

06.12.08 - School Bus Retrofitting

Governor Deval L. Patrick

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As Delivered**

On Thursday, June 12, 2008, Governor Patrick traveled to the Julia F. Callahan Elementary School in Lynn to announce the start of the MassCleanDiesel: Clean Air for Kids program. The first statewide program of its kind in the nation, MassCleanDiesel will retrofit virtually all diesel-powered school buses in the state with pollution-reduction equipment, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and thereby improving air quality and public health across Massachusetts communities.

Representative Walsh:

It's great to join you all here. If I can just for a second, can all of the students of the school right now, can we all give the Governor a huge round of applause for coming to visit this school? I also am happy to visit this school anytime I can as my mother is a graduate and my uncles are graduates of this school so it's great to come back to where they started.

I'm joined by my colleagues in government I want to mention Representative Bob Fennell, Representative Mark Falzone, Representative Laurie Ehrlich, and our state senator Tom McGee is in session right now at the State House and Brendan Crichton is here from his office.

A brief word if I could about Mass-Clean-Diesel. 750,000 students travel in school buses each and every day around the Commonwealth. This is so important in terms of pollution, in terms of our environment, in terms of our beginning to be more and more useful of renewable energy. Our children getting to and from school is something we worry about every day. We worry about them on the bus, in the bus, and we worry about their safety in our communities.

So I want to mention briefly, as the Mayor did, that we have had some problems in our community with violence lately. This Governor and this administration have been a partner with us. They have worked each and every day to say, "How can we help, what can we do?" This Governor has launched Shannon grants to make money available to communities to offer more money for anti-violence programs, for community policing for police on the streets, they have been a partner with us. So it's important on days like today that we keep all of our other initiatives going. We had a transportation bond bill just yesterday pass in the House, we have MassCleanDiesel we're announcing today. We have to keep moving forward in every other thing we're doing while we're also fighting violence in our communities. This Governor has done that so well.

A word about this Governor: he was in Lynn to tour our waterfront; to make sure that money was available for the Lynn waterfront. He's been in our downtowns to make money available for the reuse of our buildings downtown. He had the Lieutenant Governor here to talk about development in our community. He has been in each and every of the 351 cities and towns, but he has been to Lynn more than 2 dozen times on behalf of our businesses, on behalf of our residences, and on behalf of our students. He has been the most pro-education governor we've had in more than 20 years. It's a great, great benefit and thrill for me and for our delegation to be able to call him a partner and to welcome him here to Lynn today. Welcome Governor Patrick.

Governor Patrick:

Thank You. Thank you first of all to Rep. Walsh and to all the members of the delegation. Thank you for your partnership, for the very warm welcome today here to Lynn, and for all the good work that we do together. I also want to acknowledge the Mayor, the Principal, the Superintendent, and all the members of this school community, and we to thank you for having us. We're going to get you off of those hot buses as soon as possible. I won't be too long. But I appreciate very much, your warm welcome and thank you so much for all of the beautiful signs. I hope we'll collect them before we go so I can take them back and keep them in the office alright. And I hope you'll come and see me in the office sometime.

We have been thinking about you. Not just in the context of today's announcement, but certainly in the context of the extraordinary events of the last couple of days here in Lynn. And I just want to echo what Representative Walsh and the Mayor have said - We are here to do whatever we can to support you in keeping the streets of Lynn safe for you. And I want you to know that, never doubt it.

I'm pleased also to acknowledge and welcome my partners in government who are here: Secretary Bowles our Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs, and Commissioner Laurie Burt the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection who have had so much to do with the, with building the program I'm here to announce. And that program is the MassCleanDiesel program; a program to retrofit every single big yellow school bus, like those here, with equipment to sharply reduce diesel pollution.

All vehicles powered by diesel fuel, even those as safe as school buses, pollute the air with fine particles that have been known to lead over time to asthma, chronic bronchitis, heart attacks, and even lung cancer. MassCleanDiesel will make that ride to school healthier for the children on the bus and for those communities along the way, and to do that every day.

MassCleanDiesel will retrofit all eligible, diesel-powered school buses in the Commonwealth with equipment that cuts harmful emissions by up to ninety percent at no expense to the bus owners or to the local communities. It almost sounds too good to be true. Laurie, you'll have to come up with other programs of this kind.

We have set aside, under funds provided through the Big Dig mitigation agreement, some 16.5 million dollars for these pollution control upgrades- enough to retrofit up to 5,500 school buses. Over the next three years, MassDEP will make these upgrades to every large yellow school bus that is capable of being

retrofitted. What we need now is for school districts and their school bus operators to step up and work with us to get these buses cleaned up. A few communities have already taken steps to clean up their diesel buses with other fundings- communities like Boston and Cambridge, Medford and Sandwich, and the Mohawk regional school district. The city of Lynn is also stepping up. So is their school bus company, North Reading Transportation Company. Who's here from North Reading? And we thank you. Thank you for your leadership.

I commend the bus company, the school department, the city as a whole for being the first to sign up and partner with us under this new, first in the nation program - very first one in America where we have partnered with local communities to clean up diesel buses. With MassCleanDiesel, we have the opportunity to be the first state in the nation to cut diesel pollution on its entire school bus fleet. But it's a voluntary program and to succeed it needs volunteers. So I'm asking any of those within the sound of my voice or with the help of the media who may hear of this announcement to take the example of the North Reading Bus Company- Transportation Company, and Lynn and join this program. Make it real. I ask every Massachusetts community, every school department, every school bus operator to answer my call and join MassCleanDiesel. It will cost you nothing and it will give your kids and your communities the gift of cleaner air. Now we can't stop there and we know that. Leaving aside school buses, there are 680,000 diesel engine vehicles in Massachusetts today. There are many newer, cleaner diesel vehicles on the road today, but still quite a few of the old diesel smokers that spew pollutants into the air around us as they rumble by; affecting us in all kinds of ways including the Mayor when he's out on his jog.

The Commonwealth is working on many fronts to reduce diesel pollution from large trucks and off-road construction vehicles by requiring retrofits and tracking diesel emissions from diesel-powered cars and pickup trucks during the annual vehicle inspection. To expand that effort, I am today directing Secretary Bowels, and Commissioner Burt to develop a comprehensive strategy for reducing diesel pollution in Massachusetts. I want a plan by Labor Day that focuses on areas of the Commonwealth most affected by diesel emissions, addresses the high emitting diesel engines that affect sensitive populations in neighborhoods and helps those communities that are facing the highest rates of childhood asthma today. That work begins with the MassCleanDiesel program. And I am thrilled to launch it, and to launch it today, and to launch it here in Lynn.

Thank you very much for having me today everybody.