

## **EPA's Proposed 2010 Ozone Standards and Nonattainment Implications**

**Ground-level ozone** is a federally regulated air pollutant. Ozone is not emitted directly into the air but is formed through chemical reactions between natural and man-made emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and nitrogen oxides (NOx) in the presence of heat and sunlight. Reducing ozone levels requires reductions in VOCs and NOx. Common sources of VOC and NOx are motor vehicles, industrial processes, electric generating facilities, construction equipment, lawn and garden equipment, fueling facilities.

**EPA proposes more stringent federal ozone in standards.** On January 6, 2010, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed a more stringent primary ozone standard in a range of 0.060 to 0.070 parts per million (ppm), or 60 to 70 parts per billion (ppb). The current standard is 0.075 parts per million (75 parts per billion). Compliance with the primary standard is determined based on a 3 year average of the fourth highest monitored 8-hour ozone concentrations. EPA also proposed a different secondary standard in a range of 7 to 15 ppm-hours. Compliance with the secondary standard is calculated using weighted hourly averages to determine the 3 consecutive months with the highest ozone levels, then averaging the highest 3 months for 3 years. The 3 year average must be less than or equal to the standard.

**Protection of public health and environment** is the primary reason for the more restrictive ozone standard. High ozone causes: irritation to throat and lungs, diminished lung capacity, aggravation of asthma or other respiratory problems. Increased health care costs and school absences occur. Exposure to high ozone damages sensitive vegetation, crops and trees.

**The region's air quality compliance is threatened.** Our region's current design value (the three-year rolling average of 4<sup>th</sup>-highest 8-hour ozone readings on which compliance is based) of 75 parts per billion (ppb) exceeds the 60 to 70 ppb proposed range. According to EPA, based on 2006-2008 data, the region's value for the secondary standard is 11 ppm-hours.

**EPA could designate part or all of the region nonattainment** for ozone by August 2011. Travis County is currently the only county with regulatory monitors. However, EPA's presumed default area for nonattainment designation is the MSA, so additional counties could be designated based on contributing factors. **A nonattainment designation has significant, and long lasting, implications for the region's transportation planning, economic development and quality of life.**

**Nonattainment requirements include:** State and Federally enforceable state implementation plan (SIP) developed by TCEQ; transportation plans, programs and projects must pass transportation conformity reviews; nonattainment New Source Review requires offsets from industry; general conformity for federal projects and two 10 year maintenance plans for extended commitments after the area attains the standard.

**Transportation conformity** increases costs and time for conducting transportation planning. Difficulty in demonstrating transportation conformity **can delay or eliminate transportation projects.** The Federal Highway Administration can withhold federal transportation funding if an area cannot demonstrate transportation conformity or the state fails to produce an approvable SIP.

**Economic development potential can be diminished** by the negative stigma of a nonattainment designation. Diversion of resources to fund emission controls results in costs to businesses and the public. Nonattainment can place restrictions on business operations and expansion. General conformity requirements may affect some economic development.