



ENCOURAGING
Environmental
EXCELLENCE

Encouraging Environmental Excellence Achievement Level Recognition

February 7, 2017

The Ohio EPA Encouraging Environmental Excellence Program targets those who reduce waste, improve efficiency and work to continuously improve as an environmental steward. The program has a four-level approach to provide recognition to Ohio businesses and other organizations completing environmentally beneficial activities. Higher levels of recognition are for those who exceed regulatory requirements or commit to future environmental stewardship efforts. The Achievement Level recognizes any applicants completing environmentally beneficial activities. Any business, trade association, professional organization or local government in Ohio may apply. Achievement Level participants must demonstrate significant progress in one of eight environmental stewardship criteria: Impact to the environment; pollution prevention; energy efficiency; renewable energy; renewable, recovered or recycled materials; green building; recycling programs or organics diversion. Achievement Level participants must also demonstrate some level of progress in at least six additional environmental stewardship criteria and indicate they are in compliance with environmental laws and regulations.

Ohio EPA is recognizing the following organization that successfully met the criteria for the Achievement Level of the Encouraging Environmental Excellence Program. Below is a summary of their efforts.

Cincinnati Metro: The Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority (publicly known as Metro) is Cincinnati's fixed-route bus service, serving Hamilton County residents, as well as providing commuter routes from Clermont, Warren and Butler counties into Cincinnati. The agency operates from approximately 4 a.m. to 1:30 a.m. 365 days a year out of two garages, Bond Hill and Queensgate. With a workforce of approximately 840 employees, (primarily operators and mechanics), Metro offers 26 local-service routes, 19 express routes and 5 Job Connection reverse-commute routes. Metro operates 348 buses that drive about 11 million miles per year. Metro also owns 44 Access paratransit vehicles. It also provides about 9000 rides per day to Cincinnati Public School and parochial school junior and senior high school students on school days.

In May 2015, Hamilton County Recycling and Solid Waste District and Rumpke conducted a solid waste audit of Metro's garages. The findings resulted in Metro launching an agency-wide recycling program September 2015, collecting used cardboard, aluminum and tin cans, plastic bottles, glass and office paper. To promote the program, a green team was formed to host quarterly employee educational events. In the first year, the green team hosted three events and combined recycling messages at two other agency events. Recycling reminders continue to be included in the "Drive" and "Metro Express" weekly employee publications and in the "Recycler", a monthly employee e-newsletter. Metro's New Hire orientation includes a 20-minute sustainability PowerPoint presentation showcasing the recycling program.

In its first year, the cost of trash pick-up was reduced by 51 percent. Prior to the implementation of the recycling program, Metro paid \$1,585 each month compared to \$744 each month a year later. 79,450 pounds of solid waste was diverted from the landfills in that year. An average of 24,000 pounds of scrap metal is collected and sold each quarter. Metro is making preparations to execute a file collaboration system in January 2017. The objective is to eliminate paper usage beginning with binders used by the Board of Trustees. It is projected that this system will prevent approximately 5,000 pages from being printed each month for the board meetings. Roll out to the entire organization is expected in first quarter of 2017.

Metro is in the process of purchasing a cardboard baler to increase efficiency of disposal of used cardboard. The goal of baling the cardboard is to reduce the number of recyclable pick-ups by 50 percent within a year of its operation and to generate revenue to subsidize employee education and outreach efforts.

In April 2015, Metro's CEO and General Manager signed the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Sustainability Commitment in which Metro pledged to include sustainability in the organization's strategic plan, delegate an environmental champion, establish an employee education and outreach program and to conduct a baseline inventory of environmental indicators. The Board of Trustees voted to adopt an environmental policy in September. Supported by executives, Metro formed a Sustainability Steering Committee, representative of the diverse workforce, to lead the organization in its green efforts. The Committee developed a Three-Year Sustainability Framework Plan in Spring 2015. In July 2016, APTA awarded Metro with the Bronze level award for its sustainability achievements.

Currently, a core team is participating in the Federal Transportation Association's Environmental and Sustainability Management System training. The team is using this training to have Metro become ISO 14001 certified in 2017.

The recognition of Metro at the E3 Achievement Level results from our ongoing efforts within the Division of Environmental and Financial Assistance to expand E3 recognition beyond manufacturing facilities traditionally recognized by the program. This regional transit authority joins the widening array of organizations recognized by the E3 program that also include communities, universities, and wastewater treatment plants.

For more information about the Encouraging Environmental Excellence Program and the four levels of recognition, visit www.epa.ohio.gov/ohioE3.aspx or call (800) 329-7518.