

# A!ert

dvrpc | October 2017

*Alert is a monthly update on transportation and air quality planning activities in the Delaware Valley.*



## Air Quality Regulations

**Study shows that Environmental Regulations Do Not Impact Population or Economic Activity Growth in American Urban Areas**

Researchers at Carnegie-Mellon University recently published a study in the Journal *PLOS ONE*, that suggests that air pollution policy reduces the severity of increased air pollution that results from population growth in metropolitan areas without disrupting the economic growth from this urbanization.

"We find that the relationship between urbanization (population) and economic output (GDP) is not affected by environmental policy," said Nicholas Muller, lead author of the study. "This has profound implications for the current policy debate that frames environmental goals and economic goals as at odds with each other."

The researchers used annual data provided by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to determine whether a county within the United States was compliant with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). These standards are set at the national level, and a county is deemed to be "nonattainment" if monitored pollution levels within the area are above the standard. Using this information as well as annual, county-level data on economic indicators, pollution levels, and population, the authors assessed the economic and environmental impacts of pollution regulation.

When a county is found to be non-compliant with NAAQS, it is subject to stricter regulation than compliant counties. By comparing the outcomes of compliant and non-compliant counties, researchers estimated how the stringency of environmental regulation affects both economic output and environmental damages.

The authors found that stricter NAAQS criteria imposed on nonattaining counties reduced pollution damages (health impacts expressed in monetary terms) but did not slow the rate of economic growth relative to compliant counties. Furthermore, pollution did not scale linearly with population, that is, the authors found that pollution per person decreases as population grows. The findings suggest that environmental policy can dramatically reduce the adverse pollution consequences of urbanization without hindering production, innovation, and growth.

"Well-designed, actively enforced environmental policy and economic growth are not mutually exclusive," said Muller. "We find evidence that environmental policy significantly reduces the per-capita pollution emissions in American cities without adversely affecting GDP per capita."

For more information on the Carnegie-Mellon Research on Air Pollution Policy, please visit:  
[www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/08/170809142025.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/08/170809142025.htm)



## Save the Date

**Wednesday  
October 11, 2017**

**Public Participation Task  
Force  
Workshop: DVRPC Annual  
Work Program  
5:30 pm**

*Location of Meeting:  
DVRPC Conference Center  
8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
6<sup>th</sup> and Race Streets  
Philadelphia, PA*

**Tuesday  
October 24, 2017**

**Vibrant Port, Healthy Ports  
Workshop  
9:00 – 4:00 pm**

*Location of Meeting:  
DVRPC Conference Center  
8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
6<sup>th</sup> and Race Streets  
Philadelphia, PA*



## Air Quality Information

### Volkswagen Environmental Mitigation Trust Effective Date Established as October 2, 2017

In June, 2016, German automaker Volkswagen agreed to pay up to \$14.7 billion to settle allegations of violating the Clean Air Act by cheating emissions tests and deceiving customers, in suits brought by United States, the State of California, and the U.S. Federal Trade Commission. Volkswagen agreed to pay up to \$10 billion to compensate consumers under the program. In addition, the company will spend \$2.7 billion to mitigate the pollution from these cars and invest \$2 billion in green vehicle technology.

Pennsylvania has been allocated over \$118 million in the federal Consent Decrees to mitigate environmental damage done by Volkswagen, model year 2009-2016, 2.0 and 3.0 liter engine, diesel vehicles that were equipped with emissions “cheat” devices and sold in the Commonwealth. The amount of money allocated to Pennsylvania is based on the percentage of unlawful Volkswagen vehicles registered in the state compared to the number registered nationally. New Jersey has been allocated over \$65 million under the settlement.

On September 19, 2017, the U.S. District Court in San Francisco approved the Trust Agreement between the U.S. Government and Wilmington Trust, paving the way to establish the Trust Effective Date (TED) and allowing state agencies to proceed with plans to apply to become beneficiaries of the Mitigation Trust and ultimately initiating plans to mitigate the emissions caused by these vehicles. The TED has been established as October 2, 2017.

Now that a TED has been established, the states can move forward with becoming certified as a beneficiary to the Mitigation Trust, finalizing mitigation plans, and then beginning to implement mitigation plans. This process is expected to take between three to six or more months depending on the status of the states’ mitigation plans and the response times of the Trustee, but the TED is the critical next step required to move funding for mitigation projects forward.

States across the nation have been preparing plans for when the TED is announced so that they can act quickly to access the fund. In May 2017, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) released a Draft Beneficiary Mitigation Plan that provides an overview of how Pennsylvania will distribute its portion of the trust fund. In general terms, the Mitigation Plan outlines how DEP will receive proposals for projects and rate the projects on established and publicized criteria, such as cost effectiveness, emission reductions, and the air quality where the project is located. DEP will grade project applications and identify the best eligible projects. Once DEP is approved as a beneficiary to the Trust and identifies eligible projects that it intends to fund, the agency can then apply to the Mitigation Fund Trustee for approval to fund those projects with money from the settlement that has been apportioned to Pennsylvania.

For more information on VW Environmental Mitigation Trust Fund and Pennsylvania Draft VW Environmental Mitigation Plan, please visit [www.dep.pa.gov](http://www.dep.pa.gov) and search VW.

### PA DEP Announces Availability of \$1 Million for Alternative Fuel Incentive Grants Program

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is announcing the availability of approximately \$1 million in grants to support the installation of publicly accessible alternative fuel infrastructure projects in designated major transportation corridors.

Examples of eligible projects include electric vehicle charging stations, compressed natural gas refueling stations, and propane refueling stations. All projects must be fully accessible to the public and be located within the designated alternative fuel corridors of I-76, I-276, I-476, I-70, I-95, and I-80.

The funding is made possible through the Commonwealth’s FAST (Fixing America’s Surface Transportation) Act. This special solicitation under the AFIG (Alternative Fuels Incentive Grants) Program is designed to provide long-term certainty for surface transportation infrastructure planning and investments.

For more information on Pennsylvania’s Alternative Fuel Incentive Grant Program, please visit: [www.dep.pa.gov](http://www.dep.pa.gov) and search AFIG.



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