



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

DATE: Wednesday, October 27, 2004

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New Program Aims to Improve Children's Health by Significantly Reducing School Bus Emissions

Denver, Colo. – In celebration of National Children's Health Month (October), the Regional Air Quality Council (RAQC) and 16 Front Range school districts launched a new program to significantly reduce harmful diesel emissions from school buses throughout the region.

The *Clean Yellow Fleets for Blue Skies (CYFBS)* school bus emission reduction project aims to retrofit up to 1,250 school buses with pollution reduction technology and fund the purchase of lower-polluting diesel fuel in hopes of improving children's health throughout the 10-county Front Range region.

Participating School Districts

Adams 12 Five Star Schools
Adams County School District 14
Adams County School District 50
Aurora Public Schools
Boulder Valley School District
Cherry Creek Schools
Colorado Springs Academy School District 20
Colorado Springs School District 11

Denver Public Schools
Douglas County School District Re-1
Englewood Schools
Jeffco Public Schools
Littleton Public Schools
Mapleton Public Schools
St. Vrain Valley School District
Thompson School District

CYFBS is funded through two federal grant programs – the United States Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Clean School Bus U.S.A. program and the Federal Highway Administration's Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality program. Together these two programs are providing \$1.35 million to the participating school districts to install pollution control devices such as diesel oxidation catalysts (DOCs) and anti-idling block heaters and to use a lower-polluting diesel fuel throughout their fleet of school buses to achieve significant emissions reductions.

Pauline Gervais, transportation director for Adams 12 Five Star Schools, explained, “The federal grant funding will enable the participating districts to purchase retrofit devices and alternative fuels to help reduce diesel emissions from our school buses, which will create a cleaner, healthier environment for our students, bus drivers, and community now and into the future.”

The oxidation catalysts that will be used on the school buses are similar to those found on modern gasoline-powered vehicles and – according to EPA – are estimated to reduce hydrocarbon (HC) emissions by 49 to 66 percent, carbon monoxide (CO) emissions by 38 to 41 percent, and particulate matter (PM) emissions by 20 to 26 percent, depending on the particular make, model, and year of each school bus. The engine block heaters are designed to warm up the engine without turning on the vehicle, therefore eliminating the need to idle. It is estimated that this device reduces CO, PM, and nitrogen oxide emissions by up to 80 percent during its typical two-hour period of use. The school buses will also be running on a cleaner-burning diesel fuel – called biodiesel (B20). Biodiesel is a blend of 80 percent petroleum diesel and 20 percent vegetable oil (typically produced from soy or rapeseed crop). It is estimated to reduce HC emissions by up to 20 percent and CO and PM emissions by up to 12 percent, according to EPA.

“Emissions from diesel trucks and buses are a significant source of air pollution in the Denver region,” said Kenneth H. Lloyd, RAQC executive director. “Reducing emissions from these vehicles through programs like this will help reduce the Brown Cloud and ensure that we maintain federal air quality standards in the future.”

Clean Yellow Fleets for Blue Skies will also work towards the goal of making school buses – which remain the safest way for children to travel to and from school, according to EPA – the cleanest possible form of transportation for this generation of school children.

“We are pleased to be offering these school districts an opportunity to make such substantial reductions in pollution emissions from their buses,” said Robert E. Roberts, regional administrator for EPA’s Region 8 Headquarters. “Retrofits and clean fuels offer clear benefits for regional air quality and provide cleaner environments for children as they travel to and from school.”

The Colorado project is one of 17 other projects nationwide selected for funding through EPA’s *Clean School Bus USA* program in 2003. The *Clean School Bus USA* program was started in 2003 when Congress allocated \$5 million for a cost-shared grant program designed to assist school districts in upgrading their bus fleets. Building on the successes of the 2003 program Congress again allocated \$5 million for school bus retrofit and replacement grants in 2004. The RAQC and its partnering school districts received an EPA grant of \$400,000 and are one of the first to launch their program.

The CYFBS effort is the largest of its kind in the State; however, several smaller retrofit efforts are underway throughout the region. The City and County of Denver recently received nearly \$30,000 from the RAQC’s *Clean Air*

Fleets program to retrofit up to 20 of its trash trucks and street sweepers that frequently travel through Denver's neighborhoods. In addition, St. Vrain Valley School District in Longmont recently received a \$150,000 Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP) grant from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). The school district plans to purchase additional pollution-reduction equipment and biodiesel fuel in hopes of retrofitting its entire school bus fleet. The SEP grant is a result of an agreement signed late last year between the CDPHE and Cemex, Inc. over air pollution violations at the company's Lyons facility.

RAQC has been working with the other participating school districts for the past year to secure total program funding and to develop a strategy for the installation of equipment. Phase I of the installation started in mid-October and will continue through the end of the year. Phase II is scheduled to begin in January 2005 and will continue through next summer.

The launch of the CYFBS program coincides with the CDPHE's annual wintertime ***High Pollution Advisory Program***. This five-month program begins Nov. 1 by issuing the season's first daily air pollution advisory intended to inform citizens of the potential for elevated pollution levels and encourage behavior change, such as using alternate modes of transportation. The RAQC has been an active partner in the CDPHE's efforts, helping to inform residents and municipalities in the seven-county Denver-metropolitan area about the current advisory.

For more information on RAQC's ***Clean Yellow Fleets for Blue Skies*** or ***Clean Air Fleets*** programs, visit the official Web site at <http://www.cleanairfleets.org> or call (303) 629-5450. For more information on CDPHE's ***High Pollution Advisory Program***, visit their Web site <http://apcd.state.co.us/psi/advisory.html> or call one of the two telephone hotline numbers maintained by the CDPHE at (303) 758-4848 or (303) 782-0211. For more information on the EPA's ***Clean School Bus USA*** program visit their Web site at <http://www.epa.gov/otaq/schoolbus/index.htm>.

The Regional Air Quality Council is the lead air quality planning agency for the seven-county Denver-metropolitan region. In existence since 1989, the Council's main purpose is to develop plans and programs to keep the region in compliance with federal air quality standards, with significant input from area citizens, businesses, and local governments. The RAQC also oversees the development and implementation of air quality outreach and education programs throughout the region.

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