



# REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

JEFFERSON • ORLEANS • PLAQUEMINES • ST. BERNARD • ST. TAMMANY • TANGIPAHOA

September 10, 2015

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*Executive Director, RPC*

Ozone Advance  
c/o Laura Bunte, Mail Code C304-01  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Office of Air Quality Planning & Standards  
109 TW Alexander Drive  
Research Triangle Park, NC 27711

Dear Ms. Bunte:

The Regional Planning Commission for Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Tammany, and Tangipahoa Parishes (RPC) would like to submit the following as the annual report as required by participation in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Ozone Advance program. This document will outline the short term action plan to reduce emissions of ozone precursors, volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and oxides of nitrogen (NO<sub>x</sub>) for the parishes of New Orleans Metropolitan Statistical Area (Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. James, St. John, and St. Tammany Parishes) with the understanding that the document will be updated as various initiatives shift throughout the program.

## Background:

Ground level ozone, not to be confused with atmospheric ozone, is created when oxides of nitrogen (NO<sub>x</sub>) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) react in sunlight. Highest concentrations of ground level ozone typically occur during hot, sunny days of summer. When people breathe in this ozone, it can be harmful to their health, and this is of particular concern for children, elderly, and those who are active outdoors. Ozone can cause difficulty in deep breathing, shortness of breath, coughing or sore throat, or many other issues with the respiratory system. Ground level ozone can reduce overall lung function and inflame linings of the lungs. With repeated exposure, lung tissue has the potential to be permanently scarred.

The New Orleans area (Orleans, Jefferson, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, and St. Tammany Parishes) had over 32 days of temperatures over 100 degrees Fahrenheit from January 2004 to December 2013. In these warmer temperatures it is more common to have unhealthy levels of ground level ozone, and with climate change likely increasing the overall number of days in this high end range of temperatures, the metropolitan area is a prime candidate for this proactive, voluntary ozone reduction program.

## TRANSPORTATION POLICY COMMITTEE (MPO) Full RPC Membership

IFTIKHAR AHMAD, *Director, Louis Armstrong N. O. Intl. Airport*  
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MIKE COOPER, *Mayor, City of Covington*  
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CATHY F. GAUTREAU, *Ex. Dir. Louisiana Motor Transport Assoc.*  
SALVADOR LONGORIA, *Chairman, Regional Transit Authority*

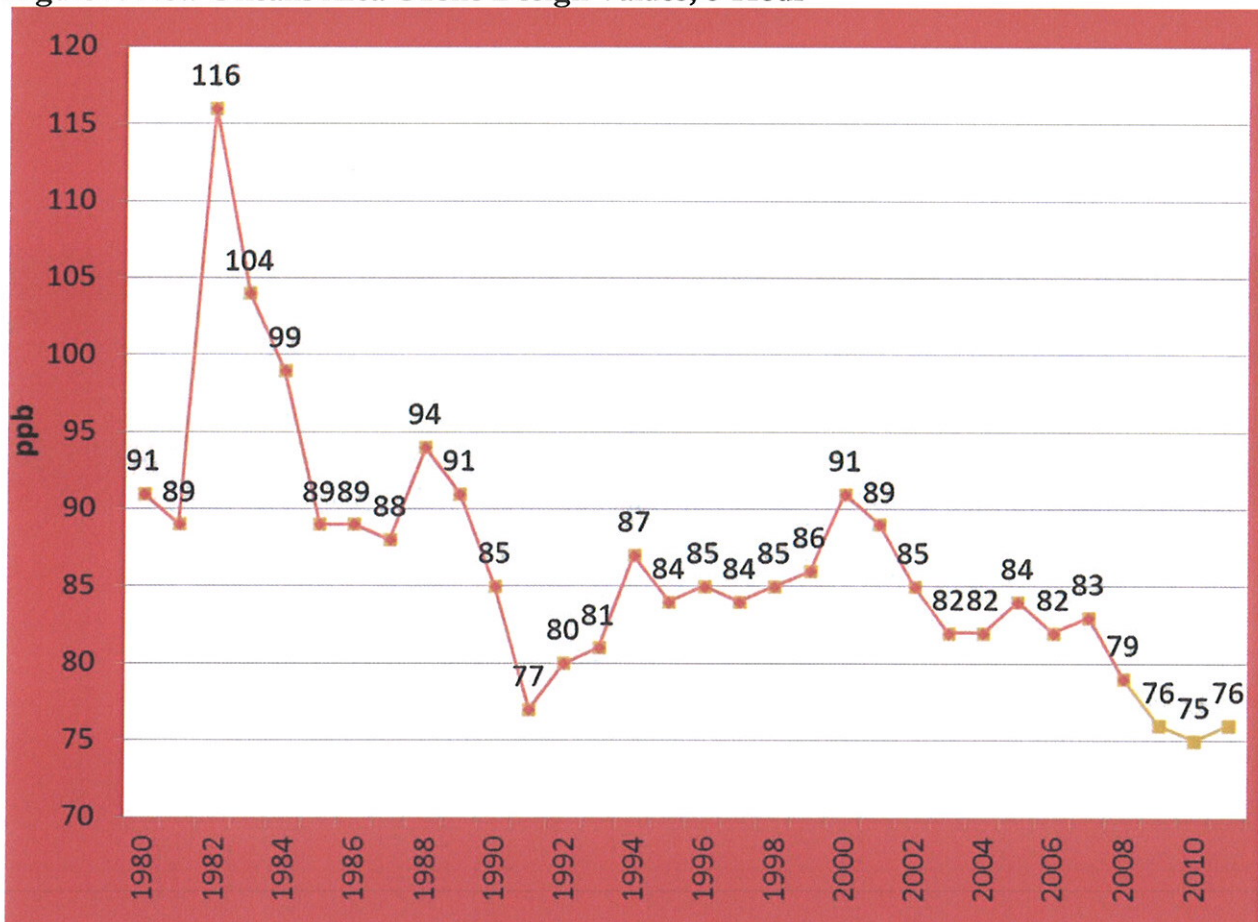
JEFF DAVIS, *Gen. Manager, NO Public Belt RR*  
NATALIE ROBOTOM, *Parish President, St. John the Baptist*  
V. J. ST. PIERRE, JR., *Parish President, St. Charles Parish*  
DONALD VILLERE, *Mayor, City of Mandeville*

The New Orleans region is monitored for the pollutant ozone at the following locations:

- 220710012 – City Park Site
- 220930002 – Convent Site
- 220890003 – Hahnville Site
- 220511001 – Kenner Site
- 221030002 – Madisonville Site
- 220870004 – Meraux Site

Figure 1 below shows how ground-level ozone levels have been on a downward trend since the early 1980s, and the RPC hopes that the voluntary actions through Ozone Advance and other programs will help this trend to continue into the future.

**Figure 1. New Orleans Area Ozone Design Values, 8-Hour**



### Voluntary Actions to Reduce Ground Level Ozone – Current and Planned

#### *GreenRide*

Metro New Orleans GreenRide is a program that was launched in 2011 by the Regional Planning Commission in an effort to reduce vehicles miles traveled and overall congestion in the metro area. This program is a turn-key rideshare software that can be used by anyone traveling

to or from the Greater New Orleans area. The site provides opportunities for drivers and passengers to coordinate trips and match with other individuals to carpool. The RPC launched GreenRide in 2011, with minimal media campaigns.

In addition to connecting interested carpoolers, the site also has the ability direct individuals to information regarding other transportation modes – transit, bicycle, vanpool. In the coming year, the RPC plans to target advertising and specific partnerships with universities and employers to further grow the program. This is what both the GreenRide staff and the RPC feel is the best way to help the tool gain traction in the region.

UPDATE:

With the recent rebranding of the Baton Rouge area's carpooling service as GeauxRide, giving the service a more localized brand, RPC intends to follow suit and rebrand from GreenRide to GeauxRide as well. An outreach plan is being developed at the RPC to have the greatest impact on increasing number of people using ridesharing and carpooling as a means to get to and from their places of work.

RPC was recently approached by South Central Planning and Development District to learn more about the experience with GreenRide, and there are investigating the potential of getting a state-wide ridesharing subscription through GreenRide or another service.

*Southeast Louisiana Clean Fuel Partnership*

The Southeast Louisiana Clean Fuel Partnership was designated as a US Department of Energy Clean Cities Coalition in 2008 with a vision to promote and facilitate implementation of clean fuels and technologies for transportation fleets that will greatly contribute to our energy independence. The Southeast Louisiana Clean Fuel Partnership creates partnerships between producers, distributors, retailers, and users and provides support and project coordination for fleets interested in transitioning to cleaner fuels in order to increase the number of vehicles using an alternative fuel by twenty percent (20%) annually and to expand the availability of cleaner fuels and technologies in southeast Louisiana.

With the Southeast Louisiana Clean Fuel Partnership and the Ozone Advance programs housed at the RPC, the program coordinators can easily collaborate on upcoming projects and initiatives that help fleets transition to alternative fuels while also decreasing the ground level ozone.

UPDATE:

In 2014 alone, coordinated efforts by the Southeast Louisiana Clean Fuel Partnership and stakeholders led to reduction of 2,977,219 gallons of gasoline equivalent. See *Table 1* on the following page for reductions by individual fleet.

The Southeast Louisiana Clean Fuel Partnership will continue to assist fleets in their transition to alternative fuels. As part of the program's outreach, educational events are held each year to educate fleet managers and maintenance personnel on alternative fuels and idle reduction technologies. The partnership also works to establish alternative refueling and/or recharging stations across the region. *Table 2*, on the following page, contains a list of alternative fuel stations that have recently opened.

**TABLE 1. Fuel Savings for New Orleans Area Fleets**

<b>Fleet Name</b>	<b>Gasoline Gallons Equivalent Reduced</b>	<b>Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduced (Tons)</b>	<b>Fuel/ Technology/ Program</b>
<b>RTA</b>	1,271,485	7,205	Electric Streetcars Biodiesel Hybrid Buses Fuel Economy Improvements: Tire Inflation Program
<b>UPS</b>	541,097	4,693	Biodiesel Propane
<b>New Orleans Public Belt Railroad</b>	374,606	4,645	Idle Reduction Technology
<b>Metro Disposal</b>	369,116	694	Natural Gas
<b>Progressive Waste</b>	165,801	312	Natural Gas
<b>Regional Planning Commission &amp; the City of New Orleans</b>	69,274	853	Bike Lane Program/ Reduction in Vehicle Miles Travelled
<b>Airport Shuttle</b>	59,217	124	Propane
<b>Dr. Pipe</b>	40,593	76	Natural Gas
<b>Park 'n Fly</b>	31,493	59	Natural Gas
<b>Limousine Livery</b>	18,503	41	Propane & Electric
<b>CSX Transportation</b>	9,626	119	Idle Reduction Technology
<b>Wood Resources</b>	8,026	74	Biodiesel
<b>Jefferson Parish Transit</b>	7,567	69	Biodiesel
<b>Nissan North America</b>	4,503	15	Electric Vehicles
<b>Coca-Cola</b>	2,459	30	Hybrid Vehicles
<b>Atmos Energy</b>	1,725	3	Natural Gas

**TABLE 2. Alternative Fuel Stations Installed in 2014**

<b>Fuel Type</b>	<b>Public Stations</b>	<b>Private Stations</b>
<b>Biodiesel</b>	-	-
<b>CNG – Compressed Natural Gas</b>	-	-
<b>E85 – 85% ethanol</b>	-	-
<b>Electric Chargers</b>	3	6
<b>Hydrogen</b>	-	-
<b>LNG – Liquefied Natural Gas</b>	-	-
<b>Propane</b>	-	-

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Grant for Municipal and Law Enforcement Fleets  
RPC was a recipient of Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) grant funding from Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LA DOTD) to help municipal and law enforcement fleets offset the cost of clean fuel vehicles. The grant will reimburse fleets for 80% of the incremental cost difference between an alternative fuel vehicle and a traditional vehicle and 80% of the cost of idle reduction technologies. For the purposes of this project, alternative fuel vehicles include natural gas, propane, electric, and hybrid vehicles. The parishes eligible for this funding (based on LA DOTD guidelines and RPC's geographic region) are Jefferson, Orleans, St. Bernard, and St. Charles. Over the course of the 4 years, \$1,136,500 will be made available.

The RPC is working with the Southeast Louisiana Clean Fuel Partnership to allocate funding for propane vehicles for Jefferson Transit. If successful, this will be the first project funded through this CMAQ grant.

The Southeast Louisiana Clean Fuel Partnership is beginning a partnership with the National Parks Service to install EV chargers in area parks, as well. Also not listed in table 1, as they are new, the Port of New Orleans just purchased two all-electric Nissan Leaf vehicles.

The Southeast Louisiana Clean Fuel Partnership and the Ozone Advance Program at the RPC will continue to work in coordination to identify and pursue these and other funding sources to decrease fuel usage and emissions through use of alternative fuels or idle reduction practices and technologies.

### *Multimodal Transportation Network*

#### Transit

The RPC assists local transit providers in creating a regionally seamless transit system that connects potential workers with job opportunities, that contributes to the reduction of transportation emissions, fossil fuel consumption, and sprawl, and that enhances overall accessibility and mobility for all residents.

In 2012, the RPC completed a Comprehensive Operational Analysis of both the Jefferson Transit and Regional Transit Authority systems, providing guidelines and suggestions to improve the commute via transit.

#### Pedestrian and Bicycle Program

The RPC's Pedestrian and Bicycle Program is working to create walkable and bikeable communities for the citizens of Southeast Louisiana. The Pedestrian and Bicycle Program works to raise awareness, promote safety, and encourage increased walking and biking throughout the region.

By providing more improved pedestrian and bicycle facilities, individuals are encouraged to choose an alternative form of transportation, other than their individual vehicle. When people choose to bike or walk to their destinations, the result is an overall decrease in air pollution, including VOCs and NO<sub>x</sub>. See *Table 3* below for a list of completed bikeways by parish, as of September 2015.

**Table 3. Bikeway Mileage by Parish**

<b>PARISH</b>	<b>COMPLETED BIKEWAYS</b>
<b>Jefferson Parish</b>	52 miles
<b>Orleans Parish</b>	98 miles
<b>Plaquemines Parish</b>	1.4 miles
<b>St. Charles Parish</b>	26 miles
<b>St. John Parish</b>	5.5 miles
<b>St. Tammany Parish</b>	28 miles

*Awards:*

- City of New Orleans | Bicycle Friendly Community | Silver | November 2014  
The League of American Bicyclists  
Improvement from previous standing of Bronze
- City of New Orleans | Walk Friendly Community | Bronze | April 2012  
UNC Highway Safety Research Center's Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center

**UPDATE:**

- RPC continues to publish the New Orleans Bike Map and Guide to Safe Cycling.
- RPC hosts educational campaigns about bicycle and pedestrian safety, including producing materials for cyclists, pedestrians and drivers that explain the rules of the road.
- Jefferson Parish completed the Jefferson Parish Bicycle Master Plan in April 2014, prioritizing routes for consideration.
- RPC hosts bicycle and pedestrian design workshops to educate engineers and designers of best design practices for successful bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- In January 2014, the City of New Orleans Pedestrian Safety Action Plan was completed.

RPC Complete Street Policy

Though the Pedestrian and Bicycle Program is mostly focused on education and safety initiatives, the RPC Complete Streets Policy, adopted in 2012, works toward implementation with the goal of creating a comprehensive, integrated, connected transportation network for the New Orleans and St. Tammany urbanized areas that balances access, mobility, health, and safety needs of motorists, transit users, freight, bicyclists, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities, which includes users of wheelchairs and mobility aids.

This policy will continue to apply to all projects, including new construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, maintenance, and planning, involving federal or state funding.

### *Intelligent Transportation Systems*

The Regional Transportation Management Center, the building where the RPC is located, is a state-of-the-art facility that utilizes Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) technology and regional coordination to facilitate communication among drivers, traffic operations staff, emergency response personnel and other agencies to maximize the use of existing roadway throughout the region. At the facility, traffic management staff monitor traffic conditions throughout the region in real-time with the use of ITS tools, such as traffic cameras and vehicle detectors. Roadway conditions are communicated with drivers and emergency responders through use of Dynamic Messaging Signs, Twitter, and the 511 Traveler Information System. The technologies employed at the Regional Transportation Management Center assist with the congestion reduction, aid in the prevention of accidents, and shorten the response time for emergency personnel to respond to the accidents.

While the daily traffic management operations functions are overseen by the LA DOTD, the RPC collaborates with LA DOTD to enhance the effectiveness of its operations. Currently, cities and parishes handle their own highway management; however, RPC is working with local governments to tie into the system.

### *Congestion Management Planning Process*

The RPC has maintained a Congestion Management System – now termed Congestion Management Planning Process (CMPP) – that identifies continued efforts to reduce congestion in the New Orleans metropolitan area. The objective of this CMPP is to provide the RPC with a mechanism for identifying congestion on the region's roadways and to develop recommendations for its reduction. Reducing congestion in the region would therefore result in decreases in the ozone precursors, NO<sub>x</sub> and VOCs; therefore, these efforts to reduce congestion are also efforts to reduce emissions throughout the region.

Through the CMPP and other areas of planning at the RPC, signal coordination and synchronization studies are taking place across the region, most recently on Veterans Blvd, a main east-west connection in Jefferson Parish.

In order to maintain an ongoing process that achieves the stated CMPP objective, the RPC must complete several actions on a recurring basis. The most significant actions are described below:

#### Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meetings

The RPC is responsible for hosting Technical Advisory Committee Meetings. TAC input is used for identifying congestion, recommending and selecting congestion management strategies. We continuously discuss the potential implications of non-attainment designation at TAC meetings, where most public works and planning directors are present. This is an opportunity to encourage alternative transportation choices and designs, which have an overall impact on air emissions and relieving congestion.

### Data Collection and Management

Qualitative data requirements of the CMPP will be accomplished through the RPC's overall data collection and management program. Since traffic data are used for purposes beyond the CMPP, policies and procedures for data collection and management are part of a separate, stand-alone program.

### CM Index Calculations

The CM Index is the CMPP's quantitative measure of congestion. The Index is calculated with a formula including ADT, Speed, and Commercial Operated Vehicles. The RPC is responsible for calculating the index. The Index will be recalculated for all CM routes once annually.

### CM Network Data Maintenance

The CM network will be updated when CM routes are changed and such changes have been approved by the TAC.

### Planned CM Strategy Tracking

The CMPP attempts to track planned programs and projects that are expected to reduce congestion. The list of planned projects will be updated annually.

### Implemented CM Strategy Tracking

The CMPP also tracks projects that have been implemented, and this list of projects will be updated annually.

### Objective and Performance Measure Tracking

The CMPP includes several objectives meant to guide the strategy selection and performance measuring processes. These each involve the accomplishment of a measurable goal within a specific time frame. The RPC will monitor progress towards objective achievement. Performance Measures for each objective will be checked once annually. At the end of an objective's given timeframe, RPC will report results to the TAC.

### *New Orleans Clean Air Coalition*

Using the example set by the Baton Rouge Clean Air Coalition and with the assistance of LDEQ, RPC is working to form the Greater New Orleans Clean Air Coalition. This will be a coalition of local governments, state environmental agencies, relevant trade associations (e.g., Louisiana Chemical Association), businesses, industries, and ports who will convene with the goal of finding the most effective ways to improve air quality, specifically focused on ozone.

### Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality

RPC was recently awarded a Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) grant from LA DOTD to work with large employers in CMAQ-eligible parishes, including the ports, their tenants, marine vessel operators and energy production facilities to discuss the commuting patterns of their employees and their fleet operations. These discussions will focus on reducing their air emissions and saving fuel through facilitating the conversion of their fleet vehicles to cleaner fuels and the implementation of idle reduction measures and technologies in their fleet operations, as well as assisting them in evaluating the potential for and in implementing employee carpooling and vanpools. The grant will fund a public education and outreach campaign (Years 1-2) and planning activities for specific project(s) identified during the outreach



process (Year 3 – 4). These projects will accomplish emissions reductions by facilitating the conversion of clean transportation projects and reduce congestion by promoting carpooling and vanpooling. Stakeholders will include private companies, such as marine fleets, port tenants, and energy companies, as well as public entities such as ports. RPC anticipates that some of the projects will also promote public-private partnerships. Potential pilot projects include initiatives such as retrofitting existing marine vessels for alternative fuel use (e.g. LNG), implementing idle reduction technologies such as shore power, purchasing alternative fuel van pool vehicles. This CMAQ funding will be integral to the Coalition's success, allowing for funding of a Clean Air Coalition Coordinator.

#### *Freight Planning and Coordination*

RPC acknowledges the difficulty of simultaneously meeting the growing demand for freight while improving environmental outcomes. RPC has made tremendous strides over the last 6 years by working in partnership with EPA and USDOE to assist transportation fleets implement cleaner fuels and cleaner vehicles, and by supporting activities, policies and technologies to reduce the amount of fuel used. For freight these include idle reduction, repowering, alternative fuels and energy efficiency technologies. USDOE has also supplied a fleet contact database for the region that will be useful in outreach efforts to identify concerns and prioritize projects in the TIP.

The RPC facilitates regional partnerships and helps to reconcile local, state and federal laws to advance progressive, sustainable, economically-viable freight transportation strategies. The New Orleans RPC has historically worked one on one with public or quasi-public entities on the Transportation Policy Committee to identify planning needs and priority freight projects. These include the Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport (aviation), the New Orleans Public Belt Railroad (rail), the Port of New Orleans (maritime) and the Louisiana Motor Transport Association (motor carrier). In addition to input provided at MTP meetings, the RPC conducts individual interviews with the major terminal operators and administrators. More recently staff has engaged a larger and more varied group of freight related representatives extending invitations to private sector business and transportation service industries to be a part of Freight Roundtable discussion. The Freight Roundtable is developing long-term program priorities is poised to provide important feedback on every aspect of freight planning in the future. Improved efficiency in moving freight is also an improvement to air quality through minimized idling.

#### *EPA School Flag Program*

The EPA School Flag Program encourages students, teachers and schools to be aware of their air quality and how it can affect activity. It is based on the Air Quality Index with green, yellow, orange, red and purple flags. It helps orient the students to what they mean and what actions they can take to improve air quality. It encourages individual responsibility and like to recycling program, if encouraged in the elementary grades has a lasting impact. The RPC plans in the next year to work with at least one area school to start the School Flag Program. RPC could potentially leverage efforts of the Greater New Orleans Water Collaborative education surrounding water management and water quality education, starting with one of the schools that is part of the water education program.

Looking ahead, we will continue to work with area stakeholders to identify additional opportunities for reducing ground-level ozone in the New Orleans area, and we will continue to search for funding for these and related efforts. Potential funding opportunities include the Transportation Alternatives Program, the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program, and the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act. The Regional Planning Commission appreciates the guidance of the U.S. EPA and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, and we look forward to continued participation in the Ozone Advance Program.

Sincerely,



Walter R. Brooks  
Executive Director