

School News & Notes

Making School Buses Safer And Cleaner

(NAPS)—Thanks to new technology and a government program, there's good news for parents, students and school districts that rely on diesel technology to transport children to and from school in a safe and economical manner.

Diesel engines power most of the school bus fleets in the U.S. Millions of children ride the school bus every day, and school buses drive more than four billion miles each year.

However, critics claim diesel exhaust contains significant levels of particles, known as fine particulate matter. These particles, in addition to being carcinogenic, can cause lung damage and aggravate conditions such as asthma and bronchitis. According to the American Lung Association, 6.1 million children under 18 years of age currently have asthma.

Fortunately, experts say there are ways to limit these threats without eliminating the benefits school buses offer. According to an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) project called Clean School Bus USA, replacing or modifying conventional (uncontrolled) diesel school buses with diesel particulate matter filters—a process called retrofitting—can help to reduce the risks posed by emissions.

The EPA initially launched the program in April 2003, with the goal of upgrading the nation's entire school bus fleet to low-emission buses by 2010. There are a variety of ways to retrofit a school bus. EPA verifies retrofit technologies to ensure that they produce the emission reductions advertised by their manufacturer.

The Bush administration sup-



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ports the program and Congress has authorized \$7.5 million in funding in the 2005 budget. However funding of around \$60 million per year for the next 5 years is required to retrofit the nation's entire school bus fleet by 2010.

The Clean School Bus USA program provides grants to governmental entities to pay for retrofitting post-1990 school buses with state-of-the-art emission control technology. School transportation districts are advised to apply as soon as possible for this grant money.

The EPA encourages bus owners/proprietors to take steps to retrofit existing buses with pollution controls and parents to discuss options for pollution control with school transportation officials.

For more information on the program and what you can do, go to www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus. In addition, anyone can write, on either side of this or any issue, to the U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510 and the House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515.