

**Trends in OMI NO₂
observations over the
US**

A. R. Russell et al.

Trends in OMI NO₂ observations over the US: effects of emission control technology and the economic recession

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Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

◀

▶

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



Abstract

Observations of tropospheric NO₂ vertical column densities over the United States (US) for 2005–2011 are evaluated using the OMI Berkeley High Resolution (BEHR) retrieval algorithm. We assess changes in NO₂ on day-of-week and interannual timescales to assess the impact of changes in emissions from mobile and non-mobile sources on the observed trends. We observe consistent decreases in cities across the US, with an average total reduction of $32 \pm 7\%$. Changes for large power plants have been more variable ($-26 \pm 12\%$) due to regionally-specific regulation policies. An increasing trend of 10–20% in background NO₂ columns in the Northwestern US is observed. We examine the impact of the economic recession on emissions and find that decreases in NO₂ column densities over cities were moderate prior to the recession ($-6 \pm 5\% \text{ yr}^{-1}$), larger during the recession ($-8 \pm 5\% \text{ yr}^{-1}$), and then smaller after the recession ($-3 \pm 4\% \text{ yr}^{-1}$). Differences in the trends observed on weekdays and weekends indicate that prior to the economic recession, NO₂ reductions were dominated by technological improvements to the light-duty vehicle fleet but that a decrease in diesel truck activity has dominated emission reductions since the recession. We use the satellite observations to estimate a 34% decrease in NO₂ from mobile sources in cities for 2005–2011 and use that value to infer changes in non-mobile sources. We find that reductions in NO₂ from non-mobile sources in cities have been more variable than NO₂ reductions from mobile sources ($-10 \pm 13\%$).

1 Introduction

Nitrogen oxides (NO + NO₂ ≡ NO_x) play an important role in tropospheric chemistry. On a regional scale, NO_x degrades local air quality due to its dual role in regulating the production of ozone and its contribution to particle formation. NO_x is emitted into the troposphere by both anthropogenic (transportation, power generation) and natural (lightning, soil, fires) sources with anthropogenic sources dominating in highly-populated regions.

Trends in OMI NO₂ observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

⏪

⏩

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



Efforts to reduce anthropogenic NO_x emissions in North America and Europe have led to dramatic reductions in urban NO_x concentrations (Richter et al., 2005; Kim et al., 2006, 2009; Stavrou et al., 2008; van der A et al., 2008; Konovalov et al., 2010; Russell et al., 2010; Castellanos and Boersma., 2012; Zhou et al., 2012). These reductions are largely attributed to emission control measures; however, despite the improvements, concentrations in the United States (US) continue to reach levels that promote high ozone and that are detrimental to human health (US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 2010). Regulatory efforts implemented over the past decade have aimed at reducing emissions further by establishing stricter emissions standards for both light- and heavy-duty vehicles and by imposing stricter controls on electric power generation, sources which taken together account for approximately 55 % of the anthropogenic NO_x budget in the US (National Emissions Inventory (NEI) 2008). Examples include the Clean Air Interstate Rule (CAIR), which requires reductions in the emissions of NO_x produced from power generation in the Eastern US, and the Tier II Tailpipe NO_x Emissions Standard, which called for a step-wise reduction (77–86 % total for cars) in emissions per year for all vehicles in the US produced between 2004 and 2009 (USEPA, 2004).

Satellite observations of NO₂ have been widely used to identify NO_x source regions and evaluate changes in emissions over time (Irie et al., 2005; Richter et al., 2005; Kim et al., 2006; van der A et al., 2006; He et al., 2007; Stavrou et al., 2008; van der A. et al., 2008; Kaynak et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2009; Mijling et al., 2009; Konovalov et al., 2010; Russell et al., 2010; Castellanos and Boersma, 2012; Zhou et al., 2012). This is possible due to the short chemical lifetime of NO_x which results in relatively small background NO₂ column densities against which source regions have high contrast. More recent work has focused on using satellite observations to identify the causes of the observed reductions; for example, Kim et al. (2006) showed that in the Eastern US, where a large proportion of NO_x emissions can be attributed to power generation, controls on power plant NO_x emissions have greatly reduced NO_x concentrations. Kaynak et al. (2009) showed that the weekly cycle in NO₂ column densities can be used

Trends in OMI NO₂ observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



Trends in OMI NO₂ observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

◀

▶

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



to distinguish between urban, rural, and isolated point sources so that the contribution of mobile sources can be quantified. Russell et al. (2010) showed that trends in satellite-based NO₂ column densities agree well with trends in ground-based observations and a regional emissions inventory in four urban regions in California, confirming the ability of the satellite to capture changes in emissions over time. Together, these studies demonstrate the potential for using trends in satellite observations to discriminate between source contributions and thereby to provide timely updates to emission inventories.

In this work, satellite observations from the Ozone Monitoring Instrument (OMI) are used to evaluate trends in NO₂ across the US from 2005 to 2011. We employ the Berkeley High-Resolution retrieval (BEHR) in our analysis, which has been shown to minimize biases in the retrieved NO₂ column densities by using higher resolution terrain pressure, albedo, and NO₂ vertical profiles than those used in the operational products (Russell et al., 2011). We describe changes in tropospheric NO₂ column densities for major cities, power plants, and remote regions of the US on day-of-week and inter-annual timescales. These temporal patterns are used to infer how changes in source categories have influenced trends in NO₂ concentrations.

2 Data description

2.1 OMI tropospheric NO₂ column

The Ozone Monitoring Instrument (OMI) resides on the Aura satellite, launched in July 2004. The UV/Visible spectrometer observes solar irradiance and sunlight reflected from the surface of the Earth in the 270–500 nm wavelength range at approximately 0.5 nm resolution (Levelt et al., 2006). The 114° field of view yields a 2600 km swath of data collected continuously in the direction perpendicular to the flight path. These data are binned in order to yield observations ranging from 13 × 24 km² at nadir to 24 × 128 km² at the edge of the swath. The instrument achieves near global coverage

daily, with overpasses occurring at approximately 01:45 p.m. LT at the equator. A Differential Optical Absorption Spectroscopy (DOAS) algorithm is applied to derive NO₂ slant column densities from the radiance measurements.

Over the years, several row anomalies have developed on the OMI detectors resulting in unreliable detection in a number of cross-track scenes (<http://disc.sci.gsfc.nasa.gov/Aura/data-holdings/OMI/index.shtml#info>). In order to prevent biases arising from the variable availability of reliable pixels over the 2005–2011 time period, we uniformly exclude all affected cross-track scenes for all years of evaluation. Additionally, we exclude pixels otherwise flagged as unreliable and those with an effective cloud fraction exceeding 20 % according to the cloud retrieval described in Accareta et al. (2004).

Operational retrieval of NO₂ vertical column density from the global dataset is performed by both the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Goddard Space and Flight Center (NASA–GSFC) and the Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute (KNMI). The resulting publicly available datasets are known as NASA’s standard product (Bucsela et al., 2006; Celarier et al., 2008) and KNMI’s DOMINO product (Dutch OMI NO₂; Boersma et al., 2007, 2011). Both products use the same general approach; the DOAS spectral analysis technique is used to determine NO₂ slant column densities and then the stratospheric portion of the column is subtracted to yield a tropospheric slant column. The air mass factor (AMF), a multiplicative factor that is used to convert the slant column into a vertical column, is determined by interpolating the output from a radiative transfer model according to terrain, profile, cloud, and viewing parameters, and is then applied to determine the tropospheric NO₂ vertical column density. Significant differences between the two products include different methods for inferring the stratospheric contribution to the total column and the use of different terrain and profile datasets for conversion of the tropospheric slant column into a vertical column.

2.2 BEHR retrieval of tropospheric NO₂ column

The BEHR retrieval of tropospheric NO₂ vertical column densities, developed at the University of California Berkeley and available upon request, is an adaptation of the

Trends in OMI NO₂ observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



Trends in OMI NO₂ observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

◀

▶

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



NASA standard product (Russell et al., 2011). In the high-resolution BEHR product, AMFs are determined using terrain pressure information from the GLOBE (Global Land One-kilometer Base Elevation) $1 \times 1 \text{ km}^2$ topographical database and albedo is from the MODIS (Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer) $0.05^\circ \times 0.05^\circ$ 16-day average albedo (MCD43C3, produced every 8 days). To extend BEHR from the California domain described in Russell et al. (2011) to the rest of the contiguous US, we have made a minor change to the procedure, using profiles from WRF-Chem (Weather Research Forecasting Chemistry) monthly-averaged simulations at $12 \times 12 \text{ km}^2$. Details of the WRF-Chem simulations are included in the Appendix.

Russell et al. (2011) found that the BEHR tropospheric NO₂ columns are approximately 30% lower in unpolluted regions and 8% higher in polluted regions than in the NASA standard product (v.1). They observed improved agreement with aircraft observations collected during the ARCTAS-CA flight campaign compared with both the NASA standard product (v.1) and KNMI DOMINO product (v.1.0.3), and determined that significant variance between the operational retrievals and in situ observations was due to the low spatial and temporal resolution of the terrain and profile inputs, particularly the albedo and the NO₂ profile. Additional studies have also shown that low spatial resolution input parameters compromise the accuracy of OMI retrievals (Schaub 2007; Zhou et al., 2009, 2010; Hains et al., 2010; Boersma et al., 2011; Heckel et al., 2011). More recently, updates to the standard (version 3.2; Bucselo et al., 2012, in preparation) and DOMINO (version 2; Boersma et al., 2011) products have included higher resolution profile and terrain parameters; however, with the exception of the temporal resolution of the a priori profiles that are resolved on a monthly basis in BEHR compared to a daily basis in DOMINO, the BEHR product continues to provide NO₂ column densities over the United States using the highest spatial and temporal resolution inputs of all OMI NO₂ retrievals that we are aware of.

2.3 Continuous emission monitoring system

The Continuous Emissions Monitoring System (CEMS) is a system of instruments for the measurement of trace gases and particulates from industrial combustion sources including power plants. Data is recorded hourly and made publicly available for download at <ftp://ftp.epa.gov/dmdnload/>. Here, we use CEMS data to evaluate the consistency of trends in emissions with trends inferred from OMI observations for isolated power plants as well as for cities in close proximity to major power generation sources.

3 Methods

We evaluated trends in OMI BEHR tropospheric NO₂ column densities for 2005–2011. Seasonal averages were determined by performing an area-weighted averaging, binning to 0.05° × 0.05°, as in Russell et al. (2010). Figure 1a shows the average OMI NO₂ column retrieved using the BEHR algorithm during summer (April–September) 2005. Elevated NO₂ column densities allow dozens of urban and industrial emission sources to be identified. A total of 47 cities and 23 power plants across the US and Canada were selected for the analyses that follow. Circular regions surrounding each location were chosen with radii large enough to capture NO₂ plumes from each source during summer 2005, while minimizing a dampening of the signal from averaging in the background (black circles in Fig. 1a). Additionally, 12 rectangular “background” regions, defined as regions isolated from major cities and power plants, were analyzed (black rectangles in Fig. 1a). More information about the regions chosen is given in the Appendix (Table A1). Averages were computed for both winters (October–March) and summers (April–September). Weekday (Tuesday–Friday) and weekend (Saturday–Sunday) seasonal averages were also computed. Percent changes for each time period, $Y_1 - Y_2$, were determined by $(Y_2 - Y_1) / Y_1 \times 100$. Trends for cities and power plants are reported as $A \pm B\%$, where A is the average change among all locations and B is the standard deviation describing the variability. We focus most of our analysis on

Trends in OMI NO₂ observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



summertime observations when the NO_x lifetime is short and both transport and carryover from the previous day are minimized such that variation in concentrations and columns is more closely related to variation in emissions.

4 Results and discussion

4.1 Observed trends in OMI BEHR NO_2 columns

Figure 1 shows summertime OMI BEHR NO_2 column densities from 2005 (Fig. 1a), 2011 (Fig. 1b), and their difference, 2011–2005 (Fig. 1c). Average wintertime column densities for all the sites we have analyzed are included in Appendix A (Fig. A1). From 2005 to 2011, NO_2 reductions of as much as 5×10^{15} molecules cm^{-2} (up to 47%) are observed. Absolute reductions are largest in the most populous regions of the country, including the eastern seaboard (from Boston to Washington DC), Chicago, and Los Angeles. In contrast, small increases in column NO_2 are observed over rural regions of the Central US. Comparison with the average 2005–2011 columns (not shown) indicates that NO_2 in the Central US was anomalously high in 2011 and that there has been no significant trend in concentrations. Interannual variations in soil NO_x emissions as described in Hudman et al. (2010, 2012) are likely a major factor contributing to the variability of the NO_2 columns observed in the Central US.

Figure 2a–c shows the time series of seasonally averaged OMI NO_2 column densities on weekdays and weekends for select US cities. Sample cities shown here were chosen from different regions of the US to highlight common features. A seasonal cycle in NO_2 column densities, with larger columns in winter than in summer, is observed in each of the cities due to the longer lifetime of NO_x in winter. Additionally, we observe the well-documented weekend effect, characterized by larger NO_x concentrations on weekdays than weekends, due to the large proportion of emissions from mobile sources which vary according to the weekly cycle in human activity in the US. Figure 2d shows the time series of summertime averages for all 47 cities studied here,

Trends in OMI NO_2 observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

⏪

⏩

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



with concentrations for each city normalized to their 2005 values. Figure 2a–d shows that, in general, reductions in urban regions across the US were relatively large and linear from 2005 to 2009 but that decreases in columns slowed from 2009 to 2011. Percentage reductions from 2005 to 2011 are similar for US cities with an average change of -32% . The variance among cities is approximately Gaussian with a standard deviation of $\pm 7\%$. A map showing the reductions in all cities studied here for 2005–2011 is shown in Fig. 3 (tabulated reductions are available in Appendix Table A1). In general, smaller decreases are observed in urban areas of the Central US compared with urban regions located closer to the coasts. This may, in part, be due to a masking of anthropogenic reductions by NO_2 from agricultural emissions in the Central US. The smallest decrease we observe is 15% in Omaha and the largest decrease is 47% in New York City.

Trends in NO_2 column density observed over power plants are more variable than those observed over cities. Figure 2e–g shows the time series of seasonally averaged OMI NO_2 column densities for three power plants located in different regions of the US. Combined weekday and weekend averages are shown since a weekly cycle is not observed (not shown) over power plants. Figure 2h shows the time series for all power plants studied here, each normalized to their 2005 values. Trends at power plants are generally negative (Fig. 2e–h); however while large decreases are observed at some locations (e.g., Seminole, FL, Fig. 2g), little change is observed at others (e.g., Intermountain, UT, Fig. 2e). An average change of $-26 \pm 12\%$ is observed. OMI observations suggest that power plant emission reductions have been highly variable in the Western US where there has been little effort to regulate emissions. In the Eastern US, we observe more consistent decreases in NO_2 near power plants; however, it is much more difficult to isolate eastern power plant plumes from the nearby urban areas and therefore observed changes are likely influenced by both regulatory efforts to reduce power plant emissions (CAIR) and reductions from other sources in nearby urban centers. At these power plants, we tend to observe decreases that are linear (not shown), likely demonstrating the influence of urban reductions that are occurring

Trends in OMI NO_2 observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

[Title Page](#)[Abstract](#)[Introduction](#)[Conclusions](#)[References](#)[Tables](#)[Figures](#)[Back](#)[Close](#)[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)

roughly linearly over time. In contrast, at the more isolated power plants, the change is more variable. In some cases, we observe reductions that are step-wise (e.g., Fig. 2g), as expected if plants have installed new technology at discrete intervals over time. Trends in CEMS emissions measurements show similar features and generally good agreement with OMI observations. As an example, comparison with CEMS measurements recorded at the Seminole power plant in Florida (not shown) verifies that a step-wise reduction in emissions has occurred at the power plant (large reductions in 2007 and 2009), although the magnitude of the reduction is larger in the CEMS observations than in the satellite observations.

4.2 Economic impact on trends

Late 2008 marked the beginning of a significant global recession. Castellanos and Boersma (2012) showed that changes in the economy of Europe due to the recession significantly impacted regional NO_x concentrations. They observed decreases in NO_2 column densities of $10\text{--}25\% \text{yr}^{-1}$ for the recession years 2008–2009 compared to the long-term trend of $2\text{--}5\% \text{yr}^{-1}$ prior to 2008.

Here we examine the effects of the global recession on NO_2 concentrations in the US by evaluating trends in summertime OMI BEHR NO_2 during three time periods: before the recession (2005–2007), during the recession (2007–2009), and after the recession (2009–2011). Tabulated summertime reductions for each city and power plant are included in the Appendix (Table A1). Maps comparing the observed trends for each of the three time periods are shown in Fig. 4. In the majority of US cities, we observe moderate decreases (similar to those observed by Russell et al. (2010)) for 2005–2007 ($-6 \pm 5\% \text{yr}^{-1}$), larger decreases for 2007–2009 ($-8 \pm 5\% \text{yr}^{-1}$), and smaller decreases for 2009–2011 ($-3 \pm 4\% \text{yr}^{-1}$). Reductions for cities in the Western US tend to be larger than those observed previously by Kim et al. (2009) using OMI observations, likely due to both the use of high-resolution BEHR product and the manner in which regions were chosen to minimize the contribution from the low background NO_2 in this work. In general, urban areas in the Southwestern and Southeastern US

Trends in OMI NO_2 observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



saw the largest reductions in NO₂ during the peak of the recession. In the southeast, these same cities have seen the largest increase in NO₂ concentrations during 2009–2011. Large reductions observed for 2007–2009 are consistent with heavy duty diesel activity reports showing a reduction of 10–14 % in freight transport (California Air Resources Board, 2009), as well as an increasing trend in total vehicle miles traveled until late 2007 followed by a steady decrease through 2009 as reported by the Department of Transportation (<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/travel/tvt/history/>). Similar trends in the NO₂ column densities during the recession are observed for power plants, and this is particularly striking for plants in the Western US (Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico) where satellite observations and CEMS data show that NO_x emissions were increasing prior to 2007 but then dropped dramatically during 2007–2009. These observations are consistent with the 13 % reduction in coal-powered energy generation in the US between 2007 and 2009 reported by the US Energy Information Administration (<http://www.eia.gov/electricity/annual/pdf/tablees1.pdf>).

4.3 Trends on weekdays and weekends

A pronounced weekly pattern in NO_x emissions – and consequently NO₂ concentrations – has previously been observed in urban regions across the globe (Cleveland et al., 1974; Marr et al., 2002a, b; Beirle et al., 2003; Harley et al., 2005; Murphy et al., 2006, 2007; Kaynak et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2009; Russell et al., 2010). Harley et al. (2005) showed that in the US, total daily emissions from light-duty vehicles are similar throughout the week whereas on-road heavy-duty diesel emissions are reduced by roughly 60–80 % on weekends relative to weekdays. Mobile sources account for 77 % of anthropogenic emissions in the US cities analyzed here (NEI 2008) and heavy-duty diesel emissions are predicted to be the dominant mobile source of NO_x in the US in recent years (Dallmann and Harley, 2010).

Figure 5a–b shows the percent change in the OMI BEHR NO₂ column for weekdays and weekends in cities across the US for 2005–2011. Significant decreases are observed on weekdays and weekends alike; however, the magnitudes of the reductions

Trends in OMI NO₂ observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

⏪

⏩

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



vary, with larger reductions observed in a majority of cities on weekdays ($-34 \pm 8\%$) than weekends ($-27 \pm 10\%$). This result is different than observations reported by Russell et al. (2010), which showed larger reductions on weekends than on weekdays in four urban regions of California over 2005 to 2008. The largest percentage changes in NO_2 column densities – generally ranging from 40–50% – are observed on weekdays in California and in the Eastern US (Fig. 5a), coinciding with cities where differences in weekday and weekend NO_2 columns are largest. Trends on weekends in these regions are significantly lower ($\sim 20\text{--}30\%$). In contrast, similar trends on weekdays and weekends are observed in the Central US. Evaluating the changes in these trends over pre-, during, and post-recession periods, we find that for 2005–2007, we observe similar decreases on weekdays ($-6 \pm 4\% \text{yr}^{-1}$) and weekends ($-7 \pm 5\% \text{yr}^{-1}$) (consistent with Russell et al., 2010), while during and after the recession we generally observe larger decreases in NO_x emissions on weekdays (2007–2009: $-9 \pm 4\% \text{yr}^{-1}$, 2009–2011: $-4 \pm 4\% \text{yr}^{-1}$) than weekends (2007–2009: $-6 \pm 7\% \text{yr}^{-1}$, 2009–2011: $-1 \pm 7\% \text{yr}^{-1}$).

We suggest that the difference in the observed trends on weekdays and weekends between the pre-recessionary period and the recession and post recession periods has contributions from two factors: improved vehicle emission control technology and the reduced activity related to the economic downturn. In the cities analyzed here, mobile sources account for 77% of total anthropogenic NO_x emissions, on average, with 20% of NO_x emissions from fuel combustion (primarily from electric power generation) and the remaining 3% from industrial and other miscellaneous sources (NEI, 2008). Dallmann and Harley (2010) showed that a reduction in emission factors of about a factor of two occurred for on-road gasoline engines between 1996 and 2006, while the reduction for on-road diesel engines was small. Russell et al. (2010) showed that, as a result of the improvements to light-duty gasoline engines, there were large decreases in NO_2 column densities in four urban regions in California from 2005 to 2008 and that the reductions were linear. This linear trend in NO_x reductions is expected to extend to cities across the US because, as Bishop and Stedman (2008) showed, reductions in fuel-specific emissions for 1999–2006 have been consistently linear in cities across

Trends in OMI NO_2 observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

[Title Page](#)[Abstract](#)[Introduction](#)[Conclusions](#)[References](#)[Tables](#)[Figures](#)[⏪](#)[⏩](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[Back](#)[Close](#)[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)

the US. Since diesel trucks contribute a larger fraction of emissions on weekdays than weekends, and their emissions have decreased relatively slowly over the past decade, we suggest that the reduction of NO₂ on weekdays prior to the recession was dampened by the unchanging diesel fleet emissions, yielding reductions that are similar to or smaller than those on weekends. Here, we find that across the US, reductions on weekdays are generally smaller than decreases on weekends, as previously observed by Russell et al. (2010) for cities in California. During the recession, mobile source emissions decreased due to improved emission control technology on light-duty gasoline vehicles and due to a 10–14 % reduction in heavy-duty diesel vehicle activity. This added reduction in diesel activity on weekdays explains the larger reductions we observe on weekdays compared to weekends during the 2007–2011 time period. Additionally, we note that on-road diesel emissions in cities make up a relatively small fraction of the total on-road diesel emissions since a significant fraction of activity occurs outside of city centers. Unfortunately, we are unable to detect changes in on-road diesel emissions in rural regions and therefore results reported here are specific to changes in urban areas.

4.4 Trends in non-mobile sources

We estimate the percent change in non-mobile sources in each city by assuming a consistent rate of decrease for mobile NO_x emissions among cities in the US, as observed in Dallmann and Harley (2010). First, we approximate the reduction in NO₂ due to mobile sources by considering the change in NO₂ column densities for cities that are both located far from large power plant NO_x emission sources and where mobile sources are expected to contribute a large fraction (>85 %) of total NO_x emissions according to the NEI 2008. In the 16 cities meeting these criteria, we observe a decrease of 34 ± 5 % in NO₂ for 2005 to 2011. We apply this value to all cities and calculate the trend in non-mobile sources using observed trends in OMI BEHR NO₂ and the fractions of mobile

Trends in OMI NO₂ observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



and non-mobile sources from NEI 2008:

$$C_{\text{BEHR}} = C_m \times F_m + C_n \times F_n \quad (1)$$

where C_m and C_n are the percent change in emissions from 2005–2011 for mobile and non-mobile sources, respectively, F_m and F_n are the fractions of the total NO_x emissions from mobile and non-mobile sources according to NEI 2008, and C_{BEHR} is the 2005–2011 percent change in column NO_2 . Figure 6 shows the inferred changes in non-mobile emissions for 2005–2011 for each city. Open circles show cities where the change is $< \pm 5\%$ while closed circles show where the change is $\geq \pm 5\%$. Changes in non-mobile sources are generally negative (-10%) with significant variability ($\pm 13\%$) between locations. The largest reductions in non-mobile emissions are inferred for cities in the Ohio River Valley (Indianapolis, IN, Columbus, OH, Pittsburg, PA), in Jacksonville, FL, and in Las Vegas, NV. Observations from CEMS (not shown) confirm that power plants in close proximity to these cities experienced large emission reductions during 2005–2011 that likely influenced the observed NO_2 in these cities.

4.5 Trends in background NO_2

Figure 7 shows the percent change in average NO_2 column over 12 remote regions that do not contain any major cities or power plants. Increases of 10–20% are observed over remote areas of the Northwestern US while decreases (10–20%) are observed over regions more heavily influenced by nearby, densely populated urban centers (Texas, Maine, and Indiana). Both increasing and decreasing trends are linear for 2005–2011 (not shown), with fits to summertime observations in regions where changes are greater than $\pm 5\% \text{yr}^{-1}$ yield R^2 values ranging from 0.33 to 0.86. The largest percentage enhancements are observed in the far northwestern corner of the US, with smaller percentage enhancements observed for regions further south and further east. Average weekday and weekend concentrations (not shown) are similar for remote regions in the northwest.

Trends in OMI NO_2 observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

⏪

⏩

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



The spatial pattern of the NO₂ trends observed over remote locations in this work is similar to modeled spatial patterns in O₃ and PAN enhancements predicted for trans-Pacific transport of rising Asian anthropogenic emissions (Jacob et al., 1999; Jaffe et al., 2003, 2007; Hudman et al., 2004; Zhang et al., 2008; Cooper et al., 2010).

GEOS-Chem simulations described in Zhang et al. (2008) for 2000 and 2006 showed that a doubling of anthropogenic NO_x emissions in Asia produced only a 3 pptv increase in NO_x concentrations, an increase that is too small to detect from space. Since trans-Pacific transport displays a spring maximum, we tested seasonal cycles of NO₂ column densities for the remote regions; however, no clear or consistent seasonal cycle was observed among the background regions to support the idea that trans-Pacific transport could be contributing to the increasing trend. We suspect that the low concentrations observed over these regions may be largely influenced by uncertainties related to the subtraction of the seasonally varying stratospheric component of the observed column. We propose that the constant weekly cycle suggests that local mobile source emissions are not responsible and that the linearity of the trends implies that biomass burning is not the cause. Changes in agricultural NO₂ emissions could be responsible and should be explored further.

4.6 Effects of OH feedback on NO_x lifetime on observed trends

A non-linear relationship between NO_x concentrations and the predominant NO_x sink, OH, is well known. A maximum in OH concentrations in the planetary boundary layer occurs at NO_x concentrations on the order of a few ppb (e.g., Murphy et al., 2006; Valin et al., 2011). Most, if not all US cities have NO_x concentrations that exceed the peak in the OH versus NO_x curve (e.g., Pusede et al., 2012). In this regime, decreases in NO_x result in nearly equal percentage increases in OH. The increased OH is a feedback that results in NO_x concentrations decreasing faster than reductions in emissions. As a result of this lifetime feedback, the observed reductions in NO₂ column reported in this manuscript are almost certainly larger than the emissions reductions that are primarily responsible for the trends. The feedback effect is likely no more than 50%

Trends in OMI NO₂ observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

◀

▶

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



of the observed trend. In contrast, the relative changes in emissions between different source categories are likely more accurate.

5 Conclusions

Using satellite observations of NO₂ vertical column density from the OMI instrument, we detect large decreases in NO₂ concentrations over urban regions across the US between the years 2005 and 2011. Percentage reductions in urban areas are similar across the entire US, with an average change of $-32 \pm 7\%$. These results indicate that improved emission control technology for on-road mobile sources has been successful in reducing NO₂ concentrations in cities across the US. Spatially, we see that reductions have been the largest in the eastern and western parts of the country and smaller in the Central US. Trends over power plants are more variable, with patterns that reflect regional regulations.

In order to explore the impact that the economic recession has had on NO₂ concentrations, we examined trends in OMI BEHR NO₂ prior to, during, and after the economic recession, or 2005–2007, 2007–2009, and 2009–2011, respectively. We find that NO₂ column densities in cities declined at a rate of $-6 \pm 5\% \text{ yr}^{-1}$ before the recession, $-8 \pm 5\% \text{ yr}^{-1}$ during the recession, and $-3 \pm 4\% \text{ yr}^{-1}$ after the recession. Similarly, we also find that NO₂ concentrations over power plants generally decreased during the recession. Together, these results indicate that the economic recession had a significant impact on NO_x emissions, resulting in substantially larger reductions in NO₂ concentrations in cities and power plants across the US for 2007–2009, and that as the economy has recovered, emissions have decreased more slowly or in some cases increased. By analyzing weekday and weekend trends before, during, and after the recession, we show that emission reductions from light-duty vehicles dominated overall decreases prior to the recession but that a reduction in diesel truck activity has had a larger impact on emission reductions since the start of the recession.

Trends in OMI NO₂ observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



Trends in OMI NO₂ observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

◀

▶

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



5 Additionally, we estimate changes in non-mobile sources for 2005–2011 in cities across the US using OMI observations and the fraction of emissions from on-road mobile sources (NEI2008). In regions dominated by mobile source emissions, we infer a reduction in NO₂ from mobile source emissions of approximately –34 %. This reduction was applied uniformly to mobile sources across the US and, using the observed trends from OMI, we estimated the change in NO₂ from non-mobile sources at each location. We find that NO₂ from non-mobile sources has decreased in a majority of cities across the US for 2005–2011, but to a much lesser extent than for mobile sources. Reductions are, on average, $-10 \pm 13\%$ for 2005–2011, with the largest reductions likely influenced by nearby power generation according to measurements from CEMS.

10 Finally, we find that satellite observations suggest that NO₂ has increased by 10–20 % over remote regions in the Northwestern US, despite substantially large decreases in anthropogenic emissions in urban regions across the country. This is the first time this feature has been observed. No satisfactory explanation for this observation was identified. Although it is possible an Asian influence or change in agricultural management practices is responsible, further research is needed to assess the viability of either hypothesis.

Appendix A

WRF-Chem simulation

20 Monthly NO₂ profiles used in the Berkeley High-Resolution retrieval (BEHR) were derived using the WRF-Chem model (Weather Research and Forecasting Chemistry), a state-of-the-art, multi-scale regional 3-D air quality chemical transport model (Grell et al., 2005). Our domain covers $3480 \times 8040 \text{ km}^2$ centered on the United States ($\sim 25\text{--}50^\circ \text{ N}$, $125^\circ \text{ W--}65^\circ \text{ W}$). A 10 day simulation was run for each month from the 11th through the 20th, with the first two days used to spin-up and the last eight days included in the average. Chemistry is computed using the Regional

Acid Deposition Model 2 (RADM2; Stockwell et al., 1990) and anthropogenic emissions from on-road and off-road mobile sources are from the National Emission Inventory (NEI) 2005 at native $12 \times 12 \text{ km}^2$ resolution. More information concerning NEI2005 emissions is publicly available online (ftp://aftp.fsl.noaa.gov/divisions/taq/emissions_data_2005/Weekday_emissions/readme.txt). Initial and boundary conditions were derived from the North American Regional Reanalysis for 2005 (NARR – http://nomads.ncdc.noaa.gov/dods/NCEP_NARR_DAILY).

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Trends in OMI NO_2 observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

◀

▶

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



Trends in OMI NO₂ observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

[Title Page](#)
[Abstract](#)
[Introduction](#)
[Conclusions](#)
[References](#)
[Tables](#)
[Figures](#)
[Back](#)
[Close](#)
[Full Screen / Esc](#)
[Printer-friendly Version](#)
[Interactive Discussion](#)


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**Trends in OMI NO₂
observations over the
US**

A. R. Russell et al.

[Title Page](#)[Abstract](#)[Introduction](#)[Conclusions](#)[References](#)[Tables](#)[Figures](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[Back](#)[Close](#)[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)

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**Trends in OMI NO₂
observations over the
US**

A. R. Russell et al.

[Title Page](#)[Abstract](#)[Introduction](#)[Conclusions](#)[References](#)[Tables](#)[Figures](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[Back](#)[Close](#)[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)

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**Trends in OMI NO₂
observations over the
US**

A. R. Russell et al.

[Title Page](#)[Abstract](#)[Introduction](#)[Conclusions](#)[References](#)[Tables](#)[Figures](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[Back](#)[Close](#)[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)

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**Trends in OMI NO₂
observations over the
US**

A. R. Russell et al.

[Title Page](#)[Abstract](#)[Introduction](#)[Conclusions](#)[References](#)[Tables](#)[Figures](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[Back](#)[Close](#)[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)

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Trends in OMI NO₂ observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



Table A1. Summary of regions evaluated in this study and the percent change in NO₂ observed by OMI.

Location	Latitude	Longitude	Radius	2005–2007 (%yr ⁻¹)	2007–2009 (%yr ⁻¹)	2009–2011 (%yr ⁻¹)	2005–2011 (%)
Albuquerque, NM	35.20	-106.55	30	-3.22	-6.97	-6.80	-30.43
Atlanta, GA	33.80	-84.35	35	-10.07	-13.53	4.05	-37.04
Bakersfield, CA	35.30	-119.00	25	-1.16	-12.53	-3.84	-32.43
Boston, MA	42.45	-71.00	30	-14.70	0.26	-5.46	-36.78
Charlotte, NC	35.25	-80.85	20	-7.18	-12.41	-0.81	-36.67
Chicago, IL	41.80	-87.70	60	-4.14	-5.91	-8.09	-32.21
Cincinnati, OH	39.10	-84.55	25	-9.20	-12.08	-0.85	-39.18
Cleveland, OH	41.45	-81.67	30	-11.85	-8.39	3.66	-31.85
Columbus, OH	40.00	-83.10	30	-11.63	-5.38	-5.26	-38.72
Dallas, TX	32.85	-96.95	40	-5.89	-6.94	-1.68	-26.57
Denver, CO	39.75	-105.00	30	-2.89	-5.44	-4.91	-24.28
Detroit, MI	42.35	-83.10	45	-11.17	-2.96	-9.29	-40.50
Fresno, CA	36.70	-119.75	25	-4.34	-6.60	-7.20	-32.15
Houston, TX	29.80	95.25	30	-7.65	-7.74	0.30	-27.99
Indianapolis, IN	39.80	-86.15	20	-5.71	-9.57	-4.58	-34.92
Jacksonville, FL	30.45	-81.60	25	-6.42	-14.62	0.99	-37.12
Kansas City, MO	39.15	-94.55	30	-6.75	-4.18	-1.13	-22.52
Knoxville, TN	35.95	-84.00	30	-6.58	-11.86	-0.50	-34.42
Las Vegas, NV	36.20	-115.20	25	-7.62	-13.78	-5.64	-45.53
Los Angeles, CA	34.00	-117.90	70	-5.47	-14.99	-2.15	-40.33
Memphis, TN	35.10	-90.10	20	-1.19	-12.46	3.88	-21.02
Miami, FL	26.05	-80.30	20	-3.67	-9.87	-5.21	-33.38
Minneapolis, MN	44.95	-93.25	30	-4.14	-2.37	-10.10	-30.29
Montreal, QC	45.60	-73.70	30	-9.40	-0.81	-5.18	-28.37
Nashville, TN	36.20	-86.60	30	0.44	-11.67	-2.77	-26.96
New Orleans, LA	30.05	-90.30	30	-1.83	-11.23	-1.18	-27.06
New York, NY	40.85	-73.70	70	-9.28	-10.45	-9.20	-47.43
Omaha, NE	41.30	-96.05	25	-9.81	4.71	-1.55	-14.79
Orlando, FL	28.50	-81.30	20	-6.05	-9.51	0.67	-27.86
Philadelphia, PA	40.00	-75.20	50	-5.56	-16.44	-1.24	-41.81
Phoenix, AZ	33.60	-112.00	40	-5.56	-16.44	-1.24	-41.81
Pittsburg, PA	40.40	-79.95	25	-10.58	-11.48	3.75	-34.72
Portland, OR	45.45	-122.55	30	-7.04	-8.32	0.54	-27.61
Reno, NV	39.55	-119.70	20	-6.16	-6.55	-3.19	-28.65
Richmond, VA	37.40	-77.30	20	-4.30	-2.97	-5.11	-22.82

Trends in OMI NO₂ observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

◀

▶

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



Table A1. Continued.

Location	Latitude	Longitude	Radius	2005–2007 (%yr ⁻¹)	2007–2009 (%yr ⁻¹)	2009–2011 (%yr ⁻¹)	2005–2011 (%)
Sacramento, CA	38.65	-121.40	25	-11.93	-4.18	-3.04	-34.46
Salt Lake City, UT	40.70	-111.95	20	0.05	-11.81	0.36	-22.99
San Antonio, TX	29.55	-98.45	30	-5.74	-5.54	-4.10	-27.75
San Diego, CA	32.80	-117.00	25	-6.22	-5.90	-7.23	-33.94
San Francisco, CA	37.60	-122.00	40	-7.79	-7.76	0.89	-27.42
Seattle, WA	47.35	-122.25	50	-11.51	-3.88	-2.05	-31.90
St Louis, MO	38.65	-90.35	30	-8.05	-7.05	-2.83	-32.01
Tampa, FL	27.90	-82.40	30	-9.62	-12.38	-4.82	-45.10
Toronto, ON	43.70	-79.50	40	-6.80	-4.46	-4.48	-28.37
Tucson, AZ	32.25	-110.85	20	-2.42	-14.52	0.03	-32.44
Vancouver, BC	49.25	-122.85	25	-3.98	-9.97	-0.99	-27.75
Washington DC	39.15	-76.80	50	-9.02	-9.86	-5.06	-40.85
Bruce Mansfield, PA	40.40	-79.05	20	-8.07	-5.75	0.31	-25.34
Cholla, AZ	34.95	-110.20	20	1.44	-13.55	-3.65	-30.47
Colstrip, MT	45.90	-106.45	20	-10.84	-8.20	0.75	-33.54
Conemaugh, PA	40.10	-76.55	20	-6.46	-5.57	-3.42	-27.91
Coronado Generating Station, AZ	34.55	-109.20	20	5.58	-8.85	-3.96	-15.76
Craig, CO	40.50	-107.35	20	-3.38	1.72	-7.92	-18.85
Crystal River, FL	28.95	-82.65	20	-5.74	-13.18	-0.01	-34.83
Four Corners/San Juan, NM	36.75	-108.30	35	6.42	-12.71	-3.23	-21.30
Gen J M Gavin, OH	40.55	-80.45	20	-12.00	-10.95	-2.63	-43.77
Gibson, IN	37.95	-87.00	20	-6.86	-6.77	0.17	-25.15
Hatsfields Ferry Power Station, PA	39.85	-79.90	20	-6.98	-8.30	8.84	-15.56
Huntington, UT	39.25	-111.10	20	5.76	-8.66	-8.41	-23.31
Intermountain, UT	39.55	-112.55	20	2.97	-1.82	0.41	2.92
Jim Bridger, WY	41.75	-108.65	20	-7.23	-4.58	-5.69	-31.14
JM Stuart, OH	39.85	-80.70	20	-15.02	-9.13	-3.21	-46.48
Johnsonville, TN	36.05	-87.90	20	-2.07	-13.14	4.95	-22.34
Joppa Steam, IL	37.20	-88.75	20	-5.68	-14.25	6.31	-28.62
Laramie River, WY	42.10	-104.85	20	-0.75	-4.04	-1.66	-12.47
Leland Olds, ND	47.40	-101.35	35	-3.06	3.95	-3.72	-6.23
Marshall, NC	35.60	-80.95	20	-6.06	-10.30	-3.58	-35.22
Navajo Generating Station, AZ	36.90	-111.35	20	2.65	-11.61	-15.52	-44.24
Seminole, FL	29.80	-81.55	20	-8.55	-16.70	4.47	-39.84
Valmy, NV	40.90	-117.00	20	-5.16	-3.66	-2.75	-21.46

Trends in OMI NO₂ observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

Title Page

Abstract Introduction

Conclusions References

Tables Figures

◀ ▶

◀ ▶

Back Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



Trends in OMI NO₂ observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

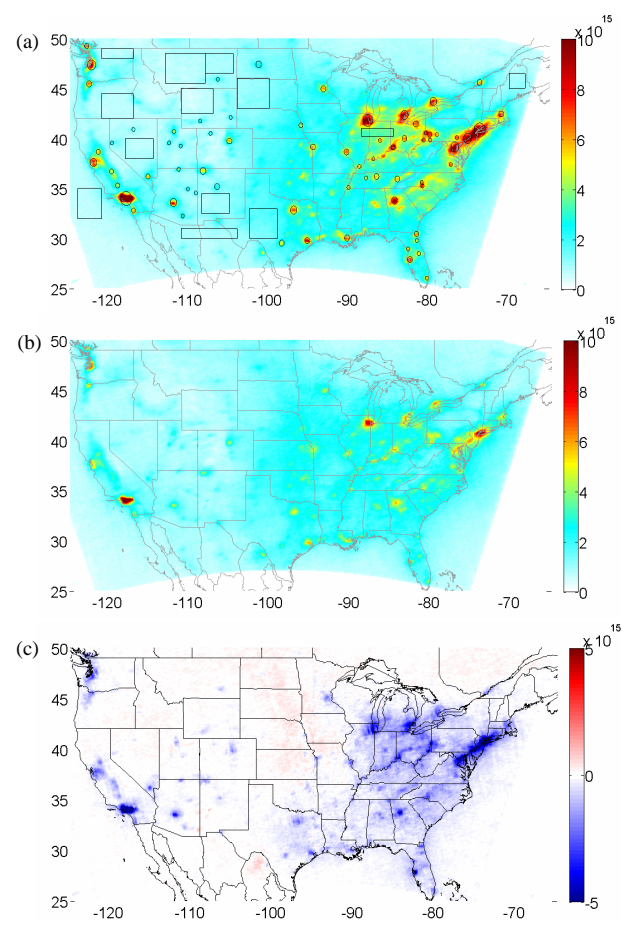


Fig. 1. Average summertime (April–September) OMI BEHR NO₂ column densities for **(a)** 2005, **(b)** 2011, and **(c)** the difference, 2011–2005.

Title Page

Abstract	Introduction
Conclusions	References
Tables	Figures

⏪ ⏩
◀ ▶
Back Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



Trends in OMI NO₂ observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

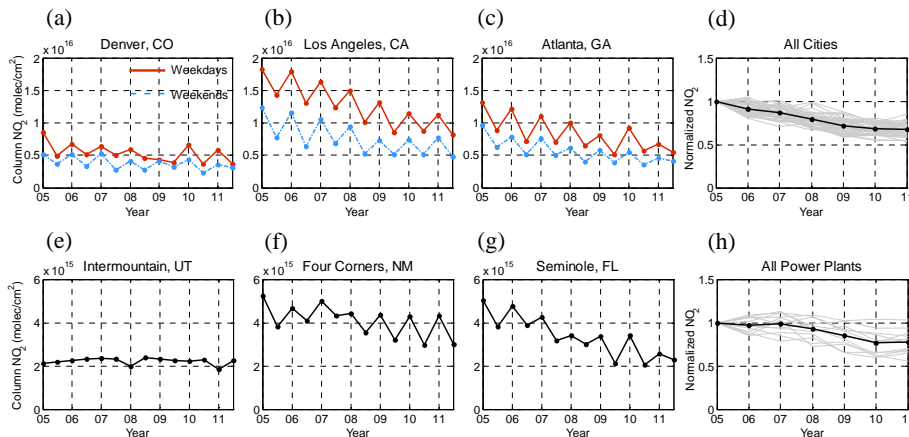


Fig. 2. Time series of average summertime (April–September) and wintertime (October–March) OMI NO₂ column densities for 2005–2011 for three US cities (**a–c**) and three power plants (**e–g**). Average NO₂ column densities in winter are higher than those in summer due to the longer NO_x lifetime in winter. For the cities, weekday (red) and weekend (blue) time series are shown, while for power plants the combined weekday and weekend average time series are shown. The time series of average summertime columns normalized to 2005 concentrations for each US city and power plant (gray) and the average for all cities and power plants (black) are shown in Fig. 2d and h, respectively.

[Title Page](#)
[Abstract](#)
[Introduction](#)
[Conclusions](#)
[References](#)
[Tables](#)
[Figures](#)
[Back](#)
[Close](#)
[Full Screen / Esc](#)
[Printer-friendly Version](#)
[Interactive Discussion](#)

Trends in OMI NO₂ observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

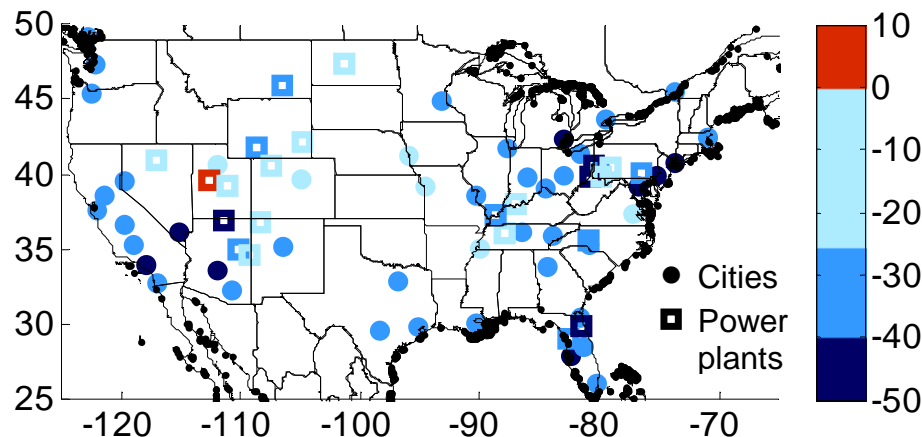
[Title Page](#)[Abstract](#)[Introduction](#)[Conclusions](#)[References](#)[Tables](#)[Figures](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[Back](#)[Close](#)[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)

Fig. 3. Percent change in average summertime (April–September) OMI BEHR NO₂ column densities for 2005–2011 for major cities (dots) and power plants (squares). The medium blue color shows locations where reductions are within a standard deviation of the mean reduction for all cities, while the darker blue shows where reductions were larger, the light blue shows where reductions were smaller, and red shows regions where we observe increases in NO₂ for 2005–2011.

Trends in OMI NO₂ observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

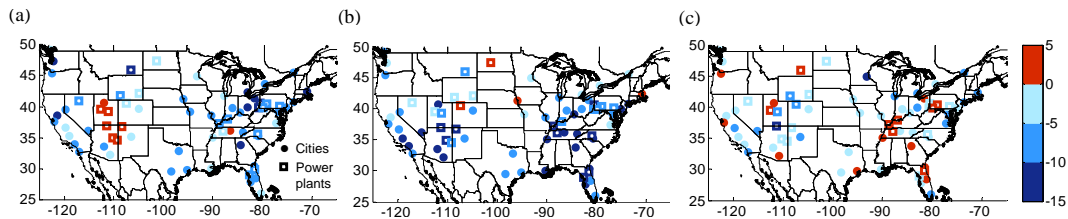


Fig. 4. Percent change per year in OMI BEHR NO₂ column for (a) 2005–2007, (b) 2007–2009, and (c) 2009–2011 for major cities (dots) and power plants (squares) in the US.

[Title Page](#)[Abstract](#)[Introduction](#)[Conclusions](#)[References](#)[Tables](#)[Figures](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[Back](#)[Close](#)[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)

Trends in OMI NO₂ observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

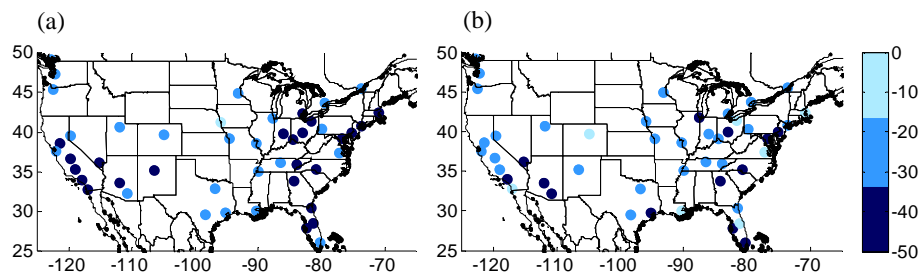


Fig. 5. Percent change in average summertime (April–September) OMI-observed NO₂ column for 2005–2011 for major cities in the US for **(a)** weekdays and **(b)** weekends.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

◀

▶

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



Trends in OMI NO₂ observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

◀

▶

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

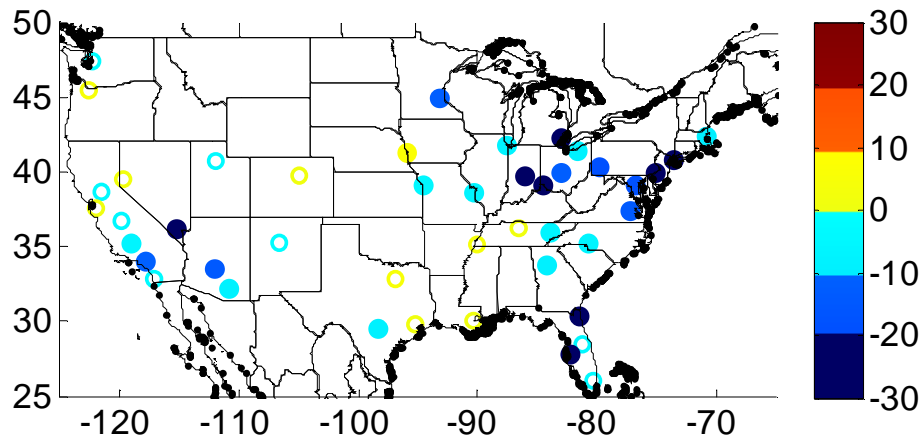


Fig. 6. Percent change in NO₂ from non-mobile sources for 2005–2011 (derived from OMI observations) in major cities of the US. Open circles show where the change is < ± 5 % while the solid dots show where the change is ≥ ± 5 %.

Trends in OMI NO₂ observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

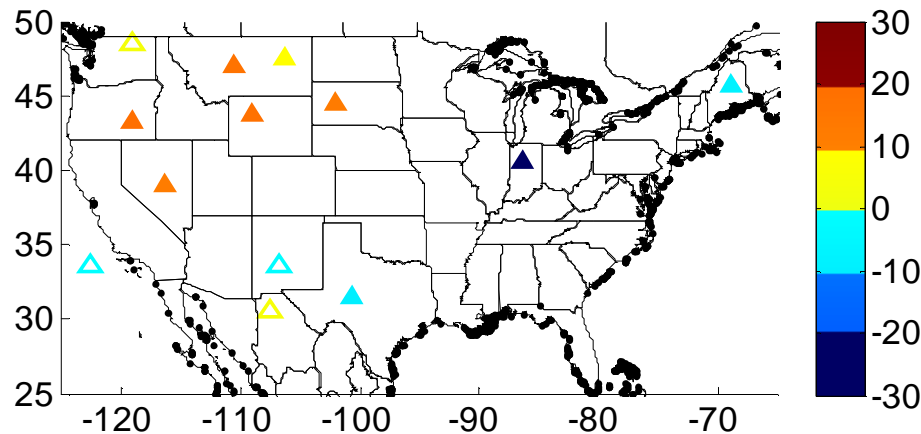
[Title Page](#)[Abstract](#)[Introduction](#)[Conclusions](#)[References](#)[Tables](#)[Figures](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[Back](#)[Close](#)[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)

Fig. 7. Percent change in OMI-observed background NO₂ columns. Open triangles show where the change is $< \pm 5\%$ while the solid triangles show where the change is $\geq \pm 5\%$.

Trends in OMI NO₂ observations over the US

A. R. Russell et al.

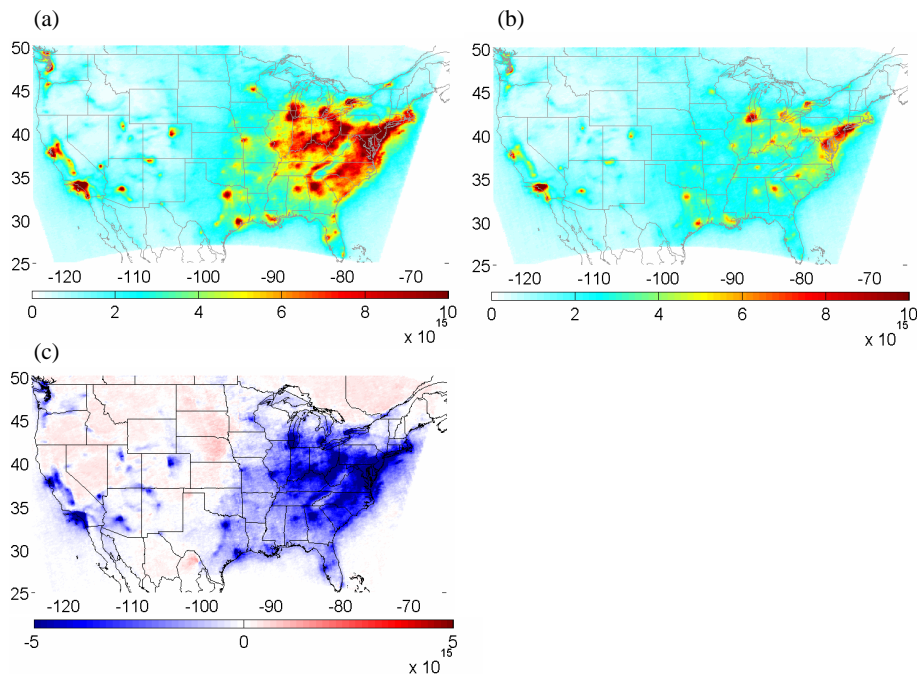
[Title Page](#)[Abstract](#)[Introduction](#)[Conclusions](#)[References](#)[Tables](#)[Figures](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[Back](#)[Close](#)[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)

Fig. A1. Average wintertime (Oct-Mar) OMI NO₂ column densities for **(a)** 2005, **(b)** 2011, and **(c)** the difference, 2011–2005.