

MIDLANDS AIR QUALITY FORUM

REGIONAL AIR QUALITY REPORT



TRANSPORTATION



LAND USE



INDUSTRY



ENVIRONMENT



QUALITY OF LIFE



Introduction



Vision Statement



Current Efforts



Action Items

Introduction

Air quality is important to our human and economic health. With the Midlands region threatened by “nonattainment” status, it has become paramount that we take proactive measures for improving air quality and ensuring attainment with current and future national ambient air quality standards. This situation creates an ideal opportunity for the diverse stakeholders of the Midlands region to collaborate and formulate a regional action plan. In doing so, this report seeks to provide a vision and set of guiding principles as well as a host of actions that municipalities, businesses and citizens in general can take in helping us all to breathe better and lead healthier lives.

It is understood that while planning, though important, left to itself is not enough. True success is only determined by the choices we make as individuals; and those choices collectively can make the biggest difference to our air quality for years to come.

Air Quality in the Central Midlands Region



Air Quality in the Midlands is affected by pollution emitted from different man-made sources. Such sources include factories, power plants, dry cleaners and degreasing operations as well as mobile sources such as cars, buses, planes, trucks, and trains. All of these sources adversely affect our air quality and if not properly addressed can create significant public health and economic challenges for our community.

The portions of Richland and Lexington counties of the Columbia Area Transportation Study (COATS) MPO are currently designated “nonattainment-effective date deferred” for the 8-hour ozone (O₃) standard. This designation means that at the time EPA issued designations for areas not meeting the 1997 8-hour O₃ standard, these areas were violating the 3-year average. Due to their involvement in the 8-hour Ozone Early Action Compact (EAC), these areas were able to have the effective date of their designation deferred until December 31, 2007, as long as all milestones of the EAC were met. The final milestone is to achieve the standard by December 31, 2007. The Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) is in the process of reviewing the 2007 Ozone Season (April – October) data. Early indication is that these areas will show that the strong commitments by local stakeholders, including local governments, local industry and environmental groups working together, in conjunction with regional and state-wide efforts, have been successful in South Carolina. DHEC will provide this information to EPA Region 4 and as a part of their commitment to the EAC process EPA could redesignate the area to attainment by April 15, 2008. These areas could be used as models to show that implementation of emission reduction strategies earlier than required, does bring cleaner air sooner. Most recent data is evidence that at times when the meteorological patterns are conducive to the formation of ozone, the ozone monitors did not reveal elevated readings. While weather is definitely a factor in the formation of ozone, it is one component that we do not have the ability to control. However, local stakeholders given the flexibility to implement programs geared toward reducing oxides of nitrogen emissions do have an impact on the formation of ozone.



The EPA is currently strengthening its standards for ozone, a process that will be completed by 2008 and will virtually ensure by proposed standards that the Midlands will exceed its attainment status. Continuing to recognize the importance of strategies implemented for the EAC process will assist areas struggling to meet the proposed standards.

Recognizing the success of the EAC process, has led to the development of partnerships with EPA Region 4 defined “focus” areas. This includes those areas that are designated attainment for the PM_{2.5} standard but may be approaching a level of concern. Over the last year, DHEC staff began meeting with stakeholders in the Midlands area focusing on emission reduction strategies, specifically those for the PM_{2.5} standard. The PM_{2.5} monitor in Irmo currently reads above the National Ambient Air Quality Standard. While EPA could designate this area as nonattainment, the preferred approach at this time is to allow local stakeholders to address the issue and implement emission reduction strategies that make sense for the specific area.

Results of these efforts to date are evident in that county councils are considering air quality goals when discussing transportation and other issues such as open burning. In Lexington County one of the first issues addressed was open burning. After a number of meetings with stakeholders, the county revised and strengthened their ordinance.



The administrators for Lexington and Richland counties met with the Central Midlands Council of Governments (CMCOG) seeking their leadership. As a result, CMCOG hosted an Air Quality Forum in June 2007 expanding the stakeholders from the 4-county CMCOG region to include all of the counties and cities within the 7-county Columbia-Newberry Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (Richland, Lexington, Fairfield, Newberry, Kershaw, Calhoun and Saluda). A result of this meeting was for CMCOG to develop a regional air quality report that includes a regional policy framework and action steps. A second meeting was held in November 2007. The stakeholders were expanded and the agenda included the establishment of three technical workgroups (Mobile Sources/Diesel Emissions, Regulation/Policy Issues, Education/Outreach). Each of the workgroups will be asked to provide a list of strategies for consideration. A third meeting is being planned for February 2008.

The Midlands Region has an ideal opportunity for all stakeholders to take proactive steps toward improving air quality, prior to designation by U.S. EPA for either the current PM standard or the revised PM and ozone standards. Failure to act now could lead to serious public health and economic challenges. Poor air quality not only worsens existing respiratory problems, but also contributes to heart disease, lung cancer and premature death. Possible economic ramifications include the inability of municipalities to recruit new industries and limit the amount of funding available for major transportation projects.

Strong regional leadership in taking a cooperative, proactive approach will help to protect the health and quality of life of the many 500,000-plus citizens that live, work, and play in the Midlands.

Stakeholders and Participants

From May – November 2007, stakeholders and participants from the following jurisdictions met to discuss proactive approaches to improving our regional air quality.

*Richland County
City of Columbia
Lexington County
Town of Lexington
City of West Columbia
City of Cayce
Batesburg-Leesville
Town of Irmo
Fairfield County
Winnsboro
Newberry County
City of Newberry
Kershaw County
Camden
Calhoun County
Saluda County*

Vision Statement

In the Midlands of South Carolina, opportunities abound for achieving cleaner and healthier air. Together, our local governments, businesses, schools, health advocates and citizens will work in developing and implementing actions that lead to better environmental planning, sound growth management strategies, and smart commuting practices all to ensure that the Midlands remains a quality place to live, work, play, and breathe for generations to come.

Guiding Principles

- Making the air cleaner for everyone to breathe— especially for young children, the elderly, and people with respiratory illnesses
- Improving air quality in the Midlands to meet federal health standards and to reduce future costs of doing business in the region
- Increasing public awareness about the importance of clean air and encouraging individuals to take actions that will help improve air quality
- After the completion of the Early Action Compact, meeting the next generation EPA air quality standards
- Reducing traffic congestion and, as a result, increasing business productivity
- Substituting voluntary actions in place of additional air pollution regulations

Regional Partnerships in Action

The Midlands community has mobilized to take early, decisive action to avoid long-term air quality impairment. The following are examples of efforts currently underway. All of these regional partners (including, but not limited to, Central Midlands COG, Richland County, Lexington County, and City of Columbia) are active members of the Air Quality Forum, and they will be working together to secure and sustain air quality attainment.

Central Midlands Council of Governments

As the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Columbia metropolitan, CMCOG is actively engaging in regional transportation planning initiatives. Many of CMCOG's planning activities either directly or indirectly address regional air quality by focusing on trip reduction measures and incorporating transportation demand management strategies. Below is a brief summation of recent CMCOG plans that impact air quality.

- Long Range Transportation Plan
- Bike and Pedestrian Pathways Plan
- Lower Richland & White Knoll Sub-Area Plans
- S-48 Columbia Avenue Corridor Study
- Regional Motor Freight Plan
- Regional Congestion Management Plan
- Transit Element of the COATS LRTP
- Human Service Coordination Plan
- Regional Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Coordination Plan
- Commuter Rail Feasibility Study
- Green Infrastructure Plan

Richland County Initiatives

- Designation of Air Quality Staff Personnel
- Administrator's Directive
- Use of Ultra Low Sulfur Diesel in vehicles
- 10 Hybrid & 24 Flex Fuel Vehicles
- Updated Land Development Code (2005)
- Open Burning Restrictions (2004)
- Expand E-Government
- Participation in Clean Cities
- Air Quality Fund (FY 2008)
- Recycling and Energy Plan
- Information on Website
- Email Notices / Press Releases
- TV Show Segments
- Gas Can Exchange
- Car Care Event
- Lawn Mower Exchange
- Partnering with other state, local and private entities

Lexington County Initiatives

- Designation of Air Quality Staff Personnel
- Air Quality Policy
- No Idling Policy
- Promotion of Ridesharing and use of Park/Ride Facilities
- Vehicle Maintenance Check
- Outdoor Burn Ordinance
- Lawn Mower Exchange
- Take a Break from the Exhaust
- Walk to School Day
- USDA - Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Environmental Efforts
- Improve Air Quality at the City of West Columbia Water Treatment Plants
- Tree Care Workshop
- The Greater Columbia Fuel Cell Challenge
- Tree Planting Projects
- Partnering with Other State, Local and Private Entities
- School Outreach (B² Breathe Better) Anti-idling Campaign

City of Columbia Initiatives

- Designation of Air Quality Staff Personnel
- Tree and Landscape Ordinances – 2002
- Fleet Management
- Car Pool to Meetings
- Idling Policy
- Alternative Fuels
- Digital Thermostats
- Improved HVAC Monthly Maintenance
- Fluorescent Bulbs
- Boiler Timers
- Reflective Roof Sealant
- Mayor's Hybrid Vehicle (Ford Escape)
- Energy Audit/Performance Based Contracting
- Traffic Signals--80% converted to LED Lights (Full Conversion Planned)
- Mayor Climate Protection Agreement:
 - a. Climate Protection Action Committee
 - b. E-Waste Recycling
 - c. Resolution for Hydrogen Center
 - d. Resolution Fuel Cell District
- City's Bicycle Friendly Community Committee, Promotion of Bicycling as Viable Travel Choice
- Bike to Work 2007
- Bike and Pedestrian Week 2007
- Partnering With Other State, Local and Private Entities

Greater Columbia Chamber "Good to Great" Initiative

The Greater Columbia Chamber of Commerce is a leader in mobilizing the business community to work toward creating a strong economy and a sustainable community. In 2006, community leaders gathered together to learn about a number of significant challenges facing the region in its quest to go from a good region to a great region. Task forces were formed around a number of issues, including Air Quality and Transportation Funding. A non-profit corporation has been formed to help advance the effort, and significant fund raising is underway. The Good to Great Air Quality task force offers a means of mobilizing the business community to help meet the goal of air quality attainment. The Transportation task force will be critical to the regional effort to find a stable funding source for the Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority.

2007 Richland and Lexington Electric Lawnmower Exchange



Action Items For Local Governments and Businesses

Air Quality Contact	Assign staff person to work with DHEC and other agencies on AQ issues, education and outreach
Buildings	Have buildings become more energy efficient; turn off computers and lights when not in use
Ridesharing/Carpooling	Provide incentives to encourage persons to rideshare (full-time, part-time, twice/week).
Education/Outreach Programs	Implement program to educate/motivate persons to take actions in minimizing air pollution
Fueling	Discourage "topping off" fuel tanks when refueling
Clean Cities	Join Clean Cities Program (www.eere.energy.gov/cleancities), which promotes ways to reduce petroleum consumption
Lawn Mower Exchange	Gas for electric
Media	Utilize local media to promote AQ action steps
Ozone Action Day Policies	Delay/reschedule small engine use and painting activities on Ozone Action Days
Alternative Transportation Modes	Encourage alternative transportation modes (e.g. transit, bicycling)
Teleconferencing	Encourage use of teleconferencing (providing adequate facilities and technology)
Work/Flex Scheduling	Change outside work hours to reflect summer temperatures; Use flex scheduling/compressed work weeks
Landscaping/Plantings	Plant trees, shrubs, etc. to reduce the need for the use of lawn equipment.

2006
Vehicle
Maintenance
Check



SCDOT
Express Bus
Parking Area
Camden, SC

Action Items for Collaboration by Regional Partners

Air Quality-Friendly Policies	Amend zoning/subdivision regulations to promote better land use planning and policies that help AQ (eg TOD, infill dev). Develop a landscaping/tree ordinance aimed at planting more trees (trees help to reduce need for use of air conditioning).
Alternative Fuel Use	Assist with establishing alternative fuels for fleet projects, where possible
Air Quality website	Dedicate a portion of your organization's website to post information (or post a link to SCDHEC's website) to stay informed of important air quality issues.
Idle Reduction Policies	Establish policies to reduce/stop idling time
Landfill Methane Outreach Program (LMOP)	Aids the reduction of methane emissions from landfills by encouraging the recover and use of landfill gas as energy source.
Private Sector Leadership	Outreach to industrial/business leaders concerning AQ issues
Open Burning Ordinance	Establish a policy that discourages the open burning of unwanted materials such as paper, trees, brush, leaves, grass, and other debris, where smoke and other emissions are released directly into the air without passing through a chimney or stack. See SCDHEC's website for a model ordinance and other resources
School Outreach	Partner with area schools to promote AQ
Park-n-Ride Lots	Encourage development and use of park -n- ride lots for commuters to Columbia

2007
Columbia
Bike to
Work
Day



2007
Columbia
Bike and
Pedestrian
Week



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CENTRAL MIDLANDS COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS