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NEWS

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EPA Clean School Bus Grant to Fill Colorado School Buses with Biodiesel *New program continues trend of schools choosing biodiesel to reduce toxic emissions*

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – Twelve school districts in the Denver metropolitan area will begin using cleaner burning biodiesel as a result of an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) program to reduce pollution from school buses. The Denver urban and suburban districts will join a growing list of about 50 other districts nationwide that have chosen biodiesel as a means of reducing school kids' exposure to harmful emissions.

Congress included \$5 million in EPA's budget for Clean School Bus USA, a cost-shared grant program designed to assist school districts in cleaning up their bus fleets. EPA received more than 120 applications requesting nearly \$60 million in funds. One of the awards made will support the Denver Regional Air Quality Council's (DRAQC) "Clean Yellow Fleets for Blue Skies" project to retrofit school bus fleets with clean diesel technology, and to purchase low-pollution biodiesel, which works in any diesel engine. Part of the \$400 thousand award will cover the incremental cost differential between petroleum diesel and B20, a blend of 20 percent biodiesel and 80 percent diesel.

Two large Colorado school districts, Littleton Public Schools and Jefferson County Public Schools, already use biodiesel successfully. Littleton has used B20 for about a year and reports decreased maintenance costs since making the switch.

"Having two school districts in our area tell us what a great experience biodiesel has been really made a difference in deciding what fuel to offer to other districts," said Sara O'Keefe, DRAQC communications manager. "Biodiesel is one of the most easily available clean fuels in our area. Our hope is that if we cover the slight cost difference under this grant, then the schools will see the benefits and continue to use it."

Biodiesel can be made from any fat or vegetable oil, such as soybean oil, and works in any diesel engine with few or no modifications. It is nontoxic and biodegradable. Biodiesel can be blended with petroleum diesel at any level or used in its pure form. In 1997, the Medford, New Jersey School District was the only school in the nation to run its fleet with the cleaner burning fuel. Today, thousands of buses and other diesel-powered vehicles use biodiesel in schools.

"Biodiesel is a good fit for the Clean School Bus program because it offers an immediate way to begin cleaning up emissions, and it works with the buses they already have," said Jeffrey Kimes, EPA Environmental Engineer in the Colorado district. "It performs just like diesel, but tests show biodiesel is better for human health, and that is one of the major benefits of the fuel."

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Biodiesel is the only alternative fuel to have completed the rigorous Health Effects testing required by the Clean Air Act. Results, submitted to EPA, show biodiesel emissions reduce by 80 to 90 percent cancer causing compounds called Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAH) and nitrated PAH. EPA studies show the exhaust emissions of particulate matter from pure biodiesel are about 47 percent lower than overall particulate matter emissions from diesel. Breathing particulate has been shown to be a human health hazard. Biodiesel also reduces emissions of total unburned hydrocarbons, a contributing factor to smog and ozone, by about 68 percent. Carbon monoxide is reduced by about 48 percent. Lifecycle carbon dioxide is reduced by 78 percent.

About 350 major fleets use biodiesel nationwide. Biodiesel has similar horsepower, torque and BTU content compared to petroleum diesel. It offers excellent lubricity and higher cetane than diesel fuel. Biodiesel is registered with the EPA as a fuel and fuel additive.

Readers can learn more about biodiesel by visiting <http://www.biodiesel.org>. For more on the Clean School Bus USA program, visit http://www.epa.gov/otaq/schoolbus/grants_2003.htm.

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