

# Safer and Healthier School Buses for Georgia's Students

We can work together to make Georgia's school buses safer and healthier.

More than 200,000 Georgia children have asthma, and those who do not are at greater risk of developing the illness if regularly exposed to unhealthy air. On average, children in Georgia spend about an hour each school day on a school bus. This adds up to 180 hours a year. Protecting children from known dangers and guaranteeing a safe and healthy ride to school should be a priority for Georgia.

## What Can You Do?

- Contact your school system's transportation director or another administrator and encourage them to apply for EPD funds to retrofit their buses.
- Ask your school district to institute a no-idling policy for school buses.



## Diesel Retrofit Devices for School Buses

While school buses are, in many ways, the safest way for children to travel to school, harmful diesel exhaust can build up in the cabins of school buses, putting children at risk. The good news is that the dangerous fine particulates in diesel exhaust can be reduced by as much as 85 percent by installing pollution control devices (retrofits).

Over the past several years, the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) has received several million dollars from the federal government to retrofit school buses and other diesel engines with pollution control devices.

Children are particularly vulnerable to exposure to diesel exhaust because they breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults. Younger students also are closer to the ground and, therefore, closer to the tailpipes. Studies show that diesel pollution reaches levels 3-5 times higher inside school buses than in the air outside.

Diesel soot contains particulate matter, black carbon, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and more than 40 hazardous air pollutants – all of which are dangerous to human health, especially to the developing bodies of children. The fine particles in diesel soot are so small that they penetrate deep into the lungs and get into the blood stream. Breathing diesel exhaust can contribute to both chronic and acute human health

problems such as asthma attacks, reduced lung function, lung disease, cancer and even premature death.

To date, 14 school systems in Georgia have retrofit a total of almost 1,000 buses. Currently, more than \$2 million are available to school systems

in areas that do not meet federal air quality standards. School transportation directors can apply for funding to retrofit their school buses through the Georgia EPD.

**“We have a moral responsibility to provide our children with a healthy and safe ride to school.”**

*Rebecca Watts Hull  
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