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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS ANNOUNCES MORE THAN \$18 MILLION IN FUNDING FROM EPA'S CLEAN SCHOOL BUS PROGRAM FOR 51 NEW SCHOOL BUSES

Walter Mugdan, Deputy Regional Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency: Good morning everyone.

Robert Reichenbach, President, Bird Bus Sales: Good morning.

Mayor Eric Adams: Morning.

Mugdan: So my name's Walter Mugdan. I'm the deputy regional administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's region two office. Region two includes New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, and eight federally recognized Indian nations. So I'm delighted to be joined here today by New York City Mayor Eric Adams. And Mayor Adams, I want to congratulate you on your new plan before electrifying a hundred schools, New York City schools, by the year 2030. That's a great, great project.

Robert Reichenbach is president of Bird Bus Sales and he represents the awardees here today with the invaluable role of bringing clean school buses to New York City. Julie Tighe and the New York City Clean School Bus Coalition. Here they have an organization that's totally committed to improving air quality and the health of our city students. We're also here with New York City Deputy Mayor Meera Joshi, and New York City Schools Chancellor David Banks, and New York City Council Member Rita Joseph. So thank you very much for joining us here today.

So I'm so happy to be here today with all of you. Thanks to the passage just one year ago of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, New York City Kids and communities will soon benefit from the purchase of 51 new clean school buses, similar to the one you see right behind us here, and bigger as well. Through the EPA Clean School Bus Program, we're awarding almost 18 and a half million dollars to New York City rebate winners to purchase all electric school buses. These winners, J.P. Bus and Truck Repair, and Nesco Bus and Truck Sales will service New York City school districts, benefiting communities citywide.

Now, as you probably know, most older school buses around the country run on heavily polluting diesel fuel. Each weekday, students, many of whom stand no higher than the diesel

tailpipe of the bus, breathe in the fumes as they board and they get off the bus and they walk past it on their way home. This diesel air pollution harms their health. It's linked to asthma and other health concerns that cause kids to miss school. And this is particularly common in communities of color. Getting rid of these diesel school buses and these diesel engines will mean cleaner air for students, for bus drivers, and for the school staff who work near the bus loading areas, as well as the communities through which they drive every day.

It also means reducing greenhouse gas emissions, which cause climate change. It'll save school districts money on upgrading their fleets, providing improved health and less noise throughout the community. Protecting our kids and tackling the climate crisis is genuinely a win-win.

New York City has one of the country's highest asthma rates among children and young adults. Transitioning away from diesel school buses and toward electric, clean buses is a climate smart investment in our children's future. Clear air, less pollution — these are net positives for every community in New York. And thanks to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, this is just the beginning.

EPA designed the Clean School Bus Program to prioritize underserved and overburdened communities across the country. These awards are the first \$1 billion out of a five year, \$5 billion program under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Most of that money will benefit underserved and overburdened communities with the greatest need and it will forever transform school bus fleets across the United States. I'm not surprised that New York City is part of this really important transformation. It's great to see that our kids and our communities right here in New York City are going to benefit from it.

It's very clear that people in all communities want and need clean school buses. In fact, there was such high demand for the Clean School Bus Program in its first year that EPA recently nearly doubled the amount of money for it. We look forward to announcing the next round of funding in the coming months, which will also include an ambitious grant program. We expect to make another billion available for clean school buses sometime in 2023. So if you're an applicant who did not win in this first round, or if you didn't apply, don't worry, just be on the lookout for the next round. I encourage school districts to apply for the first time in the next round or to reapply in order to benefit from this historic and transformative program.

So thank you all for coming here to celebrate this moment. We're grateful to provide support for New York City and for all of us here for a better and cleaner future for our kids. And now it's my honor to turn the podium over to Mayor Eric Adams.

Mayor Adams: Thank you.

Mugdan: Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Adams: Thank you. Thank you so much. You are always welcome here, Walter, when you bring money. We like those big checks. And I don't think any parent would ever forget the first time they dropped off their son or daughter to school and placed them on that bus and stood there for a moment watching that bus leave sight. That separation is intense and it is unforgettable. But there was also an unforgettable moment last week when the team stood at the

school. And we asked the question, we stated, "How many of you have asthma?" 50 percent of the class raised their hands, 50 percent of the class.

And so we often think about saving our children from the visible threat, but lurking among us from the fossil fuel that was coming from the smokestacks, to the exhaust that was coming from the school buses.

We were feeding the healthcare crises and we've ignored it for so long in general, but specifically in Black and brown communities, asthma and the impacts of asthma and other health related issues that come from the exhaust. It impacts the quality of life. It impacts the economics, the days of work, hospitals, the amount of money that is spent from those little pumps. Every child in the classroom seems to be walking around with the same pump when they get an asthma attack. It impacts on their healthcare, unable to play some of the normal games that children play due to the challenges of having their passages shrink and they're unable to take in air. And it's a frightful sight. And chancellor, I remember one of our chancellors we lost due to a severe asthma attack.

And so this is something that is important. And I just want to take my hat off to Senator Schumer, who's not here, and the Biden-Harris team for this initiative. And thanks so much, deputy mayor, for putting in that grant, filling it out. And I'm hoping we get another bite of that apple because this is not enough money. We want more. This is the Big Apple, so we should get big dollars. And this is a big step forward towards the future by saying these yellow buses are now going to be not only safe to transport our children internally, but the outside fumes are no longer going to be harmful to the 51 new clean buses this \$18 million is going to allow us to put into our transportation system.

The buses, as it was indicated, were run entirely on renewable energy. Who would've thought this was possible? But now we are seeing the possibilities materialize every day. No more dirty fossil fuels, no more harming our children by breathing in these dirty fumes. By accelerating the transition to zero emission school buses that are far better for our children, we're creating a better future for our children. That is what is happening — the government works when we coordinate. And this was a Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, so we took the money that both sides of the aisle came together with, and with the leadership of our president, we took that money, and we are looking towards the future of creating an infrastructure that is going to be safe for the children and families.

And we've been talking a lot about this the last few days. We reflected on the 10 year anniversary of Superstorm Sandy, and we know the impact of it. And it's clear we must make big changes to protect our environment, our true children, and our future. New York City is taking action. And when you do it here, it cascades throughout the entire country. If we can show that electric school buses operate well and are productive here, it is something that will signal the entire country. The good housekeeping seal of approval that comes from this city allows other smaller municipalities to expand on these ideas.

So we are going to be expanding renewable energy and reducing emissions, switching to these electrified powered school buses, electrifying our schools and a fleet of clean energy buses to get children to their destination. So it's something we must do now to protect our city and our children. And I say over and over again, we have two mothers, a mother that gave birth to us and

Mother Earth that sustains us, and that love of both is going to be significant for today and for all of our tomorrows. So again, Walter, I thank you and you're welcome here anytime with a checkbook.

Mugdan: We'll be happy to be back another time. Thank you so much, Mr. Mayor. Now let me invite Robert Reichenbach up, president of Bird Bus Sales.

Reichenbach: Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Good morning. For 30 years plus, factory directed Bird Bus Sales has been a long, steady leader in the school transportation industry. We've helped fleets convert from small bus to big bus and vice versa, as well as to adopt brand new fuel types. Safety is paramount within the school bus transportation industry. We're here, we're supporters of being one of the few states that have seat belts on school buses, and we're also leading the charge in electric buses. In 2018, we were 90 percent diesel sales in the school transportation industry. In 2022, we are now 90 percent alternative fuel buses. And with the help of the guidance of the state, the legislation in 2027 will be 100 percent electric zero emission school buses. Give a round of applause.

This is all for the benefit of the world's most precious cargo. We applaud the EPA, the administration, Senator Schumer, Mayor Adams for all your support. Thank you to Julie and the League of Conservation Voters. This grant and rebate proves that it's critical to involve the distributors of the school buses and that it's an important part of the EV deployment process. We congratulate Consolidated Bus for all the hard work that they do transporting our students in New York City, and we look forward to the leadership as they take the dive into electric buses.

As we move forward with the transition of nearly 10,000 school buses in New York City, 45,000 school buses in New York State, myself and Bird Bus look forward to working with the different parties and the EV initiative to minimize the cost, cover the incremental cost, which we have plenty of work to do with. Thank you again for this opportunity. Thank you to all parties involved in this initiative and let's continue to increase the buzz around the electric vehicle industry. Thank you.

Mugdan: Thank you very much. And now let's call up Julie Tighe from the New York City Clean School Bus Coalition.

Julie Tighe, President, New York League of Conservation Voters: Thank you so much. I'm Julie Tighe. I'm president of the New York League of Conservation Voters. We're a statewide environmental organization in New York that fights for clean order, clean air, renewable energy, and open space for political action. And I'm here today on behalf of the New York City and New York State Clean School Bus Coalitions.

Every day, over 2 million students in New York rely on the state's nearly 50,000 school buses, to get to school on time. There are so many harmful environmental and public health impacts of our overwhelmingly diesel based school bus lead. And we're so excited to hear how many more alternative fuel powered buses you're selling these days at Bird Bus. We congratulate you on that. School buses and other heavy duty vehicles in the transportation sector cause a huge amount of our greenhouse gas emissions. They're nearly one third and they spew out air pollution.

The air pollution actually inside of the buses may be as much as 12 times higher than that outside of the school buses, meaning that the kids who are on those buses are breathing in dirtier air while they're doing it, and so are the school bus drivers, and in New York City, the matrons. So we know that there's a lot of impacts associated with that. Asthma rates in New York state have tripled in the past three decades, affecting 315,000 kids, and is the leading cause of emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and school absenteeism. In New York City, the rates of respiratory illnesses, including asthma, are significantly higher in environmental justice communities, in some places as high as 25 percent in the South Bronx. Clean Electric School buses can help to eradicate this issue.

In the past 12 months alone, we've made huge progress towards moving us off of these dirty diesel buses. Last fall, New York City passed a law moving all of its buses to electric.

Then Governor Hochul included legislation in her budget, and now all school buses statewide must be electric by 2035, and all sales by 2027. But we know that cost remains the biggest barrier to adoption of these zero emission vehicles because the buses can cost three to four times more than their diesel counterparts. So we need funding sources like the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law's Clean Bus program from the EPA to jumpstart that transition to electric school buses in time to meet those New York City and New York State electric bus mandates.

So we're super excited for the EPA to be funding 51 new Bird Buses here in New York City and 184 statewide, which will help protect our students, our workers, and our communities from the negative environmental and health impacts of dirty school buses. And I would be remiss if I did not say that New Yorkers will have an opportunity this November to provide more support for electric school buses because there's 500 million allocated for electric school buses and they're charging infrastructure in the New York Environmental Bond Act, which will be on the ballot this election day, and it's on the back of the ballot, so we want to make sure people flip it over.

I want to thank, again, President Biden, the EPA, Senator Schumer, the New York Congressional delegation, the mayor for your leadership in going and getting this money and bringing it home. You're right, we're the Big Apple, mayor, Joshi. We're so grateful for that. And I'm delighted to be here with our partners in the Clean School Bus Coalition and in the bus community. So thank you so much.

Mugdan: Thank you, Julie. And Mr. Mayor, thank you so much for being here. If there's any questions, we'll take some afterwards off on the side here. Thank you all for coming. We appreciate it. Bye-bye.

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