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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **U.S. EPA to Strengthen Ozone Health Standard Five Central Ohio Counties Expected to be Affected by Changes**

**(Columbus – January 12, 2010)** The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced that the agency is proposing to replace the ozone pollution standard set by the previous administration, which many believe was not protective enough of public health. EPA expects the five central Ohio counties with ozone monitors to be impacted by the tougher limit: Delaware, Franklin, Knox, Licking and Madison.

In September, those same counties were designated as meeting the 1997 standard of .084 parts per million (ppm); however EPA's recent proposal announced that they will be looking at strengthening the standard to range between .060 and .070 ppm measured over eight hours. The revision will be guided by more than 1,700 scientific studies. Sources of ozone pollution include cars, diesel vehicles, lawn equipment and power plants. Children are at the greatest risk from ozone because their lungs are still developing, they are most likely to be active outdoors, and they are more likely than adults to have asthma. Adults with asthma or other lung diseases, and older adults are also sensitive to ozone.

The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) will work with the Ohio EPA to proactively identify strategies that reduce air pollution while protecting central Ohio's economy. MORPC will continue its efforts to improve central Ohio's air quality by:

- issuing daily air quality forecasts for the region
- alerting the public when air pollution reaches levels that are considered to be unhealthy for certain sensitive groups
- working with diesel fleets to install emission-reduction technology
- providing carpool and vanpool assistance to commuters
- coordinating central Ohio greenway trails and roadways to encourage walking and bicycling
- providing home weatherization assistance and energy efficient upgrades to income-eligible applicants
- completing carbon footprint assessments for local governments
- linking air quality with issues of transportation, energy, local food, water quality, housing and the economy in a regional planning project.

EPA will take public comment for 60 days following publication of the proposal in the Federal Register and will issue a final standard by August 31, 2010. More information can be found at <http://www.epa.gov/groundlevelozone/>.

MORPC is a voluntary association of 47 local governments in central Ohio serving the region through planning, direct service, public policy information and innovative programming and intergovernmental coordinating services in the areas of transportation, land use, energy conservation, the environment and housing.