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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Project Green Fleet Recognized
as a National Model for Reducing Air Pollution**
*Collaborative efforts result in cleaner air and healthier kids.
Minnesota-based initiative wins national award
from the Environmental Protection Agency.*

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. – A voluntary collaboration of businesses, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations called **Project Green Fleet** that is reducing the pollution created by school buses across Minnesota, has been recognized by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a national model for improving air quality. This Minnesota-based initiative will receive the EPA’s Clean Air Excellence Award in the category Community Action on May 28, 2008.

Project Green Fleet provides school districts and fleet owners with EPA approved filters and catalyst mufflers that can reduce emissions from diesel bus engines by up to 50%. Buses eligible for these retrofits are older buses that are expected to still provide many years of service—newer buses create less pollution and don’t need retrofits. To date, Project Green Fleet has made possible the installation of retrofits on nearly 1,000 buses that transport tens of thousands of schoolchildren throughout Minnesota.

Diesel engines, like those on many school buses, contribute more than 50% of the air pollution generated by traffic in Minnesota. Those pollutants can concentrate inside a bus: studies have shown that pollution levels inside a school bus can be up to five times higher than outdoor air. Because children breathe more air relative to their body weight than adults, they are especially susceptible to the health problems these pollutants can cause, such as asthma and other lung diseases.

Participation in Project Green Fleet is entirely voluntary. Air quality in Minnesota currently satisfies the standards established by the federal Clean Air Act. As a result, there is no regulatory mandate to retrofit diesel engines to make them run cleaner. But ignoring pollution sources such as diesel engines places the quality of Minnesota's air at risk. Says David Thornton, assistant commissioner of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, "Minnesota is proactively taking responsibility to enhance our quality of life by reducing harmful emissions and lowering the health risk to children."

Retrofits are provided at no charge to school districts and fleet owners through the generous support of Project Green Fleet's many sponsors. Clean buses have been made possible through the support of Flint Hills Resources, Xcel Energy Foundation, Rochester Public Utilities, the Mayo Foundation, Minnesota Power, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the Environmental Protection Agency, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation, and many other sponsors. Donaldson Company, a Minnesota-based manufacturer of filtration systems, provides the retrofit equipment. Recognizing the importance of this work, the Minnesota legislature appropriated \$2.4 million to support retrofitting school buses statewide.

The EPA's Clean Air Excellence Awards recognize and honor those individuals and organizations that "have undertaken the risks of innovation, served as pioneers in their fields, and have helped improve air quality." Award winners must provide a model for others to follow, and ideally also demonstrate effective collaboration and partnerships. Project Green Fleet won in the category Community Action, one of only two nationwide, whose award winners must have "significantly improved the community quality of life."

Project Green Fleet began in 2005 when the Minnesota Environmental Initiative (MEI) partnered with the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, and numerous businesses, state government agencies, and nonprofits to create the project. MEI, a nonprofit that builds partnerships to develop collaborative solutions to Minnesota's environmental problems, continues to coordinate Project Green Fleet. For more information about Project Green Fleet, contact MEI's Bill Droessler at 612-334-3388 x103 or bdroessler@mn-ei.org, or visit www.projectgreenfleet.org.

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