Particle Density and Shape Factors Estimated from Merging Aerodynamic and Mobility Distributions

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Introduction

• Different instruments provide different measures of aerosol size:
  – aerodynamic (cascade impactors, APS)
  – mobility-equivalent (SMPS)
  – vacuum-aerodynamic (Aerodyne AMS)

• Combining measurements from these instruments into a single spectrum provides an insight into other aerosol characteristics, such as particle shape and density.

Approach

• Measurements were carried out at the central site of the Pittsburgh Air Quality Study.

• A simple algorithm was developed to combine electrical mobility and aerodynamic size distribution data into a single size distribution by finding best-fit shift of the APS distribution to match SMPS in the overlap range.

• The integrated aerosol volume from merged size distribution was compared to the PM$_{2.5}$ mass concentration measurements using TEOM, providing a measure of the average bulk aerosol density.

• SMPS size distributions were compared to the distributions measured with Aerodyne Aerosol Mass Spectrometer (AMS) using density estimated from concentrations of aerosol components measured with the AMS.

• The aerosol density was estimated from a comparison of SMPS-APS volume with PM$_{2.5}$ mass measured with TEOM. Data on chemical composition measured with AMS was also used to estimate aerosol density.

Results

• Merging algorithm for combining SMPS and AMS distributions provides a better comparison with integrated instruments such as TEOM (Fig. 1, 2).

• Merged distributions show a good agreement with MOUDI cascade impactor measurements (Fig. 3).

• The slope of TEOM mass vs. SMPS-APS volume provides a measure of particle density (during the study ambient particles were wet, having shape factor of 1).

• Estimated “apparent” aerosol density from TEOM/SMPS-APS comparison is on average 1.5 g/cm$^3$ ±20%. The estimated density is in good agreement with the density estimated from chemical composition data (1.56 g/cm$^3$).

• Comparison of AMS mass concentrations and SMPS volume concentration provides an estimation for the density of particles of 1.5 g/cm$^3$, which is close to the estimation using chemical composition measured with AMS. However, there are occasional apparent discrepancies between the instruments likely due to the presence of highly non-spherical soot particles during rush hour periods, as has been observed at other urban sites (Fig. 4).

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