

Robin Schafer, New Haven Resident Comments Received December 30, 2005

As a commuter cyclist in the city of New Haven, as well as someone who frequently walks in the downtown and other urban neighborhoods, I have real concerns about diesel pollution. For cyclists and pedestrians the impact of diesel is neither statistical nor in any way abstract: being passed by or following a diesel vehicle leaves a bad taste in your mouth and smells awful. Thus I am relieved that the DEP is working to form a plan to reduce some of the worst emissions from diesel vehicles.

However, I am seriously concerned that the draft plan actually presents options for diesel fleet owners that amount to doing nothing. For example,

- The Draft School Bus Report, Option 2 (section IIIB) suggests reducing diesel pollutants through fleet turnover, delaying serious reduction in diesel pollutants for well over 10 years and allowing yet another generation of children to develop serious illness as they ride to school. We need option 1: mandatory retrofitting with diesel oxygen catalyst technology, together with mandated cleaner fuels and anti-idling efforts.
- The Draft Transit Report includes a similar Option 2, a 12 year fleet turnover requirement which again would delay seriously addressing the problems presented by the buses on our streets. If Option 2 is adopted, 13 years from now, in 2019, we still wouldn't have achieved the PM reduction possible now with retrofits. The third option in this report (section IIIC) is likewise untenable: a combination of strategies whereby Hartford and New Haven buses were immediately retrofitted and all others left to turnover would not address the serious issues of air quality in other sizeable CT cities like Bridgeport. As gasoline becomes a more scarce commodity and prices rise, mass transit will serve a wider number of residents. We need to spend the money now to keep it an appealing option for all our residents and to save in the long term on the devastating health and environmental repercussions of failing to act.
- The Draft Construction Report, section III, includes as options voluntary approaches through incentives (Option 4) and DEP recommendations on reviews (Option 5). A Diesel Plan that adopted only these options wouldn't be worth the paper it was written on. Again we need a plan adopting the CT Clean Air Construction Initiative (Option 1), in combination with Options 2 and 3 mandating requirements for emissions control technology and rental equipment retrofitting or replacement.

The toothless options like those mentioned above should not be included in the plan, and under no condition should they constitute the plan. Diesel vehicles must be replaced with newer, cleaner burning vehicles or retrofitted with pollution control devices and filters. It is crucial that this be mandated for all CT Transit buses, school buses, garbage trucks and construction vehicles.

Moreover, the idling of these vehicles must be stopped. This would have such a real impact in downtown New Haven, where enjoying a cup of coffee outside at Claire's can become a disgusting experience when some (often double parked) truck remains running during a delivery.

Finally I must point out that your draft plan is available for public comment through January 2 2006. Your website incorrectly states that comments are due by December 15. This date may at one time have been accurate, but you must update these calendars when changes are made, otherwise public comment is stifled! It would also be nice if the e-mail address for comments were posted with the calendar.

Yours Sincerely,
Robin Schafer