City of Philadelphia

City Council
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Legislation Details (With Text)

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On agenda:			**Final action:**		
Title:	Authorizing the Council Committee on the Environment to conduct hearings on the feasibility and desirability of mandating the use of biofuels in the City's fleet of cars and trucks and in school buses operated by the Philadelphia School District.				
Sponsors:	Councilmember Kenney, Councilmember Greenlee, Councilmember Reynolds Brown, Councilmember DiCicco, Councilmember Rizzo, Councilmember Krajewski, Councilmember Blackwell, Councilmember Savage, Councilmember Ramos, Councilmember Miller, Councilmember Clarke				
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Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result	Tally
3/22/2007	0	CITY COUNCIL	ADOPTED & REFERRED		
3/22/2007	0	CITY COUNCIL	READ		
3/22/2007	0	CITY COUNCIL	Introduced	Pass	

Authorizing the Council Committee on the Environment to conduct hearings on the feasibility and desirability of mandating the use of biofuels in the City's fleet of cars and trucks and in school buses operated by the Philadelphia School District.

WHEREAS, Diesel vehicles comprise only 2% of on-road vehicles yet contribute 40% of nitrogen oxide emissions and 63% of particulate matter in Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia ranked 5th worst in the nation for greatest public health risk associated with air toxics; and

WHEREAS, In 1912, Rudolf Diesel said, "The use of vegetable oils for engine fuels may seem insignificant today. But such oils may become in course of time as important as petroleum and the coal tar products of the present time"; and

WHEREAS, Pollution from diesel school buses has health implications for everyone, especially the children inside them. In 2002 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency released a health assessment of diesel engine exhaust. The assessment concluded that long term inhalation exposure is likely to pose a lung cancer hazard, and other lung damage. Also, there is evidence that diesel exhaust inhalation exacerbates existing allergies, bronchitis, and asthma symptoms because of its significant levels of particulate matter. Studies also show that children riding in school buses are subject to "self-pollution", which occurs when diesel exhaust enters the passenger cabin and becomes trapped and concentrated. Children are more susceptible to the particulate matter (and subsequent health risks) than healthy adults because children breathe faster, and their respiratory systems are not fully developed; and

WHEREAS, Biodiesel is a cleaner-burning, renewable fuel made from animal fats or vegetable oils, and

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alcohol. The fuel properties of biodiesel are very similar to those of petroleum diesel and biodiesel has the potential for replacing petroleum diesel in many applications without the need for retrofit. Biodiesel can be readily integrated into the existing petroleum diesel supply, transportation, and distribution infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, A study co-sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Department of Agriculture in May 1998 found that the energy yield of biodiesel is 280% greater than petroleum diesel fuel - the greatest energy balance of any fuel; and

WHEREAS, Biodiesel is better for the environment because it is made from renewable resources and has lower emissions compared to petroleum diesel. It is less toxic than table salt and biodegrades as fast as sugar. Since it is made in the USA from renewable resources such as soybeans, its use decreases our dependence on foreign oil and contributes to our own economy; and

WHEREAS, The Federal Government has recognized the benefits of biodiesel use for these reasons, and has introduced a Federal tax incentive for biodiesel users; and

WHEREAS, Under Pennsylvania's Act 178, the State will pay for the incremental cost of using biodiesel for fleets belonging to entities such as school districts, municipalities and non-profits. This means that fleets can use biodiesel at no added cost, regardless of the difference in fuel prices. Biodiesel increases the lubricity of the fuel, which leads to longer engine life, protection against fuel injector failure, lower maintenance costs and less equipment downtime. Ultimately these equipment improvements have a very positive economic impact for municipalities and school districts that use biodiesel; and

WHEREAS, Six local governments in North Carolina use biodiesel for their fleets. For example, Raleigh uses biodiesel in 300-400 trucks and Carrboro runs all of its diesel vehicles and equipment on B20. Also, Chapel Hill fuels 165 of its own vehicles with B20, and provides biodiesel to the UNC Hospital Bus Service, the Orange Water and Sewer Authority, the Carolina Air Care Ambulance Fleet and others; and

WHEREAS, The Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission has operated 315 of its trucks in the Philadelphia region on B20 biodiesel since at least 2002; and

WHEREAS, Currently there are over 2,500 alternative fuel school buses operating in 21 states across the U.S. in a wide range of applications and climates, displacing 4-5 million gallons of petroleum each year. In Pennsylvania last year, the Great Valley School District became the first school district in the state to start using B20 biodiesel in its 70 school buses, with funding from the Alternative Fuels Incentive Grant Program of the Pa. Department of Environmental Protection; now therefore

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELHPIA, That the Council Committee on the Environment is authorized to conduct hearings on the feasibility and desirability of mandating the use of biofuels in the City's fleet of cars and trucks and in school buses operated by the Philadelphia School District.

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