

**Clean Air Act Section 176(c)**

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TITLE 42--THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELFARE

CHAPTER 85--AIR POLLUTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL

SUBCHAPTER I--PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

Part D--Plan Requirements for Nonattainment Areas

subpart 1--nonattainment areas in general

Sec. 7506. Limitations on certain Federal assistance

- (a), (b) Repealed. Pub. L. 101-549, title I, Sec. 110(4), Nov. 15, 1990, 104 Stat. 2470
- (c) Activities not conforming to approved or promulgated plans

(1) No department, agency, or instrumentality of the Federal Government shall engage in, support in any way or provide financial assistance for, license or permit, or approve, any activity which does not conform to an implementation plan after it has been approved or promulgated under section 7410 of this title. No metropolitan planning organization designated under section 134 of title 23, shall give its approval to any project, program, or plan which does not conform to an implementation plan approved or promulgated under section 7410 of this title. The assurance of conformity to such an implementation plan shall be an affirmative responsibility of the head of such department, agency, or instrumentality. Conformity to an implementation plan means--

(A) conformity to an implementation plan's purpose of eliminating or reducing the severity and number of violations of the national ambient air quality standards and achieving expeditious attainment of such standards; and

(B) that such activities will not--

- (i) cause or contribute to any new violation of any standard in any area;
- (ii) increase the frequency or severity of any existing violation of any standard in any area; or
- (iii) delay timely attainment of any standard or any required interim emission reductions or other milestones in any area.

The determination of conformity shall be based on the most recent estimates of emissions, and such estimates shall be determined from the most recent population, employment, travel and congestion estimates as determined by the metropolitan planning organization or other agency authorized to make such estimates.

(2) Any transportation plan or program developed pursuant to title 23 or chapter 53 of title 49 shall implement the transportation provisions of any applicable implementation plan approved under this chapter applicable to all or part of the area covered by such transportation plan or program. No Federal agency may approve, accept or fund any transportation plan, program or project unless such plan, program or project has been found to conform to any applicable implementation plan in effect under this chapter. In particular--

(A) no transportation plan or transportation improvement program may be adopted by a metropolitan planning organization designated under title 23 or chapter 53 of title 49, or be found to be in conformity by a metropolitan planning organization until a final determination has been made that emissions expected from implementation of such plans and programs are consistent with estimates of emissions from motor vehicles and necessary emissions reductions contained in the applicable implementation plan, and that the plan or program will conform to the requirements of paragraph (1)(B);

(B) no metropolitan planning organization or other recipient of funds under title 23 or chapter 53 of title 49 shall adopt or approve a transportation improvement program of projects until it determines that such program provides for timely implementation of transportation control measures consistent with schedules included in the applicable implementation plan;

(C) a transportation project may be adopted or approved by a metropolitan planning organization or any recipient of funds designated under title 23 or chapter 53 of title 49, or found in conformity by a metropolitan planning organization or approved, accepted, or funded by the Department of Transportation only if it meets either the requirements of subparagraph (D) or the following requirements--

(i) such a project comes from a conforming plan and program;

(ii) the design concept and scope of such project have not changed significantly since the conformity finding regarding the plan and program from which the project derived; and

(iii) the design concept and scope of such project at the time of the conformity determination for the program was adequate to determine emissions.

(D) Any project not referred to in subparagraph (C) shall be treated as conforming to the applicable implementation plan only if it is demonstrated that the projected emissions from such project, when considered together with emissions projected for the conforming transportation plans and programs within the nonattainment area, do not cause such plans and programs to exceed the emission reduction projections and schedules assigned to such plans and programs in the applicable implementation plan.

(E) The appropriate metropolitan planning organization shall redetermine conformity of existing transportation plans and programs not later than 2 years after the date on which the Administrator—

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(i) finds a motor vehicle emissions budget to be adequate in accordance with section 93.118(e)(4) of title 40, Code of Federal Regulations (as in effect on October 1, 2004);

(ii) approves an implementation plan that establishes a motor vehicle emissions budget if that budget has not yet been determined to be adequate in accordance with clause (i); or

(iii) promulgates an implementation plan that establishes or revises a motor vehicle emissions budget.

(3) Until such time as the implementation plan revision referred to in paragraph (4)(C) is approved, conformity of such plans, programs, and projects will be demonstrated if--

(A) the transportation plans and programs--

(i) are consistent with the most recent estimates of mobile source emissions;

(ii) provide for the expeditious implementation of transportation control measures in the applicable implementation plan; and

(iii) with respect to ozone and carbon monoxide nonattainment areas, contribute to annual emissions reductions consistent with sections 7511a(b)(1) and 7512a(a)(7) of this title; and

(B) the transportation projects--

(i) come from a conforming transportation plan and program as defined in subparagraph (A) or for 12 months after November 15, 1990, from a transportation program found to conform within 3 years prior to November 15, 1990; and

(ii) in carbon monoxide nonattainment areas, eliminate or reduce the severity and number of violations of the carbon monoxide standards in the area substantially affected by the project.

With regard to subparagraph (B)(ii), such determination may be made as part of either the conformity determination for the transportation program or for the individual project taken as a whole during the environmental review phase of project development.

(4) CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES FOR DETERMINING CONFORMITY

(A) IN GENERAL—The Administrator shall promulgate, and periodically update, criteria and procedures for determining conformity (except in the case of transportation plans, programs, and projects) of, and for keeping the Administrator informed about, the activities referred to in paragraph (1).

(B) TRANSPORTATION PLANS, PROGRAMS, AND PROJECTS—The Administrator, with the concurrence of the Secretary of Transportation, shall promulgate, and periodically update, criteria and procedures for demonstrating and assuring conformity in the case of transportation plans, programs, and projects.

(C) CIVIL ACTION TO COMPEL PROMULGATION—A civil action may be brought against the Administrator and the Secretary of Transportation under section 7604 of this title to compel promulgation of such criteria and procedures and the Federal district court shall have jurisdiction to order such promulgation.

(D) The procedures and criteria shall, at a minimum--

(i) address the consultation procedures to be undertaken by metropolitan planning organizations and the Secretary of Transportation with State and local air quality agencies

and State departments of transportation before such organizations and the Secretary make conformity determinations;

(ii) address the appropriate frequency for making conformity determinations, but ; the frequency for making conformity determinations on updated transportation plans and programs shall be every 4 years, except in a case in which—

(I) the metropolitan planning organization elects to update a transportation plan or program more frequently; or

(II) the metropolitan planning organization is required to determine conformity in accordance with paragraph (2)(E); and

(iii) address how conformity determinations will be made with respect to maintenance plans.

(E). INCLUSION OF CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES IN SIP.—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of the SAFETEA–LU the procedures under subparagraph (A) shall include a requirement that each State include in the State implementation plan criteria and procedures for consultation required by subparagraph (D)(i), and enforcement and enforceability (pursuant to sections 93.125(c) and 93.122(a)(4)(ii) of title 40, Code of Federal Regulations) in accordance with the Administrator’s criteria and procedures for consultation, enforcement and enforceability.’’.

(F) Compliance with the rules of the Administrator for determining the conformity of transportation plans, programs, and projects funded or approved under title 23 or chapter 53 of title 49 to State or Federal implementation plans shall not be required for traffic signal synchronization projects prior to the funding, approval or implementation of such projects. The supporting regional emissions analysis for any conformity determination made with respect to a transportation plan, program, or project shall consider the effect on emissions of any such project funded, approved, or implemented prior to the conformity determination.

(5) Applicability.--This subsection shall apply only with respect to—

(A) a nonattainment area and each pollutant for which the area is designated as a nonattainment area; and

(B) an area that was designated as a nonattainment area but that was later redesignated by the Administrator as an attainment area and that is required to develop a maintenance plan under section 7505a of this title with respect to the specific pollutant for which the area was designated nonattainment.

(6) Notwithstanding paragraph 5,\1\ this subsection shall not apply with respect to an area designated nonattainment under section 7407(d)(1) of this title until 1 year after that area is first designated nonattainment for a specific national ambient air quality standard. This paragraph only applies with respect to the national ambient air quality standard for which an area is newly designated nonattainment and does not affect the area's requirements with respect to all other national ambient air quality standards for which the area is designated nonattainment or has been redesignated from nonattainment to attainment with a maintenance plan pursuant to section 7505a \2\ of this title (including any pre-existing national ambient air quality standard for a pollutant for which a new or revised standard has been issued).

(7) CONFORMITY HORIZON FOR TRANSPORTATION PLANS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Each conformity determination required under this section for a transportation plan under section 134(i) of title 23, United States Code, or section 5303(i) of title 49, United States Code, shall require a demonstration of conformity for the period ending on either the final year of the transportation plan, or at the election of the metropolitan planning organization, after consultation with the air pollution control agency and solicitation of public comments and consideration of such comments, the longest of the following periods:

(i) The first 10-year period of any such transportation plan.

(ii) The latest year in the implementation plan applicable to the area that contains a motor vehicle emission budget.

(iii) The year after the completion date of a regionally significant project if the project is included in the transportation improvement program or the project requires approval before the subsequent conformity determination.

(B) REGIONAL EMISSIONS ANALYSIS.—The conformity determination shall be accompanied by a regional emissions analysis for the last year of the transportation plan and for any year shown to exceed emission budgets by a prior analysis, if such year extends beyond the applicable period as determined under subparagraph (A).

(C) EXCEPTION.—In any case in which an area has a revision to an implementation plan under section 175A(b) and the Administrator has found the motor vehicles emissions budgets from that revision to be adequate in accordance with section 93.118(e)(4) of title 40, Code of Federal Regulations (as in effect on October 1, 2004), or has approved the revision, the demonstration of conformity at the election of the metropolitan planning organization, after consultation with the air pollution control agency and solicitation of public comments and consideration of such comments, shall be required to extend only through the last year of the implementation plan required under section 175A(b).

(D) EFFECT OF ELECTION.—Any election by a metropolitan planning organization under this paragraph shall continue in effect until the metropolitan planning organization elects otherwise.

(E) AIR POLLUTION CONTROL AGENCY DEFINED.—In this paragraph, the term ‘air pollution control agency’ means an air pollution control agency (as defined in section 302(b)) that is responsible for developing plans or controlling air pollution within the area covered by a transportation plan.

(8) SUBSTITUTION OF TRANSPORTATION CONTROL MEASURES.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Transportation control measures that are specified in an implementation plan may be replaced or added to the implementation plan with alternate or additional transportation control measures

(i) if the substitute measures achieve equivalent or greater emissions reductions than the control measure to be replaced, as demonstrated with an emissions impact analysis that is consistent with the current methodology used for evaluating the replaced control measure in the implementation plan;

(ii) if the substitute control measures are implemented—

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(I) in accordance with a schedule that is consistent with the schedule provided for control measures in the implementation plan; or

(II) if the implementation plan date for implementation of the control measure to be replaced has passed, as soon as practicable after the implementation plan date but not later than the date on which emission reductions are necessary to achieve the purpose of the implementation plan;

(iii) if the substitute and additional control measures are accompanied with evidence of adequate personnel and funding and authority under State or local law to implement, monitor, and enforce the control measures;

(iv) if the substitute and additional control measures were developed through a collaborative process that included—

(I) participation by representatives of all affected jurisdictions (including local air pollution control agencies, the State air pollution control agency, and State and local transportation agencies);

(II) consultation with the Administrator; and

(III) reasonable public notice and opportunity for comment; and

(v) if the metropolitan planning organization, State air pollution control agency, and the Administrator concur with the equivalency of the substitute or additional control measures.

(B) ADOPTION.—

(i) Concurrence by the metropolitan planning organization, State air pollution control agency and the Administrator as required by subparagraph (A)(v) shall constitute adoption of the substitute or additional control measures so long as the requirements of subparagraphs (A)(i), (A)(ii), (A)(iii) and (A)(iv) are met.

(ii) Once adopted, the substitute or additional control measures become, by operation of law, part of the State implementation plan and become federally enforceable.

(iii) Within 90 days of its concurrence under subparagraph (A)(v), the State air pollution control agency shall submit the substitute or additional control measure to the Administrator for incorporation in the codification of the applicable implementation plan. Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, no additional State process shall be necessary to support such revision to the applicable plan.

(C) NO REQUIREMENT FOR EXPRESS PERMISSION.—The substitution or addition of a transportation control measure in accordance with this paragraph and the funding or approval of such a control measure shall not be contingent on the existence of any provision in the applicable implementation plan that expressly permits such a substitution or addition.

(D) NO REQUIREMENT FOR NEW CONFORMITY DETERMINATION.— The substitution or addition of a transportation control measure in accordance with this paragraph shall not require—

(i) a new conformity determination for the transportation plan; or

(ii) a revision of the implementation plan.

(E) CONTINUATION OF CONTROL MEASURE BEING REPLACED.—A control measure that is being replaced by a substitute control measure under this paragraph shall remain in effect until the substitute control measure is adopted by the State pursuant to subparagraph (B).

(F) EFFECT OF ADOPTION.—Adoption of a substitute control measure shall constitute rescission of the previously applicable control measure.

(9) LAPSE OF CONFORMITY.—If a conformity determination required under this subsection for a transportation plan under section 134(i) of title 23, United States Code, or section 5303(i) of title 49, United States Code, or a transportation improvement program under section 134(j) of such title 23 or under section 5303(j) of such title 49 is not made by the applicable deadline and such failure is not corrected by additional measures to either reduce motor vehicle emissions sufficient to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of this subsection within 12 months after such deadline or other measures sufficient to correct such failures, the transportation plan shall lapse.

(10) LAPSE.—In this subsection, the term ‘lapse’ means that the conformity determination for a transportation plan or transportation improvement program has expired, and thus there is no currently conforming transportation plan or transportation improvement program.’’.

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\1\ So in original. Probably should be ``paragraph (5),".  
\2\ See References in Text note below.  
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(July 14, 1955, ch. 360, title I, Sec. 176, as added Pub. L. 95-95, title I, Sec. 129(b), Aug. 7, 1977, 91 Stat. 749; amended Pub. L. 95-190, Sec. 14(a)(59), Nov. 16, 1977, 91 Stat. 1403; Pub. L. 101-549, title I, Secs. 101(f), 110(4), Nov. 15, 1990, 104 Stat. 2409, 2470; Pub. L. 104-59, title III, Sec. 305(b), Nov. 28, 1995, 109 Stat. 580; Pub. L. 104-260, Sec. 1, Oct. 9, 1996, 110 Stat. 3175; Pub. L. 106-377, Sec. 1(a)(1) [title III], Oct. 27, 2000, 114 Stat. 1441, 1441A-44.)

#### References in Text

Section 7505a of this title, referred to in subsec. (c)(6), was in the original ``section 175(A)" and was translated as reading ``section 175A", meaning section 175A of act July 14, 1955, which is classified to section 7505a of this title, to reflect the probable intent of Congress.

#### Codification

In subsecs. (c)(2) and (d), ``chapter 53 of title 49" substituted for ``the Urban Mass Transportation Act [49 App. U.S.C. 1601 et seq.]" and in subsec. (c)(4)(D) substituted for ``Federal Transit Act" on authority of Pub. L. 103-272, Sec. 6(b), July 5, 1994, 108 Stat. 1378 (the first section of which enacted subtitles II, III, and V to X of Title 49, Transportation), and of Pub. L. 102-240, title III, Sec. 3003(b), Dec. 18, 1991, 105 Stat. 2088, which provided that

references in laws to the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964 be deemed to be references to the Federal Transit Act.

#### Amendments

2000--Subsec. (c)(6). Pub. L. 106-377 added par. (6).

1996--Subsec. (c)(4)(D). Pub. L. 104-260 added subpar. (D).

1995--Subsec. (c)(5). Pub. L. 104-59 added par. (5).

1990--Subsecs. (a), (b). Pub. L. 101-549, Sec. 110(4), struck out subsec. (a) which related to approval of projects or award of grants, and subsec. (b) which related to implementation of approved or promulgated plans.

Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 101-549, Sec. 101(f), designated existing provisions as par. (1), struck out "(1)", "(2)", "(3)", and "(4)" before "engage in", "support in", "license or", and "approve, any", respectively, substituted "conform to an implementation plan after it" for "conform to a plan after it", "conform to an implementation plan approved" for "conform to a plan approved", and "conformity to such an implementation plan shall" for "conformity to such a plan shall", inserted "Conformity to an implementation plan means--" followed immediately by subpars. (A) and (B) and closing provisions relating to determination of conformity being based on recent estimates of emissions and the determination of such estimates, and added pars. (2) to (4).

1977--Subsec. (a)(1). Pub. L. 95-190 inserted "national" before "primary".