MECKLENBURG COUNTY
Land Use and Environmental Services Agency
- A I R Q U A L I T Y -

August 22, 2018

TRANSMITTED VIA EMAIL

Advance Program
c/o Laura Bunte
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards, C304-01
advance@epa.gov

RE: Ozone Advance Path Forward for the Charlotte Region – Progress Report

Dear Ms. Bunte:

On August 15, 2017, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) welcomed Mecklenburg County, NC into the Ozone Advance program, as requested by Mecklenburg County Air Quality (MCAQ). Subsequently on September 26, 2017, the N.C. Division of Air Quality (DAQ) requested to join the Advance program on behalf of the entire state of North Carolina. Over the last 12 months MCAQ and DAQ have made significant progress toward creating a program that will improve air quality in the Charlotte region and be a model for future programs across North Carolina.

Breathing Room: A Brand and A Vision

MCAQ created the "Breathing Room" brand for the Charlotte region's Advance program. The brand was designed to create a unique and goal-oriented identity for the program. It reminds residents that the Charlotte region only narrowly meet the health-based standard for ground-level ozone and invites participants to help put some breathing room between local data and the ozone standard.

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Building on Existing Stakeholder Input to Plan for "Now, Next, Future"

As a starting point for creating a Path Forward, MCAQ reviewed existing stakeholder-developed plans (e.g. Air Quality Commission report, Connect our Future, LivableMeck, Charlotte Area Transit Service 2030 Vision) to identify regional priorities that align with air quality. In consultation with the Mecklenburg County Air Quality Commission and NCDAQ, MCAQ used these existing stakeholder priorities to identify 15 model strategies that will reduce local air pollution. Using a prioritization activity called "Now, Next, Future," MCAQ solicited input from over 300 stakeholders ranging from middle and high school youth, to elected officials and city planners, to business leaders and manufacturing workers. Public input is still ongoing and will shape the region's final Path Forward.

Creating a Relevant, Continuously Improving Path Forward

Rather than producing a static document, MCAQ has opted to present the Charlotte region's Path Froward as a website: https://www.mecknc.gov/LUESA/AirQuality/Pages/BreathingRoom.aspx. Using a website for our Path Forward keeps the Breathing Room program relevant to policy makers and the public, and it allows the program to continuously improve and evolve.

Requesting Flexibility

The final step to completing the Charlotte region's Path Froward will be to add an implementation plan, with a timeline, to the Breathing Room website. The implementation plan and timeline will improve with additional input from stakeholders. Therefore, MCAQ is requesting the flexibility to continue to meet with stakeholders through 2018 with the goal of submitting a "final" Path Forward in the summer of 2019.

If you have any questions about Breathing Room or the Path Forward, please contact Megan Green of my staff at 980-314-3368 or Megan.Green@MecklenburgCountyNC.gov. Thank you for your support as we continue developing new ways to improve air quality in the Charlotte region and across North Carolina.

Sincerely,

Leslie H. Rhodes

Leslie Rhodes
Director

Cc:
Megan Green, Mecklenburg County
Ebenezer Gujjarlapudi, Mecklenburg County
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