

SUMMARY OF BOARD ITEM

ITEM # 00-12-2: PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER THE PROPOSED LOWER-EMISSION SCHOOL BUS PROGRAM GUIDELINES .

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the Board approve the proposed Lower-Emission School Bus Program guidelines.

DISCUSSION: Governor Gray Davis made a one-time allocation of \$50 million for the Lower-Emission School Bus Program. The funds are in the Air Resources Board's (ARB's) budget for the 2000-2001 fiscal year and are currently available for distribution. The program would fund grants for about 400 new buses, and equip 1500 older buses with particulate filters. School districts would have a choice of new diesel or new alternative fuel buses. The ARB, the California Energy Commission (CEC), and local air districts will administer the program.

There are over 24,000 school buses operating in California. About 6,600 are pre-1987 model year buses, including about 1,900 pre-1977 model year buses. Older diesel-powered school buses are sources of high levels of both particulate matter (PM) emissions and oxides of nitrogen (NOx) emissions, and many of the older buses are not built to current safety standards. While the continued use of these buses poses public health and safety issues, school districts lack funds to buy new buses.

The ARB staff conducted workshops on September 18, 2000, and September 21, 2000, to discuss the proposed guidelines for the Lower-Emission School Bus Program. Environmental organizations, engine and retrofit device manufacturers, school bus vendors, school transportation officials, and other stakeholders provided valuable input at the workshops, and through comment letters, phone calls, and via email. A working group composed of school transportation officials was

very helpful in providing direct input from the school districts, and in sharing their school transportation expertise. ARB is committed to continue working with school transportation officials, the CEC, air districts, and other stakeholders to ensure that the program is effectively implemented.

The school bus replacement program focuses on reducing emissions from pre-1987 buses by replacing them with new, lower-polluting buses. It is estimated that the proposed school bus replacement program portion, (\$40 million,) would result in a PM emission reduction of 90 tons and a NOx reduction of 1010 tons. The retrofit portion of the program (\$10 million), would result in an estimated PM emission reduction of 113 tons.

If approved, these proposed guidelines would reduce school children's exposure to both cancer-causing and smog-forming pollution, as well as provide safer school transportation.