



News Release

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SUPERINTENDENT ANNOUNCES ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY DIESEL PURCHASES-- YELLOW SCHOOL BUSES TO BURN 'GREEN' FUEL TO HELP KEEP AUSTIN'S SKIES BLUE

The Austin School District's bright yellow buses are now burning environmentally friendly "green" diesel while transporting 17,000 students a day to campuses.

"This is a 'green letter day' in the Austin School District. There is nothing better than the air we breathe to remind us that we are all part of one community. In approving the purchase of this cleaner diesel, the Board of Trustees has seen to it that the School District does its part to keep Austin's skies blue," Superintendent Pat Forgione said today.

Superintendent Forgione says that the switch to cleaner-burning diesel is part of the School District's overall effort to address air-quality issues, both outdoor and indoor, in Austin.

"The Health and Safety Bond Initiative, which goes before Austin voters on February 2, 2002, is another important part of the equation. It will provide the District with the funding to make necessary improvements in our schools, to address dangerous mold problems and improve indoor air quality in general," Dr. Forgione said.

At a news conference at the South Bus Terminal Saegart Center, Dr. Forgione also thanked representatives of *Texas Campaign for the Environment* for bringing the opportunity to use "green" diesel to the District's attention.

Speaking at the event, Robin Schneider, the group's director, congratulated the Austin School District for decreasing vehicle emissions. "This school bus fleet is one of the largest fleets of diesel vehicles in our area plus, it is the largest one that carries our community's children. This is great," Ms. Schneider said.

During the 2001-2002 school year, the District's fleet of buses is expected to burn 600,000 gallons of diesel fuel. Out of 450 buses, nearly 400 are powered by diesel; the remainder use unleaded gasoline.

In October, Trustees approved the purchase of KOCH Performance Gold Diesel, manufactured by KOCH Industries Inc.

At 68-cents-a-gallon, the fuel costs about three cents more per gallon than regular diesel. However, in addition to reduced air emissions, school transportation officials expect the improved diesel will yield more miles to the gallon and pay for itself with lower engine maintenance costs.

Dr. Forgione also outlined other School District initiatives to improve Austin's environmental quality.

- * The new J.J. Pickle Elementary School is a model for "green" building design and construction. The new school, which is a joint project with the City of Austin, opened in August in the St. John neighborhood. The combination school and community center reflects the latest in environmentally-sensitive building principles.

- * The Superintendent has appointed Paul Turner, director of Administrative Support Services, to be the District's representative to Austin's *Clean Air Force*. The District will work with other large employers and government agencies in the Austin area to address the region's ground-level ozone problems.

- * The Board of Trustees also decided not to seek a state waiver from a new state law that calls for a later start to the school year in August. The change will significantly reduce bus and car traffic to schools during early August, which is a critical ozone alert period in the Austin area.

- * The District is working closely with the City's Sustainability Office to find other ways to reduce air pollution prior to the next ozone season.

- * In addition to decreasing air emissions, the District is also committed to attaining greater energy efficiency. The District has saved millions of dollars by establishing new energy management systems in its facilities. Savings include switching from T-12 fluorescent lights to T-8's in two-thirds of the campuses and replacing all the ballasts that used PCBs. These actions have significantly improved light quality and reduced energy use by half in those schools. Since 1995, the District has also replaced 25 major chillers that used CFCs and replaced cooling towers with energy efficient heat pumps.

"We are continuing to explore all of the possibilities for working as a good community partner to improve Austin's air quality," Dr. Forgione said.