



February 25, 2021

California Air Resources Board
Response to Assembly Bill 617 Community Air Protection Program – Consideration of Recommended Communities
Submitted via email to communityair@arb.ca.gov

Dear California Air Resources Board Members and Staff:

On behalf of the South Los Angeles Transit Empowerment Zone (SLATE-Z), we are thankful for the consideration of South Los Angeles for an air improvement plan that will benefit community health and well-being, and we are thankful to CARB and AQMD for prioritizing South LA. Designated a federal Promise Zone in 2016 by HUD and led by Los Angeles Trade Technical College (LATTC), SLATE-Z is a cross-sector partnership of more than 71 organizations dedicated to revitalizing South LA, by means of focusing significantly on the intersection between sustainability strategies, community health, and the social determinants of health.

To date, CARB has chosen 13 communities to benefit from the Community Air Protection Program, and for the past 3 years, South Los Angeles has been left out of this opportunity along with many other Environmental Justice communities who continue to be forced to compete with each other for AB617 resources. South Los Angeles residents are demanding long overdue solutions that can be supported by an AB617 community selection for Community Emissions Reduction Plan.

The South Los Angeles community is a historic Black community with a rich history that is also being shaped by immigration, shifts in labor markets, and housing policy that has led to economic displacement and gentrification. South LA is also a community that has been devastated by discriminatory policies and practices like redlining and environmental racism. With nearly 50% of our residents living below the federal poverty line, the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated historic racial inequities. For too long South Los Angeles has suffered the consequences of being exposed to toxic air, poor oversight by regulatory agencies, lack of enforcement on polluting industries, and lack of prioritization of community health. South LA communities are overexposed to the clustering of more than 280 facilities of concern that include oil drilling sites, auto body shops, dry cleaners, and metal manufacturing facilities. Consistent exposure to poor air quality in South LA impacts the health of residents including causing high asthma and coronary heart disease rates, low birth weight, cancer clusters, and low life expectancy.

In addition, several high vehicle capacity freeways are placed next to sensitive receptors. Community air monitors have consistently measured PM 2.5 emissions above the National annual standard level. SLATE-Z partners have leveraged opportunities brought by established and projected mass transit lines to improve community infrastructure by increasing the affordability, safety, and use of public transit. The South LA Community is ready to engage in a rigorous process to bring resources and investments to the community to improve air quality.

South LA is a resilient community when faced with deep inequality as a predominantly Black and Brown community. South LA is also a place of deep innovation and a rich tapestry of social justice organizations with a history of sophisticated, progressive, and innovative political organizing. Our community is ready to carry out a just transition centered in strong community organizing, innovative solutions, and progressive policy change. We stand in strong support for South LA to be designated as an AB617 Air Improvement Community to push for significant emissions reductions and improvements in air quality. We are thankful for the consideration and look forward to working together with CARB and the local air district to bring significant emissions reductions to South LA.