



Our Children's Earth Foundation | 100 First Street, Suite 100-367, San Francisco, CA 94105

## NEWS RELEASE

Date: December 6, 2003

### BUSES GO ON BALLOT

#### *Voters May Choose to Retire Older, Polluting Models*

San Francisco, CA --- San Francisco voters will get a chance next March to tell Muni to retire more than 100 dirty, diesel buses blamed for adding pollution to the city's air.

The proposed ordinance would require the San Francisco Municipal Railway to replace all of its pre-1991 diesel buses in a series of deadlines before 2007. The measure, called the Healthy Air Enforcement Act of 2004, or Proposition I, was placed on the March 2 ballot by four members of the Board of Supervisors.

Supervisors Chris Daly, Matt Gonzalez, Tom Ammiano and Gerardo Sandoval signed the measure this week, just in time to place it on the ballot.

Under the City Charter, at least four supervisors may put before voters any ordinance that they could otherwise pass in a board meeting.

Muni spokeswoman Maggie Lynch said Michael Burns, chief executive officer, had only recently received a copy of the ballot measure, and wasn't yet prepared to give a substantive response.

Five environmental, health and community groups, including the American Lung Association, urged the supervisors to bring the issue before the voters, saying they were tired of Muni's failure to keep promises to switch to alternative fuels.

"Folks have been talking to Muni for seven years, trying to get them to clean up their diesel bus fleets," said Diane Bailey, staff scientist with the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental group. "In the meantime, the drivers, the passengers and the people of San Francisco are exposed to what we consider dangerous levels of pollution from these oldest buses."

Diesel exhaust from all sources -- mostly trucks and buses -- accounts for 70 percent of the cancer risk from air pollution in the state, according to the California Air Resources Board.

Environmental and health groups argue that practical alternatives to diesel are used by at least 30 other transit operators in California and include buses powered by compressed natural gas, liquefied natural gas and hybrid diesel-electric engines.

Some funds to replace the old buses are available under Proposition K, passed last month to renew the half-cent sales tax that funds transit projects.

The new measure, Proposition I, lays out a retirement schedule for Muni's pre-1991 buses. Buses bought before 1989 would be removed before 2005; buses bought before 1990 would be removed by 2006, and buses bought before 1991 would be removed by 2007.

In an effort to add flexibility, the San Francisco County Transportation Authority may give a one-time extension of up to 12 months "if replacement buses are not commercially available or unforeseen circumstances prevent Muni from procuring new buses on a timely basis."

In April, the lung association, the Sierra Club, Our Children's Earth and Bayview Hunters Point Community Advocates released a survey showing that many of Muni's buses are beyond their useful life and should be retired. Thirty- nine percent of diesel buses leaving two main depots during a week in March were more than 12 years old, the survey found. In response to the Board of Supervisors' past calls for Muni to replace its diesel buses, Burns has pushed for a diesel-electric hybrid bus, which he says are better suited for San Francisco's hills. But the type of hybrid Burns wants is not yet approved by the California Air Resources Board.

The environmental groups say there are several clean-fuel buses now in use by dozens of other transit agencies in the state that Muni can buy today.

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