by the California Health in All Policies (HiAP) Task Force to share tangible outcomes of the 2011 Action Plan on Housing Siting and Air Quality, and to maintain transparency and accountability to the Strategic Growth Council and the public. The 2011 Action Plan was developed to implement the following recommendations:

1. Promote sustainable development through smart housing siting.
2. Develop recommended processes for balancing multiple public policy objectives affecting air quality and the permit processing and siting of transit-oriented development.
3. Identify research needs and support research and demonstration efforts to mitigate adverse environmental and public health impacts in residential areas proximate to major urban roadways and transportation corridors.[1]

Outcomes of Action Steps

The outcomes below correspond to objectives in the 2011 Action Plan on Housing Siting and Air Quality. See the Action Plan for more details.

Objective 1. Convene stakeholders to discuss issues related to siting housing near high volume roadways.

- The Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) has chaired and facilitated the state-agency Housing Siting and Air Quality Work Group (Work Group) of the HiAP Task Force since its inception in 2011. This Work Group brings together state agency stakeholders to foster efforts to harmonize policy objectives involving housing proximate to major urban roadways affecting air quality and public health. Work Group members include HCD, Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR), Department of Transportation (Caltrans), Air Resources Board (ARB), and Department of Public Health (CDPH), with staffing support from HiAP Task Force staff.
- The Work Group developed eight cross cutting policy objectives to focus their efforts: 1) Reduce and minimize exposure of existing and prospective residents to local and regional air pollutants, 2) Provide and preserve adequate housing supply, including affordable housing, 3) Locate housing accessible to jobs and services, 4) Provide an efficient, multimodal regional transportation system, 5) Address environmental justice and fair housing opportunity issues, 6) Provide for recreational uses and urban greening, 7) Avoid/minimize generating nonconforming uses, 8) Facilitate permit streamlining/avoid adding procedural steps/minimize multi-agency permitting requirements.
- The Work Group developed "whitepaper" descriptions of eight cross-cutting issues and the related authority and responsibilities of each of the five State agencies for these objectives regarding siting housing near high volume roadways.
- In April 2011, the Work Group hosted a stakeholder roundtable meeting in Sacramento focusing on pending issue areas in local planning and development, and included representatives from the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning (LCDRP), Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), and



an affordable housing development in Davis. Subsequent to the roundtable, LCRPD invited the Work Group to participate in consultations underway in the general plan update process of LCDRP.

- In October 2011, the Work Group hosted a stakeholder convening in Los Angeles to facilitate information sharing on existing and pending activities with the potential to affect housing siting and air quality near major urban roadways. This convening included Work Group members as well as LCDRP staff, SCAG, South Coast Air Quality Management District, LA Metro, and Caltrans District 7 staff. This resulted in planning for a workshop to engage a broader set of stakeholders.
- In July 2012, the Work Group partnered with regional agencies and Los Angeles City's Planning Department, to develop a full day stakeholder workshop in Los Angeles. In addition to those organizations that participated in the 2011 convening, the 2012 convening also included Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, academics, and the South Coast Air Quality Management District. Workshop objectives included catalyzing efforts to harmonize policy objectives related to public health, greenhouse gas reduction, affordable housing, air quality, regional land use planning, and near- roadway impacts of exposure to air pollutants, to increase understanding of the complex interrelationships among diverse policy objectives, and to identify strategies to balance these policy objectives. The workshop fostered cross-sector understanding of the issue and explored case examples relevant to the County's general plan update and pending consideration of an advisory policy by the City's planning commission.

Objective 2. Clarify existing guidance on siting housing near high-volume roadways.

- The Work Group participated in the planning of and attended the June 2012 conference of national researchers on Vegetation as Near Roadway Mitigation for Air Pollution in Sacramento, sponsored by the Health Effects Task Force, with significant involvement of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA).^{*} Outcomes included encouragement for more California-based research, increased consultation between US EPA representatives and California researchers, and collaboration by the Work Group chair in publishing an article for the Transportation Research Board, on Integrating Vegetation & Green Infrastructure into Sustainable Transportation Planning, Sept.-Oct. 2013 highlighting efforts of the Work Group.
- In July 2012, the Work Group provided input to ARB in the development of a paper on the Status of Research on Potential Mitigation Concepts to Reduce Exposure to Nearby Traffic Pollution.^{*} This document provides information on scientific research that has been conducted on various building-related and site mitigation concepts suggested as potentially effective approaches for reducing the traffic-related exposures of those living near busy roadways.
- Work Group members participated in the planning of, and attended the June 2015 workshop of researchers on the role of vegetation in near roadway air quality mitigation, sponsored by the Health Effects Task Force with US EPA sponsorship, and supported outreach plans developed by stakeholder agencies.^{*}
- In the summer of 2015, the Work Group provided input on draft ARB documents including 1) Strategies to Reduce Near-Roadway Pollution Exposure Technical Advisory and 2) an accompanying literature review to complement the 2005 Air Quality and Land Use Handbook.^{*} These resources are pending publication.
- The Work Group provided significant input and guidance to CDPH through the development of a paper on Public Health and Housing near High Volume Roadways in California: Local Public Health Department Engagement Examples to be released in 2016. This paper shares experience and perspectives from local California health departments involving the challenges in balancing housing planning and public health near high volume roadways.
- The Work Group provided input on near roadway siting issues to OPR in drafting the 2016 General Plan Guidelines update.
- Over the course of this Action Plan timeline, ARB and other State and regional agencies and organizations have supported research including: In-home exposure reduction to air pollution; High efficiency filtration benefits to children with asthma; Urban designs and traffic management strategies that reduce air pollution



exposure; Sound wall-vegetation combination barriers as near-roadway pollutant mitigation strategies; and Measurement of urban tree planting mitigating GHG emissions for potential CEQA mitigation measures.*

- Two Work Group members served on the California Freight Mobility Plan (CFMP) Advisory Committee. Adopted in late 2014, analysis of the CFMP estimated that approximately 752,000 housing units with 2.1 million people are located in census blocks within 1,000 feet of California's federally designated Primary Freight Network (PFN), which is a portion of the state's extensive freight corridor network.

Related Outcomes

In addition to carrying out the items detailed in the action plan itself, Task Force members also identified and pursued a variety of other opportunities to convene stakeholders and engage in dialogue on siting housing near high-volume roadways.

- As a result of the April 2011 Roundtable meeting, and at the request of the Los Angeles County Regional Planning Department, the Work Group held a series of meetings/conference calls with County staff from planning, health, and parks departments regarding their draft policies on near-roadway housing siting for the pending general plan update. During the course of these meetings, the draft policies were revised from buffer policies to a more flexible policy.
- In 2011- 2012 the Work Group met with representatives from the San Francisco Department of Public Health and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD), and attended workshops on BAAQMD's then-pending California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) "receptor thresholds" which triggered more extensive project-level environmental review and mitigation.
- In January 2014, the Work Group chair participated in the Annual Meeting of the Transportation Research Board in Washington, D.C., Reconciling Transportation and Air Quality Planning to Promote Sustainable Development, focused on how transportation and urban planning agencies and developers can promote sustainable development while not causing increased public health risks.
- The Work Group reviewed and commented on the Community Risk Reduction Plan process undertaken in San Francisco, with the collaboration of the County's Public Health and Planning Departments and BAAQMD.
- Work Group members participated in a number of conference panels on the issue, including at the annual conferences of the American Planning Association and the Association of Environmental Professionals and Environmental Health Professionals.
- In 2016, the Work Group provided input to BAAQMD on a draft guidance document Planning Healthy Places, developed to encourage local governments to address and minimize potential air quality issues in the land use planning process and to provide technical tools to assist them in doing so.

Value Added

Task Force members involved in this work were asked to articulate the value that was added through implementation of this action plan. Below are key points from their responses.

- *"The work group has helped to increase needed communication among state agencies and it has been a venue to stay abreast of new developments in the area of near-roadway exposure."*
- *"This has helped to break down agency silos and provided staffs with a broader perspective on the issue as they go about fulfilling their agency-specific roles."*
- *"Workgroup members learned a great deal from one another about the complexity of this issue. We also learned how other agencies and academia are grappling with solutions through local planning, policies, and*



research. The Los Angeles Workshop gave us an opportunity to provide an educational service. We tried to convey the breadth of the challenges to attendees who had diverse interests. I believe that many of the workshop attendees learned things they did not know before and came away with new appreciation for why this issue is so challenging to deal with.”

Next Steps

Stakeholders have many activities planned to continue to alleviate the incidence of exposure of sensitive populations to near roadway pollution. For example,

- The US EPA and the ARB will continue to fund research on strategies to reduce both mobile source pollution and exposure, involving fuels and technology. Some of the larger air districts may also fund such research at a smaller scale, applicable to their districts.
- Research findings will continue to be used to inform updates of guidance documents such as BAAQMD’s Planning Healthy Communities and OPR’s General Plan Guidelines.
- Some agencies will continue awarding grants for clean fuels and technology to reduce criteria pollutants through the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. Implementation of the Sustainable Freight Action Plan by ARB and the California Freight Mobility Plan by Caltrans, along with new federal funding for the freight sector, will provide resources for the freight industry to focus on conversion to and use of cleaner fuels and technology, and mitigation of environmental and community impacts.

While the above activities are anticipated to have substantial effects, the extent of existing impacted communities will continue to present a significant challenge in addressing exposure to near roadway air pollution. The HiAP Task Force remains committed to supporting healthy housing as a strategy to promote health, equity, and environmental sustainability. Task Force members will explore opportunities to advance healthy housing as opportunities present themselves and resources allow. For example, the Task Force will explore supporting HCD and other agencies in establishing a resource clearinghouse on this topic; disseminating promising models like Los Angeles’s *Clean Up Green Up* to promote replication in other communities; providing support to impacted communities to enable collaboration between local officials, public health practitioners, and non-governmental stakeholders; and identifying opportunities to provide state resources in support of more targeted initiatives directed at reducing pollution and exposure in poor quality housing occupied by seniors and households with young children.

References

1. Rudolph, L., et al., *Health in All Policies Report to the Strategic Growth Council*. 2010, California Department of Public Health and University of California, San Francisco.

* These activities support research, objectives, and development efforts of the action plan.