Air Quality Mapping in Sacramento Communities Using a Research-Grade Mobile Platform

Quality Assurance Report

Project Quality Assurance

The project team implemented a comprehensive multi-step quality assurance (QA) process to ensure high quality air quality measurements were collected for robust data analysis. This was comprised of several components, including:

- Pre-and post-study verification and calibration checks, including flow checks,
- Primary ongoing zero and span checks,
- Comparisons of measured values between the Bercut station analyzers and mobile platform analyzers,
- Post-study assessment of AROMA check standard, and
- Assessment of data set completeness

The protocol was mostly consistent with the steps identified in the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) submitted to the District. However, some of the quality control (QC) check frequencies were reduced to offset real-world challenges encountered during the study, and so that the volume of data collected during the campaign could be maximized. Some of these challenges included significant loss in the measurement campaign window due to adverse weather conditions and instrument issues. Additionally, the final community driving plan was significantly longer than the original plan (179-193 daily miles, as compared to original proposed mileage of 120-150 unique miles). Since the project had the desired objective of completing the entire driving route every day (where possible) for a consistent intercomparison of all community grid cells, the measurement team focused on maximizing data collection in lieu of achieving regulatory-level QA/QC that is typically reserved for regulatory monitoring. Furthermore, the collective multi-phase quantitative and qualitative reviews suggest that there was minimal drift in the mobile platform instruments.

Given that the project was focused on analyzing local pollution enhancements in community zones so statistically significant high pollution zones could be identified, the multi-phase review process provided overall confidence in the data quality for this type of analysis. Moreover, the use of local pollution enhancements will always be relative to the measurement baseline, leading to an analysis of relativity rather than absolutes. As such, the collective qualitative and quantitative approaches, along with the comprehensive bookended reviews in the 45-day study period, ensured that the study collected high quality data for the local pollution enhancement analysis.

Highlights

- The comprehensive data quality evaluation, including (1) pre- and post-study instrument evaluation, (2) daily checks, (3) weekly challenges, and (4) collocation comparison show that instruments performed well and the overall drift in instrument performance was limited.
- Moreover, given that the project focused on local enhancements, a dynamic background level was always subtracted from the measured concentrations.
- This performance review and data application provide confidence that the collected data was suitable for subsequent analysis.

Quality Assurance Process

With consideration to the QA practices described above, the overall validation of routine data relied on weight-of-evidence and compelling evidence approaches^{[1](#page-1-0)} for the evaluation of whether the measurements met the intended goals of the project. We have assessed the QA results using a weightof-evidence approach and have concluded that although some specific elements of the project SOPs did not adhere to the intended frequency or target recovery of the calibration and zero checks, those QA deviations did not harm the attainment of the project goals stated in Section 2.1. In particular, this adjustment of the QA procedures is in accordance with standard mobile air monitoring practices which are designed to collect screening data rather than to ensure that data meet rigorous regulatory compliance standards.

Note that the supporting documentation for the summary data presented in this section is contained in Appendix.

Pre- and Post-Study Instrument Checks

Pre-field mobilization checks as well as post-study checks were conducted on all instruments, including flow checks on the Teledyne T640 and the Magee Aethalometer AE33. Documentation of

¹ Best Practices for Review and Validation of Ambient Air Monitoring Data, US EPA, EPA-454/B-21-007, August 2021.

these checks is included in Appendix, except for NO₂ and O₃, for which the documentation is unavailabl[e.](#page-2-0) ² Due to standard practice, all STI-owned instruments are checked for calibration prior to storage in advance of the next use, which constituted the pre-field check. Particulate-based instrument checks are contained in **Table 2**.

Primary Ongoing Quality Control Checks

Due to the previously noted challenges during the measurement campaign (e.g., weather conditions, instrument issues), QC checks did not entirely adhere to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Quality Assurance (QA) Handbook Volume II: Appendix D Validation Template^{[3](#page-2-1)} which outlines the Measurement Quality Objectives (MQOs) for all criteria pollutants. For gaseous criteria pollutants (CO, NO2, and O3), the U.S. EPA specifies that zero/span and one-point QC checks should be performed once every 14 days. Additionally, U.S. EPA also specifies the acceptance criteria (percent difference) that needs to be met when conducting regulatory monitoring. A brief table of U.S. EPA's MQOs for criteria pollutants is shown in **Table 1.**

Table 1. The relevant measurement quality objectives for criteria pollutants that were measured during the field campaign.

Although the project SOP specified daily checks, the extenuating circumstances in the field did not allow that to be met to ensure that the project objectives of maximized data collection could be achieved. **Table 2** shows the results of the QC checks that occurred during the mobile monitoring campaign. The record shows that all analyzers had multiple checks and zeros throughout the study after the initial pre-field check, including a mid-point and a final point.

 2 The initial NO_x analyzer was taken out of service for repair, so no post-testing check was necessary

³ QA Handbook Volume II, Appendix D, Rev 1, US EPA, March, 2017

It should be noted that mobile air quality monitoring does not typically adhere to the same strict QA/QC criteria that is needed for regulatory monitoring because mobile monitoring data are frequently used to collect screening data while regulatory monitoring is used in policymaking, state implementation plans, and demonstrations of attainment of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Instead, in mobile air quality monitoring, it is typical to perform pre- and post-campaign QC checks to validate data. In this campaign, STI and other field staff attempted to adhere to U.S. EPA's MQOs as closely as possible but did not meet the frequency and/or acceptance criteria on one occasion for NO² (frequency criteria was not met between 3/8-3/30), on two occasions for O³ (frequency criteria was not met between 3/5-3/30; acceptance criteria was not met on 3/4), on numerous occasions for CO which led to its invalidation for the entire campaign, and on one occasion for PM2.5 (frequency not met).

It is noteworthy that the CO analyzer consistently had poor performance, as reflected in the relatively high deviations from the gas cylinder standard. It is believed that this is due to the combination of temperature instability in the van, the physical nature of the measurement method (e.g., gas filter correlation), and the effects of movement of the van. Background concentrations of CO were seen to be problematic as well. The net effect of all these issues hindered the ability to consistently assess QC checks. Ultimately, the QA system failed for the CO instrument, resulting in the invalidation of the entire CO dataset including mobile and stationary monitoring. Following the field campaign, no postchecks of the CO monitor occurred to verify the calibration due to the invalidation of the entire dataset.

Secondly, the original NO_x analyzer encountered challenges, with variable output and unstable internal parameters. The NO_x analyzer was replaced on March 7, 2023 with the District's newer instrument. This unit (the District's unit) proved useful and provided valid and consistent data during the period of its use in the mobile campaign. In March 2023, STI staff performed corrective actions and maintenance on its NO_x analyzer (STI's unit) including capillary cleaning and insertion of new parts. Following the conclusion of the mobile campaign, STI returned the District's NO_x analyzer and re-inserted its analyzer following maintenance to be used during stationary monitoring. It was determined that STI's NO_x analyzer performed poorly during the stationary measurements and it was subsequently sent to the manufacturer (Thermo Scientific™) who performed major maintenance on the instrument. Thus, the measurements taken using STI's NO_x analyzer during stationary monitoring were rendered to be of insufficient quality and were invalidated.

In addition, as described in the memorandum in the Appendix, the AROMA instrument was originally calibrated at the Entanglement facility, but the checks performed in the field were performed using an expired gas cylinder standard, though done in a standard run basis, not using the internal calibration check routine. However, it was determined that the expired gas cylinder standard (for benzene) was still within its original specifications, so the field checks remained as valid checks. Other parameters were not checked in the expired gas cylinder standard, but based on the post deployment calibration check of the AROMA instrument, all other parameters passed (Appendix Attachment 4).

Table 2. Periodic Primary Zero and Span Checks

As previously mentioned, a post-calibration check was performed by Entanglement on the AROMA-VOC instrument using a different gas cylinder standard. The expired benzene calibration standard was re-analyzed after the end of the study by Entanglement against a new 5% NIST-traceable benzene calibration standard and was found to still be within specifications. Therefore, the in-field quality control checks performed while in standard RapidScan mode (e.g., not using the system cal check option) demonstrated the lack of drift and continuing performance under the original MQO goals. Note that no adjustments to the instrument response factor were made during the field operations. A separate discussion of the re-checks of the expired cylinder against a new calibration standard is contained in Appendix.

Secondary Ongoing Bercut Station to Mobile Platform **Comparisons**

On a daily basis, the output of the Bercut station analyzers was compared informally to the output of the mobile platform. **Table 3** contains the documentation regarding the frequency of both the primary and secondary instrument evaluation criteria. This table shows that the informal semiquantitative comparison of +/-20% of the Bercut station values was performed daily, with just a few exceptions. This table also includes when the primary quantitative checks were performed, as noted in **Table 1**.

Date	Monitoring Day	PM _{2.5}	BC	NO ₂	O ₃	CO	AROMA
Pre-Test		\star	\star	\star	\star	\star	\star
2/16/2023	Yes	ON	ON	ON	ON	ON	
2/17/2023	Yes	ON	ON				
2/18/2023							
2/19/2023	Yes	ON	ON	ON	ON	ON	
2/20/2023	Yes	ON	ON	ON	ON	ON	
2/21/2023	Yes	ON	ON	ON	ON	ON	
2/22/2023	Yes	ON	ON	ON	ON	ON	
2/23/2023							
2/24/2023	Yes	ON	ON	ON	ON	ON	
2/25/2023	Yes	ON	ON	ON	ON	ON	
2/26/2023							
2/27/2023							
2/28/2023							
3/1/2023	Yes	ON		ON	ON	ON	
3/2/2023	Yes	ON	ON	ON	ON	ON	
3/3/2023	Yes			\star		\star	
3/4/2023	Yes	ON	ON	\star	\star	ON	
3/5/2023	Yes	ON	ON	ON	\star	\star	
3/6/2023						\star	
3/7/2023	Yes	ON	ON	ON	ON	ON	
3/8/2023	Yes	ON	ON	ON	ON	ON	
3/9/2023	Yes	ON	ON	ON	ON	ON	\star
3/10/2023							
3/11/2023							

Table 3. Daily and Periodic Primary and Secondary Instrument QC Checks

As the table shows, the semi-quantitative comparison between the mobile and stationary Bercut platforms was performed regularly, confirming that the mobile platform instruments remained in stable operating mode.

Hourly Comparisons--Bercut Station and Mobile Platform

The project team evaluated the performance of NO₂, CO, PM_{2.5}, and BC instruments in the mobile monitoring platform by comparing hourly-aggregated measurements against measurements from Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District's (SMAQMD) Bercut station (AQS ID: 06- 067-0015). These evaluations were conducted for all timeframes outside of normal mobile monitoring operations (i.e., 18:00-8:00). In the analysis, outliers outside the 99th percent confidence interval of the van measurements were removed.

Concentrations measured in the van were compared against monitoring data measured by regulatory monitors at the Bercut station. Across all pollutants, slopes ranged from 0.6-1.9. NO² concentrations (Figure 1) had a robust comparison against the regulatory monitor (slope = 1.1, r^2 = 0.75, p <0.01). CO concentration concentrations measured in the van were statistically significant when compared to the regulatory station (r^2 = 0.35, p <0.01) (Figure 2), but van instrument concentrations trended much lower than the stationary monitoring instrument (slope = 0.61). BC measurements (**Figure 13**) in the van measured higher than the stationary monitoring instrument (slope = 1.9, r^2 = 0.73, p <0.01), but this high slope was primarily driven by hourly measurements from February 19-20, 2023, and when BC measurements in the van were high $($ >3 µg m⁻³). When these measurements are removed (not shown), the BC measurements compared very well against the SLAMS monitor (slope = 1.1, r^2 = 0.65, p < 0.01). PM_{2.5} performance was also within an acceptable range (slope = 1.0, r^2 = 0.76) when the hourly van measurements were compared against the hourly Federal Equivalence Method measurements from the Bercut site (**Figure 4**).

Figure 1. Overnight comparisons of hourly nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) concentrations (ppbv) between the Bercut monitoring station (x-axis) and mobile monitoring platform (y-axis). The regression equation is shown in the top left. The regression line (solid black line) and the 1:1 line (dashed black line) are also shown.

Figure 2. Overnight comparisons of hourly carbon monoxide (CO) concentrations (ppbv) between the Bercut monitoring station (x-axis) and mobile monitoring platform (y-axis). The regression equation is shown in the top left. The regression line (solid black line) and the 1:1 line (dashed black line) are also shown.

Figure 3. Overnight comparisons of hourly BC concentrations (µg m⁻³) between the Bercut monitoring station (x-axis) and mobile monitoring platform (y-axis). The regression equation is shown in the top left. The regression line (solid black line) and the 1:1 line (dashed black line) are also shown.

For the period between February 19-20, 2023, the CO analyzer in the mobile monitoring platform had a zero intercept that was set high (+0.4965). Comparisons to the Bercut station during the overnight periods were used to correct data during that timeframe.

Figure 4. Overnight comparisons of hourly PM_{2.5} concentrations (µg m⁻³) between the Bercut monitoring station (x-axis) and mobile monitoring platform (y-axis). The regression equation is shown in the top left. The regression line (solid black line) and the 1:1 line (dashed black line) are also shown.

As with the other analyzers, the comparison of the hourly mobile platform with the Bercut station analyzer showed that the data were stable and although not quantitatively in agreement - likely due to the placement of the inlets – the measurements from the van were confirmed to provide a consistent measurement result.

Data Completeness

Table 4 details overall data completeness for each parameter during mobile monitoring. Data collected during stationary monitoring were excluded from the completeness calculation. In general, data completeness was satisfactory, and all but two parameters achieved a valid data percentage greater than 85%. Alkanes had the highest percentage of valid data (98.92%), and CO had the lowest percentage of valid data (46.72%). Because the "IJ" QC flag was determined based on driving speed, the percentage of data flagged as "IJ" was mostly consistent across all parameters. Notable issues encountered throughout data collection that affected overall data completeness are outlined below.

- The Thermo 48i CO analyzer experienced calibration and drift issues throughout data collection, leading to a higher abundance of data missing and flagged as "AN" relative to other parameters. Ultimately, all
- BC has a higher total data count because all other data collected at a 1-sec temporal resolution (CO, NO2, ozone, PM2.5, and PM10) were aggregated to a 1-min and 1-hr temporal resolution by the datalogger on 2/16 and 2/17, and thus were unusable for subsequent

analysis. The 1-sec BC data collected during these days were manually extracted from the Magee AE33 Aethalometer.

• Many diene data points were flagged as "AN" throughout mobile monitoring due to a high number of negative values below the negative MDL (**Figure 5**).

Parameter	Total Count ^a	Missing Count (%) ^b	AN Count $(\%)^c$	MD Count $(\%)^c$	IJ Count $(\%)^c$	AM Count $(\%)^c$	Valid Count (%) ^d
Carbon Monoxide	407,119	64,017 (15.72%)	343,102 (84.28%)	71,171 (17.48%)	4,687 (1.15%)	$0(0.00\%)$	$0(0\%)$
Nitrogen Dioxide	407,119	55,843 (13.72%)	8 (0.00%)	16,056 (3.94%)	11,490 (2.82%)	$0(0.00\%)$	351,268 (86.28%)
Ozone	407,119	55,843 (13.72%)	321 (0.08%)	332 (0.08%)	11,737 (2.88%)	$0(0.00\%)$	350,955 (86.20%)
PM _{2.5}	407,119	55,843 (13.72%)	$0(0.00\%)$	$0(0.00\%)$	11,789 (2.90%	40 (0.01%)	351,236 (86.27%)
PM_{10}	407,119	55,843 (13.72%)	$0(0.00\%)$	$0(0.00\%)$	11,789 (2.90%	40 (0.01%)	351,236 (86.27%)
Alkanes	71,676	432 (0.60%)	345 (0.48%)	$0(0.00\%)$	1,956 (2.73%)	$0(0.00\%)$	70,899 (98.92%)
Aromatics	71,676	911 (1.27%)	2,293 (3.20%)	8 (0.01%)	1,908 (2.66%)	$0(0.00\%)$	68,472 (95.53%)
Black Carbon	447,801	$\mathbf{0}$ (0.00%)	66,577 (14.87%)	$0(0.00\%)$	11,789 (2.63%)	$0(0.00\%)$	381,224 (85.13%)
Dienes	71,676	353 (0.49%)	21,465 (29.95%)	2,941 (4.10%)	1,198 (1.67%)	$0(0.00\%)$	49,858 (69.56%)
Carbon Dioxide	71,676	6,002 (8.37%)	$0(0.00\%)$	$0(0.00\%)$	1,834 (2.56%	$0(0.00\%)$	65,674 (91.63%)
Methane	71,676	8,214 (11.46%)	$0(0.00\%)$	$0(0.00\%)$	1,671 (2.33%)	$0(0.00\%)$	63,462 (88.54%)

Table 4. Data completeness during the mobile monitoring data collection period.

a Total data count was calculated by counting the number of data points collected during the daily mobile monitoring period.

b Missing data count was calculated by counting the number of data points collected during the daily mobile monitoring period in which the concentration was missing (I.e., null).

^cFlagged data counts were calculated by counting the number of data points collected during the daily mobile monitoring period that were flagged as "AN", "MD", "IJ", or "AM".

^d Valid data counts were calculated by subtracting the number of data points flagged as "AN" or "AM" and the number of missing data points from the total data count.

Figure 5. Raw diene concentrations collected during the mobile monitoring data collection period color coded by QC flags. Note: data flagged as "Valid" include data not flagged or flagged as "IJ".

Data Evaluation

An overall assessment of the data collected was performed using two concepts from within EPA QA guidanc[e:](#page-13-0)⁴ 1) Compelling evidence, and 2) weight of evidence. The former is related to the question of whether a set of data can be accepted to meet the specific QC check specifications using other information. Secondly, the weight-of-evidence approach is used for assessing whether a data set can be used for regulatory decisions.

Using the compelling evidence approach, it was determined that while there was an absence of the originally-specified daily data checks, the data should be deemed valid based on the acceptable QC checks that met EPA Appendix D Validation template criteria, the robust correlations with corresponding parameters from the Bercut monitoring station. While the data set was not intended for a specific regulatory action, it was intended to assist in directing other resources (e.g., additional confirmatory monitoring) for determining the local enhancements above background in communities.

Overall, therefore, these assessments provide support for the conclusion that the data set as constituted meets the objectives of the program.

⁴ Best Practices for Review and Validation of Ambient Air Monitoring Data, US EPA, EPA-454/B-21-007, August 2021.

Appendix

- 1. Pre-test Certification for CO Analyzer
- 2. Pre- and post-test Certification for T640 Analyzer
- 3. Pre- and post-test Certification for Aethalometer
- 4. Calibration Report for AROMA

CleanAir

CleanAir Instrument Rental 500 W. Wood Street
Palatine, IL 60067-4975
800-553-5511 www.cleanair.com

Proof of Performance - Page 1 of 2

Calibration Results

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Date: $12-6.27$

Printed On: $2/6/23$

Signature:

CleanAir

Proof of Performance - Page 2 of 2

Teco 48iTLE CO Monitor Instrument: 210152 Asset No:

Tech Name: Date Generated: Philip Grajek $2/6/23$

Calibration Graph

Allowed: +/-2C Temperature: degrees C **As Found** Adjusted Ref: $19.8\vert n/a$ Meas: $19.2 \mid n/a$ $0.6\sqrt{n/a}$ Diff:

 \mathbb{Z}

Taylon Jones
2/9/2023

Note:

If adjusted values are n/a, it means it passed the test and required no adjustments

Note: If adjusted values are n/a it means it passed the test and required no adjustments

 $+/- 2C$

 $T^{\frac{1}{2}}$ $T^{\frac{3}{2}n e_{5}}$ $8^{1}24^{23}$

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 $\left\{ \left(\Phi_{1},\Phi_{2}\right) \right\}$, Φ_{1}

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Instrument Calibration Report

Date Prepared: August 18, 2023

Entanglement Technologies, Inc.

1192 Cherry Avenue, San Bruno, CA 94066 650.204.7875

Summary

This report summarizes the calibration report for the AROMA analyzer for speciated analysis.

- The instrument received a full calibration on October 10, 2022 against a certified standard. This calibration was performed onsite in the European Commission's Joint Research Center
- Prior to deployment the instrument passed Continuing Calibration Verification on a known good standard (December 22, 2022)
- Insufficient gas remained in this standard for the deployment, however and expired standard was available. The concentrations in the expired standard were compared against the remains of the unexpired standard. The instrument response was updated to report the values contained in the expired standard for field QC Purposes.
- No Field Continuing Calibration Verification measurements were performed during the deployment.
- Upon completion of the field test, the instrument was re-validated against a new 5% certified standard. A secondary validation was performed with a Sonoma standard (benzene only).
- Reported data was reported using the calibration referenced the new certified standard.

Anthony Miller August 22, 2023

Initial Calibration.

Date: October 10, 2022 Reference Number: 160-401863505-1 Expiration: August 6, 2023

All $r^2 > 0.99$.

Pre-Deployment Continuing Calibration Verification

Date: December 22, 2022 Reference Number: HCL-004 SET 1 Expiration: Jan 6, 2023

Expired Cal Cylinder: December 22, 2022 Reference Number HCL -003 SET 1 Expiration: Dec 3, 2021

Post Deployment Calibration

Date: April 18, 2023 Reference Number: CC524059 Expiration: April 8 2024

All r^2 > 0.99. Difference is expected vs measured mass reflects recalibration coefficients applied in final analysis.

Post Deployment Sonoma Standard Validation

An expired Sonoma Benzene standard was evaluated on the analyzer at the conclusion of the deployment. This standard was used for Rapidscan calibration checks. The standard, despite expiration, matched the AROMA analysis results.