



Program Update

Transportation Conformity: Federal Interagency Coordination

The following questions and answers describe the coordination between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) on transportation conformity.

What is Transportation Conformity?

Transportation conformity is a Clean Air Act requirement that calls for EPA, DOT, and various regional, state and local government agencies to integrate the air quality and transportation planning development process. Transportation conformity supports the development of transportation plans, programs, and projects that enable areas to meet and maintain national air quality standards for ozone, particulate matter, and carbon monoxide which impact human health and the environment.

Why is Federal Interagency Coordination Important?

Interagency consultation between EPA and DOT is important because these two federal agencies are responsible for the environmental and transportation programs that are affected by transportation conformity. For example, EPA sets national air quality standards that metropolitan and rural areas must meet. DOT is responsible for approving transportation plans, programs and projects that may affect the ability of an area to “conform” to state and local air quality plans designed to meet EPA’s air quality standards.

How do EPA and DOT Coordinate?

To improve federal consultation in the transportation conformity process, EPA and DOT signed a national Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on April 19, 2000. This agreement will ensure that EPA and DOT continue to coordinate and regularly consult on transportation and air quality programs that are related to the transportation conformity process.

By improving consultation between the federal agencies, the MOU will support improved and timely decisions which affect state and local transportation and air quality agencies. The MOU specifically provides guidance on federal interagency coordination; it does not affect state or local agreements on coordination and consultation practices.

Under the MOU, EPA and DOT have agreed to the following basic principles to ensure effective interagency consultation in the transportation conformity process:

- Consultation procedures that provide for the agencies to give each other timely advice on the conformity implications of an air quality or transportation plan, program, or project.
- A process for elevating unresolved, conformity-related issues to senior levels of EPA/DOT management.
- A process for maintaining communications when it is apparent that pending transportation programs, plans and projects will not conform to an area's air quality goals.
- A process for allowing new air quality beneficial projects to proceed when transportation activities do not conform to an area's air quality goals.

How can I get more information?

You can access a copy of the MOU and other documents on transportation conformity electronically on the Office of Transportation and Air Quality (OTAQ) Web site at:

<http://www.epa.gov/otaq/traq>(click on "conformity")

You can also contact the OTAQ library for document information at:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Transportation and Air Quality Library
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