

Recommended Methods for Use of EMFAC2002 To Develop Motor Vehicle Emissions Budgets and Assess Conformity

As the agency charged with estimating motor vehicle emissions for air quality plans, the Air Resources Board (ARB) has improved the EMFAC modeling tool for use in combination with estimates of vehicle population and activity to develop motor vehicle emissions budgets and assess transportation conformity. The most recent version of this tool, EMFAC2002, has been transmitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) for approval for use in State Implementation Plans (SIPs) and conformity assessments. This paper describes the recommended practices for ARB, air districts, metropolitan planning agencies (MPOs) and regional transportation planning agencies (RTPAs) to use vehicle activity in conjunction with EMFAC2002 emission rates to calculate emissions budgets and conduct conformity assessments.

The vehicle activity indicators commonly used to develop emissions inventories are vehicle trips and vehicle miles of travel (VMT) by speed, vehicle class and time of day. Though not a direct measure of travel activity, vehicle population may also be a variable for these purposes, as described below.

Vehicle trips. In California, MPOs and RTPAs use demographic forecasts and travel demand models to develop estimates of current and future daily VMT, daily vehicle trips and average travel speeds for links in the transportation network. ARB separately estimates daily vehicle trips, but defines trips as the number of times a vehicle is started, rather than a number of specific daily destinations. This distinction is important; ARB and U.S. EPA studies find that vehicles are started five to six times per day, while trips associated with destinations as reported through travel surveys and predicted in travel demand models occur three to four times per day. Because start emissions and the duration of time between starts are crucial to emissions estimation, ARB equates vehicle trips with vehicle starts. Though EMFAC2002 permits model users to alter estimates of vehicle trips used to estimate emissions, ARB recommends that the model's default estimates of vehicle trips (starts), developed from instrumented vehicle studies, be used for air quality planning and conformity purposes.¹ Alternatively, for vehicle classes where appropriate local data are made available for review through the interagency consultation process, use of trip factoring or other methods to fully account for vehicle starts may be employed. Such alternative approaches should be discussed in the interagency consultation process.

¹ An exception would occur when a user chooses to factor these start-based trips to account for trip reduction programs. EMFAC2002 start-based trips rather than destination-based trips should serve as the baseline for this adjustment. The adjustment would be made through the What-If Scenario (WIS) function of EMFAC2002 as follows, where TRS denotes the trip reduction scenario:

$$\text{WIS Input TRS Trips} = \text{EMFAC Default Trips} * (\text{RTPA TRS Trips} / \text{RTPA Baseline Trips})$$

Vehicle speeds. Most travel demand models provide output of estimated average speed by time period and link that may be summarized for use in EMFAC2002. For each major vehicle class and up to 24 hourly time periods, total VMT is divided into 13 different speed “bins” (5 mph through 65 mph) and used as input to EMFAC2002. ARB recommends continuation of this current practice to develop emissions budgets and assess conformity. Travel from intrazonal trips should be assigned to the appropriate speed bin based on the speed assigned to that travel in the travel demand model. VMT for each speed bin and time period can be used as input through the WIS function of EMFAC2002. It is also possible to input this data specific to vehicle class if adequate and defensible local data are available.

Vehicle population. Vehicle trips (starts) in EMFAC2002 are estimated as a function of the number of vehicles, or vehicle population, by county. The population of each class of motor vehicle is estimated and forecast from Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) registration data. EMFAC2002 assumes there is a relationship between vehicle population and VMT, carried through mileage accrual rates.² In the default case, the model assumes *vehicle population * mileage accrual = VMT*. ARB-preferred practice is to maintain this internal consistency, for reasons explained below.

Vehicle miles of travel. Daily VMT is both an emissions model input usually provided by MPOs/RTPAs and a model output used to estimate exhaust emissions. ARB staff reviews MPO/RTPA estimates of VMT and vehicle speeds, and supports these estimates for use in air quality plans whenever we agree they are reasonable and defensible. Use of the latest estimates of MPO/RTPA VMT and speeds in plan development facilitates the subsequent federal transportation conformity process. This is particularly important for any year for which the plan creates emissions budgets, as conformity rules allow no emissions budget exceedance, regardless of how small. As there may be some variance between default EMFAC2002 VMT and more recent MPO/RTPA estimates to be used for SIP development, we are recommending a procedure to more exactly incorporate into emissions budgets revised VMT estimates for emissions budget analysis years.

Although it is possible to directly input VMT into EMFAC2002 through the model’s WIS function, it is generally not recommended to do this independent of vehicle population because of the desire to properly estimate start and evaporative emissions tied to the size of the vehicle fleet. A change in total forecasted miles of travel implies a change either in the number of vehicles traveling those miles or in mileage accrual rates. For future years, we generally recommend making vehicle population the variable, rather than mileage accrual. Thus, VMT adjustment would usually occur through vehicle population adjustment in the model’s WIS function, according to this formula:

$$\text{WIS Input Population} = \text{EMFAC Default Population} * (\text{RTPA VMT} / \text{EMFAC Default VMT})$$

² Accrual rates are miles traveled per year as a function of vehicle age, derived from the Bureau of Automotive Repair Smog Check database as described in Section 7.1 of the EMFAC2000 Technical Support Document, found via http://www.arb.ca.gov/msei/on-road/latest_revisions.htm#pcaccrual.

The result of this modification is that emissions estimates more precisely incorporate the daily VMT provided by each MPO/RTPA to calculate exhaust emissions, and vehicle population is adjusted for consistency with this assumption of higher or lower VMT, providing similarly modified start and evaporative emissions.³ Though the emissions impact of using this approach will often be small, we believe the approach is appropriate given the desire to fully reflect the impacts of changes in travel activity on all emissions processes. Use of consistent methods in air quality plans and conformity assessments will both reduce potential conformity problems and preserve the integrity of the SIP and conformity processes.

Alternatively, local data may indicate that changes in VMT are tied more closely to changes in household or business rates of travel than to changes in vehicle ownership. Or, improved travel demand modeling may project auto ownership rates with a high degree of confidence. In such cases it may be appropriate to adjust total mileage accrual rather than vehicle population. It is also possible to derive a modified VMT forecast from adjustments to both variables in EMFAC2002. Planning agencies are encouraged to present alternative approaches for consideration in the interagency consultation process.

Recommendations

1. ARB recommends that the EMFAC2002 default estimates of vehicle trips, based on starts per day, be used for SIP development and conformity purposes. Model defaults for trips may be factored to account for trip reduction scenarios, but should not be replaced with estimates that do not account for all vehicle starts. Alternative approaches, such as the factoring of travel demand model trip outputs for appropriate classes to account for additional starts, may be considered through interagency consultation.
2. We recommend continuation of current practices for input of latest speed distributions for SIPs and conformity assessments. Travel from intrazonal trips should be assigned to the appropriate speed bin based on the speed assigned to that travel in the travel demand model.
3. To fully reflect the impacts of modified VMT forecasts on all emissions processes, in the calculation of SIP emissions budgets, and in the assessment of conformity with those budgets, vehicle population should be adjusted in EMFAC2002 proportional to the estimated VMT change. Local circumstances may alternatively support adjustment of mileage accrual rates, subject to interagency consultation.

³ After adjusting VMT through use of the population variable in the WIS function of EMFAC, a user who desires to match VMT even more exactly (to the mile instead of the tens of miles) can then adjust VMT in the WIS without disturbing the population adjustment. This is unlikely to have a discernible impact on emissions, however.