

Air Quality 101

Transportation Conformity

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Purpose

- Overview
- What is Nonattainment?
- Transportation Conformity
- Local Impact on Transportation Projects

Overview

- National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) set by US EPA
- Augusta, Georgia - Ozone
- New Standard under review by EPA
 - Final Reconsidered NAAQS – July 2011
 - Final Designations - ???

Nonattainment

- Nonattainment designation:
 - Area contributes to pollutant levels higher than allowed under NAAQS (Ozone & PM 2.5)
 - Air quality plan is prepared describing efforts to reduce pollution within the region.

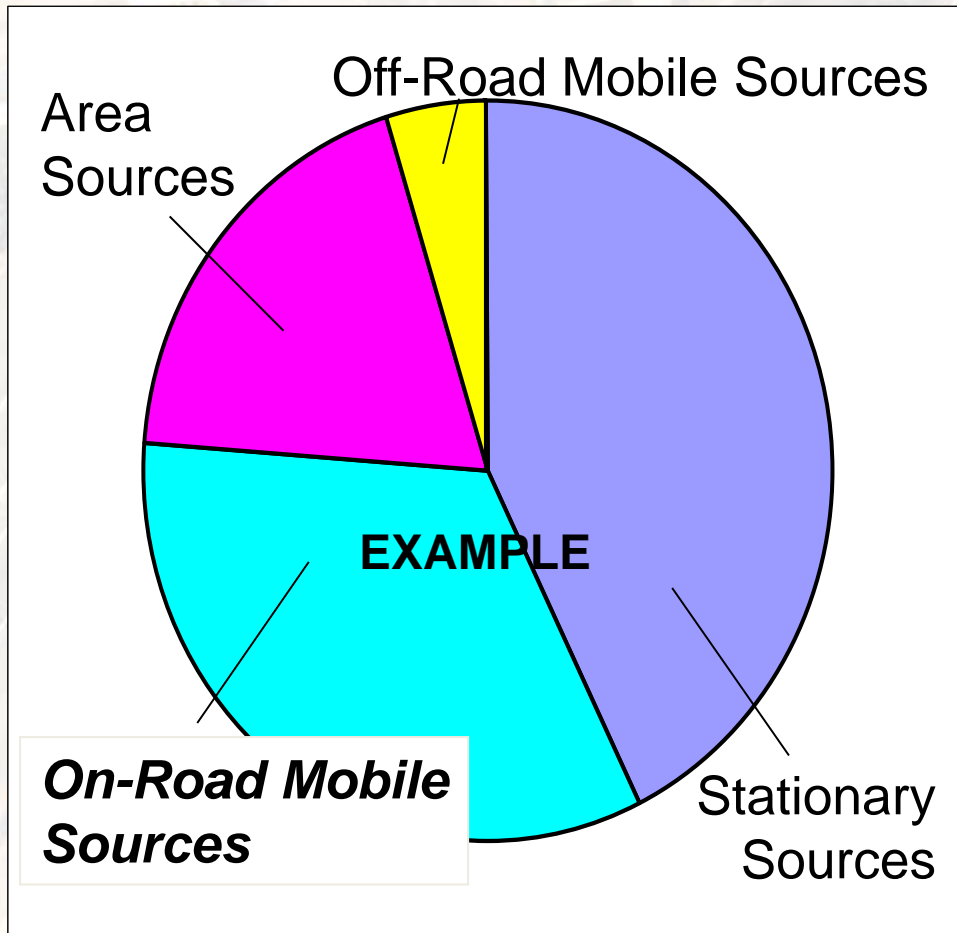
Transportation Conformity:

The Link Between Air Quality and Transportation Planning

- 1990 CAA amendments added specificity to the relationship between air quality planning and transportation planning
- *Reason:* Controlling mobile sources is critically important to meeting the NAAQS
- Transportation conformity is intended to help the SIP achieve its goal which is to attain the NAAQS



On-Road Mobile Sources are One Piece of the Total Emissions Pie



- ◆ Transportation conformity addresses emissions from on-road mobile sources.
- ◆ On-road mobile sources are emissions created by cars, trucks, buses, etc...
- ◆ Transportation conformity covers just one piece of the emissions pie...

What is Transportation Conformity?

- Requires evaluation of emissions from transportation plans, programs, and projects (including SPLOST) **BEFORE** any element may be implemented
- Ensures that Federal funding and approval are given to activities that are consistent with air quality goals
- Required even after attainment of air quality standard

Method to meet Clean Air Act requirements:

Transportation plans, programs and projects do not:

- Create new violations of the NAAQS
- Increase the frequency or severity of NAAQS violations
- Delay timely attainment of the NAAQS

Who is Responsible For Conformity?

- There are numerous agencies involved in the conformity process, including:
 - Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)
 - State DOTs
 - State Air Quality Agencies
 - US DOT (FTA/FHWA)
 - US EPA



Interagency Consultation



- Interrelationship between the SIP and transportation
- Planning processes requires close coordination
 - Coordination is carried out through the interagency consultation process
 - Participants may include state air agency, state DOT, MPOs, regional air districts (where applicable), cities & counties, FHWA, FTA, and EPA
 - Required by the conformity rule and integrated into the SIP

When is Conformity Required?

Conformity must be determined:

- At least every 4 years in nonattainment and maintenance areas
- Prior to approval / acceptance of a transportation plan, a TIP, and certain plan / TIP amendments

Prior to approval of Federal projects

- Federal projects involving FHWA/FTA approval / funding
- Projects must be included in a conforming plan and TIP

When is Conformity Required for Projects?

- Re-determination required if a project's design concept and scope have changed significantly
- Project-level conformity requirements are usually met during the Federal environmental review process

Conformity Lapse

- “...Lapse means that the conformity determination for a transportation plan or TIP has expired, and thus there is no currently conforming transportation plan / TIP.”
- Conformity Lapse = no capacity increasing projects

Conformity Lapse Grace Period

- SAFETEA-LU provides additional 12 months from deadline to correct problem before lapse occurs
- With STIP/TIP in place, area can continue to advance projects
- If plan in effect, but STIP/TIP expired, FHWA/FTA cannot authorize projects

Transportation Conformity

- Transportation plans, programs, and projects are demonstrated to be consistent with the transportation-related elements of a SIP
- Maintenance designation = 20 years of conformity process

Local Impacts of Transportation Conformity

- Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)/TIP (and amendments) must be consistent with air quality requirements
- Planning assumptions & projects now reviewed by Federal and State partners

Local Impacts of Transportation Conformity

- Local governments & departments must increase coordination with MPO
- Less flexibility in revising project schedules
- SPLOST projects must be reviewed by interagency partners

What Should Transportation Officials Be Doing Now?

- MPO takes the lead
- Educate stakeholders on conformity/CMAQ
- Get involved in air quality planning process for the new nonattainment areas
- Get started now

Questions...



Conformity Websites

FHWA Website:

- www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/air_quality/conformity/

EPA Website:

- www.epa.gov/OMSWWW/stateresources/transconf/index.htm

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