



Environmental Fact Sheet

The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)

The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program provides federal transportation funds to support state and local projects that reduce transportation related air pollution. It was reauthorized by the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) to fund projects that initiate or expand transportation related infrastructure and services with air quality benefits. The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) administers the program, in consultation with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), under flexible guidelines. These projects include both traditional and non-traditional highway and transit projects. Examples of non-traditional projects include marketing and outreach to reduce driving, reduced fare programs to encourage transit use, transportation demand management programs, and programs to increase the use of clean alternatively-fueled vehicles. The highest priority for CMAQ funds are transportation control measures (TCMs) identified in approved State Implementation Plans (SIPs).

CMAQ projects compliment many of the more traditional strategies for reducing air pollution from transportation sources. Traditionally, states and local governments have relied on technological control measures to reduce air pollution and attain the air quality standards. Industrial processes with significantly lower emission levels, cleaner exhaust emissions from vehicles, and lower evaporative emissions from fuels have resulted in cleaner air in many cities. Yet the increase in the number of

vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in recent years counteracts these gains and may slow progress toward achieving healthy air. Strategies to reduce VMT and reduce congestion in order to make travel less polluting are increasingly viewed as integral components of sustainable air quality plans.

How Does the Program Work?

TEA-21 provides for as much as \$8.1 billion for the CMAQ program from 1998 through 2003. The funds are apportioned to the states annually, based upon a legislated formula, with each state guaranteed 0.5% and the rest apportioned on the basis of population and the severity of the air pollution in ozone and carbon monoxide nonattainment and maintenance areas. As with most of the federal transportation programs, a state or local match of funds is required.

Two project eligibility requirements apply to the CMAQ program. First, the money must be spent on projects which reduce ozone, carbon monoxide, or PM-10 from transportation sources. Second, the money must be used in nonattainment or maintenance areas, if one exists within the state. It is important to note that nonattainment and maintenance areas for PM-10 are eligible to receive CMAQ funds, even though these areas are not included in the CMAQ apportionment formula. The state is responsible for distribution of funds among multiple nonattainment areas. If the state does not have an ozone or carbon monoxide nonattainment or maintenance area, the funds may be used anywhere in the state

for any activity eligible under the CMAQ or Surface Transportation Programs. However, in these cases, if a PM-10 area exists, funding projects that address transportation-related particulate matter is encouraged.

What Kinds of Projects are Eligible for CMAQ Funds?

Because of the program's high degree of flexibility, CMAQ projects can vary greatly from area to area. However, there are some common characteristics, due to the program's focus on air quality. Generally, CMAQ projects are developed through a coordinated planning process and target the pollutants for which the area is in nonattainment or maintenance. CMAQ projects can usually be classified in one of the following categories:

- Travel Demand Management Strategies
- Transit Improvements
- Shared Ride Services
- Traffic Flow Improvements
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Programs

These broad categories provide wide-ranging flexibility and can support specific projects that vary greatly in design, scope, and implementation. The categories are not intended to be exclusive; other activities, such as public education and outreach programs and the conversion of vehicle fleets to clean alternative fuels, are also eligible.

How to Get CMAQ Funding for a Project

CMAQ programs are coordinated through an urban area's lead transportation planning organization. Usually this is an area's regional council or association of governments, known as a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). MPOs have broad responsibility in developing an area's long-range Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). MPOs typically work with the state air quality agency to develop the State Implementation Plan (SIP) for air quality.

Any individual or organization can develop a formal proposal and submit it to the MPO for consideration. Examples include transportation management associations, transit operators, local or state government transportation or environmental departments, or simply a neighborhood group. The MPO, and in some cases the state, evaluates the proposal in consultation with state and local air quality agencies to determine if the proposal supports the area's air quality needs and should be included in the long range transportation plan and TIP. A list of projects from the transportation plan, including specific CMAQ projects based on priorities and available CMAQ funds, are subsequently included in the next TIP. The inclusion of any specific CMAQ project in the TIP is more likely if the project has support from other interested parties (transit operators, air quality agencies, local government representatives, etc.).

The new amended TIP is approved by the MPO and sent to the governor for state approval. CMAQ projects are then selected

for implementation from the approved TIP and are submitted to the Federal Highway Administration or the Federal Transit Administration, as appropriate, for final approval and authorization to proceed. CMAQ funds are obligated for each submitted project when it receives this final approval. When CMAQ funds are obligated to a project, the state can then draw on the funds for reimbursement of expenses incurred for that specific project.

For Further Information

For more information about the CMAQ program, you may contact:

- Your local Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Your State Department of Transportation
- The U.S. Department of Transportation
 - Federal Highway Administration, State Division Offices
 - Federal Transit Administration, Regional Offices
- The U.S. EPA Regional Offices

or:

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