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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Spanier Buses Go Green in St. Cloud

Voluntary efforts result in cleaner air and healthier kids

SAINT CLOUD, Minn. –School buses in one of the fleets serving the St. Cloud Area School District 742 are now running cleaner and greener thanks to the voluntary efforts of **Spanier Bus Service**. Spanier Bus Service, Inc., recently partnered with **Project Green Fleet**, a collaboration of businesses, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations dedicated to improving Minnesota’s air quality by reducing diesel emissions.

Buses are made “green” by the installation of federally approved filters and catalyst mufflers that can reduce engine emissions by up to 50%. Buses eligible for retrofits are older buses with diesel engines that are expected to still provide many years of service—newer buses create less pollution and don’t need retrofits. Forty-one school buses in the Spanier Bus Service fleet have been retrofitted with pollution control equipment.

Diesel vehicles contribute more than 50% of the air pollution generated by all 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 in outdoor air.¹ 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 upper respiratory ailments.

Cleaner running buses serving St. Cloud Schools are part of a larger statewide effort by Project Green Fleet. To date, more than 1,700 buses have been retrofitted in cities such as Duluth,

Bemidji, Rochester, and the Minneapolis and St. Paul area. Those retrofits have reduced emissions exposure for thousands of school children. Spanier Bus Service is the first St. Cloud bus fleet to partner with Project Green Fleet, but as part of a goal to retrofit all eligible school buses in the state – a total of approximately 4000 buses – Project Green Fleet hopes to work with other school bus fleets in the St. Cloud Area.

Participation in Project Green Fleet is entirely voluntary. Air quality in Minnesota currently satisfies federal standards administered by the U.S Environmental Protection Agency. As a result, there is no regulatory mandate in Minnesota to retrofit diesel engines to make them run cleaner. “The staff at Spanier Bus Service has always worked to minimize the affect our fleet has on air quality” said Ken Spanier, CEO. “When we became aware of the technical and material support this program gave us, we enthusiastically embraced the retrofit. It took a full year of planning and working while transportation operations continued. I am proud of my team and very happy with the results.”

Thanks to Project Green Fleet’s sponsors, participation is completely free to participating bus fleets. In St. Cloud, clean buses have been made possible through a federal grant from the U.S Environmental Protection Agency. Project Green Fleet has also received support from sponsors such as Flint Hills Resources, Andersen Corporation, Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation of Minnesota and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. Project Green Fleet worked with Donaldson Company Inc., a Minnesota-based manufacturer of clean diesel technologies to purchase the pollution control equipment and train Spanier Bus Service staff to install the equipment.

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 Emily Franklin at 612-334-3388 x114 or efranklin@mn-ei.org, or visit www.projectgreenfleet.org.

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ⁱ Wargo, J., L. Wargo & N. Alderman (2006). The Harmful Effects of Diesel Exhaust: A Case for Public Policy Change. *Environment and Human Health, Inc.* www.ehhi.org/reports/exhaust/exhaust06.pdf.

