

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

STATE HOUSE BOSTON, MA 02133 (617) 725-4000

DEVAL L. PATRICK

GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
CONTACT:

KYLE SULLIVAN, CYNDI ROY, BECKY DEUSSER (617) 725-4025

ED COLETTA (DEP) 617-292-5737

**GOVERNOR PATRICK LAUNCHES INNOVATIVE
PROGRAM TO RETROFIT DIESEL SCHOOL BUSES
WITH EQUIPMENT TO REDUCE AIR POLLUTION**

***Governor also calls for comprehensive strategy to fight diesel pollution
from all sources***

LYNN – Governor Deval Patrick today launched “MassCleanDiesel: Clean Air for Kids,” the Commonwealth’s newest clean air initiative, which will install pollution controls on diesel-powered school buses serving public schools across the state by 2010. MassCleanDiesel is the nation’s first fully funded statewide program to reduce air pollution from all school buses.

“The buses that take our children to school should not foul the air breathed by those same children, and this program will help put that situation to an end,” said Governor Deval Patrick, at an event held at the Julia F. Callahan School in Lynn. “I applaud the City of Lynn and its school-bus operator, North Reading Transportation Co., for stepping forward as the first to volunteer for this new program, and I call on all school districts in the Commonwealth and their bus companies to take part.”

Administered by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), the new program will equip up to 5,500 school buses that are able to be retrofitted – virtually all the large diesel-powered school buses serving public schools that weigh more than 10,000 pounds, and carry more than 10 students at a time. The retrofitted buses will release less air pollution, resulting in healthier air for everyone, but especially students and drivers. Approximately 750,000 schoolchildren ride school buses each day.

Pollution controls will be installed using \$16.5 million in state and federal funding provided by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works (EOT) under an agreement associated with the Central Artery/Tunnel Project.

Governor Patrick today also directed Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs Ian Bowles and MassDEP Commissioner Laurie Burt to report back to him by Labor Day with a comprehensive program for reducing diesel pollution from other sources, with priority given to protecting vulnerable populations and reducing heavy concentrations of pollution.

School buses are a safe and energy-efficient way for children to get to school. But school buses, like all diesel-powered vehicles, pollute the air with harmful gases and particles. Diesel pollution contributes to asthma attacks, respiratory problems, and other diseases. A 2006 Department of Public Health survey of 662,994 students in 1,780 Massachusetts schools found that 1 in 10 schoolchildren in kindergarten through eighth grade have asthma.

“The launch of MassCleanDiesel affirms the Commonwealth’s commitment to providing clean air to all residents in the state, and especially our children, whose developing lungs are particularly susceptible to the harmful effects of diesel exhaust,” said Secretary Bowles. “It is also the first step toward a comprehensive approach to combating diesel pollution.”

The MassCleanDiesel initiative is the result of a 2006 agreement between EOT and MassDEP where \$22.5 million in state and federal funds was made available to retrofit thousands of school and regional transit buses across the state.

“The transportation sector is a major contributor to greenhouse gases and particulate matter,” said Transportation Secretary Bernard Cohen. “This landmark program removes some of the dirtiest diesel exhaust and improves our environment while continuing to provide safe transportation for our children to and from school.”

“MassCleanDiesel will help make the ride healthier for the three-quarters-of-a-million students who take the bus to school,” said Commissioner Burt, whose agency is coordinating the program. “These retrofits will remove up to 90 percent of the bus pollutants – and at no cost to the bus companies or the local communities.”

“We welcome the opportunity to implement this unique program here in Lynn for the positive effects it will have on the environment, our children’s health, and also as an education tool teaching students about the ill effects of air pollution,” said Lynn Mayor Edward “Chip” Clancy.

“I would like to commend the Governor and Secretary Bowles for leading this excellent initiative,” said Senator Thomas M. McGee. “Air quality is very important to the well-being of our city’s children, and this program will have a real impact on the air they breathe every day. This is a creative and cost-effective way to address a serious environmental concern, and the benefits will be realized in Lynn and throughout the Commonwealth.”

“Our environment is one of our most precious resources and it is more important now than ever that we take steps to protect it,” said Representative Steven M. Walsh. “A reduction in these harmful diesel emissions will have a tremendous impact on the public health of all our students and will better the air quality for all the citizens of Lynn.”

“This is a great idea and a great opportunity for us, for the kids and for improving the air we all breathe,” said John McCarthy, a representative of North Reading Transportation Co. “We’re grateful that the state is stepping up to assist a company like ours and in turn we can help others as a result.”

The North Reading Transportation Co. serves school systems in Chelmsford, Dracut, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, North Andover, Wakefield and Wilmington, carrying 22,000 students to school each day. Also expressing interest in joining the MassCleanDiesel program are the school systems in Andover, Beverly, Cohasset, Egremont, Gill, Greenfield, Lincoln and Monson, as well as the Manchester-Essex Regional School District and the Southeastern Regional School District.

Diesel retrofits will decrease the levels of exterior and in-cabin particulate matter, carbon monoxide and hydrocarbon emissions, and produce less tailpipe exhaust and pollutants that form smog, without compromising vehicle performance. To receive free retrofits, school bus owners must enroll in the program, obtain estimates from retrofit vendors, and work with the vendors to coordinate equipment installations. MassDEP will reimburse the retrofit vendor directly, provided that installations meet all terms of the program.

“The Patrick Administration is to be commended for taking a huge step forward for public health,” said Sam Krasnow, policy advocate for Environment Northeast and member of the steering committee of the Diesel Pollution Solution Coalition, a statewide consortium of public health and environmental advocates. “By addressing school buses, the Commonwealth is on its way toward cleaner air for kids and their communities.”

For more information on MassCleanDiesel, visit www.mass.gov/dep/air/masscleandiesel or call the MassCleanDiesel Help Line at (617) 292-5809.

MassDEP is responsible for ensuring clean air and water, safe management and recycling of solid and hazardous wastes, timely cleanup of hazardous waste sites and spills, and the preservation of wetlands and coastal resources.

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Links to photos attached:

http://www.mass.gov/Agov3/images/2008-06-12_buses_01web.jpg

http://www.mass.gov/Agov3/images/2008-06-12_buses_02web.jpg