

MWAQC Technical Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary
October 13, 2020, 10:00 AM to 11:20 AM

Present:

Tom Ballou, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality
Sonya Lewis-Cheatham, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality
Lisa Nissley, Maryland Department of the Environment
Ram Tangirala District Department of Energy & Environment,
Jim Ponticello, Virginia Department of Transportation
Chris Voigt, Virginia Department of Transportation
Norman Whitaker, Virginia Department of Transportation
Virginia Moore, Virginia Department of Transportation
Virginia Burke, Maryland Department of Transportation
Mathew Gaskin, District Department of Transportation
John Kinsman, Edison Electric Institute
Malcolm Watson, Fairfax County
Sree Nampoothiri, Northern Virginia Transportation Authority

Staff:

Sunil Kumar, COG/DEP
Steve Walz, COG/DEP
Jen Desimone, COG/DEP
Jane Posey, COG/DTP
Jinchul Park, COG/DTP
Mark Moran, COG/DTP
Dusan Vuksan, COG/DTP
JC Park, COG/DTP

1. Call to Order and Review of Meeting Summary

Tom Ballou called the meeting to order at 10 am. The September 8th meeting summary was approved without any changes.

2. Ozone Season Update

Sunil Kumar discussed the 2020 ozone season summary and impacts of COVID-19 related restrictions on air quality. Ram requested COG staff to show a comparison of different color code days for PM2.5. He mentioned that the District will be talking to EPA regarding the validity of the 2020 ozone data. Tom said that Virginia does not currently intend to talk to EPA on this issue. He said that the abnormal 2020 data does not fit into EPA's "Exceptional Events" data policy. Lisa said that MDE plans to talk to EPA on the next planning call with EPA on this issue. Ram informed members that the DOEE is reviewing the option of not submitting a request for the attainment date extension for the 2015 ozone standard as the region may eventually have to submit an attainment plan for that standard.

Sunil also briefly discussed the region's current attainment status for the 2015 ozone standard and possible next steps for the planning for this standard. As of September 30th, there was only one Code Red day for PM2.5, 2 Code Orange days for ozone, and the rest of the days were either code green or code yellow.

COVID-19 related restrictions reduced ozone and PM2.5 levels this year as emissions

decreased due to a significant reduction in traffic and energy use as businesses and offices were closed and most people were teleworking. The number of vehicles, which had dropped significantly in April came back to about 10% of the normal traffic by the September end. Energy use is still by 4% lower compared to the pre-COVID period. Weather was mostly unfavorable for the pollutant formation and build up and so played an important role in keeping pollutant levels low.

3. Base Year 2017 Emissions Inventory

Sunil briefed members on the status of the submittal of the base year 2017 emissions inventory. The District completed its public hearing and comment process and Virginia's public comment period will end on October 14th. Maryland had already completed its process and plans to submit the document soon. Ram asked COG staff when the date would be finalized for holding a conference call for the MWAQC-Executive committee to approve the BY2017 emissions inventory for EPA submittal. Jen said that it will be most likely at the end of October.

4. Overview of CMAQ Program in Washington Region

Jane Posey presented an overview of the CMAQ program in the Washington region. The Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality (CMAQ) program was established in 1991 under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) in 23 U.S.C. Section 149, and reauthorized in all subsequent federal transportation funding bills. It provides funds to States for transportation projects designed to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality, particularly in areas of the country that do not attain national air quality standards. It supports investments that encourage alternatives to driving alone, improve traffic flow, and help urban areas meet air quality goals. DOTs select projects for CMAQ funding, calculate emissions benefits, and report annually to FHWA. MPOs and DOTs coordinate for CMAQ-related Performance Based Planning and Programming (PBPP) requirements.

Each CMAQ project must be a transportation project, generate emission reductions (which must be estimated quantitatively or qualitatively), be located in or benefit a nonattainment or maintenance area, and conform to CMAQ guidance (e.g. no SOV capacity increasing projects).

Each State must report to FHWA annually on CMAQ project obligations and its associated air quality benefits in March of every year. In 2018, the state DOTs set individual targets for their portion of the nonattainment area and the MPO set targets for the MPO portion of the nonattainment area. The TPB drafted a Mid-Performance Report showing progress made towards the CMAQ emission reduction targets and by October 1, 2020 the state DOTs sent the MPO Mid-Performance Reports to the FHWA.

Ram asked if there was a provision in CMAQ for funding for the electrification of infrastructure or fleet. Virginia Burke said CMAQ was not suitable for purchasing EV fleet due to the "Buy America" requirement, but it could be for the EV infrastructure. The VW settlement fund is an important source for such infrastructure projects. Jim said that FHWA is ultimately responsible for determining the eligibility for any specific project for CMAQ funds.

5. State & Local Updates

There were no updates.

The conference call ended at 11:20 am.