

## SCHOOL BUS NO-IDLING PROGRAM

### **Background**

The Houston-Galveston-Brazoria (HGB) region is currently classified as a non-attainment area with respect to the 8-hour National Ambient Air Quality Standard for ozone. In addition, this region is concerned with localized elevated levels of fine particles and air toxics. All of these pollutants are known to result in negative economic impacts and adverse health effects.

A key source of emissions that contribute to our elevated levels of ozone, fine particles, and air toxics is diesel vehicles. Air pollution from diesel vehicles has health implications for everyone, but children may be especially susceptible because they breathe more air relative to their body weight and their respiratory systems are still developing. Exposure to diesel exhaust can aggravate asthma, allergies, and respiratory problems. Some studies suggest that long-term exposure increases the risk of lung cancer.

To address this concern, the state legislature enacted the Texas Clean School Bus Program, which is being implemented by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ, see [www.texascleanschoolbus.org](http://www.texascleanschoolbus.org))

TCEQ recommends school districts consider adopting a bus idling reduction policy. An average school bus uses one-half gallon of diesel fuel for each hour of idling. Reducing idling by 30 minutes per day would save approximately 45 gallons and over \$112 per bus per year, freeing up scarce school district funds for other uses. A district with a 25-bus fleet could save over \$2,800 a year.

### **Current Situation**

The Regional Air Quality Planning Committee (RAQPC) has drafted a resolution supporting the adoption of school bus idling reduction policies. The sample resolution and policies would be disseminated to school districts throughout the non-attainment area.

Such policies would include: turning off school bus engines while waiting to load and to unload students; installing “Idle Free Zone” signs at school drop-off and pick-up locations; and training school-bus drivers to minimize idling. Many school districts have already indicated that they have no-idling policies currently in place. These include: Clear Creek, Columbia-Brazoria, Friendswood, Humble, Katy, Klein, Liberty, Montgomery, Pearland, Santa Fe, Splendor, and Stafford. These 12 school districts are only a portion of the 63 districts within the eight-county nonattainment region.

### **Action Requested**

Request approval of model school bus idling restriction resolution and policy.