

Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District

For Agenda: May 26, 2005

To: Board of Directors, Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District

From: Larry Greene, Air Pollution Control Officer

Subject: Model General Plan Air Quality Element

Recommendation This report is before you to offer the following recommendation for your approval:

Authorize the Chair to sign a letter recommending that the mayors of all local jurisdictions and the Chair of the Board of Supervisors include a separate and distinct Air Quality Element in proposed General Plans or General Plan updates, and approve model language for use by the jurisdictions in crafting the Air Quality Elements.

Purpose

As local jurisdictions create or update their general plans, planning staff frequently consult with Air District staff for recommendations and guidance on preparing air quality policies to include in an air quality element or other related elements. The Model Air Quality Element will provide clear and consistent guidance to local jurisdictions while reducing the burden on these jurisdictions in developing an adequate Air Quality Element.

Air District staff will continue to be available for consultations with jurisdictions to refine the Model to fit their unique needs. The Model serves as a strong guidance document that can be altered to suit the unique characteristics of each jurisdiction.

The Model Air Quality Element offers a practical way for local jurisdictions to contribute to air quality improvement in the Sacramento region. This document sets forth a number of policies to reduce emissions, and identifies strategies that will help bring healthy air to the residents of each community.

Background

In April 2004, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency designated the Sacramento region a "serious" nonattainment area for the new 8-hour ozone standard with an attainment deadline of 2013. The 8-hour standard is more stringent than the previous 1-hour standard and meeting it will require a greater commitment on the part of local residents, businesses, and jurisdictions.

Implementing local policies to reduce emissions will help the Sacramento region in its effort to reach these new health-based standards. The Model Air Quality Element offers an efficient and effective way to reduce local air pollution. Most importantly, the implementation of these policies will help protect the health of people within our communities.

Summary of Model Air Quality Element

The Model Air Quality Element contains 41 recommended policies, and emphasizes the significance that land use decisions and resulting transportation behavior have on air quality. Focusing primarily on “smart growth” development and secondarily on transportation demand management, the policies outlined in this document are intended for use in a separate Air Quality Element in a General Plan.

The Model Air Quality Element includes a background section explaining its purpose, the importance of air quality, impact of criteria pollutants, causes of poor air quality in the Sacramento Region, and the need and authority for consistent Air Quality Elements in General Plans. There are five sections within the Model that outline strategies for achieving clean air. The land use portion focuses on issues of environmental justice, locating businesses near transit, encouraging compact development where appropriate, and improving project design guidelines. The transportation section concentrates on trip reduction measures, transportation systems management, and the use of low-emission vehicles. The reduction of construction and heavy-duty equipment emissions, energy conservation, and public education are also important components of the Model Air Quality Element.

State Government Code Authority for Air Quality Element

Under state law, every local general plan must include seven elements. Air quality is not one of the mandated elements, but is an optional element. Government Code Section 65303 states that “the general plan may include any other elements or address any other subjects which, in the judgment of the legislative body, relate to the physical development of the county or city.” Because of this, different jurisdictions handle air quality impacts differently in each of their general plans.

Furthermore, a bill introduced by Senator Kehoe on January 4, 2005 (SB 44) would require each city and county to amend its General Plan to include air quality policies. This bill would also require each city and county to send a copy of its draft General Plan to the local Air District for review at least 45 days prior to the Plan’s adoption.

Whether or not SB 44 becomes law, the Model Air Quality Element will help to streamline the General Plan review process within the District, resulting in more efficient use of staff and consulting resources.

Need for a Separate Air Quality Element

A separate Air Quality Element highlights the importance of addressing the air quality problem and is a demonstration of the regional commitment to improve air quality. The Sacramento region is a recognized leader in developing innovative air quality programs to promote a thriving business climate as well as a healthy population. At the same time, the District recognizes that workload issues associated with the development of separate Air Quality Elements can prevent jurisdictions from developing the element. By offering the Model to each jurisdiction, the planning staff workload required for its development is greatly reduced, and better consistency between the general plans for all jurisdictions can be achieved.

**Outreach to Local
Planning
Directors**

In an effort to solicit comments and recommendations from local jurisdiction staff, the District circulated a draft Model Air Quality Element to each planning director in the region. No comments were received.

Respectfully submitted,

Larry Greene
Air Pollution Control Officer

Approved as to form:

Kathrine Pittard
District Counsel

Attachment A – Model Air Quality Element
Attachment B – Template Letter