

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM

Date: September 16, 2025

To: Honorable City Council
c/o City Clerk, Room 395
Honorable Heather Hutt, Chair, Transportation Committee
Honorable Adrin Nazarian, Chair, Energy and Environment Committee

From: Laura Rubio-Cornejo, General Manager 
Department of Transportation

Subject: **LOCAL AIR QUALITY PROGRAM**

SUMMARY

In response to Council File (CF) 25-0141, this report evaluates the feasibility of implementing a program in Los Angeles, whether geographically focused or to be implemented Citywide, modeled after New York City's 2017 Citizens Air Complaint Program.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Los Angeles City Council RECEIVE and FILE this report.

BACKGROUND

According to the American Lung Association's *State of the Air 2024* report, Los Angeles ranks as the sixth most polluted metropolitan area in the United States in terms of annual particle pollution. A significant contributor to this pollution is vehicle idling, particularly from gasoline and diesel-powered trucks and buses. Prolonged exposure to fine particulate matter (PM2.5) has been linked to increased infant mortality, cardiovascular hospitalizations, and severe asthma complications—effects disproportionately experienced by low-income communities and communities of color. The Wilmington community, located adjacent to the Port of Los Angeles (POLA), suffers from some of the highest concentrations of particulate pollutants in the region.

New York City (NYC) enacted the Citizen Air Complaint Program in 2017 to mitigate similar public health impacts. This NYC program allows trained residents to report illegally idling commercial vehicles and receive 25% of any resulting fines. The program fostered public engagement, enhanced enforcement efforts, and supported environmental justice by reducing pollution in vulnerable NYC communities.

In June 2019, Council instructed the Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA), with the assistance of the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT), the City Attorney's office, and other departments, as needed, to report with options that would grant the necessary authority to the City of Los Angeles (City) to post "No Truck Idling" signs and enforce any truck idling parking restrictions, including those that have been posted by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) (CF 19-0454). Following this report, Council directed LADOT to install and maintain "No Trucks / Bus Idling" signs at locations requested in writing from the California Air Resources Board, with concurrence of the affected Council Office.

On May 20, 2022, Council directed the City Administrative Office (CAO) with the support of LADOT, POLA, Information Technology Department, and other departments to assess and report on the feasibility of creating a community-reporting system for idling commercial vehicles, integrated into 311 or a similar online tool, similar to the NYC Citizens Air Complaint Program (CF 22-0369). The 2022 motion highlighted the negative impacts on communities near the Port, including issues like traffic congestion, noise, and pollution from diesel exhaust. It proposed exploring a community-based reporting system, similar to the program in NYC, where residents who submit video evidence of illegally idling commercial vehicles can receive a portion of the collected fine.

On March 19, 2025, Council instructed LADOT with the assistance of the POLA, Wilmington Neighborhood Council, and other stakeholders, to report on the feasibility of enacting a program in Los Angeles, similar to the NYC Citizens Air Complaint Program to address local air quality challenges (CF 25-0141).

DISCUSSION

California's existing anti-idling laws have primarily concentrated on heavy-duty vehicles, such as diesel trucks. These regulations aim to reduce emissions from the commercial freight sector, which is a significant contributor to air pollution. State anti-idling legislation also specifically targets school buses, recognizing the importance of protecting children from harmful exhaust fumes in school zones.

Compliance with these laws is carried out by several key governmental bodies, each with their own authorities and responsibilities that work in concert to regulate emissions and enforce air quality standards.

Air Quality Management Agencies

The established procedure to report air quality issues in the Los Angeles region is to contact the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and/or South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD). In the Port, air quality concerns may also be handled internally by the Port's Environmental Management Division (EMD).

California Air Resources Board (CARB)

As the state's primary air pollution control agency, CARB possesses direct enforcement authority for state-level air quality regulations, particularly concerning commercial and heavy-duty vehicles. Their enforcement actions often involve fines and penalties for non-compliance with idling limits.

CARB is also instrumental in developing and implementing statewide programs to control air pollution. Its mandate includes running campaigns to reduce commercial vehicle idling and actively encouraging residents to report instances of vehicles idling for more than five minutes. The agency actively manages campaigns to reduce commercial vehicle idling and encourages residents to report instances of commercial vehicles idling for more than five minutes that include an established enforcement mechanism for these specific categories.

CARB has several public reporting mechanisms for no-idling violations, primarily aimed at reducing harmful air pollutants from vehicles. The public can report any potential violations through the following channels:

- CARB Online Complaint Forms: CARB provides a dedicated online form for reporting idling commercial vehicles. There's also a specific online complaint form for reporting school buses or other commercial vehicles idling within 100 feet of a school.
- CARB Phone Hotlines: CARB manages several hotlines to report complaints.
 - Vehicle Complaint Hotline: The public can call 1-800-END-SMOG (1-800-363-7664) to report idling vehicles.
 - General Air Pollution Complaint Hotline: The public can also use 1-800-952-5588.
 - Off-Road Vehicle Complaints: For off-road diesel vehicles, the public can call 1-877-59DOORS (1-877-593-6677).
- CARB Email: The public can send an email to envirotip@arb.ca.gov to report a violation.

South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD)

The regional air pollution control agency is responsible for air quality in major portions of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties. SCAQMD develops and enforces rules to reduce air pollution from stationary and mobile sources, complementing CARB's statewide efforts. As such, the public reporting mechanisms for SCAQMD no-idling violations largely align with CARB's system, with some direct SCAQMD channels as well. The public can report any potential violations through the following channels:

- SCAQMD Air Quality Complaint Line: The public can call 1-800-CUT-SMOG (1-800-288-7664), a 24-hour, toll-free complaint line. This number is for reporting a wide range of air quality issues, including "extended periods of idling by trucks, trains or other equipment."
- SCAQMD Online Complaint System: The public can visit www.aqmd.gov/complaints to access their online complaint form. The public can select "SMOKE" or "OTHER (Unpermitted Business, Unregulated Sources)" as the complaint type if idling is not explicitly listed, and then provide details in the description.
- SCAQMD Smartphone App: SCAQMD offers a smartphone app that allows the public to report air quality complaints, including excessive odors, smoke, dust, or other contaminants. This is a convenient option for on-the-go reporting.

Port of Los Angeles (POLA)

For over a decade, POLA actively worked to mitigate truck idling by posting CARB "No Idling" signs throughout its jurisdiction. CARB reinforces these efforts by conducting random mobile emissions testing and maintaining a dedicated system for truck idling complaints. When the Port's EMD receives a complaint, it facilitates the reporting process by either submitting the CARB form on the complainant's behalf or directing them to the appropriate reporting channel.

Local Enforcement

The City Attorney has undertaken legal analysis to identify roles and responsibilities related to the no-idling restrictions as part of the CLA Report dated April 5, 2021 for CF 19-0454.

“No Truck/Bus Idling” restrictions are outlined in the California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 13, Chapter 10, Article 1, Sections 2480 and 2485, which prohibits the unnecessary idling of commercial vehicles and all buses, regardless of weight. This code is enforceable, with specified penalties, at any location in the State of California, with or without posted signage. In the City of Los Angeles, state codes require enforcement be carried out by SCAQMD or the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). LADOT Parking Enforcement is not legally allowed to enforce violations of this code since they are not “Peace Officers.” (See CCR Sec. 2485(f)).

On or after January 1, 2015, any person who violates any requirement of this section is subject to the penalties set forth in California Health and Safety Code Sections 39674, 39675, 42400, 42400.1, 42400.2, 42400.3, 42402, 42402.1, 42402.2, 42402.3, 42402.4, 42403.5, 42410, and 43704. (See CCR Sec. 2485(g)). Signage is not required for enforcement, but the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) provides two options for standard signs that local agencies can use if they wish to post signs for this restriction. If used, these signs are required to be placed in areas where idling commonly occurs. The sign locations are to be determined by CARB and LADOT, and installed and maintained by LADOT. LADOT works closely with POLA and CARB to install and maintain no idling signs where appropriate.

NYC Citizen Air Complaint Program

In New York State, the State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) plays a crucial role in regional outdoor air quality management. It issues Air Quality Health Advisories for the New York City Metro region and operates a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week Air Quality Hotline (800-535-1345) for public inquiries and alerts. The NYS DEC also oversees larger-scale pollution control measures and issues permits for major emission sources within New York City, thereby playing a significant role in the City's overall air quality regulation.

New York City also operates its own Citizens Air Complaint Program that allows residents to participate directly in enforcing anti-idling regulations. Through this program, citizens can anonymously report vehicles (excluding passenger cars) that idle illegally for more than three minutes, or over one minute when adjacent to a school or park. Complaints are filed via 311 or directly through the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Idling Complaint System, and require specific evidence such as time and date-stamped photos clearly showing the vehicle's license plate.

The DEP is the primary agency responsible for investigating these complaints pertaining to outdoor air quality issues and enforcing the idling violations, with citizens potentially eligible to receive 25% of the proceeds for their successful enforcement efforts. The DEP is also specifically tasked with updating and enforcing the New York City Air Pollution Control Code (Title 24, Chapter 1), which outlines regulations for emissions, equipment, fuel standards, and enforcement procedures.

As outlined in CF 19-0454, CLA Report dated April 5, 2021, “No Truck/Bus Idling” restrictions are defined in the California Code of Regulations, Title 13, Chapter 10, Article 1, Sections 2480 and 2485, which

prohibits the unnecessary idling of commercial vehicles and all buses, regardless of weight. This code is enforceable, with specified penalties, at any location in the State of California, with or without posted signage but must be enforced by either SCAQMD or Peace Officers as defined by Penal Code Section 830 et seq, which includes but is not limited to sheriffs, police officers, and port police. Should the City pursue a new program where citizens can report commercial vehicles in violation of idling regulations, similar to the program in New York City, the investigation and any subsequent enforcement action would need to be carried out by an appropriate law enforcement agency with peace officers as defined in the penal code.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no impact to the general fund with the recommendations in this report.

LRC:DM:ck