




air pollution control district  
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** December 23, 2025

**TO:** Community Advisory Council (CAC) Members

**FROM:** Aeron Arlin Genet, Air Pollution Control Officer 

**SUBJECT:** Community Advisory Council - Quarterly Update

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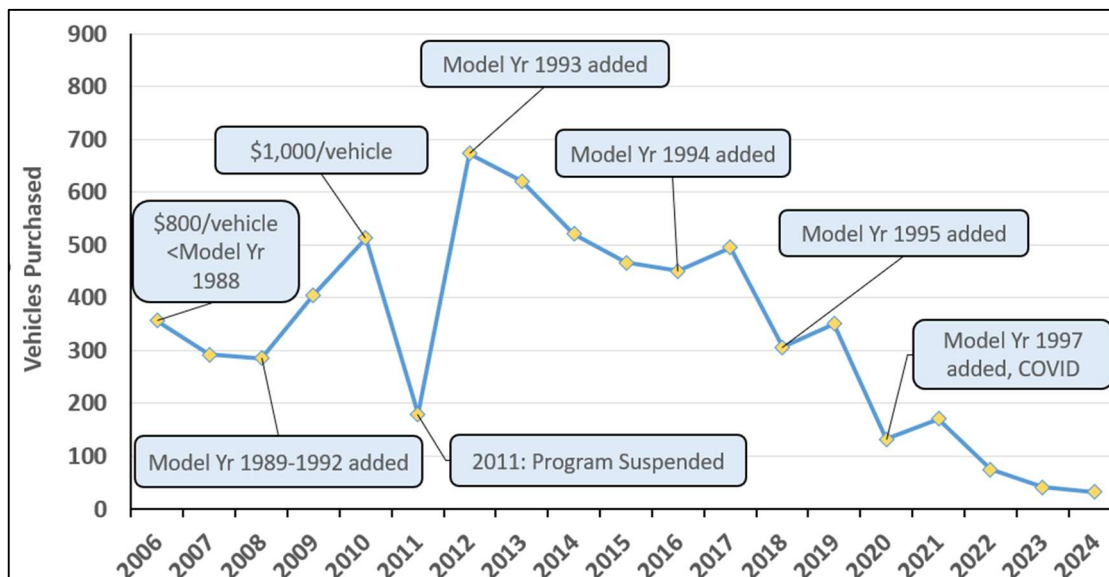
Per the Community Advisory Council (CAC) By-Laws, District staff provides quarterly updates to the CAC to maintain continuity during periods when there are no planning or rulemaking matters to discuss. The last quarterly update to the CAC occurred in September 2025, and a listing of the previous status updates can be found [here](#) on our website. The information below is provided as the quarterly status update for December 2025.

### Old Car Buy Back Program

Over the past 32 years, the District has implemented the Old Car Buy Back Program, a light-duty vehicle retirement program primarily funded through Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) surcharge fees. The program allows residents of Santa Barbara County to receive a financial incentive to voluntarily remove their older, active vehicle off the road. Since its inception, the program has retired over 8,100 vehicles and reduced an estimated 975 tons of oxides of nitrogen (NOx), reactive organic compounds (ROC), and particulate matter (PM) emissions throughout the county. The emission reductions from this program are an essential part of our strategy to attain and maintain the state ozone standard.

In August 2025, the District Board of Directors approved a major upgrade to the Old Car Buy Back Program. Under the new state guidelines, the program is now accepting model year 2002 or older vehicles and offering participants \$2,200 per vehicle. Previously, the program was limited to model year of 1997 or older vehicles, and participants were paid \$1,000. These changes significantly increased public participation while maintaining a cost-effective program, especially since the cost of used cars has increased in value in recent years. Figure 1 below illustrates the changes to the program parameters and participation rates since 2006.

**Figure 1: Historical Old Car Buy Back Participation**



To inform the public of the changes to the Old Car Buy Back Program, the District is implementing a comprehensive outreach strategy in both English and Spanish. We're collaborating with the participating dismantlers on their outreach and advertising efforts, while also performing our own promotions on the District's social media platforms. A news release was also sent to the District's extensive contact list and to news outlets. Under the new contracts with the five local auto dismantlers (located in Goleta, Lompoc, and Santa Maria), over 150 older vehicles have already been retired within the last few months. Additional updates and tracking of the program metrics will continue to be included as an administrative item for each meeting of the District's Board of Directors. More information on the District's Old Car Buy Back Program can be found on the District's website at [www.ourair.org/old-car-buy-back-program/](http://www.ourair.org/old-car-buy-back-program/).

## 2024 PM<sub>2.5</sub> NAAQS – EPA Motion for Vacatur

Particulate matter consists of fine minerals, metal, soot, smoke, and dust particles suspended in the air that can harm our heart and lungs. For health reasons, inhalable particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter (PM<sub>10</sub>), and less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) are of most concern since these small particles can permanently lodge in the deepest areas of the lungs, causing respiratory issues and other heart illnesses. To help protect the public from PM<sub>10</sub>, PM<sub>2.5</sub> and all other criteria air pollutants, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) develops and implements the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The NAAQS determine how much of each pollutant can be in the air without causing harm, and they are set at levels to protect public health, including the health of sensitive or at-risk groups. The PM<sub>2.5</sub> NAAQS consists of a 24-hour standard that addresses the short-term, acute health effects, and an annual standard that addresses the long-term, chronic health effects of breathing fine particulate matter.

In early 2024, the EPA lowered the PM<sub>2.5</sub> annual standard from 12.0 to 9.0 micrograms per cubic meter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ). Recently, in November 2025, the EPA filed a motion to vacate (nullify) the 2024 revision to the PM<sub>2.5</sub> NAAQS before the area designation deadline of February 7, 2026.

Although Santa Barbara County was expected to be in attainment with the new 2024 PM<sub>2.5</sub> NAAQS, the nullification of the 2024 standard would affect the pollutant breakpoints used to calculate the Air Quality Index (AQI). The AQI is one of EPA's user-friendly tools for communicating outdoor air quality and health impacts. It uses six color-coded categories, each corresponding to a range of index values (i.e., Green is Good, Yellow is Moderate, Orange is Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups, etc.). The higher the AQI value, the greater the level of air pollution and the greater the health concern. More information on the AQI can be found on the District's website at [www.ourair.org/todays-air-quality](http://www.ourair.org/todays-air-quality).

## **2026 Ozone Plan**

Every three years, the District is required to update our plan to attain and maintain the state 1-hour and 8-hour ozone standards. The 2026 Ozone Plan will be the eleventh triennial update to the initial state Air Quality Attainment Plan adopted by the Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District (District) Board of Directors in 1991.

We anticipate the 2026 Ozone Plan will be composed of seven chapters that address air quality trends, the emission inventory, stationary source control measures, transportation control measures, voluntary incentive programs, and attainment strategy. District staff plan to hold the next CAC meeting in the first quarter of 2026 and will be reaching out to CAC members soon to schedule a meeting date to begin the review process and discuss the 2026 Ozone Plan. District staff intend to take the 2026 Ozone Plan to the District Board for a public hearing and adoption in 2026.

This concludes the status update for this quarter. I hope you and your family enjoy a special holiday season, and I look forward to working with you in 2026. If you have any questions, please contact me ([aag@sbcapcd.org](mailto:aag@sbcapcd.org)) or Alex Economou ([aje@sbcapcd.org](mailto:aje@sbcapcd.org)).

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*The CAC's charter is to consider issues related to air pollution planning and rulemaking for which the District has jurisdiction, and to render advice to the District Board and the APCO. The CAC serves an important function by providing expertise and representation of community interests during planning and rulemaking. The CAC's advice has helped the District Board adopt plans and rules, which have contributed to improving air quality in our county, and District staff appreciate the care and consideration you show in carrying out your service. These updates are also be posted to our website at [www.ourair.org/community-advisory-council-info](http://www.ourair.org/community-advisory-council-info).*