



AGENDA
AIR QUALITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE*
Tuesday, October 26, 2021
10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
VIRTUAL MEETING – GOTOMEETING

DUE TO COVID-19 OUTBREAK, EAST-WEST GATEWAY'S OFFICES ARE CURRENTLY CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC AND WILL BE UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

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- I. **Call to Order**
 - Carol Lawrence, Chair, East-West Gateway Council of Governments
 - A. Minutes of May 25, 2021 Meeting
- II. **Upcoming Grant Opportunities from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Under the American Rescue Plan**
 - Ashley Keas, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 7
- III. **Overview of the 2021 Ozone Season**
 - Maureen McCarthy, East-West Gateway
- IV. **American Fuels Report**
 - St. Louis Regional Clean Cities Program
- V. **Update Activities of the States**
 - Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
 - Missouri Department of Natural Resources

VI. **Other Business**

VII. **Adjournment**

* Please note that this meeting will serve as a part of the Inter-Agency Consultation

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- Vice Chair**
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C. William Grogan
John A. Laker
Ron Williams
- Non-voting Members**
Holly Bieneman
Illinois Department of Transportation
Vacant
Illinois Department of Commerce
and Economic Opportunity
Patrick McKenna
Missouri Department of Transportation
Taulby Roach
Bi-State Development
Aaron Willard
Missouri Office of Administration
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MINUTES
AIR QUALITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Tuesday, August 24, 2021
10:00 am – 11:00 am
VIRTUAL MEETING - GoToMeeting

Members Present:

Carol Lawrence, Chair – East-West Gateway Council of Governments
Betsy Tracy – Federal Highway Administration Illinois
Mark Leath – Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Mallory Box – Citizens for Modern Transit
Chris Schmidt – Illinois Department of Transportation
Rory Davis – Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
Mike Henderson – Missouri Department of Transportation
Susannah Fuchs – American Lung Association
Jack Fishman – St. Louis University
Jacqueline Covington – Bi-State

Others Present:

Francisco Cortalezzi – Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Kevin Herdler – St. Louis Clean Cities
Steven Donatiello – Spire
Leah Clyburn – Sierra Club
Kevin Jemison – Illinois Department of Transportation
Christine Favilla – Sierra Club
Michael Hutcheson – Ameren
Jed Wolkins – EPA Region 7
Tara Rocque – Interdisciplinary Environmental Clinic, Washington University
Andy Knott – Sierra Club
Aaron Cadman – St. Louis County
Amanda Schomaker – Madison County Transit
Roger Walker – REGFORM
Stacy Allen - Ameren
Rita Buechter – Hastings Engineering

Staff:

Mary Grace Lewandowski, Jim Wild, Lubna Shoaib, Rachael Pawlak, Amir Poorfakhraei,
Roz Rodgers, Maureen McCarthy, Lee Harris

1. Call to Order

- Carol Lawrence, Chair, East-West Gateway Council of Governments

The meeting of the Air Quality Advisory Committee (AQAC) was called to order by Chair Carol Lawrence, East-West Gateway Council of Governments (EWG). The minutes of the June 29, 2021 AQAC meeting were approved as circulated.

2. Environmental Racism in St. Louis Report

- Leah Clyburn, Sierra Club
- Tara Rocque, Interdisciplinary Environmental Clinic, Washington University

Environmental justice embraces the principle that all people and communities have a right to equal protection and equal enforcement of environmental laws and regulations. St. Louis is far from meeting these goals instead, as detailed in the 2019 Environmental Racism in St. Louis Report. This report was prepared by the Interdisciplinary Environmental Clinic at Washington University in collaboration with the Sierra Club, Arch City Defenders, Action St. Louis and Dutchtown South Community Corporation. As the title indicates, St. Louis is a classic example of environmental racism. The ultimate result of this is decreased health, increased poverty, and decreased quality of life for the people of color, who live in our city. The report examined how a number of environmental injustice indicators are inter-related, how they cause each other, and how they exacerbate each other. The presentation today will focus on two or three main factors: air pollution, asthma, and mold, because air pollution inside the home is also very important.

The speakers said that when you talk about environmental racism, you talk about environmental justice. Inequities such as food, access, criminal justice, and beyond what we were able to identify, starting with the report, along with many of other reports, as you would see when we're doing this environmental racism report that we've collaborated with other partners. There was also a Harvard Report that came out around the height of COVID. It showed that in addition to the virus, the air pollution risk factors on top of decades of burdens on black and brown community members is not only why we need to identify the power structures enabling these inequities, but no longer stand for them.

Air pollution has significant negative impacts on health, such as triggering or worsening asthma. St. Louis is one of the worst cities in the country for asthma and black St. Louisans bear the brunt of the problem. Since we all presumably breathe the same air, one would think that asthma rates are distributed equally amongst the population, but that is far from the case. Black adults have eight and a half times more ER visits while black children have almost eleven times more ER visits for asthma than white children. For every 1,000 black children, over 42 of them will end up in the ER every year for asthma. For white children that number is less than four. That is a huge disparity that is made even worse by St. Louis already having high rates of asthma. Making matters worse, black St. Louisans are statistically are more likely to lack adequate medical care. Many of our public schools in majority black neighborhoods lack full-time nurses, which essentially assures that children's asthma cannot be properly controlled.

Air pollution not only worsens asthma but it also damages lungs and can contribute to premature death. It is linked to cardiovascular problems and has been linked to adverse birth outcomes. The report focused on ozone and particulate matter since they are two primary sources of air pollution. Ozone pollution occurs when pollutants from vehicles, power plants, and other sources chemically react in the presence of sunlight. St. Louis has been in violation of federal ozone standards since 1979. Fine particulate pollution is particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) that is 2.5 microns or smaller, which is significantly smaller than the width of a human hair. Because it is so small it can work its way deep into our lungs and cause serious and long lasting health problems. Particulate matter comes from dust, metals, mold, pollen, and vehicle emissions. It can include sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and a host of other substances. St. Louis was in violation of federal standards from 2005 to 2017. The region is technically in compliance with the standard, but it is still not good.

It was found that majority black neighborhoods have the majority of air pollution operating permits and are more often located closest to major highways. There is a high vacancy problem in St. Louis and the majority of vacant properties that are demolished are also located in majority black communities. Demolitions are a huge source of particulate matter. From a nationwide perspective black Americans are exposed to 56 percent more particulate matter air pollution.

Coal-fired power plants are a big problem for air quality. Ameren has four coal-fired plants that surround the St. Louis area. The largest plant in Missouri is located to the west of St. Louis in Labadie, MO. This facility has no pollution control mechanisms to clean the gasses that pass through the smokestacks. The Rush Island plant is the sixth largest emitter of sulfur dioxide in the nation and also does not have pollution control mechanisms in place. A recent court decision has ordered Ameren to install scrubbers to clean the gasses being emitted from the Rush Island plant, but that has not been finalized. Due to the wind patterns the emissions from Rush Island and Labadie goes to and settles in St. Louis.

Air pollution does not only exist outside the house. Low-income housing or houses that are improperly sealed from the elements often have mold. Mold is not listed in building codes which means landlords can rent out apartments with mold and tenants can do nothing to make them fix it. Mold causes a variety of illnesses and it can trigger asthma attacks. Complaints about mold are statistically more likely and more common in majority black neighborhoods in St. Louis. Many people are affected by this problem but there is no practical resource for them in the laws.

Speakers discussed recommendations in the report. One thing that can be done is to hold our officials accountable. If they say they don't understand something, we need to get in front of them and educate them about it. Last year the City of St. Louis signed Resolution 124, which is a commitment to move to 100 percent renewable resources. Acting on this resolution would help reduce the use of fossil fuel within the city. There are also the regulatory agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency and the Public Commissions Board that need to hear our collective voices to bring about change. These and other regulatory agencies need to be held

accountable for what they have pledged to do which is to not only preserve and protect our communities, but the environment that surrounds us as well.

One law to bring to your attention is the proposed Environmental Justice Mapping and Data Collection Act sponsored by U.S. Representative Cori Bush. This bill would take a data heavy analysis of all of the environmental justice indicators and analyze the issues affecting specific communities on a census block-by-block basis. This data would then be used to determine who needs help and what kind of help they need so money can be specifically allocated to the communities for the appropriate reasons. It would be a way to make sure that government funding is spent the way it is intended to be spent and to help the people that have so long been marginalized and harmed by environmental toxins. The bill is still in committee.

As a general matter, environmental justice issues need more funding. Laws and regulations should continuously be improved to incentivize renewables, improve air quality, and impose strict pollution controls on coal-fired power plants. At the local level the city needs more air monitors. The lack of monitors makes it difficult to know what people are breathing in, where they breath it in, and how much. There needs to be more data in order to figure out what should be done to spend money efficiently and effectively to improve people's lives.

Another thing that is effective is increasing the flora and fauna. There is a large disparity in the quality and quantity of green spaces when comparing black and white neighborhoods in the city. One tree standing alone, depending on the type of tree, and where it's planted, can decrease particulate matter in the immediate area from between 7 percent to 24 percent. Trees and shrubs lining streets and sidewalks will reduce and control the effect of vehicle emissions and reduce particulate matter at the base level.

In addition to more flora and fauna, the laws for safe demolitions of buildings need to be sufficiently enforced. Safe demolition practices help prevent mold and other particulate matter from being spread within that community. Providing public education of sources of air pollution in the home like mold, dust, allergens, and chemicals will help people identify those sources and help them take action to eliminate those sources. If possible, providing low cost HEPA filters to impacted communities can help people clean the air in their homes.

Incentivizing alternative transportation and increasing the access to public transportation would also have a big impact on air pollution by reducing the number of cars on the roads. Improving sidewalks and installing bike lanes also provide people with safe alternatives to driving. Promoting infrastructure for electric cars and buses can also help reduce pollution.

It is important to not invest in supporting gentrification in these affected communities. Too often community members are left out of the plan and that plan ends up ostracizing them and removing them from the change in the community.

The Interdisciplinary Environmental Clinic is actively talking with a whole host of environmental justice-focused organizations and working on next steps. They can't do lobbying. We need to find people that want to implement the steps, but frankly, before that, what needs to happen is go out to majority black communities and vet our recommendations because these recommendations were researched and drafted by Washington University students. COVID got in the way of our plans to have meetings where we talk to people, and the digital divide prevents us from doing that through Zoom. We are still experimenting with ways to vet the recommendations from the report before we can push that out there but it has been very difficult. If some of us could even help support resources like the Clinic, who had been an astronomical resource for so many non-profits, including the Sierra Club and other smaller organizations, it would move us miles forward.

3. St. Louis Regional Clean Air Partnership Update

- Susannah Fuchs, American Lung Association

The Clean Air Partnership is an initiative that's led by the American Lung Association, and it came into being in the mid 1990's when Washington University, East-West Gateway, Metro Ride Finders, the Science Center, and some other major partners across the metro area realized that the air pollution problem here was pretty grave. These organizations first worked to find a media partner and developed a primetime special about air pollution and the air pollution situation in the Metro area. That led to the Clean Air Partnership, which is centered on public education about air pollution especially from emissions of transportation sources. The Partnership provides the forecasts for air pollution levels for the next day during the worst of the ozone season which is May to September. This is a public education campaign that spans the entirety of the non-attainment area. The idea with this forecasting is to reduce the emissions from transportation sources and to protect lung health. The focus on lung health is in large part related to the high rates of asthma in the metro area.

The Partnership does a lot of public outreach through social media and traditional media as well as e-mail and blogs. We will highlight companies or individuals who are taking extra steps to reduce ozone and particulate matter, or who are part of municipality or business working to reduce air pollution. The Partnership does outreach to schools and individuals. Due to COVID the methods of outreach had to be altered. There has been more meetings online and meetings outside as well as offering tailored information packages so that individuals and organizations can do their own outreach in their communities. Outreach efforts are made to try to have people take voluntary steps to reduce the precursors to ozone and particulate matter.

4. Update Activities of the States

- Rory Davis, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency

In Illinois, Monroe County was added to the non-attainment area for the 2015 ozone standard in July.

- Mark Leath, Missouri Department of Natural Resources

Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MoDNR) has launched a brand new website last Wednesday. The goal of the new site is to provide the public with easier access to the information they want such as public notices, monitoring data, and permits.

There is a Missouri Air Conservation Commission (MACC) meeting on Thursday, August 26, 2021. There are two items up for adoption. One is the Marginal Non-Attainment Area Plan for the Missouri side of the St. Louis 2015 ozone non-attainment area. In July, Jefferson County was added to that plan so the plan now includes Jefferson County's emissions inventory and reflects the addition of Jefferson County to the non-attainment area.

All of the application periods for every project category that's eligible under the Volkswagen Beneficiary Plan are currently open. This includes fleets that are looking to upgrade busses, trucks, marine engines, trains, airport equipment, cargo equipment, anything under DERA, and electric vehicle charging stations. The deadline to submit applications for all of the different project categories is October 12.

The Air Forum will meet in the afternoon after the MACC meeting on August 26. The Volkswagen Beneficiary Plan will be on that agenda along with four other planning items.

A proposal may come out as early as this fall to bump up the St. Louis non-attainment area from marginal to moderate. The proposal will potentially be made final by early spring of next year. MoDNR is currently gathering modeling inputs and setting up their modeling capabilities for what they think is coming.

5. Other Business

So far, for the 2021 ozone season there have been nineteen exceedances of the 2015 ozone standard over ten days. July 28th was a particularly bad day for the region in both Missouri and Illinois. The Blair St. and East St. Louis monitors each recorded exceedances of 99 ppb. Maryville recorded 83 ppb and Wood River recorded 72 ppb.

EPA announced that they will be receiving \$50 million as part of the 2021 American Rescue Plan to improve air quality monitoring in communities, in particular, those with health outcome disparities. There is going to be a competitive grant program focused on community monitoring, and then direct awards to air agencies. The request for proposals will come out in the fall of 2021 and funds will be awarded in 2022.

6. Adjournment

The next meeting will be October 26, 2021. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.