REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

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

February 5, 2014

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 a path forward letter as required by participation in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Ozone Advance program. This document will outline the short term path forward to reduce emissions of ozone precursors, volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and oxides of nitrogen (NO_x) 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_x) 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.

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Email: rpc@norpc.org; Web Site: http://www.norpc.org

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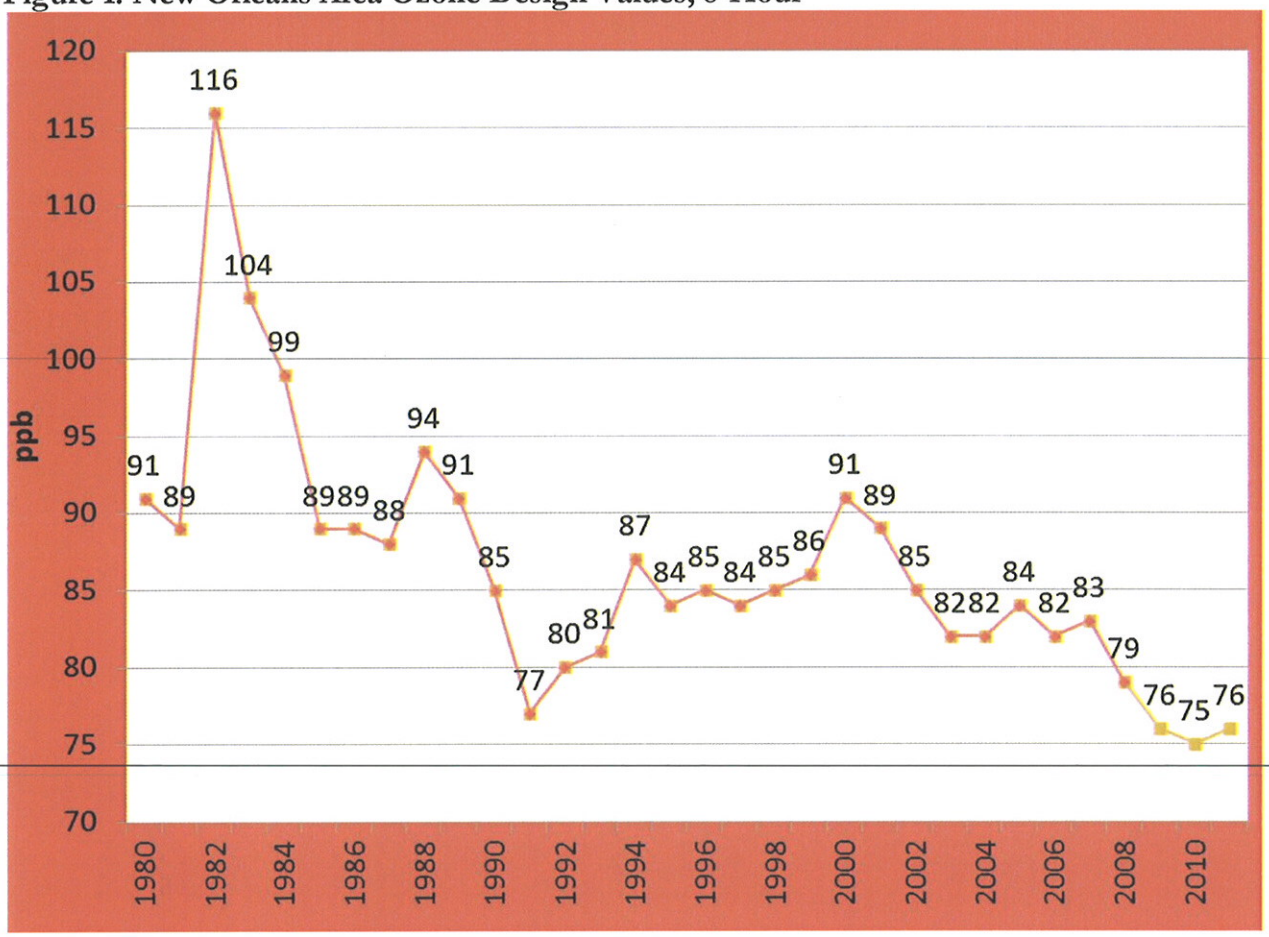
The New Orleans region is monitored for the pollutant ozone at the following locations:

- 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.

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.

In 2012 alone, coordinated efforts by the Southeast Louisiana Clean Fuel Partnership and stakeholders led to reduction of 820,761 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

Fleet Name	Gasoline Gallons Equivalent Reduced	Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduced (Tons)	Fuel/ Technology/ Program
RTA	455,199	2,713	Electric Streetcars Biodiesel Hybrid Buses Tire Inflation Program
New Orleans Public Belt	132,194	1,639	Idle Reduction Technology*
Progressive Waste	55,236	104	Natural Gas
Airport Shuttle	42,945	90	Propane
Dr. Pipe	32,302	61	Natural Gas
Park n Fly	31,447	59	Natural Gas
RPC Bicycle and Pedestrian Program	27,884	343.5	Bike Lane Program
CSX Transportation	16,597	206	Idle Reduction Technology*
Limousine Livery	8,086	17	Propane
Jefferson Parish Transit	8,086	74	Biodiesel
Entergy	4,322	8.3	Natural Gas & Propane
AT&T	2,850	5	Natural Gas
Coca-Cola Refreshments	2,459	30	Hybrid Vehicles
City of New Orleans	176	1.7	Hybrid Vehicles
Jefferson Parish	420	5.1	Hybrid Vehicles
Solar Alternatives Inc.	157	1	Electric Vehicle

**Idle reduction Technology specific to the New Orleans Public Belt Railroad and CSX Transportation will be discussed later in the Path Forward Letter.*

TABLE 2. Alternative Fuel Stations in the New Orleans Area

Station Name	Location
Blossman Propane Station	Kenner, LA
Whole Foods Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment	New Orleans, LA
Clean Energy Compressed Natural Gas Station at Park N Fly	Kenner, LA
Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment at Tulane University, University of New Orleans, Loyola University	New Orleans, LA
Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment at Ray Brandt Nissan, Premier Nissan-Metairie, Bryan Mitsubishi, Eric Hill Nissan, Nissan of Slidell, and Eddie Tourelle's Northpark Nissan	Various
Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment at New Orleans International Airport	Kenner, LA

Idle Reduction Technologies

New Orleans Public Belt (NOPB) is reaping the benefits of retrofitting with idle reduction equipment to reduce their air emissions and fuel cost. The idle reduction systems are estimated to reduce the NO_x emissions by forty four percent (44%), particulate matter emissions by ninety percent (90%), hydrocarbon emissions by thirty eight percent (38%) and carbon monoxide emissions by seventy five percent (75%). In 2010 and 2011 the new technology saved NOPB 156,845 gallons of fuel for an estimated cost savings of almost $500,000. In addition to the emissions reductions and direct fuel savings, the project also reduces maintenance costs by reducing idling which is detrimental to engines.

NOPB received approximately $214,000 from Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality's (LDEQ's) Clean Diesel Program through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to retrofit seven locomotives with automatic start and shutdown systems. Four of NOPB's locomotives were retrofitted with the systems previously; the grant allowed for NOPB to install emissions-reducing and fuel-saving technology to the remainder of their locomotive fleet.

CSX Corporation, the U.S. EPA, and the Southeast Louisiana Clean fuel Partnership collaborated on a project to jointly fund a GenSet ultra-low emission locomotive. Housed at the Gentilly Yard in New Orleans, the GenSet uses technology that reduces carbon emission by 25% and NO_x and particulate matter by more than 80%. The new engine system is expected to save 15,000 gallons of fuel annually, with a projected annual cost savings of over $50,000.

GenSet technology replaces the traditional large, single diesel engine with three small diesel engines, allowing the switcher locomotive to use only the appropriate amount of energy necessary to pull its load. Monitoring technology takes the engines into "sleep" mode after a period of inactivity in order to conserve fuel and to reduce emissions.

This project was partially funded through a grant ($1,045,125) awarded to the RPC's Clean Fuel Partnership by the EPA's National Clean Diesel Funding Assistance Program. CSX funded the remainder ($348,375) as part of the company's commitment to fuel efficiency and emissions reductions.

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 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_x. See *Table 3* below for a list of completed

Table 3. Miles of Bicycle Lanes by Parish

PARISH	COMPLETED BICYCLE LANES
Jefferson Parish	51.2 miles
Orleans Parish	81.75 miles
Plaquemines Parish	1.4 miles
St. Charles Parish	25.85 miles
St. John Parish	5.5 miles
St. Tammany Parish	27.7 miles

The RPC is also working with the City of New Orleans on a feasibility study and business plan for phased implementation of a bike share program in New Orleans. This bike share program, if implemented, would allow for tourists and locals alike to easily travel between different areas of downtown New Orleans. A successful bike share program can achieve multiple benefits including encouraging the modal share of non-motorized travelers, thereby reducing the negative travel and air quality effects of automobile congestion.

Awards:

- City of New Orleans | Bicycle Friendly Community | Bronze | September 2011
  The League of American Bicyclists
- City of New Orleans | Walk Friendly Community | Bronze | April 2012
  UNC Highway Safety Research Center's Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center

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

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_x and VOCs; therefore, these efforts to reduce congestion are also efforts to reduce emissions throughout the region.

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.

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.

LA DOTD Motorist Assistance Patrol

The Motorist Assistance Patrol (MAP) is a key part of the LA DOTD's effort to safely and efficiently keep traffic moving. Congestion is a particularly important safety issue n the state's heavily traveled roadways, including in the New Orleans area. In the New Orleans area, MAP vehicles patrol I-10 from Loyola Avenue to I-510, the entire stretch of I-610, and US 90 Business from the I-10 interchange to the Crescent City Connection Bridge seven days a week from 5:30am to 7:30pm. In the event of an incident, crash, or stalled vehicle, MAP vehicles are dispatched by the Regional Transportation Management Center (RTMC), the same building where the Regional Planning Commission is housed. Deploying the MAP vehicles helps to remove the incident from the roadway more quickly, minimizing congestion caused by the incident.

Traffic Signal Synchronization

The RPC is working with member parishes to implement traffic signal synchronization, where appropriate. Jefferson Parish recently synchronized multiple signals along the Veterans corridor, which has led to improved traffic flows, and the RPC intends to continue this work to improve traffic flows, thus decreasing emissions caused by idle vehicles.

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