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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

First Time in History Columbus Region Recorded Zero High Ozone Days in June

(Columbus-July 21, 2014) Central Ohio is experiencing cleaner air this year based on zero high ozone days recorded through June 30 by the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC). While the official ozone season is from April 1 to October 31, ground-level ozone levels often ramp up in June when temperatures begin to climb and sunlight is more prevalent. For the first time in the past decade, the region has not exceeded the air quality standards for ozone as measured on the Air Quality Index (AQI), which identifies health effects from higher levels of pollutants in the air.

“Over the past 10 years, we averaged about three high ozone days in the month of June,” said Evelyn Ebert, MORPC Air Quality Program Coordinator. “Since Central Ohio is under nonattainment for ozone based on EPA air quality standards, it is significant for the region to achieve no exceedances of ozone as we work towards attainment.”

MORPC has administered Central Ohio’s year-round daily Air Quality Forecasting Program for the past ten years, in partnership with Sonoma Technologies, Inc. (STI), and issues an Air Quality Alert when ground-level ozone or particle pollution concentrations are expected to exceed 100 AQI or Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups. Air quality monitoring and forecasting are provided for a six-county region that includes Delaware, Knox, Fairfield, Franklin, Licking and Madison counties.

In July 2012, the Central Ohio region was designated as a marginal nonattainment area by the U.S. EPA under the 2008 National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for ozone. This classification requires the region to work under a State Implementation Plan (SIP) in coordination with the Ohio EPA and can impact the region’s ability to attract business investments and achieve continued growth. The region has three years to reach attainment under NAAQS.

Emissions reductions from the mobile and power sectors have contributed to a decrease in ozone pollution levels over the past 10 years. Emissions reduction programs also play a role in the overall decrease of unhealthy ozone levels. MORPC addresses mobile pollution sources by promoting active and alternative transportation options, in addition to its RideSolutions program which offers carpooling and vanpooling services in Central Ohio.

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Working to Build a Better Region

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Ground-level ozone pollution or smog is a colorless, odorless gas that is formed when pollutants from cars, trucks, power plants, and industry react with heat and sunlight. “Over the past 10 years we’ve seen a decrease in the number of high ozone days, despite a gradual increase in temperatures. In fact, temperatures from April-June this year were above normal in Columbus, but there were no high ozone days”, said Dan Alrick, Air Quality Forecaster with STI.

Information about ozone pollution trends for the past ten years can be found at airquality.morpc.org.

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The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) is a voluntary association of local governments and regional organizations which envisions and embraces innovative directions in economic prosperity, energy, the environment, housing, land use, and transportation. Our transformative programming, services and innovative public policy are designed to promote and support the vitality and growth in the region.