

Six Oregon School Districts graduate to cleaner buses thanks to a \$150,000 EPA grant

\$150,000 in EPA funding with \$27,054 in matching funds

(Eugene, OR, - May 22, 2006) Students at the Eugene, Springfield, Harrisburg, South Lane, Blachly and Central Linn School Districts will be breathing easier, thanks to a \$150,000 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) "Clean School Bus USA" grant.

The EPA grant - together with \$27,054 from state and local partners - will allow the six school districts to purchase and install Diesel Oxidation Catalysts (DOC). A total of 95 buses will be retrofitted with DOCs. The grant will also provide funding for cleaner fuel alternatives such as Ultra Low Sulfur Diesel (ULSD) or biodiesel.

The diesel oxidation catalysts that will be installed on the buses will reduce emissions of fine particulates by at least 30 percent, hydrocarbons by at least 50 percent and carbon monoxide emissions by at least 30 percent.

"Retrofitting these buses and providing funding for alternative fuels is one of the best things we can do for our kids' health and the environment," said Michael Bogert, EPA's Regional Administrator in Seattle. "The work that is funded by this grant will be a great benefit not only to the six school districts, but also to the surrounding communities."

Eugene has also begun the Smart Walks to School Program aimed at reducing fuel consumption and traffic congestion around local schools. The program offers free services to encourage students to walk, bike, ride a bus or carpool to and from school.

Exposure to diesel exhaust exacerbates the symptoms of asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia. Asthma is the most common long-term childhood respiratory disease and is the number one cause of absenteeism in schools.

This year, EPA awarded 37 grants across the nation totaling \$7.5 million as part of the Clean School Bus USA program. The initiative encourages policies and practices to eliminate unnecessary school bus idling, install effective emission control systems on newer buses and replace the oldest buses with cleaner diesel or compressed natural gas powered buses.

This grant directly complements an EPA \$500,000 grant in 2004 to retrofit school buses in Eugene and in Western Oregon. These grants also complement similar efforts by the West Coast Collaborative to reduce diesel emissions from other sectors such as: agriculture, construction, locomotives & rail, marine vessels & ports and trucking.

For more information about Clean School Bus USA visit:

<http://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus>

For more information about the West Coast Collaborative visit:

<http://www.westcoastcollaborative.org>