



# Memorandum

**TO:** RULES AND OPEN  
GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

**FROM:** Kerrie Romanow

**SUBJECT:** SEE BELOW

**DATE:** March 27, 2019

Approved

*D. D. Syl*

Date

*3/29/19*

**SUBJECT: GASOLINE-POWERED LAWN EQUIPMENT REPLACEMENT PROGRAMS AND FUNDING**

## RECOMMENDATION

Accept the report on Gasoline-Powered Lawn Equipment Replacement Programs and Funding.

## BACKGROUND

During the discussion on, Update on Climate Smart Activities, at the October 30, 2018, City Council meeting (Item 7.1), Council requested that staff:

- (1) Research a buy-back program for gasoline-powered lawn equipment as well as funding opportunities via grants from the state's cap-and-trade program or other programs, and
- (2) Return to the Rules & Open Government Committee with preliminary findings for consideration of placing the item on the Transportation & Environment Committee work plan.

In both 2014 and 2017, as part of the City's Council Priority Setting, the San José City Council considered exploring a ban on gasoline-powered leaf blowers, due to their potential adverse effects on health, but did not ultimately rank this item as a priority. A similar issue, expanded to include all gasoline-powered lawn equipment, was once again considered during the most recent 2019 Council Policy Priority Setting Session, but was not prioritized for the administration to pursue.

## **ANALYSIS**

Gasoline-powered lawn equipment (e.g., lawn mowers and leaf blowers) create local air pollution through the burning of fossil fuels. Furthermore, gasoline-powered lawn equipment present health risks for landscape workers by exposing them to ultrafine particles and potential hearing damage due to related noise. They also present a risk to the environment and community, with the potential to spill gasoline during operation and refueling.

The following cities in Santa Clara County have bans on gasoline-powered leaf blowers: Sunnyvale, Los Gatos, Los Altos, Palo Alto, and Mountain View. The primary intent of these bans is focused on mitigating the associated health effects from noise pollution and particulate matter. There are currently no cities in Santa Clara County with bans on gasoline-powered lawn mowers.

### ***Historical Replacement (aka “Buy-Back) Programs***

In the past, Bay Area communities have had access to push lawn mower exchange (gas to electric) programs funded by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. Staff contacted the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, who indicated that there were no plans in the near future to open another round of funding for exchange programs. However, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District does have a program available to public agencies called the Commercial Lawn and Garden Equipment Exchange Program that fully funds the purchase of new zero-emission, battery-powered equipment in exchange for the scrapping of gas-powered equipment, including leaf blowers. The Commercial Lawn and Garden Equipment Exchange Program is first-come, first-served until funds are fully exhausted.

### ***Other Potential Funding Opportunities***

Staff researched other potential funding sources for a gasoline-powered lawn equipment buy-back and/or exchange program:

- **California Air Resources Board (CARB):** In 2020, CARB will consider new emission standards to achieve additional reductions from small engines to help California meet its goal of reducing smog-forming pollutant emissions from mobile sources by 80 percent by 2031. Significant emission reductions will be achieved through a combination of regulatory and incentive approaches, and a major shift to zero-emission electric equipment will be needed to meet the 80 percent reduction goal. This may result in some additional CARB funding opportunities in or around 2020.
- **State of California 2018–2019 Cap-and-trade funds:** The state’s budget spending plan includes \$1.4 billion in discretionary investments in climate adaptation, research, wildfire prevention, and several other programs. The recent Cap-and-trade Auction Proceeds Third Investment Plan: Fiscal Years 2019-20 through 2021-22 identifies current funding priorities and future opportunities to continue creating an equitable, sustainable future. Among its many funding priorities, CARB has allocated \$367 million for Community Air

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Protection Program grants and the Funding Agricultural Replacement Measures for Emissions Reduction Program. A small portion of those funds cover the existing lawn mower exchange program and emission reduction strategies, but no funds were specifically identified for creating a commercial and/or residential lawn equipment exchange program.

- **San Jose Clean Energy:** The successful launch of San Jose Clean Energy has the potential to generate funding to support programs such as energy efficiency, fuel switching, and demand reduction. After the financial stabilization of San Jose Clean Energy, the department will evaluate opportunities for public participation to reduce the use of gasoline-powered lawn equipment and transition to new, electric models.

A residential and/or commercial gasoline-powered lawn equipment buy-back or exchange program would align with Climate Smart San José goals and, more importantly, provide health benefits to the community, including reduced local air, ground, water, and noise pollution. The Council-approved Climate Smart Plan, and supported through the Bloomberg grant program, used extended cost benefit analysis to identify and prioritize the programs and initiatives that reduce the most carbon for the least cost. Staff will continue to focus on these workplan priorities to move the City toward its aggressive climate goals, while keeping an eye on leveraging any opportunistic initiatives or funding that may be leveraged to benefit the Climate Smart Plan.

/s/

Kerrie Romanow

Director of Environmental Services

For questions, please contact Cynthia Comerford, Climate Smart Deputy Director, at (408) 975-2548.