

# Alert

dvrpc | June 2019

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



## Air Quality Regulations

### The Nation's Top Automakers Ask for Compromise on National Fuel Efficiency Standards

Many top-selling automakers around the world sent a letter to President Trump on June 6, 2019 urging the Trump administration to scrap plans to roll back fuel efficiency standards set during the Obama administration.

The New York Times reported that 17 major automakers including General Motors, Ford, and Toyota, wrote a letter to the President stating that a rule cutting back on fuel efficiency standards imposed under the Obama administration would essentially split the nation's auto market in half. This rule would force companies to deal with competing efficiency standards imposed by the federal government and some states that have imposed their own standards. California and more than a dozen other states have adopted their own fuel efficiency standards and are likely to sue the Trump administration to block the rule if it is announced, according to the Times.

The Trump administration is reportedly planning to unveil the rule rolling back efficiency standards over the summer, freezing mileage standards for cars around 37 miles per gallon and scrapping plans to raise those targets to 54.5 miles per gallon by 2025.

The letter reportedly urged the Trump administration to resume negotiations with California over the standards, as did a similar letter sent to Gov. Gavin Newsom, according to the Times.

"We strongly believe the best path to preserve good auto jobs and keep new vehicles affordable for more Americans is a final rule supported by all parties, including California," the letter reportedly read.

A spokeswoman for the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers told the Times that the auto industry hopes that discussions ahead of the rule's official announcement will allow for a compromise that avoids a divide between states and the federal government.

"Our thinking is, the rule is still being finalized, there is still time to develop a final rule that is good for consumers, policymakers and automakers," said Gloria Bergquist, the group's vice president.

In February, the White House announced that it had ended talks with California, essentially ensuring that the final outcome would lead to litigation. Even if a compromise can be reached on the fuel economy standards,



## Save the Date

**Friday  
June 28, 2019**  
**Application Deadline for  
DVRPC Congestion  
Mitigation and Air Quality  
(CMAQ) Program in PA**

**For information on the  
funding program, please  
visit:  
[www.dvrpc.org/cmaq](http://www.dvrpc.org/cmaq)**

**Monday  
July 29, 2019**  
**Public Meeting: FY2020 NJ  
TIP and Conformity Finding  
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm**

*Location of Meeting:  
Mercer County  
Administration Building  
Room 211  
640 South Broad Street  
Trenton, NJ*

California and the group of twelve other states, including Pennsylvania and New Jersey, will likely join in a lawsuit fighting the President's attempt to repeal California's right to set its own air quality standards.

For more information on President's Trump's proposal to repeal the fuel efficiency standards, please visit: <https://thehill.com/policy/transportation/447384-top-automakers-warn-trump-about-plan-to-rollback-emissions-standards>



## Air Quality News

### May Kicks Off the Beginning of Greater Philadelphia's Poor Air Quality Season

On June 3, 2019, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection announced that it is requesting approval from the Volkswagen Environmental Mitigation Trustee to disburse \$16 million for the deployment of electric heavy-duty garbage trucks, school buses, and port-related vehicles.

This is the DEP's second round of requests for funding from the state's \$72.2 million share of federal settlements to resolve claims that Volkswagen installed emissions defeat devices in vehicles it manufactures to emit air pollutants without being detected by emissions-testing programs across the nation.

"The projects to be funded by this second round of grants will improve air quality in environmental justice communities that for too long have had to bear a disproportionate burden of air pollution and its health consequences," Commissioner Catherine R. McCabe said. "These projects also will demonstrate the viability of using electric heavy-duty vehicles to improve air quality in urban areas and throughout the state."

As part of its first round of funding from the Volkswagen Mitigation Trust, the DEP earlier this year requested \$11.2 million for charging stations and electric transit buses for NJ TRANSIT's use in Camden. The Trustee has approved those funds for immediate release to New Jersey.

Two partial consent decrees approved in 2016 and 2017 established a \$2.93 billion environmental mitigation trust to provide funds to all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and federally recognized tribes to implement actions to counter the air quality impacts of excess nitrogen oxide emissions resulting from the emissions defeat devices.

In New Jersey, transportation sector emissions account for 71 percent of nitrogen oxide emissions as well as 42 percent of greenhouse-gas emissions. Nitrogen oxides are a major contributor to smog, which forms when pollutants interact with sunlight and hot temperatures during warmer months to create ground-level ozone molecules.

Ozone is beneficial in the upper atmosphere by shielding harmful rays from the sun, but is a health hazard at ground level. Ozone irritates tiny lung sacs known as alveoli and can increase asthma attacks in asthmatics and make people more vulnerable to lung diseases such as pneumonia and bronchitis. Long-term exposure to ozone particles can cause lung inflammation, chest pain, coughing, wheezing, sneezing, pulmonary congestion and scarring of lung tissue.

While ground-level ozone levels in New Jersey have been improving in recent years, the state continues to work to meet federal health-based standards for the pollutant. The process is difficult, however, because New Jersey is heavily urbanized and in the middle of one of the nation's busiest transportation corridors. The state is also impacted by smog transported by prevailing winds from older, dirtier power plants in upwind states.

For more information about the Volkswagen settlement and the DEP's Beneficiary Mitigation Plan, visit [www.nj.gov/dep/vw/](http://www.nj.gov/dep/vw/).



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