



Earthjustice Action Los Angeles Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: **Karen Bass**

Overview

Angelenos have a right to clean air, clean water, and a healthy environment. Earthjustice Action, a 501(c)(4) organization, works to protect public health, unleash affordable clean energy, and ditch toxic fossil fuels by defending and shaping environmental laws and policies. The leaders responsible for setting, implementing, and enforcing those policies play a critical role in people's everyday lives.

That's where the next Mayor of Los Angeles comes in.

As the chief executive of the second-most populous city in the United States and the most populous in California, the Los Angeles mayor's policies – enacted through legislation, executive orders, appointments and negotiation with county and state governments – affect the health and well-being of millions of people and have the potential to set a standard for California and the rest of the nation.

This questionnaire will cover a wide variety of public health concerns and environmental issues the next Mayor of Los Angeles will need to confront to help inform Los Angeles residents of the next Mayor's priorities and leadership style. It will be provided to all eligible mayoral candidates on the November 2026 ballot. Completed questionnaires will be posted on Earthjustice Action's website and distributed to our supporters in Los Angeles County and interested parties. We will not endorse, oppose, or support any candidates in this election.



A. Air Quality and Bus Emissions

Fossil fuel-powered trucks and buses are often the dirtiest vehicles on our roads. With nearly 2,100 buses, LA Metro is the second largest transit agency in the United States. The emissions from large vehicles pollute the air and create negative health outcomes including asthma, heart problems, cancer and premature death, disproportionately affecting low-income communities in Los Angeles. To quantify the health impact, the public health benefit from eliminating transit bus emissions by transitioning to nonpolluting buses would be approximately \$223 million between 2025 and 2050.[\[SOURCE\]](#) The LA Metro's 13-member voting Metro Board of Directors includes the mayor and three of their appointees.

About a third of Los Angeles Unified School District's (LAUSD) school buses run on diesel. [\[SOURCE\]](#) Research shows that diesel school buses not only pollute the air in the neighborhoods they drive through, but they also leave kids in the back of the bus breathing toxic diesel exhaust. This is a particularly dangerous kind of air pollution that elevates levels of asthma, heart problems, and cancer for people nearby. Children face special risks from air pollution because their lungs are still developing, they breathe about twice as fast as adults, and they have larger lungs relative to their size.

1) Would you set additional goals for improving air quality vis-à-vis LA Metro buses? If yes, what would they be? If not, why not?

Yes, absolutely. As Metro Chair, I will continue to push Metro to achieve a zero-emission bus fleet as soon as possible. In addition to the long-range goals, we will set interim milestones, similar to what we did for the City's Department of Transportation (LADOT) in my Climate Action Plan. In the Valley, the G Line Bus Rapid Transit (aka Orange line) already runs on 100% electric buses. We will do everything possible to acquire as many zero-emission buses for deployment for the 2028 Games. I am proud that the Metro has already allocated funding to purchase electric buses and the necessary infrastructure. We will be advancing these purchasing plans at the upcoming September Metro Board meeting. Additionally, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) is working with LA Metro to ensure the zero-emission electric bus infrastructure is in place, including chargers and electrical capacity. I will also continue to uplift micro mobility options aligning Metro and the LADOT infrastructure to create more first/last mile connections which would increase transit ridership. During my tenure as Mayor, LADOT DASH lines now have over 160 battery-electric buses. LADOT is on-track to be 100% zero-emission by 2028. My team is currently working on new policies focused on safe streets so that we can meet our Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) reduction and micromobility targets. Also, as current Chair of the Metro Board, I am proud of these accomplishments: Extended the A Line into the San Gabriel Valley, reconnecting Azusa, Glendora, San Dimas, La Verne, and Pomona to rail service for the first time since 1951. Opened the D Line extension to Beverly Hills,



creating a roughly 20-minute subway trip between Union Station and Beverly Hills for a \$1.75 fare. Made Metro's GoPass program permanent, allowing hundreds of thousands of K-12 and community college students across Los Angeles County to ride Metro and participating transit systems for free.

2) Do you believe there are actions the mayor can take to protect children from school bus emissions? Why or why not? What plans do you have, if any, as mayor to help school systems like LAUSD achieve its objectives of getting kids to school on buses that do not pollute their lungs? [SOURCE]

Yes, I take school safety and children's health seriously. In fact, I served as a nurse in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and a Physician Assistant in the emergency room at County General Hospital. My administration will continue to work closely with LAUSD to transition their school buses. During my tenure as Mayor, the Department of Water and Power (LADWP) has already worked closely with LAUSD to facilitate electric vehicle charging for school buses. In fact, LAUSD broke ground in March 2026 to electrify the Sun Valley school bus yard that will charge 180 electric school buses. LADWP also has multiple programs that support transition to zero emission electric buses. For example, LADWP offers a \$125,000 rebate per heavy duty electric vehicle charger. LADWP also runs a commercial energy storage program that provides financial incentives for vehicle-to-grid infrastructure. Furthermore, LA28 has a partnership with Highland Electric for 500 electric school buses for use during the Olympics. The initiative will borrow 500 electric school buses from local Southern California school districts that sit idle during summer break. This partnership could create new opportunities that I would be happy to explore with LAUSD. To keep school kids safe, the City has also installed more than 250 speed humps and implemented 450 school slow zones to protect students. And we created 180 quick-build intersection improvements to prevent hit-and-runs near schools. These examples prove that the Mayor's Office is working closely with LAUSD on a variety of initiatives to keep kids safe and will continue to do so.



B. Emissions from the Port of Los Angeles

In Los Angeles County, the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach “are the region’s largest single sources of air pollution: Every day, their equipment, trucks, rail yards and ships emit 23 tons of smog-forming nitrogen oxides, half a ton of fine particles and nearly a ton of sulfur into the air... Fine particles are known to trigger asthma and heart attacks, while nitrogen oxides bake in the sun with other pollutants to form a gas in smog that also causes respiratory problems.” [\[SOURCE\]](#)

According to South Coast air quality district officials, the two ports are responsible for about a fifth of the Los Angeles region’s nitrogen oxides—more than the daily emissions from all six million cars in the region. [\[SOURCE\]](#)

The Mayor of Los Angeles has an incredible amount of influence over the Port of Los Angeles. For example, the five-person Los Angeles Harbor Commission, which oversees the management and operation of the Port of Los Angeles, is appointed by the mayor.

3) Regarding the port’s goal of 100% zero-emission on-road drayage trucks by 2035, do you support or oppose that goal? Why or why not? [\[SOURCE\]](#) Please address whether you believe that goal to be necessary or unnecessary, and realistic/unrealistic, and why. If you oppose, please explain whether you have an alternative. If you support, what would the implementation timeline be?

I unequivocally support the goal of being 100% zero emission (ZE) by 2035. I would like it to be sooner but it’s hard to hit the goal when manufacturers are not producing them as quickly as traditional diesel trucks and the cost is still too high for independent owner operators to purchase them. In Los Angeles, we have to lead the way and be innovators for the rest of the country – and the world – to create the change that is needed. That’s exactly what we are doing. I am proud to say that during my time as Mayor, I have pushed the Port of Los Angeles to offer more financial incentives. The Port continues to offer a voucher for purchasing ZE trucks. Additionally, the Port just approved ZE-Trip. It’s a 3 year program that incentivizes more ZE emissions truck trips to the San Pedro Bay complex. A truck owner can receive \$60 per visit and up to \$36,000 per vehicle annually to offset ongoing operation costs.



4) Do you think there is a role for the mayor to play in reducing air and climate pollution from port related equipment beyond port drayage trucks? Why or why not? If yes, are there actions you might take as Mayor to further reduce emissions from ships, cargo handling equipment, locomotives, and/or commercial harbor craft?

I believe as Mayor it is my duty to make sure I do everything in my power to reduce emissions from port related activities. The ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach are the backbone of the local and national economy but it should not be at the burden of port adjacent communities. Under my leadership, the Port of Los Angeles has already taken action with our partners at SCAQMD and the Port of Long Beach. We approved an addendum to further accelerate clean air technologies and incentives. We need to keep the cargo moving but in a safe and healthy manner. The recent addendum to the historic Cooperative Agreement enhances incentives for the cleanest ocean-going vessels, establishes new incentives for zero-emission (ZE) trucks and invests toward regional charging and fueling infrastructure for ZE drayage trucks. Additionally, the Port of LA now has an approved roadmap and has made a financial commitment on the port's ZE infrastructure plan, via the Cooperative Agreement. As Mayor, it is also critical to help secure new sources of funding to reduce air pollution at the Port of Los Angeles. And I will continue to do so. For example, in October 2024, the Port of Los Angeles was awarded \$412 million through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Clean Ports Program for zero emissions infrastructure and initiatives. The Mayor's office worked with a regional consortium to secure \$500 million in Climate Pollution Reduction Grants from the U.S. EPA. Finally, as Mayor, I also play an international relations role that is important to reducing pollution in and around the port. I am really proud of the partnership we've built with ports in Asia, including Shanghai, Singapore and other cities. Together, we are advancing green shipping corridors across the pacific ocean that will have zero emission ships transiting between Asian ports and Los Angeles. In 2024, the first zero emission green methanol ship called at the Port of Los Angeles.



C. Safe Home Appliances

Space and water heating impact Los Angeles's air quality in a serious way. They account for roughly 10% of all greenhouse gas emissions and 5% of nitrogen oxide emissions in California (exposures to nitrogen oxide may contribute to the development of asthma, among other negative health outcomes). [SOURCE] These appliances represent the single largest source of criteria pollutant emissions under the jurisdiction of the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

5) Is this an issue you would tackle in your term? Why or why not? If yes, what are your plans regarding appliances in homes related to the safety of air quality? If not, is this a matter that should be addressed by someone else or later in the future? Why or why not?

Yes. Reducing pollution from space and water heating is an issue I am addressing through my Climate Action Plan. This is a public-health and environmental-justice priority. Residents in communities already burdened by pollution should have access to cleaner appliances and healthier homes. Electric heat pumps are an important part of the solution. They transfer heat rather than generate it by burning fuel, allowing us to replace gas-fired heating and water-heating equipment. Heat-pump heating and cooling systems also provide air conditioning, pairing emissions reductions with protection from extreme heat. Affordability must be part of implementation. A rebate alone may not help a household or affordable-housing provider that cannot pay the initial installation cost. My plan includes developing upfront-capital options for retrofits, including opportunities to pair financing with LADWP's multifamily incentives. It also prioritizes anti-displacement. We have several tools to advance this work: Financial assistance for cleaner equipment. LADWP increased its rebates for qualifying heat-pump equipment purchased and installed beginning November 1, 2025. Incentives now reach up to \$2,500 per heat-pump water heater and up to \$2,500 per ton of heating and cooling capacity for qualifying heat-pump systems. Targeted support for affordable rental housing. LADWP's Comprehensive Affordable Multifamily Retrofits program provides qualifying properties with free assessments, assistance developing projects and procuring contractors, and financial incentives for improvements. Electrification options include heat-pump water heating, heating and cooling upgrades, and induction cooking. Building policies that support lasting emissions reductions. My Climate Action Plan calls for working with the City Council on policies for both new construction and existing buildings. That includes an ordinance promoting electric appliances in new construction.



D. Industrial Electrification and Manufacturing Leadership

California is the third-largest industrial energy consumer in the U.S., thanks in part to its manufacturing sector. Manufacturing requires heat —usually generated through natural gas steam boilers. In the U.S., approximately 90% of that heat comes from fossil fuel combustion. Using industrial heat pumps instead can reduce energy consumption, lower emissions, and potentially lower energy costs.[\[SOURCE\]](#) Los Angeles currently lags other cities in the world in the deployment of this technology.

6) Do you have any plans as mayor regarding industrial equipment. Why or why not? If yes, what concrete actions will you take? If not, is this a matter that should be addressed by someone else or later in the future? Why or why not?

Yes. Reducing pollution from industrial equipment should be part of Los Angeles's climate and economic-development agenda. Workers and residents near industrial facilities deserve cleaner air, and manufacturers need practical support to modernize equipment while maintaining reliable operations and good jobs. My Climate Action Plan establishes a foundation through investments in clean electricity, energy efficiency, and access to capital for cleaner technologies. LADWP also offers business incentives through its Business Offerings for Sustainable Solutions program, which supports qualifying efficiency and electrification projects. We can build on these tools to address industrial heating more directly. Industrial heat pumps offer an opportunity to replace fossil-fuel combustion in suitable applications. Their effectiveness depends on the temperature a process requires, the availability of recoverable heat, and how equipment operates throughout the day. That calls for a targeted approach informed by the needs of individual facilities. My next steps would be to: Identify suitable projects. Ask LADWP to work with manufacturers to assess industrial heating needs and identify opportunities for heat pumps, heat recovery, and other efficiency improvements. Address financial barriers. Review how existing LADWP incentives can support these projects and where additional assistance may be needed. Evaluate upfront financing and outside funding opportunities, with attention to smaller manufacturers that may lack the capital or technical staff to undertake a conversion. Demonstrate results and expand what works. Pursue initial projects with willing businesses and track energy consumption, operating costs, reliability, and reductions in greenhouse gases and local air pollutants. Involve workers and community representatives, and use those results to guide broader deployment. This work should advance cleaner air and industrial competitiveness together.



E. Cooperation with California Agencies

The Mayor of Los Angeles plays an important role in coordinating with many agencies on clean air and climate work. For example, the City of Los Angeles appoints one of 13 members to the South Coast Air Quality Management District Governing Board. In addition, the city routinely engages with agencies like the California Air Resources Board and California Energy Commission.

7) What is your philosophy for engaging with agencies where the City and Mayor have appointing authority, like the South Coast Air Quality Management District?

The South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD), the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD), and the other agencies where I have appointed authority are critical to advancing our environmental and environmental justice goals. As Mayor, I work directly with the SCAQMD and other agencies and will continue to do so. Mayor's Office staff members also regularly engage with these agencies, including SCAQMD leadership, through quarterly meetings where city priorities are discussed. To address the air quality concerns after the Lineage warehouse fire in Boyle Heights, I met directly with the leadership of SCAQMD multiple times to push for more monitoring and enforcement. I testified at a South Coast AQMD hearing; the abatement order included stricter enforcement based on my advocacy. Furthermore, my office paid for buses for community members to attend and testify in front of the AQMD Hearing Board. This kind of partnership with environmental justice groups is critical. My team also worked closely with Councilmember Adrian Nazarian's office (my appointee to SCAQMD) to advance community assistance in Boyle Heights. We successfully advocated for deepened constituent services, such as air purifiers and in-person support to file odor complaints.

8) What is your philosophy for engaging with agencies where the City has no appointing authority, like the California Air Resources Board and California Energy Commission?

As Mayor, I am committed to advancing our environmental goals and leveraging my deep relationships in both Sacramento and Washington D.C. to do so. This approach extends to legislative bodies and the executive branch (including State agencies). As a former State Assembly Speaker, I understand the power of CARB and the California Energy Commission firsthand and know how to advance an agenda in partnership with these agencies. In fact, as Speaker of the Assembly, I worked closely with all of the relevant agencies to enact ground-breaking laws to advance environmental sustainability and expand green job opportunities. I continue to do so as Mayor. The Mayor's Office and City Departments regularly engage with the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and the California Energy Commission to advocate for funding and support for the city's climate programs. For example, the Mayor's Office and LADWP have worked very constructively with CARB to



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ensure that the Cap and Invest program supports LADWP's decarbonization investments and customer programs.

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