



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

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Fellow Marylanders:

Sometimes we substitute common sense for science. For example, we are reasonably sure that when development occurs near public transportation or in population centers, use of private automobiles is reduced, with a beneficial impact on air quality. In Maryland, we are backing up common sense with science, so that we can measure the impact of land-use decisions. In this issue of *EnviroMatters*, we look at several projects that will help us make wiser decisions about development and growth in the future.

I welcome your comments and suggestions about this and future issues of *EnviroMatters*.

Sincerely,

Kendl P. Philbrick
Acting Secretary

Creative Land Use Policies Help Improve Air Quality

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) has been working on an innovative strategy that examines the close link between creative land use policies and improvements in air quality.

The initiative, called Maryland's Innovative Measures State Implementation Plan, has received high praise from numerous state governments, environmental advocacy groups, regional planning organizations, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Maryland's efforts build off creative policy documents developed by EPA.

MDE has worked closely on this initiative with the Maryland Department of Transportation and the Maryland Department of Planning to examine the potential air quality benefits created through various growth policies and creative land use management techniques (like brownfields).

The initiative looks at how Maryland has shaped its land use patterns in a way that benefits air quality through the reduction of transportation emissions rather than letting unconstrained growth adversely impact emissions and air quality. For example, we know people living in mixed-use communities tend to drive shorter distances, thereby producing less transportation related emissions.

The initiative involves three specific land use projects: the Digital Harbor area of Baltimore City (a redevelopment project that includes the MDE's new home of Montgomery Park), the Owings Mills Transit Oriented Development Project (a mixed-use development located at a transit hub), and the Parole Redevelopment Project (a proposed mixed-use development located near Annapolis). Through modeling efforts, Maryland is calculating the actual air quality benefits created through the implementation of these three projects. In addition to the land use projects, several other innovative programs are incorporated in this initiative. These additional programs include voluntary programs like our Ozone Action Day program and transportation emission reduction programs like our Commuter Choice initiative.

In addition to the actual quantitative calculation of the land use benefits, MDE intends to incorporate other innovative air quality planning concepts into this State Implementation Plan. These include the flexible bundling of projects for emission benefit reductions, the use of voluntary measures as Maryland's award winning Ozone Action Day program, a multi-agency air quality planning approach, and using air quality planning documents to assist decision makers as they consider future transportation planning options.

Our intent is to produce a "living" document that recognizes the complexity of the issues relating to air quality planning in Maryland and that provides flexibility to implementing agencies to seek innovative approaches to improving the air we all breath. Maryland intends to submit the document to EPA for review by the end of 2003.