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NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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October 26, 2009

Michigan school buses go the "extra miles" on biodiesel

Bus rolls over 300,000 miles, highlighting performance and health benefits

JEFFERSON CITY, MO. – School bus driver Linda Rogers remembers the winter days with thick, blue smoke fouling the air around the buses. Those were the days before her district switched to B20, a blend of 20 percent biodiesel.

"Since switching to biodiesel, it is much cleaner and smells much better," the 20-year veteran of the St. Johns, Mich. Public Schools said. "When fueling, you don't have the smell on your hands all day. Your clothes don't smell like diesel all day. It is a much better work environment and much healthier for the kids and the community."

The school district's switch to B20 in 2002 came from the persistence of Wayne Hettler, Garage Foreman & Head Mechanic for St. Johns. His foresight has led to a reported track record of bus longevity and reduced service needs, saving the school district money.

Last week, "bus #14" rolled over 300,000 miles – a milestone Hettler attributes to B20 and believes no other Michigan school bus used on a daily route has achieved.

In October, 2002, bus #14 had 119,621 miles on the odometer. That was the first day of the rest of its life on B20. Since then, the maintenance on this engine has been very low with the only unscheduled maintenance being a \$160 lift pump and a \$90 injector, according to Hettler.

In addition, because biodiesel adds lubricity to the engines, St. Johns has been able to extend their engine oil changes from roughly 6,000 miles between changes in 1997, to 12,000-18,000 mile intervals, depending on the engine type. That alone cut filter costs by more than half.

St. Johns fleet includes 28 buses and 12 support vehicles. Fourteen of the 28 buses have over 200,000 miles on them and total bus fleet mileage is well over 3 million miles on B20.

Hettler adds, "I think I'd have a revolt on my hands if we ever went away from the biodiesel. And, I know without a doubt that driver absenteeism has also gone down since we've fueled

with B20. Using B20 has extended the life of our buses and saved our tax payers money without jeopardizing safety."

However, much to Hettler's dismay, budget cuts and a recent increase in the cost of biodiesel forced their transportation department to purchase a lower blend of biodiesel. They went from B20 to B5 for a short timeframe, but hope with their next fill to return to the B20 level.

"With the cost-savings we've experienced, I hope the community and administrators will find it important to not cut the fuel budget and allow our schools to continue fueling with B20. You cannot put a price on health, and I feel that by fueling our buses with B20, we have improved the overall health of our staff, the children, and the community."

Biodiesel is a renewable fuel made from agricultural byproducts, such as soybean oil, recycled oil and fats. Biodiesel reduces most regulated emissions substantially, including greenhouse gases and potential cancer causing compounds. The NBB is the national trade association of the biodiesel industry and is the coordinating body for biodiesel research and development in the United States.

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For more details on biodiesel, visit www.biodiesel.org.

