
Chapter 1:

Introduction

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Regulatory Background

Assembly Bill 617 (AB 617)¹ was signed into California law on July 26, 2017, and focused on addressing disproportionate impacts of local air pollution in environmental justice (EJ) communities. “Environmental justice” is defined as “the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.”² AB 617 was the companion measure to Assembly Bill 398³ (E. Garcia), signed into law on July 25, 2017, which extended the California Greenhouse Gas Cap-and-Trade program, established pursuant to Assembly Bill 32⁴ (Núñez, Pavley, Chapter 488, Statutes of 2006), until 2030. These bills followed Senate Bill 32⁵ (Pavley, Chapter 249, Statutes of 2016) which requires CARB to ensure that statewide greenhouse gas emissions are reduced to at least 40 percent below the 1990 level by December 31, 2030.

AB 617 recognizes that while California has seen tremendous regional air quality improvement, some communities are still disproportionately impacted due to air pollution sources near residential areas. Major air pollution sources in EJ communities include mobile sources and industrial facilities. These communities also experience health, social, and economic disadvantages that add to their cumulative burdens. The AB 617 program invests resources and focuses on improving air quality in EJ communities.

AB 617 communities are designated by California Air Resources Board (CARB), and they specify the plan(s) for the community as either an emissions reduction program, air monitoring system, or both. To meet the emissions reduction program requirements, South Coast Air Quality Management District (South Coast AQMD) develops and implements Community Emission Reduction Plans (CERPs). For the air monitoring system requirements, South Coast AQMD develops and deploys Community Air Monitoring Plans (CAMPs). For communities with an emissions reduction program component, the local air district must develop a CERP in collaboration with CARB, community-based organizations, community members, affected sources, and local governmental bodies, which must be implemented within five years.⁶ Additionally, air districts are required to provide an Annual Progress Report to CARB⁷ and if new information becomes available, the CERP may be evaluated and revised by CARB. For communities with an air monitoring system component, a CAMP must be developed and deployed within one year of community designation.⁸

An essential element of the program is partnership and collaboration with the community to address the community’s air quality priorities and develop corresponding goals and actions in the CERP and

¹ California Health and Safety Code, Section 44391.2

² California Government Code, Section 65040.12

³ California Revenue and Taxation Code, Section 6377.1

⁴ California Health and Safety Code, Section 38500

⁵ California Health and Safety Code, Section 38566

⁶ California Health and Safety Code, Section 44391.2 (b)(2)

⁷ California Health and Safety Code, Section 42705.5 (d)

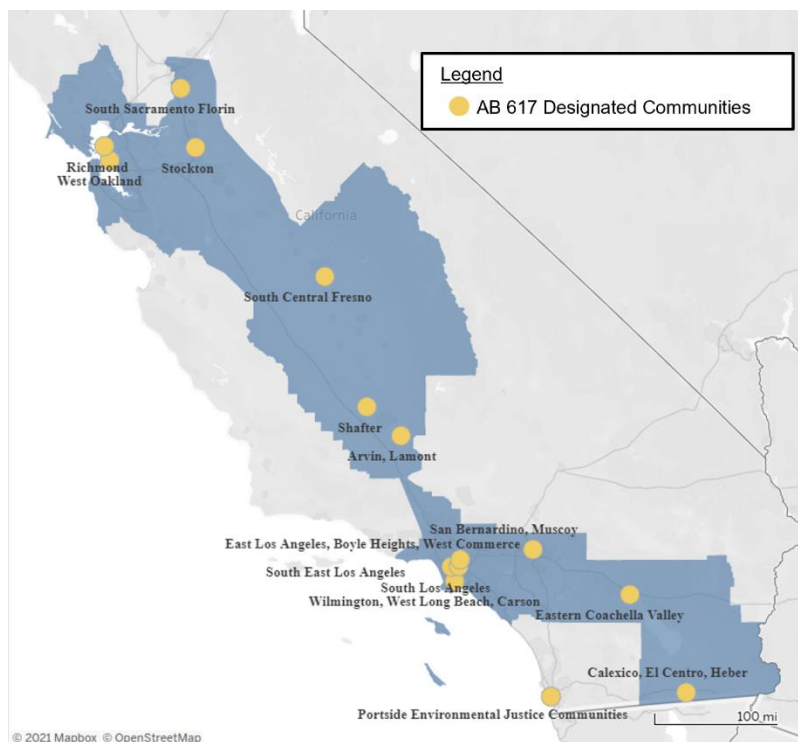
⁸ California Health and Safety Code, Section 42705.5 (b)

CAMP. The Community Steering Committee (CSC) is a diverse group of people who live, work, own businesses, or attend school within the community. Additionally, local land-use agencies, public health agencies, regulatory agencies, and elected officials may have representation on the CSC. The CSC guides the development and implementation of the emissions reduction program and air monitoring system.

Assembly Bill 617 Designated Communities

Currently, statewide, there are 15 AB 617 communities designated by CARB (see **Figure 1-1**) and six of the 15 communities reside within the jurisdiction of the South Coast AQMD. In 2018 (Year 1), CARB designated three South Coast AQMD communities. In 2019 (Year 2), CARB designated two⁹ additional communities in South Coast AQMD. On February 25, 2021 (Year 3¹⁰), South Los Angeles (SLA) was designated by CARB as an AB 617 community in South Coast AQMD to develop a community emissions program and an air monitoring system.^{11,12}

Figure 1-1: AB 617 Designated Communities



⁹ Eastern Coachella Valley and Southeast Los Angeles were designated in 2019 to develop both a community emissions program and air monitoring system, <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/capp-communities>

¹⁰ South Los Angeles is designated as a “2020” or “Year 3” community despite the CARB Board meeting for community selection being held in 2021, <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/our-work/programs/community-air-protection-program/communities/south-los-angeles>

¹¹ California Health and Safety Code, Section 44391.2 (c)(2)

¹² California Health and Safety Code, Section 42705.5 (d)

Assembly Bill 617 Program Challenges

Over the past four years of implementing the AB 617 program, South Coast AQMD has experienced challenges and gained insight on working with the designated communities and addressing their concerns. One of the common challenges for all AB 617 communities continues to be the emissions reduction program development timeline; one year to develop and adopt an emissions reduction program limits the ability to establish a relationship with the community, inform the community, and build consensus. Another challenge is the limited authority of air districts to sufficiently address all air quality related issues raised by the CSCs. Limited funding has also been challenging to sufficiently support the development, implementation, and deployment of community plans. South Coast AQMD is and continues to advocate for legislative changes on behalf of the community for more reasonable deadlines and increased and sustained funding for the AB 617 program.

Purpose

This CERP is developed to achieve emission and exposure reductions within the SLA community and address this community's air quality priorities, provide emissions and exposure reduction actions, and an implementation schedule (Chapter 5: Actions to Reduce Community Air Pollution). This plan also describes the community outreach conducted to develop this CERP (Chapter 3: Community Outreach, Community Steering Committee, Community Engagement, and Public Process) and an enforcement plan (Chapter 4: Enforcement Overview and History).

Community Emissions Reduction Plan Development Process and Emphasis on Community Engagement

Community engagement and input to inform both the process and the actions in a CERP are a primary element of the AB 617 program. Public meetings, subcommittee meetings, conversations, and communications among community co-leads, CSC members, community members, South Coast AQMD, and CARB staff contribute to developing and implementing this CERP. Chapter 2b: Community Profile and CERP Development as Presented by the Community Co-Leads and Chapter 3 describes the CSC, community co-leads, and outreach efforts for CERP development.

Community Designation and Community Emissions Reduction Plan Development Timeline

On January 14, 2021, South Coast AQMD and CARB initiated the first community meeting (Community Kickoff Meeting) in preparation for SLA's designation by CARB as an AB 617 community. Additionally, South Coast AQMD provided an overview of the agency, and South Coast AQMD and CARB presented information about the AB 617 program and explained the critical role of the CSC in the development and implementation of the CERP and CAMP. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all meetings were held virtually via Zoom. On February 16, 2021, Physicians for Social Responsibility-Los Angeles (PSR-LA) in collaboration with Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE) and Watts Clean Air and Energy Committee (WCAEC), South Coast AQMD, and CARB hosted a conference called "What's Up With the Air in South LA? An AB 617 Air Quality Virtual Conference". On February 25, 2021, SLA was designated by CARB as an AB 617 community. Since the designation, there have been a series of community meetings to develop the CERP and CAMP; see **Figure 1-2** for the timeline. On March 11, 2021, South Coast AQMD hosted the first official SLA CSC meeting, in collaboration with PSR-LA, SCOPE, and WCAEC who helped develop the agenda and prepare community members for meaningful engagement.

Figure 1-2: SLA Community Designation and CERP Development Timeline