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Richfield Public Schools Receives “Cleaner Bus” School Recognition

*15 School Districts across Minnesota have taken action
to reduce diesel emissions from school buses*

Minneapolis, MN, June 4, 2003 – Today, students in the Sierra Club’s “Cleaner Bus” School campaign announced that at least 15 school districts, from Brainerd to Mankato, have taken steps to reduce children’s exposure to diesel emissions as a result of the “School Bus Diesel” law passed by the State of Minnesota in May 2002 and an outreach campaign by the Sierra Club and the Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance.

Richfield Public Schools is being recognized by the Sierra Club North Star Chapter as a “Cleaner Bus” School for adopting a “no idling” policy which requires buses to not idle longer than three minutes. In addition to setting the policy, the transportation department has also provided trainings and information in driver’s handbooks. “Our bus drivers are congenial to turning off the engines now because of the education,” said Rus George, Supervisor Building, Grounds, and Transportation. Stopping unnecessary idling saves money on fuel costs, and reduces particulate pollution from diesel exhaust.

Children are particularly vulnerable to diesel emissions because, as compared to adults, they breathe more frequently, breathe more often through their mouths, have smaller airways, and are more susceptible to asthma and allergies. The lungs of children and teenagers are still developing so toxic chemicals can cause permanent damage. California studies reveal that diesel may be responsible for more than 70 percent of the cancer risk from air pollution and that particle pollution harms lung development in children. According to the United States Environmental

Protection Agency, diesel exhaust increases asthma and allergic reactions as well as causing cancer. In Minnesota, asthma is the leading cause of school absenteeism.

In addition to Richfield Schools, the following school districts also took action to reduce school bus idling: Balaton, Brainerd, Central, Comfrey, Mahtomedi, Mankato, Minneapolis, Minnetonka, Northland Community Schools, South Washington County, St. James, and St. Paul.

“Students did the research, lobbied for passage of the law, led outreach to involve schools, and continue to teach about the dangers of diesel pollution through curriculum in elementary and high schools,” said Amir Nadav, high school student leader of the “Cleaner Bus” School campaign, “I could have never imagined a year and a half ago when we started the ‘Cleaner Bus’ School campaign that we would have these kind of results.”

Other states are considering similar campaigns to reduce unnecessary idling, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency now has a Clean School Bus campaign to minimize idling and retrofit buses (www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus).

The “Cleaner Bus” School campaign has received national recognition by the Department of Energy’s Smart Communities Network, the National Governor’s Association, and the American Lung Association.

For a complete list of “Cleaner Bus” School school districts and the actions they have taken or more information on the campaign, please visit: www.northstar.sierraclub.org/schoolbus/pressreleases

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