

DIESEL RETROFIT PROJECT SOLICITATION & PROPOSED EVALUATION

The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) is a flexible funding source for state and local governments to fund transportation projects and programs to help meet the requirements of the Clean Air Act (CAA). CMAQ was created in 1991 and reauthorized in the SAFETEA-LU legislation. CMAQ funds support transportation projects that reduce mobile source emissions in areas designated by U.S. EPA as a non-attainment or “maintenance” area according to the national ambient air quality standards.

Recent estimates indicate that diesel exhaust from heavy-duty vehicles contributes 63 percent of the Nation's on-road particulate matter (PM) inventory. These same diesels generate about 42 percent of on-road nitrogen oxides (NOx), or 13 percent of total NOx. Even more critical, heavy-duty vehicles off the highways, like construction or farm equipment, are estimated to generate 22 percent of the Nation's NOx inventory.

To address the continuing problem with diesel truck emissions, EPA unveiled a diesel retrofit program in March 2000. Diesel retrofit technology carries established, calculable emissions benefits for use in SIP and conformity analyses. While emissions reduction credit varies with each local program, some estimates point to substantial clean air gains. Several types of retrofit emission control technologies such as diesel particulate filters and diesel oxidation catalysts are available with varying levels of demonstrated effectiveness at reducing PM, hydrocarbons (HC), carbon monoxide (CO), and air toxics. Closely related to the more targeted retrofit programs are diesel engine replacement initiatives; the two are sometimes cast as a complementing package.

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU) reauthorized federal transportation funding programs through Federal Fiscal Year 2009. The SAFETEA-LU legislation included two new provisions that could increase the number of retrofit projects funded by the CMAQ program. The first of these requires states and MPOs to give priority in distributing CMAQ funds to “diesel retrofits, particularly where necessary to facilitate contract compliance.” The second expands the eligibility of projects to include non-road vehicles and engines that are used in highway construction projects.

The Planning Committee, at its December 2006 meeting, created a set-aside for diesel retrofits of non-CDTA fleets. The attached solicitation for projects under CDTC's CMAQ diesel retrofit program requests information from potential applicants about the fleet to be retrofitted and the associated air quality benefits. Applications will be evaluated and ranked according to the emissions reduction potential of the project. Off-road diesel retrofit projects will be given an additional weight, since the SAFETEA-LU legislation emphasizes the importance of the off-road program. CDTC staff will distribute the solicitation to its member agencies, the municipal entities in the four counties and advertise the solicitation on their website.

CDTC staff seeks Planning Committee concurrence on this solicitation, proposed evaluation procedures and approach.