

# A!ert

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



## Air Quality Regulations

### California and 23 Other States Sue Trump Administration Over Attempt to Pre-empt California Emissions Regulations

A coalition of state attorney generals is suing the Trump administration over the administration's attempt to revoke California's authority to set its own vehicle emissions standards for greenhouse gases.

The lawsuit, filed by California's Attorney General, along with 23 other states; including Pennsylvania and New Jersey, argues that the Trump administration unlawfully removed the state's waiver granted under the Clean Air Act.

The suit alleges that the decision to remove California's waiver to set its own standards, which are currently adopted by 12 other states, exceeds the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) authority. NHTSA, under the Department of Transportation (DOT), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) jointly drafted a new emissions rule that lowered national fuel efficiency standards, a move opposed by those states that have adopted the California standards.

The DOT and EPA formally announced the propose revocation of the waiver on September 19, 2019. California was first granted the right to submit environmental waivers for review in 1970 under the Clean Air Act. For decades, the state has been issued waivers allowing it to set air pollution standards higher than that of the federal government, due to the state's unique struggle with air pollution and smog. The federal government has never before revoked one of its waivers.

Trump administration officials contend that the greenhouse gas waiver was improperly granted because, although greenhouse gases cause harm by trapping heat in the atmosphere and warming the planet, they do not cause the specific local or regional problems such as asthma or lung disease linked to traditional pollutants such as fine particles and ozone.

California and the other states maintain that the waiver to set standards on tailpipe greenhouse pollution was granted lawfully, within the authority granted by Congress under the Clean Air Act, and its revocation is unlawful.

The California lawsuit also contends that those tailpipe standards are required for the state to control emissions of the other pollutants, such as fine particle pollution and ozone, at levels required to meet federal standards. "We need the extra clean cars to meet the standards set by the



## Save the Date

Wednesday  
October 30, 2019

**Application Deadline for  
Driving PA Forward Ocean-  
Going Vessel Shorepower  
Grant Program**

For information on the grant  
program, please visit:  
[www.depgis.state.pa.us/  
DrivingPAForward](http://www.depgis.state.pa.us/DrivingPAForward)

Wednesday  
October 30, 2019

**Application Deadline for  
Diesel Emissions Reduction  
Act School Bus Rebate  
Replacement Program**

For information on the  
rebate program, please visit:  
[CleanDieselRebate@epa.gov](mailto:CleanDieselRebate@epa.gov)

federal government," said Mary Nichols, the Chairperson of the California Air Resources Board. "If this prevails, millions of people in California will breathe dirty air. There will be more pollution, more asthma more hospitalizations, more premature deaths."

The suit was filed in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, but will most likely ultimately be resolved in the Supreme Court.

In July, 2019, Ford, Volkswagen, BMW, and Honda agreed to comply with the California greenhouse gas emissions and fuel economy standards even if standards are not supported by the new, more lax federal standards.

To read more about California's suit to retain its waiver to regulate greenhouse gases, please visit the August 13, 2019 edition the Washington Post at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2019/09/20/california-sues-trump-administration-after-revoking-authority-limit-car-pollution/>.



## Air Quality News

### Transit System Data Quantifies How Public Transit Reduces Pollutant Emissions.

Public transit has long been an answer for people looking to leave their car at home and reduce their air pollution emissions. Armed with better rider tracking tools, the University of Utah and the Utah Transit Authority have attempted to answer the question of just how much air pollution is avoided by transit services.

In a paper published in *Environmental Research Communications* in September 2019, University of Utah researchers used tap-on tap-off rider data to quantify the emissions saved by buses and commuter rail lines, and also project how much additional emissions could be saved by upgrading the bus and rail fleet. The study was conducted in cooperation with the Utah Transit Authority (UTA) and the Utah Department of Environmental Quality, Division of Air Quality.

The advance of tap-on tap-off fare cards that provide anonymized data on where those riders who have electronic passes enter and exit public transit have been critical in making this research possible. Approximately half of UTA's passengers use an electronic fare medium.

The second source of data that made this research possible is the General Transit Feed Specification system. This system provides the data that supplies Google Maps with transit information to help users find the bus or train they need complete their trip. With that data source, the researchers could track where and how often UTA's buses and trains run.

With this high-resolution data on the movement of both vehicles and passengers, the researchers could paint a nearly comprehensive picture of public transit use in the UTA service area and allowed the researchers to quantify the emissions produced and miles traveled by the transit systems. This information was balanced with the miles traveled by passengers and the estimated amount of car travel and emissions avoided by riding transit.

On weekdays during rush hours, and in densely populated areas, the balance was clearly on the side of reduced emissions. "That tapers off significantly during the evening hours, on the outskirts of the city, and definitely during the weekends," according to lead researcher Daniel Mendoza. In those situations, the number of passengers and how far they rode transit did not offset certain criteria pollutant emissions.

For transit to improve its regional reduction in emissions, particularly fine particle pollution (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) and Nitrogen Oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), the transit service is looking at lower emissions vehicles and making transit trips more efficient.

For more information on the study of transit benefits for reducing emissions, please visit: <https://unews.utah.edu/new-rider-data/>



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