

School buses running cleaner

By Anne Marie Kyzer
annemariek@thetruecitizen.com

Filters installed on Burke County school buses last week should help residents breathe a little easier.

Burke County Public Schools' transportation department was awarded a \$240,729 grant to install diesel particulate filters, also called catalytic converters, on school buses that did not already have the technology. The filters are guaranteed to eliminate 90 percent of visible emissions, according to Stacy Allman, who oversees the grant program for the Environmental Protection Division (EPD).

Burke County transportation director Leonard Hill said filters were installed on 20 buses with the funds, and another grant is in the works to possibly cover the rest of the school system's fleet, which includes 39 more buses. Currently, the converters are not required on school buses but could eventually be required by state environmental regulations. If school systems

voluntarily install the filters, they may apply for grants to cover the costs. Should the filters become mandatory, school systems must foot the bill.

So far, only about a dozen systems in Georgia have voluntarily installed the filters.

"The EPD has given us the opportunity to get this done for free," Hill said. "If we renege, we have to pay for it. So we're just going ahead before it's mandatory."

Allman said it only makes sense for other school systems to follow suit.

"It's low hanging fruit. It can be installed on any diesel," she said, calling the filters an easy way to clear up a large amount of pollution.

Diesel particulate filters trap soot and other matter that would otherwise be blown from a bus's tailpipe. The filters need to be cleaned annually, but the grant provided \$20,000 for the cost of the necessary cleaning equipment as well.



From left, Marvin Tiesler of Yancey Power Systems, Stacy Allman of the EPD and Leonard Hill inspect a filter from beneath a bus. Yancey technicians came to Waynesboro to install the filters.