GVWR) phase-in requirement is 50 percent each year starting in MY 1998. Fleet owners will receive emission credits for purchasing ultra low emitting vehicles.

USEPA ECO guidance issued on December 17, 1992, recognizes the importance of encouraging the use of vehicles operated by means other than a gasoline or diesel operated internal combustion engine. For the purpose of calculating the average passenger occupancy (APO), States may develop factors to be applied to the vehicle count which would reflect the lower emission levels from alternatively fueled vehicles that include natural gas vehicles.

Comment

Several commenters believe the program will result in great costs to area ECO employers, but will not result in any environmental benefits. The commenters cite that the results of an ECO pilot project in Northwest Indiana show that despite great expense and sincere effort to make the program successful, employees simply were not responding.

USEPA Response

As discussed above, the ECO program is part of the Act's strategy for addressing the growth in vehicle miles traveled. Congress mandated ECO as a starting point for changing travel behavior so air quality problems associated with single-occupancy automobiles usage can be solved. The program should not be thought of as a short-term effort. It is really the beginning of a ten- or twenty-year effort to expand employees' choices and opportunities for travel. The funding provisions of the Intermodal Surface Transportation and Efficiency Act make it possible for Federal dollars to be used for public transportation projects which can support ECO long-term goals. The USEPA believes that the ECO program will play a significant role in making people aware of how they travel and this awareness will eventually extend beyond work-related trips to trips taken throughout the day. This awareness will have important implications related to traffic congestion, air quality, climate change and energy usage.

The results of the ECO pilot project cannot be used to substantiate claims that ECO will not work in Indiana. Employer plans only began to be implemented in the late spring of 1994 and there has not been enough time to evaluate effectiveness or costs. In addition, participants in the ECO pilot project were not required to develop the full scale compliance plans that will be required when the program is fully implemented.

Comment

Several commenters address the unlikely success of carpooling in Northwest Indiana. The commenters note that employees of any one company are spread out over a wide geographic area, and many worksites have multiple shifts beginning during the peak travel period of 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. The commenters also discuss that the nature of their work requires that employees have use of their car at all times. The commenters note that they often do errands on the way to and from work, such as taking children to and from daycare, and are concerned about handling a family emergency that may occur in the middle of the day.

USEPA Response

Carpooling and vanpooling will be important elements of many ECO programs. While there will always be employees that cannot carpool because of individual needs, there will be many employees that will be able to carpool. Moreover, the needs of commuters will change over time. For example, employees that must drop children off at daycare currently may be able to carpool in the future when their children are older. The ECO program provides an opportunity to establish commuting options, such as carpooling, public transit or other alternatives, to meet future commuting needs.

Employers cannot determine that their employees are spread out over too wide a geographic area for carpooling to succeed until they have conducted their APO surveys that include employee locations and attitudes. Even if employees are spread out over a large area, there may be small pockets of employees willing to carpool. In addition, more employers in close proximity may operate cooperative carpooling programs in which their employees would be given the opportunity to carpool together.

The potential success of carpooling in any area will largely be determined by the amount of effort by employers to provide educational programs and measures that support ridesharing. Guaranteed ride home programs provide assurance to employees who do not drive to work that their transportation needs can be met in case of a midday emergency. All of the participating employers in the Northwest Indiana ECO pilot project have included a guaranteed ride home program in their compliance plan. Employers may also establish on-site amenities that will make it less necessary for employees to

have their own vehicle, including automatic teller machines, cafeterias, and daycare facilities.

Other support measures for carpooling include: offering preferential or subsidized parking for carpools and vanpools; charging drive alones for parking; cashing out parking with cash equivalents to free parking; sponsoring or subsidizing carpools and vanpools; providing comprehensive rideshare matching services; subsidizing shuttles during midday to local shopping areas; and providing company-owned vehicles for ridesharing.

Several alternative measures would address the concern over multiple shifts during the peak travel period. The ECO can be looked at as an opportunity for employers to reevaluate how they do business. At some worksites, it may be possible to reschedule shifts by reducing the number of starting times to consolidate the number of employees arriving at worksites at the same times. Other alternatives include changing work schedules to accommodate compressed work weeks in which employees work longer shifts over fewer days. This gives employers the opportunity to offer their employees more favorable schedules such as four day work weeks and three-day weekends. Some employers may want to allow certain employees to telecommute, or work at home, one or two days a week.

Employers can also adopt incentive programs to encourage employees to use public transit if it is available. Where public transit is not available, employers may want to turn to the private sector and sponsor subscription bus services. Employers can also improve facilities to promote bicycle use and walking options.

Comment

Several commenters object that the ECO program is required all year long, although the ozone season is only April through October. The commenters note that high ozone levels typically are recorded only during exceptionally hot and dry periods in June, July or August.

USEPA Response

The ozone season in Indiana is April through September, not October. However, excessive driving of single occupied vehicles during the 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. peak commuting period and the resulting traffic congestion occurs all year long. Indiana chose to implement its ECO program on an annual basis because the State believes it would be difficult to change commuting habits, such as reforming carpools, just in the spring and summer. The State believes