

# SEMCOG REGIONAL UPDATE

A BIWEEKLY PUBLICATION OF SEMCOG, THE SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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## SEMCOG reports results of vehicle emissions testing program

SEMCOG has just released the findings of its roadside emissions testing program conducted on random vehicles throughout Southeast Michigan last summer:

- Approximately two percent of the passenger vehicles operating in Southeast Michigan were high emitters. This is less than reported in several other metropolitan areas around the country.
- Southeast Michigan has fewer high emitters because its vehicle fleet is younger.
- This project confirmed that a small fraction of vehicles account for a major portion of emissions. Ten percent of the vehicles accounted for roughly 70 percent of the total pollutant emissions from passenger vehicles.
- Many owners of high emitters assumed their emissions were high simply because their vehicle was old. However, in reality, these vehicles emit far more pollution than a properly operating vehicle of the same age.
- Voluntary efforts to reduce vehicle emissions were met with a high degree of acceptance. Very few negative comments were received and a significant percentage of owners reported taking their vehicles in for repairs.

These results tell us that there are two targets of opportunity for reducing emissions from motor vehicles:

- Reduce emissions from existing high emitters.
- Educate the public to prevent vehicles from becoming high emitters in the first place.

Once again, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency proposes lowering the ozone standard. State and local governments will have to find ways to reduce overall emissions in order to attain the new standard. However, in light of this project's results, SEMCOG believes that mandatory emissions testing would be an inefficient use of scarce fiscal resources (since nearly every vehicle will soon have on-board emissions detecting equipment). Resources should be focused on incrementally reducing the number of high emitters and preventing high emitter occurrence.

The complete report, *Passenger Vehicles and Air Pollution: A Profile of Southeast Michigan's Fleet*, is available in PDF on SEMCOG's Web site, [www.semco.org](http://www.semco.org); look under Reports on the home page. Hard copies and the technical report from the contractor are available from SEMCOG Information Services. *Contact: SEMCOG Information Services.*

## SEMCOG invites comment on annual budget

SEMCOG announces a public comment period for the FY 2008-2009 Annual Operating Budget and Work Program Summary. SEMCOG's work program is designed to respond to the needs of the Southeast Michigan region as identified by SEMCOG membership.

The work program summary and budget is now available from the SEMCOG Information Center; a summary of the document is on SEMCOG's Web site (link to Public Notices from the upper navigation bar). Comments can be mailed, phoned, or faxed to the SEMCOG Information Center, and made in person at the following meeting:

- General Assembly, Thursday, April 3, 2008, 4:30 p.m., Rock Financial Showplace, 46100 Grand River, Novi 48274; present, discuss, and take final action to adopt the budget and work program summary.

*Contact: SEMCOG Information Center.*

## View highlights of Executive Committee on SEMCOG's Web site

Highlights of the February 22 Executive Committee meeting can now be viewed on SEMCOG's Web site. From the home page, link to Podcasts in the upper right bar, then look for the Executive Committee link in the center of the page. Highlights include a presentation from Michigan Department of Transportation providing an update on the status of the Detroit River International Crossing Project (DRIC). *Contact: Sue Stetler, SEMCOG Communications Director.*

## Upcoming SEMCOG University focuses on Transfer of Development Rights in Michigan

**Transfer of Development Rights in Michigan: Three Scenarios for Higher Density Community Planning** — Wednesday, March 19, 2008, 9:00 a.m.-noon (registration begins at 8:30 a.m.). Learn about the benefits and workings of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) as a tool for protecting natural areas and agricultural lands, with a focus on the study of hypothetical scenarios in Southeast Michigan.

Discover the role of TDR in community planning, components of a successful TDR program, and how TDR could be applied in Michigan using case studies. This SEMCOG University will be held in SEMCOG's Buhl Building office in downtown Detroit. SEMCOG University workshops are for members and partners; there is a \$75 charge for nonmember local governments. Seating is limited; please register online as

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soon as possible. At [www.semco.org](http://www.semco.org), click on the Calendar in the upper navigation bar; find the workshops on the March calendar. *Contact: Amanda Polanco, SEMCOG University Registrar.*

### New HOV lane, express bus service begin today

SEMCOG worked with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and transit providers — SMART and DDOT — in developing the idea of putting Michigan's first HOV (high occupancy vehicle) traffic lane in each direction on a 5.25-mile stretch of Michigan Avenue from Wyoming Avenue to Detroit's Central Business district for use by buses and cars/vans with two or more occupants. SEMCOG provided data and assisted MDOT in analyzing various ways to alleviate congestion during the Ambassador Bridge Gateway construction project, the major project that closes a section of I-75 from Rosa Parks Boulevard to Clark Street in Southwest Detroit for 22 months. Another viable option for commuters traveling from Downriver communities to Downtown Detroit during this construction is the DDOT/SMART "Gateway Express" service on the HOV lanes. SMART and DDOT have formed a historic partnership to operate a new commuter bus service. At the February 15 press conference announcing these initiatives, MDOT Director Kirk Steudle said, "This is an important partnership for transit in Metro Detroit. We commend DDOT and SMART for coming together to make this possible. We hope it represents the first of many partnerships involving MDOT, DDOT, and SMART." Steudle also thanked SEMCOG for the role it played in making these initiatives a reality. *Contact: Sue Stetler, SEMCOG Communications Director.*

### Phase II Stormwater Permit extended

SEMCOG continues to work on behalf of our members, facilitating a workgroup that is providing comments to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) on the new draft Phase II stormwater permit. The current permit

expires on April 1, 2008. With significant progress being made, but additional talks needed, MDEQ has agreed to extend the current permit coverage. In order to have the current permit extended, permittees will need to fill out an abbreviated permit application by March 31, 2008. MDEQ will send a letter with this permit application to all permittees in the next couple of weeks. Once the new permit is reissued, MDEQ will then request additional application information as appropriate. *Contact: Amy Mangus, Coordinator of SEMCOG Environmental Programs.*

### SEMCOG's new automated phone system

SEMCOG has begun using an automated phone system. Callers are encouraged to use direct dial numbers to reach staff. If you don't have the direct line of the person you are calling, you can call the main number and be directed to a staff directory. An operator is available for questions. Feedback on this system is welcome. *Contact: Amanda Polanco, SEMCOG Information Center.*

SEMCOG is a regional planning partnership of governmental units serving 4.9 million people in the seven-county region of Southeast Michigan striving to enhance the region's quality of life. *Regional Update* is a publication of SEMCOG, financed through funds from state and federal grants and dues from member communities.

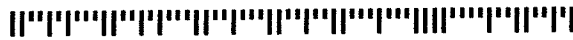
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