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Subject: Ozone SIP Comments, Docket Nos. 2023-107-SIP-NR, 2023-108-SIP-NR, 2023-110-SIP-NR, and 2023-132-SIP-NR
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To the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality,

I write to ask that you pass strong ozone plans for the Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston-Galveston-Brazoria, and Bexar County regions (Docket Nos. 2023-107-SIP-NR, 2023-108-SIP-NR, 2023-110-SIP-NR, and 2023-132-SIP-NR). Although each of these submissions is for a specific requirement of Texas' ozone SIP, there are some basic principles that I believe Texas should follow in its SIP submissions.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recently rejected State Implementation Plan (SIP) submissions by Texas for these three regions for the 2015 ozone SIP. I agree with the EPA's conclusion that Texas has not proposed measures adequate to bring our cities into attainment of federal pollution standards. For this reason, I think Texas should do more in its SIP submissions to reduce ozone pollution.

Mobile sources—cars and trucks—are significant contributors to ozone precursor pollution. Texas recently discontinued safety inspections, meaning vehicles not meeting air pollution standards are more likely to go undetected. Texas must maintain a robust emissions testing system in counties where this is required. Texas must also ensure that car companies are not cheating on emission testing, as Volkswagen and Audi have done. Strategies to combat vehicle pollution include emissions tests, the smoking vehicle program, and remote emissions sensing.

Large stationary sources are some of the worst emitters of ozone pollution precursors. Texas can reduce ozone pollution by closing its largest stationary source emitters, including the WA Parish coal plant in Fort Bend County (the large NOx emitter in the region) and the Martin Lake Power Plant in Rusk County. Texas must also ensure that major stationary sources are not avoiding major source review by undercounting emissions to stay under the major source threshold or by improperly segmenting major modification projects.

Emissions from oil and gas facilities must also be addressed. TCEQ uses drilling rig counts from 2014/2015 in the DFW SIP, which is unacceptable when more recent rig counts are readily available. TCEQ can also reduce emissions from the oil and gas industry by promoting the use of electric drilling equipment and renewable energy. The TCEQ can join the EPA in implementing the new methane rule to reduce emissions of methane, an ozone precursor.

Finally, the TCEQ can strictly enforce the Clean Air Act and the permits it issues under the act. Most air pollution violations in Texas occur with no corrective action at all. The TCEQ has a crucial role to play in using enforcement to give companies an economic incentive to obey the law.

In conclusion, I do not believe the TCEQ is doing enough in its SIP submissions to meet ozone pollution standards. I encourage the agency to do all it can to reduce pollution and protect public health.

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