
Transportation Conformity Determination Report
1997 Ozone NAAQS

Transportation Conformity Determination
Lackawanna / Luzerne MPO
Portion of the Scranton-Wilkes-
Barre, PA Area

2025-2028 Transportation
Improvement Program (TIP)
and 2045 Long-Range
Transportation Plan

April 2024

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Executive Summary

As part of its transportation planning process, the Lackawanna/Luzerne Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) completed a transportation conformity determination for the 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). This report documents that the TIP and LRTP meets the federal transportation conformity requirements in 40 CFR Part 93. Note that conformity for the LRTP is being reaffirmed to address the 4-year frequency requirement for conformity; and there are no changes to the LRTP.

Clean Air Act (CAA) section 176(c) (42 U.S.C. 7506(c)) requires that federally funded or approved highway and transit activities are consistent with (“conform to”) the purpose of the State Implementation Plan (SIP). Conformity to the purpose of the SIP means that transportation activities will not cause or contribute to new air quality violations, worsen existing violations, or delay timely attainment of the relevant NAAQS or any interim milestones. EPA’s transportation conformity rules establish the criteria and procedures for determining whether metropolitan transportation plans, transportation improvement programs (TIPs), and federally supported highway and transit projects conform to the SIP.

On February 16, 2018, the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit in *South Coast Air Quality Mgmt. District v. EPA* (“*South Coast II*,” 882 F.3d 1138) held that transportation conformity determinations must be made in areas that were either nonattainment or maintenance for the 1997 ozone national ambient air quality standard (NAAQS) and attainment for the 2008 ozone NAAQS when the 1997 ozone NAAQS was revoked. These conformity determinations are required in these areas after February 16, 2019. The *Scranton-Wilkes-Barre, PA* area (encompassing both Lackawanna and Luzerne counties) was maintenance at the time of the 1997 ozone NAAQS revocation on April 6, 2015 and was also designated attainment for the 2008 ozone NAAQS on May 21, 2012. Therefore, per the *South Coast II* decision, this conformity determination is being made for the 1997 ozone NAAQS.

This conformity determination was completed consistent with CAA requirements, existing associated regulations at 40 CFR Parts 51.390 and 93, and the *South Coast II* decision, according to EPA’s *Transportation Conformity Guidance for the South Coast II Court Decision* issued on November 29, 2018.

1.0 Background

1.1 Transportation Conformity Process

The concept of transportation conformity was introduced in the CAA of 1977, which included a provision to ensure that transportation investments conform to a State Implementation Plan (SIP) for meeting the Federal air quality standards. Conformity requirements were made substantially more rigorous in the CAA Amendments of 1990. The transportation conformity regulations that detail implementation of the CAA requirements were first issued in November 1993, and have been amended several times. The regulations establish the criteria and procedures for transportation agencies to demonstrate that air pollutant emissions from metropolitan transportation plans, transportation improvement programs and projects are consistent with (“conform to”) the State’s air quality goals in the SIP. This document has been prepared for State and local officials who are involved in decision making on transportation investments.

Transportation conformity is required under CAA Section 176(c) to ensure that Federally-supported transportation activities are consistent with (“conform to”) the purpose of a State’s SIP. Transportation conformity establishes the framework for improving air quality to protect public health and the environment. Conformity to the purpose of the SIP means Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding and approvals are given to highway and transit activities that will not cause new air quality violations, worsen existing air quality violations, or delay timely attainment of the relevant air quality standard, or any interim milestone.

1.2 National Ambient Air Quality Standards

The CAA requires the EPA to set NAAQS for pollutants considered harmful to public health and the environment. A nonattainment area is any area that does not meet the primary or secondary NAAQS. Once a nonattainment area meets the standards and additional redesignation requirements in the CAA [Section 107(d)(3)(E)], EPA will designate the area as a maintenance area.

Both Lackawanna and Luzerne counties are currently designated as part of a maintenance area under the 1997 8-hour ozone NAAQS. The counties are in attainment of the 2008 and 2015 8-hour ozone, 2006 24-hour PM_{2.5} and 2012 annual PM_{2.5} NAAQS. Transportation conformity requires nonattainment and maintenance areas to demonstrate that all future transportation projects will not prevent an area from reaching its air quality attainment goals.

1997 8-hour Ozone NAAQS

The EPA published the 1997 8-hour ozone NAAQS on July 18, 1997 (62 FR 38856),

with an effective date of September 16, 1997. An area was in nonattainment of the 1997 8-hour ozone NAAQS if the 3-year average of the individual fourth highest air quality monitor readings, averaged over 8 hours throughout the day, exceeded the NAAQS of 0.08 parts per million (ppm). On May 21, 2013, the EPA published a rule revoking the 1997 8-hour ozone NAAQS, for the purposes of transportation conformity, effective one year after the effective date of the 2008 8-hour ozone NAAQS area designations (77 FR 30160).

On February 16, 2018, the D.C. Circuit reached a decision in *South Coast Air Quality Management District v. EPA*, Case No. 15-1115. In that decision, the court vacated major portions of the final rule that established procedures for transitioning from the 1997 ozone NAAQS to the stricter 2008 ozone NAAQS. By court decision, Lackawanna and Luzerne counties were designated as part of the *Scranton-Wilkes-Barre, PA* “orphan” maintenance area since the area was maintenance for the 1997 ozone NAAQS at the time of its revocation (80 FR 12264, March 6, 2015) and was designated attainment for the 2008 NAAQS in EPA’s original designations for this NAAQS (77 FR 30160, May 21, 2012).

2008 and 2015 8-hour Ozone NAAQS

The EPA published the 2008 8-hour ozone NAAQS on March 27, 2008 (73 FR 16436), with an effective date of May 27, 2008. EPA revised the ozone NAAQS by strengthening the standard to 0.075 ppm. Thus, an area is in nonattainment of the 2008 8-hour ozone NAAQS if the 3-year average of the individual fourth highest air quality monitor readings, averaged over 8 hours throughout the day, exceeds the NAAQS of 0.075 ppm. Lackawanna and Luzerne counties were designated as an attainment area under the 2008 8-hour ozone NAAQS, effective July 20, 2012 (77 FR 30088).

In October 2015, based on its review of the air quality criteria for ozone and related photochemical oxidants, the EPA revised the primary and secondary NAAQS for ozone to provide requisite protection of public health and welfare, respectively (80 FR 65292). The EPA revised the levels of both standards to 0.070 ppm, and retained their indicators, forms (fourth-highest daily maximum, averaged across three consecutive years) and averaging times (eight hours). Under the Clean Air Act, the EPA administrator is required to make all attainment designations within two years after a final rule revising the NAAQS is published. Lackawanna and Luzerne counties are in attainment of the 2015 8-hour ozone NAAQS.

2.0 LACKAWANNA/LUZERNE MPO TIP and LRTP

MPOs and Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs) each develop a TIP at the local level, which reflects the first four years of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) Twelve Year Program (TYP). The Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) covers the entire state and includes the individual TIPs representing each Planning Partner. Federal Law requires TIPs to be

updated at least every four years. Pennsylvania's MPOs and RPOs update their TIPs every two years during the TYP update process.

The LRTP serves as the official transportation plan for a metropolitan area. The LRTP documents the current and future transportation demand and identifies long-term improvements and projects to meet those needs. The [LRTP](#) was adopted by the MPO and approved by FHWA on June 14, 2021. It guides decision-making about transportation improvements in the county. The planning factors specified in federal regulations provide the framework for developing the LRTP. In addition, PennDOT provides guidance to help MPOs prepare LRTPs, and local policies and plans play a role in LRTP development to ensure transportation investments address current and future needs. The Lackawanna/Luzerne LRTP includes projects from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) Twelve Year Program (TYP).

The February 16, 2018, *South Coast vs. EPA* Court decision did not vacate EPA's revocation of the 1997 ozone standard and the decision does not change the area's attainment status. Therefore, while such areas might be required to meet conformity requirements as part of anti-backsliding controls, such areas are not considered nonattainment or maintenance areas under the Transportation Planning Rule (23 CFR 450.104). Such areas continue to complete 5-year plan update cycles as described in 23 CFR 450.324(c). The 5-year metropolitan transportation plan update cycle continues to apply from the date of the most recent MPO metropolitan transportation plan adoption (not the most recent FHWA/FTA conformity determination). While these areas have a 5-year plan cycle for transportation planning purposes, as a result of the court decision they must still meet the 4-year frequency requirements for conformity determinations on TIPs and LRTPs as required by 40 CFR 93.104.

Appendix A provides a listing of the regional significant projects that are funded in the TIP and LRTP within Lackawanna and Luzerne counties. Regionally significant projects include transportation projects (other than exempt projects as defined under 40 CFR 93.126-127) that are on a facility which serves regional transportation needs.

3.0 Transportation Conformity Process

Per the court's decision in *South Coast II*, beginning February 16, 2019, a transportation conformity determination for the 1997 ozone NAAQS will be needed in 1997 ozone NAAQS nonattainment and maintenance areas identified by EPA¹ for certain transportation activities, including updated or amended TIPs and LRTPs. Once US DOT makes its 1997 ozone NAAQS conformity determination, conformity will be required no less frequently than every four years. This conformity determination report will address transportation conformity for the Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO 2025-2028 TIP and 2045 LRTP.

¹ The areas identified can be found in EPA's "Transportation Conformity Guidance for the South Coast II Court Decision, EPA-420-B-18-050, available on the web at: www.epa.gov/state-and-local-transportation/policy-and-technical-guidance-state-and-local-transportation.

4.0 Transportation Conformity Requirements

4.1 Overview

On November 29, 2018, EPA issued **Transportation Conformity Guidance for the South Coast II Court Decision**² (EPA-420-B-18-050, November 2018) that addresses how transportation conformity determinations can be made in areas that were nonattainment or maintenance for the 1997 ozone NAAQS when the 1997 ozone NAAQS was revoked, but were designated attainment for the 2008 ozone NAAQS in EPA's original designations for this NAAQS (May 21, 2012).

The transportation conformity regulation at 40 CFR 93.109 sets forth the criteria and procedures for determining conformity. The conformity criteria for TIPs and LRTPs include: latest planning assumptions (93.110), latest emissions model (93.111), consultation (93.112), transportation control measures (93.113(b) and (c), and emissions budget and/or interim emissions (93.118 and/or 93.119).

For the 1997 ozone NAAQS areas, transportation conformity for TIPs and LRTPs for the 1997 ozone NAAQS can be demonstrated without a regional emissions analysis, per 40 CFR 93.109(c). This provision states that the regional emissions analysis requirement applies one year after the effective date of EPA's nonattainment designation for a NAAQS and until the effective date of revocation of such NAAQS for an area. The 1997 ozone NAAQS revocation was effective on April 6, 2015, and the *South Coast II* court upheld the revocation. As no regional emission analysis is required for this conformity determination, there is no requirement to use the latest emissions model, or budget or interim emissions tests.

Therefore, transportation conformity for the 1997 ozone NAAQS can be demonstrated by showing the remaining requirements in Table 1 in 40 CFR 93.109 have been met. These requirements, which are laid out in Section 2.4 of EPA's guidance and addressed below, include:

- Latest planning assumptions (93.110)
- Consultation (93.112)
- Transportation Control Measures (93.113)
- Fiscal constraint (93.108)

4.2 Latest Planning Assumptions

The use of latest planning assumptions in 40 CFR 93.110 of the conformity rule generally applies to a regional emissions analysis. In the 1997 ozone NAAQS areas, the use of latest planning assumptions requirement applies to assumptions about transportation control measures (TCMs) in an approved SIP. However, the *Scranton-Wilkes-Barre, PA* SIP maintenance plan does not include any TCMs.

² Available from [Policy and Technical Guidance for State and Local Transportation | US EPA](#)

4.3 Consultation Requirements

The consultation requirements in 40 CFR 93.112 were addressed both for interagency consultation and public consultation.

As required by the federal transportation conformity rule, the conformity process includes a significant level of cooperative interaction among federal, state, and local agencies. For this air quality conformity analysis, interagency consultation was conducted as required by the Pennsylvania Conformity SIP. This included conference call(s) or meeting(s) of the Pennsylvania Transportation-Air Quality Work Group (including the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), DEP, EPA, FHWA, FTA and representatives from larger MPOs within the state).

A meeting was conducted on February 7, 2024 to review all planning assumptions and to discuss the template and content for transportation conformity analyses in 1997 ozone orphan areas.

The TIP and associated conformity determination has undergone the public participation requirements as well as the comment and response requirements according to the procedures established in compliance with 23 CFR part 450, Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO's Public Participation Plan, and Pennsylvania's Conformity SIP. The draft document was made available for a 30-day public review and comment period beginning on June 9th, which included a public meeting.

4.4 Fiscal Constraint

The planning regulations, Sections 450.324(f)(11) and 450.326(j), require the transportation plan to be financially constrained while the existing transportation system is being adequately operated and maintained. Only projects for which construction and operating funds are reasonably expected to be available are included. The Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO, in conjunction with PennDOT, FHWA and FTA, has developed an estimate of the cost to maintain and operate existing roads, bridges and transit systems in the region and have compared the cost with the estimated revenues and maintenance needs of the new roads over the same period. The Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO TIP and LRTP has been determined to be financially constrained.

5.0 Conclusion

The conformity determination process completed for the Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO TIP and LRTP demonstrates that these planning documents meet the Clean Air Act and Transportation Conformity rule requirements for the 1997 ozone NAAQS.

Appendix A

Regionally Significant Project List

Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties

Project Name	Description	Municipality
FY 2025-2028 Non-Interstate Highway-Bridge-Transit TIP		
Tigue Street Park N Ride (MPMS 92949)	Construction of a Park and Ride on State Route 8002 (Tigue Street) in Dunmore Borough.	Dunmore Borough (Lackawanna County)
SR 247 Expand Jessup Borough Park and Ride (MPMS 106681)	Construction of a Park and Ride Extension on State Route 247 in Jessup Borough	Jessup Borough (Lackawanna County)
Butler Twp Park and Ride (MPMS 64481)	Construction of a Park and Ride Lot on State Route 309 (North Hunter Highway) at the Interstate 80 Interchange.	Butler Township (Luzerne County)
Cooks Store Intersection (MPMS 92444)	Safety improvement at intersection of State Route 118, State Route 1049 (Fire House Road) and Township Road 700 (Mountain View Drive); intersection of State Route 118 and Township Road 811 (Meeker Road); and intersection of State Route 118 and Township Road 806 (Outlet Road) in Lehman Township.	Lehman Township (Luzerne County)
FY 2025-2028 Interstate Highway-Bridge TIP		
I-81 NB/SB Moosic-Scranton I-4R Lackawanna (MPMS 87736)	Interstate reconstruction on I-81 (American Legion Memorial Highway) from Exit 178 (Airport/Avoca) in Avoca Borough, Luzerne County to approximately Exit 185 (President Joseph R. Biden Expressway) in the City of Scranton, Lackawanna County. Rehabilitation/replacement of multiple structures through Avoca Borough, Duryea Borough, Moosic Borough and, City of Scranton and improvements to four interchanges (Exit 180 Moosic; Exit 182 Davis Street; Exit 184 River Street and; Exit 185 President Joseph R. Biden Expressway).	Avoca, Duryea, Moosic Boroughs and City of Scranton (Lackawanna County)

Project Name	Description	Municipality
Scranton Beltway / Turnpike (MPMS 106682)	This project will link Interstate 81 and the Pennsylvania Turnpike's Northeastern Extension (I-476), creating a beltway around the City of Scranton. The project will widen I-81 to six lanes and provide new ramps to connect I-81 and the Turnpike (I-476) both south and north of Scranton.	Borough of Dupont, Pittston Township, South Abington Township
I-81 Luzerne County Ashley to Arena I4R (MPMS 115097)	Roadway improvements including evaluation for roadway reconstruction/widening, roadway realignment, bridge replacements/widening and interchange and intersection reconfigurations on Interstate 81.	Rice, Plains, Hanover Townships, Ashley Borough and Wilkes Barre Township (Luzerne County)
2045 LRTP (no changes from previous conformity determination)		
SR 2007 over Railroad and Local Streets (MPMS 114276)	Bridge removal on SR 2007 (South Street) over Railroad and Local Streets in Wilkes Barre City, Luzerne County.	Wilkes Barre City (Luzerne County)
SR 2010 over Pocono Northeast Railroad (MPMS 114277)	Bridge removal on State Route 2010 (Main Street) State Route 2010 (Main Street) in Ashley Borough, Luzerne County.	Ashley Borough (Luzerne County)