

## School Buses Go Green in District 196 Equipment to reduce pollution from diesel engines is added



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*Children who take the bus in the Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan School District should breathe a little easier, thanks to a project that reduces the pollution emitted by the buses' diesel engines. Coordinated by Clean Air Minnesota, Project Green Fleet is a partnership between school districts, Minnesota businesses, government agencies and non-profit organizations.*

District 196 was one of the first school districts to sign on with the project, which retrofits older school buses with equipment that can reduce bus pollutants by 40 percent.

According to Clean Air Minnesota, diesel-fueled vehicles like school buses emit the highest level of unhealthy pollutants that can contribute to heart and lung disease and asthma. Surprisingly, pollution levels inside buses can be up to five times higher than levels in the outdoor air.

“School kids spend up to 2,000 hours on buses, and their exposure level is much higher than the average person living in a residential area or even working downtown,” said David Thornton, assistant commissioner of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). “The fact that we meet ambient air standards isn’t good enough. We need to do better than that.”

There are two pieces of equipment used on the buses. One essentially filters the vehicle’s exhaust system, and the other is a closed crank case filtration system on the engine itself. The equipment is manufactured by the Donaldson Company of Bloomington.

About 40 of District 196’s 202 buses have been retrofitted at a cost of about \$2,800 each. The funds came from sponsors, said Randy Dukek, transportation coordinator for District 196.

“That was one of the things that was appealing about it,” he said. “We could improve emissions and the environment and there was no cost to the district.”

Buses built in the mid-90s through 2005 are the only ones being retrofitted. Buses built before the mid-90s are not cost-effective to retrofit because they will eventually be scrapped, said Bill Droessler, director of Clean Air Minnesota. New buses already come with similar pollution-reduction equipment installed, he said.

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So far, the Green Fleet Project has retrofitted 200 school buses with the equipment in four school districts, and it wants to raise enough money to equip 300 more buses by the end of 2007.

In addition to school districts that voluntarily retrofit their buses, Project Green Fleet is supported by a number of organizations, including Flint Hills Resources, Xcel Energy, the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation and the Donaldson Company.

“While these school bus retrofits are a tried and true method to reduce emissions elsewhere in the country, what makes our project unique is its proactive, wholly voluntary nature, and the private-public partnership that is making it all work,” said Mike Robertson of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce.

For more information on Project Green Fleet, visit [www.projectgreenfleet.org](http://www.projectgreenfleet.org). Erin Johnson is at [eagan.thisweek@ecm-inc.com](mailto:eagan.thisweek@ecm-inc.com). #