

**Tennessee Department of Transportation
Long Range Planning Division**

**Spring 2011 CMAQ Project Competition
Project Selection Criteria**

PROPOSAL DEADLINE: July 1, 2011

The Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) is requesting project proposals for funding under the federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) program. TDOT is accepting CMAQ proposals from Tennessee Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Transportation Planning Organizations (TPOs) that are eligible for CMAQ funding (i.e., that include counties that are designated by EPA as federal air quality nonattainment or maintenance areas).

All CMAQ projects must meet certain basic requirements. Each must be (1) a transportation project that (2) reduces air emissions from mobile sources (3) in an air quality nonattainment or maintenance area. Projects located in an attainment county adjacent to a nonattainment or maintenance county may be considered for funding, but project sponsors must demonstrate to FHWA that the project will improve air quality in the adjacent nonattainment county.

Projects to reduce congestion are encouraged, but the strategy selected to reduce congestion is very important. Air quality analyses must demonstrate that the congestion reduction project will also reduce air emissions. There are specific restrictions against using CMAQ funds for some congestion reduction strategies. For example, projects that add capacity (other than HOV or HOT lanes) are not eligible for CMAQ funding. In reviewing project proposals, TDOT intends to rely on detailed project descriptions and explicit air quality analyses (i.e., emission reduction estimation methods, analysis and emission reduction estimates) to ensure that each project is eligible for CMAQ funding. Formal authority to determine the eligibility of CMAQ projects remains with FHWA.

TDOT intends to use the following project selection criteria to select projects for funding in May 2011. A TDOT team of reviewers will review, evaluate and score each project proposal. Each project proposal submitted by MPOs, TPOs and TDOT will be evaluated against the criteria listed below, and the review team will give each proposal a numerical score under each evaluation criterion. Scores will be totaled to a maximum of 100 points, and higher numerical scores will indicate higher quality proposals.

Maximum Total Score = 100 points

**1. Emission Reductions
(0–10 points)**

TDOT will assess the air quality analysis and emission reduction estimates that each project sponsor must submit along with each project proposal. This criterion is designed to reward and encourage proposals that achieve the most significant emission reductions over a period of time. Projects with higher emission reduction estimates will receive higher scores. This criterion is related to the cost-effectiveness criterion below, but measures the emission reduction potential of a project without subjecting it to cost considerations. Emission

reduction estimates for each relevant pollutant are strongly encouraged and will receive higher scores. Report emission reduction estimates for the first full year of a project, and estimate the number of years that the project's emission reductions will continue. Because emission reduction estimates must often rely on analytical assumptions, reasonable and realistic assumptions will earn higher scores than assumptions that appear overstated and unrealistic. Documenting the accuracy and reasonableness of analytical methods and assumptions (e.g., indicating an official source for the emission estimation method) will strengthen a project proposal.

2. Cost-Effectiveness of Project Emission Reductions (0–30 points)

TDOT will assess and heavily weight the cost-effectiveness of project proposals. Cost-effectiveness is the project's cost per unit of emission reduction of all pollutants (e.g., tons or kilograms of emission reduction). Proposals that achieve better cost-effectiveness will receive higher scores. More cost-effective proposals will be those that achieve a given unit of emission reduction at a lower cost (i.e., a lower cost per ton or kilogram of emission reduction) than competing projects. The estimated cost-effectiveness and expected duration of air quality benefits that are claimed must be explicitly addressed in the required project air quality analysis. This criterion is designed to reward and encourage projects that will produce a given amount of emission reduction for the lowest cost.

3. Projects that Address Congressional CMAQ Priorities (0–5 points)

TDOT will also assess whether project proposals address the CMAQ priorities identified by Congress in SAFETEA-LU. Congress singled out diesel retrofit projects and other cost-effective projects as special priorities for the CMAQ program, but allowed state DOTs considerable flexibility in addressing them.

4. Innovative Project Proposals (0–15 points)

TDOT will award more points to innovative projects that find new ways to reduce mobile source emissions, or that address evolving air quality/transportation issues that are now receiving more policy attention. For example, projects that reduce air emissions from freight hauling and freight transfer activities may receive higher scores.

5. Project Impacts on Diversity and Comprehensiveness of Regional Initiatives (0–5 points)

TDOT will award more points to projects that initiate new and complementary efforts in a region, and that add a new program capability or enhance an existing one that a region wants to establish or maintain as part of their regional suite of programs. TDOT would like to encourage MPOs to develop and implement a range of air quality projects that will reduce mobile source emissions in their region. Each project proposal should describe how the project will relate to existing programs and capabilities in the MPO/TPO region, and how the proposed project will expand, extend or enhance regional efforts. Opportunities for achieving greater results through project coordination should be identified and described.

**6. Projects Benefits for Multimodal Infrastructure in Region
(0–15 points)**

TDOT will also award points to projects that will expand and enhance the multimodal infrastructure in communities in nonattainment and maintenance areas. These projects will include transit projects, projects that expand or improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, projects designed to increase the use of transportation alternatives (including ridesharing) and projects to reduce emissions and fuel use associated with hauling, transferring and distributing freight. In some cases, these projects do not achieve large reductions in emissions and are often less cost-effective than other projects. However, they are still important in the long-term effort to establish a stronger, multimodal transportation system less reliant on single-occupant vehicles.

**7. Quality of Implementation Plan (Schedule, Milestones, Major Tasks) and Management Plan
(0–20 points)**

TDOT will consider the quality and thoughtfulness of the proposal's implementation plan and management plan for the proposed project. Elements that will be considered include the project schedule, the description of tasks and activities that must be completed and the milestones that must be achieved for the project to be successfully implemented. TDOT will also consider the plan for managing and tracking the project to ensure that the project will be implemented successfully and on schedule. Projects that appear as if they can be more easily implemented, and that appear more likely to be completed on schedule will receive higher scores. This criterion will benefit projects that can be implemented quickly and efficiently without major complications or delays.

TDOT will also consider the description of the project sponsor's track record in successfully implementing CMAQ projects in the past. This will not penalize sponsors that have little or no experience with the CMAQ program, but will benefit those projects sponsors that have implemented projects on schedule and within the budget. Proposals should describe the project sponsor's previous experience in successfully managing CMAQ projects so that they are completed on time and within budget. Include details on specific projects to demonstrate that the projects were implemented and completed on schedule, and that expenditures were managed so as to complete the project with available funds, and without incurring cost overruns.