

From: [Toni Oplt](#)
To: [Brown, Don](#)
Cc: [Emilee Chaclas](#)
Subject: [External] R24-17: written public comment
Date: Friday, January 31, 2025 5:25:17 PM

Hello:

I write today to make a formal written comment for the upcoming public hearing (March 10-12) on R24-17: Advanced Clean Trucks (ACT) and Heavy-Duty Low-NOx Omnibus (HDO) rules

My name is Toni Oplt. I live in Edwardsville, Illinois. I am a resident of Madison County, the 11th worst county in our state for diesel engine PM2.5 air pollution, according to the Respiratory Health Association. Therefore, I am grateful to the Illinois Pollution Control Board for holding these hearings and seeking to provide space and time for the many voices of those directly and indirectly negatively affected by the current level of diesel exhaust emissions.

Along the outskirts of my hometown of Edwardsville, warehouses line the 255 Interstate for miles. What was once farmland is now a vast field of asphalted pads that accommodate a constant stream of heavy-duty trucks arriving and leaving the warehouse bays, idling for long periods as shipments are loaded and unloaded. These trucks, once never seen inside our city limits, are granted further leniency for their traffic each year.

Along with the increase in the trucking industry has come an increase in poor air quality days for our area. Over the past five years, I have learned to continually check air quality to see if it is safe to be outside, to take a walk to town, to ride my bike, to work in my garden. For days on end, the air never improves above moderate. Since I suffer from severe dust allergies, particulate matter becomes a real threat.

But my complaints pale in comparison to the high level of childhood asthma in our county. The hundreds of days children and vulnerable adults spend in emergency rooms, the lost workdays (and sometimes jobs) for parents, the lost school days for our future generations add up to a massive cost burden, calculated in human suffering and economic hardship. Madison County has higher levels of respiratory illness and non fatal heart attacks compared to most other counties, which is why the Respiratory Health Association added it to the Dirty Dozen list in 2023. As I stated earlier, we are number 11, so it is even worse for counties listed above us.

But there is another factor of concern here that is so often left out of our legal and political conversations: the devastation caused by cumulative impact. As someone who has stood before you in the past participating in public comment on strengthening coal ash regulations, as well as standing before the Office of Surface Mines and Minerals in the IDNR and before the IEPA speaking against permit expansions that benefit only polluters, I have come to realize that cumulative impacts are never considered. There are loopholes in permit language and narrowed definitions of what can be acknowledged as relevant and a myopic view of what really needs to be done or changed. Yet for people who live in counties like mine, scarred by heavy industrial pollution, as well as diesel exhaust and agricultural chemical drift, there is no

loophole, no narrower view, no blinders to keep us from the true threat of cumulative impact. So this conversation about diesel exhaust is really a small conversation about the truly large reality of our situation. For us everything matters.

So as you deliberate and weigh the information submitted by people like me, I hope you will see that adopting the Advanced Clean Trucks (ACT) and Heavey-Duty Low-NOx Omnibus (HDO) rules is a necessary and positive step toward making life better for the people of Illinois and for the land and its wildlife—the often overlooked victims in our discussion. Because everything is connected, isn't it? Ecosystems sustain life—all life—until they fail. Air pollution caused by diesel engine exhaust may not be the only culprit, but it is a formidable one. Adoption of the Advanced Clean Trucks (ACT) and Heavey-Duty Low-NOx Omnibus (HDO) rules will help us put a significant dent in the cumulative impact of industrial pollution.

The impacts of diesel pollution on health, economics, and communities in Illinois are enormous. We must establish strong yet feasible emission standards for new fossil fuel trucks that will continue to be sold and increase sales targets for new electric trucks. Eleven states have already adopted this ACT. Please put us on the path to a better future, with a healthier population and a forward-growing economy. Please adopt the Advanced Clean Trucks (ACT) and Heavy-Duty Low-NOx Omnibus (HDO) rules.

I greatly appreciate your attention in this matter. I will be present at the hearings and will provide oral comment at that time. I value the opportunity you have provided.

Sincerely,

Toni Oplt

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