

ALERT! February 2006

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



CONFORMITY

Public Comment Period Open for PM_{2.5} Conformity Findings for Mercer County

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) will open a public comment period from February 1 through March 2, 2006, for the Commission's Conformity Finding of the FY 2006 New Jersey Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Year 2030 Long-Range Plan for fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) in Mercer County.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has announced air quality designations under the PM_{2.5} standards. Effective April 2005, Mercer County was designated as part of the New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-CT PM_{2.5} Non-attainment Area. The remaining eight counties in the DVRPC region and New Castle County, Delaware, were collectively designated as the Philadelphia-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE PM_{2.5} Non-attainment Area. Conformity findings for the latter region were adopted by the DVRPC in January 2006.

Staff will ask for comments at a public meeting on February 7, 2006 at the NJ Department of Transportation, Engineering and Operations Building, 1035 Parkway Avenue, Trenton, NJ. The meeting is from 4:00 to 6:00 PM, and the public is welcome to arrive at any time during that time period. Copies of the Conformity Finding are available on the DVRPC website, <http://www.dvrpc.org>, and in the DVRPC library.

EPA Proposes New Test Method for Fuel Economy Window Stickers

In order to provide consumers with a more accurate picture of the fuel economy of new vehicles, EPA is proposing new methods to determine city and highway miles per gallon (mpg) to be posted on new vehicle window stickers.

The proposed methods will consider factors such as high speed/rapid acceleration, air conditioning, and cold air operation as well as accounting for other conditions such as road grade, wind and tire pressure. The proposed changes are expected to reduce mpg estimates from between 5% and 20% from the current testing method. The last changes in testing methodology were implemented in 1985. EPA is accepting comments on the proposal during a 60 public comment period. The proposal can be viewed at <http://www.epa.gov/fueleconomy>



**Tuesday,
February 7th, 2006
Mercer County PM_{2.5}
Conformity Finding
Public Meeting
4:00-6:00 pm**

NJDOT, Engineering and
Operations Building
1035 Parkway Avenue
Trenton, New Jersey

**Monday,
February 13th, 2006
Philadelphia
Diesel Difference
Working
Group Meeting
10:00 am**

DVRPC Conference Center
190 N. Independence Mall West,
(corner of 6th and Race Streets)
8th Floor



OTHER NEWS

Transit Ridership Rates Increase in the Region and Across the Nation in the Third Quarter of 2005

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) reports that national transit ridership grew in the third quarter of 2005 by 3.3% over the same period of 2004. The report noted rising gas prices as the probable impetus for these increases but also noted that the trend continued into November after gas prices had begun to decline. APTA reported that increases in ridership were realized across all modes of transit including light rail (8.8%), commuter rail (4.6%), heavy rail (4.3%), bus (2.5%), demand response (3.2%) and trolley bus (0.2%). Increases in transit usage were accompanied by a 0.2% decrease in vehicle miles of travel reported by the FHWA.

Regionally, both SEPTA and New Jersey Transit were noted as transit agencies with increases in ridership that were higher than the national average. SEPTA reported an increase of almost 10% in commuter rail riders and NJ Transit reported a statewide increase in light rail ridership of 14%. PATCO's increase was slightly below the national average at 3.1%. The transit agencies also noted significant increases in utilization of other modes of public transportation.

The full Public Transportation Ridership report can be viewed at the APTA website at: <http://www.apta.com/research/stats/ridershp/>.

MARAMA Releases Mid-Atlantic Air Quality Study

The Mid-Atlantic Regional Air Management Association (MARAMA) recently released a report titled "A Guide to Mid-Atlantic Air Quality". The guide's main focus is on ozone, fine particle pollution and how different pollutants interact with geography and weather patterns to influence regional air quality.

The MARAMA report reviews the techniques used to track and model air pollution, such as direct measurements, emissions analysis and photochemical modeling and presents the strengths and limitations of these tools. The guide provides basic knowledge needed to begin to understand the complex set of components of regional air quality and is a useful resource to assist air quality managers and officials understand and communicate air quality issues to the public.

MARAMA is a non-profit association of ten state and local air pollution control agencies, including Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware and Philadelphia. The report can be downloaded at the MARAMA website at: http://www.marama.org/reports/guide-midatlantic_regaq-final.pdf. CD copies of the report can be obtained by calling MARAMA at 410-467-0170.

ALERT! is a DVRPC publication.



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