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New Mid-Atlantic Program Helps to Improve Port Communities

COLLEGE PARK, MD (June 13, 2011) – The University of Maryland Environmental Finance Center (EFC) is working with the Mid-Atlantic Regional Air Management Association, Inc. (MARAMA) to launch a regional Mid-Atlantic Dray Truck Replacement Program. This new program offers financial support to replace older, more polluting short-haul trucks that serve the Ports of Baltimore, Virginia, Philadelphia, and Wilmington (DE) (known as drayage or dray trucks) with newer, cleaner vehicles. Cleaner trucks mean less air pollution throughout the Mid-Atlantic transit corridor. This project is supported by a $3.3 million grant from US EPA.

The Mid-Atlantic Dray Truck Replacement Program offers qualified applicants a $15,000 down payment towards the purchase of trucks that meet more stringent emissions standards. The intent of the program is to remove some of the oldest, dirtiest trucks from the fleets that serve the four ports. The program is based on similar clean truck programs that are sweeping the country, including programs at the ports of Los Angeles, Long Beach, Oakland, Seattle, Tacoma, Houston; and more recently the Port of New York and New Jersey.

The Mid-Atlantic program intends to build on the initial US EPA grant with the financial support and cooperation of the participating states, as well as the shippers and carriers associated with these ports. “We no longer want our ports to be the place where old trucks go to die. We understand the need for supporting our local economy but not at the expense of the health of the surrounding port community. This program aims to give truck drivers an opportunity to afford that cleaner, greener truck but at the same time, not go broke making the payments for that truck,” says Joanne Throwe, Director of the Environmental Finance Center who helps to manage this effort. Throwe and her colleagues are working hard to engage partners so they can double
the impact of the US EPA award with a dollar-for-dollar match in the form of sponsorships and support from the public and private sector. “This is a great example of how a government and industry partnership should work. The program goals are admirable – reducing emissions from mobile sources at the Mid-Atlantic ports to promote clean air for everyone’s benefit, and the government is giving private industry the tools needed to achieve those objectives,” said Louis Campion, President of the Maryland Motor Truck Association, Inc.

The Port of Virginia was the first to open their Green Operator Program through this Mid-Atlantic partnership in March 2011. They are leveraging the Mid-Atlantic Dray Truck Replacement Program with a $300,000 contribution of their own. There was a waitlist of approximately 150 applicants with 24 applications ready to receive approval for funding. At the Port of Baltimore, over 75 people have expressed interest in submitting an application as soon as the program opens with matching sponsorships. The Ports of Philadelphia and Wilmington are set to open in July and already have had considerable interest from dozens of carriers and sponsors.

“The timing for the opening of a Mid-Atlantic Truck Replacement Program couldn’t be better,” adds Throwe. The US EPA’s SmartWay Program is set to announce a new program aimed at expanding drayage truck programs around the country on June 28, 2011 at the Port of Charleston in South Carolina. With the industry commitment demonstrated by members of the Coalition for Responsible Transportation (CRT) whose members make up some of the largest shippers and distributors from around the country, CRT is working to establish and endorse clean truck programs around the country. Through this partnership with CRT, US EPA hopes to bring more attention to clean truck issues and strengthen the opportunity to support programs such as the Mid-Atlantic effort.

The EFC is one of ten university-based centers across the country providing communities with the tools and information necessary to manage change for a healthy environment and an enhanced quality of life. For more information about this program, please visit www.efc.umd.edu or call 301-405-5036.

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