

Agencies Reward MTA for Buying Clean-Air Buses

(Nov. 6, 2001) For the fourth straight year, clean-air agencies have rewarded the MTA for buying alternative-fuel coaches for the Metro Bus fleet, recently approving \$5.2 million in funding.

The Air Quality Management District

(AQMD) approved a grant of \$2.88 million and the Mobile Source Air Pollution Reduction Committee (MSRC) a grant of \$2.34 million to reimburse the MTA for its purchase of state-of-the-art buses.

The \$5.2 million reimbursement covers portions of the MTA's purchase of 223 New Flyer buses and 585 NABI buses. The approximate cost of a CNG bus is \$315,000. The grants average up to \$12,000 per bus.

"We've been aggressive with our clean fuel program at a time when air quality regulators have decided they want to promote this technology," says Douglas Kim, the transportation planning manager in charge of the clean-air grants program.

With the addition of the \$5.2 million, clean-air revenues to the MTA since 1998 have reached \$23.7 million. While most of the money was for bus purchases, more than \$4.4 million was earned through the sale of clean-air credits to companies that generate pollution.

Because CNG buses emit only half the smog-producing nitrogen oxides (Nox) permitted by law, the MTA's fleet of CNG coaches creates "emission reduction credits" that can be sold to others. The agency has been a leader in pursuing clean-air grants and sells the equivalent of about 150 tons per year in emission reduction credits to manufacturing plants and other stationary pollution sources.

"We've been able to generate this revenue and show that you can make money by being good guys," says Kim. "That's a fringe benefit of being progressive and pushing clean-air technology."

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Key players in the MTA's clean-air grants program are, from left, Douglas Kim, transportation planning manager; Charlene Lee Lorenzo, grants manager; and John Drayton, vehicle acquisition manager. Not shown, Michael Chang, Equipment Engineering.