

A!ert

dvrpc | November 2012

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



Transportation and Air Quality

DVRPC Board Approves \$10.7 Million Dollars for Transportation Projects that Reduce Congestion and Improve Air Quality

On October 28, 2012, the DVRPC Board approved a list of projects to be funded under the DVRPC Competitive Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program.

The CMAQ Program is a source of federal transportation funds that is required to be used to fund cost effective programs that will improve air quality and / or reduce congestion in regions not meeting the federal health based air quality standards. States are allocated CMAQ funds based, in part, on the state's population that lives in air quality nonattainment areas.

Typically, DVRPC assigns CMAQ funds to projects through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) project selection process. In 2011, the DVRPC Board set aside \$10.7 million of the region's CMAQ funds to be used in an open competitive program to encourage innovative projects that may not be funded through the traditional TIP selection process.

The DVRPC Board allocated \$8 million in the Pennsylvania TIP and \$2.7 million in the New Jersey TIP for this competitive program to be available for projects in FY 2013.

DVRPC received 45 applications for funding, requesting \$26.4 million from municipalities, non-profit organizations, and public-private partnerships. The DVRPC Board approved funding for 21 of those applications; 16 in Pennsylvania and five in New Jersey.

The selected projects represented a diverse set of project types, including traffic flow improvements, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, transit improvements, diesel engine retrofit and repower projects, and an alternative fuel project. The one common component all of the awarded projects shared was that the projects demonstrate a benefit to the region's air quality. The projects will have three years to be implemented.

When the projects are implemented, they will collectively result in a reduction of 65 tons of nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and over 16 tons of volatile organic compounds (VOC) per year. NO_x and VOCs are the major components of ground-level ozone pollution which has been demonstrated to aggravate and cause breathing disorders. The selected projects will also reduce fine particle pollution (PM_{2.5}) in the region by almost four tons per year. PM_{2.5} pollution contributes to heart attacks, breathing disorders and even pre-mature death.



Save the Date

**Monday,
November 19, 2012
Philadelphia Diesel
Difference Working Group
10:00 am**

*Location of Meeting:
DVRPC Conference Center
8th Floor
6th and Race Streets
Philadelphia, PA*

**Tuesday,
November 20, 2012
Greater Philadelphia
Clean Cities Stakeholders
Meeting
10:00 am**

*Location of Meeting:
DVRPC Conference Center
8th Floor
6th and Race Streets
Philadelphia, PA*

The full list of projects selected for funding under the 2012 DVRPC Competitive CMAQ Program, along with a description of the program's guidance and selection criteria can be viewed at: www.dvrpc.org/cmaq



Transportation and Air Quality

Study Shows that Stroke Risk Increases Even During Periods of Moderate Air Quality

A study published in the journal *Archives of Internal Medicine*, in February 2012, claims to demonstrate that fine particle pollution (PM_{2.5}) at the moderate, or "Code Yellow," range of the Air Quality Index (AQI), can increase the risk of stroke by up to 34 percent. The study, conducted by the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, reviewed the medical records of 1,700 stroke victims, 90 percent of who lived within 15 miles of the Harvard School of Public Health's environmental monitoring station, and correlated air quality data with the circumstances of the study subjects' strokes. Study results showed that even when PM_{2.5} levels were within the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) current guidelines for air quality, there is an elevated risk for stroke when particle pollution is above the good, or "Code Green" range on the AQI.

The researchers calculated that the peak risk to patients from exposure to pollution occurred 12 to 14 hours before a stroke. The researchers also found that heightened stroke risk was tied to levels of two air pollutants from vehicles, black carbon and nitrogen oxides. Dan Costa, EPA's national program director for air climate and energy research, states that "this study shows that concentrations of particulate matter can be lower than previously thought for strokes and that the duration of exposure can be shorter."

The researchers cite their study as evidence that the current PM_{2.5} air quality standards are not sufficient to protect public health and that EPA should revise the language it uses to describe the health consequences of moderate air quality.

In July 2012, the EPA proposed to tighten the Annual PM_{2.5} National Ambient Air Quality Standard, as part of the mandated five year air quality standard review cycle. The EPA reviewed the body of scientific literature on the health and environmental impacts of PM_{2.5} pollution and determined that a revision to the standard is warranted in order to protect public health. The new standard is expected to be finalized by December 2012. The AQI levels and health advisory language would also be revised at this time to reflect new evidence about the health impacts of PM_{2.5} pollution.

For more information on EPA's PM_{2.5} standard, please visit: www.epa.gov/airquality/particlepollution



Information

Pennsylvania State Clean Diesel Grant Program Announced

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) announced the opening of the 2012 State Clean Diesel Grant Program on November 3, 2012. The goal of the program is to improve air quality by decreasing emissions from diesel-powered highway and off-road vehicles. The program will provide \$177,000 for projects that replace, re-power, or retrofit vehicles to lower emissions of pollutants, purchase and install idle reduction technology, or purchase clean alternatively fueled vehicles. DEP will accept applications from November 5, through December 19, 2012.

The grant application and guidance can be downloaded at www.dep.state.pa.us. Use keyword: "Clean Diesel."



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