ITEM # 03-3-1: Public Meeting to Consider a Health Update – Ozone And Health Effects: Asthmatics

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Informational Item

DISCUSSION: Staff will update the Board on a published paper on ozone exposure and health effects in asthmatics.

SUMMARY AND IMPACTS: The impact of ozone on public health is a serious concern to health officials. The 2000 review of state ambient air quality standards – jointly conducted by ARB and the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) – ranked ozone as the second highest priority for formal reassessment and possible revision due to its effect on children and other sensitive populations. That process is currently underway, with Board consideration tentatively scheduled for the end of 2003.

Some epidemiological studies suggest that asthmatic individuals may be at greater risk of adverse effects, compared to nonasthmatics, when exposed to ambient ozone. Since most asthmatics have the allergic form of the disease, one possible explanation for the epidemiological observations is that ozone interacts in some way with allergic responses, resulting in a greater adverse response than would be induced by exposure to either ozone or allergen alone. The paper to be presented provides evidence for this hypothesis, and has implications for future standard setting because of its contribution to explaining the impact of ozone exposure on asthmatics.