



TRAQ Technical Brief

Transportation Air Quality Center

DOT/EPA Transportation and Air Quality Public Information Initiative



The United States Department of Transportation (DOT) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are working together to support and facilitate the efforts of state and local governments to meet their congestion and air quality goals under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and the Clean Air Act (CAA).

Objectives The Transportation and Air Quality (TRAQ) Public Information Initiative is designed to increase public awareness of the connection between travel behavior and air quality, alternative modes of transportation, and the impact of travel choices on traffic congestion and air quality.

Significance The American public wants both mobility and clean air. While progress has been made in achieving both of these goals, significant challenges remain to reduce congestion levels and improve air quality. Growth in vehicle travel contributes to traffic congestion and air pollution and, unless technology improvements keep pace, could begin to offset emissions reductions made through cleaner cars and fuels.

Consequently, a successful community-based program will help address increases in miles driven by encouraging people to consider a range of travel choices including ride-sharing, trip chaining, using public transit, and telecommuting.

Partners

- U.S. DOT - Federal Highway Administration
- U.S. DOT - Federal Transit Administration
- U.S. EPA - Office of Mobile Sources

The federal partners are working collaboratively with local communities on the transportation and air quality public information initiative.

Initiative Design

Meeting the objectives of the initiative requires a carefully Design coordinated and consistent effort. Thus, the federal partners are beginning a long term initiative on both the national and local levels. There are four primary components to the initiative: pilot tests, coalition building, outreach and communication, and evaluation.

Pilot Programs:

Three communities were chosen to create pilot programs at the local level:

- Dover, Delaware
- Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- San Francisco, California

Each pilot site is designing a customized community-based approach to assess the community's specific public involvement and informational needs and capabilities in order to mitigate air quality and congestion concerns. The pilot products and processes will be adaptable to other, similar communities across the country. Pilot sites will be given technical assistance, creative materials, and limited start-up funding by the federal partners.

Federal and local sponsoring agencies will work closely with community planners, businesses, and transportation, public health and environmental partners to develop a coalition infrastructure at pilot sites and the national level. This infrastructure is designed to insure the sustainability of this initiative. The coalitions will bring together partners representing organizations with diverse interests to share their perspectives and seek common ground.

Coalition Building:

Local coalition members will assess local air quality and transportation concerns, develop appropriate local transportation strategies, communicate these to the driving public, and work with the public to encourage individual choices to improve air quality and mitigate congestion. At the national level, coalition members will work together to develop and disseminate consistent, timely, and accurate communication tools and design public outreach activities based on widely accepted technical information for use nationwide.

Outreach and Communication:

The national and local communication effort will explain through information dissemination and public involvement how alternatives to driving alone can meet a person's mobility needs while reducing stress, saving time and money, and providing time for personal activities during travel. The national and local efforts will complement each other. The national effort will support and reinforce efforts at the local level. Community efforts will communicate regionally specific solutions to issues of national prominence.

Evaluation:

The pilot evaluation will assess the effectiveness and long-term potential value of this community-based approach. The partners will measure changes in driver awareness levels and attitudes toward transportation and air quality issues. In addition, they will establish baseline measures by collecting information on the use of carpools/vanpools, use of public transit, trip chaining, and telecommuting at each pilot site. Evaluation will be a significant component of the nationwide public information initiative as well.

Federal Support

The national initiative will be launched soon after the pilot test program is completed. The federal partners will then publicize the initiative beginning in late 1998. Interested communities can apply via one of the three Agency contacts listed below to receive technical assistance, the materials necessary to implement the campaign, and limited start-up funds. Local organizations will be selected to receive federal support based on: 1) local congestion and air quality conditions; 2) their enthusiasm and willingness to conduct a transportation and air quality public information effort; and 3) their ability to engender community support for sound transportation choices to sustain this effort in the long term.

**For Further
Information**

For more information on the DOT/EPA Transportation and Air Quality Public Information Initiative, please contact:

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This document and additional information on transportation and air quality are available electronically on the EPA Internet server on the World Wide Web at:

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