

November 13, 2000

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Air Docket – Public Docket No. A-2000-16  
Room M-1500 (6102)  
Waterside Mall  
401 M Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20460

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the State and Territorial Air Pollution Program Administrators (STAPPA) and the Association of Local Air Pollution Control Officials (ALAPCO), we offer the following comments on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) September 20, 2000 proposed "Amendments to Vehicle Inspection Maintenance Program Requirements Incorporating the Onboard Diagnostic Check" (65 *Federal Register* 56844).

The overall issue of inspection and maintenance of motor vehicles, and this particular proposal regarding the incorporation of the onboard diagnostic (OBD) check into state and local I/M programs, are of great interest to many state and local air agencies. With respect to this proposal, STAPPA and ALAPCO note that a number of state and local agencies are submitting individual comments to EPA, offering specific comments and recommendations; we urge that EPA carefully review and consider the range of issues and perspectives addressed in those individual comments. In addition, we urge the agency to give careful consideration to the following STAPPA and ALAPCO comments, which provide a set of nine policy-oriented principles supported by the associations regarding the implementation of OBD.

**Principle #1** – STAPPA and ALAPCO support the provisions of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 regarding the incorporation of OBD checks into I/M programs. In particular, the associations agree that, as prescribed by Section 202(m) of the Act, jurisdictions with State Implementation Plans (SIPs) that contain I/M programs should amend their plans "to provide for inspection of onboard diagnostics systems...and for the maintenance or repair of malfunctions or system deterioration identified by or affecting such diagnostics systems."

**Principle #2** – STAPPA and ALAPCO support EPA’s proposal to extend by one-year, until January 1, 2002, the date by which mandatory OBD system checks for model year 1996 and newer vehicles must begin. In addition, the associations recommend that EPA provide for the possibility of allowing, on a case-by-case basis, up to six additional months beyond January 1, 2002 for a state or locality making a good-faith effort to move forward with the incorporation of the OBD check into its I/M program.

**Principle #3** – Until the release of the MOBILE6 model, STAPPA and ALAPCO support the allocation of SIP credits for OBD testing at a level equivalent to that allowed for I/M 240 (or equivalent programs). This level of credit is based on existing, longstanding guidance provided to states and localities by EPA (i.e., Tier II spreadsheets). STAPPA and ALAPCO further recommend that, following the release of MOBILE6, a credit “true-up” process be conducted to assess each I/M program relative to OBD implementation and, if necessary, to adjust credits upward or downward to reflect the actual level of credit as determined by MOBILE6.

**Principle #4** – STAPPA and ALAPCO support EPA’s proposal to allow the technology-based OBD check to replace the performance-based tailpipe emissions test for MY 1996 and newer vehicles. However, the associations urge that in making this “affirmative determination that states are *not* required to conduct both the traditional I/M tests *and* the OBD check on MY 1996+ OBD-equipped vehicles,” EPA also expressly affirm that no state or locality is precluded from continuing, at its own discretion, the traditional tailpipe emissions test for MY 1996 and newer vehicles in conjunction with the OBD check, as the transition to an OBD-based I/M program is made.

**Principle #5** – STAPPA and ALAPCO believe that the timely availability of the MOBILE6 model is essential. The associations find EPA’s repeated delay in releasing MOBILE6 to be unacceptable and note that the continued absence of this important tool is becoming increasingly problematic for state and local air agencies. Accordingly, STAPPA and ALAPCO urge EPA to make the immediate completion and release of MOBILE6, as well as EPA-funded training on the use of this model, a top priority. We further urge that EPA work closely with state and local air agencies in advance of the model’s release to develop an appropriate communications strategy regarding the results and implications of MOBILE6.

**Principle #6** – STAPPA and ALAPCO believe that EPA must place a high priority on the development, implementation and agency funding of a comprehensive outreach, education and communications strategy regarding the incorporation of OBD checks into I/M programs. This strategy should include both public outreach and education – so that consumers, political leaders and others are provided with clear, consistent and accurate information relative to OBD testing and its role in their I/M programs – as well as technician training. This comprehensive strategy should be developed in close partnership with affected state and local air agencies.

**Principle #7** – STAPPA and ALAPCO urge EPA to expedite the issuance of the draft OBD guidance currently being developed by the agency and, moreover, to provide an

adequate opportunity for state and local air agencies to comment on and otherwise participate in the preparation of final guidance.

**Principle #8** – STAPPA and ALAPCO believe that it is imperative for EPA to work in close coordination with state and local air agencies to ensure the successful roll out and implementation of OBD. Accordingly, in addition to the abovementioned specific issues that EPA should address in partnership with states and localities, the associations urge that EPA initiate a collaborative federal/state/local effort to develop a general OBD implementation strategy to be carried out during the “extension” period (i.e., between now and January 1, 2002).

**Principle #9** – STAPPA and ALAPCO believe it is important that EPA remain committed to assuring the quality of OBD design – through rigorous certification and in-use compliance – to ensure maximum air quality benefits and preserve the integrity of the I/M program.

STAPPA and ALAPCO appreciate this opportunity to comment on EPA’s proposal to incorporate OBD into I/M programs and look forward to working with the agency as additional steps are taken with respect to this important issue.

Sincerely,

John Elston  
STAPPA Chair  
Mobile Sources and Fuels Committee

Eric P. Skelton  
ALAPCO Chair  
Mobile Sources and Fuels Committee