

## Houston to Los Angeles Rural Local Project Advisory Group Meeting Summary August 28, 2024

The Houston to Los Angeles (H2LA) Rural Local Project Advisory Group met on Wednesday, August 28, 2024, via Zoom. The following Local Project Advisory Group members were present: **Chris McElrath** (Hill College, Chairman of Job Training and Workforce Programs), **Shannon Ydoyaga** (Weatherford College, Executive Vice President and Chief Academic Officer), **Heath Schaaf** (Texas State Technical College, Dean of Transportation), **Marcus Balch** (Texas State Technical College, Provost), **Michael Erny** (Paris Junior College, VP of Workforce Education), **Michelle McKenzie** (Hood County Clean Air Coalition, Air Quality Program Manager), and **Susan Shifflet** (Texas Hydrogen Alliance, Executive Director).

Others present at the meeting were: **Jared Wright** (NCTCOG, Senior 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:**

Jared Wright from NCTCOG opened the meeting with a brief presentation on NCTCOG's CFI Corridor Award and an overview of the H2LA project. Following these overviews, Jared Wright presented slides with discussion questions for the group related to the meeting topic of community concerns and priorities.

### **2. Discussion:**

The meeting focused on various aspects of hydrogen fuel infrastructure, including safety concerns, community benefits, workforce development, and the future of hydrogen production and transportation.

A significant portion of the discussion revolved around the safety concerns associated with hydrogen fueling stations, particularly when they are located near populated areas or campuses. Shannon Ydoyaga from Weatherford College asked about one of NCTCOG's CFI Corridor stations in Fort Worth, specifically why it is planned to be in north Fort Worth instead of along IH-20 or IH-30. Jared Wright clarified that the proposed station near Fort Worth would be co-located with an existing truck stop near the freight area surrounding Fort Worth Alliance Airport, an area that has been interested in zero-emission trucks and other new technologies.

Heath Schaaf from Texas State Technical College (TSTC) raised concerns about the safety of workers, first responders, and surrounding buildings in the event of an incident, noting the higher risks associated with hydrogen. Eric Boria from GTI Energy responded that he has not seen anything specifically related to the safety risks of co-locating. However, he emphasized how any workforce safety concerns can be documented to the Department of Energy (DOE) and they can bring back the proper answer or information to the group. Susan Shifflet from the Texas Hydrogen Alliance added that companies are co-locating since a lot

of the necessary permitting has already been on for those locations, and that truck drivers are already familiar with going to those locations. She also referenced H2tools.org as a resource to use for finding information on hydrogen safety and suggested having someone from the Center for Hydrogen Safety present to the group at a future meeting. Susan Shiflett also noted that the Texas Railroad Commission has a Hydrogen Production Policy Council drafting a plan on how the hydrogen industry is growing and where it is headed. She encourages the group to send their concerns about hydrogen safety and interest in hydrogen training to the Railroad Commissions' Council, since that feedback can be incorporated into the plan.

The meeting also touched on community benefits and workforce development related to hydrogen initiatives. Eric Boria asked about what communities would expect from investments in hydrogen, such as reduced emissions from diesel trucks, but the group did not have any comments on this topic.

The potential for job creation and educational programs was discussed, with Shannon Ydoyaga expressing concerns about accurately forecasting job opportunities in order to see how many students they need in their program and to build a proper curriculum. She expressed concerns about a potential flooding of the job market if they do not have an estimate of jobs needed in the hydrogen industry. Jared Wright noted that NCTCOG would get back to her on this question, since those numbers may be included in NCTCOG's CFI Corridor Application. Heath Schaaf added that they will need to know what sort of indirect job training is needed, such as the additional training needed for the surrounding sensory systems on Tesla vehicles.

The group recognized the importance of including health and safety aspects in workforce training and considered expanding educational outreach to high school levels to prepare future workers. Heath Schaaf asked about the refueling process for hydrogen trucks and whether a certification is needed, since that would require additional training and education. He asked about a possible certification requirement due to being under the impression that hydrogen trucks are refueled at a very high pressure. Susan Shiflett confirmed that there is no certification needed to refuel a hydrogen truck, unlike propane. Eric Boria noted that there are a few projects testing various options for hydrogen pumps used for trucks, so currently there is a wide range of what we currently see for the pressure of hydrogen truck refueling. From here, Susan Shiflett felt that it would benefit the group to take a tour of The University of Texas at Austin's hydrogen proto-hub site, which is a test refueling laboratory. Eric Boria confirmed that this would be a great site visit for both the DFW and San Antonio Local Project Advisory Groups to coordinate to attend.

The conversation further delved into the impacts of hydrogen trucking on local corridors, with Shannon Ydoyaga noting the increase in truck traffic and associated air quality

concerns around IH-20. Eric Boria noted how hydrogen solutions can address these issues and pointed out the disparity where communities along these corridors often bear the pollution burden without necessarily benefiting from the jobs created. The group also noted that it might be better to include more community members to provide feedback on these topics. Regarding hydrogen production and transportation, Susan mentioned that most hydrogen is currently transported by trucks, with limited pipeline infrastructure.

Susan Shifflet pointed out that it may be beneficial for a truck company that is interested in hydrogen to come and speak to the group about what sort of training will be needed. Chris McElrath from Hill College raised concerns about the cost and practicality of training on hydrogen trucks, due to the benefits and risks of hands-on training versus the use of expensive simulators. His experience with electric vehicle simulators, due to the safety risks of doing hands-on training for electric vehicles, but it has been that it can be very expensive. Thus, he wanted to know if it would be a similar experience for hydrogen vehicles. Heath Schaaf added that TSTC is always looking for sponsors or collaborators, and in this case it would be for figuring out what is needed to build or work on hydrogen trucks.

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

- Concerns and priorities:
  - o The safety implications of co-locating hydrogen refueling stations and the potential reaction with a gasoline station if something were to go wrong, as well as co-locating near neighborhoods.
  - o Concerns about the safety of co-locating and general workforce safety can be communicated to the Department of Energy and the Texas Railroad Commission's Hydrogen Production Council for their upcoming state plan on hydrogen production oversight (<https://www.rrc.texas.gov/news/121423-rrc-begins-planning-and-oversight-with-newly-established-texas-hydrogen-production-policy-council/>).
  - o The number of jobs that hydrogen refueling stations will produce needs to be clarified for the purpose of creating educational programs that have an appropriate number of students in the program.
  - o The practicality of training on hydrogen trucks is another topic of concern, so it would be beneficial to the group to have a truck company interested in hydrogen speak to the group on this topic.

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

- The third H2LA Rural Local Project Advisory Group Meeting is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, November 6 from 2-3:30pm.
- NCTCOG will check the workforce solutions sections of their CFI Corridor application and bring any relevant information back to the group.
- NCTCOG will coordinate with Susan Shifflet to schedule a site visit of The University of Texas at Austin's test refueling laboratory and send an interest survey out to the group.

- The group suggested that NCTCOG invite more rural community members to the group.