

Transportation Conformity Rules

On March 3, 1995, the Environmental Quality Commission adopted rules to ensure that state and local transportation planning and funding is consistent with state and local air quality planning.

Where do the rules apply?

The rules apply only to those areas in Oregon that are classified as nonattainment or maintenance areas under the 1990 Clean Air Act amendments. This means that these areas either have monitored violations or have the potential for future violations of health based air quality standards. Currently, the following areas are affected: Portland, Salem, Eugene-Springfield, Medford-Ashland, Klamath Falls, La Grande, Grants Pass, Lakeview and Oakridge.

Why did the EQC adopt transportation conformity rules?

In November, 1993, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Transportation jointly issued rules to implement the federal Clean Air Act's requirements. These rules and the Clean Air Act require states to adopt transportation conformity rules.

What do the rules require?

The Clean Air Act requires areas that do not meet health-based air quality standards to develop and submit to EPA State Implementation Plans (SIPs) demonstrating how these standards will be achieved and maintained. Each area is required to establish a motor vehicle emissions budget allocating a certain amount of air pollution emissions to motor vehicle use. The motor vehicle emission budget is part of the total emissions budget in the SIP that includes emissions from industry and other sources.

The rules:

- Require air quality analyses demonstrating that projected emissions from the use of a proposed transportation system are consistent with the emissions allocated to motor vehicle use in the SIP.
- Ensure that transportation projects will not cause or increase violations of air quality standards.

- Require implementation of transportation control strategies identified in an area's SIP as necessary to achieve healthy air.
- Establish a process for coordination between state and local air quality and transportation planning agencies.

In metropolitan areas, this coordination will occur through standing committees which include representation from local governments, transit providers, the Oregon Department of Transportation and DEQ. In non-metropolitan areas, affected parties will meet annually to ensure coordination between transportation and air quality planning. The rules also require DEQ to establish working groups of interested and affected parties to assist DEQ in developing air quality plans.

In metropolitan areas, transportation conformity is linked to the transportation planning requirements under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). ISTEA requires the U. S. Department Of Transportation to designate Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in areas with more than 50,000 inhabitants. These MPOs distribute large amounts of federal money to develop and construct a region's transportation system. MPOs are required to adopt long-range regional transportation plans describing planned facilities and policies for a 20-year period and transportation improvement programs for the next three to seven years that allocate money to specific projects. The Clean Air Act requires that both the long range plan and the transportation improvement program be assessed for their consistency with the air quality plans of an area.

In non-metropolitan areas, the required regional air quality analysis is linked to the statewide transportation plan and improvement program, also required under ISTEA.

For more information:

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