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Department of Environmental Protection Implements Program to Reduce Diesel School Bus Emissions in New Haven

Today, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) kicked off Connecticut's largest urban school bus retrofit project in the state in the City of New Haven. The **Clean School Bus Program** is an important part of DEP's overall efforts to address diesel emissions from school buses. This initiative, announced by DEP Commissioner Arthur J. Rocque, Jr., Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Regional Administrator – New England Robert Varney, and City of New Haven Mayor John DeStefano, will include the use of cleaner fuels and innovative technology to reduce harmful emissions from school buses in New Haven. The project is expected to significantly reduce risk exposure to children and improve air quality.

The Clean School Bus Program will be implemented throughout the New Haven school system and will include improvements to all 182 of the school buses in the First Student Inc. fleet used by elementary, middle and parochial schools in the city. Implementation of the program is targeted for the 2004/05 academic year, with buses being adapted over the upcoming months to use a cleaner fuel additive in conjunction with the ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel. Additional pollution control technology will be installed on each school bus to reduce emissions from the diesel engine. Results of this project will be used to promote the DEP's Clean School Bus initiative into other urban school districts such as Bridgeport and Hartford.

“Diesel emissions are a risk to both human health and the environment. This is a project we can all truly be proud of because it directly benefits children, making their ride to school safer and cleaner through significant reductions in harmful bus emissions,” said DEP Commissioner Arthur J. Rocque, Jr. “Reducing diesel emissions is part of the DEP's overall plan to improve statewide air quality in Connecticut. This project will reduce diesel school bus emissions in New Haven and complements other emission reduction efforts already in effect such as the school bus anti-idling policy. Dovetailing with the emission reduction efforts is the implementation of DEP's anti-idling requirements for diesel buses which addresses idling at schools and during morning start-up.”

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To remind school bus drivers and the general public about their obligation to not idle their vehicles, DEP, with the help of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (DOT) is introducing its new anti-idling signage program. Research has shown that constant reminders in the form of signs should significantly improve compliance rates with the idling restriction. Beginning in New Haven and the City of Norwich, DEP will provide a pair of anti-idling signs to Connecticut public schools for voluntary posting in school bus loading areas. A regulatory sign will clearly inform vehicle drivers that they may not idle for more than three minutes, and will also be used throughout the state to raise awareness of the idling issue at rest areas in cooperation with DOT. An informational sign will supplement the regulatory one, to let people know that by not idling they are helping to protect air quality.

The New Haven Clean School Bus pilot program in New Haven will combine a multi-faceted approach, including low emission fuels and state-of-the-art pollution control features. To educate students about air pollution and diesel reduction efforts, an air quality curriculum will be implemented in middle school science classes throughout the City of New Haven. With a grant of \$99,000 from EPA DEP will work with science teachers in New Haven to implement an air quality curriculum to complement the school bus retrofit project.

“The State of Connecticut has been a pioneer in taking steps to clean up diesel vehicles, especially school buses,” said Robert W. Varney, regional administrator of EPA’s New England Office. “DEP Commissioner Art Rocque and New Haven Mayor John DeStefano have found creative ways to fund a project that will equip all 182 of the city’s diesel school buses with cutting-edge pollution controls that will dramatically reduce diesel emissions. It is my hope that cities and towns across New England can achieve these same visionary projects in their communities.”

“I’m proud that New Haven is leading the way with this important initiative and setting an example for other Connecticut cities,” said John DeStefano, Mayor of New Haven. “We’re committed to addressing the root causes of childhood asthma and we do this by reducing toxics from diesel engines and reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. Doing these things improves the environment in New Haven, and that leads to a better quality of life for us all.”

The New Haven Clean School Bus Program will require multiple partners including: the New Haven Public Schools, the Mayor’s office, DEP, First Student, the Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management (NESCAUM), and Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) in seeking to reduce particulate emissions from the diesel fuels used by school buses.

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This is a particularly important project because it ensures that our children's learning environment is not detrimental to their health. The New Haven project will demonstrate that school buses can be made much cleaner while maintaining engine performance and efficiency.

As part of the program, DMV will oversee the inspection and compliance of new pollution control equipment installed over the next several months. Technical staff and inspectors of the DMV will work with area bus companies to make necessary mechanical improvements and conduct inspection operations, with the introduction of retrofitted buses throughout this school year.

NESCAUM will work with First Student, Inc., the bus company that serves New Haven, in overseeing the installation of the new technology and the implementation of cleaner burning fuels. These new technologies include the use of Donaldson Company's Diesel Oxidation Catalyst (DOC) and their Spiracle closed crankcase ventilation system. To further advance emission reductions, a clean fuel additive produced by Clean Diesel Technology known as a Fuel Borne Catalyst (FBC) will be added to the already in place Ultra Low Sulfur Diesel (ULSD). At a minimum, fine particulates and carbon monoxide are expected to be reduced by approximately 40 percent, and hydrocarbons by 45 percent. In addition, a small reduction in nitrogen oxides is expected.

Diesel emissions, an emerging national issue, have long been an important element in Connecticut's plan to improve air quality. Connecticut intends to aggressively pursue additional reductions in the level of diesel emissions impacting our air. The New Haven community provides an element of synergy in this program because of the opportunities to further improve air quality in our urban centers. Ken Colburn, NESCAUM's Executive Director said, "Connecticut has become one of the most progressive states in the nation, working effectively with communities to initiate programs that enhance public health through innovative pollution control technologies. NESCAUM is proud to work with Connecticut DEP and the City of New Haven through advancing their ongoing effort to dramatically reduce unhealthy diesel emissions."

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