

# Environmental News Brief

Baltimore Metropolitan Council

July 7, 2005

*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.*

- [MDE Air Quality Conference](#)
- [Changes to Final Draft 2006-2010 TIP](#)
- [Interstate Air Quality Council Created](#)
- [Final PM2.5 Precursor Rule](#)
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## MDE Air Quality Conference



Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) will be hosting an air quality conference on July 21st, in Baltimore. The purpose of the conference, 2005 Maryland Department of the Environment Air Quality Conference: New Challenges, will be to involve many people in developing new air quality plans which will address recent standards.

[Click for additional information](#)

## Changes to Final Draft 2006-2010 TIP

At the close of the comment period on the draft TIP and Conformity Determination no comments had been submitted on air quality. MTA has however determined that several projects need to have funding adjustments before BRTB approval. Beginning around Monday, July 11 there will be several MTA projects put out for a two week review. The changes will not impact air quality. The resolutions for BRTB consideration in July will be postponed until August to accommodate this review period. Information will be on the Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC) website.

[Click here to visit the BMC website.](#)

## Interstate Air Quality Council Created



On May 31, 2005, the governors of Maryland and Virginia, and the mayor of D.C. announced the formation of the Interstate Air Quality Council (IAQC). The purpose of this council will be to "streamline planning to meet new federal standards for ozone and fine particulates," for the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region. IAQC will collaborate with the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Council.

[Click to read additional information.](#)

### *Final PM2.5 Precursor Rule*



EPA signed the final PM2.5 Precursor Rule on May 2nd of this year. Four precursors being added to the conformity regulations include nitrogen oxides (NOX), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), sulfur oxides (SOX), and ammonia (NH3). The final PM2.5 Precursor Rule does not alter the April 5, 2006 date by which the Baltimore region must have a PM2.5 conformity determination approved by the federal government.

[Click here for more information on the final PM2.5 Precursor Rule.](#)

### *Final EPA Staff Paper on PM NAAQS*



The final staff paper on National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for particulate matter was released by EPA last week. The paper recommends that EPA Administrator Steve Johnson make particle pollution standards stronger. A consent decree is requiring EPA to propose a rulemaking regarding particle pollution standards by December 20, 2005.

[Click to view or download the final staff paper](#)

### *MEA Grant to BMC for Hybrid Bus Demo*

Early this year, the Maryland Energy Administration awarded a grant to the Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC) for the demonstration of hybrid bus technologies in the Baltimore region. BMC contracted with New West Technologies to secure a number of hybrid buses from several manufacturers. The project began in late June, when a vehicle made by Allison visited several local transit providers in the region. New West and other manufacturer representatives are currently scheduling more opportunities for fleet operators to see the buses under actual operating conditions. For further information, contact Russ Ulrich, BMC's project manager, by e-mail at [rulrich@baltometro.org](mailto:rulrich@baltometro.org) or by telephone at 410-732- 9575.

### *Baltimore National Aquarium to Receive EPA Brownfields Grant*

EPA is awarding the Baltimore National Aquarium a grant of \$200,000 to clean up an 11-acre contaminated property. Part of the property includes the Baltimore Department of Public Works Central Maintenance Garage. This cleanup grant is just one of four types of grants provided by EPA through the Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act.

[Click here for more information.](#)

## *Senate Energy Bill Approved*



On June 28, 2005, the Senate approved federal energy legislation by a vote of 85 to 12. Working out differences between the Senate and the House energy bills is expected to be a major task. Notable differences between the two bills include the overall cost of the bill, the existence or nonexistence of an MTBE waiver for oil companies and refiners, the amount of corn-based ethanol refiners would need to use, and the level of support for energy conservation. A tax break package worth \$18 billion is included in the Senate bill, which

would encourage energy efficiency, renewable energy, clean diesel, and alternative fuels. In addition, the House bill mentions drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, while the Senate bill does not. Bush is asking for an Energy Bill to be on his desk by August, before the recess.

[Click here for more information.](#)

## *Transportation Conformity Training for PM2.5*

EPA will be providing training sessions this summer on PM2.5 transportation conformity, for nonattainment areas. Information on the upcoming training sessions will be provided shortly on the EPA transportation conformity website.

[Click to link to the website.](#)

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