

CHAPTER 16

CONFORMITY

A. MASSACHUSETTS TRANSPORTATION CONFORMITY

1. 2008 Ozone Nonattainment Area

As of July 20, 2013, Dukes County, Massachusetts [Dukes County Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) of Massachusetts] is nonattainment, classification marginal, for the 2008 8-Hour Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS), also known as the 2008 ozone standard. Final Rule: “*Air Quality Designations for the 2008 Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards*,” Monday, May 21, 2012; (77 FR 30088); effective July 20, 2012.

Interagency Transportation Conformity Consultation has determined Dukes County, Massachusetts to be an isolated rural nonattainment area for the 2008 8-hour ozone standard.

Isolated rural nonattainment and maintenance areas are areas that do not contain or are not part of any metropolitan planning area as designated under the transportation planning regulations. Isolated rural areas do not have federally required metropolitan transportation plans or TIPs and do not have projects that are part of the emissions analysis of any MPO's metropolitan transportation plan or TIP. Projects in such areas are instead included in statewide transportation improvement programs. These areas are not donut areas.

See 40 CFR Section 109(g) for conformity in isolated rural nonattainment and maintenance areas.

2. 1997 Ozone Nonattainment Areas

As of July 20, 2013, the 1997 8-Hour Ozone NAAQS (the 1997 ozone standard) is revoked for transportation conformity purposes in the Boston-Lawrence-Worcester (Eastern Massachusetts), Massachusetts and the Springfield (Western Massachusetts), Massachusetts areas. Transportation conformity no longer applies to the 1997 ozone NAAQS in Massachusetts. Final Rule: “*Implementation of the 2008 National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Ozone: Nonattainment Area Classifications Approach, Attainment Deadlines and Revocation of the 1997 Ozone Standards for Transportation Conformity Purposes*,” Monday, May 21, 2012; (77 FR 30160); effective July 20, 2012.

a) MassDOT Response to Conservation Law Foundation

Some Massachusetts MPO's received comments from the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF) contending that air quality conformity determinations for ozone

precursors should continue to be conducted in Massachusetts. MassDOT has prepared the following response to the CLF comment letters:

All the Massachusetts MPOs and MassDOT continue to meet the requirements of air quality conformity according to the Code of Federal Regulations, and as evaluated through inter-agency consultation. Specifically:

On March 6, 2015, (80 FR 12264, effective April 6, 2015) EPA published the Final Rulemaking, "Implementation of the 2008 National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for Ozone: State Implementation Plan Requirements; Final Rule." This rulemaking removed transportation conformity to the 1997 Ozone NAAQS (the standard referenced by CLF and the subject of a 12/23/14 DC Circuit Court decision).

Link to Final EPA Rulemaking: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2015-03-06/pdf/2015-04012.pdf>

Since the RTPs have been developed, reviewed, and will be approved after April 6, 2015, air quality conformity determinations to the 1997 Ozone NAAQS are no longer required, as those standards and all associated area designations have been permanently replaced by the 2008 NAAQS, which (with actually a stricter level of allowable ozone concentration than the 1997 standards) no longer designate Massachusetts as a non-attainment area(s) for ozone (except for Dukes County – see below).

Through the Interagency air quality consultation process (involving U.S. DOT, EPA, MassDEP, MassDOT, and the MPOs) the latest EPA rulemakings, the referenced court decision, ozone standards and area designations were all reviewed. Specific transportation conformity requirements in Massachusetts for this RTP round are as follows:

- No conformity determination is required for the 2008 Ozone NAAQS, as Dukes County (the only designated non-attainment area) is classified as an "isolated rural nonattainment area" and therefore only needs to evaluate transportation conformity when the Martha Vineyard Commission has a "regionally significant" project that would trigger conformity.
- The Boston carbon monoxide attainment area with a current maintenance plan in place (with a carbon monoxide motor vehicle emission budget) will prepare a carbon monoxide air quality analysis for the Boston Area (nine communities).
- The Lowell, Waltham, Worcester and Springfield Areas are classified attainment with a limited maintenance plan in place. No regional air quality analysis is required in limited maintenance plan areas as emissions may be treated as essentially not constraining for the length of the maintenance period because it is unreasonable to expect that such areas will experience so much growth in that period that a violation of the carbon monoxide NAAQS

would result. Therefore, in areas with approved limited maintenance plans, Federal actions requiring conformity determinations under the transportation conformity rule are considered to satisfy the “budget test.” All other transportation conformity requirements under 40 CFR 93.109(b) continue to apply in limited maintenance areas, including project level conformity determinations based on carbon monoxide hot spot analyses under 40 CFR 93.116.

In consideration of the comments received, combined with MassDOT’s greenhouse gas (GHG) reporting requirements for the Commonwealth’s Global Warming Solutions Act (310 CMR 60.05), MassDOT will conduct a “conformity-related” emissions analysis for ozone precursors, consistent with the 1997 NAAQS standards (currently superseded by the 2008 NAAQS). This emissions analysis will be for informational purposes only (as it is currently NOT federally required), and will be contained in a separate air quality document (also to include GHG emissions analysis) that will be completed at the end of August 2015 – the results of which will then be available to the MPOs, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (and affiliate agencies), and all other interested parties.

3. Carbon Monoxide Full Maintenance Plan

As of April 1, 1996, the Boston carbon monoxide area was redesignated to attainment and EPA approved a maintenance plan for the Boston area (Boston, Chelsea, Revere, Quincy, Cambridge, Everett, Malden, Medford, and Somerville) through a Direct Final Rulemaking: “*Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans and Designation of Areas for Air Quality Planning Purposes; State of Massachusetts; Change in National Policy Regarding Applicability of Conformity Requirements to Redesignation Requests*,” Tuesday, January 30, 1996; (61 FR 2918). SIP approved year 2010 CO motor vehicle emission budget 228.33 tons per winter day.

4. Carbon Monoxide Limited Maintenance Plan

As of April 22, 2002, the cities of Lowell, Waltham, Worcester and Springfield were redesignated as being in attainment for CO, with an EPA-approved limited-maintenance plan. No regional air quality analysis is required in limited maintenance plan areas as emissions may be treated as essentially not constraining for the length of the maintenance period because it is unreasonable to expect that such areas will experience so much growth in that period that a violation of the carbon monoxide NAAQS would result. Therefore, in areas with approved limited maintenance plans, Federal actions requiring conformity determinations under the transportation conformity rule are considered to satisfy the “budget test.” All other transportation conformity requirements under 40 CFR 93.109(b) continue to apply in limited maintenance areas, including project level conformity determinations based on carbon monoxide hot spot analyses under 40 CFR 93.116.

5. Transportation conformity requirements under 40 CFR 93.109(b) that continue to apply:

These requirements must be addressed by Interagency Consultation and as appropriate the RTP Transportation conformity evaluation document.

- Latest planning assumptions
- Latest emissions model
- Consultation (including:
- Evaluating events which will trigger new conformity determinations in addition to those triggering events established in §93.104;
- Which projects should be considered to have a significant change in design concept and scope from the transportation plan or TIP;
- Whether projects otherwise exempted should be treated as non-exempt in cases where potential adverse emissions impacts may exist;
- Past obstacles to implementation of TCMs which are behind the schedule established in the applicable implementation plan have been identified and are being overcome;
- Whether State and local agencies with influence over approvals or funding for TCMs are giving maximum priority to approval or funding for TCMs; [This process shall also consider whether delays in TCM implementation necessitate revisions to the applicable implementation plan to remove TCMs or substitute TCMs or other emission reduction measures.)
- Public participation
- U.S. DOT fiscal constraint requirements
- Transportation Control Measures approved into the State Implementation Plan
- Currently conforming plan and TIP
- Project from a conforming plan and TIP
- CO hot-spots analysis and project level conformity.

B. GREENHOUSE GAS MONITORING AND EVALUATION

1. Metropolitan Planning Organizations and the Global Warming Solutions Act

The Commonwealth's Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA) of 2008 requires statewide reductions in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of 25 percent below 1990 levels by the year 2020, and 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. As part of the GWSA, the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs developed the Massachusetts Clean Energy and Climate Plan (CECP), which outlines programs to attain the 25 percent reduction by 2020 – including a 7.6 percent reduction that would be attributed to the transportation sector.



The Commonwealth's thirteen metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) are integrally involved in helping to achieve greenhouse gas reductions mandated under the GWSA. The MPOs work closely with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) and other involved agencies to develop common transportation goals, policies, and projects that would help to reduce GHG emission levels statewide. For example, one of the programs in the CECP is MassDOT's sustainability initiative known as GreenDOT. GreenDOT policy goals were developed in accordance with the GWSA, and are as follows:



Reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. MassDOT will achieve this by taking GHG emissions into account in all of its responsibilities, from strategic planning to project design and construction and system operations.



Promote the healthy transportation modes of walking, bicycling, and public transit. MassDOT will achieve this by pursuing multi-modal, "complete streets" design standards; providing choice in transportation services; and by working with MPOs and other partners to prioritize and program a balance of projects that serve drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit riders.



To support smart growth development. MassDOT will achieve this by working with MPOs and other partners to make transportation investments that enable denser, smart growth development patterns that support reduced GHG emissions.

The Pioneer Valley MPO shares in these goals and is working to meet the specific requirements of the GWSA regulation – Global Warming Solutions Act Requirements for the Transportation Sector and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (310 CMR 60.05). The purpose of this regulation is to assist the Commonwealth in achieving their adopted GHG emission reduction goals by:

- Requiring MassDOT to demonstrate that its GHG reduction commitments and targets are being achieved
- Requiring each MPO to evaluate and track the GHG emissions and impacts of its Regional Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program
- Requiring each MPO, in consultation with MassDOT, to develop and utilize procedures to prioritize and select projects in its RTP and TIP based on factors that include GHG emissions and impacts

Meeting the requirements of this regulation will be achieved through the transportation goals and policies contained in the 2016 Regional Transportation Plan, the major projects planned in the RTPs, and the mix of new transportation projects that are programmed and implemented through the Transportation Improvement Program. The GHG tracking and evaluation processes enable the MPOs to identify the anticipated GHG impacts of the planned and programmed projects, and also to use GHG impacts as a criterion in prioritizing transportation projects. This approach by the MPO is consistent with the greenhouse gas reduction policies of promoting healthy transportation modes through prioritizing and programming an appropriate balance of roadway, transit, bicycle and pedestrian investments; as well as supporting smart growth development patterns through the creation of a balanced multi-modal transportation system. All of the MPOs and MassDOT are working toward reducing greenhouse gases with plans, actions, and strategies that include (but are not limited to):

- Reducing emissions from construction and operations
- Using more fuel-efficient fleets
- Implementing and expanding travel demand management programs
- Encouraging eco-driving
- Providing mitigation for development projects
- Improving pedestrian, bicycle, and public transit infrastructure and operations (healthy transportation)
- Investing in higher density, mixed use, and transit-oriented developments (smart growth)

2. Regional GHG Tracking and Evaluation in RTPs

MassDOT coordinated with MPOs and regional planning agency (RPA) staffs on the implementation of GHG tracking and evaluation in development of each MPO's 2012 RTPs, which were adopted in September 2011. This collaboration has continued for the MPO's 2016 RTPs and 2016-19 TIPs. Working together, MassDOT and the MPOs have attained the following milestones:

- Modeling and long-range statewide projections for GHG emissions resulting from the transportation sector for use before final RTP endorsement. Using the Boston MPO's regional travel demand model and the statewide travel demand model for the remainder of the state, GHG emissions will be projected for 2020 no-build and build conditions, and for 2040 no-build and build conditions. The results of this modeling will be available before the endorsement of this RTP and the MPO staff will present on the results to the MPO membership before a vote on endorsement.
- All of the MPOs will include GHG emission reduction projections in their RTPs, along with a discussion of climate change and a statement of MPO support for reducing GHG emissions as a regional goal.

MassDOT, using its statewide travel demand model, will provide the Pioneer Valley MPO with statewide estimates of CO₂ emissions resulting from the collective list of all recommended projects in all the Massachusetts RTPs combined (and supplemented by CO₂ emission reduction results for smaller, "off-model" projects supplied by the MPO). Emissions will be estimated using the new (2014) MOVES model, and also incorporate the latest planning assumptions including updated socio-economic projections for the Commonwealth.

The project mix from this RTP (and all other RTPs) – modeled for both 2020 and 2040 using an Action (Build) vs. Baseline (No-Build) analysis to determine the CO₂ emissions attributed to all MPO's mix of projects and smart-growth land use assumptions – is expected to show a neutral shift toward meeting the statewide greenhouse gas emissions reduction goal of 25 percent below 1990 levels by the year 2020, and 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. The reason for the anticipated neutral shift is that early indicators have shown that major infrastructure projects, both individually and collectively, would not trigger a significant change in GHG emission levels.

Working closely with MassDOT, the Pioneer Valley MPO continues to make efforts toward progress through planning activities to meet the GHG reductions targets and complying with the requirements of the GWSA. As part of this activity, the MPO will provide further public information on the topic and will continue to advocate for steps needed to accomplish the MPO's and Commonwealth's goals for greenhouse gas reductions.

