



GROUP AGAINST SMOG & POLLUTION
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**Group Against Smog and Pollution (GASP) Comments on Pennsylvania's Draft Beneficiary Mitigation Plan:
VW Clean Air Act Violations Settlement**

Good morning. My name is Rachel Filippini and I'm the executive director of the Group Against Smog and Pollution, also known as GASP. For nearly 50 years we have worked to improve air quality in southwestern Pennsylvania in order to safeguard human, environmental, and economic health. We do this through education, advocacy, policy-making, and legal work.

The defeat devices employed by Volkswagen deceived Americans by letting us think their vehicles were compliant, when in fact, during on-road operation, their vehicles were emitting 9 to 40 times the allowable amount of oxides of nitrogen, also called NOx, which are harmful air pollutants. Their deception tarnished not only our air quality but also our trust in their company. The funding Pennsylvania is allocated to receive through this settlement will help to offset some of the pollution emitted by Volkswagen vehicles with defeat devices. We thank the PA DEP for putting out a draft beneficiary mitigation plan and asking for public comment.

We strongly agree with PA DEP's assessment that "Reducing emissions from diesel engines is one of the most important air quality challenges facing the Commonwealth," and we concur that funds should be used to support projects throughout Pennsylvania that will reduce or eliminate emissions of NOx, focusing on the most cost-effective projects that will maximize emission reductions. Additionally:

1. We agree with focusing on projects located in areas with high population density and high traffic density. According to the Health Effects Institute, the number of people living "next to a busy road" may include 30-45% of the urban population in North America.
2. PA DEP should consider giving additional priority to projects in close proximity to schools and hospitals -- places where vulnerable populations spend lots of time. According to the EPA, motor vehicle pollutant concentrations tend to be higher closer to the road, with the highest levels generally within the first 500 feet of a roadway and reaching background levels within approximately 2,000 feet of a roadway, depending on the pollutant, time of day and surrounding terrain. Nearly 17,000 schools in both rural and urban areas across the U.S. are located near heavily traveled roads.
3. We were surprised not to see construction equipment explicitly listed in the non-road/off-road fleet projects list. With institutions like UPMC and the City of Pittsburgh adopting clean construction policies and legislation respectively, there should be increased interest in cleaning up construction fleets too.

4. We would agree that some percentage of the funds should be used to support infrastructure development related to projects, especially for things like electric vehicle charging stations. Fleet owners want to know that there is reliable infrastructure to charge or refill their alternatively fueled vehicles. Without the infrastructure in place, fleet owners will be less likely to retrofit or replace their vehicles with alternatively fueled vehicles.
5. Reimbursement rates should be higher for municipal fleets and school districts. These entities are often strapped for cash and have little discretionary funding for purchases that aren't absolutely necessary.
6. Considerable outreach to a variety of fleet owners, especially to smaller ones who may not have the staff to apply for funding, will be needed in order to maximize use of the funds. As an organization that has worked on a variety of projects and initiatives that aim to reduce diesel emissions in southwestern Pennsylvania, we may be able to assist and would like to be considered a project partner.
7. Last but not least, Pennsylvania should comply with the Clean Air Act and hold diesel vehicles to the same emission testing standard as gasoline-powered vehicles. In Pennsylvania, diesel vehicles are exempt from the state's vehicle emissions testing program even though Pennsylvania has the legal authority to include diesel powered light duty vehicles and light duty trucks in its enhanced vehicle Inspection/Maintenance program. Emissions testing is designed to identify such vehicles in order to make necessary repairs to reduce emissions below the applicable pollution control standards. Emission testing improves air quality by ensuring emission controls are working properly. Other states' enhanced vehicle I/M programs (including those in Ohio, New Jersey, and New York) require model year 1997 and newer diesel vehicles to undergo on-board diagnostic checks in accordance with EPA's 1996 regulations. Why not Pennsylvania?

Thank you once again for putting the draft beneficiary mitigation plan out to public comment. We appreciate the opportunity to speak and look forward to the solicitation for projects.