Environmental News Brief

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

July 21, 2006

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's Got a Biodiesel Plant

The first biodiesel plant in Maryland opened in Worchester County on June 19th. The biodiesel being produced is 20 percent soybean oil and 80 percent diesel. Biodiesel is an alternative fuel made for use in diesel engines. The production of biodiesel involves the removal of glycerin from vegetable oil or animal fat. Most biodiesel is created from soybean oil. Pure biodiesel can be mixed with petroleum at any combination, to produce a biodiesel blend. What are the benefits of biodiesel? It can be produced domestically out of renewable resources, reducing our dependence on foreign oil. And, it produces lower emissions of hydrocarbons (a precursor to ground-level ozone), particulate matter, and carbon monoxide. However, emissions of nitrogen oxides (also a precursor to ground-level ozone) could either increase slightly or decrease slightly, depending on certain factors.

Click for the referenced article.

EPA Requiring Cleaner Diesel Fuel

As of June 1, 2006, EPA is requiring refiners and importers to make sure that 80 percent of the highway diesel fuel they produce or import to be ultra low sulfur diesel (ULSD). In other words, it has a maximum of 15 parts per million (ppm) sulfur. Low sulfur diesel fuel has up to 500 ppm sulfur. By December 2010, all highway diesel fuel sold at retail stores must be ULSD. ULSD is expected to be able to be used in the existing diesel fleet. Vehicles that are model year 2007 or later can only use ULSD, and not low sulfur diesel fuel. The introduction of ULSD allows for the use of advanced emission control devices, and is expected to allow for significant reductions in air pollution emissions from heavy duty diesel vehicles, such as trucks and buses.

Click for information from the Clean Diesel Fuel Alliance.

How Does Our Air Rank?

According to the American Lung Association, the Washington-Baltimore-Northern Virginia metropolitan statistical area (MSA) ranks as the 12th most polluted metropolitan region in the country, for short- term ozone and particle pollution. Baltimore City ranks 16th in the country for their short-term particle pollution problem. This data is from the American Lung Association's 2006 State of the Air Report. Anne Arundel County ranked 20th in the 25 most ozone polluted counties in the country, while Harford County ranked 21st. For year-round particle pollution, the Washington-Baltimore-Northern Virginia region ranked 21st for metropolitan areas.

Most Polluted by:	***Area***	***Rankings:***	
		2005	2006
Short-term particle pollution (MSA)	Washington, D.C./ Baltimore / Northern Virginia	12	12
Short-term particle pollution (County)	Baltimore City	N/A	16
Year-round particle pollution (MSA)	Washington, D.C./ Baltimore/ Northern Virginia	24	21
Ozone (City)	Washington, D.C. / Baltimore/ Northern Virginia	11	12
Ozone (County)	Anne Arundel County, MD	19	20
Ozone (County)	Harford County, MD	17	21

Click for data on Maryland from the report.

Getting Credit for Retrofits

In June, the EPA released guidance on estimating emission reductions from diesel retrofits, for use in SIPs, transportation conformity, and general conformity determinations. A diesel retrofit project is "any technology, device, fuel, or system that when applied to an existing diesel engine achieves emission reductions beyond that currently required by EPA regulations at the time of its certification." Emission reductions can be calculated for highway and nonroad diesel vehicles, engines, or equipment.

Click for more information on the guidance.

Federal Funding for Retrofits

The Senate approved $20.1 million in federal funding for diesel retrofits, less than the $49.5 the President had originally requested. The Diesel Emissions Reduction Program was introduced as part of the 2005 Energy Policy Act last year. Funding for diesel retrofits is especially important for reducing emissions from the legacy fleet of diesel-powered vehicles and equipment. And, the use of diesel retrofits is a cost effective way to reduce air pollution emissions.

Click here for the Diesel Technology Forum article.

Particulate Matter Brochure Available

For those of you transportation planners and stakeholders out there who still have some questions about particulate matter, don't despair. A helpful brochure is available on the FHWA Resource Center Air Quality Team web site. The brochure provides easy to understand information on what particulate matter is, it's health effects, federal standards, new requirements, and timelines.

Click to view the particulate matter brochure.

Workshop on Calculating Emission Reductions

On August 21st and 22nd, the Mid-Atlantic Diesel Collaborative and MARAMA will be sponsoring a workshop on how to calculate emission reductions from different diesel retrofit projects. The workshop will be held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania at the Radisson Plaza-Warwick Hotel. The Steering Committee for the Mid-Atlantic Diesel Collaborative will also meet on the 22nd. Hurry, registration ends July 31st!

Click here for information on registration.

Looking for Truck Stop Electrification?

Well, now you can find it. The Federal Highway Administration is sponsoring a Truck Stop Electrification (TSE) Station Locator on the U.S. Department of Energy's Clean Cities web site. With truck stop electrification, truckers can receive heating, cooling, and electrical power, without having to idle their engines. Use of anti-idling equipment such as this reduces harmful diesel emissions. It is also economically beneficial to truckers and trucking companies because it saves money that would otherwise be spent on wasted fuel.

Click to view information on truck stop electrification, and for the TSE Station Locator.

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