



## NHI Offers Suite of Courses on Maintaining Air Quality

Many members of the transportation community are committed to ensuring that effective planning leads to a safe, accessible, and healthy environment. Transportation planners, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), and other transportation and air quality agencies are integral to ensuring that the United States meets the requirements of the Clean Air Act and the transportation law under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21).

Although aggregate emissions of the six principal pollutants tracked nationally have been cut 29 percent since 1970, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) expects that more counties across the country will be designated as nonattainment according to new standards for ozone and fine particulate matter. With some of these counties facing transportation and air quality issues for the first time, it is clear that more training is necessary.

The Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) National Highway Institute (NHI) and Office of Natural & Human Environment, along with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), EPA, and the U.S. Department of Energy, recently collaborated to create a three-course "suite" of training to address the major issues in transportation and air quality. The courses are designed to educate planners and engineers in State and local departments of transportation, MPOs, and resource agencies on how to implement the legislation and regulations. Further, these courses complement an existing National Transit Institute (NTI) course, Introduction to Transportation/Air Quality Conformity ([www.ntionline.com](http://www.ntionline.com)).

Under the Clean Air Act, regions designated as nonattainment or maintenance (minimum attainment) areas are required to demonstrate that their transportation plans, programs, and projects will not worsen air quality or delay the area's ability to meet the standards. If an area cannot demonstrate the environmental viability of its programs, Federal funding will not be approved.

NTI's course presents basic information about conformity requirements and the relationships between transportation and air quality planning processes. The course prepares Federal, State, and local agency staff to participate in interagency consultations and work effectively to resolve conformity issues. Transportation and air quality professionals nationwide have attended more than 15 sessions of the NTI course since its introduction in 2002.

Conformity determinations are made based on the results of regional emissions analyses—complex technical processes that involve experts in transportation and emissions modeling. Developed as a technical companion to NTI's introductory course, NHI's Estimating Regional Mobile Source Emissions (#152071A) helps planners and practitioners estimate mobile source

emissions and possible benefits attributable to selected control measures. NHI suggests that participants have 1–3 years of experience in forecasting travel demand, assessing conformity, or analyzing air quality. Combining discussions of emerging issues with instruction in operating modeling programs, the course demonstrates how to use the Mobile Source Emission Factor Model (MOBILE6) and travel demand forecasting models to generate an inventory of mobile source emissions.

The third course, NHI's Implications of Air Quality Planning for Transportation (#142044A), goes beyond the statutes to explain how the integrated transportation and air quality planning process has been defined and reinforced over the past decade by regulations, guidance, and litigation. The course provides a context for the various statutory and regulatory requirements, as well as practical exercises that enable participants to reinforce the classroom instructional materials by addressing real-life challenges that they may face within their organizations or agencies.

"The Implications of Air Quality Planning for Transportation course demonstrates how transportation planning and air quality planning fit together under the Transportation Conformity Rule," says FHWA Air Quality Team Leader Mike Savonis. "It underscores the importance of reasonable transportation assumptions and sound data analyses that lead to fair and attainable emissions reduction targets."

The final course addresses the \$8 billion Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program. The CMAQ Program: Purpose and Practice (#142043A) targets prospective project sponsors and administering officials from Federal, State, and local agencies and provides an overview of the CMAQ Program as an important funding source. Topics include eligibility, emissions analysis, and connections to the Clean Air Act and the Federal-Aid Highway Program.

Together, these courses represent a solid curriculum in transportation and air quality that can benefit beginners, as well as experienced practitioners on this important environmental issue.

*For more information, contact Mila Plosky at 703-235-0527. To schedule a course, contact Danielle Mathis-Lee at 703-235-0528 or e-mail [danielle.mathis-lee@fhwa.dot.gov](mailto:danielle.mathis-lee@fhwa.dot.gov). Information about NHI courses is available on the Web at [www.nhi.fhwa.dot.gov](http://www.nhi.fhwa.dot.gov).*