

ALERT!

March 2004

ALERT is a monthly update on transportation and air quality planning activities in the Delaware Valley.



**Tuesday,
March 16, 2004
Air Quality
Partnership Board
Meeting**

SEPTA Headquarters
1234 Market Street
Philadelphia
10a.m. to 12 noon



CONFORMITY

EPA Told Proposed Mercury Controls Fall Short

Environmental groups and state officials testified last week at a hearing in Philadelphia against a Bush administration proposal to reduce pollution from coal-burning power plants. The plan would reduce plant emissions of mercury, a potent poison that harms the brains of developing fetuses. Critics contended the proposed pollution cuts were insufficient, saying the planned 70 percent cut would not go far enough and would not be achieved for more than 20 years.

Another complaint centered around companies trading their rights to spew mercury from their stacks, resulting in what critics call "hot spots" - places where mercury levels are higher than others. EPA and industry officials say concern about hot spots is unfounded, as the biggest plants will have the biggest incentive to install controls.

Coal-burning power plants are not the only source of mercury. They account for one-third of U.S. mercury emissions and 1 percent of the worldwide total. Although unsure whether power plants play a role in contaminating marine fish such as tuna, scientists believe they contribute to the mercury found in freshwater species.

Similar hearings took place in Chicago and North Carolina as part of the process required before the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency can adopt the proposal.

Department of Energy Seeks New Round of Pollution Control Technology for Coal-based Power Plants

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has released a solicitation for the second round of proposals under President Bush's Clean Coal Power Initiative (CCPI). Approximately \$280 million in federal funds will be provided for demonstrating barrier-breaking technologies that sharply reduce and ultimately eliminate pollution in coal-based power plants.

Prospective projects must ensure coal is used for at least 75 percent of the fuel energy input to the process, while electricity is at least 50 percent of the energy-equivalent output from the technology demonstrated. Additionally, proposals must show the potential for rapid market penetration upon successful demonstration of the technology concept.

Round II projects will support both the Clear Skies Initiative to reduce emissions, particularly mercury, by about 70 percent and the FutureGen Initiative to create the world's first zero-emissions coal-based power plant, which will include carbon removal and sequestration and the production of hydrogen to support other initiatives, including the Climate Change Initiative.

For each project selected, industrial sponsors must be willing to at least match the federal funding share. There will also be a requirement for repayment from commercially successful technologies, which will be used to underwrite future clean coal research.

Industry has until June 15, 2004 to submit proposals, and DOE anticipates selection of winning projects by the end of the calendar year.

It all adds up to cleaner air

Transportation-Air Quality Initiative

New Federal Funding Proposed to Reduce School Bus Emissions

EPA Administrator Michael Leavitt recently announced a \$55 million increase in funding for the Clean School Bus USA Program. The expanded program will provide grants to governmental entities to replace pre-1991 school buses with new clean school buses offering state-of-the-art emission control and safety features and to retrofit post-1990 school buses with similar advanced emission controls. A total of \$65 million will be provided for the program in 2005, a thirteen-fold increase over 2004 funding levels.

The Clean School Bus Program brings together school districts and administrators, their bus-fleet operators, health advocates, fuel providers, bus manufacturers and emissions-technology innovators to craft a collaborative, cost-effective program to protect the health of school children and the public.

Natural Gas, Hybrid Electric Vehicles Top List of 'Greenest' 2004 Vehicle Models

The American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) recently announced its list of the "greenest" vehicles of model year 2004. This is part of its seventh annual *Green Book Online*, a web-based resource that gives a "green score" to all vehicles offered in the model year based on fuel consumption, tailpipe emissions and greenhouse gas emissions.

ACEEE named the natural gas-powered Honda Civic GX the greenest of the year with the hybrid electric Honda Insight, Toyota Prius and Honda civic vehicles rounding out the top four. The ACEEE Green Book Online is available at <http://www.greencars.com>

ALERT contains news items related to air quality and transportation.

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