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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fort Bend County Launches First Air Quality Study, Invites Public to Open House on April 15

Rosenberg, TX— Fort Bend County Health and Human Services, in partnership with The University of Texas at Austin and UTHealth Houston School of Public Health, is launching its first-ever comprehensive air quality study, to better understand how air pollution varies across neighborhoods and impacts community health. Led by Fort Bend County Health & Human Services, an academic health department and Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB)-accredited agency, the study will evaluate air quality at the neighborhood level, support county public health initiatives, and provide a baseline assessment to guide future air quality solutions, ensuring data-driven strategies for healthier communities.

Residents are invited to attend a **free public open house on April 15, 2026, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the George Memorial Library.** The event will offer an opportunity to learn about the study, meet the research team, and see an air quality testing demonstration in person.

“This study represents an important step in understanding how air quality impacts the health of our residents across Fort Bend County,” said Dr. Letosha Gale-Lowe, Local Health Authority and Fort Bend County Health and Human Services Director. “By partnering with leading academic institutions, we are strengthening our ability to make informed, data-driven decisions that protect and improve community health.”

The open house will give community members a closer look at how air quality is measured and how mobile monitoring technology will be used throughout the county. The study includes a three-week field monitoring campaign, during which a state-of-the-art air quality mobile laboratory will travel through Fort Bend County neighborhoods and conduct measurements while in motion, as well as stationary measurements at key locations.

Researchers will measure pollutants including ozone (O_3), fine particulate matter (PM2.5), nitrogen oxides (NOx), carbon monoxide (CO), sulfur dioxide (SO_2), and volatile organic compounds (VOCs), generating high-resolution, neighborhood-level data to identify patterns, potential pollution hotspots and areas of concern. The air quality mobile lab is equipped with advanced instrumentation, including the Vocus mass spectrometer, a highly accurate, real-time monitoring system, capable of measuring more than 1,000 air pollutants while in motion and at fixed locations.

“Community engagement is a critical part of this work,” said Dr. Pawel K. Misztal, Principal Investigator with The University of Texas at Austin. “We’re bringing advanced air quality monitoring directly into neighborhoods to better understand pollution sources and share that knowledge with the community.”

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The partnership also brings a strong public health focus to the study, connecting environmental data with community health outcomes.

“This collaboration helps translate complex environmental data into meaningful public health insights,” said Dr. Kevin Lanza, Co-Lead from UTHealth Houston School of Public Health. “Our goal is to provide information that supports healthier communities across Fort Bend County.”

Residents may see the mobile laboratory traveling throughout Fort Bend County during the monitoring period. Preliminary findings are expected in mid-2026.

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About Fort Bend County Health and Human Services

Fort Bend County Health & Human Services (FBCHHS) is committed to promoting and protecting the health and well-being of Fort Bend County residents. Through disease prevention and intervention, public health emergency preparedness and response, community engagement, and efforts to ensure the equitable provision of basic human needs, FBCHHS works to build healthier communities. Our vision is healthy neighbors living, learning, working and playing together in vibrant, thriving communities.

About the University of Texas at Austin, Cockrell School of Engineering

The Cockrell School of Engineering at The University of Texas at Austin is a top-ranked engineering school, No.1 in the state of Texas. With more than 70,000 living alumni, the Cockrell School has been a global leader in technology advancement and engineering education for over a century. Texas Engineering is home to more than 8,500 students, close to 300 faculty members, 11 undergraduate and 13 graduate programs and more than 20 impactful research centers.

About UTHealth Houston School of Public Health

Founded in 1967, UTHealth Houston School of Public Health was Texas' first public health school and remains a nationally ranked leader in graduate public health education. Since opening its doors in Houston nearly 60 years ago, the school has established five additional locations across the state, including Austin, Brownsville, Dallas, El Paso, and San Antonio. Across five academic departments — Biostatistics and Data Science; Epidemiology; Environmental & Occupational Health Sciences; Health Promotion and Behavioral Science; and Management, Policy & Community Health — students learn to collaborate, lead, and transform the field of public health through excellence in graduate education.