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OTC Commends EPA's Proposal to Boost Health and Environmental Protection with Stronger Ozone Standards

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The Ozone Transport Commission (OTC) commends the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on today's decision to propose strengthening the primary national ambient air quality standard for ozone within the range of 0.060 to 0.070 ppm, providing significant improvements in public health protection. The OTC also applauds EPA's proposal to set a new secondary standard designed to provide greater protection of the environment from ozone damage. The new levels proposed by EPA are consistent with the recommendations made by the Clean Air Science Advisory Committee (CASAC), and will result in substantial additional health and environmental benefits.

"The OTC States have worked collaboratively to meet federal ozone standards and will do the same to meet these standards," said Shari Wilson, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Environment and Chair of OTC. "The proposed new standards, which are critical for public health and environmental protection, demonstrate EPA's commitment to science and will require a much stronger federal action to address transport. We commend EPA."

"EPA's decision to propose more protective primary and secondary standards consistent with the CASAC's recommendations is an important step toward providing clean air and a healthy environment for millions of people in the country, and also shows EPA's renewed focus on relying on sound science in its decision-making," said Anna Garcia, OTC's Executive Director.

State air quality plans for new standards are normally due 3 years after a final rule is issued by EPA. EPA's proposal contains a more ambitious timeline intended to avoid substantial delays in bringing more healthy air quality to the public. Once it is adopted, the OTC states will work with EPA to expeditiously meet the new implementation goals. OTC is currently working on a suite of potential control strategies for reducing emissions of nitrogen oxides (NOx) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which are the key precursors to the formation of ground-level ozone pollution.

Over the past 15 years the OTC and EPA have implemented successful strategies to reduce NOx and VOCs, which react in sunlight to cause harmful ozone. Those emission reductions from vehicles, power plants, factories, and consumer products have resulted in significant reductions in ground-level ozone, providing substantial health and welfare benefits. Further reductions in ozone precursor pollutants are feasible and consistent with efforts to also reduce greenhouse gases and air toxics emissions.

"Meeting these new, more stringent proposed standards will bring an even greater focus to transported pollution, and will require that EPA develop national

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strategies across all sectors to adequately address the problem,” said Ms. Garcia, “local and regional measures alone will not be sufficient to achieve and maintain the more protective standards.”

The OTC is a multi-state organization created under the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 to develop regional solutions to the problem of ground-level ozone pollution. It is committed to finding innovative approaches that maximize public health and environmental benefits.