

# A!ert

dvrpc | February 2015

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



## Air Quality Regulations

### US EPA Proposes to Strengthen the Ground-Level Ozone Standard

On December 17, 2014, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) opened a 90-day public comment period on the proposed new ground-level ozone standard. The EPA is required to review the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) every five years. Based on over 1,000 new environmental health studies on the impacts of ozone on public health, and the advice of the agency's Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC), the EPA is proposing to strengthen the ozone NAAQS to between 65 and 70 parts per billion (ppb). The current standard, adopted in 2008, is 75 ppb.

Decades of scientific research have linked ozone pollution to asthma attacks, bronchitis, heart attacks, and premature death. Ozone pollution is linked to permanent damage to lung tissue in children and decreased lung function in people exposed to the pollutant. New scientific studies indicate that the current ozone standard is not sufficient to protect public health from these effects with an adequate margin of safety.

Ozone is not directly emitted but is formed when nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) combine in the presence of sunlight to form ozone. The EPA estimates that up to 63 percent of nationwide NO<sub>x</sub> emissions and 37 percent of nationwide VOC emissions originate with mobile sources such as cars, trucks, locomotives, and construction equipment.

In the past eight years the EPA has enacted a number of regulations aimed at reducing these ozone pre-cursors from cars, trucks, and diesel engines, in addition to stricter rules on power plants and industry. Efforts to regulate ozone pre-cursor emissions have been successful in the past with national average ozone concentrations decreasing by 33 percent since 1980, while Gross Domestic Product has more than doubled. Ninety percent of the areas designated as nonattainment for the 1997 ozone standard (84 ppb) now meet that standard.

In addition to revising the ozone standard, the EPA is proposing to revise the Air Quality Index (AQI) to reflect the new standard. The AQI is a color coded alert system to notify the public when air quality is reaching unhealthy levels. Code Orange on the AQI corresponds to air quality that is unhealthy for people sensitive to air pollution and is set at the standard.

EPA is also proposing extending the ozone monitoring season to account for days that may violate the new standard that are outside of the traditional



## Save the Date

**Friday,  
February 11, 2015  
9:30–12:00 PM**

### Healthy Community Planning Task Force

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

**Monday,  
February 23, 2015  
10:00 AM**

### Air Quality Partnership Board Meeting

*Location of Meeting:  
DVRPC Conference Center  
New Jersey Room  
8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
6<sup>th</sup> and Race Streets  
Philadelphia, PA*

summer season. Pennsylvania and New Jersey currently actively monitor for ozone from May until September. These months are typically when weather conditions are conducive to ozone formation. The proposal would extend the monitoring season to April through October in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware. Thirty other states would have their monitoring season revised based on the exceedances of the standard occurring outside of the typical ozone season.

Air quality models indicate that the DVRPC region will not meet either a 70 ppb or 65 ppb ozone standard but the region would likely meet both of those standards by 2025, as clean air regulations that have already been legislated are implemented.

The EPA anticipates finalizing the 2014 Ozone Standard in October 2015, with the final nonattainment area designations in October of 2017. The DVRPC region will have until 2020 or 2023 to attain the new ozone standard depending on whether the region is designated as a marginal or moderate nonattainment area.

For more information on EPA's proposed 2014 Ozone standard, please visit:  
<http://www.epa.gov/groundlevelozone/actions.html>



## Information

### Carbon Emissions Continue to Decline in Pennsylvania

In January 2015, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) announced that carbon emissions in the state are anticipated to be below year 2000 levels by 2020. According to the DEP press release, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions are the result of comprehensive measures to reduce emissions from the residential, commercial, transportation, agriculture, and waste sectors. GHG emissions from fossil fuel fired electric generation have declined by 12 percent between 2008 and 2013 and are expected to decline by 29 percent between 2005 and 2020.

Emissions of other air pollutants have also significantly declined in the state over that time period. Since 2008 notable reductions include:

- Nitrogen oxides emissions have been reduced by 23 percent,
- Fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) emissions have been reduced by 46 percent,
- Sulfur oxide emissions have been reduced by 70 percent, and
- Mercury emissions have been reduced by 37 percent.

Reductions in air emissions in Pennsylvania and across the nation have contributed to improved air quality in the DVRPC region. The region currently meets the 1997 Ozone standards as well as the 1997 and 2006 PM<sub>2.5</sub> air quality standards. The New Jersey counties and most counties in the Pennsylvania portion region are already meeting the new 2012 PM<sub>2.5</sub> standards. State and national regulations are anticipated to continue to improve air quality and reduce GHG emissions in the region and across the nation.

For more information on Pennsylvania's GHG emissions statistics, please visit [www.portal.state.pa.us](http://www.portal.state.pa.us) and search keywords "greenhouse gas". National emissions trends can be viewed at <http://epa.gov/airtrends>.



DVRPC, 8th Floor  
190 N. Independence Mall West  
Philadelphia, PA 19106-1520  
Phone: 215.592.1800 | Fax: 215.592.9125 | Web: [www.dvrpc.org](http://www.dvrpc.org)