

California Air Resources Board  
Community Air Protection Program

# Stockton Community Emissions Reduction Program Staff Report

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CARB Governing Board Hearing Date: July 29, 2021



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## Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the California Air Resources Board (CARB or Board) approve the Stockton Community Emissions Reduction Program (CERP) developed pursuant to Assembly Bill (AB) 617<sup>1</sup> and direct CARB staff to work with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (District or SJVAPCD) and the Stockton Community Steering Committee to take additional actions 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 approved the *Community Air Protection Blueprint*<sup>2</sup> (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*<sup>3</sup>. At the same meeting, the Board also approved 10 initial communities to develop and implement community emissions reductions programs, community air monitoring plans, or both. On December 13, 2019, the Board selected an additional three communities, including the community of Stockton in the SJVAPCD to develop a community emissions reduction program and a community air monitoring plan.

Subsequently, on March 18, 2021, the SJVAPCD Governing Board adopted the Stockton CERP<sup>4</sup> as recommended by the Stockton Community Steering Committee and described below. This report summarizes the results of CARB staff's review and evaluation of the CERP to determine if it meets the criteria established in AB 617<sup>5</sup> and the Blueprint, reflects community priorities, and is likely to reduce emissions and exposure to air pollution in the community.

## Community Emissions Reduction Program Overview

In accordance with the Blueprint, the District convened a community steering committee to develop the CERP. The steering committee is made up of 40 primary members, 23 of whom are residents, and held 18 meetings between March 2020 and March 2021. In September 2020, the District also hosted an educational webinar for interested steering committee

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<sup>1</sup> Assembly Bill 617, Garcia, C., Chapter 136, Statutes of 2017.

<sup>2</sup> The Blueprint is available at: <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/capp-blueprint>.

<sup>3</sup> The Checklist for the Community Emissions Reduction Program Evaluation begins on page C-41.

<sup>4</sup> To review the CERP and associated documents, visit <http://community.valleyair.org/selected-communities/stockton/>

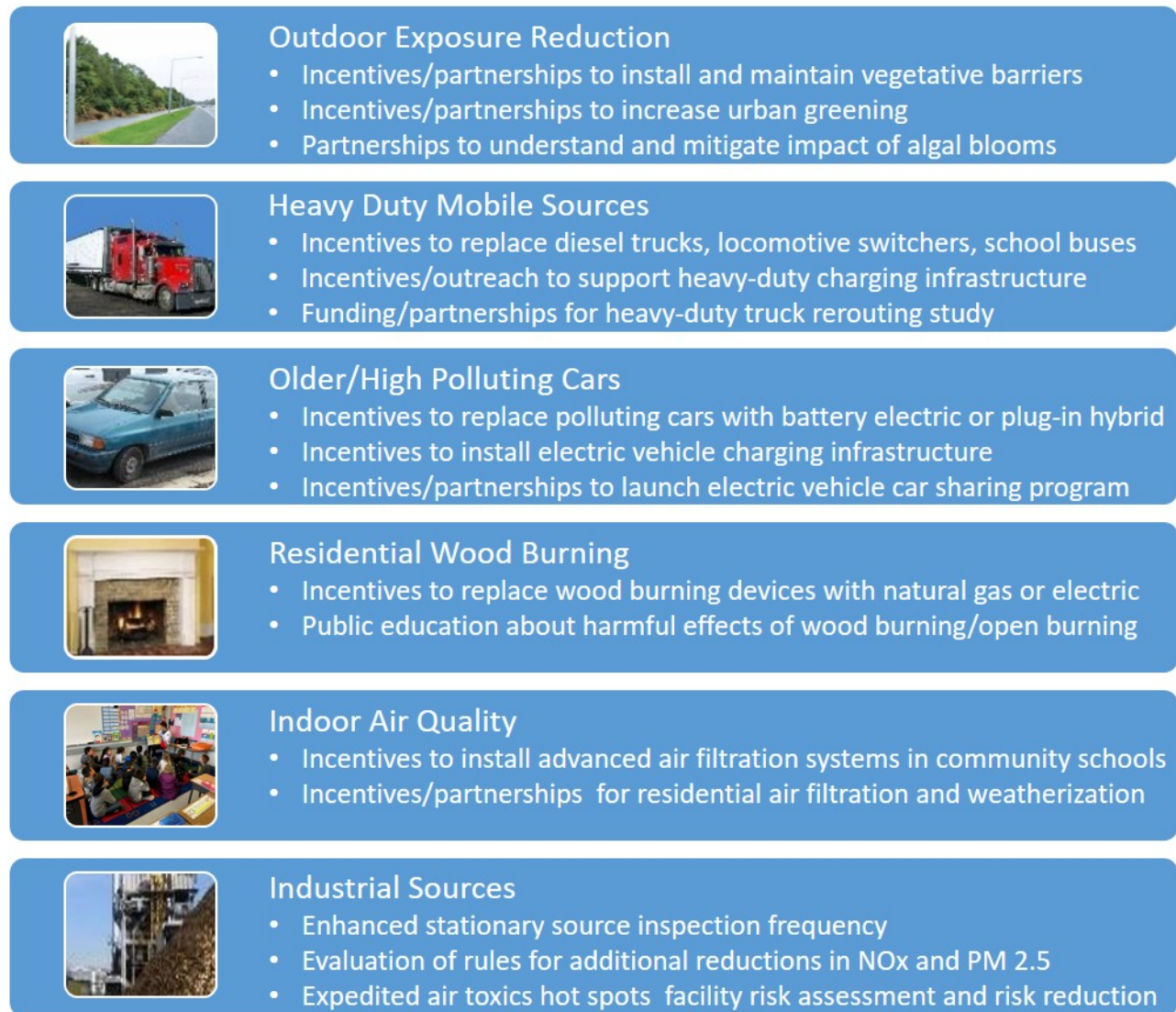
<sup>5</sup> California Health and Safety Code §44391.2.

members to learn more about District and CARB enforcement and regulatory operations, and how they might be incorporated into the CERP development process. In response to steering committee requests for more information regarding CARB regulatory actions and timelines related to ports and rail, as well as questions about incentives, CARB staff hosted an optional meeting with the steering committee on February 1, 2021.

The steering committee identified operations at the Port of Stockton as a priority source of concern early in the development process. After much discussion over the course of numerous meetings, the committee ultimately voted **19-10** to exclude port measures from the CERP. Some members indicated they didn't want to use AB 617 funds to subsidize continued Port expansion and the potential for increased air pollution, and other members cited the Port's historical lack of transparency, its failure to follow through on outreach commitments, and general dissatisfaction with the Port as a neighbor. At the SJVAPCD Governing Board meeting to consider approval of the CERP on March 18, 2021, board members expressed concern about the absence of port measures, approved the CERP as submitted, and directed District staff to return the port measures to the steering committee for final consideration. In the April 2021 steering committee meeting, the committee affirmed their previous decision and chose not to take up another vote.

The CERP focuses on reducing exposure to fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>), toxic air contaminants (TAC) including diesel particulate matter, and oxides of nitrogen (NO<sub>x</sub>). Emissions reduction strategies target a variety of sources including heavy-duty trucks, school buses, locomotive switchers, older passenger cars, residential wood burning, and algal blooms. Strategies to reduce exposure to air pollution include vegetative barriers, indoor air filtration, and urban greening. The CERP also contains strategies for enforcement, regulatory action, outreach, educational training for electric vehicle mechanics, and partnerships with other agencies. Figure 1 lists examples of the actions and strategies to reduce emissions and exposure for the air quality priorities in the CERP. For the full list of strategies, see Chapter 4 of the CERP.

**Figure 1. Examples of Actions in the Stockton Community Emissions Reduction Program.**



## Summary of CARB's Evaluation

CARB staff's review of the CERP follows the framework established in the Blueprint. In addition to the CERP itself, staff also reviewed meeting materials including a record of public comments and responses to those comments by SJVAPCD, included in the CERP. During the CERP development process, CARB staff attended every Stockton community steering committee meeting and met regularly with SJVAPCD staff. Finally, CARB staff hosted a virtual community workshop on June 21, 2021, to solicit additional community perspectives to help inform CARB staff's recommendations. Ten community steering committee members or alternates attended the workshop along with members of the public. Discussion questions

focused on CARB's role in the development of the CERP; the CERP itself and what was learned during the process that could benefit other communities.

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 convene a community steering committee, develop a process for operation of the community steering committee, develop relationships within the steering committee and with regulatory agencies, establish the technical foundation for understanding the community's air quality status, and develop the strategies to reduce air pollution emissions and exposure. Additionally, the Stockton community concurrently developed a community air monitoring plan. The statewide stay-at-home orders further exacerbated the already short timeline. During the December 2020 steering committee meeting, the committee unanimously asked the District to request a 3-month extension of the deadline from CARB. While AB 617 does not give CARB the authority to adjust the statutory 12-month deadline, CARB responded that the progress made to date and the path forward outlined in the request met AB 617's intent for fast action to clean up communities.

The CERP meets the criteria established in AB 617 and the Blueprint, reflects the community's priorities, and is likely to reduce community emissions and exposure to air pollution. However, to ensure that the CERP successfully delivers on the identified actions, there are elements of the CERP that need additional clarification and detail as the CERP moves from the short time frame provided for development into the implementation phase. As each of the selected communities and their community emissions reduction programs are approved by the air districts and CARB, the need to focus on strengthening the programs during implementation is a theme that applies to all communities.

CARB staff recommends approval of the CERP with additional Board direction to CARB staff, SJVAPCD, and the community steering committee to begin CERP implementation immediately, while taking steps to strengthen implementation of the CERP. These recommendations draw directly from the core principles of the Board-adopted Blueprint.

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

- Key strengths of the CERP, and the CERP development process, which highlight areas staff found particularly noteworthy.
- Recommended actions for SJVAPCD and CARB to strengthen implementation, including areas where additional discussion, information, clarification, and detail will help ensure the CERP is successful and achieves emissions reductions in the Stockton community, as well as commitments CARB will make based on feedback provided about CARB's role in the process to date.

## Key Strengths

The key strengths of the CERP for the Stockton community highlighted below are a direct result of the community steering committee's commitment to working in partnership with the District and CARB. Prior to the stay-at-home orders enacted by the Governor in March 2020, the District was able to hold one in-person community steering committee meeting on March 4, 2020. The District responded quickly to the many challenges presented by the stay-at-home orders. They deployed technology support to provide steering committee members with laptop computers and internet connectivity to ensure members could continue to remain fully engaged in the new virtual environment. On a parallel path, District staff researched and learned new technologies to effectively host ongoing virtual meetings themselves. On April 22, 2020, just over a month after the stay-at-home orders were enacted, the District hosted its first virtual community steering committee meeting. The District worked with the community steering committee to expand community engagement virtually, including Zoom meetings for direct participation, and Facebook Live and YouTube for streaming video.

The District introduced a co-host model early in the process, encouraging community steering committee members to volunteer to co-host meetings on a rotating basis and share member-specific perspectives and knowledge.

The passion and dedication of the Stockton community was apparent from day one. They devoted an extensive amount of time and hard work within and outside of the formal meeting structure to learn detailed technical information, understand the community's air pollution challenges, and to discuss and prioritize the many measures contained within the CERP. The committee remained engaged and stayed the course even in trying times, never hesitating to seek additional information to ensure the best possible decisions for the community and responsible stewardship of government funds. The committee prioritized vegetative barriers as an exposure reduction strategy, acknowledging the importance of striking a balance between the pressing need to protect the air they breathe as quickly as possible with the longer timelines associated with many of the emissions reduction and regulatory measures.

The District worked with the steering committee to identify key air quality priorities and developed a set of strategies designed to work together to address each priority. For example, actions to address the impacts of heavy-duty truck traffic include a truck re-routing study, incentives to replace diesel trucks, heavy-duty electric vehicle charging infrastructure, truck idling plug-ins, educational training for electric vehicle mechanics, and enhanced enforcement of the statewide anti-idling regulation. The CERP also includes many collaborative actions with local land use and transportation agencies, local non-profits, and state agencies for air quality concerns that are outside of the District's jurisdiction such as installing and maintaining vegetative barriers, increasing urban greening, and mitigating the impacts of algal blooms.



## Recommended Actions to Strengthen Implementation

Staff recognizes that the CERP is the culmination of an extensive amount of work in a short timeframe. In future efforts, SJVAPCD, CARB, and the community steering committee should work to refine issues related to implementation as the strategies in the CERP move forward, as well as the periodic status reports required under AB 617.

To support implementation going forward, CARB staff recommends actions in two key areas: provide enhanced focus on technical information in implementation, and address committee membership turnover and onboarding processes. Progress in implementing these recommendations should be included in the annual progress reports submitted to CARB as required by the AB 617 statute. Additionally, based on feedback provided during the June 21 workshop, CARB commits to providing technical information to support implementation.

### Provide enhanced focus on technical information in implementation

AB 617 requires that local air districts work with communities to develop a CERP within one year after being selected under the program. This rigorous deadline presents significant, unavoidable challenges, particularly when a community is selected to develop both an air monitoring plan and an emissions reduction program in the same year, such as Stockton. Steering committee members need a large variety of technical information and data and the time to discuss and process that information, including revisiting it as necessary, to equip them with the knowledge to make informed decisions

The District, in strong partnership with CARB and coordination with other state and local agencies, invested substantial time within and outside the steering committee meetings to define and discuss technical information throughout the process while also striving to meet the one-year mandate. Examples of topics discussed include understanding the various types of pollutants, sources of pollution, local emissions inventory, health impacts, air pollution authorities, local and statewide regulations, enforcement, new and emerging technologies, and air monitoring - just to name a few. Despite the volume and variety of technical information shared with the steering committee over a relatively short period of time, the pressure to meet the required one-year deadline created a sense of conflict amongst some committee members who expressed a desire for additional and more in-depth technical information from CARB, the District, and other subject-matter experts who they felt could better inform their decision-making process. CARB staff recommends that CARB and the District continue to work together with the community steering committee to plan for and address the committee's requests for technical information to support implementation. Additionally, CARB commits to being more proactive in offering its expertise.

### Address committee membership turnover and onboarding processes

Recognizing that CERP implementation takes place over at least a 5-year timeline, committee membership turnover can be expected and prepared for. The current committee has

demonstrated strong dedication, active participation, and a solid sense of community. In recognition of this, it is important for the group's charter to support ongoing commitment. CARB staff recommends the District continue to work with the committee to discuss how to address membership turnover, and to define and document in the group's charter the process for fully onboarding new members to ensure a smooth transition into the existing committee.

## **CARB Commitment**

Of the 10 steering committee members who participated in the June 21 workshop, the majority recommended that CARB should be more engaged in the process and be more proactive in offering expertise and accessible technical information to support implementation. Such information will be tailored to specific needs, and offered timely and regularly. CARB will be proactive in supporting exchanges across AB 617 communities that are pursuing similar implementation strategies.

The CERP has support from the community steering committee, which voted unanimously to approve the CERP at a steering committee meeting on March 3, 2021; the aforementioned suggestions will help serve to strengthen the CERP during the 5-year implementation period.