

I'm delighted to have this opportunity to join colleagues in putting forward Cathy Stephens as a nominee for the Air Central Texas Lifetime Achievement Award. The spectacular success of our region's air quality efforts is a direct result Ms Stephens' perseverance, intellect, and consensus-building leadership.

CAMPO hired Ms Stephens to steer the agency through a seemingly inevitable EPA ozone nonattainment designation. What they got was a skilled public servant whose work obviated the need for designation. Central Texans enjoy the benefits of her career with every breath of clean air we take.

Ms Stephens and Bill Gill implemented the policy directives of elected officials. It sounds simple; it's not. Many of these directives were groundbreaking. Some were controversial. (Bringing a Vehicle Inspection & Maintenance program to an air quality attainment region is the policy equivalent of walking into Mordor.) None of them would be easy to accomplish. They succeeded.

But Ms Stephens and Mr Gill had an advantage, their impeccable reputations for delivering sound science and accurate policy analysis. Their ongoing briefings and outreach led to civic leaders who were extremely well informed on air quality issues. Elected officials could make confident decisions about public health based on trustworthy data. Central Texans are the ongoing beneficiaries of this good governance.

I worked for or with Ms Stephens during the development of each air quality plan. I attended the meetings, work sessions, open houses, happy hours, and hearings. I got to watch a master at work. She kept fragile coalitions from unraveling; she never lost sight of the human value of environmental regulations; she had a gift for steering improbable projects to completion.

Cathy Stephens was essential to the existence, and extraordinary success, of our air quality plans. I say this with confidence because I was (pardon a gratuitous Hamilton reference) in the room where it happened. Cathy Stephens is a richly deserving nominee for the award give in honor of her long-time colleague.

Thank you for your consideration,

Shana Norton
former Air Quality staff at City of Austin and CAMPO