



TRAQ Technical Brief

Transportation Air Quality Center

Initiative to Involve Youth in Reducing Vehicle Miles Traveled



The Environmental Protection Agency has entered into a cooperative agreement with the Academy for Educational Development to develop a program that would involve youth in decreasing vehicle emissions by changing travel behavior. This community-based, voluntary program will be field tested in three pilot sites. The results of the field testing will be used to produce a program blueprint that can be used by diverse localities interested in innovative, effective approaches to address their air quality concerns.

Significance

The increase in the number of miles being driven in recent years threatens to overwhelm the technological advances made with respect to vehicle emission reductions, adding to air pollution as well as urban gridlock. Although today's cars are 70 to 90 percent cleaner than their 1970 counterparts, transportation emissions continue to be a significant cause of air pollution due to the rapid increase in travel activity since 1970. The amount

of miles driven has almost doubled in the U.S. from 1970 to 1990, tripled from 1960, and increased even faster in many specific metropolitan areas. Youth contribute to travel activity and can play an important role by developing a better understanding of the impact of travel choice. This youth-based initiative will create a voluntary program which will be field tested to provide effective application in communities around the country.

Objectives

The initiative will produce a blueprint for a community-based program that supports states and local communities seeking to meet air quality standards and improve public health. It will do this by developing a replicable and sustainable approach to involving American youth and their families in reducing emissions from travel activity.

Partners

EPA's Office of Mobile Sources entered into a cooperative agreement with the Academy for Educational Development (AED), who first proposed to undertake this effort. AED is a private, nonprofit service organization with 35 years of experience in addressing the problems of human development, with a strong emphasis on youth.

Initiative Design

This three-year initiative began in spring 1997. A youth-design oriented program is being developed at the local level at three pilot site locations:

- Tampa** Primary Partner: American Lung Association of Gulfcoast Florida
Projected Results: Reduced vehicle miles traveled (VMT) because of youth involvement in VMT issue. The objective will be realized through two tracks: 1) enhancement of the current AirWise curriculum to strengthen the VMT component targeting seventh-grade students; and 2) creation of youth committee of tenth-grade students to develop appealing promotional approaches around specific travel activities.
- Boston** Primary Partner: Alternatives for Community & Environment
Projected Results: Enhanced suburb-to-suburb transportation options, so that low-income residents have better access jobs. The objective will be realized as youth become engaged in identifying needs and proposing solutions to expand and improve transportation choices available in target

neighborhoods. For example, the youth may engage the transit agency to expand or enhance bus service.

Kansas City

Primary Partner: Mid-America Regional Council (MARC)

Projected Results: Enhanced use of a wide range of travel choices by students who live close to school. This objective will be realized by developing a bike/pedestrian initiative to involve youth in working with the community to make walking and biking to school a viable alternative.

Youth Involvement

Involving youth in the decision-making process can improve project effectiveness and sustainability. Youth can play a role in several ways.

- Communicate about travel choices.
- Contribute to finding travel solutions.
- Choose travel options that minimize VMT.

Appropriate local youth-focused organizations are being identified and invited to participate in each pilot site.

Outcome

Upon completion, AED will have a program blueprint and tools to conduct an effective, community-based, sustainable approach to involve youth in reducing VMT. This will be shared with EPA and communities across the country. The blueprint can then be used by states and local communities interested in including a youth component in their VMT reduction efforts.

For Further Information

For more information on the initiative to involve youth in reducing vehicle miles traveled, please contact:

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Additional documents on transportation and air quality are available electronically from the EPA Internet server at:

<http://www.epa.gov/oms/traq>