



Blueprint for Clean Air (1995-1998)

I. Introduction/Background

In 1995, after successfully developing plans and programs to meet the 1990 Clean Air Act requirements, the Regional Air Quality Council (RAQC) focused on the development of the metropolitan-Denver region's first comprehensive long-range air quality plan – Blueprint for Clean Air (hereafter referred to as "Blueprint"). The plan evaluated the costs, benefits and feasibility of strategies to achieve various levels of improved air quality through 2020. The Blueprint recommended several voluntary local actions that, when combined with current programs and anticipated future federal regulation of motor vehicle emissions, would achieve several key goals:

- Keep the region in compliance with current federal health standards through 2020;
- Reduce fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) levels by 20 to 25 percent and ozone-forming pollutants by 15 to 20 percent;
- Provide a margin of safety against future violations of prospective federal health standards;
- Reduce violations of the state's visibility standard for the region by 40 to 50 percent; and
- Maintain coarse particulate matter (PM₁₀) emissions from motor vehicles at levels consistent as those achieved with the 1995 regulation.

The RAQC found that additional actions evaluated but not recommended as part of the Blueprint would be expensive and would provide limited additional air quality improvements. Given the strategies and technologies available at the time of development, the RAQC was unable to identify local actions that would eliminate the region's visibility problem, regardless of cost.

II. Stakeholders

The Blueprint process included over 300 stakeholders during the four-year process. The Technical Advisory, Market-based Incentives, Industrial and Area Sources, Mobile Sources and Fuels, Transportation and Land Use, Street Sanding and Cleaning and Public Involvement committees, which focused on specific components of the plan, met on a regular basis to discuss strategies and evaluate options. Recommendations were brought to the Board for final consideration.

III. Implementation Status and Accomplishments

The recommendations included in the Blueprint were implemented by the responsible organizations, including state agencies, local governments and private industry. Many of the recommendations also led to the formation of additional workgroups to further evaluate strategies, such as heavy-duty diesel emissions inspections and street sanding and sweeping practices. A list of the specific recommendations and implementation outcomes follows:

- Reduce uncontrolled sulfur dioxide emissions by 70% and nitrogen oxide emissions by 20% from Public Service Company's (now Xcel Energy) coal-fired, area power plants;

Outcome: Public Service Company's emissions agreement was approved by the Air Quality Control Commission (AQCC) and Public Utilities Commission in 1999.

- Improve the state's Inspection and Maintenance (I/M) program for diesel vehicles;

Outcome: The RAQC and the State's Air Pollution Control Division (APCD) worked with diesel fleets on a pilot study to evaluate a new heavy-duty diesel emissions inspection procedure. In addition, as a result of this stakeholder effort, the RAQC began working with fleets in 2003 to implement a voluntary education and retrofit program to reduce emissions from heavy-duty diesel vehicles. The RAQC has been successful in recruiting participants from school bus fleets, public work fleets, construction companies, over-the-road fleets and oil & gas fleets.

- Reduce street sanding, increase the use of alternatives to sand and/or increase sweeping to avoid increases in mobile source PM₁₀ emissions;

Outcome: In 1999, the AQCC adopted more stringent emission requirements for street sanding and paved road dust to maintain particle emissions at 1995 regulatory levels.

- Take actions to reduce vehicle travel and related emissions;

Outcome: Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG), local governments and other organizations continue to place a high priority on implementing the Metro Vision plan. Currently, 22 local jurisdictions have adopted urban growth boundaries consistent with Metro Vision. During the development of its 1999-2004 Transportation Improvement Plan, DRCOG gave additional points to transportation projects in jurisdictions that adopted urban growth boundaries.

- Establish a Governor's task force to evaluate and make recommendations on the future direction of the oxygenated fuels and light-duty vehicle I/M programs;

Outcome: In 1998, then-Gov. Romer authorized a task force to examine the programs. In 2000, the RAQC forwarded to the Governor, the General Assembly and the Air Quality Control Commission a discussion paper outlining options to improve the I/M programs. Many of the options led to the development of the RAQC's voluntary Repair Your Air Campaign in 2003 and to the State's mandatory remote sensing pilot program which began in 2006.

- Develop a carbon monoxide maintenance plan and redesignation request for the region;

Outcome: The plan was developed in 1999, approved by the AQCC in 2000, and submitted to EPA. The plan was approved by EPA in December 2001. December 2005 updates to the Plan were approved by EPA in August 2007.

- Increase efforts to reduce emissions from smoking vehicles;

Outcome: The RAQC forwarded to the General Assembly a discussion paper addressing the problem of high-emitting and smoking vehicles in the metro-Denver area. The RAQC sponsored a High Emitter Work Group which subsequently led to the development of the Repair Your Air Campaign pilot project. This pilot project uses remote sensing technology to identify high emitting vehicles and then offers assistance to repair or retire these vehicles.

In 2006, the General Assembly required that the CDPHE and DOR implement a mandatory pilot high-emitter program which terminates at the end of 2009 and the program will continue as a voluntary program. In addition to RYAC, the RAQC developed and implemented a voluntary vehicle

salvage program focused on those high-emitters that could not be repaired. High-emitters that cannot be repaired are rendered inoperable at a local salvage yard.

- Evaluate federal proposals to tighten emission standards for cars and trucks and advocate for strategies that make sense for the metro area;

Outcome: EPA finalized tighter emission standards for cars and light-duty trucks and established requirements for low-sulfur gasoline. The RAQC continues to track federal proposals.

- Take short-term, voluntary actions to guard against violations of the ozone standard; and

Outcome: Since 1999, the RAQC and APCD have worked with stakeholders to evaluate voluntary actions to reduce ozone. Beginning in 2005, the RAQC has received sizable grants to increase and enhance its outreach efforts.

- Implement voluntary and incentive programs to reduce pollution.

Outcome: The RAQC continues to work with other parties to expand implementation of voluntary and incentive programs as appropriate. In 1999, the General Assembly passed a bill providing incentives for greater use of alternative fuel vehicles. The RAQC and other organizations continue to explore options for other incentive programs, particularly relating to high-emitting and smoking vehicles. As discussed above, the RAQC has also implemented incentive-based programs to reduce emissions from diesel vehicles and high-emitting vehicles.

The Blueprint emphasizes the role of voluntary and incentive-based programs to reduce pollution from a variety of sources in the metro area. The RAQC recognizes the importance of these strategies for long-term air quality improvements and will continue to work with other parties to expand their use as deemed necessary.

IV. Resources

Reports are available on the RAQC's web site at www.RAQC.org under Archives, Reports, Select the Topic "The Blueprint for Clean Air". Additional RAQC program reports are available by Topic from the Reports page.