



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Transportation Planning Board Technical Committee  
**FROM:** Robert d'Abadie, TPB Transportation Engineer  
**SUBJECT:** EPA Approval: Determination of Attainment by Attainment Date and Clean Data  
Determination for the Washington DC-MD-VA Nonattainment Area for the 2015 Ozone  
National Ambient Air Quality Standard  
**DATE:** April 25, 2025

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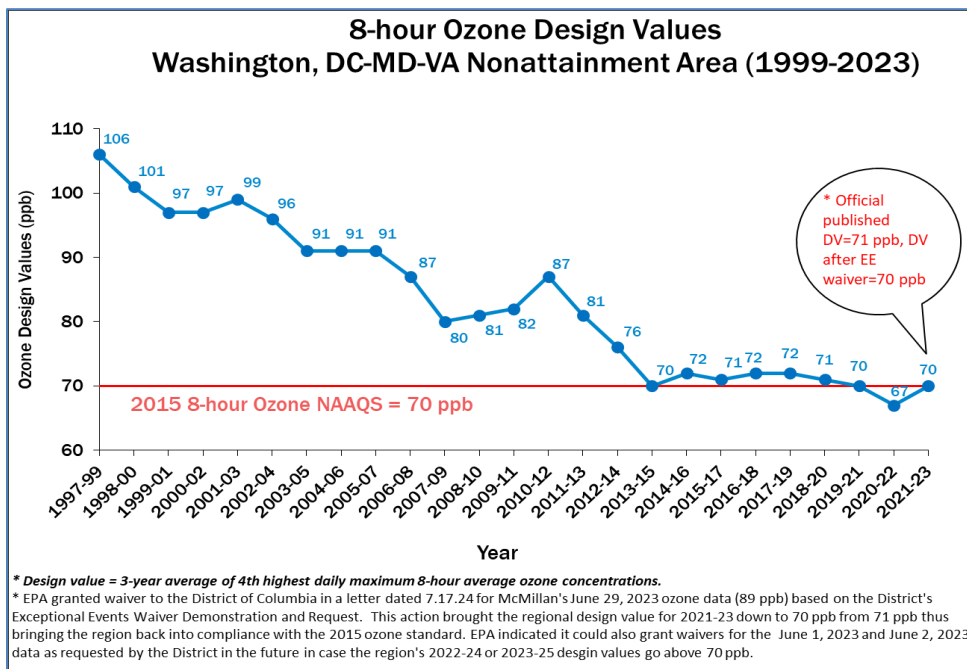
The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has just officially certified that the region's air quality meets the current 2015 National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS or Standard) for ozone. The region has now attained all current NAAQS but will officially remain in nonattainment of the 2015 Ozone Standard until a redesignation request and 10-year maintenance plan are submitted by the Washington Area and approved by the EPA. This is great news for the region as all criteria pollutants now meet federal standards.

This memo provides background information on the federal requirements, agency responsibilities, and next steps.

## BACKGROUND

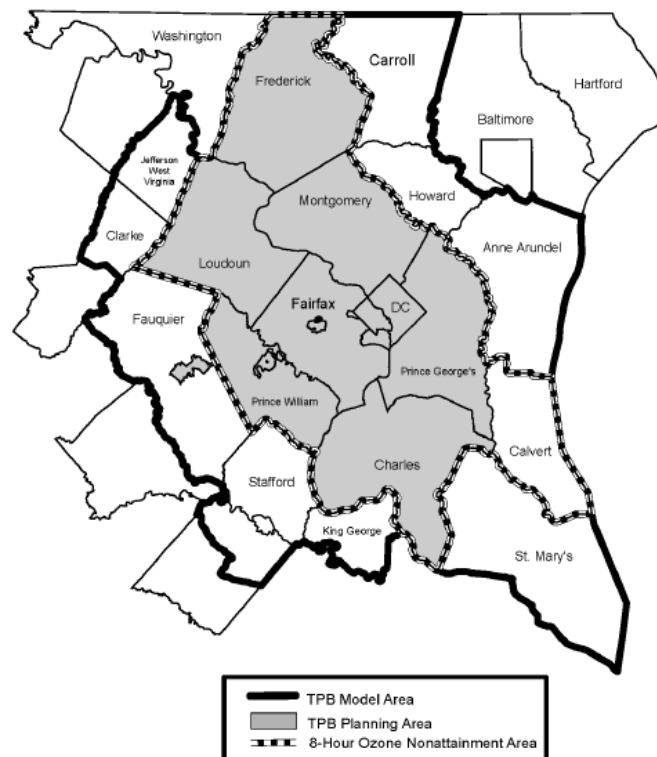
The federal Clean Air Act and Amendments (CAAA) of 1990 established standards and procedures for reducing human and environmental exposure to a range of pollutants generated by industry and transportation. The law allows the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to define the boundaries of "non-attainment" areas for various common pollutants such as ground-level ozone. These boundaries outline geographic areas where air quality does not meet Federal air quality standards. The law also established non-attainment area classifications ranked according to the severity of the area's air pollution problem. These classifications are: marginal, moderate, serious, severe, and extreme. EPA assigns each non-attainment area one of these categories, thus triggering various requirements that the area must comply with in order to meet a particular standard. The EPA is required to review these standards at least once every five years and to update the standard if new data show that the old standard does not protect human health and the environment. EPA set the current ozone standard in 2015. Once a non-attainment area attains a standard for a pollutant, the area must progress through a series of steps in order to be reclassified from "non-attainment" to "maintenance." The first of these steps is for the state departments of environment to share "certified" air quality monitor data with the EPA and have EPA approve a "Clean Data Determination" (CDD) and a "Determination of Attainment by Attainment Date" (DAAD). The next step is to develop and submit to EPA a "Redesignation Request" officially asking EPA to redesignate the region as being an attainment area. The last step is to develop and submit a "Maintenance Plan" showing how the region will maintain the standard into the future. The "maintenance" designation includes its own set of requirements that assure that the standard for that pollutant is maintained. The Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC), in conjunction with the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), develops both the redesignation request and the maintenance plan. These are then provided to the state air agencies for finalization and submission to the EPA for approval.

Here is a graphic showing the Washington DC region (DC-MD-VA) area's ozone levels through time as recorded on monitors around the region:



Here is a map of the Washington DC region (DC-MD-VA) non-attainment area, which is not the same as the Transportation Planning Board's (TPB) or COG's planning areas (please refer to the dashed line):

Figure 3 TPB Transportation Planning Areas Map



## MWAQC AND TPB RESPONSIBILITIES

The [Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee](#) (MWAQC) is the entity certified by the mayor of the District of Columbia and the governors of Maryland and Virginia to prepare an air quality plan for the DC-MD-VA Metropolitan Statistical Area under Section 174 of the CAAA. MWAQC members are elected officials of COG member jurisdictions plus members from Calvert and Stafford counties; the air management and transportation directors of the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia; members of the Maryland and Virginia General Assemblies; and the chair of the Transportation Planning Board. TPB and MWAQC work together on conformity and each state's State Implementation Plan (SIP) – the Maintenance Plan discussed here is a type of SIP. TPB has authority over conformity actions and decisions. MWAQC has authority over SIP actions and decisions.

## CLEAN DATA DETERMINATION

On October 26, 2015, the EPA promulgated an updated ground-level ozone standard (the 2015 standard), tightening the NAAQS from 75 parts per billion (ppb) to 70 ppb.<sup>1</sup> This NAAQS retained the previous standard's averaging time (8 hours) and form (annual fourth-highest daily maximum, averaged over three years). The Washington Area was initially designated as Marginal nonattainment with an attainment date of August 3, 2021.<sup>2</sup> On November 7, 2022, the EPA determined that the Washington Area had failed to attain the 2015 ozone standard by the deadline and was subsequently reclassified as moderate nonattainment with a new attainment date of August 3, 2024.<sup>3</sup> While the Washington Area was on track to attain the standard early, Canadian wildfires resulted in several days with excessively high readings in 2023. Although the EPA was ready to announce the DAAD and CDD in February of 2023 based on the 2019 to 2021 monitor data,<sup>4</sup> this was not finalized due to a failing monitor during the 2023 Ozone season (the McMillan Monitor – Air Quality System (AQS) Site ID # 110010043). On March 20, 2024, the Department of Energy and the Environment (DOEE) on behalf of the District of Columbia submitted an exceptional events demonstration to show the maximum daily 8-hour average ozone concentrations at the McMillan monitor on June 29, 2023, were influenced by Canadian wildfires. The EPA concurred with this request on July 17, 2024.

With the granting of the exceptional events demonstration, the Washington Area attained the 2015 ozone NAAQS based on approved monitoring data for 2021 – 2023. This determination is further supported by the 2019-2021 and 2020-2022 monitoring data, with attainment also demonstrated in those respective time periods. This allowed the EPA to grant the DAAD and CDD for the region.<sup>5</sup>

## NEXT STEPS

The granting of the DAAD and CDD does not reclassify the Washington Area as attainment for the 2015 ozone NAAQS. The region must submit a redesignation request and a maintenance plan, including updated Motor Vehicle Emission Budgets (MVEBs) showing how the region will continue to maintain the NAAQS for the next 10 years. Once the EPA approves these items and publishes them in the Federal Register, the region will be officially redesignated as being in attainment of the 2015 ozone NAAQS with a maintenance status.

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<sup>1</sup> 80 FR 65292 October 26, 2015

<sup>2</sup> 83 FR 25776 June 4, 2018

<sup>3</sup> 87 FR 60897 October 7, 2022

<sup>4</sup> 88 FR 6688 February 1, 2023

<sup>5</sup> 90 FR 14730 April 4, 2025