

# Environmental News Brief

Presented by the Baltimore Metropolitan Council for the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board

The following news "briefs" highlight recent news regarding transportation-related environmental issues, primarily air quality, affecting the Baltimore region. Please note that this brief is not all inclusive of the variety and magnitude of activities in the region. It is intended for informational purposes only; refer to the source, guidance, or program for additional information.

## Maryland Clean Power Rule



On November 17, 2005, Governor Ehrlich announced the Maryland Clean Power Rule. This Rule will lower air pollution emissions from the state's six largest coal-fired power plants. It will include emission rate limits for pollutants that contribute to ozone, particles, regional haze, and acid rain. Power plants will be required to add pollution controls to plants within Maryland to achieve their limit, rather than being allowed to trade pollution credits with a plant outside the state. This rule will go a long way in helping the state reach the new federal air quality standards for fine particulate matter and 8-hour ozone. According to MDE, the rule is expected to be published in January of next year, and there will be public hearings in early spring.

December 21, 2005

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## MDE Receives EPA Grant for Landfill Device Retrofits

On November 7, 2005, the Maryland Department of the Environment was named by EPA as one of ten recipients of a 2005 National Clean Diesel Campaign Demonstration Grant. The purpose of this grant program is to provide funding for projects that demonstrate strategies to reduce air pollution emissions from nonroad equipment and vehicles. The \$50,000 grant from EPA, along with \$12,500 from MDE and \$23,800 from the Johnson Matthey Company, will be used to add diesel particulate filters to front end loaders that are used at the City of Baltimore's landfills. Between four and six front-end loaders will get this device.

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## *Proposed Revisions to Particle Standards*

On December 20, 2005, EPA announced proposed revisions to the federal particle pollution standards. According to the EPA, "The proposed revisions would strengthen a fine particle standard important for both health and visibility, and would improve and refocus the coarse particle standards on those particles that are associated with public health concerns." Based on their assessment of additional scientific data, EPA is proposing to lower the 24-hour fine particulate matter standard from 65 to 35 micrograms per cubic meter. EPA is also proposing to retain the annual fine particulate matter standard of 15 micrograms per cubic meter, but will be taking public comments on lower alternatives. In addition, they are proposing to change the coarse particles standard to an "inhalable coarse particles" standard. The "inhalable coarse particles" standard would address particles between 2.5 and 10 micrometers in diameter. The current coarse particles standard addresses particles with a diameter of 10 micrometers or smaller. The proposed standard would focus on certain sources of coarse particles. After publication in the Federal Register, EPA will take public comments for a period of 90 days.

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## *Phase II of the Final 8-hour Ozone Rule Released*

On November 9, 2005, EPA issued Phase II of the Final Rule to Implement the 8-Hour Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standard. The federal air quality standard for 8-hour ozone was established in 1997. This rule describes how to implement the standard. It will be used by the Maryland Department of the Environment when they create the State plan for reaching attainment for 8-hour ozone.

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## *EPA Denies Washington County PM2.5 Request*

EPA has denied the request to change the fine particulate matter nonattainment status of Washington County, Maryland. In December 2004, EPA designated which areas of the country do not reach the federal standard for fine particulate air pollution. A county is designated nonattainment for a pollutant if it does not meet the federal standard, as shown by monitors. Counties can also be designated nonattainment if they contribute to fine particle pollution problems in a nearby area as determined by nine different factors which include air quality, emissions, population density, traffic/commuting, expected growth, meteorology, geography, jurisdictional boundaries, and level of emission control. In their letter, EPA upheld their determination that Washington County "contributes to air quality that violates the PM2.5 NAAQS within the Hagerstown-Martinsburg nonattainment area."

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### *PM2.5 Conformity Approved by BRTB*

At their December 13th meeting, the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board approved a resolution for the Fine Particulate Matter Conformity Determination of the 2006-2010 Transportation Improvement Program and the 2004 Baltimore Regional Transportation Plan. This was the first conformity determination performed for the region that addressed fine particulate matter. A public comment period was held between November 2 and December 6; however, no comments were received. For more information, contact Sara Tomlinson at BMC, at [stomlinson@baltometro.org](mailto:stomlinson@baltometro.org).

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### *Baltimore County Drinking Water Award*



Baltimore County was given an award by EPA for the efforts they have taken in protecting their drinking water. The county made zoning changes on the land surrounding the three reservoirs that are used to provide drinking water.

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