



ANOTHER RBEP SUCCESS: Pilot program boosts biodiesel use in the St. Louis area

The Regional Biomass Energy Program (RBEP) promotes increased production and use of bioenergy resources, and helps advance the use of renewable biomass feedstocks and technologies. Historically, the RBEP leverages two nonfederal dollars for every federal dollar it administers.

CHALLENGE

Biodiesel is a nontoxic, biodegradable fuel that has been proven to lower exhaust emissions even when used in a blend called B20 that consists of 20% biodiesel and 80% diesel fuel. Because it is a relatively new fuel, many fleet owners are reluctant to switch to B20 without seeing evidence that it is economical and won't create any operating problems.

Benefits of Pilot Program

- **Provided the City of St. Louis with evidence supporting a switch to biodiesel fuel**
- **Encouraged the Bi-State bus fleet to switch to biodiesel**
- **Addressed concerns among local fleet operators about using biodiesel**
- **Initiated plans to develop a biodiesel processing plant in Missouri**

"I think that the pilot program definitely helped to create a friendly environment for biodiesel in the St. Louis area. Very concretely, it brought the City of St. Louis into the biodiesel camp."

Tom Verry
Field Services Director
Missouri Soybean Association

RBEP SOLUTION

The U.S. Department of Energy's Regional Biomass Energy Program helped fund a pilot program in which all 1,200 diesel-fueled vehicles operated by the City of St. Louis Equipment Services Division (ESD) ran on B20 for a month. The goals of the program included, (1) demonstrating the switch to B20 could be made quickly and efficiently, (2) proving the fuel does not cause engine problems, and (3) establishing that B20 is cheaper to use than any other type of alternative fuel.



**U.S. Department
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State & Alternative Fuel Provider Program

The State & Alternative Fuel Provider Program is authorized under Sections 501 and 507 of EPACT and requires state government and alternative fuel provider fleets to purchase alternative fuel vehicles as a percentage of their annual light-duty vehicle (LDV) acquisitions. In addition to acquisition requirements, fuel provider fleets are required to fuel their vehicles with alternative fuel whenever possible.

Fleets must report annually to the U.S. Department of Energy on their compliance with the regulations. The program applies only to fleets with more than 50 LDVs located in one of the 125 designated metropolitan areas. For more information, e-mail regulatory_info@afdc.nrel.gov or visit www.ott.doe.gov/epact/state_fleets.html.

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RESULTS

The switch to B20 proved to be very easy — it simply involved filling vehicle tanks with the new fuel. There were no operating problems using B20 (even with the city's fire engines and ambulances). ESD vehicle operators were extremely pleased with the way the fuel performed, and maintenance personnel observed the reduced emissions that resulted from using the fuel.

BENEFITS

The pilot testing program showed the City of St. Louis that using the B20 biodiesel blend could be very helpful in meeting Phase 2 requirements of the Energy Policy Act (EPACT) when those requirements become law. In the near term, switching to B20 would give the city an opportunity to avoid being downgraded to a “serious” non-attainment area by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency due to high ozone levels. Being downgraded would severely hamper the economic growth of the city and metropolitan area.

Test results were published in a report and discussed during many face-to-face meetings between the St. Louis Commissioner of Equipment Services and local fleet operators. Using B20 fuel gained considerable momentum as a result. The St. Louis District of the Missouri Department of Transportation is now using B20 to meet Phase 1 EPACT mandates, and the Bi-State Development Agency is committed to using the fuel in all St. Louis buses to help ease the city's environmental concerns.

There is now interest in building a biodiesel processing plant capable of making 10 million gallons of biodiesel per year. This would benefit Missouri soybean farmers because biodiesel can be made from soybean oil.

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