



REGIONAL AIR QUALITY PLAN: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



PRESENTED BY

 **REAGAN SMITH**

MHT
CONSULTING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

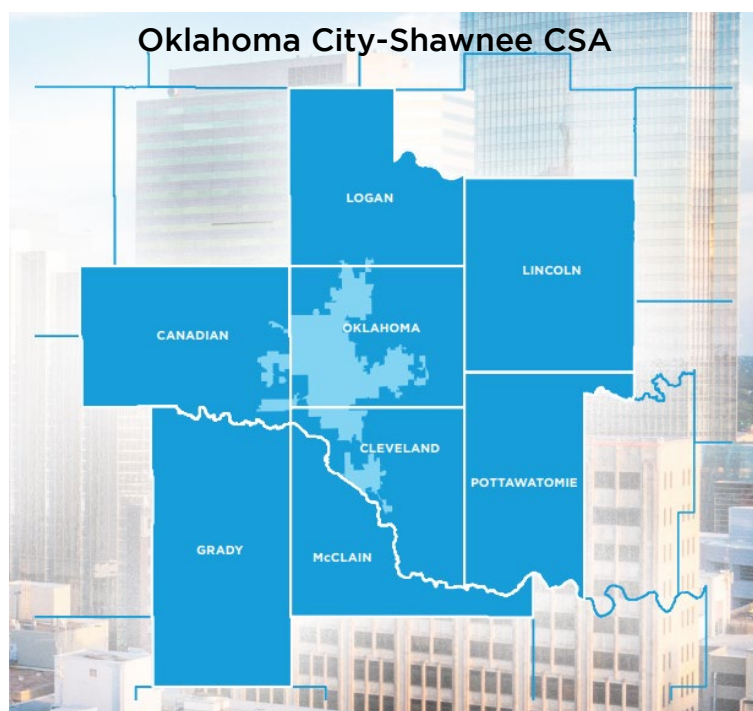
Air quality is more than a measure of pollution; it reflects how well we protect our most vulnerable populations and ensure a sustainable future. In Central Oklahoma, marginalized communities and historically underinvested areas face disproportionate exposure to pollutants such as ground-level ozone and particulate matter (PM). These pollutants contribute to tangible health consequences, including higher asthma rates, cardiovascular conditions and reduced life expectancy.

In the fall of 2022, ACOG Board of Directors attended a retreat that gave ACOG members, for the first time in history, the opportunity to actively participate in brainstorming exercises that established vision statements and goals for our region, leading to this [Regional Air Quality Plan](#). The Oklahoma City Metro has been in attainment of the EPA Ozone Standard for decades, however in the last few years the number of violations has increased significantly and poses the difficult reality of being designated as nonattainment soon. The ACOG Cost of Nonattainment Study highlights the extensive economic and transportation costs to the region, if designated by the EPA.

The Oklahoma City Metropolitan area remains committed to maintaining an attainment designation of the EPA's National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for ozone and Particulate Matter (PM) while supporting regional approaches to greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction strategies. As part of this effort, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) created the Climate Pollution Reduction Grants (CPRG) program in 2023, funded by the Inflation Reduction Act. Due to planning efforts and others, the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) successfully secured \$3 million under EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Phase 1. Additionally, ACOG successfully secured \$1 million under Phase 1: Planning Grants to implement community-driven solutions to the climate crisis, reducing pollution, advance environmental justice and accelerate Oklahoma's responsibly expanded energy future. Coordination between ACOG and the DEQ gives Central Oklahoma citizens and business leaders actions to help mitigate and reduce emissions now and in the future.

The Oklahoma City Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and Oklahoma City-Shawnee Combined Statistical Area (CSA) Regional Air Quality Plan is intended as a guide to address regional air pollution issues for Canadian, Cleveland, Grady, Lincoln, Logan, McClain, Oklahoma, and Pottawatomie Counties. The plan is designed to help the region:

- Reduce pollution levels and improve ambient air quality within the eight-county Oklahoma City MSA and Oklahoma City-Shawnee CSA;
- Reduce emissions from within the region; and
- Mitigate the health, environmental, economic, and social impacts of regional air pollution.



The Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) competitively procured Reagan Smith, Inc. and MHT Consulting to develop a Regional Air Quality Plan.

With this plan, ACOG seeks to better understand current air quality status and sources of emissions, explore what other regions are doing to improve air quality, identify private sector emissions reduction strategies, review transportation sector emissions reduction plans, policy and funding opportunities, equity considerations and environmental justice, as well as action and implementation items.

The plan will help stakeholders, and the community maximize the probability of compliance with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) region-wide and minimize health and environmental impacts of the regional air pollution. To achieve this, this plan calls for public outreach, surveys to gather public input, ambient air monitoring data, other air quality research and planning activities, policy and funding research, and creating a list, or *toolbox* of implementation items. The plan identifies:

- regional air quality issues
- objectives for addressing these issues
- strategies for achieving these objectives
- actions that will advance these strategies
- roles and responsibilities of the various organizations' participation

Clean air is good for business and the community. Improved air quality reduces asthma cases, reduces missed work days, improves school attendance, lowers healthcare costs for families and frees up resources for businesses to reinvest in their workforce. These benefits combined with policies that promote renewable energy and energy-efficient practices, attract investments, boost worker productivity and create jobs in emerging industries like clean energy and green infrastructure. For example, the Oklahoma Emissions Reduction Technology Rebate Program incentivizes businesses to adopt cleaner technologies supporting economic development while cutting emissions and reducing costs.

From reducing methane leaks from natural gas operations to improving recycling practices, businesses in the Oklahoma City metro and beyond are proving that sustainability and economic growth go hand-in-hand. Sustainability initiatives not only benefit the environment – they bolster local economies by creating jobs and fostering innovation. Oklahoma businesses are stepping up to protect air quality through sustainability practices and innovative technologies. Companies like Devon Energy and Dolese are reducing emissions by adopting cleaner operations and investing in energy-efficient systems, such as LED lighting and energy efficient equipment.

The transportation sector is one of Central Oklahoma's largest contributors to air pollution. Innovations like electric vehicles (EVs), alternative fuels, public transit expansion and bike-friendly infrastructure reduce harmful emissions. However, continued investment is crucial. OKC's public transit system is already making strides with the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project and plans to expand streetcar routes in downtown Oklahoma City. The Regional Transportation Authority of Central Oklahoma (RTA) is planning for future commuter rail. These initiatives reduce vehicle miles traveled and improve air quality. Embracing EV adoption and increasing charging infrastructure can further amplify these benefits.

Environmental justice ensures that no community bears an unequal share of pollution's burden. In Oklahoma, addressing the health impacts of pollutants like nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide and particulate matter is essential for creating equitable living conditions. These pollutants have been linked to asthma, heart disease and premature death, disproportionately affecting low-income and minority populations. By targeting emission reductions in these areas, we can advance health equity and improve the quality of life for all residents.

Within the air quality sector, guidelines and rules are constantly changing, rebate programs and funding programs are periodically available, and legislation is regularly being introduced. For this reason, many of the programs and plans mentioned in this document may no longer be available. We worked to create a vision to demonstrate to the public what is currently available to help fund opportunities to reduce emissions. Rebate programs and tax credits can be found for a variety of sectors including businesses, homes, vehicles, solar, and utilities.

Creating implementation items for the Oklahoma City metro area was a priority for this plan to guide the community into healthier air. A partnership between governments, businesses and individuals is essential to protecting the region’s air quality. Governments can adopt action plans focusing on emission lowering goals, funding public transportation projects, installing renewable energy, making energy efficiency improvements, and deploying cleaner fleets. Businesses can transition to electric or low-emissions vehicles, implement workplace policies to encourage action on Ozone Alert Days, as well as implementing proactive policies to reduce Nitrogen Dioxide (NO_x) and Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) emissions from operated sources. Additionally, individuals can switch to energy-efficient appliances and vehicles using tax incentives, walk, bike or use public transit whenever possible, and participate in community air quality programs like Ozone Alert Days.

Action Steps

Corporate Recognition Program	Corporate Working Group	Public Awareness Campaign
Establish a program to recognize businesses implementing Ozone Day responses and emission reduction efforts.	Organize and facilitate a working group, led by ACOG, to develop and promote the recognition program.	Launch a media campaign to educate the public on the benefits of preventing non-attainment designation.

There are numerous resources to help Oklahoma citizens reduce emissions and improve air quality. Programs and resources from the EPA, the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, City of Oklahoma City, etc. can be found on the [ACOG Website](#).