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Minnesota gets \$3 million to upgrade diesels

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The nonprofit Minnesota Environmental Initiative [MEI] will announce today that it's received a record \$3 million grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency [EPA] to cut diesel emissions statewide through its Project Green Fleet, a collaboration with school bus companies and other diesel operators.

The program should inspire about \$15 million in private spending on related pollution-control equipment and about 50,000-plus hours of work by mechanics.

Each \$1 in clean-diesel retrofit spending delivers \$13 in environmental benefits, according to federal officials.

Bill Droessler, MEI's director of environmental projects, said the grant will expand Green Fleet to 45 trucking, waste-hauling and construction companies that use diesel equipment, 15 school districts and bus fleets, several private installation providers and municipalities.

Project Green Fleet partners will upgrade about 700 older school buses and heavy-duty diesel vehicles with pollution control equipment, re-powered engines, vehicle replacements and idle-reduction technologies.

"Minnesota is proactively taking responsibility ... by reducing harmful emissions and lowering the health risk to children," said David Thornton, assistant commissioner of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

Diesel-fueled buses and heavy equipment account for just 10 percent of Minnesota motor fuel consumption but half of related pollution, including fine particulate matter, or soot, that has been linked to asthma, cancer and heart disease. Pollutants can be five times higher inside an old bus than in the outdoor air.

Since 2005, Project Green Fleet has retrofit more than 1,200 school buses and nearly 80 heavy-duty diesel vehicles statewide. Green Fleet partners include filter-manufacturer Donaldson Co, Ziegler Cat, the Mayo and Blue Cross foundations, Flint Hills and Xcel Energy.

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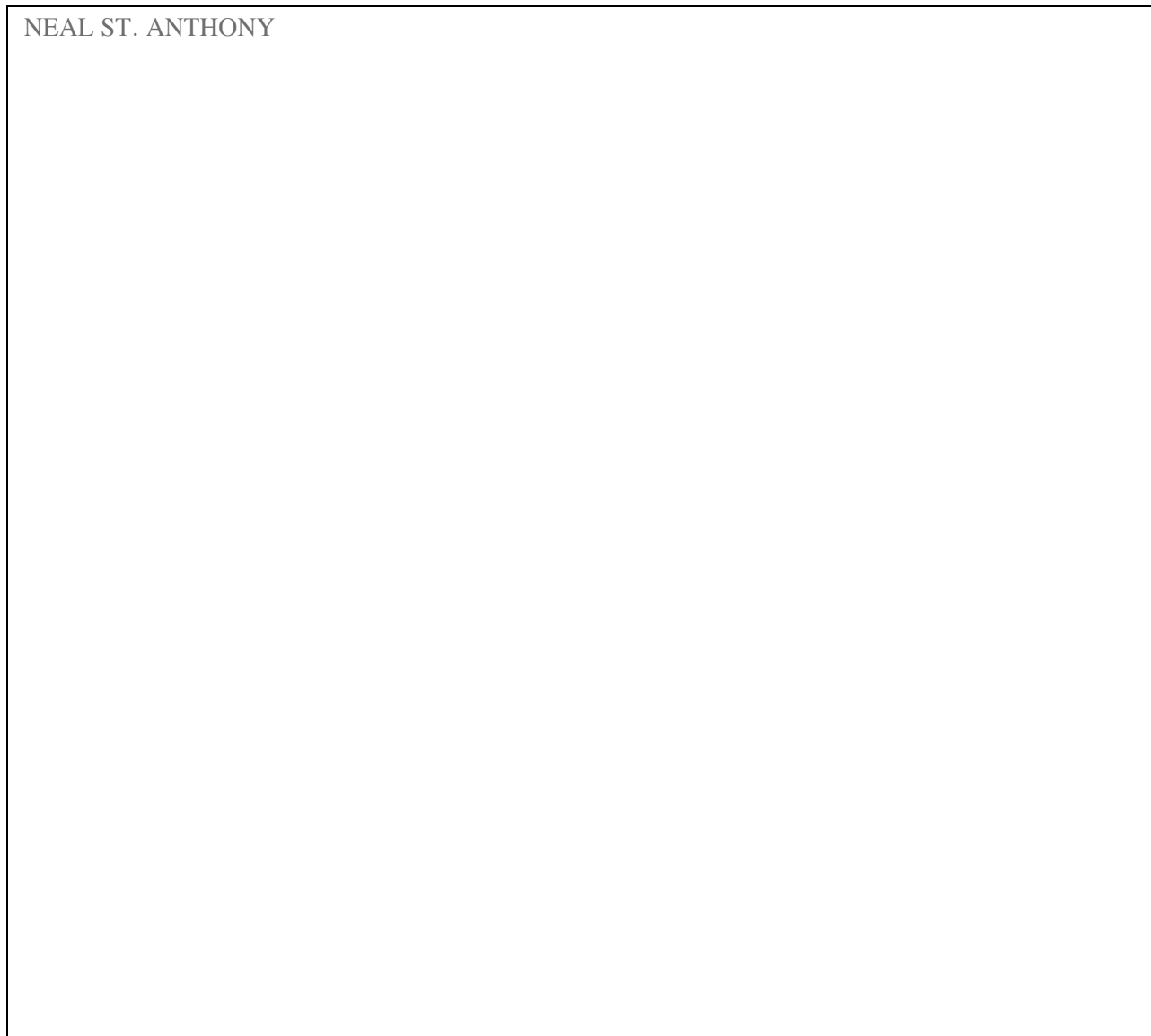
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