What is Transportation Conformity?

• The Basic Concept
  - When state and local governments add projects to their transportation plans (called Transportation Improvement Programs or “TIPs” or Constrained Long Range Plans or “CLRPs”) …
    • They must demonstrate that emissions stay below emission “budgets” set in the states clean air plan (or SIP/State Implementation Plan)
    • A formal demonstration (the conformity analysis) is submitted to show that the “new” transportation plan will keep emissions under the SIP “budget”

• Conformity failure places federal transportation dollars at risk
  - Federal funds provide a large portion of the money we use to fund transportation plans in Maryland and other states and have a tremendous influence on what and how many projects we can develop
Concerns With Current Conformity Process

- The current process is very out of date
- The current process does not consider greenhouse gases
- The current conformity process could be enhanced to provide policy makers with more complete information to ensure that all critical environmental issues are considered as decisions on which new projects to add to transportation plans are finalized
It appears that NOx emissions in 2017 and 2020 are far below “acceptable levels”. Is that true?

This is a very old budget – does not in any way relate to the reductions needed for newer standards – like the 75 ppb ozone standard.

Does not address where we need to be in the 2015 to 2020 time frame at all.
Addressing Transportation Conformity: MDE’s Goal and Approach
MDE’s Goal

• Some have joked that it is MDE’s goal to take away individuals given right to drive their car whenever and however they want

• This is not true

• Our goal is simple …
  – To make sure that the policy makers are thinking about how their decisions on adding and funding new roads and other transportation projects impact long term environmental goals
A Conceptual Approach

- A proposed regulation requires a progress report every time a conformity analysis is required

- REGULATION IS ON HOLD

- The regulation also establishes long-range environmental emission targets
  - The progress report shows how close projected emissions will come to the long-range environmental emission targets
What the MDE Regulation Will Do

Adds Long-Range Environmental Goals to the Process

Clarifies that this “Budget” line represents the minimum regulatory requirement.

Establishes long-range environmental goals (for NOx) needed to meet air quality and Chesapeake Bay goals.

Presents Policy Makers with a Very Different Question …

… Shouldn’t We be Striving to Get Closer to the Green Line?
Special Project with MDE and DC Department of the Environment (DDOE)
Special Project

• To begin a “new” conversation about important policy issues
  – What air quality goals should be considered to meet current and future health standards?
  – What CO2 goals are needed to meet regional GHG reduction goals for climate change mitigation?
  – What mobile sector strategies are available to efficiently help meet air quality and climate change goals?
Shared Challenges

- Ozone Nonattainment: Region does not meet the current 75 ppb ozone standard is unlikely to meet the standard by 2015 deadline

- Climate Change: MWCOG & jurisdictions have GHG reduction goals for 2020 and 2050 that will be difficult to meet
Questions