

State of California
Air Resources Board
Board Item Summary

**Item # 22-13-1: Public Meeting to Consider Assembly Bill 617
Community Air Protection Program – Arvin/Lamont Community
Emissions Reduction Program**

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the California Air Resources Board (CARB or Board) approve the Arvin/Lamont Community Emissions Reduction Program and direct Staff to work with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (Valley Air District) to take additional actions to strengthen implementation.

Discussion:

The Arvin/Lamont Community Steering Committee (CSC) with their elected co-leaders Gustavo Aguirre Jr, Central California Environmental Justice Network, and Byanka Santoyo, community resident, worked in partnership with the Valley Air District and other agencies to develop the Arvin/Lamont Community Emissions Reduction Program (CERP) to reduce air pollution emissions and exposure in their local community.

The CSC is made up of 70 members, including five non-voting government representatives. Of the voting members, 53 (82%) are residents and the remaining CSC is a combination of businesses and community-based organizations. The CSC held 20 regular meetings between March 2021 and August 2022 that ranged in topics including an introduction to the Assembly Bill (AB) 617 Program, community air pollution concerns, emission sources, and air quality monitoring. In addition to these topics, the CSC also discussed air pollution impacts on health, air quality rules and enforcement, the role of incentives, and community pesticide impacts. These meetings culminated with the CSC developing emission and exposure reduction strategies tailored to community needs. These strategies are detailed in the Arin/Lamont CERP.

To keep the CSC meetings accessible and productive, the Valley Air District employed a third-party facilitation team to help plan and host the meetings, and simultaneous Spanish interpretation at all meetings. The Valley Air District provided materials in print form for CSC members as requested. Along the way, the Valley Air District also held bi-lingual (Spanish and English) office hours and reached out directly to CSC members around certain topics, including CERP measures, to help answer questions and listen to their concerns.

On June 16, 2022, the Valley Air District Governing Board adopted the CERP, which includes measures to improve the air quality and reduce air pollution exposure in the Arvin/Lamont community. Examples of CERP measures include investing in projects like residential lawn and garden equipment replacement and agricultural equipment replacement, partnership measures to address pesticides, truck re-routing, and oil well impacts, and outreach measures to help inform the community about their air quality and related opportunities.

CARB staff attended all CSC meetings to provide information, technical assistance, and to hear the community's concerns. To provide a way for the CSC and community to share their reactions and comments about the CERP and its development process, staff also distributed a survey directly to the CSC and hosted a public workshop during a regular CSC meeting on August 24, 2022. These participation and outreach efforts helped inform the Staff Report findings.

Staff evaluated the CERP to ensure that it meets the criteria established in AB 617 and the Community Air Protection Program Blueprint, it reflects community priorities, and it will reduce air pollution emissions and exposure in the community. Staff identified several key strengths. Community engagement was especially strong as the Valley Air District and community leaders brought their experience from previous communities to this process. The District built trust with the community early in the process by agreeing to convene the largest CSCs in the history of the program, establishing community co-leaders for the CSC, and expanding the boundaries to include Weedpatch, Fuller Acres, and Hilltop. The District kept a strong focus on language justice, addressed technology gaps; and developed a participatory budgeting tool that empowered the CSC to make informed decisions about incentive measures for their CERP. Another strength came from developing early partnerships that helped secure actionable commitments that are included in the CERP.

Staff also identified some specific actions that Valley Air District and CARB Staff can take, in collaboration with the CSC, to strengthen the CERP implementation. Examples of these actions include continuing to work with the CSC to prioritize and refine strategies, use the participatory budgeting tool as needed to reassess priorities, track incentive expenditures and measure progress, regularly reviewing CSC governance, and setting goals or guiding principles to create shared purpose, and with CARB support, maintain and solidify effective partnerships and collaborations to meet community priorities.

The staff recommendation to approve the CERP and recommendations to further refine the implementation process is based on the staff evaluation, community outreach, and participation in the process that resulted in the final CERP document. Staff evaluation and key findings are summarized in the Arvin/Lamont Community Emissions Reduction Program Staff Report (Staff Report), released on September 23, 2022.

Summary and Impacts:

Approving the Arvin/Lamont CERP and providing direction to staff and the Valley Air District to take the recommended actions will result in these agencies continuing to work with the CSC to define and implement measures that will reduce air pollution exposure in the Arvin/Lamont Community. The Valley Air District will provide annual reports to CARB with progress updates including those on the recommended actions defined in the Staff Report. CARB will continue to develop, implement, and enforce our mobile source regulations, provide technical assistance to Arvin/Lamont community, respond to community air quality concerns, and facilitate and support interagency collaboration to address measures in the CERP.