

Environmental News Brief

Baltimore Metropolitan Council • March 2, 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.

Air Quality

EPA Designates Baltimore Region Nonattainment for Fine Particulate Matter

On December 17, 2004, the EPA announced Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Harford County, Howard County, Anne Arundel County, and Carroll County have all been designated nonattainment for the new fine particulate matter (PM 2.5) standard. This means that they do not meet the standard for PM 2.5 that was established by the EPA to protect human health. The State of Maryland must submit an air quality implementation plan to EPA by early 2008.

[Additional information is available at: <http://www.epa.gov/pmdesignations>.]

MTBE Ban Proposal Brought to Annapolis

Several bills have been introduced to Maryland legislators, asking for a gradual ban of methyl tertiary butyl ether (MTBE). On February 16th, there was a hearing regarding these proposals. This concern over MTBE in Maryland is the result of the detection of MTBE in 178 wells in the Fallston area in 2004. MTBE is a gasoline additive that has been used widely since 1992 to increase the amount of oxygen in the gasoline, thereby making the gasoline burn more cleanly. However, since then it has been discovered that MTBE can leak from underground storage tanks and pollute nearby groundwater and drinking wells. Because regions in nonattainment are required by Congress to use oxygenates like MTBE in their gas, Maryland would have to substitute the MTBE additive with ethanol, if an MTBE ban were to go into place. So far, there has not been a decision on the MTBE issue; however, there have been emergency measures put into place in response to the discovery of MTBE in Maryland wells. The emergency measures include double-walled underground storage tanks and pipes on new fuel tanks, as well as improved groundwater monitoring.

[Additional information is available at: <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/local/harford/bal-te.md.mtbe14feb14,1,7519631.story>. The Baltimore Sun is requesting response to the issue by March 3rd, to possibly be published next Sunday: <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/local/harford/bal-ha.speakout27qfeb27,1,7020676.story>.]

First Draft Version of MOVES Released

The EPA has released the first draft version of MOVES (Motor Vehicle Emission Simulator), MOVES2004. MOVES is a modeling system being developed by the EPA, to estimate both onroad and nonroad mobile source air pollutant emissions. Eventually MOVES will replace MOBILE6 and NONROAD, the systems that are currently being used to model air emissions. According to the EPA, MOVES will model emissions from all mobile sources and is able to model them on multiple scales. The draft model was released in January 2005, at which time a six-month review period began. The draft was only released for the purposes of review and comment, and this release does not affect the official status of MOBILE6 or NONROAD.

[Additional information is available at: <http://www.epa.gov/otaq/ngm.htm>.]

Air Pollution May Alter Babies' Genes

Results of a study of New York City newborns shows that the air pollution their mothers were exposed to, while pregnant, may have caused changes in their babies' chromosomal structure. It could be that this altered structure may lead to greater risk of cancer. This study of 60 newborns was performed by the Columbia University Center for Children's Environmental Health, and funded

by the National Institute of Environmental Health Science, the U.S. EPA, and others. Air monitors, which were attached to the mothers, measured levels of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). PAHs are a combustion byproduct and one of their sources is vehicle exhaust. They can pass through the placenta, thereby reaching babies in utero.

[Additional information is available at: <http://www.nih.gov/news/pr/feb2005/niehs-15.htm>.]

Alternative Fuels & Clean Technology

BRTB Approves IdleAire Project

At their February 22, 2005 meeting, the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB) approved amendments to the FY 2005-2009 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). One of these amendments is an Advanced Truck Stop Electrification (ATE) project that will be installed by IdleAire, and funded by 80% Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) funds and 20% MDOT funds. ATE provides units at truck stop parking spaces that can supply trucks with heating, air conditioning, power, entertainment and communication abilities. As a result, these trucks do not need to idle their engines during their rest period at truck stops. This will, therefore, reduce the level of air pollution produced by truck idling in the region. As well as reducing pollution, ATE will also save on fuels costs of idling trucks. The IdleAire ATE project is proposed for two TravelCenters of America truck stops on I-95, one in Jessup and the other in Baltimore City. The target date to begin operations is July 2005. As usage fees are collected, payback of funding will occur.

MEA Grant to BMC for Hybrid Bus Demo

The Maryland Energy Administration has awarded a grant to the Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC) for the demonstration of hybrid bus technologies in the Baltimore region. BMC will contract with New West Technologies (formally Antares Group) to secure a number of hybrid buses from several manufacturers. New West and bus manufacturer representatives will take the vehicles on tour, throughout the region, to give fleet operators a chance to see the buses under actual operating conditions. The project will begin in late spring, and any area fleet operators interested in scheduling a demonstration should contact Russ Ulrich, BMC's project manager, by e-mail at rulrich@baltometro.org or by telephone at 410-732-9575.

EPA Grant to Fund Clean Diesel Retrofits for Baltimore City Fire Trucks and Ambulances

Out of 83 applications sent to EPA for grants under their \$1.6 million Clean Diesel Campaign grant program, the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) had one of 18 projects that were chosen. On February 25, EPA announced a \$75,000 Clean Diesel Grant to MDE, to fund the retrofitting of 37 fire trucks and 26 ambulances. The retrofits, done in partnership with the Baltimore City Fire Department, will enable the installation of diesel oxidation catalysts and crankcase ventilation filtration systems. According to EPA, these retrofits will reduce emissions of volatile organic compounds by 2.95 tons/year, particulate matter by 0.07 tons/year, and carbon monoxide by 27.65 tons/year. Alongside the EPA grant, MDE will contribute \$25,000 toward the retrofits.

[For the reference article, see

<http://yosemite.epa.gov/r3/press.nsf/0/afb1ac48c9ea3f1385256fb30051a747?OpenDocument>.]

State to Lease Fuel Cell Minivan

Last September, Governor Ehrlich announced the State's plans to lease a hydrogen fuel cell vehicle. The vehicle will be a General Motors minivan that a Maryland state agency will use on a fixed route. The Governor believes that the state can 'play an important role in the emerging hydrogen economy.' Vehicles powered by fuel cells are cleaner than those powered by internal combustion engines because the only byproduct is water vapor.

[For the reference article, see

http://www.gm.com/company/gmability/adv_tech/100_news/maryland_fuelcell_090904.html.]

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