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NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Americans Support Biodiesel Incentives for Use in School Buses

Survey shows 85 percent of Americans favor biodiesel incentives to improve air quality for kids

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – A new national public opinion survey of adults shows 85 percent of Americans think it is important for schools to receive incentives to help pay for biodiesel, a cleaner-burning fuel made from renewable fats or oils, such as soybean oil. In recent months, various scientific studies have raised public concern about the harmful effects of diesel exposure to children who ride school buses. Several schools across the nation have already made the switch to biodiesel because of its reduced emissions.

“We first looked at using biodiesel because we have an obligation to protect the health of kids who ride on our school buses,” said John Molnar, fleet administrator for the Hammond School District in northwest Indiana. The district of 13 thousand school kids has used B20, a blend of 20 percent biodiesel and 80 percent diesel, to transport children for the last year and a half. “Several high profile studies have shown that diesel fumes may be harmful to children on buses. Using biodiesel is one of the easiest and best things we can do to protect the health of our kids.”

Because of biodiesel’s ability to improve air quality, more than half (54 percent) of the adults surveyed said it was very important to give incentives to schools for the purchase of biodiesel; and 31 percent said it was somewhat important. Virtually every demographic group showed strong support for incentives for schools to use biodiesel, which works in diesel engines with few or no modifications. Both households with children and those without them showed willingness to provide financial incentives for schools to use biodiesel. The national public opinion study, funded by the United Soybean Board, was conducted by Wilson Research Strategies as part of an omnibus survey of more than 1000 telephone interviews nationwide in October.

Biodiesel is the only alternative fuel to have completed the rigorous Health Effects testing required by the Clean Air Act. Results show biodiesel poses less of a risk to human health than petroleum diesel. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently released a comprehensive technical report of biodiesel emissions data that shows the exhaust emissions of particulate matter from pure biodiesel are about 47 percent lower than overall particulate matter emissions from diesel. Breathing particulate has been shown to be a human health hazard. Biodiesel emissions also reduce by 80 to 90 percent potential cancer causing compounds called Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAH) and nitrated PAH. Biodiesel also reduces emissions of total unburned hydrocarbons, a contributing factor to smog and ozone, by about 68 percent. Carbon monoxide is reduced by about 48 percent.

Biodiesel has similar horsepower, torque and BTU content compared to petroleum diesel. It offers excellent lubricity and higher cetane than diesel fuel. Biodiesel is registered with the EPA as a fuel and fuel additive. About 250 fleets nationwide use biodiesel.

Readers can learn more about biodiesel by visiting <http://www.biodiesel.org>. The National Biodiesel Board is funded in part by the United Soybean Board and state soybean board checkoff programs.

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EXAMPLES OF SCHOOLS USING BIODIESEL

Warwick, Rhode Island Energy Educator/Manager Robert Cerio helped his school district successfully use various blend levels of biodiesel in their heating boilers in 2001 and 2002. The U.S. Department of Energy Clean Cities Program and the National Renewable Energy Lab provided funding for the project that included extensive testing of biodiesel. The results showed that biodiesel reduced emissions from the boilers in three schools compared to a fourth where standard petroleum-based diesel was used as a control. Staff noticed fewer odors with biodiesel and found virtually no soot in the equipment. Biodiesel also did not impact the efficiency of the boilers. The school is now starting to use biodiesel in their fleet of 58 school buses.

“Biodiesel gives kids cleaner air to breathe without sacrificing performance or efficiency,” Cerio said. “It is good for the kids, and it’s good for our country since use of biodiesel reduces our dependence on foreign oil.”

The school is also integrating the biodiesel information into educational curriculum. Such initiative led to the school’s overall energy program receiving the Pinnacle Award of Excellence for Warwick’s School Business Manager Robert Dooley at the October annual meeting of the American School Business Officials Internationals.

Campbell and McLean counties in Kentucky use B20 in their school buses. Children in rural areas can benefit even more from the use of biodiesel in their school districts since they often spend more time on diesel-fueled school buses than children in urban areas.

“Biodiesel is working great for us,” said Earl Melloy, superintendent of the McLean county school district. “Using biodiesel is a ‘win-win’ situation. It’s good for the children who ride the school buses, and it’s good for America’s soybean farmers. And, there are a significant number of soybean farmers in our county.” Melloy first became interested in biodiesel after learning about the fuel’s benefits from a soybean farmer in his community

“Biodiesel has performed very well in our school buses,” said Mike Dawson, director of transportation for the Campbell County School District. “I’ve noticed that the exhaust is much less abrasive than the pure diesel fuel we used before, and it’s good to know that the schoolchildren in our district are now breathing cleaner air when they ride to and from school.” The Campbell County School District uses a B20 blend in its 65 school buses.

The Medford, New Jersey School District started using B20 in 1997. According to Joe Biluck, Director of Operations and Technology, the fuel has performed well even in temperatures as low as eleven degrees below zero.

“Biodiesel offers the best option to increase our reliance on domestic, renewable fuels while producing significant results in terms of emission reduction,” said Biluck. “Biodiesel’s primary attraction is its ease of integration coupled with the fact it is a technology that is not capital intensive and can be applied to older units as well as today’s vehicles.”

The Hammond, Indiana School District in northwest Indiana first began fueling its school buses with B20 in the 2001 school year under a grant from the Indiana Department of Commerce to pay for the incremental cost increase of the fuel. Although the grant has expired, fleet administrator John Molnar says he continues to use biodiesel because he thinks it’s the right thing to do.

“I do a lot of busing for kids with asthma, and that scares me,” he said. “So when I had an opportunity to try biodiesel, I did. I feel like I’m doing my fair share to protect our kids.”

Arlington County Virginia recently began using B20 in the county’s 500 diesel-powered vehicles, including 120 school buses, according to Ric Hiller, chief of the equipment division. “We started using biodiesel in our school buses this school year because we saw an opportunity to kill two birds with one stone: clean the air and use a renewable fuel,” said Hiller. “We’re very pleased with biodiesel so far.”