

Diesel School Bus Retrofit Grant Program
Ohio EPA Partners with Schools to Help Kids Breathe Easier
February 2006

A new grant program, under development at Ohio EPA, will help school districts retrofit their diesel school buses with pollution control equipment and use cleaner fuels to reduce emissions.

Priority for the grants will be given to applications from school districts in communities that do not meet the federal air quality standards for outdoor concentrations of fine air particles, and districts that employ additional measures such as anti-idling programs, to reduce emissions from their school bus fleets. Fine particulates are so small that they are able to penetrate deep into the lungs and pose serious health risks such as aggravated asthma and lung damage. U.S. EPA also has identified diesel exhaust as a likely human carcinogen.

Grants will be funded from civil penalties Ohio EPA collects from environmental violations. The Agency expects to have as much as \$1 million available to distribute statewide during 2006-2007. Grant application deadlines are expected to be March 31 and Sept. 1, 2006.

“We are delighted that the General Assembly has made it possible for Ohio EPA to provide these funds to school districts,” said Carolyn Watkins, Chief of the Office of Environmental Education. “The program is voluntary, so we really want to commend the school districts for being proactive. By using cleaner fuels and retro-fitting their buses with pollution control equipment, the schools reap two immediate benefits: they reduce student exposure to diesel exhaust and they help their communities meet clean air standards.”

Privately owned buses that are used exclusively to transport Ohio school children through an agreement with an Ohio school district are also eligible for the diesel retrofitting grant program through the local school district.

When applying for funds, applicants may also describe other pollution reduction measures being taken (or planned), including the anti-idling program, in their application. All applications received by the established deadline will be reviewed and grants will be awarded based on the criteria established. School districts that do not receive an Ohio EPA grant may apply for U.S. EPA funds or may re-apply with Ohio EPA in future grant rounds.

For more information about the grant program, please contact Carolyn Watkins by e-mail at carolyn.watkins@epa.state.oh.us or phone at (614) 644-3768. For questions about diesel bus retrofitting, particulate standards or program rules, contact John Paulian at john.paulian@epa.state.oh.us, or phone at (614) 644-4832.

U.S. EPA also has a “Clean School Bus USA” grant program designed to reduce children’s exposure to diesel exhaust and reduce the amount of air pollution created by diesel school buses. According to U.S. EPA, 24 million children ride the school bus every day, and on average, students spend an hour and a half each weekday in a school bus. Three Ohio school districts received funding in the latest grant round. [For more information, click here.](#)

“Several Ohio school districts have received similar grants from U.S. EPA, but there hasn’t been enough funding available at the federal level to assist all school districts who are interested,” Watkins said. “The Ohio grants will help fill that gap. It’s always exciting to put together a brand new program like this that will have immediate, measurable results in terms of cleaner air.”

- For more information about Ohio EPA’s program, go to <http://www.epa.state.oh.us/oeef/html/schoolbus.html>.
- For more information about U.S. EPA’s school bus grant program, visit www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus.

**Free School Bus
Pollution Prevention
Lessons Available Online**

Schools may be interested in transferring real-world problem-solving from their bus retrofits into the classroom. Ohio EPA has funded the development of 4th, 5th and 6th grade lessons that measure the benefits of reducing idling, increasing fuel efficiency and keeping tires properly inflated. These lessons may be downloaded at no charge by going to <http://p2cc.udayton.edu/>.