



Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc. Hotline



Spring 2007

www.gasp-pgh.org

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Commuters Exposed to Air Pollution

by Rachel Filippini, GASP Executive Director

Whether you travel to work by car, bus, bike, or even walk, chances are you are breathing in harmful diesel exhaust. This transportation pollution was the focus of the new landmark report by Clean Air Task Force (CATF). *No Escape from Diesel Exhaust: How to Reduce Commuter Exposure* found that, although we only spend a small portion of our day commuting, it is during the commute that we receive more than half our overall exposure to deadly fine particulate pollution.

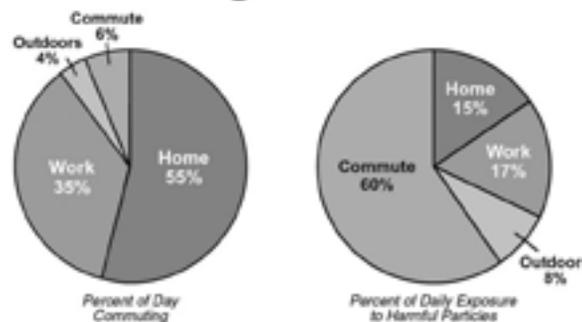
specifically investigated diesel exhaust levels during commutes in four U.S. cities: New York, NY; Boston, MA; Austin, TX; and Columbus, OH. They recorded particle levels inside cars, buses, ferries, trains, and on foot—what they found was quite shocking. The Task Force documented diesel particle levels four to eight times higher inside commuter cars, buses, and trains than in the ambient outdoor air in those same cities at the same time.

Among the various studies that CATF performed was one that compared the particle levels in a car during a commute on a major interstate with trucks, to the levels experienced in the same car on a “no-truck” alternative route. They found that ultrafine particles on the major interstate with trucks were consistently higher than on the no-truck route.

Overall, health researchers estimate that fine particles, such as those found in diesel exhaust, shorten the lives of 70,000 Americans each year. The report states, “Two analyses by Abt

Associates for the Clean Air Task Force, following EPA Science Advisory Board-approved methodologies, have estimated that approximately 45,000 American lives are lost prematurely each year from exposure to particulate matter pollution from two sources of particles—21,000 from diesel engines and 24,000 from power

60% of Diesel Exposure During Commute



Although we may spend only 6% of our day commuting, that is when we get up to 60% of our daily exposure to harmful particles.

Source: California Air Resource Board

According to U.S. Census data, the average travel time to work for Allegheny County workers is 23.8 minutes. It is a goal of the *Allegheny County Partnership to Reduce Pollution*, the diesel campaign headed by GASP and Clean Water Action, to work with local, state and federal authorities to make those twenty-four minutes traveled a lot healthier.

For this report, Clean Air Task Force

Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc. (GASP) is a nonprofit citizens group in southwestern Pennsylvania working for a healthy, sustainable environment. Founded in 1969, GASP has been a diligent watchdog, educator, litigator, and policy maker on many environmental issues, with a focus on air quality in the Pittsburgh region.

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EPA Proposes Cleaning Up Locomotive and Marine Diesel Engines

by Rachel Filippini, GASP Executive Director

In early March, the EPA announced a three-part program to clean up diesel emissions from locomotive and marine diesel engines. First, they intend to tighten emission standards for existing locomotives when they are remanufactured. Second, they plan to set near-term engine-out emission standards, referred to as Tier 3 standards, for newly-built locomotives and marine diesel engines. And lastly, EPA proposes setting longer-term standards, referred to as Tier 4 standards, for newly-built locomotives and marine diesel engines that reflect the application of high-efficiency after-treatment technology.

According to the EPA, locomotive and marine diesel engines contribute significantly to air pollution in many of our nation's cities and towns. In the coming decades, these engines are expected to account for an even greater share of overall emissions as other emission control programs take

effect for cars, trucks, and other non-road emissions sources. EPA estimates that locomotives contributed about 7% of NOx and 6% of PM mobile source emissions as of 1996; this is expected to rise to about 12% of NOx and 18% of PM by 2030. Locomotive engines typically last 40+ years, and during that period may be remanufactured every 5 to 7 years.

EPA is scheduled to issue the final regulations later this year. What EPA proposes is a great step toward reducing toxic diesel emissions; however, it is unfortunate that it will take so many years before the benefit can be realized.

For more information about the rule and related documents go to <http://www.epa.gov/otaq/regs/nonroad/420f07015.htm> 



The **Hotline** is the quarterly newsletter of the Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc.

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Printed on 100% post-consumer recycled, processed chlorine-free paper at Forward Lithography, 4065 Irvine St., Pittsburgh, PA.

GASP Mission Statement

GASP will act to obtain for the residents of southwestern Pennsylvania clean air, water, and land in order to create the healthy, sustainable environment and quality of life to which we are entitled.

Methods of Achieving Mission

GASP is a citizens group based in Southwestern PA which focuses on Allegheny County environmental issues. When pertinent to these concerns, we participate in state and national environmental decisions.

We believe in the public's right to receive accurate and thorough information on these issues and to actively participate in the decision making process.

To achieve our environmental goals on behalf of our membership, GASP will advocate, educate, serve as an environmental watchdog, mobilize action, and litigate when necessary.

We will work both independently and in cooperation with like-minded individuals and groups as determined by the Board of Directors.

We will uphold GASP's reputation for scientific integrity, honesty, and responsible involvement.

Effect of Air Pollution on Blood Pressure

by David Fowler, GASP Board Member

What's the evidence for rising blood pressure in persons with cardiac conditions when they breathe polluted air?

That's a matter of interest to GASP, whose energies are largely devoted to reducing air pollution. Thus when GASP member Donald Spencer, who is retired from the Carnegie Mellon University chemistry faculty, put the question to a GASP board member, other board members set about searching the literature on the subject.

David Eibling, chief of Otolaryngology at the VA hospital, who recently joined the GASP board, came up with a recent study done at Harvard, "Ambient Pollution and Blood Pressure in Cardiac Rehabilitation Patients," found in the journal *Circulation*, 2004: 110: 2184-218.

This was a study done between 1999 and 2001 of 62 Boston-area cardiac patients. The researchers found that rises in air pollution, especially of small-particle (2.5) "led to within-person increases in resting and exercise BP (blood pressure) among vulnerable patients with cardiovascular disease." These findings are from an early report, and further study is necessary to confirm the results.

The reference to small-particle air pollution is worth noting. A prime target of those working for better air quality in recent years has been the generation of such small particles by combustion, especially in power-generating facilities.

Among other studies, the one done by Carnegie Mellon University of air pollution in Western Pennsylvania targeted small-particles (2.5) as contributors to air pollution in the area.

Spencer's communication to the GASP board member de-

scribed his personal experience with breathing polluted air:

"In 1997 my aortic heart valve, which had been defective since birth, was replaced by a cow membrane artificial valve at Cleveland Clinic. I have continued to be blessed by good health, but my two daughters (one a nurse and the other a pediatric urologist) gave me a blood pressure monitor and insisted that I use it. My blood pressure had been in the moderately high range.

"In the ten years since my operation I have kept a record of my blood pressure. Within two or three years I started to observe definite patterns.... It then became clear that these patterns could be correlated to distinct weather changes, and I finally concluded that a chemical substance or substances in the air were responsible for many of the periods of high blood pressure that I was experiencing. The occasional periods with the highest blood pressures (systolic pressures of over 200 mm) might reasonably be explained by the plume from a point source polluter that occasionally comes to earth around my Monroeville home. A reasonable possibility would be a power plant such as Bruce Mansfield which is in the direction from us that prevailing winds often come.

"There has been a significant increase in my blood pressure this winter over previous winters, so I believe the time has come to test my theory and find out if there is any link between high blood pressure and power plant pollutants. If there is it would provide compelling argument for improving or redesigning overage plants like Bruce Mansfield..." 

Childhood Asthma

Researchers at the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public Health are attempting to learn more from parents about their children's asthma, especially concerning what triggers it. They are seeking parents with children under 8 with whom they will conduct 30-45 minute discussions on this topic.

Discussion questions will focus on household asthma triggers, and all information given will be kept confidential. Based on your needs, the interview can be completed either at your home, a place of your choice, or at the University of Pittsburgh. The researchers value your input and hope that you are interested in participating. In appreciation for your time, you will be given \$20 upon completion of the interview.

If you are interested in participating or would like more information, please contact Tammy Thomas at 412-624-8139 or tthomas@pitt.edu. 



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Hays Woods Update: Legal Maneuvers

by Fran Harkins, GASP Board Member

On January 19, 2007, Pittsburgh Development Group Land Development Inc. (PDG) filed an appeal with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to review and vacate the DEP decision of December 21, 2006, denying PDG's application for a permit to surface mine Hays Woods. The Environmental Hearing Board will hear the appeal.

In its 14-page appeal PDG directly confronts the scope of the DEP's Office of Surface Mining's authority. PDG contends that the DEP should limit its purview to the "situations where the surface mining is the end in mind." However, PDG has long argued for a variance from DEP regulations which require restoring the original contours of the site after mining. Their long-stated aim was to flatten the hilly site to build a racetrack. Interestingly, their current aim has morphed, as stated in the appeal, into creating an "urban infill development" on the 613-acre site with no mention of a racetrack.

Additionally, PDG requires a variance from PA code to mine within 100 feet of a stream. Though PDG argues its mining would improve water quality impacts, in effect, it would fill thousands of feet of hillside streams, thus eliminating them.

PDG's able counsel, Kirkpatrick & Lockhart Preston Gates Ellis LLP, must counter additional, varied and substantive arguments which formed the basis of the DEP

denial: the stability of proposed fills; the design of sedimentation basins; water quality, wildlife, and aquatic habitat impacts; inadequacies in the site plan; inadequacies in PDG's consideration of alternative locations; inadequacies in the mitigation proposal planned for Beaver County's Blacks Run watershed instead of Allegheny County's Streets Run watershed; an inadequate wetland replacement plan; and a failure to submit a post-development storm water management plan.

In a separate legal filing of February 2, 2007 to the Environmental Hearing Board, PennFuture is petitioning to intervene as an appellee. In PennFuture's words, "PDG proposes to use the strip mine to flatten three wooded hill tops and fill in several thousand feet of stream with coal refuse in order to construct a yet-to-be licensed horse racing track. Characterizing this development as 'environmentally-sustainable' is like calling the Exxon Valdez Spill a shoreline improvement project."

On an icy Valentine's Day, the Sierra Club honored the various groups including their own Allegheny Group, PennFuture, GASP, the Baldwin Citizens Alliance, Connie and Tom Merriman of the Studio for Creative Inquiry and others who have worked together to oppose the strip mining of this "forest within a city." 

Are We Being Taken for a Ride? PAT's Route Cuts

by Marilyn Skolnick, GASP Board Member

The State Legislature has still not taken any action regarding predictable funding for transit. They seem to be fiddling while Pittsburgh burns. A winter storm in February gave you a picture of what could happen if the proposed cuts are implemented. Many people were unable to get to work or to medical appointments because buses could not climb the steep hills and the T wires froze. I am convinced more than ever that a good analysis of the consequences of the proposed route eliminations was not done.

A recent television program featured the two heads of the Port Authority's unions discussing the route cuts. They

indicated that they would be willing to talk with PAT's CEO, Steve Bland, about how the routes could be reduced in a more reasonable manner and still save money. We have till June to get this problem solved. That is the end of the fiscal year. We can all help by letting our state legislators know that their inaction is unacceptable, and asking Mr. Bland to sit down with his unions and see if they can come to an agreement on how to minimize the pain of reducing the routes. 

Commuters Exposed to Air Pollution continued from page 1

plants." With 237 deaths, 340 heart attacks, and nearly 4,000 asthma attacks occurring locally each year, GASP has serious concern with the risk diesel exhaust poses, especially for our most vulnerable citizens, our children and the elderly.

The good news is that affordable technology exists today that can reduce diesel particle emissions by up to 90% when combined with ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel. Starting this year, because of new EPA regulations, new diesel trucks will be sold with a diesel particulate filter, or DPF, already attached. However, the EPA rule doesn't regulate the emissions from the 13 million existing diesel engines in use today. While EPA's new engine rules will mean huge air quality improvements over time, a child born today will be twenty-three years old by the time those rules are fully effective. If we are truly going to clean up diesel exhaust and make our commutes healthier, then it is absolutely imperative that the existing fleet of diesel vehicles be retrofit with DPFs. The emissions control technology required for new diesel engines starting this year is available, affordable, and proven to significantly reduce pollution from most of the existing diesel vehicles on the road today.

During their investigation, CATF installed a box truck with a DPF. The installation of the DPF dramatically reduced fine particles near the tailpipe from 5,000 micrograms per cubic meter to just 25 micrograms per cubic meter. As a result, fine particles from the truck barely registered in the chaser car following behind. CATF also documented that in-cabin exposure to particles from the bus pollution inside Boston transit buses equipped with DPFs was reduced to trace levels.

Filters Solve the Problem



NO FILTER **WITH FILTER**

Fine particle levels from a conventional box truck (left) can be reduced by 85% or more with a diesel particulate filter (DPF) installed (right).

(Source: CATF)

While biking and walking are certainly sustainable ways for individuals to travel, they may not be very healthy for the commuter. With monitors in backpacks, CATF

researchers walked from residential to commercial areas in Boston and Columbus. They found that people who walk or bike to work near thoroughfares traveled by diesel vehicles are exposed to high levels of pollutants.

To unveil the report, the Allegheny County Partnership to Reduce Diesel Pollution held a press conference on February 28, 2007. During the conference we:

1. Called for citizens to continue reporting illegal idling of diesel vehicles to the health department and municipal police.
2. Asked that the City of Pittsburgh adopt a policy to retrofit their entire diesel fleet.
3. Supported paying for transit retrofits with Local, State, and Federal funds.
4. Called for the PA DEP to reserve a fund specifically allocated for diesel retrofit projects around the state.
5. Asked that the Federal EPA adopt an engine rebuild rule. Such a rule would require owners/operators of long-haul diesel trucks to install Diesel Particulate Filters and Closed Crankcase Ventilation Systems at the time of their mid-life engine rebuild.

We were lucky to be joined at our press conference by Dr. David Eibling, professor of otolaryngology (head and neck surgery) in the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, and Chief of Otolaryngology at the VA hospital. Dr. Eibling summed it up best in his talk when he said:



Dr. David Eibling speaking at the press conference

The infrastructure, processes, and systems in which we live and work were all designed by people, hence it is up to people to change them. And that is all of us. By shining a bright light on the problem, the authors of this report challenge each of us to work for redesigning our transportation infrastructure to reduce the burden of these nanotoxins poisoning the air we breathe. Tomorrow we cannot stop commuting, Tomorrow we cannot fit every American with a custom filtered mask, Tomorrow we cannot switch to electric or hydrogen powered transportation. But, Tomorrow we can begin the work to retrofit our diesel powered transportation system with effective soot filters to save the air we all must breathe.

To read the entire report and view diesel exhaust videos go to <http://www.catf.us/projects/diesel/noescape/>

GASP's Spring 2007 Teacher Workshops!

Please contact Bridget Yupcavage at the GASP office at 412-325-7382 or bridget@gasp-pgh.org if you are interested in the following teacher workshops. \$10/fee per workshop. Food will be provided.

Fueling the Future: Transportation Pollution & Alternative Fuels

3.5 Act 48 hours. Ever wonder how transportation pollution affects our lives? With the help of Steel City Biofuels and funding provided by the EPA, this workshop will address environmental and health hazards associated with diesel and gasoline powered motor vehicles. We'll focus on hybrid vehicles, idling regulations, GASP's air monitors, carpooling, alternative fuels such as biodiesel, and other strategies for reducing the impact from motor vehicles. **One lucky teacher will go home with their own biodiesel production kit!** Sign up early because this workshop will "fill up" fast!

This workshop will run from 9 AM to 1 PM on the following dates at the locations indicated:

Saturday, April 28

Westmoreland Conservation District, Greensburg 15601

Saturday, May 5

GASP Office, Pittsburgh 15217

Saturday, May 12

GASP Office, Pittsburgh 15217

Saturday, June 16

Crooked Creek Environmental Center, Ford City 16226

Air, Art & Life: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Air Quality in the Pittsburgh Region

4 Act 48 hours. With funding provided by the PA DEP, this workshop will examine the connection between the Donora Smog Disaster of 1948 and current air quality regulations and concerns in southwestern PA. Science, art and regional history will be used to provide teachers with a strong background in air quality as well as exciting ways to present the information in the classroom.

This workshop will run from 9 AM to 3 PM on the following dates at the locations indicated:

Saturday April 14

GASP Office, Pittsburgh 15217

Saturday, June 9

Conservation Consultants, Inc., Pittsburgh 15203

GASP's Particulate Monitor in Action



North Hills High School senior, Ronald Condrin, uses the GASP particulate monitor to measure levels of PM2.5 in a classroom. The building is undergoing a major construction project and Ronald, along with a few other students in Pat Milliken's Environmental Science class, is monitoring specific areas of the building to determine the levels of fine particulates. When the monitoring is complete, results will be shared with school administrators.



As part of GASP's Diesel Pollution Patrol, students from Phase 4 Learning Center volunteered to count diesel vehicles and monitor fine particles using GASP's particulate monitor near Century III Mall in West Mifflin.

Spotlight on the GASP Staff

Bridget acquired her passion for environmental issues from her father who "took us camping at a very young age, always had the gigantic, smelly compost pile in his backyard (still does), didn't allow us to watch TV, and recycled *everything* (still does)." It seemed to be a



logical fit that she received an Environmental Studies degree from The George Washington University in Washington D.C. While at GWU, she participated in a cross-country geology field camp, spent a semester sailing the East Coast and Caribbean aboard a 130 foot schooner and spent three weeks

trekking in Nepal studying women and development issues. D.C. didn't "provide the greatest backdrop for outdoor exploration," so Bridget sought it elsewhere.

Upon graduating from GWU in 2002, Bridget taught environmental education at Snow Mountain Ranch in Winter Park, Colorado and became Assistant Director of Outdoor Education before moving back to Pennsylvania in 2004. She learned about GASP while looking for jobs on the website Idealist.org. "I was attracted to the mission of the organization right away. Even though I had never been to Pittsburgh, I was somehow drawn to this area."

Bridget began working for GASP in December of 2004, first fulfilling GASP's administrative duties, and then doing more educational work in the community until the official title of Education Coordinator was created. She not only handles the organization's database, membership and finances, but also conducts presentations relating to particulate and diesel pollution, coordinates use of the GASPer air monitor and educational programs, and assists with fundraising, grant writing and events.

Bridget's current focus is coordinating and facilitating Act 48 credit workshops for teachers in the region. She feels GASP has "...some exciting teacher workshops coming up that go beyond informing teachers about the region's air quality concerns. The workshops take more of an 'outside the box approach' to learning about air pollution."

Outside of GASP, Bridget works part-time for Carnegie Museums, supervising special events at the Museum of

Art, Museum of Natural History, Warhol and the Science Center. When she is not working at GASP or one of the museums, Bridget enjoys exploring area parks with her dog, Rufus, and traveling with her boyfriend, Conor.

Bridget will be relocating to Denver, Colorado this summer as she intends to apply to graduate school there. She says she has "thoroughly enjoyed" her time with GASP and will miss working for such a "unique and effective" organization. For GASP's part, we thoroughly enjoyed her time with us and will miss having such a unique and effective individual working for us!

Thanks, Bridget, for all your excellent work. We wish you the best in your new endeavors.

Note: see back page for job opening announcement for Bridget's position.

Join GASP Today!

- \$35 Grassroots Supporters (\$15 low income/student rate)
- \$60 Grassroots Contributors
- \$100 Grassroots Patrons
- \$250 Clean Air Defenders
- \$500 Clean Air Protectors
- \$___ Other

Call GASP at (412) 325-7382 to learn about automatic monthly giving, deducted directly from your checking account or charged to your credit card. An easy, hassle-free way to support GASP all year round!

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All contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The official registration and financial information of GASP may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Drive Cleaner Drive Greener 2007

Promoting Fuel Efficient, Clean Vehicles

GASP is gearing up for our 4th annual Drive Cleaner Drive Greener events! Our main event will be held at the Venture Outdoors Festival on Pittsburgh's North Shore, as it has been for the past two years. We are inviting local owners of hybrid vehicles and other fuel efficient, clean vehicles to be part of this fun event by displaying their cars and being available to answer questions about them from event attendees. Join us on Saturday, May 19 from 11 AM until 4 PM for Drive Cleaner Drive Greener and enjoy the rest of the family-friendly Venture Outdoors Festival, celebrating outdoor activities in the beauty of southwestern Pennsylvania.

In addition, we have been asked to organize similar displays at The Carnegie Science Center's Earth Day event and the Westmoreland County Earth Day Festival on Saturday, April 21. Irwin Car Cruise organizers have asked us if we know any hybrid owners interested in displaying their vehicles on Saturday, April 28. We are seeking volunteers to display their cars at each of these events—please contact Bridget at bridget@gasp-pgh.org or 412-325-7382.

As a small token of our appreciation, each volunteer who displays a vehicle will receive a goody bag filled with GASP materials and additional items.

- April 21 DCDG @ Science Center Earth Day Festival**
One Allegheny Avenue (across from Heinz Field)
10 AM-4 PM (vehicles will be displayed in two shifts: 10-1 and 1-4)
- April 21 DCDG @ Westmoreland County Earth Day Festival**
St. Vincent College, Latrobe, PA 15650-2690
12-4:30 PM (vehicles should be there between 11 and 11:30 AM)
- April 28 Irwin Car Cruise**
Please note that there may be an \$8 fee to participate.
To register, please call Gary Ed at 724-396-2714 or
Fernando Cardoza at 412-445-1079. 1-5 PM
- May 19 DCDG @ Venture Outdoors Festival**
Pittsburgh's North Shore, near Heinz Field.
11 AM-4 PM (vehicles will be displayed in two shifts: 11-1:30 and 1:30-4)

We're looking forward to a series of successful Drive Cleaner Drive Greener events this year. Hope you can join us!

Help Wanted

Do you want to protect the environment and help clean up southwestern PA? Do you like working with the community, teachers and students? Are you good at organizing information? Do you take pleasure in educating others about important environmental issues? Are you trustworthy, organized, reliable, and independent? Then we have a great job for you!

GASP is looking to fill a full-time Education Coordinator/Administrative Assistant paid position in June. If you are interested, please contact gasp@gasp-pgh.org for more information.

