

ALERT! February 2009

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



CONFORMITY

EPA Prepares Notices to Disapprove Ozone State Implementation Plans for the DVRPC Region

On January 9, 2009, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), signed *Federal Register* notices to disapprove the 8-Hour Ozone State Implementation Plans (SIPs) for Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, for their portions of the Philadelphia 8-Hour Ozone Non-attainment Area (NAA). The EPA proposals state that air quality monitoring data projections indicate that the Philadelphia 8-Hour Ozone NAA will not meet the 8-hour ozone standard by the mandated attainment date of June 2010.

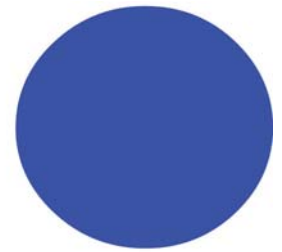
The EPA's notice to disapprove the SIPs has not yet been published in the *Federal Register* due to the Obama Administration's desire to review new proposals before they are published in the *Federal Register*. This "hold" on new proposals applies to the ozone SIP disapprovals. Once the disapproval notices are published the public will have 30 days to comment on the proposed EPA actions.

After the 30-day comment period EPA can publish the final SIP disapprovals in the Federal Register. If EPA issues final SIP disapprovals, without a protective finding, a conformity freeze will become effective for the 18-county Philadelphia Ozone NAA. The region can avoid a conformity freeze if all of the states in the NAA request that EPA reclassifies the ozone NAA from "moderate" to "serious" nonattainment. This reclassification will move the 8-hour ozone attainment date from June 2010 to June 2013. A reclassification will, however, incur further emissions reductions and more stringent emissions permitting processes for point sources of emissions than under the current "moderate" classification.

In the unlikely event that a conformity freeze does take effect, the MPOs in the Philadelphia 8-Hour Ozone NAA will not be able to conduct a transportation conformity analysis on TIPs or Long Range Plans. This freeze would effectively prevent DVRPC, and the other MPOs in the NAA, from making changes to non-exempt projects in their TIPs or adopting new TIPs or long range plans until new attainment SIPs are approved by EPA.

For more information on EPA's Proposed SIP disapprovals, please visit:

<http://www.epa.gov/air/ozonepollution/fs20090109.html>



**Monday,
February 9th, 2008
Philadelphia Diesel
Difference
Working Group
10:00 am**

DVRPC Conference Center
8th Floor
6th and Race Streets
Philadelphia, PA

**Wednesday / Thursday,
February 18th, 19th 2008
NTI Intro to Statewide
Transportation Planning
Workshop
8:00 am**

DVRPC Conference Center
8th Floor
6th and Race Streets
Philadelphia, PA



AIR QUALITY PARTNERSHIP

EPA Proposes to Revise the Air Quality Index for Particle Pollution

The Air Quality Index (AQI) is a color coded graphic designed to convey levels of air quality to the public. The AQI uses the familiar green (good air quality), yellow (moderate), orange (unhealthy for sensitive populations) and red (unhealthy for everyone) color scheme to alert the public when air quality is forecast to be poor or unhealthy. The US EPA has announced a proposal to revise the AQI for particle pollution (PM_{2.5}). The revision will set the Code Orange level, the level at which Air Quality Action Day alerts are issued, to correspond with the PM_{2.5} air quality standard of 35.5 ug/m³. Currently the Code Orange level for PM_{2.5} is 40.4 ug/m³ of particles. Under the proposed change, the Code Red level will also be revised from 65.5 ug/m³ to 55.4 ug/m³.

With the revisions to the PM_{2.5} air quality standard and the AQI the Delaware Valley is expected to experience approximately 14 Code Orange Air Quality Action Days for PM_{2.5}, based on historic data. Most of these days are likely to correspond with Code Orange Ozone Air Quality Action Days during the summer months. While the number of Code Orange Air Quality Action Days will increase, it is important to note that air quality in the region is improving.

This proposal to lower the AQI for PM_{2.5} is expected to raise public awareness of the health effects of particle pollution which has been linked to premature mortality, increased emergency room visits and development of chronic respiratory disease. The Air Quality Partnership encourages the public to protect their health by avoiding strenuous activities on Action Days. The Partnership also encourages the public to reduce activities, such as letting vehicles idle and topping off the gas tank, that contribute to particle pollution. Air quality alerts are an important tool in these efforts.

EPA will be taking comments on the proposed change for 60-days after the proposal's publishing in the *Federal Register*.

For more information on the proposed change to the AQI please visit: <http://www.epa.gov/pm/actions.html>

Comments on the proposed standards can be submitted via mail, email or fax to the following addresses:

Mail: Docket No EPA-HQ-OAR-2007-0195
EPA Docket Center, Mail Code 6102T
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Email: a-and-rdocket@epa.gov

Fax: 202-566-1741

All correspondence should be identified by Docket Id No. *EPA-HQ-OAR-2007-0195*.

ALERT! is a DVRPC publication.



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