

Regulatory Announcement

Transportation Conformity Final Rule: PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ Hot-Spot Analyses in Project-Level Transportation Conformity Determinations for the PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ National Ambient Air Quality Standards

EPA is finalizing the criteria for determining which transportation projects must undergo a local air quality analysis (i.e., a "hot-spot analysis") as part of conformity determinations in areas not meeting PM_{2.5} (particulate matter smaller than 2.5 micrometers in diameter) air quality standards. This final rule also streamlines existing hot-spot requirements in PM₁₀ areas. A "hot-spot analysis" is an estimation of pollutant concentrations in a localized area resulting from the use or operation of a transportation project, and a comparison of those concentrations to the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS).

Key Elements of the Final Rule

- This rule requires that PM_{2.5} hot-spot analyses be performed only for new transportation projects with significant diesel traffic. Examples of such "projects of air quality concern" include intermodal freight or bus terminals, and major highway projects and congested intersections involving significant diesel traffic. No hot-spot analyses will be required for most projects in PM_{2.5}

areas, because most projects are not an air quality concern. This final rule also streamlines existing PM₁₀ hot-spot requirements in a similar way.

- The streamlined approach in this final rule will ensure that transportation and air quality agencies in PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ areas use their resources efficiently, while achieving clean air goals.
- In both PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ areas, a quantitative hot-spot analysis is not required until EPA issues a new motor vehicle emissions model capable of estimating local emissions as well as future hot-spot modeling guidance. Qualitative analyses will apply in the interim.
- This rule extends an existing flexibility by allowing the U.S. Department of Transportation to make “categorical hot-spot findings,” which would waive PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ hot-spot reviews for categories of projects where modeling shows that there is no air quality concern.

Background

Transportation conformity is a Clean Air Act requirement that ensures that federally supported highway and transit projects are consistent with (“conform to”) the purpose of a state air quality implementation plan (SIP). Conformity ensures that public health is protected by early consideration of transportation decisions in cities with air quality challenges.

This final rule is part of EPA’s implementation of the current PM_{2.5} standards. The final rule is a result of two proposed rulemakings in November 2003 and December 2004. EPA received comments from state and local transportation and air quality agencies, environmental and transportation interest groups, and private citizens. EPA has worked closely with DOT in the development of this final rule.

Health and Environmental Impacts

By focusing requirements on transportation projects of air quality concern, this rule ensures that conformity is practicably implemented and that conformity will help achieve the Clean Air Act’s public health and environmental goals.

For More Information

You can access the final rule and related documents on EPA's Office of Transportation and Air Quality web site at: www.epa.gov/otaq/transp/conform/conf-regs.htm. For further information about the final rule, please contact:

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