



---

July 27, 2018

**For immediate release**

Contact: Sheila Storm, (520) 495-1451

## **Continued high summer ozone levels could trigger costly nonattainment for region**

If ozone concentrations continue to be at elevated levels in the Tucson metropolitan area this summer as reported by the Pima County Department of Environmental Quality, the region could be designated a "nonattainment" area. This potential designation would make it harder for the region to spend federal dollars for needed transportation projects unless improvements in air quality are made, according to Pima Association of Governments.

The region's ground-level ozone levels hovered near the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's 2008 standards (.075 parts per million) in prior years, but with the more protective 2015 EPA standards, (0.070 parts per million), the ozone concentrations have exceeded the standard's level three times so far this summer. One more exceedance this year could trigger the nonattainment designation.

"If our region is designated a nonattainment area, it will be a very difficult and costly process to bring the region back to attainment status," said PAG Senior Air Quality Planner Sue Cotty. "Motor vehicles are a major source of emissions. Regional planning efforts to improve traffic flow at congested intersections and reduce vehicle idling, such as at drive-throughs and parking areas, can reduce air pollution. Using alternative transportation modes, such as carpooling or riding the bus, or combining errands in one trip, will help to lower vehicle emissions. It is important for everyone to take steps to help keep our air healthy."

PAG has seen a growing, delicate balance between congestion management, safety improvements and air quality requirements, and the new ozone standards emphasize the importance of planning and regional collaboration in addressing this issue.

"In the meantime, it is critical that we monitor traffic patterns on our transportation network to identify ways to continuously improve traffic flow and reduce congestion at the intersections, which will greatly benefit regional air quality," said PAG Transportation Planning Director Paul Casertano.

For more information about ozone, visit [PimaCleanAir.com](http://PimaCleanAir.com).

*Pima Association of Governments is an association of local, state and tribal governments with a mission to build consensus among its members and the public on regional planning for transportation, watershed, air quality and economic vitality. Please visit [www.PAGregion.com](http://www.PAGregion.com) or [www.facebook.com/PAGregion](https://www.facebook.com/PAGregion) for more information.*