Chapter 2c: Just Transition

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Why We Need a Just Transition

Vision for South Los Angeles

South Los Angeles is a vibrant community where community residents and organizations are hungry for transformative change that can reverse the impacts of racialized decision making. The communities of South LA face interlocking health, environmental, housing and economic injustices that are shaping their individual and community health.¹ People living in South Los Angeles zip codes live on average 8-12 years less than people living in Bel Air.² Residents experience higher rates of asthma, heart disease, low birth weight, and cancer as compared to their wealthier neighbors in West and North Los Angeles.³ A key demand from our communities is a community where residents can live, work, play, pray and thrive individually and collectively. The AB 617 community process to develop this CERP offers an opportunity to address the pervasiveness of industrial pollution from the perspective of public health by tapping into the creativity, and innovation that exists in the area.

This chapter is written by the co-leads in an attempt to begin a serious conversation on how we can simultaneously improve air quality, support green and just economic development and promote pollution prevention. Reducing pollution burden and cumulative stressors, and addressing racism as a public health crisis is essential to protecting already overburdened communities.⁴ According to CalEnviroScreen, South Los Angeles census tracts score in the top 5-10% of census tracts that are disproportionately burdened by multiple sources of industrial pollution, including hazardous waste generators and contaminated tracts of land.⁵ A growing body of literature demonstrates that "health disparities found among communities of racial or ethnic minorities and those of low socioeconomic status" are "not attributable to biological

¹ Gonzalez, D.J.X., Nardone, A., Nguyen, A.V. *et al.* Historic redlining and the siting of oil and gas wells in the United States. *J Expo Sci Environ Epidemiol* (2022). <u>https://doi.org/10.1038/s41370-022-00434-9</u>

² Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. (2013). Health atlas for the City of Los Angeles. Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. <u>https://planning.lacity.org/odocument/7f065983-ff10-4e76-</u>

³ Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. (2013). Health atlas for the City of Los Angeles. Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. <u>https://planning.lacity.org/odocument/7f065983-ff10-4e76- 81e5-</u> <u>e166c9b78a9e/Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles.pdf</u>

⁴ National Academies of Sciences. (2017). The state of health disparities in the United States. National Academies Press (US); 2017 Jan 11. 2. <u>https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK425844/</u>

⁵ CalEnviroScreen 3.0 indicators: <u>https://oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen/indicators</u>

factors" alone but can be explained by social and environmental contributors.⁶ For instance, a study suggests that environmental factors account for 30% of the total childhood asthma burden in California, but in places where pollution is acute, they could be responsible for up to 41% of that burden.⁷ Exposure to multiple pollution sources and social stressors further compounds health disparities. In addition, the current COVID-19 pandemic has revealed and increased the urgent need for improved air quality and health protections. Research links industrial pollution exposure to significant health impacts, including low birth-weight, heart attack, stroke, and the development of chronic diseases such as asthma, cancers, learning disabilities, and reproductive problems and now heightened mortality for COVID-19.⁸ Sensitive receptors, such as overexposed low-income and communities of color, children, pregnant women, and seniors are most at risk of long-term exposure to air pollution and are more likely to develop or exacerbate chronic diseases such as asthma.⁹

The combined environmental health impacts with other social and economic burdens results in residents being less able to cope with disease and thus further exacerbating health inequities. In addition to environmental health disproportionate impacts, South LA residents face a great deal of stress due to economic hardship, lack of economic development opportunities, and a high rate of unemployment. In 2015, 34% of South LA residents were living below the federal poverty line, almost double the rate in Los Angeles County (18%).¹⁰ South LA residents today have a median personal income of \$14,347, compared to over \$30,000 for LA County.¹¹ The post-Recession unemployment rate that year was 14% in South LA, the highest among all service planning areas in Los Angeles. Residents face systematic barriers to full employment, which include: limited English proficiency, lack of driver's license or citizenship, lack of education, lack of transportation, and racial discrimination.¹² South LA workers are also often excluded from advancement in key growth sectors as well as clean and green jobs that can significantly support clean air, environmental justice, and economic justice goals.

⁶ Negussie, A, and Geller A, Y. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine; Health and Medicine Division. Baciu Communities in Action: Pathways to Health Equity. Washington (DC): the National Academies Press (US); 2017 Jan 11. 2, The State of Health Disparities in the United States. Available from: <u>https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK425844/</u>

⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2013). Asthma in California a surveillance report. California Department of Public Health. <u>https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DEODC/EHIB/CPE/CDPH%20</u> <u>Document%20Library/Asthma in California 2013.pdf</u>

⁸ Xiao, W., Nethery R.C., Sabath B.M., Braun D., Dominici F. (2020). Exposure to air pollution and COVID-19 mortality in the United States: a nationwide cross-sectional study. MedRxiv. Article 04.05.20054502. <u>https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.04.05.20054502</u>

⁹ Peden, D.B. (2020). Pollutants and asthma: role of air toxics. Environmental Health Perspectives 110, no. Suppl 4 (August 2002): 565–68.

¹⁰ Scott, M. E. (2011). Voices from Los Angeles: barriers to good jobs and the role of the public sector. Retrieved from Strategic Concepts in Organizing & Policy Education website: <u>http://scopela.org/our-work/research/</u>

¹¹<u>https://censusreporter.org/profiles/79500US0603751-los-angeles-county-south-central-la-city-south-central</u>

¹² Institute for Applied Economics. (2017). Economic update for Los Angeles County. Retrieved from Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation website: <u>https://www.laedc.org/tag/economic-update/</u>

A key issue that emerged in the South LA AB617 Community Steering Committee is the need to balance between cleaning up the air and ensuring economic development. Creative and collective community-driven solutions that are centered in a transformative public health approach that seeks to prevent pollution, improve healthy economic development, and create green and clean workforce opportunities. Building a path towards a healthy and green economy through community-driven solutions means we must first address the economic conditions of South LA that are marked by a history of racial discriminatory practices from redlining that led to the over siting of industries in the community and community disinvestment.¹³ The South LA economy is characterized by limited public services and infrastructure spending, entrenched poverty conditions, and the expansion of exploitative practices, such as pay-day lending and low-wage, part-time work.¹⁴ These limiting economic conditions are also further exacerbated by the inequitable distribution of the benefits of growing green jobs and new clean economy opportunities.¹⁵

There is an urgent need to address these cumulative issues with investments in supporting local sustainable economic growth, small businesses, and a transition to green jobs. Healthier and more sustainable forms of workforce development opportunities are growing in the energy industry sector that are becoming increasingly available and accessible. However, these opportunities in the green and healthier economy focus mainly on the energy sector. It is important that these opportunities of clean and green jobs are expanded to a more diverse set of businesses including small business owners and a larger population of workers.¹⁶ Expanding on the concept of green jobs to a wide array of hazardous industries and other sectors can ensure more economic opportunities are available to workers. To achieve a healthy and green economy that does not burden the health of workers and communities, we must create opportunities for workers, small businesses, and industries who might lack the job experience or educational opportunities necessary to access green jobs can develop the skills necessary to own a small green cleaning business or become a sustainable industry. Expanding access to workers and businesses to educational opportunities and adequate training to implement green and clean production practices can significantly address the disproportionate economic and environmental health hardships South LA residents and workers face today.

Based on the community insights gathered through the AB617 South LA Community Steering Committee (CSC), and the economic and health brudens South LA residents and workers experience daily, it is clear that to achieve air quality improvements we must combine a number

¹³ Pulido, L. (2016). Flint, environmental racism, and racial capitalism, Capitalism Nature Socialism, 27(3), 1-16. doi: 10.1080/10455752.2016.1213013

¹⁴ Scott, M. E. (2011). Voices from Los Angeles: barriers to good jobs and the role of the public sector. Retrieved from Strategic Concepts in Organizing & Policy Education website: <u>http://scopela.org/our-work/research/</u>

¹⁵ https://southlaisthefuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/SouthCentralRootedFullReport.pdf

¹⁶ Avis, E., and Zabin, C. (2013). Training for the future: workforce development for a 21st century utility workforce. Retrieved from UCLA Labor Center website: http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/pdf/2013/training_future13.pdf

of strategies and approaches that aim at achieving both health equity and economic justice. One of these approaches is developing and implementing Just Transition strategies that promote the implementation of Best Available Control Technologies process changes and innovations in clean production strategies. The South LA AB 617 Community Emissions Reduction Plan (CERP) development and implementation is key for addressing air pollution burden in South LA and creating a path towards emissions reductions, health protections, and a Just Transition.

Multiple Definitions of The Just Transition and SLA Definition

The Just Transition framework first emerged from labor unions and environmental justice groups who recognized the need to phase out harmful industries while at the same time providing just pathways for workers in those industries to transition to other high road jobs and careers.¹⁷ The Just Transition framework provides a platform for communities to work together with industries to develop strategies that address environmental health issues and create cleaner and safer industries. The framework has evolved over the years and its definition has changed to meet the needs of the current political climate. Some existing definitions that the environmental justice movement refers to are:

As defined by the Just Transition Alliance, Just Transition is a principle, a process and a practice. "The Just Transition process for achieving a healthy economy should be a fair one that should not cost workers or community residents their health, environment, jobs, or economic assets. Any losses should be fairly compensated. And the practice of just transition means that the people who are most affected by pollution — the frontline workers and fence-line communities should be in the leadership of crafting policy solutions."¹⁸

As defined by the Climate Justice Alliance, Just Transition is a vision-led, unifying and place-based set of principles, processes, and practices that build economic and political power to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy. "This means approaching production and consumption cycles holistically and waste-free. The transition itself must be just and equitable; redressing past harms and creating new relationships of power for the future through reparations. If the process of transition is not just, the outcome will never be. Just Transition describes both where we are going and how we get there."¹⁹

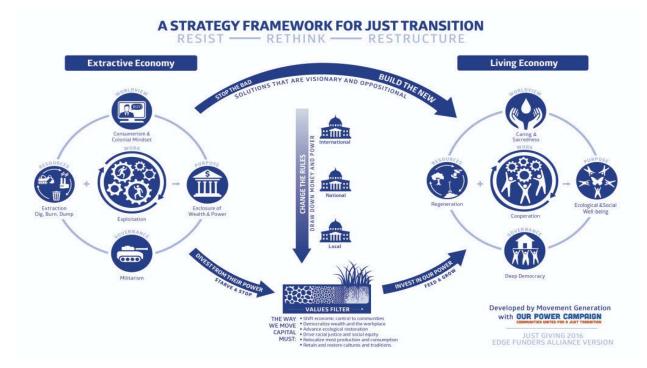
In addition, a Just Transition framework was further defined and framed by the Movement Generation organization that defined the process as: "shifting from dirty energy to energy democracy, from funding highways to expanding public transit, from incinerators and landfills to zero waste, from industrial food systems to food sovereignty, from gentrification to community

¹⁷ Spanne, A. (2021, June 30). *Just transition: History, principles, and examples*. Treehugger. Retrieved May 13, 2022, from <u>https://www.treehugger.com/just-transition-history-principles-and-examples-5190469</u>

¹⁸What is just transition? Just Transition Alliance. (2022, February 26). Retrieved May 13, 2022, from https://jtalliance.org/what-is-just-transition/

¹⁹Just transition. Climate Justice Alliance. (2022, February 14). Retrieved May 13, 2022, from https://climatejusticealliance.org/just-transition/

land rights and from rampant development to ecosystem restoration. Workers and communities impacted first and worst must lead the transition to ensure it is just."²⁰



Just Transition Framework developed by Movement Generation²¹

All of the above-mentioned definitions have shaped our own concept of a Just Transition for South Los Angeles. For the AB617 South LA community co-leads the concept of a Just transition means a transition away from our fossil fuel dependent and extractive economy towards one that is regenerative and centered in protecting the health of both workers and communities first. Key to this Just Transition is addressing the disproportionate environmental harms and burdens environmental justice communities face and providing these same communities opportunities to benefit first from new clean, greener, and healthier jobs. This complete transition is an opportunity for South LA communities to have access to the environmental, health, and economic benefits of future clean and green jobs as part of this new regenerative economy. The principles of a Just Transition are embedded in our vision for transforming air quality and community health in South Los Angeles and our goals for ensuring that a healthy economy and a clean environment can and should co-exist.²²

²⁰ Movement Generation Justice & Ecology Project. Movement Generation. (n.d.). Retrieved May 13, 2022, from https://movementgeneration.org/movement-generation-just-transition-framework-resources/

²¹ Movement Generation Justice & Ecology Project. Movement Generation. (n.d.). Retrieved May 13, 2022, from https://movementgeneration.org/movement-generation-just-transition-framework-resources/

²² Darren McCauley, Raphael Heffron, Just transition: Integrating climate, energy and environmental justice, Energy Policy, Volume 119, 2018, Pages 1-7, ISSN 0301-4215, <u>https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2018.04.014</u>.

Green Economy and Safer Alternatives

To effectively reduce harmful emissions in highly polluted communities we need to identify, require, incentivize, and implement regulations and innovative rules that can advance Best Available Control Technologies (BACT) and emissions reduction technologies. We must also focus on clean production and process change strategies and best practices to support pollution prevention and emissions reductions activities. We also need to ensure that we are promoting the cleanest, safest and least toxic emission control technologies and practices that can help industries reduce emissions and be better neighbors. The safer alternatives and best practices approach to production, along with smarter economic policies, can be the pillars for a healthier and more successful green economy.²³ Solving the complex health and environmental problems of our day are inextricably linked to strengthening local economies, greening production with safer alternatives, and establishing strong trust-based relationships among industries, workers, and community members.

Good Neighbor Agreements

South LA is a community clustered with many small industries, businesses, and high-volume traffic highways that are sources of air pollution and are contributing to cumulative impacts and heightened exposure to harmful pollution linked to adverse health outcomes. To build a stronger movement for a green and healthier economy in South LA, we need to start including a more diverse set of businesses and a larger population of workers in the development of solutions to reduce pollution and address environmental harms. Workers and small businesses who might lack the job experience or educational opportunities necessary to access green jobs or to develop the skills necessary to own a small green cleaning business, should be provided with the opportunity to become a sustainable business and leaders on safer alternatives and clean production. This is particularly important for our Just Transition vision for South La, that as we are strengthening local economies we are building relationships bridges between industries and communities that are based on solidarity and on centering health first for all.

In order to accomplish that, communities, workers, unions, and the labor force should work together to forge a path to reduce harmful exposures, enhance economic development, and create healthier and sustainable communities. For that, we refer to the development of Good Neighbor Agreements that can establish interaction guidelines among industries and communities as well as accountability metrics for implementing best practices that can contribute to emissions reduction and health protection measures.

Good neighbor agreements are instruments that provide a vehicle for communities and industries to recognize and formalize their roles in the community in a way that fosters community health, safety, sustainable development, and economic growth.²⁴ Through the AB617

²³ Attar, Kathy. Molecules to Movement Physicians for Social Responsibility - Los Angeles. (2011) <u>https://www.psr-la.org/from-molecules-to-movements-a-recap/</u>

²⁴ Lewis, S., and Henkels, D. (1996). Good Neighbor Agreements: A Tool For Environmental and Social Justice. Social Justice, 23(4 (66)), 134–151. <u>http://www.jstor.org/stable/29766980</u>

CSC, community members and industry representatives can undergo an iterative process to define these agreements on a consensus basis. Some examples of these agreements include:

- Community access to information
- Communities can request facilities inspections based on concerns
- Industries should develop emergency response plans that are vetted by the community
- Industries should develop a pollution prevention plans that are vetted by the community

The AB617 South LA co-leads believe that a Just Transition for facilities of concern cannot occur without trust and strong agreements. In order to achieve the principles of a Just Transition in industries, small businesses, and facilities of concern, South LA communities must first forge a relationship with the regulated community that is based on trust and achieving a common goal: healthier communities for all.

SLA Just Transition Project Examples – AB 617 Incentive Funds

We propose the following Just Transition potential projects for South LA that can help us further our vision for cleaning up the air and ensuring economic and environmental justice for the community.

A Just Transition Pilot Project for SLA Dry Cleaners

Background

Located in South LA there are approximately more than 50 hydrocarbon dry cleaners that are all regulated by SCAQMD due their adverse air emissions. These facilities also generate avoidable hazardous waste, create avoidable fire risk, generate avoidable excess energy demand. The majority of dry cleaners in South Central LA use Perchloroethylene (PERC) for their chemical-based dry-cleaning process. The California Air Resources Board passed a regulation to phase out PERC by 2020.²⁵ As PERC is being phased out, dry cleaners are being pushed to use other alternatives. The remaining dry cleaners are using hydrocarbons as a transition, which in addition to being combustible, has also been a source of air and water pollution.

Pollution Burden and Health Impacts

Perchlorethylene (PERC) is a source of significant groundwater contamination and is a hazardous air pollutant that is contributing to the development of chronic diseases in sensitive populations. Short-term: Breathing high levels of (PERC) for a short time can cause: dizziness, drowsiness, headache, nausea and vomiting, lack of coordination, irritation of the eyes and respiratory tract. Long-term: The health impacts may include cancer.²⁶

²⁵ California Air Resources Board. Phase Out of Perchloroethylene from the Dry Cleaning Process | California Air Resources Board. (n.d.). Retrieved May 16, 2022, from <u>https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/our-work/programs/phase-out-perchloroethlyene-dry-cleaning-process</u>

²⁶ Environmental Protection Agency. (n.d.). EPA. Retrieved May 16, 2022, from <u>https://www.epa.gov/stationary-sources-air-pollution/risk-assessment-perchloroethylene-dry-cleaners-refined-human-health</u>

Regrettable Substitutions

The hydrocarbon dry cleaning alternative has not been classified as a non-toxic alternative. While hydrocarbons are toxic and explosive, it continues to be falsely advertised as an environmental or eco-friendly product causing many small dry cleaners owned by mostly immigrants and people of color to switch to hydrocarbons toxic and harmful alternatives. Most South Los Angeles dry cleaners have switched from PERC to hydrocarbon based solvents machines. Given that Professional Wet Cleaning is a zero-emission, non-combustible, energy-efficiency, non-hazardous waste generating technology with operating costs that are lower than solvent-based dry cleaning, the transition from PERC to hydrocarbon is a regrettable substitution.

Best Available Control or Emission Reduction Technologies

A preliminary assessment of the available emissions reduction technologies using SCAQMD criteria to identify the most stringent NonToxic Alternative demonstrated that Professional Wet Cleaning is a best alternative technology.²⁷ This assessment is supported by the 2005 California Air Resources Board (CARB) classification of Professional Wet Cleaning as nontoxic and non-smog forming alternatives based on their relatively benign human health, environmental, and physical property hazard profile.²⁸

Non-Toxic Alternatives

Professional Wet Cleaning is a dry-cleaning technology that uses water-based detergents. CO2 Dry Cleaning is a dry-cleaning technology that uses CO2 as a cleaning solvent. Since this CO2 is captured from recycled sources, it is also considered an environmentally-preferable alternative.

Just Transition and South Coast AQMD

Many of the policies and actions of the SCAQMD can support the advancement of the goals of a Just Transition Plan. For example, the specific policies and procedures SCAQMD has developed for the classification of Best Available Control Technology are designed to specifically reduce emissions of harmful air emissions to the maximum extent possible, and explicitly include the use of pollution prevention approaches which have the potential to eliminate harmful air emissions altogether.

Another clear example of actions that have been taken by the SCAQMD to advance the goals of a Just Transition was the leadership SCAQMD took in promoting the commercial viability of Professional Wet Cleaning as a zero-emission pollution prevention approach to dry cleaning. In 2000, the same year that SCAQMD instituted BACT, the agency funded a project to provide incentive funds designed to convert the first set of dry cleaners using the toxic chemical PERC to Professional Wet Cleaning. Findings from this project were published in a peer review paper coauthored by SCAQMD demonstrating the commercial viability of Professional Wet Cleaning.

²⁷ Ceballos, Diana M. Perchloroethylene and Dry Cleaning: It's Time to Move the Industry to Safer Alternatives. Frontiers in Public Health. 9 (2021) <u>https://www.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fpubh.2021.638082</u> <u>DOI=10.3389/fpubh.2021.638082</u> ISSN=2296-2565

²⁸ California Air Resources Board. Non-Toxic Dry Cleaning Grant Program (AB998) | California Air Resources Board. (n.d.). Retrieved May 16, 2022, from <u>https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/resources/documents/non-toxic-dry-cleaning-grant-program-ab998</u>

AB 617 Incentive Funds for SLA Dry Cleaners Just Transition Project

A potential Just Transition project for dry cleaners in South LA is to utilize AB617 incentive funds towards creating a Professional Wet Cleaning training and Just Transition center. The incentive funds will support one South LA dry cleaners to replace their hydrocarbons solvent based machines to use professional wet cleaning technology. It will also allow this dry cleaner to create a transition training site for workers and fellow dry cleaner owners to learn about the technology, how it operates, how to install it, and how it benefits the health of both workers and communities. This pilot project will create an initiative that can build a path for South LA garment workers and family-owned dry cleaners to have the opportunity to truly learn about safer chemical-free alternatives, how to use incentives funds to transition, and benefit the communities around.

PSR-LA, through its SCLA-PUSH project funded by the AB617 Community Air Protection Grants, identified South LA dry cleaners that can potentially transition to using a non-toxic/non-hazardous Professional Wet Cleaning and use the facility as a demonstration site to educate fellow cleaners about the viability of Professional Wet Cleaning. The SCLA-PUSH project partnered with a Los Angeles-based AQUA WET CLEAN, a dedicated service provider for Professional Wet Cleaning, to identify a South LA cleaner using PERC or Hydrocarbons based solvents willing to convert to Professional Wet Cleaning and service as a demonstration site.

In June 2021, AQUA outreached to Monica's Dry Cleaners, a Latino owned dry cleaner located in the heart of South Los Angeles. PSR-LA worked with AQUA to develop an agreement for Monica's Dry Cleaners process of converting to Professional Wet Cleaning and becoming a demonstration site that can help with training for other dry cleaners.

The AB617 South LA Incentive funds will be used to cover the costs, as specified on the AQUA/Monica's agreement for removing the hydrocarbon dry cleaning machine from Monica's, install a professional wet cleaning system, complete initial training in professional wet cleaning, cover the cost of a three-year equipment lease, and carry out Professional Wet Cleaning demonstration activities over a three years period including – hosting ongoing demonstration of professional wet cleaning to fellow commercial apparel care cleaners, hosting individual site visits, and hosting training sessions for cleaners making a transition to Professional Wet Cleaning.

Completing this transition and beginning demonstrations at Monica's is essential to showcasing what a successful Just Transition initiative in South LA can look like. This Just Transition model for Dry Cleaners can support the overall AB617 goals to reduce emissions in the community by moving Dry cleaners away from their dependence on toxic chemicals and petroleum based solvents to safer and cleaner alternatives that can create significant benefits to workers/owners, the community, and the environment. Some initiatives for the CERP actions and Just Transition Case Study are:

California-based regulatory initiatives (e.g., classifying Professional Wet Cleaning as Best Available Control Technology for dry cleaning).

Broadening California's non-toxic dry clean incentive program to include fees on the full range of toxic/hazardous dry clean solvents including hydrocarbons.

Creating financial instruments to make the switch to best available technologies affordable.

Auto Body Shops Just Transition Training Pilot Project

Auto Body and repair shops is another sector that has the opportunity to support small businesses in the implementation of safer and best practices that can reduce community and workers' exposure to harmful pollution. Programs such as the Boston Health Auto Body Shop and the Safer Auto Body Shop projects in Massachusetts.²⁹ These programs can serve as a model for working directly with Auto Body shops to develop a more proactive and holistic appraoch that can support businesses in transitioning to using best practices and reducing their emissions. These new innovative models and approaches to increase compliance among AutoBody shops as well as implementation of pollution prevention practices can support AB617 goals in South LA. These programs are designed to help regulatory agencies build relationships with Auto Body shops, which are often hard to reach businesses, to implement community driven compliance goals. These programs provide training and demonstrations on how to achieve compliance with SCAQMD rules and implement pollution prevention and other best management practices.

The implementation of a more proactive approach to outreach, compliance, and enforcement that uplifts the principles of a Just Transition, Green Alternatives, and Good Neighbor Agreements can ensure businesses, workers, and communities are engaging in a process that aims at transforming the state of air quality in South LA. The goals of the Boston and Massachusetts Auto Body Shop Programs can help SCAQMD engage with the regulated business in a way that promotes use of best practices and creates a path towards active compliance and air quality improvements.

²⁹ The Massachusetts Clean Auto Repair (masscar) guide. Mass.gov. (n.d.). Retrieved May 13, 2022, from https://www.mass.gov/guides/the-massachusetts-clean-auto-repair-masscar-guide