

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration



Public Transportation

State and local governments can use CMAQ funding to support efforts to meet National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) under the Clean Air Act (CAA) in both nonattainment and maintenance areas for carbon monoxide (CO), particulate matter (PM) and ozone (O₃). Nonattainment areas are those where air pollution levels exceed NAAQS. Maintenance areas are those that were out of compliance with NAAQS for these pollutants but now meet the standards.

How CMAQ Funds May Be Used in Public Transportation

- **New Transit Service:** To tap new markets for transit, CMAQ funds may be used to support startup of new transit services, such as new express bus routes or shuttle services linking major activity centers. Although not a permanent source of funding for these services, the CMAQ dollars can support innovation and help determine the viability of new transit services.
- **System or Service Expansion:** Projects designed to attract new riders, typically by providing new transit facilities or services, are eligible for CMAQ funds. Efforts to improve modal connections in major urban areas generally are eligible for CMAQ funding, so long as they reduce overall emissions. Projects can include both constructing and operating new facilities. Improved public transit is one of the Transportation Control Measures listed in Section 108(f)(a)(1) of the CAA. However, not all transit improvements are eligible for CMAQ funding. The general guideline for eligibility is if the project can reasonably be expected to result in an increase in transit riders. As with all CMAQ-funded projects, an estimate of the resulting emissions reductions must be provided whenever possible.
- **New Vehicles:** CMAQ funds can be used to acquire new transit vehicles (buses, rail, or vans) to expand a fleet or to replace existing vehicles. Alternative fuel vehicles (AFVs) are eligible, assuming they will have a positive impact on air quality.
- **Fare Subsidies:** Under specific conditions, CMAQ funds may be used to support innovative fare policies and financial incentive strategies designed to encourage transit use and reduce exceedances of air quality standards. CMAQ funds may be used to offer reduced fares or free transit or vanpool services when these subsidies are part of an area-wide strategy for reducing emissions during peak periods of ozone pollution. Examples include ozone action programs – designed to avoid exceedances when ozone concentrations are high – coupled with more permanent measures that discourage single-occupant driving.

For any proposed project, the sponsor must document its effects on vehicle emissions so the project can be compared with other CMAQ proposals to allow informed decisions on the best use of available funds.

Examples of Successful Public Transportation Projects

Baltimore, MD/Washington, DC: New, higher-capacity coaches were purchased for Maryland's commuter rail service in the Baltimore-Washington region. CMAQ funds covered \$290,000 of the \$7.2 million cost.

- *Estimated emission reductions: 76 kg/day VOC and 255 kg/day of NO_x*

Houston, TX: A reduced transit fare program was offered in August, when ozone readings are typically highest. CMAQ funds covered \$2.6 million of the \$3.5 million cost.

- *Estimated emission reductions: 80.4 kg/day of VOC and 95.2 kg/day of NO_x*

Lake Cook, IL: An employer-sponsored transit shuttle service operated between a commuter rail stop and a business park in a Chicago suburb. CMAQ funds covered \$312,000 of the \$390,000 cost.

- *Estimated emission reductions: 17.6 kg/day of VOC*

New York City, NY: The 63rd Street-Queens Boulevard Transit Connection is a subway link constructed to facilitate travel between Queens and Manhattan. The project alleviated congestion on the jammed E and F lines running through Queens and resulted in approximately 31 hours per year in savings for the average Queens rider on the E, F, and R lines. CMAQ funds covered \$44 million of the \$645 million cost.

- *Estimated emission reductions: 91 kg/day VOC, 36 kg/day NO_x and 645 kg/day CO*



For more information, please contact:

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