

Synopsis

An air quality conformity determination (AQCD) for a plan or program is, in effect, a finding that the appropriate air quality standards will continue to be met.

Why are we producing this document?

An AQCD is required whenever the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) or Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) is updated, or, every 3 years, whichever comes first. Thus, a conformity determination must be adopted as part of the approval process for the pending draft 2031 RTP and the FY08-11 MTIP. US Department of Transportation (USDOT) must approve the conformity determination before the plans can become operative.

In 1994, the Eugene-Springfield area was redesignated by US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) as a maintenance area for *carbon monoxide* (CO). This meant that previously poor air quality had improved to the point where it now met the Clean Air Act National Ambient Air Quality Standards for CO. A 20-year monitoring period then began which ensures that no backsliding occurs and that the CO standard continues to be met. EPA had determined in 1994 that vehicle emissions were a primary source of CO levels along with home wood heating. Because of this finding, federal transportation plans and projects must be shown to not cause a violation of the CO air quality standard.

Who takes action?

The Metropolitan Policy Committee, as the policy board for the Federally-designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in the Central Lane area, must formally adopt the findings described in this report. USDOT must then confer with USEPA and if the analysis is acceptable, they will issue a positive ruling. Once the ruling is made, the plan and program become effective.

What is the basis of the analysis?

The analysis uses computer models to project the amount of carbon monoxide expected to be produced by vehicles within the MPO planning area over the period of the plan or program.

Using the regional transportation model (developed and maintained by the MPO), and the USEPA emissions model, the amount of CO emitted by vehicles within the Eugene/Springfield is computed at specific time intervals out to the end of the plan horizon (2031). The analysis takes into account land use patterns, population and employment numbers and distribution, trips taken by other modes of transport, vehicle age and type, congested speeds, environmental conditions, etc., as well as the existing transportation network and the transportation projects that are contained within the plans under consideration.

What are the results of the Air Quality Conformity Determination?

The air quality conformity determination shows that with the implementation of the 2031 RTP and the FY08-11 MTIP current federal air quality standards for carbon monoxide will continue to be met.

The results favorably compare with the CO “budget” that was established by USEPA, showing that projected CO emissions out through 2031 are such that the health standard will not be compromised by the transportation projects included in the draft 2031 RTP and the FY08-11 MTIP. *Measured* CO levels in this area back up this analysis: they have been steadily decreasing and, in 2006, reached a level that is only ¼ of the USEPA standard – a trend that is attributed to improvements in both car and wood stove technologies, as well the implementation of this area's home wood heating advisory programs.

