

September 2, 2011

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
233 South Wacker Drive, Suite 800
Chicago, IL 60606

Re: 2012-16 CMAQ Program Funding

Dear CMAP Committee,

Diesel pollution is a serious health problem. Diesel exhaust contains toxic air contaminants, carcinogens, ozone smog-forming elements, and fine particulate matter (or “soot”). According to the U.S. EPA, the “soot” in diesel exhaust can “pose a significant health risk because they can pass through the nose and throat and lodge themselves in the lungs. These fine particles can cause lung damage and premature death. They can also aggravate respiratory conditions such as asthma and bronchitis¹.” According to the Clean Air Task Force, it is estimated that diesel fine particles cause 482 deaths, 585 non-fatal heart attacks, 845 cases of acute bronchitis, and 17,847 of asthma attacks each year in the Chicago metropolitan area². The Clean Air Task Force also ranks Chicago third in the national list of metropolitan areas with the gravest diesel impacts³.

Given the serious health threat from diesel pollution, we are writing to urge you to fully fund the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) applications for projects that target reduction of diesel exhaust emissions. These include the following projects in the recommended program:

- CTA—\$0.892 million to purchase a ZF TopoDyn Program
- CTA—\$6.244 million for retrofits of electronic engine cooling fan/system
- IEPA—\$5 million for a Chicago Area Clean School Bus Initiative
- IEPA—\$5 million for Chicago Clean Diesel Engine Repowers
- METRA—\$0.368 million for Metra UP automatic engine start-stop system
- METRA—\$0.920 million for Metra BNSF replace main engine drive generator
- METRA—\$4 million for Metra MD locomotive repowers
- PACE—\$2.28 million for transit diesel engine retrofits – 2014
- PACE—\$3.06 million for transit diesel engine retrofits – 2013
- PACE—\$3.06 million for transit diesel engine retrofits - 2012.

While cognizant of the limited funding available, we are also supportive of the Multi-Year “B” list diesel retrofit projects which the CMAQ committee is considering for funding (if such funding becomes available). These projects include:

¹ US Environmental Protection Agency. *Diesel Exhaust and Your Health*. <http://epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/humanhealth.htm> (Sept. 2, 2011)

² Clean Air Task Force. *Diesel Soot Health Impacts*. <http://www.catf.us/diesel/dieselhealth/> (Sept 2, 2011)

³ Clean Air Task Force. *Diesel & Health in America: The Lingering Threat*. February 2005. <http://www.catf.us/publications/view/83> (Sept. 2, 2011)

- PACE—\$1.5 million for transit diesel engine retrofits – 2015
- PACE—\$3.48 million for transit diesel engine retrofits - 2016.

The above diesel engine emission projects would lead to significant reductions in diesel soot pollution in the Chicago metropolitan area, which will improve public health, particularly for vulnerable populations. To this end, we strongly urge you to fully fund these proposals as a vital step in satisfying the goals of CMAQ and improving air quality in the region. In addition, we will be supportive of many future health-protecting diesel projects yet to be submitted to CMAP for funding. These projects are clearly cost effective and a wise use of scarce federal funds.

Sincerely,

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Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago

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