

## Houston to Los Angeles (H2LA) Local Project Advisory Group Meeting Summary

April 9, 2024

The Houston to Los Angeles (H2LA) Local Project Advisory Group met on Tuesday, April 9, 2024, in the Transportation Council Room of the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG). Most participants attended in person, but a hybrid option was provided to allow participation by a few individuals who were unable to be present. The following Local Project Advisory Group members were present: **Monique Ward** (City of Fort Worth, Manager, Communications & Public Affairs), **Camille Gilchrist** (Dallas College, Director of Data Visualization/GIS), **James Wood** (DFW Airport, Sustainability Project Manager), **Laura Freeland** (South Dallas Inland Port, Executive Director), **Temeckia Derrough** (Joppa Freedmen's Town Association, President), **Tracy Wallace** (Green Careers TX, Executive Director), **Rosa Cisneros** (City of Dallas, Climate Coordinator), **Martin Burrell** (the Burrell Group, Principal), **Chris Hooper** (Dallas County, Director, Consolidated Services), **Tony Edwards** (Tarrant College, Interim Dean of Business and Technology), **Nathan Smith** (Tarrant County Precinct 2, Policy Director), **Minesha Reese** (Dallas County, Senior Transportation Planner), **Phillip Martin** (Environmental Defense Fund, Manager, Zero Emission Truck Initiatives in Texas), and **Nick Konen** (Hillwood, Director of Strategic Development).

Others present at the meeting were: **Lori Clark** (NCTCOG, DFWCC Director & Senior Program Manager), **Jared Wright** (NCTCOG, Senior Air Quality Planner), **Joslyn Billings** (NCTCOG, Air Quality Planner), **Eden Wagner-Muns** (NCTCOG, Intern), **Maggie Quinn** (NCTCOG, Air Quality Planner), and **Eric Boria** (GTI Energy, Senior Analyst and Project Manager).

### **1. Presentation Overview:**

The kickoff meeting for the Houston to Los Angeles (H2LA) Local Project Advisory Group was held in person at the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) offices. Jared Wright from NCTCOG opened the meeting with a presentation that included background information on NCTCOG, DFW Clean Cities, GTI Energy, and the H2LA project. Eric Boria attended virtually to provide information from GTI Energy. He emphasized their interest in maximizing community benefits and mitigating negative impacts by learning from past projects that were too heavily technology focused. There is greater interest moving forward in workforce development, informed regulations, community health impacts, and avoiding adding burdens to disadvantaged communities for this and future projects.

### **2. Discussion:**

Following the presentation, Tracy Wallace from Green Careers TX raised concerns about reinforcing existing truck corridors through low-income communities that have faced environmental injustices. She suggested an "extraordinarily intentional" focus on equity from the outset, such as directly engaging low-income school districts for workforce

training. Monique Ward from the City of Fort Worth echoed being very intentional about integrating workforce programs in these communities.

There was discussion around whether transitioning existing truck routes to hydrogen is better than relocating trucking activity altogether. Laura Freeland from the South Dallas Inland Port noted some areas like DFW Airport and Coppell don't face as much community pushback and wondered if integrating things like walking paths makes a difference. Tracy Wallace summarized that "success" means not giving low-income communities further reasons to fight for their voices to be heard, and carefully considering the histories of these areas to avoid perpetuating harm.

Monique Ward raised the importance of understanding safety implications for communities during any transition phase, such as hazards from increased chemical use or impacts of bringing in outside labor instead of utilizing local workforce. Temeckia Derrough from the Joppa Freedmen's Town Association agreed with Monique's points, saying the Joppa community already has damages from energy industries that could be exacerbated. She wanted to know the safety implications of hydrogen in her already impacted community. Laura Freeland emphasized the need for community involvement, lobbying, and looking at the full holistic effects - not just swapping "bad" emissions for "good." She suggested exploring ways to better distribute truck traffic and routing.

Eric Boria acknowledged that there are many questions on the background, planning, and considerations of the H2LA project, but affirmed that these projects cannot add to existing burdens and must funnel parts of their profits into disadvantaged communities.

Nathan Smith from Tarrant County and others questioned whether hydrogen is truly the best technology for heavy trucking long-term compared to advancing batteries. Lori Clark explained that there is no clear answer now and that there is a potential to use both electric and hydrogen medium/heavy duty trucking.

Nathan Smith was also concerned about the uncertainty of hydrogen projects using blue or green hydrogen. Blue hydrogen is extracted with electricity generated from fossil fuels, but with most of the carbon emissions being captured and stored underground. Green hydrogen is extracted with electricity generated from renewables. Phillip Martin from the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) discussed the unclear climate impacts of blue hydrogen and that EDF is researching the impact of it. Lori Clark mentioned that when it comes to air quality impacts, local air quality (like ozone and fine particulate matter) and climate concerns are impacted differently by this issue. She asked if the group thought local air quality and climate concerns were of equal importance or is one more important for local community concerns than the other. The consensus for the group was that local air quality was a larger community concern compared to climate concerns.

### **3. Key Takeaways:**

- Concerns and priorities for your community:
  - o Presuming that freight deployment will stay within low-income areas

- Uncertainty about how hydrogen will be created and how that affects project locations
- Accounting for the possibility of stranded assets due to uncertainty of hydrogen as the future for medium/heavy-duty trucking
- Public, health and safety topics:
  - Curious about the safety protocols and implications when there are problems with hydrogen refueling sites
  - Existing air quality impacts to low-income communities should not be exacerbated
- Workforce needs, training, and education needed to succeed:
  - Ensure opportunities are easily accessible and integrated with existing communities, especially in low-income school districts

#### **4. Next Steps:**

The group suggested several follow-up items prior to the next meeting, which NCTCOG staff will complete.

#### **Immediate follow-ups:**

- Sending out a survey to the group to determine future meeting times and frequency.
- Include GTI Energy's future meeting topics and project summary in follow-up email.
- Include upcoming events such as the Hydrogen User Forum and DFW Clean Cities Showcase in follow-up email.
- Send out research materials provided by Phillip Martin from the Environmental Defense Fund.

#### **Recommendations for future meetings:**

- Diving deeper into specific topics like workforce needs, public health guidelines, safety protocols, etc.
- Schedule presentations from groups like Walmart on their end user trucking experience.
- Involving workforce developers, safety experts, and environmental regulators like the EPA and TCEQ was also suggested for future meetings.