

## More Buses Receive Exhaust Filters



*Mayor Gavin Newsom tests a filter on a Muni bus by placing a white handkerchief on the exhaust pipe Tuesday on Treasure Island. More than 1,700 diesel buses from 13 Bay Area transit districts are being retrofitted with the new diesel exhaust filters.*

SAN FRANCISCO - Muni leads 13 transit agencies in installing devices that capture particulate matter

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom on Tuesday celebrated the near completion of a three-year effort to retrofit more than 1,700 Bay Area diesel buses with filters that reduce the amount of pollution the vehicles send out into the air.

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Installation of exhaust filters on diesel buses from 13 Bay Area transit districts began in 2003. Nearly 1,400 exhaust filters have been delivered, and the remaining 340 devices are scheduled for installation by the end of 2006, according to officials from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission.

“One thing we recognize is we’re not an island. We’re all in this together,” Newsom said, referring to the regional cleanup effort. “San Francisco could be doing certain things that, if Oakland’s not doing it, the South Bay’s not doing it, the North Bay’s not doing it, all of this is for naught.”

San Francisco’s Muni has the most diesel buses retrofitted in the Bay Area, 424, with AC Transit in second place with 416 buses scheduled to receive the anti-pollution devices. Other participating transit agencies include SamTrans (200 retrofits), Contra Costa County Connection (132), Santa Clara VTA (134) and Golden Gate Transit (37). The diesel exhaust filters capture 85 percent of harmful particulate matter and reduce 25 percent of the oxides of nitrogen, or NOx, created by the buses’ engines, according to MTC officials.

Diesel particulate matter is a toxic air contaminant that can cause lung disease and cancer, officials say. NOx, a precursor to ozone, can cause respiratory disease, according to the California Air Resources Board.

“We’ve got to deal with the realities of our emissions, with our fleet of buses, vehicles and other polluting efforts to turn the tide of global warming,” Newsom said. The Bay Area’s Clean Diesel Bus program was funded through the various transit

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districts, the Bay Area Quality Management District, and the MTC, in addition to \$13.8 million in federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program funds. According to the MTC, each filter installation costs about \$18,000.

By installing the 1,700 diesel exhaust filters, the region's transportation agencies have complied with a state mandate to reduce pollution particulate matter in diesel buses by 85 percent, MTC spokesman John Goodwin said. While some of the 13 transit districts have also purchased some new "clean diesel" buses, it is more cost-effective and practical to retrofit existing buses with the devices, instead of spending \$140,000 or more for a new bus, he added.

The state law also allows for transit agencies to use natural gas-powered vehicles, an alternative fuel option that some environmentalists say is the cleaner choice. Tim Carmichael, CEO of the Los Angeles-based Coalition for Clean Air, said the organization's preference is for transit agencies to use new alternative fuel buses, but added that he understood that budget constraints often limit that possibility.

"High-efficiency pollution traps can be a good alternative and will reduce pollution significantly," Carmichael said. #

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