


**Key Points:**

- Ammonium nitrate formation in summertime over northeastern Colorado is ammonia-rich and nitrate-limited
- Observations and model analyses indicate that <300 m agl, ammonium nitrate is usually <1  $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$  and inhibited by warmer temperatures
- Cooler temperatures during spring/autumn and winter in northeastern Colorado are predicted to support substantial  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation

**Supporting Information:**

Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article.

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## Inorganic Nitrogen Gas-Aerosol Partitioning in and Around Animal Feeding Operations in Northeastern Colorado in Late Summer 2021

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**Abstract** Ammonia ( $\text{NH}_3$ ) from animal feeding operations (AFOs) is an important source of reactive nitrogen in the US, but despite its ramifications for air quality and ecosystem health, its near-source evolution remains understudied. To this end, Phase I of the Transport and Transformation of Ammonia (TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am) field campaign was conducted in the northeastern Colorado Front Range in summer 2021 and characterized atmospheric composition downwind of AFOs during 10 research flights. Airborne measurements of  $\text{NH}_3$ , nitric acid ( $\text{HNO}_3$ ), and a suite of water-soluble aerosol species collected onboard the University of Wyoming King Air research aircraft present an opportunity to investigate the sensitivity of particulate matter (PM) formation to AFO emissions. We couple the observations with thermodynamic modeling to predict the seasonality of ammonium nitrate ( $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$ ) formation. We find that during TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am northeastern Colorado is consistently in the  $\text{NH}_3$ -rich and  $\text{HNO}_3$ -limited  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation regime. Further investigation using the Extended Aerosol Inorganics Model reveals that summertime temperatures (mean: 23°C) of northeastern Colorado, especially near the surface, inhibit  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation despite high  $\text{NH}_3$  concentrations (max:  $\leq 114$  ppbv). Finally, we model spring/autumn and winter conditions to explore the seasonality of  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation and find that cooler temperatures could support substantially more  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation. Whereas  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  only exceeds 1  $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$  ~10% of the time in summer, modeled  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  would exceed 1  $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$  61% (88%) of the time in spring/autumn (winter), with a 10°C (20°C) temperature decrease relative to the campaign.

**Plain Language Summary** Animal feeding operations (AFO; i.e., feedlots for large-scale meat/dairy production) emit large amounts of ammonia into the atmosphere. Gas-phase ammonia can change into aerosol-phase ammonium (i.e., gas-aerosol partitioning) and contribute to particulate matter air pollution. In this study, we try to understand whether ammonia emitted from AFOs is forming aerosols, and if so, what mechanisms are governing the gas-aerosol transfer between ammonia and ammonium. To do so, we flew a research aircraft downwind of several AFOs in northeastern Colorado in summer 2021 and measured a suite of gases and aerosols (and temperature and relative humidity). We measured high amounts of ammonia gas and low amounts of ammonium aerosols, so the observations alone only indicate that ammonia from AFOs likely is not a significant source of summertime  $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ . We then put our observations into an aerosol thermodynamic model and learned that summertime northeastern Colorado is too hot and dry to favor aerosol formation despite high amounts of ammonia. We also make some approximations of spring/autumn and winter conditions in the model and learn that the cooler temperatures could potentially support substantial  $\text{PM}_{2.5}$  formation. This means that ammonia from AFOs could be a significant source of wintertime  $\text{PM}_{2.5}$  pollution in Northeastern Colorado.

### 1. Introduction

Ammonia ( $\text{NH}_3$ ) from agricultural activity accounts for over 80% of global emissions, with 50% from livestock manure and 30% from crop fertilizer (Wyer et al., 2022). Global  $\text{NH}_3$  emissions and agricultural output have increased dramatically since the invention of the Haber-Bosch process in the early 20th century (Erisman et al., 2008; Galloway et al., 2004) and are projected to continue to increase in the near future to meet food security demands from a growing global population (Galloway et al., 2004; van Vuuren et al., 2011). The United States (US) is the third largest contributor of global  $\text{NH}_3$  emissions (Liu et al., 2022). In the US, where  $\text{NH}_3$  emissions

remain unregulated, agriculture accounts for over 80% of domestic  $\text{NH}_3$  emissions, with almost 50% of total domestic emissions attributable to livestock production (NEI, 2020).

Animal feeding operations (AFOs) are major agricultural point sources of  $\text{NH}_3$ . AFOs emit  $\text{NH}_3$  when nitrogen-containing compounds (e.g., urea and undigested proteins) in livestock waste decompose and volatilize (Behera et al., 2013; Wyer et al., 2022). The volatilization of  $\text{NH}_3$  from AFOs is affected by waste management/storage practices and ambient conditions such as temperature, soil water content, wind speed, etc. (Behera et al., 2013; Hristov et al., 2011), with temperature being the most significant meteorological parameter (Robarge et al., 2002). Thus, in regions with intensive animal agriculture such as Northern Colorado,  $\text{NH}_3$  concentrations peak in the summer when AFO emissions are generally highest (e.g., Benedict, Day, et al., 2013; Eilerman et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2020). In Northern Colorado,  $\text{NH}_3$  exhibits strong spatial gradients (e.g., Benedict, Day, et al., 2013) due to its short lifetime (hours-weeks) (Evangelou et al., 2021; Juncosa Calahorrano et al., 2023; Luo et al., 2022), and  $\text{NH}_3$  hotspots can be large enough to identify and trace back to individual AFOs via satellite imagery (Van Damme et al., 2018). Under upslope wind conditions, AFOs in Northern Colorado have also been shown to contribute significantly to nitrogen deposition and affect ecosystem health in Rocky Mountain National Park (e.g., Benedict et al., 2018; Pan et al., 2021).

Ammonia is the most abundant alkaline gas in the atmosphere and important for fine particulate matter ( $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ ) formation. Under thermodynamically favorable conditions, gaseous  $\text{NH}_3$  can partition to form aerosol-phase ammonium ( $\text{NH}_4^+$ ), which can degrade ecosystem health via soil acidification (Tian & Niu, 2015) and eutrophication (Zhan et al., 2017). In the particle phase,  $\text{NH}_4^+$  can also contribute to a significant fraction of inorganic  $\text{PM}_{2.5}$  mass (Jimenez et al., 2009), which has adverse effects on human health (Pope et al., 2009) and visibility (Hand et al., 2020).

The inorganic gas-aerosol partitioning of  $\text{NH}_3\text{-NH}_4^+$  is determined by complex, non-linear relationships between meteorological conditions and atmospheric composition. In the atmosphere, sulfuric acid ( $\text{H}_2\text{SO}_4$ ) readily condenses into an acidic aerosol (Ayers et al., 1980; Kulmala & Laaksonen, 1990; Roedel, 1979), and any  $\text{NH}_3$  present will partition to the aerosol phase to form  $(\text{NH}_4)_2\text{SO}_4$  until sulfate ( $\text{SO}_4^{2-}$ ) is fully neutralized (Bassett & Seinfeld, 1983). Next, any remaining  $\text{NH}_3$  can react with  $\text{HNO}_3$  to form  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  aerosols if thermodynamically favorable (Bassett & Seinfeld, 1983). Particulate  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation is thermodynamically favorable when the product of  $\text{NH}_3$  and  $\text{HNO}_3$  mixing ratios is supersaturated relative to the equilibrium constant  $K_p$  (i.e.,  $[\text{NH}_3][\text{HNO}_3] > K_p$ ), and  $K_p$  is exponentially lower at cooler temperatures (e.g., Kim et al., 1993; Stelson et al., 1979) and lower at higher relative humidity (RH) for aqueous aerosols (as opposed to dry) (e.g., Bassett & Seinfeld, 1983; Russell et al., 1983). The gas-aerosol partitioning of the  $\text{NH}_3\text{-HNO}_3\text{-NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  system is further complicated by interactions of  $\text{NH}_4^+$  with other inorganic species such as non-volatile cations (NVCs; e.g., sodium  $[\text{Na}^+]$ , potassium  $[\text{K}^+]$ , calcium  $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]$ , magnesium  $[\text{Mg}^{2+}]$ ), organic acids (e.g., formate, oxalate, acetate), and nonpolar organic compounds (e.g., levoglucosan) (e.g., Metzger et al., 2006; Pun et al., 2002), so these complex gas-aerosol systems are studied using aerosol thermodynamic models.

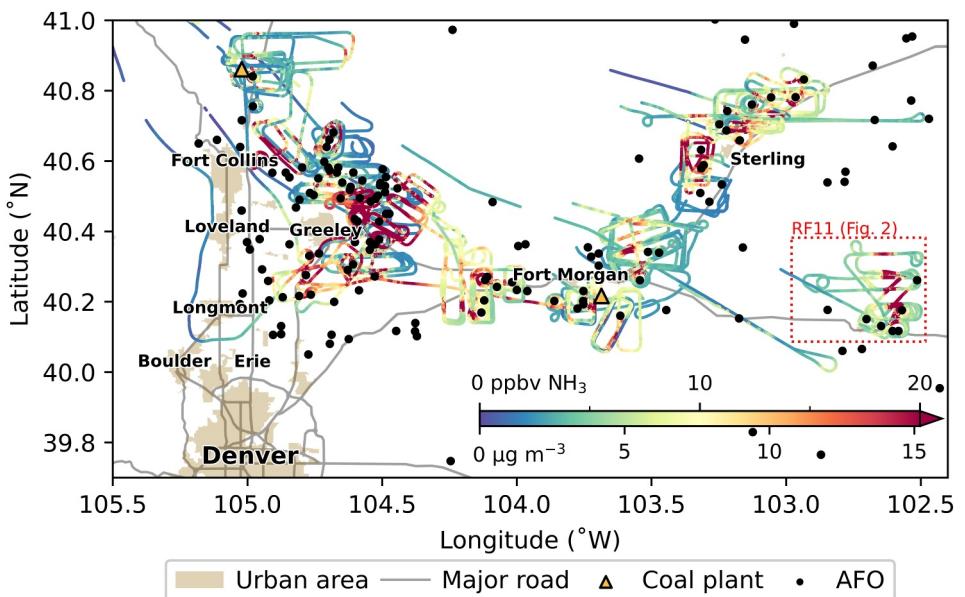
Previous studies have used aerosol thermodynamic models to study inorganic gas-aerosol partitioning, including  $\text{NH}_4^+$  formation, in various settings. Two common models are the Extended Aerosol Inorganics Model (E-AIM) (Clegg et al., 1998; Friese & Ebel, 2010) and ISORROPIA II (Fountoukis & Nenes, 2007). E-AIM is considered more accurate (Hennigan et al., 2015) and explicitly solves for thermodynamic equilibrium, with options to include  $\text{Na}^+$  and  $\text{Cl}^-$  (Friese & Ebel, 2010) and organic acids and amines (Clegg et al., 2001). In contrast, ISORROPIA II trades accuracy for computational efficiency by making several approximations and includes  $\text{Na}^+$ ,  $\text{K}^+$ ,  $\text{Mg}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ , and  $\text{Cl}^-$  and an option to use precalculated activity coefficients for even faster calculations (Fountoukis & Nenes, 2007). Both of these models can calculate  $\text{NH}_3\text{-NH}_4^+$  and  $\text{HNO}_3\text{-NO}_3^-$  partitioning either (a) as closed-system problems by using total (gas + aerosol) concentrations as inputs to predict the equilibrium-specific aerosol and gas concentrations or (b) as open-system problems by using aerosol concentrations as inputs to predict the equilibrium gas concentrations (Pye et al., 2020). Previous studies have shown that closed-system problems can better predict aerosol pH (e.g., Fang et al., 2023; Hennigan et al., 2015; Murphy et al., 2017; Song et al., 2018; Tao & Murphy, 2019, 2021), which affects  $\text{NH}_3$  neutralizing aerosol acidity via  $\text{NH}_3\text{-NH}_4^+$  partitioning; thus, both gas-phase measurements of  $\text{NH}_3$  and  $\text{HNO}_3$  and aerosol-phase measurements are required to accurately model  $\text{NH}_3\text{-NH}_4^+$  and  $\text{HNO}_3\text{-NO}_3^-$  partitioning. There is a large body of work that has used weekly-to-hourly measurements of gas-phase and aerosol-phase species from surface monitoring sites to study  $\text{NH}_3\text{-NH}_4^+$  partitioning in various settings. For example, ISORROPIA II has been used to study the sensitivity of  $\text{PM}_{2.5}$

to  $\text{NH}_3$  and  $\text{HNO}_3$  in urban and agricultural regions in the US, China, and Europe (Cheng et al., 2021; Guo et al., 2018; Nah et al., 2018) and the sensitivity of the vertical distribution of  $\text{NH}_3$  to  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  partitioning at a suburban site in northeastern Colorado (Y. Li et al., 2017). E-AIM has been used to study the sensitivity of urban  $\text{PM}_{2.5}$  to  $\text{NH}_3\text{-NH}_4^+$  (Tao & Murphy, 2019, 2021), amine versus  $\text{NH}_3$  uptake in marine  $\text{PM}_{2.5}$  (Chen et al., 2022), and new approaches to estimating aerosol pH (Tao et al., 2022). However, application of these aerosol thermodynamic models to study  $\text{NH}_3\text{-HNO}_3\text{-NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  partitioning in targeted agricultural  $\text{NH}_3$  plumes at high sub-hour temporal resolution is lacking.

In comparison to surface monitoring sites, ground-based and airborne mobile sampling have the benefit of targeting  $\text{NH}_3$  plumes from AFO outflow. Previous studies using ground-based mobile sampling have reported  $\text{NH}_3$  and methane ( $\text{CH}_4$ ) enhancement ratios from AFOs in northeastern Colorado (Eilerman et al., 2016) and the San Joaquin Valley in California (Miller et al., 2015). However, the inclusion of aerosol instrumentation in their payloads were restricted by space and power supply, and coverage was limited by speed and to roads. In contrast, airborne sampling provides better spatial and vertical coverage, but can share similar space/power limitations. Sorooshian et al. (2008) deployed a suite of instrumentation to characterize aerosols (e.g., composition, hygroscopicity, size distribution, etc.) downwind of an AFO but did not make any gas-phase measurements, so they could only infer whether  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation was  $\text{NH}_3$ - or  $\text{HNO}_3$ -limited. Staebler et al. (2009) measured  $\text{NH}_4^+$ ,  $\text{NO}_3^-$ ,  $\text{SO}_4^{2-}$ , and non-refractory organic aerosols and gaseous  $\text{NH}_3$  (but not  $\text{HNO}_3$ ) downwind of one AFO on three flights to study  $\text{NH}_3$  loss processes. They found  $\text{NH}_3$  loss to gas-aerosol partitioning was negligible (<4%  $\text{NH}_4^+:\text{NH}_3$ ), and dominated by advection (90%) and dry deposition (10%), on their three flights but did not utilize models to parse out which thermodynamic factors were inhibiting  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation. Hacker et al. (2016) tracked  $\text{NH}_3$  and  $\text{CH}_4$  enhancements downwind of AFOs on seven different flights, but could only measure  $\text{NH}_3$  and  $\text{CH}_4$  on alternating flights due to space/weight/power limitations of the two-seat motor glider. Schobesberger et al. (2023) measured  $\text{NH}_4^+$ ,  $\text{SO}_4^{2-}$ ,  $\text{NO}_3^-$ , and non-refractory organic aerosols and  $\text{NH}_3$  to investigate the surface-atmosphere exchange of  $\text{NH}_3$  and found net  $\text{NH}_3$  flux from the surface to the atmosphere at an agricultural region; they also note that  $\text{NH}_3:\text{NH}_4^+$  ratios are lower in the free troposphere compared to the boundary layer likely due the temperature-dependence of  $\text{NH}_3\text{-NH}_4^+$  partitioning. In addition to the aforementioned airborne studies that measured outflow from individual AFOs, there have been several other airborne studies that have observed  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation in regional outflow. Nowak et al. (2010) reported  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation in urban outflow over Houston when the research aircraft inadvertently intercepted  $\text{NH}_3$  plumes from an industrial accident and an unidentifiable source. Nowak et al. (2012) presented a case study that observed favorable conditions for  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation downwind of a region of dairy farms in the California South Coast Air Basin on one flight and showed  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation could be mitigated more effectively by  $\text{NH}_3$  reductions from dairy rather than from traffic. Franchin et al. (2018) showed significant  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation during winter pollution episodes in Utah and used ISORROPIA to show  $\text{NH}_3$  and  $\text{HNO}_3$  reductions can reduce  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation but its effectiveness varies by location between the Cache, Salt Lake, and Utah valleys.

In a 2019 pilot study to the Transport and Transformation of Ammonia (TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am) campaign, Pollack et al. (2022) used 1 Hz measurements of  $\text{NH}_3$ ,  $\text{CH}_4$ , and ethane ( $\text{C}_2\text{H}_6$ ) to isolate agricultural  $\text{CH}_4$  from nearby oil and natural gas (ONG)  $\text{CH}_4$  emissions and quantify  $\text{NH}_3:\text{CH}_4$  enhancement ratios from 6 AFOs, and McCabe et al. (2023) used these measurements to compare two methods of calculating agricultural  $\text{CH}_4$  emission rates in a region with co-located ONG activity and reported  $\text{NH}_3$  and  $\text{CH}_4$  fluxes from livestock. Building off of this pilot study, the full TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am campaign included a more comprehensive payload with the addition of gas-phase  $\text{HNO}_3$  and aerosol composition measurements and was conducted in northeastern Colorado in July/August 2021 (Phase I) and August 2022 (Phase II). The TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am campaign provides a unique data set containing both gas and aerosol composition at high temporal resolution in and around agricultural  $\text{NH}_3$  plumes from targeted facilities, which can be used to quantify  $\text{NH}_3$  emissions and study the near-source evolution and loss processes of  $\text{NH}_3$  from AFOs (Juncosa Calahorrano et al., 2023).

In this work, we use the comprehensive suite of observations from Phase I of TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am in tandem with model analyses to investigate (a) the sensitivity of PM formation to AFO emissions and (b) the seasonality of  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation in northeastern Colorado. Section 2 outlines the aircraft- and ground-based observations and modeling approach used in this study. Section 3 explores the sensitivity of summertime  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation to precursor



**Figure 1.** Map of near-source flights from TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am Phase I ( $\leq 1,500$  m agl) colored by 1 Hz  $\text{NH}_3$  concentration. The colorbar is truncated at 20 ppbv, and the maximum observed  $\text{NH}_3$  concentration is  $>400$  ppbv. The red dotted line outlines RF11, which is plotted as a time series in Figure 2.

emissions and meteorological conditions, then predicts the seasonality of  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation by modeling idealized scenarios beyond the summertime measurements. Section 4 summarizes our findings.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am

The Transport and Transformation of Ammonia (TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am) campaign deployed the University of Wyoming King Air (UWKA) over northeastern Colorado (Figure 1) during July/August 2021 (Phase I) and August 2022 (Phase II) to characterize the atmospheric composition downwind of AFOs and understand the chemical and physical evolution of  $\text{NH}_3$ . There were 24 research flights consisting of 17 near-source sampling flights, 6 upslope flights, and 1 satellite-underpass. Combined with a low-altitude waiver, this smaller research aircraft was able to routinely sample between approximately 60 and 300 m agl. Here we focus on the inorganic gas-aerosol partitioning during only the Phase I near-source sampling flights. Near-source sampling flights included circling facilities to manually identify the outflow direction, followed by vertically stacked boxes at multiple intervals downwind of targeted AFOs. Flights were generally flown on hot, dry afternoons when surface winds were strong ( $>5 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ ) enough to form and identify well-defined  $\text{NH}_3$  plumes. Smoke-impacted days accounted for 8 of the 10 near-source sampling flights during Phase I in 2021.

Figure 1 shows the study region including a large number of different types of AFOs (e.g., cattle, dairy, poultry, etc.), and urban areas along the major road corridor from Denver to Fort Collins. Active oil and gas operations in this region are depicted in Pollack et al. (2022). The study region is bordered by the Rocky Mountains on the west. We restrict the analysis to data collected below 1,500 m agl and  $\leq 41^\circ\text{N}$ . This removes data associated with takeoff/landing from the operations base at Laramie Regional Airport.

### 2.2. Aircraft Instrumentation

The UWKA instrument payload measured a suite of aerosol-phase and gas-phase species to study the inorganic gas-aerosol partitioning around AFO outflow. The full instrument payload is described in detail in Juncosa Calahorrano et al. (2023), so here we describe the payload relevant to our study and summarize it in Table 1.

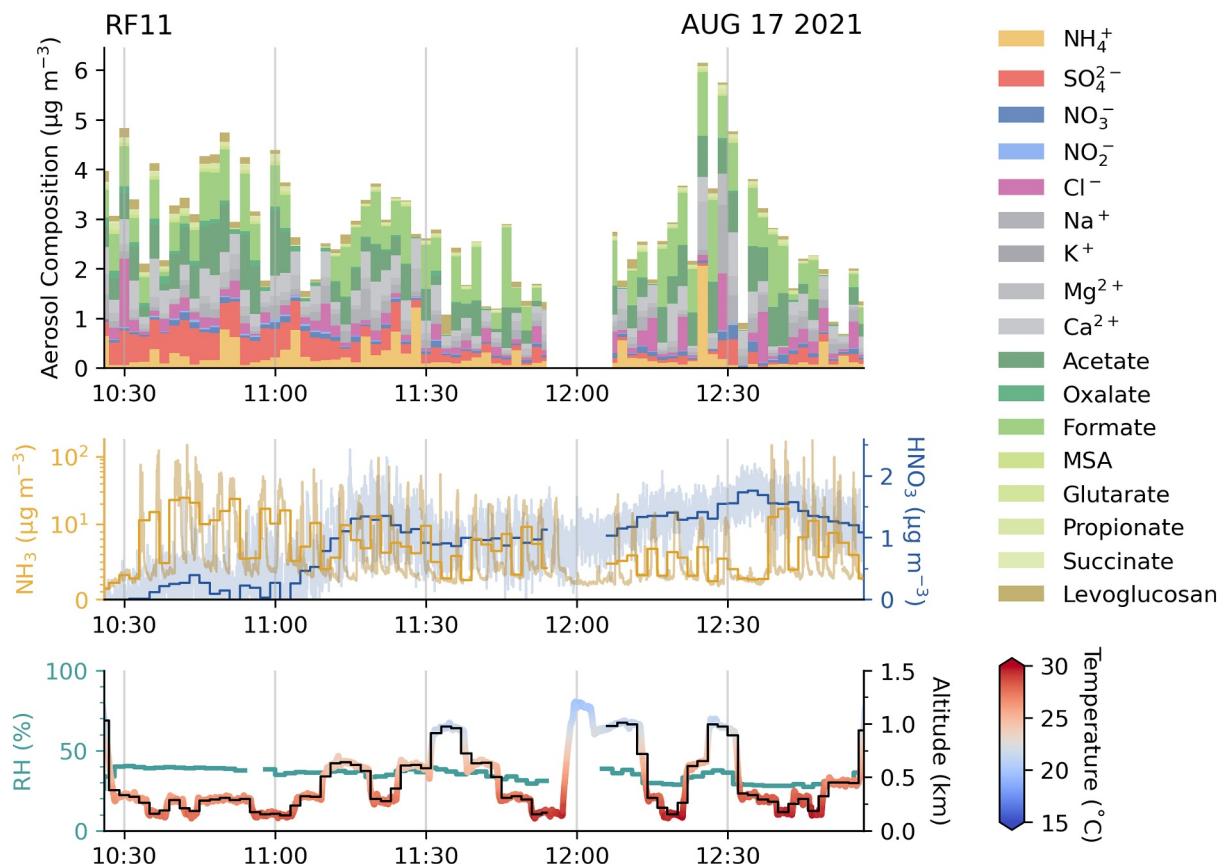
**Table 1***Summary of University of Wyoming King Air Instrument Payload and Measured Parameters Used in This Work*

Parameter	Instrument	Sampling frequency	Limit of detection
Submicron aerosol composition	PILS with fraction collector	2 min	0.001 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$
$\text{NH}_4^+$			0.001 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$
$\text{SO}_4^{2-}$			0.001 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$
$\text{NO}_3^-$			0.001 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$
$\text{NO}_2^-$			0.001 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$
$\text{Cl}^-$			0.001 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$
$\text{Na}^+$			0.001 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$
$\text{K}^+$			0.001 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$
$\text{Mg}^{2+}$			0.001 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$
$\text{Ca}^{2+}$			0.001 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$
Formate $\text{HCOO}^-$			0.001 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$
Acetate $\text{CH}_3\text{COO}^-$			0.001 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$
Oxalate $\text{C}_2\text{O}_4^{2-}$			0.001 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$
Propionate $\text{C}_3\text{H}_5\text{O}^{2-}$			0.001 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$
MSA <sup>a</sup> $\text{CH}_3\text{SO}_3^-$			0.001 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$
Succinate $\text{C}_4\text{H}_4\text{O}_4^{2-}$			0.001 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$
Glutarate $\text{C}_5\text{H}_7\text{O}_4^-$			0.001 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$
Levoglucosan $\text{C}_6\text{H}_{10}\text{O}_5$			0.001 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$
$\text{NH}_3$	QC-TILDAS operating at 967 $\text{cm}^{-1}$	1 s	180 pptv
$\text{HNO}_3$	QC-TILDAS operating at 1,723 $\text{cm}^{-1}$	1 s	555 pptv

<sup>a</sup>Methanesulfonate (MSA).

Figure 2 shows an exemplary time series of the full suite of observations collected during a single research flight on 17 August 2021. The full suite of observations includes 9 inorganic species, 8 organic species, and gas-phase  $\text{NH}_3$  and  $\text{HNO}_3$ . The  $\text{NH}_3$  and  $\text{HNO}_3$  measurements are averaged from 1 Hz to 2 min in order to match the time resolution of the PILS measurements. The 2 min averaged  $\text{NH}_3$  masks much of the observed high frequency variability present in the 1 Hz observations. For instance, the reported maximum gas-phase  $\text{NH}_3$  reported here (114 ppbv) corresponds to the 2-min average, whereas the maximum  $\text{NH}_3$  sampled using the 1 Hz data is >400 ppbv. Temperature, RH, and geospatial data are from the UWKA standard suite of instrumentation.

Water-soluble aerosol samples were collected by a Particle-into-Liquid Sampler (PILS) with a fraction collector for offline analysis using ion chromatography. A PILS works by collecting ambient aerosol particles into pure water to produce a liquid sample with aerosol particles dissolved in it. The PILS sampled air at 15 LPM from the NCAR-University of Wyoming Aerosol Inlet mounted on top of the UWKA fuselage (Snider et al., 2018). A non-rotating MOUDI impactor stage upstream of the PILS removes super-micron particles to provide a size cutoff of 1  $\mu\text{m}$  ( $\text{PM}_1$ ) (Marple et al., 1991). Sodium-carbonate- and phosphorous-acid-coated denuders remove gaseous interference before the particles are mixed with hot steam to create a supersaturated environment ( $\text{RH} \geq 100\%$ ) and grow the particles large enough to be collected by an impactor. The particles are then washed off the impactor by a continuous flow of deionized water providing the liquid sample with the dissolved aerosol particles for analysis (Orsini et al., 2003). Finally, the liquid sample is continuously collected by a Bretschel Fraction Collector for offline analysis (Sorooshian et al., 2006). The fraction collector holds seventy-two 2 mL polypropylene vials on a carousel, and the PILS liquid flow rate was set such that a ~1.2 mL liquid sample is collected into a vial every 2 min (Sullivan et al., 2022). Preloaded carousels were manually switched during each flight to allow for collection of samples across an entire flight. Background samples were also collected each flight for 10 min by forcing the airflow through a HEPA filter before entering the PILS. Immediately after each flight, the vials were unloaded, recapped with solid caps, and transported to Colorado State University in coolers with ice packs to be stored at 2°C until analysis.



**Figure 2.** Time series of observations from RF11 in local time. The flight track from RF11 is outlined by the red dotted line in Figure 1 and the plane is flying vertically stacked boxes as it moves downwind of the target facility from  $\sim 10:30$  to  $12:30$  before flying back south and circling the target facility again. Top: Aerosol-phase measurements colored by species. Middle: Gas-phase  $\text{NH}_3$  in yellow (left y-axis) and  $\text{HNO}_3$  in blue (right y-axis) averaged to 2-min Particle-into-Liquid Sampler timesteps. Light shade represents native 1 Hz measurements. Bottom: RH (left y-axis) and altitude colored by temperature (right y-axis). See Table S1 for summary statistics of each species.

Offline analysis of PILS samples was performed by ion chromatography to determine the aerosol-phase concentrations of cations, anions/organic acids, and levoglucosan (full list of species measured provided in Table 1). Cations were determined using a Dionex ICS-3000 ion chromatography with a pump, conductivity detector, and self-regenerating cation suppressor. A Dionex IonPac CS12A-5  $\mu\text{m}$  analytical column ( $3 \times 150$  mm) using 20 mM methanesulfonic acid manually made at a flow rate of 0.5 mL/min was used for the cation separation. The injection volume and analysis time were 190  $\mu\text{L}$  and 17 min, respectively. Anions/organic acids were measured using a Dionex ICS-4000 capillary ion chromatograph, which includes an eluent generator, isocratic pump, degausser, suppressor, carbonate removal device, and conductivity detector. A Dionex AS11-HC capillary column with a potassium hydroxide (KOH) gradient provided by the eluent generator at a flow rate of 0.015 mL/min was used for the separation. The complete run time was 65 min with a separation method as follows: (a) 13 min isocratic elution with 1 mM KOH, (b) 20 min linear gradient from 1 to 15 mM KOH, (c) 10 min linear gradient from 15 to 30 mM KOH, (d) 5 min linear gradient from 30 to 45 mM KOH, and (e) 17 min re-equilibration step to return to the starting conditions. An injection volume of 35  $\mu\text{L}$  was used. Levoglucosan was determined via high-performance anion-exchange chromatography with pulsed amperometric detection using a Dionex DX-500 series ion chromatograph with an ED-50/ED-50A electrochemical cell. The cell includes two electrodes: a pH-Ag/AgCl (silver/silver chloride) reference electrode and “standard” gold working electrode. For the separation, a Dionex CarboPac PA-1 column ( $4 \times 250$  mm) employing a sodium hydroxide gradient was used. The complete run time was 59 min, and the injection volume was 100  $\mu\text{L}$ . More details on the method can be found in Sullivan, Frank, Onstad et al. (2011), Sullivan, Frank, Kenski, and Collett (2011), and Sullivan et al. (2014, 2019, 2022). Samples were blank-corrected using the average of all background samples collected on that particular flight. The uncertainty is  $\pm 10\%$  and the limit of detection is  $0.001 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$  for all species.

$\text{NH}_3$  mixing ratios were measured using a closed-path quantum-cascade tunable infrared laser direct absorption spectrometer (QC-TILDAS) with an effective path length of 76 m and operating at  $967 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  (Ellis et al., 2010; McManus et al., 1995, 2010; Zahniser et al., 1995). The details of the flight-ready  $\text{NH}_3$  instrument are reported in Pollack et al. (2019). The aircraft injection inlet and inertial inlet system shared by the  $\text{NH}_3$  and  $\text{HNO}_3$  instrument in this work are configured and operated in a similar manner as reported in Pollack et al. (2019). Briefly, the  $\text{NH}_3$  QC-TILDAS is operated with a high sample flow rate ( $>10 \text{ SLPM}$ ) to help prevent adsorption of  $\text{NH}_3$  to the sampling surfaces. The instrument was also operated with a  $40 \pm 2^\circ\text{C}$  heated inertial inlet positioned along the flowpath to reduce (a) condensation of water (that  $\text{NH}_3$  can dissolve in/adsorb to), (b) adsorption of  $\text{NH}_3$  to the sampling surfaces, and (c) a positive bias from semivolatile ammonium particles  $>300 \text{ nm}$  in diameter (Ellis et al., 2010). The time response of the  $\text{NH}_3$  QC-TILDAS has been previously characterized and defined as the time required for 90% signal recovery following a step change in  $\text{NH}_3$  calibration signal (Pollack et al., 2019). During TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am, a time response of 1–2 s without surface passivation could be maintained by regularly cleaning the instrument sampling surfaces between flights. The instrument was calibrated on the ground between flights and regularly zeroed in flight by overblowing the aircraft inlet with ultra-pure air. The flowpath was also copiously flushed with ultra-pure air following calibrations. The calibration source was a thermally-stabilized, certified  $\text{NH}_3$  permeation device (Kin-Tek). The permeation rate of the calibration source was verified before and after the field study using the NOAA UV absorption system and determined to have an uncertainty of  $\pm 10\%$  (Neuman et al., 2003; Pollack et al., 2019). The instrument was also mounted on a vibrationally-isolated rack to minimize motion sensitivity in flight (Pollack et al., 2019). The 1-Hz precision of the instrument is 60 pptv; the detection limit is defined as three times the precision (180 pptv).  $\text{NH}_3$  measurements are collected at 10 Hz and averaged to 1 Hz for reporting and further averaged to 2 min to match the PILS time resolution for this analysis. The uncertainty of  $\text{NH}_3$  is  $\pm 12\%$  of the measured mixing ratio (Pollack et al., 2019).

$\text{HNO}_3$  mixing ratios are measured using a separate closed-path QC-TILDAS with a 76 m pathlength and measuring absorption by the molecule at  $1,723 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  (Roscioli et al., 2016). Owing to weight, space, and power available on the UWKA, the  $\text{HNO}_3$  measurements were categorized as second priority for the TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am payload. The only way the  $\text{HNO}_3$  QC-TILDAS could be implemented aboard the aircraft was to share a common aircraft inlet, inertial inlet, and pumping system with the  $\text{NH}_3$  instrument. Because of the shared flowpath, the same instrument operation practices are applied (e.g., regular in-flight zeros, calibrations on the ground between flights, regularly cleaning sampling surfaces and inlet components, and copiously flushing the sample flow path with ultrapure air following individual  $\text{NH}_3$  and  $\text{HNO}_3$  calibrations). The  $\text{HNO}_3$  QC-TILDAS is also mounted on vibration isolators in the aircraft equipment rack. The 1-Hz precision is 185 pptv resulting in a detection limit of 555 pptv. The uncertainty for the  $\text{HNO}_3$  measurement is determined to be  $\pm 20\%$  of the measured mixing ratio following the procedures in Pollack et al. (2019). When operated with a dedicated flowpath, the  $\text{HNO}_3$  QC-TILDAS has been previously reported to have a 70 s time response for a 90% signal recovery (Roscioli et al., 2016). Even with the high sample flow rate ( $>10 \text{ SLPM}$ ) and regular cleaning of the sampling surfaces, the 90%  $\text{HNO}_3$  signal recovery time following a step change in  $\text{HNO}_3$  calibration signal during ground calibration days between flights during TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am was closer to 500 s. The longer response time is likely related to the  $\text{HNO}_3$  QC-TILDAS being positioned downstream of the  $\text{NH}_3$  QC-TILDAS. There was a longer flow path between the inlet tip and the  $\text{HNO}_3$  detector, and this pathway was susceptible to adsorption of  $\text{HNO}_3$  on the sampling surfaces prior to detection. Owing to a larger detection limit and uncertainty in the  $\text{HNO}_3$  measurement compared to  $\text{NH}_3$ , we consider the  $1/e$  response time (which is closer to 200 s) to be a more representative time response for the  $\text{HNO}_3$  measurement. For this work, and to match the sampling frequency of PILS, the  $\text{HNO}_3$  measurements are averaged to 120 s prior to further analyses.

Active continuous passivation of the sampling surfaces has been shown to improve time response for closed-path QC-TILDAS instruments (Pollack et al., 2019; Roscioli et al., 2016). Prior work shows success in improving the time response of a single-channel, closed-path  $\text{NH}_3$  QC-TILDAS when using a strong perfluorinated base as the passivant and for a separate  $\text{HNO}_3$  QC-TILDAS when using a strong perfluorinated acid as the passivant (Pollack et al., 2019; Roscioli et al., 2016). However, active continuous passivation could not be implemented during TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am owing to the common flow path for the payload configuration.

### 2.3. Model

Extended Aerosol Inorganic Model (E-AIM) was used to investigate factors driving the gas-aerosol partitioning of  $\text{NH}_3$  and  $\text{HNO}_3$ . The E-AIM Model II (<http://www.aim.env.uea.ac.uk/aim/aim.php>) calculates the equilibrium

phase partitioning of an inorganic  $\text{H}_2\text{O}-\text{SO}_4^{2-}-\text{NO}_3^--\text{NH}_4^+$  aerosol system with an option to add preset and custom organic acids and amines. In this study, we add the three most abundant organic acids—formic acid, oxalic acid, and acetic acid—to the default inorganic aerosol system with custom property files that include molar mass, dissociation constants (<https://pubchem.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>, last accessed 28 February 2024), UNIFAC activity coefficients, and Henry's Law constants (Sander, 2023) and restrict the organic compounds to the aqueous-phase. The model inputs are measurements of temperature, relative humidity, total ammonia ( $\text{NH}_x = \text{NH}_3 + \text{NH}_4^+$ ), and total nitrate ( $\text{TNO}_3 = \text{HNO}_3 + \text{NO}_3^-$ ), as well as particle-phase sulfate, formate, acetate, and oxalate. The primary model outputs used in our study are the equilibrium gas-aerosol partitioning of total  $\text{NH}_x$  and  $\text{TNO}_3$ . To apply E-AIM to our analysis, we make a key assumption that the submicron aerosol population is internally mixed and at metastable equilibrium.

### 2.3.1. Internally Mixed Assumption

Aerosols are likely not truly internally mixed in the real atmosphere (e.g., Riemer et al., 2019), so we conduct a comprehensive suite of sensitivity tests with varying combinations of model input species to best represent the aerosol composition undergoing  $\text{NH}_3-\text{HNO}_3-\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  partitioning (Figure S1 in Supporting Information S1). We find that the inclusion of formate, oxalate, and acetate in the model help correct for  $\text{NH}_4^+$  and  $\text{NO}_3^-$  underestimates by the model (Figures S1a and S1b in Supporting Information S1), and these three compounds have been observed to be the most abundant organic acids in aerosols (Nah et al., 2018). The predicted equilibrium vapor pressure of oxalic acid ranges from ppt to ppbv and is relatively low as it is predicted to be mostly dissociated in the particle phase. In contrast, the predicted equilibrium vapor pressures of acetic and formic acid ranges from tenths to tens of percent, and they are predicted to be mostly undissociated in the particle phase. The equilibrium gas-phase concentrations of acetic and formic acid are unrealistically high compared to the tens of ppbv or less reported in wildfire plumes (Permar et al., 2023) and the <0.1% total mixing ratio of trace gases in dry air, but the reason for this is unclear and beyond the scope of this study. We find that the inclusion of NVCs and  $\text{Cl}^-$  causes E-AIM to overpredict  $\text{NO}_3^-$  on aggregate, suggesting that NVCs are externally mixed (or associated with unmeasured carbonate ions) (Section S1, Figures S1e and S1f in Supporting Information S1), so we do not include NVCs in our model for analysis. We also find that the inclusion of levoglucosan, a moderate polar organic compound (Petters & Kreidenweis, 2007), and a proxy for unmeasured smoke-related organic compounds (Section S1, Figures S2 and S3 in Supporting Information S1) worsens model-observation agreement (Figure S1 in Supporting Information S1).

### 2.3.2. Equilibrium Assumption

Previously, it has been shown that submicron aerosols can reach equilibrium within minutes to a few hours (Meng & Seinfeld, 1996). We do not calculate plume age and the time to reach equilibrium, so the equilibrium assumption is ultimately a shortcoming of this study given the strong perturbations of  $\text{NH}_3$  in AFO plumes and may contribute to overestimates in modeled  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$ . We identify two conditions of nonequilibrium behavior in 9% of our data (Section 3.3).

### 2.3.3. Metastable Equilibrium Assumption

Previous studies ran E-AIM and ISORROPIA II in metastable mode (e.g., Cheng et al., 2021; Guo et al., 2018; Nah et al., 2018; Tao & Murphy, 2019, 2021; Tao et al., 2022) because aqueous aerosol salts have been observed in the atmosphere below their deliquescence relative humidity (DRH) and above their crystallization relative humidity (CRH) (Rood et al., 1989), so we also run the model in metastable mode such that aerosols may exist in the aqueous phase below their DRH. The observed RH is above the DRH of  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  and  $(\text{NH}_4)_2\text{SO}_4$  in approximately 30% and 6% of observations, respectively, and above the CRH of  $(\text{NH}_4)_2\text{SO}_4$  in approximately 44% of observations. No CRH is observed for  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  (Davis et al., 2015). The presence of organics has also been shown to lower the CRH of  $(\text{NH}_4)_2\text{SO}_4$  (e.g., Choi & Chan, 2002; Pant et al., 2004), which would allow aerosols to exist in a metastable state at even lower ranges of RH. We find improved modeled gas-aerosol partitioning when assuming metastable equilibrium as opposed to stable equilibrium (Figure S4 in Supporting Information S1).

## 2.4. Integrated Ground-Based Measurements

We also include gas-phase  $\text{HNO}_3$  and  $\text{NH}_3$  measurements from a ground-based URG annular denuder/filter pack sampler located at the Weld County Tower site in Greeley, Colorado, which is operated by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). Weekly samples were collected from mid-March through mid-October from 2014 to 2019 (but not 2018). Ambient air was pulled into the sampler at a flow rate of 3 LPM through a  $\text{PM}_{2.5}$  Teflon-coated cyclone followed by sodium carbonate and phosphorous acid coated denuders to collect gas-phase  $\text{HNO}_3$  and  $\text{NH}_3$  (Benedict, Chen, et al., 2013). The air then passed through a 47 mm nylon filter to collect PM. Finally, the air passed through a second phosphorous acid denuder to collect any particulate  $\text{NH}_4^+$  that volatilized off the filter. The nylon filter efficiently retains volatilized nitric acid (Yu et al., 2005).

Each nylon filter was extracted in 6 mL DI Water in a polystyrene test tube and sonicated without heat for 40 min. Each denuder was extracted in 10 mL DI Water. Both extracts were then analyzed for anion and cation species using ion chromatography. Both systems utilized a Dionex DX-500 IC, which includes an isocratic pump, self-regenerating anion or cation suppressor, and conductivity detector. The anions were quantified using a Dionex IonPac AS14A (4 × 150 mm) analytical column using a manually made eluent mixture of 1 mM sodium bicarbonate and 8 mM sodium bicarbonate at a flow rate of 1 mL/min. A Dionex IonPac CS12A-5  $\mu\text{m}$  (3 × 120 mm) analytical column was used with 20 mM methanesulfonic acid eluent manually made at a flow rate of 0.5 mL/min. The injection volume and analysis time of both methods was 50  $\mu\text{L}$  and 17 min, respectively.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Overview

Figure 1 shows that northeastern Colorado is characterized by high and spatially variable  $\text{NH}_3$  concentrations.  $\text{NH}_3$  concentrations have been shown to vary by orders of magnitude from tens of pptv over remote oceans to tens of ppbv in agricultural regions (Nair & Yu, 2020), and can exhibit steep spatial gradients within agricultural regions (Benedict, Day, et al., 2013). Y. Li et al. (2017) reported weekly and biweekly averaged  $\text{NH}_3$  concentrations at 14 surface monitoring sites in northeastern Colorado during summers 2010–2015 ranging from 4 ppbv (2.66  $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ ) over grasslands to 60 ppbv (42.7  $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ ) near AFOs. Due to the finer temporal resolution and the spatial and vertical variability of our airborne measurements, we capture higher concentrations (20–114 ppbv) in targeted AFO outflow and lower concentrations outside of plumes (0.5–20 ppbv). We found that  $\text{NH}_3$  accounts for 93% of  $\text{NH}_x$  on average, and Day et al. (2012) also found that  $\text{NH}_x$  is dominantly in the gas-phase throughout the year in northeastern Colorado.

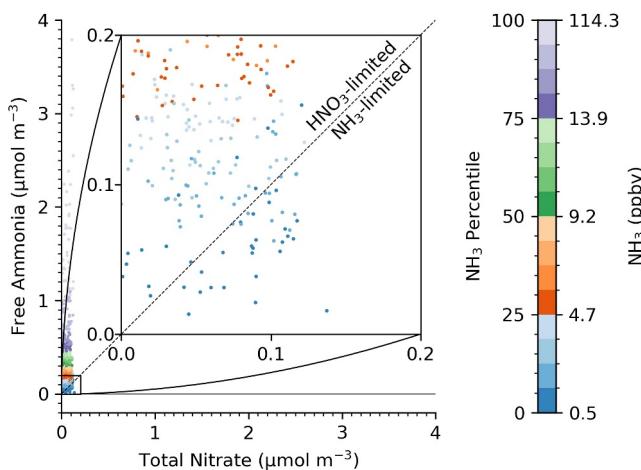
$\text{HNO}_3$  concentrations observed during TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am demonstrate much less spatial and temporal variability than  $\text{NH}_3$  concentrations.  $\text{HNO}_3$  concentrations were 1.7 ppbv on average and varied from below LOD (555 pptv) to 4 ppbv, and accounted for about 94% of  $\text{TNNO}_3$  on average. We did not identify any spatial gradients of increasing  $\text{HNO}_3$  concentrations toward urban areas, although the UWKA did not sample directly over urban areas.

For the species that the PILS resolves in this study,  $\text{PM}_1$  concentrations were 4.8  $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$  on average ( $\sigma = 2.0 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ ), with inorganic species accounting for 54% by mass and 66% by moles and organic species accounting for 45% by mass and 33% by moles. The observed inorganic  $\text{PM}_1$  mass is dominated by sulfate ( $0.52 \pm 0.37 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$  [mean ± standard deviation]), nitrate ( $0.33 \pm 0.48 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ ) and ammonium ( $0.38 \pm 0.54 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ ). The observed organic  $\text{PM}_1$  mass is dominated by acetate ( $1.1 \pm 0.7 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ ), formate ( $0.72 \pm 0.61 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ ), and oxalate ( $0.14 \pm 0.13 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ ).

### 3.2. Observed Thermodynamic Regimes

Figure 3 shows that the thermodynamic regimes sampled during TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am are always  $\text{NH}_3$ -rich and mostly  $\text{HNO}_3$ -limited. The thermodynamic regimes are determined by the gas ratio, which was introduced by Ansari and Pandis (1998) and is defined in molar concentrations:

$$\text{Gas Ratio} = \frac{\text{Free Ammonia}}{\text{Total Nitrate}} = \frac{[\text{NH}_x] - 2[\text{SO}_4^{2-}]}{[\text{TNNO}_3]} = \frac{[\text{NH}_3] + [\text{NH}_4^+] - 2[\text{SO}_4^{2-}]}{[\text{TNNO}_3]}$$



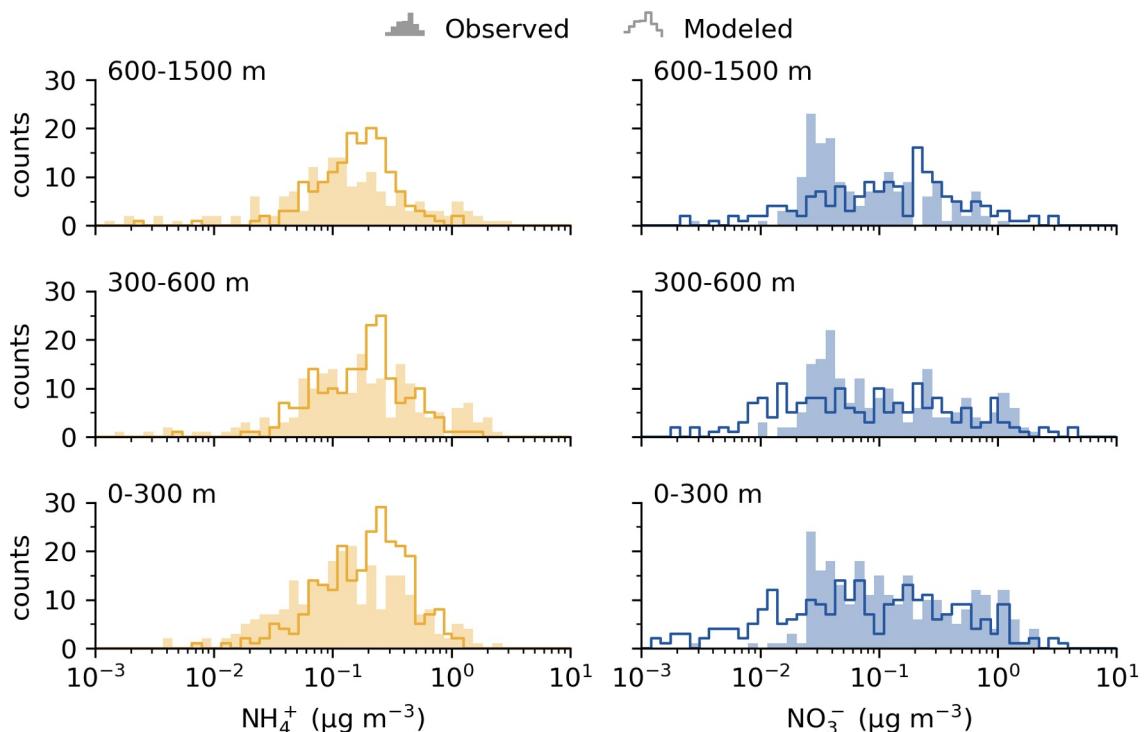
**Figure 3.** Molar concentrations of free ammonia ( $\text{NH}_3 + \text{NH}_4^+ - 2\text{SO}_4^{2-}$ ) versus total nitrate ( $\text{HNO}_3 + \text{NO}_3^-$ ). Colorbar represents  $\text{NH}_3$  percentiles and respective concentrations in ppbv are given for quartiles. Inset axes are zoomed in to the range of observed total nitrate. The dashed line delineates  $\text{NH}_3$ - and  $\text{HNO}_3$ -limited  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation regimes.

The gas ratio is always positive, indicating that sulfate is always fully neutralized and that there is always sufficient  $\text{NH}_3$  and  $\text{HNO}_3$  to form  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$ . Only 6% (37/629) of sample air masses have a gas ratio between 0 and 1 where  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation is  $\text{NH}_3$ -limited; the remaining 94% (592/629) have a gas ratio greater than 1, where  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation is  $\text{HNO}_3$ -limited.  $\text{NH}_3$ -limited conditions are only measured when  $\text{NH}_3$  is in the lowest 25th percentile ( $\leq 4.7$  ppbv). These conditions only occur sporadically away from major sources. Even though summertime AFO outflow is largely  $\text{HNO}_3$ -limited,  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation can still be sensitive to  $\text{NH}_3$  (Section 3.4).

### 3.3. Thermodynamic Modeling

Figure 4 shows the distribution of observed and modeled  $\text{NH}_4^+$  and  $\text{NO}_3^-$  binned by altitude. We find that across the full campaign in aggregate, the E-AIM simulations capture the correct order of magnitude of the observed  $\text{NH}_4^+$  and  $\text{NO}_3^-$  concentrations. Model and observations agree that there was generally little  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation, especially below 300 m. Below 300 m agl,  $\text{NH}_4^+$  exceeds  $1 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$  only 2% of the time in observations and 0.3% of the time in the model, and  $\text{NO}_3^-$  exceeds  $1 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$  4% of the time in observations and 3% of the time in the model. Summertime Colorado is hot and dry, both of which thermodynamically inhibit  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation and drive gas-aerosol partitioning into the gas-phase.

A variance analysis reveals that E-AIM systematically underpredicts  $\text{NH}_4^+$  by 102% and  $\text{NO}_3^-$  by 72% of the measured mass concentration (Figures S5c and S5h in Supporting Information S1) when excluding samples from two non-equilibrium conditions we identified. The model overpredicts  $\text{NH}_4^+$  and  $\text{NO}_3^-$  under two different non-equilibrium conditions: (a) when the plane samples in extremely concentrated AFO plumes with  $\text{NH}_3$  concentrations  $>50$  ppbv (Figures S5a and S5e in Supporting Information S1) in 3% (20/642) of our observations and (b)



**Figure 4.** Distributions of observed (shaded region) and modeled (solid line)  $\text{NH}_4^+$  (left) and  $\text{NO}_3^-$  (right) by altitude bins (rows) for the 10 near-source flights during TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am Phase I.

when the plane ascends to cooler temperatures (<20°C) under high-HNO<sub>3</sub> (>2 ppbv) conditions (Figures S5e and S5f in Supporting Information S1) in 6% (39/642) of our observations. The first non-equilibrium condition occurs mostly on one flight (RF13) which sampled the highest NH<sub>3</sub> concentrations by almost an order of magnitude (Figure S6 in Supporting Information S1), suggesting that the NH<sub>3</sub>-HNO<sub>3</sub>-NH<sub>4</sub>NO<sub>3</sub> system was supersaturated with NH<sub>3</sub> and did not yet reached equilibrium. The second non-equilibrium condition occurs mostly on two post-precipitation flights (RF02 and RF12) which sampled on the 2nd and 3rd coolest days during TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am (Figure S7 in Supporting Information S1). Cool, high-HNO<sub>3</sub> conditions favors gas-aerosol partitioning to the aerosol phase; however, the time to reach equilibrium significantly increases from <1 min for liquid particles to >>10 min for solid/semi-solid particles due to kinetic mass transfer limitations imposed by low-viscosity particle-phase organics (Liggio et al., 2011), and TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am generally sampled under dry conditions when particles may be solid/semitransparent. We find worsened model-observation agreement in E-AIM at RH <40% (Figures S8 and S9 in Supporting Information S1), similar to a previous work that used ISORROPIA to study HNO<sub>3</sub>-NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup> partitioning (Guo et al., 2016). These results suggest E-AIM might be correct in predicting NH<sub>4</sub>NO<sub>3</sub> formation is favorable under the observed cool, dry, high-HNO<sub>3</sub> conditions, but its instantaneous equilibrium assumption may be unsuitable for application to observations made in concentrated AFO plumes or cool, dry conditions and result in the overprediction of NH<sub>4</sub><sup>+</sup> and NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup>. Due to these various limitations, we are unable to draw conclusions about individual plumes, and we restrict the interpretation of our analysis to the data on aggregate and on individual flights.

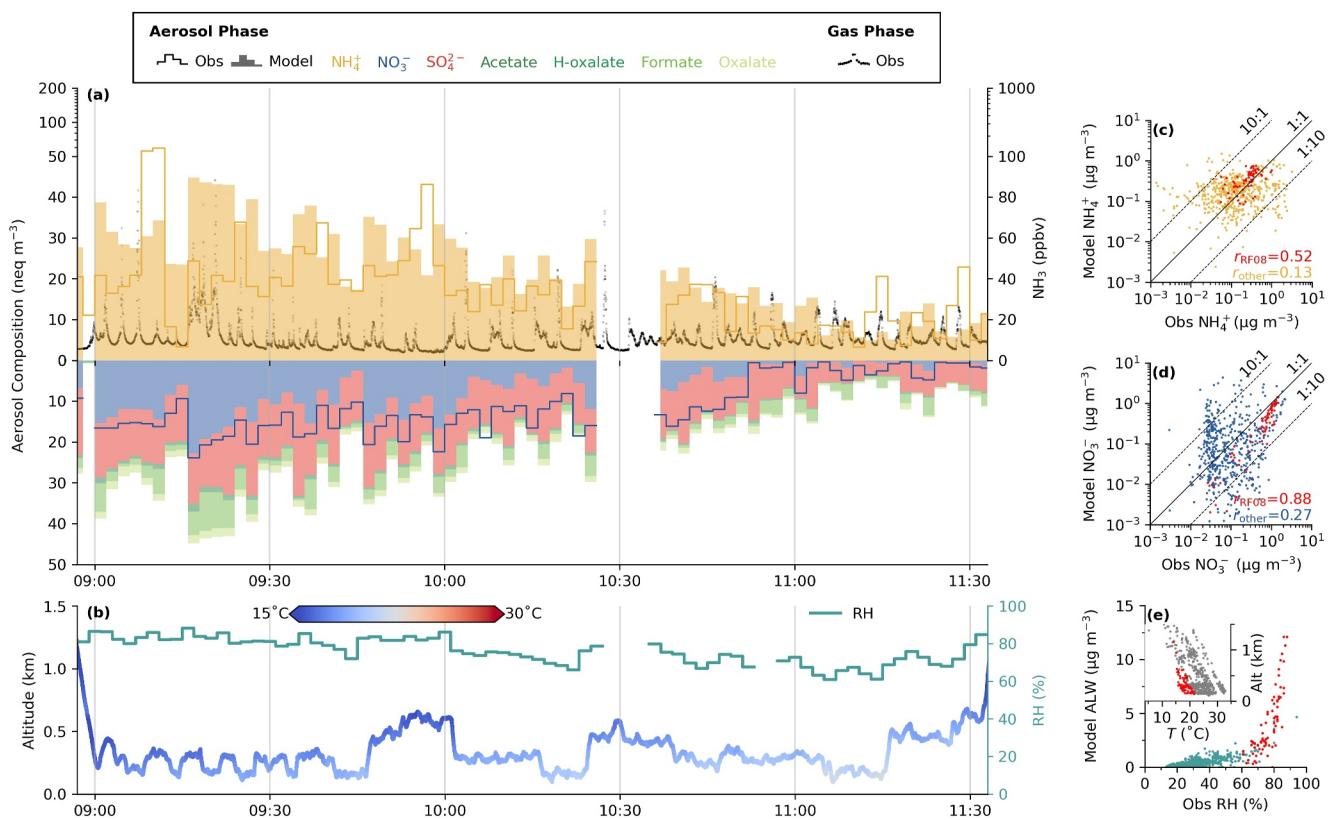
### 3.3.1. Case Study 1: Cool and Humid Conditions (RF08)

Figure 5 shows a time series of observed as well as modeled aerosol species concentrations (Figure 5a) and meteorological parameters (Figure 5b) for RF08 on 13 August 2021 in the context of the entire campaign (Figures 5c–5e). Figure 5a shows the nanoequivalents (i.e., nmol m<sup>-3</sup> × ion charge such that 1 nmol m<sup>-3</sup> = 1 neq m<sup>-3</sup> for NH<sub>4</sub><sup>+</sup> and NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup>, and 1 nmol m<sup>-3</sup> = 2 neq m<sup>-3</sup> for SO<sub>4</sub><sup>2-</sup>) of modeled and observed cations and anions, and the model captures the temporal trends of both NH<sub>4</sub><sup>+</sup> and NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup>, replicating NH<sub>4</sub><sup>+</sup> and NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup> well ( $r = 0.52$  for NH<sub>4</sub><sup>+</sup> and  $r = 0.88$  for NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup>), with generally higher concentrations observed in the first half of the flight and lower concentrations in the second half. Compared to all other flights of Phase I of TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am, this flight had exceptionally cool, humid conditions, and higher observed NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup>. RH is consistently >60% throughout RF08 (Figure 5e); 60% is an approximate threshold above which spontaneous water uptake occurs and further favors the partitioning of NH<sub>x</sub> and TNO<sub>3</sub> into the particle-phase (Wexler & Seinfeld, 1991). RF08 also has the coolest temperature conditions encountered during the campaign, with a surface temperature near 20°C rather than ~30°C for most other flights (Figure 5e inset). The uncharacteristically cool, humid conditions may be partially explained by the flight time since RF08 was conducted in the morning (~9:00–11:30), as opposed to most other flights conducted in the early afternoon. There are no precipitation events on this day or the day before, thus illustrating a diurnal temperature-driven variability that favors NH<sub>4</sub>NO<sub>3</sub> formation during cool, low-TNO<sub>3</sub> morning hours and inhibits NH<sub>4</sub>NO<sub>3</sub> formation during warm, high-TNO<sub>3</sub> midday and early evening hours (Figure S10 in Supporting Information S1), despite diurnal peaks in NH<sub>3</sub> emissions (Juncosa Calahorrano et al., 2023) and HNO<sub>3</sub> concentrations (Lindaas et al., 2017). Observed NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup> on RF08 is approximately three times higher than the average over the entire campaign (Table S1) and accounts for 50% of observed NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup> greater than 1 µg m<sup>-3</sup>. High TNO<sub>3</sub> is favorable for NH<sub>4</sub>NO<sub>3</sub> formation; however, TNO<sub>3</sub> on RF08 is the lowest amongst all flights (Figure S6 in Supporting Information S1), so TNO<sub>3</sub> concentrations did not drive NH<sub>4</sub>NO<sub>3</sub> on RF08. Sensitivity tests show that NH<sub>4</sub>NO<sub>3</sub> formation is much more sensitive to temperature (Section 3.4) than relative humidity (Figure S11 in Supporting Information S1). This implies cool temperatures drove NH<sub>4</sub>NO<sub>3</sub> formation on RF08, and warm temperatures likely inhibited NH<sub>4</sub>NO<sub>3</sub> formation on all other flights.

HNO<sub>3</sub> measurements for this flight did not pass quality control. Our model calculations conservatively assume that HNO<sub>3</sub> did not contribute to the TNO<sub>3</sub> input to the model because preliminary measurements of HNO<sub>3</sub> were very low (mean = -1.1 ppbv) and below the zero signal. As the model generally predicts the correct amount of NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup> during this flight, this corroborates our assumption that HNO<sub>3</sub> contributed trivially to TNO<sub>3</sub>.

### 3.3.2. Case Study 2: Warm and Dry Conditions (RF02)

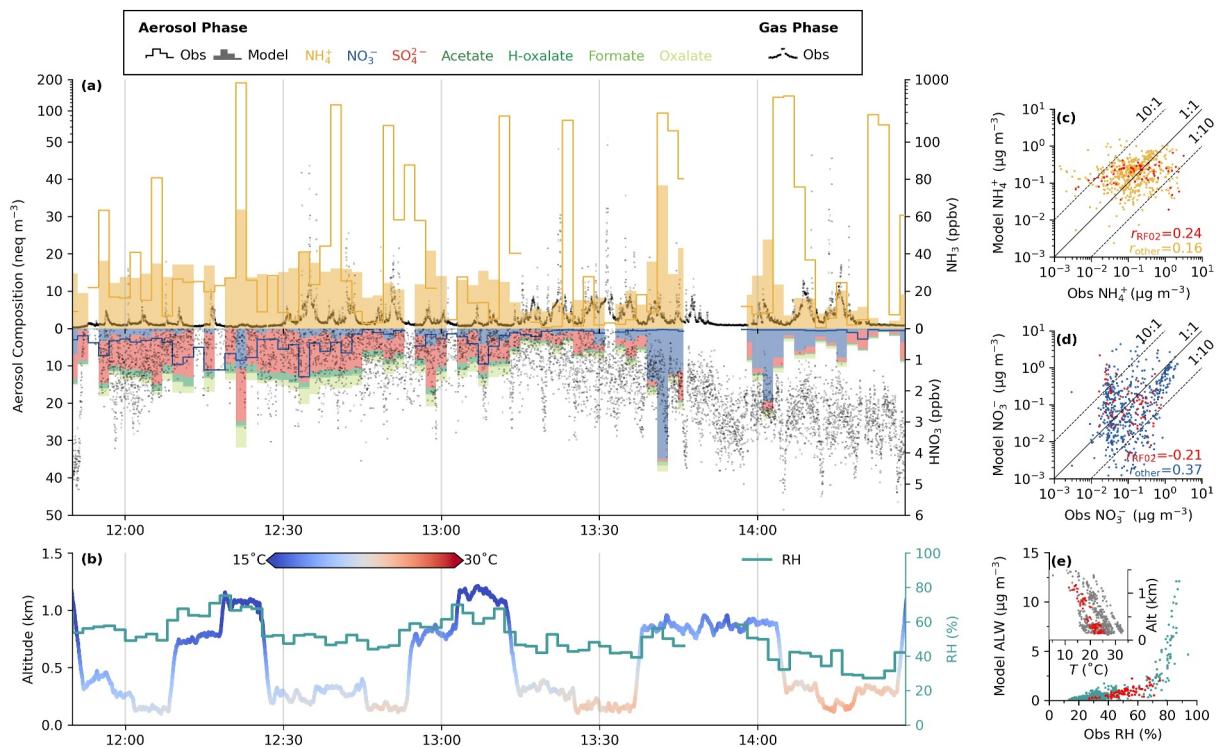
Figure 6 shows the same time series and scatter plots as in Figure 5 but for RF02 on 4 August 2021. RF02 is emblematic of many of the flights conducted on dry, warm conditions in the early afternoon during Phase I of TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am, even though it occurred after a precipitation event and has the third coolest temperature profile



**Figure 5.** Time series of model and observations for RF08 (left) and model versus observations comparisons of RF08 and all other flights (right). (a) Observed (stepped lines) and modeled (shaded bars) represent aerosol composition (color) in nanoequivalents per cubic meter ( $\text{neq m}^{-3}$ ) on the left y-axis and gas phase measurements (black dots) in ppbv on the right y-axis. At STP (273.15 K and 1 atm), 1 ppbv  $\approx$  45 nmol  $\text{m}^{-3}$   $\approx$  2.8  $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$   $\approx$  0.75  $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$   $\text{NH}_3$ . (b) Time series of altitude colored by temperature on the left y-axis and relative humidity on the right y-axis. (c) Modeled versus observed  $\text{NH}_4^+$  and  $r$ -value for RF08 in red and all other flights in yellow. Lines represent 10:1, 1:1, and 1:10, as labeled.  $R$ -values for each (d) Same as (e), except for  $\text{NO}_3^-$  and other flights are blue. (e) Modeled aerosol liquid water versus observed relative humidity for RF08 in red versus all other flights in green. Inset axes show temperature profile for RF08 versus all other flights. Note  $\text{HNO}_3$  data is missing on RF08.

(Figure S7 in Supporting Information S1).  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation appears to be generally inhibited by hot temperatures in summertime northeastern Colorado. Temperatures were warm (20–25°C) close to the surface (<200 m agl) throughout the afternoon, and RH was largely <60%, where aerosol water uptake is limited to  $2.5 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$  or less. RF02 is one of 3 flights (also RF12 and RF13) where observed total nitrate is dominantly in the aerosol-phase in the first half of the flight and then dominantly in the gas-phase in the second half of the flight. Under these conditions, the model is able to capture the range of observed  $\text{NH}_4^+$  and  $\text{NO}_3^-$ , but not the temporal variability ( $r = 0.24$  and  $r = -0.21$  for  $\text{NH}_4^+$  and  $\text{NO}_3^-$ , respectively).

In Figure 6,  $\text{NH}_4^+$  observations range from  $10^{-3}$  to  $10^1 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ , but the model only predicts  $\text{NH}_4^+$  between  $10^{-1}$  and  $10^0 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ . This is possibly because the 2-min resolution is too coarse to capture the sub-2-min plume transect time and  $\text{NH}_3$  variability. Model underestimates of  $\text{NH}_4^+$  may also be attributable to unmeasured anions because the model assumes a neutral charge balance between cations and anions, and this work joins a growing body of literature reporting excess  $\text{NH}_4^+$  ( $\text{NH}_4^+$  not associated with  $\text{NO}_3^-$  and  $\text{SO}_4^{2-}$ ). Schlag et al. (2017) attributed excess ambient  $\text{PM}_1 \text{NH}_4^+$  in an agricultural region to organic acids, which can be enhanced by clouds and smoke. Di Lorenzo et al. (2018) also reported excess ambient  $\text{PM}_1 \text{NH}_4^+$  and amines in aged smoke, even when accounting for NVCs and organic acids. Excess  $\text{NH}_4^+$  has also been reported to be increasing with total organic carbon in long-term cloud water monitoring, suggesting  $\text{NO}_3^-$  and  $\text{SO}_4^{2-}$  are no longer sufficient to explain  $\text{NH}_4^+$  in cloud water (Lawrence et al., 2023). Although the UWKA avoided sampling clouds during TRANS2Am, data on 8 of the 10 flights used in this study were collected on smoke-impacted days, so we conduct sensitivity tests to examine the influence of smoke on the modeled  $\text{NH}_3\text{-HNO}_3\text{-NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  partitioning (Section S1 in Supporting Information S1). In short, when the three most abundant organic acids in the atmosphere (formate,



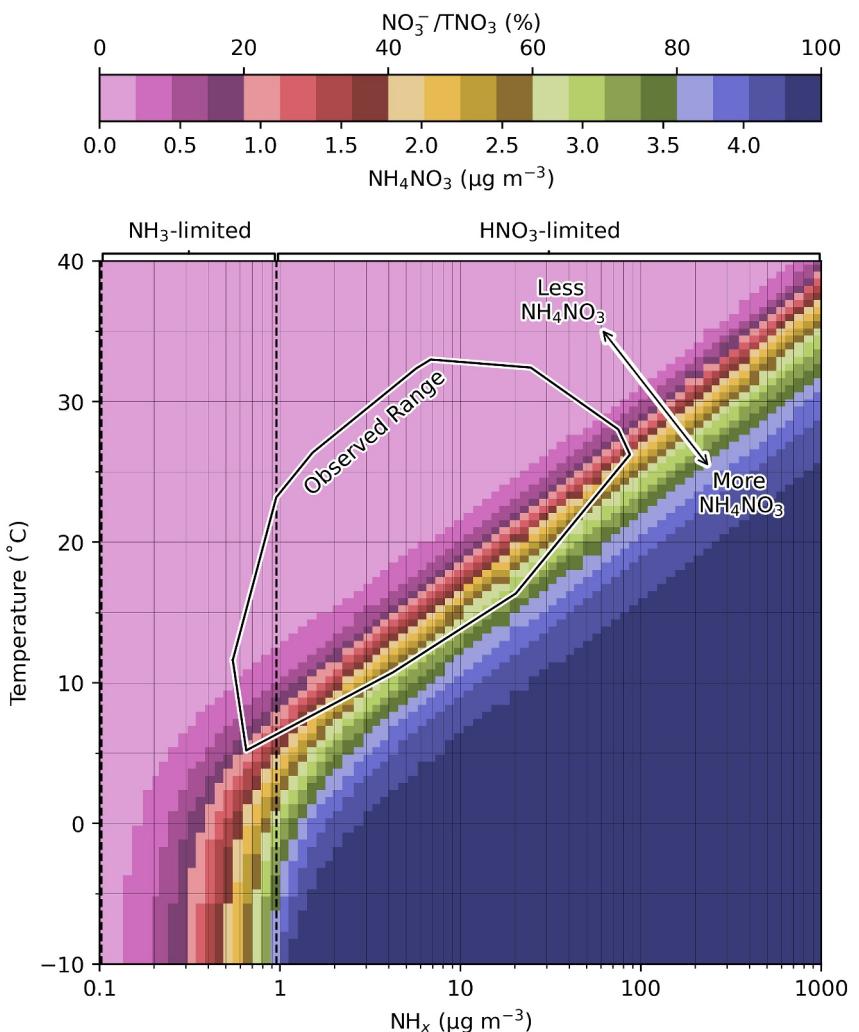
**Figure 6.** Time series of model and observations for RF02 (left) and model versus observations comparisons of RF02 and all other flights (right). (a) Observed (stepped lines) and modeled (shaded bars) represent aerosol composition (color) in nanoequivalents per cubic meter ( $\text{neq m}^{-3}$ ) on the left y-axis and gas phase measurements (black dots) in ppbv on the right y-axis. At STP (273.15 K and 1 atm), 1 ppbv  $\approx$  45 nmol  $\text{m}^{-3}$   $\approx$  2.8  $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$   $\text{NH}_3$  and 0.75  $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$   $\text{HNO}_3$ . (b) Time series of altitude colored by temperature on the left y-axis and relative humidity on the right y-axis. (c) Modeled versus observed  $\text{NH}_4^+$  and  $r$ -value for RF02 in red and all other flights in yellow. Lines represent 10:1, 1:1, and 1:10, as labeled.  $R$ -values for each (d) Same as (e), except for  $\text{NO}_3^-$  and other flights are blue. (e) Modeled aerosol liquid water versus observed relative humidity for RF02 in red versus all other flights in green. Inset axes show temperature profile for RF02 versus all other flights.

oxalate, and acetate) are included in the mode input, the distributions of  $\text{NH}_4^+$  and  $\text{NO}_3^-$  shift toward higher concentrations to better match observations (Figures S1a and S1b in Supporting Information S1). Further sensitivity tests with a proxy for unmeasured organics added to the model input does not show improved model-observation agreement in  $\text{NH}_4^+$  and  $\text{NO}_3^-$  (Figures S1c and S1d in Supporting Information S1), indicating unmeasured non-dissociating hydrophilic organics from smoke is likely not a major contributor to the  $\text{NH}_4^+$  underprediction in E-AIM.

Figure 6 also shows an example of non-equilibrium behavior driving the model overprediction  $\text{NH}_4^+$  and  $\text{NO}_3^-$  when ascending to lower temperatures aloft in the second half of the flight (13:40–14:05) when  $\text{HNO}_3$  increases above  $\sim$ 2 ppbv and RH remains  $<60\%$ . As discussed previously in Section 3.3, this is likely a result of non-equilibrium behavior driven by slow kinetic mass transfer in dry solid/semi-solid aerosols. Although for scenarios like this, the model does not consistently capture the temporal variability of  $\text{NH}_3\text{-NH}_4^+$  and  $\text{HNO}_3\text{-NO}_3^-$  partitioning, the model is able to consistently capture the range of  $\text{NH}_4^+$  and  $\text{NO}_3^-$  in aggregate across the campaign (Figure 4).

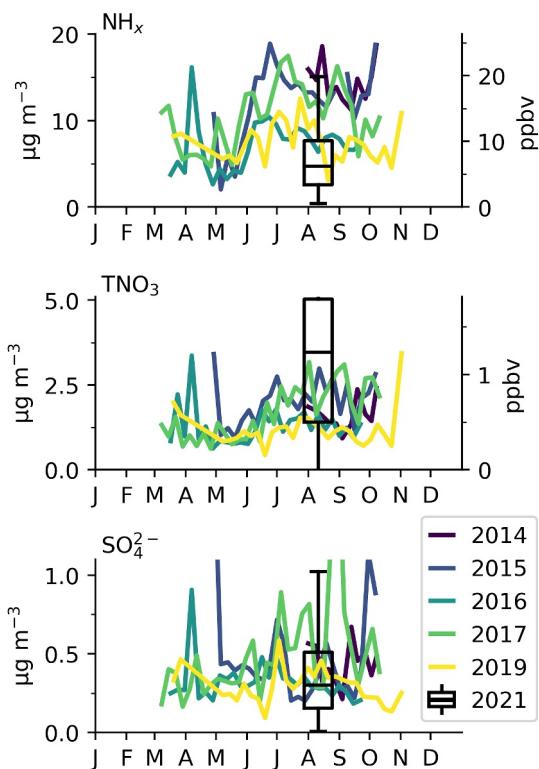
### 3.4. Temperature-Sensitivity of Gas-Aerosol Partitioning During TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am

Figure 7 shows the modeled effect of temperature and  $\text{NH}_x$  on gas-aerosol partitioning in and out of AFO plumes, and we find inorganic gas-aerosol partitioning is especially sensitive to temperature and  $\text{NH}_x$  during TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am. In this simple water- $\text{SO}_4^{2-}$ - $\text{NO}_3^-$ - $\text{NH}_4^+$  system with no organics or other inorganics,  $\text{TNO}_3$ ,  $\text{SO}_4^{2-}$ , and RH are set to the average observed values during TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am. The formation of  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  is inhibited by low  $\text{NH}_x$  and/or warm temperatures in the light pink region and driven by high  $\text{NH}_x$  and/or cool temperatures in the dark blue region. Between these two regimes, the formation of  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  is determined by a balance between temperature and  $\text{NH}_x$ . The range of observed  $\text{NH}_x$  and temperature is marked by the black outline, and observations are either



**Figure 7.** Modeled  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  and total nitrate partitioning (colorbar) for a sulfate-nitrate-ammonium system with fixed total nitrate, total sulfate, and RH for a range of temperatures and total ammonia concentrations. RH is set to dry conditions and  $\text{TNO}_3$  is set to median observed total nitrate. The black outline shows the observed range of temperatures and  $\text{NH}_x$  during TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am.  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation regimes are labeled on the top  $x$ -axis and delineated by the vertical black dashed lines.

characterized by regimes where  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation and partitioning to the aerosol phase is either (a) inhibited by warm temperatures and/or low  $\text{NH}_x$  (light pink region) or (b) very sensitive to both temperature and  $\text{NH}_x$  (steep  $\text{NO}_3^-/\text{TNO}_3$  gradient in red, yellow, and green areas). The majority of observations fall in the first category, with 70% (448/642) in the <5% modeled  $\text{NO}_3^-/\text{TNO}_3$  region and 92% (589/642) in the modeled  $\text{NO}_3^-/\text{TNO}_3 < 20\%$  region. In the  $\text{HNO}_3$ -limited regime of Figure 7 at  $\text{NH}_x \geq 0.9 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$  (gas ratio > 1),  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation is still very sensitive to temperature and  $\text{NH}_3$ , indicating a transition regime between when  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation is solely sensitive to  $\text{NH}_3$  and  $\text{HNO}_3$ . In this transition regime, at the same  $\text{NH}_x$  concentration, a temperature difference of 1°C can result in a difference in  $\text{NO}_3^-/\text{TNO}_3$  of as high as 12% ( $0.53 \mu\text{g m}^{-3} \text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$ ). Whereas Figure 7 shows model results from a simplified aerosol system,  $\text{NH}_3\text{-HNO}_3\text{-NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  partitioning in the ambient atmosphere is affected by complex, non-linear relationships between temperature, RH (for aqueous aerosols), and concentrations of  $\text{TNO}_3$ ,  $\text{SO}_4^{2-}$ , and other non-/semivolatile inorganic and organic compounds. We conduct sensitivity tests for various  $\text{HNO}_3$  concentrations and RH observed during TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am and find that the  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  mass concentration increases at a fixed  $\text{NH}_x$  concentration and temperature when  $\text{TNO}_3$  increases, but the  $\text{NO}_3^-$  fraction of  $\text{TNO}_3$  as a function of temperature and  $\text{NH}_x$  remains similar (Figure S12 in Supporting



**Figure 8.** Weekly URG denuder/filter pack measurements of  $\text{NH}_x$  (top),  $\text{TNO}_3$  (middle), and sulfate (bottom) in  $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$  (left y-axis) and ppbv (right y-axis) at ambient temperature and pressure for March–October 2014–2017 and 2019 at the Weld County Tower surface monitoring site ( $40.386^\circ\text{N}$ ,  $104.737^\circ\text{W}$ ) in Greeley, Colorado colored by year. Boxplot of  $\text{TRANS}^2\text{Am}$  Phase I measurements in 2021 are in black. Tails represent  $1.5 \times \text{IQR}$  and extend from  $-0.9$  to  $8.7 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$  for  $\text{TNO}_3$ .

Information S1), and the majority observations still fall within the  $<20\%$  modeled  $\text{NO}_3^-/\text{TNO}_3$  region (Table S2 in Supporting Information S1).

$\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation can be sensitive to  $\text{NH}_3$  in summertime AFO outflow even though it is largely  $\text{HNO}_3$ -limited. Figure S13 in Supporting Information S1 shows the change in modeled  $\text{NH}_4^+$  and  $\text{NO}_3^-$  for simulations where  $\text{NH}_x$  and  $\text{TNO}_3$  were respectively set to half of their measured concentrations. When  $\text{NH}_x$  is halved, modeled  $\text{NH}_4^+$  and  $\text{NO}_3^-$  decrease in locations that are  $\text{NH}_3$ -limited. However, there are air masses sampled in the  $\text{HNO}_3$ -limited regime where  $\text{NH}_4^+$  and  $\text{NO}_3^-$  also decrease. Similarly, when  $\text{TNO}_3$  is halved, modeled  $\text{NH}_4^+$  and  $\text{NO}_3^-$  consistently decrease in air masses in the  $\text{HNO}_3$ -limited regime; a decrease is also predicted for some  $\text{NH}_3$ -limited locations. This implies that many air masses are sensitive to both  $\text{NH}_3$  and  $\text{HNO}_3$ , and reducing  $\text{NH}_3$  emissions may still be effective in reducing  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  concentrations.

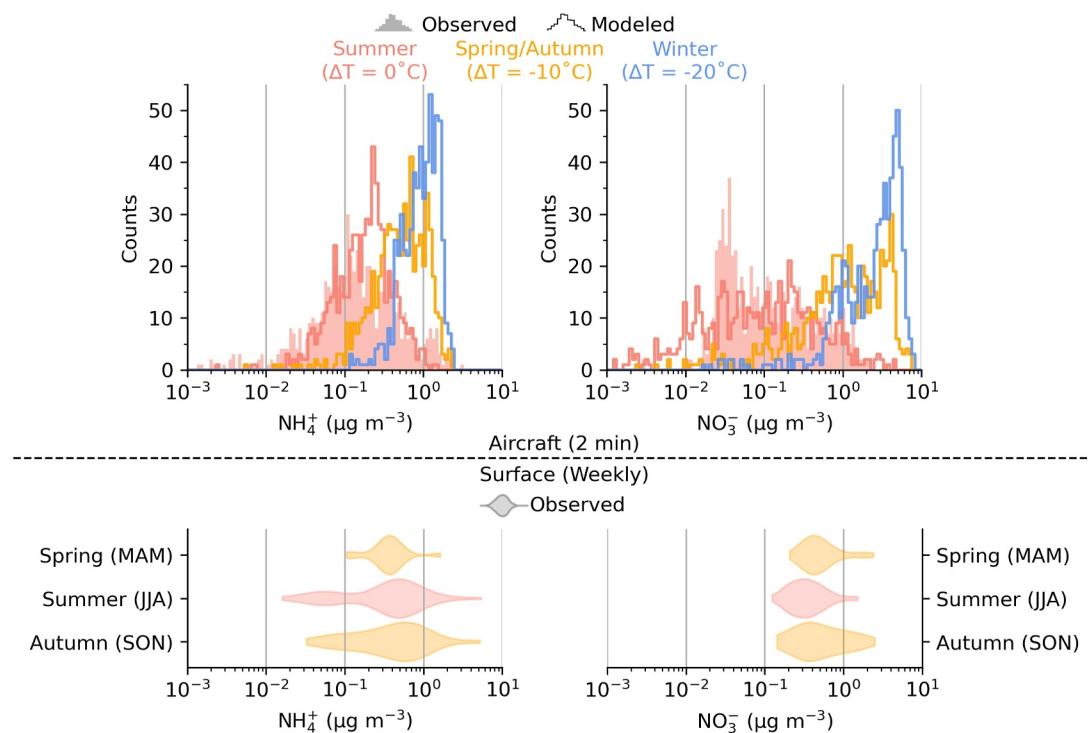
Temperature appears to be a strong driver of inorganic gas-aerosol partitioning, so accurate measurements are critical. We showed in Figure 7 that temperature differences as small as  $1^\circ\text{C}$  can result in a difference in a modeled  $\text{NO}_3^-/\text{TNO}_3$  as large as  $12\%$ . Temperature measurements could be complicated by measurement errors or the aircraft cabin temperature within the research aircraft being warmer than the surrounding atmosphere, leading to  $\text{NH}_4^+$  evaporation in the PILS inlet line and an overprediction in model  $\text{NH}_4^+$ . We are unable to directly compare cabin-ambient temperature gradients to model error because internal cabin temperature was not measured. Instead, we estimate  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  evaporation in the aerosol inlet line based on kinetic mass transfer equations from Dahneke (1983) and  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  equilibrium constants from Stelson and Seinfeld (1982) and find that the residence time in the aerosol inlet (2 s) is too short for significant  $\text{NH}_4^+$  evaporation to occur (Section S2 in Supporting Information S1). Thus, a cabin-ambient temperature gradient may not be driving model-observation disagreement, but temperature differences on longer timescales may still have profound impacts on  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation.

### 3.5. Modeling the Seasonality of $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$ Formation

Figure 8 shows the distribution of  $\text{NH}_x$ ,  $\text{TNO}_3$ , and  $\text{SO}_4^{2-}$  measured during Phase I of  $\text{TRANS}^2\text{Am}$  relative to the weekly measurements of  $\text{NH}_x$ ,  $\text{TNO}_3$ , and  $\text{SO}_4^{2-}$  from mid-March to mid-October in 2014–2019 (excluding 2018) at the Weld County Tower surface monitoring site in Greeley, Colorado. Greeley is an urban (population = 110,000) area within the study region and immediately surrounded by a large number of AFOs (Figure 1). These long-term surface-based measurements indicate no strong seasonality in  $\text{NH}_x$ ,  $\text{TNO}_3$ , and  $\text{SO}_4^{2-}$  concentrations in close proximity to AFOs and urban traffic emissions.

2-min averaged  $\text{NH}_x$  concentrations observed during  $\text{TRANS}^2\text{Am}$  are lower than long-term observations, and there are several potential reasons why we might expect this: (a)  $\text{NH}_x$  is dominated by  $\text{NH}_3$ , and  $\text{NH}_3$  was measured aloft (300–1,500 m agl) during  $\text{TRANS}^2\text{Am}$ . Away from individual facilities,  $\text{NH}_3$  typically maximizes at 10 m agl (Y. Li et al., 2017), and (b) the aircraft has sampled a much larger region and range of altitudes than represented by the ground observations.

$\text{TNO}_3$  measured during  $\text{TRANS}^2\text{Am}$  is higher than the ground-based measurements, which may be because (a) the diurnal cycle of  $\text{HNO}_3$  and (b) the influence from wildfire smoke. During summertime, active photochemistry drives a peak in  $\text{HNO}_3$  between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. local time Lindaas et al. (2017). Thus, most of the  $\text{TRANS}^2\text{Am}$  flights were conducted when  $\text{HNO}_3$  concentrations are largest. Summer 2021 was also an active wildfire season, and  $\text{HNO}_3$  is the second highest constituent of  $\text{NO}_y$  in aged wildfire smoke at low altitudes (Juncosa Calahorrano et al., 2021).



**Figure 9.** Seasonality of observed (shades) and modeled (lines)  $\text{NH}_4^+$  (left) and  $\text{NO}_3^-$  (right). Top: histograms of observed and modeled  $\text{NH}_4^+$  and  $\text{NO}_3^-$  along the flight track. Red shade is observations during summer ( $\Delta T = 0^\circ\text{C}$ ), yellow line is model with observed temperature during summer ( $\Delta T = 0^\circ\text{C}$ ), blue line is model with observed temperature minus  $10^\circ\text{C}$  ( $\Delta T = -10^\circ\text{C}$ ) to simulate spring/fall, and green line is model with observed temperature minus  $20^\circ\text{C}$  ( $\Delta T = -20^\circ\text{C}$ ) to simulate winter. Bottom: violin plots of weekly surface-based  $\text{NH}_4^+$  and  $\text{NO}_3^-$  observed at the Weld County Tower site in Greeley, Colorado grouped by meteorological season. Note no observations made during winter (DJF).

Finally, sulfate concentrations are consistent between TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am and the long-term measurements at Weld County Tower, and do not exhibit a strong seasonality. This is consistent with Chan et al. (2018), who observed no sulfate seasonality across the US after 2008. Since neither  $\text{NH}_x$ ,  $\text{NO}_3$ , nor  $\text{SO}_4^{2-}$  show a strong seasonal pattern, we model the seasonality of  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation by varying only temperature.

We investigate the seasonality of  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation for average temperature conditions in northeastern Colorado using E-AIM and hypothesize the existence of significantly higher concentrations in spring/autumn and winter due to the strong sensitivity to temperature. We model spring/autumn by lowering the model temperature by  $10^\circ\text{C}$  relative to campaign observations during the summer, and winter conditions by lowering the temperature by  $20^\circ\text{C}$  to capture the seasonal temperature ranges in this study region.

Figure 9 shows consistently more  $\text{NH}_4^+$  and  $\text{NO}_3^-$  during these cooler seasons, indicating  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation is thermodynamically favorable significantly more often in spring/autumn and winter. Instances of significant  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation  $>1$ ,  $>3$ , and  $>5 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$  are summarized in Table 2, and  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3 > 1 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$  is almost 10 times more likely in the winter than in the summer. In August 2021, no  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3 > 3 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$  was observed and

**Table 2**  
Percent of Time That  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  Is Greater Than Thresholds of 1, 3, and 5  $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$  for the Observations, Model Output Along the Flight Tracks, and the Model Simulations Where the Temperature Was Reduced by 10 and  $20^\circ\text{C}$

	Observed		Modeled		
	Summer	Summer ( $\Delta T = 0^\circ\text{C}$ )	Spring/Autumn ( $\Delta T = -10^\circ\text{C}$ )	Winter ( $\Delta T = -20^\circ\text{C}$ )	
$\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3 \geq 1 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$	10% (61/634)	9% (56/612)	61% (375/612)	88% (537/612)	
$\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3 \geq 3 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$	0% (0/634)	2% (10/612)	28% (171/612)	60% (365/612)	
$\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3 \geq 5 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$	0% (0/634)	0.3% (2/612)	11% (69/612)	35% (213/612)	

very little was modeled, but the model suggests that significantly more is likely present in spring/autumn and winter. These modeling results imply that even though  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation is  $\text{HNO}_3$ -limited and generally inhibited by hot temperatures during TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am, high concentrations of  $\text{NH}_3$  ( $>5$  ppbv) could contribute to significant  $\text{PM}_{2.5}$  formation under cooler conditions given the weak seasonal cycle in precursors (Figure 8). The distributions of modeled  $\text{NH}_4^+$  and  $\text{NO}_3^-$  along the flight track generally captures the range of surface observations by season, but best represent diurnal maximum  $\text{NH}_3$  and  $\text{HNO}_3$  emissions as opposed to the weekly-integrated surface measurements.

We evaluated whether we expect  $\text{NH}_3$  plumes from AFOs to enhance  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  concentrations relative to background during cooler seasons (Figure S16 in Supporting Information S1). Summertime and wintertime  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation in and out of plumes is more sensitive to the temperature differences between seasons than the differences in  $\text{NH}_3$  in and out of a plume, whereas  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation in spring/autumn is sensitive to both temperature and the  $\text{NH}_3$  changes (Figure S16 in Supporting Information S1). In the summer, both the model and observations agree  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  is typically  $<1 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$  both in the background ( $\text{NH}_3 < 20$  ppbv) and in plumes ( $\text{NH}_3 \geq 20$  ppbv) and inhibited by warm temperatures. In the winter, the median  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  increases from  $2.8 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$  in the background to  $4.6 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$  in plumes. In spring/autumn, the median  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  is still relatively low ( $0.9 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ ) in the background but increases to  $3.6 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$  in plumes. These results suggest a transition from summertime temperature-inhibited  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation to wintertime temperature-saturated  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation and an intermediate temperature- and  $\text{NH}_3$ -sensitive regime in the transitional seasons.

#### 4. Conclusions

In this work, we present the application of the E-AIM aerosol thermodynamic model to agricultural plumes from AFOs under hot, dry summertime conditions in Northern Colorado. With a holistic data set of aircraft-based gas-phase and aerosol-phase measurements from Phase I of the TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am campaign, we (a) study the sensitivity of  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation to summertime AFO emissions of  $\text{NH}_3$  and (b) predict the seasonality of  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation in northeastern Colorado. We find that:

- Summertime northeastern Colorado is  $\text{NH}_3$ -rich and  $\text{HNO}_3$ -limited.
- During August 2021, the observed range of  $\text{NH}_3\text{-NH}_4^+$  and  $\text{HNO}_3\text{-NO}_3^-$  partitioning on aggregate can generally be explained by the E-AIM aerosol thermodynamic model with temperature, relative humidity,  $\text{NH}_x$  ( $\text{NH}_3 + \text{NH}_4^+$ ),  $\text{TNO}_3$  ( $\text{HNO}_3 + \text{NO}_3^-$ ),  $\text{SO}_4^{2-}$ , oxalate, formate, and acetate as inputs.
- The airborne observed summertime  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  concentration is usually  $<1 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$  above 300 m agl and its formation is thermodynamically inhibited by hot temperatures.
- The  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation observed during Phase I of TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am is especially sensitive to temperature and  $\text{NH}_x$ . The campaign sampled a wide range of  $\text{NH}_3$  concentrations (0.5–114 ppbv, 2 min averages) and temperatures between 5 and 33°C. Model sensitivity tests suggest that a small change in temperature of 1°C under these  $\text{NH}_3$  concentrations can change  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  formation by as much as 12%.
- We use E-AIM to predict that  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  could reach substantial ( $>1 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ ) concentrations spring/autumn and winter in northeastern Colorado due to cooler temperatures.

We demonstrate that with a comprehensive data set of high temporal resolution aircraft-based gas-phase and aerosol-phase measurements, aerosol thermodynamic models can be leveraged to study the inorganic gas-aerosol partitioning of the  $\text{NH}_3\text{-HNO}_3\text{-NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  system from large  $\text{NH}_3$  point sources. Thus, similar payloads that measure both  $\text{NH}_3$  and  $\text{HNO}_3$  gases and aerosols at high sub-hour resolutions can then also be used to study  $\text{NH}_3\text{-NH}_4^+$  partitioning in agricultural regions. Future work should include similar measurements made under a wider range of conditions, particularly under cooler conditions.

#### Data Availability Statement

The TRANS<sup>2</sup>Am data used in this manuscript is publicly available on the NCAR/UCAR EOL Data Archive (<https://data.eol.ucar.edu/dataset/list?project=606&children=project>, Caulton & McCabe, 2022; French et al., 2023; Sullivan & Fischer, 2023). The weekly ground-based measurements from Greeley, Colorado is publicly available on Zenodo (<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10855259>, Sullivan, 2024). The E-AIM model input and output data is publicly accessible on Zenodo (<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10855157>, E. Li, 2024).

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