

Funding Programs Available for Clean Truck Technology and Fuels to Reduce Diesel Exhaust Impacts in New York City

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By **Lidia Henderson**

Funding opportunities for the replacement of older diesel trucks in New York City was just one of the topics recently covered in a well-attended educational webinar. On June 3, 2020, Empire Clean Cities, Energy Vision and New York City (NYC) Department of Transportation hosted the webinar, “Advancing Clean Air and Climate Goals with Clean Fuel Trucks.” Presenters discussed how truck fleet owners and operators can bring healthier air to residents of the South Bronx by transitioning to affordable, clean, alternatively fueled medium- and heavy-duty trucks. Over 100 attendees heard from seven different alternative fuel stakeholders, including New York State Senator Alessandra Biaggi, WE ACT for Environmental Justice, NYC Department of Transportation, Clean Energy Fuels, Manhattan Beer Distributors, Energy Vision and Empire Clean Cities.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, low-income communities in New York City are more severely affected by the virus than other demographics. As part of the webinar, New York State Senator Alessandra Biaggi, who represents the South Bronx, explained the direct connection between pollution and the devastation that has been brought by COVID-19. “Breathing in polluted air day in and day out has led to exactly the kinds of comorbidities – such as asthma, heart disease

and lung disease – that make you more vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic, and are issues that people living in the Bronx live with on a day-to-day basis. In many ways, COVID is just a preview of the looming threat of climate change, but the Bronx is already living with the impacts of climate change and environmental racism,” said Senator Biaggi.

RNG Now Available for Fleets Fueling in the Bronx

The webinar focused on renewable natural gas (RNG) and its benefits as a vehicle fuel. RNG is essentially biogas made by capturing and extracting methane emissions from our waste in landfills, large animal agricultural operations and wastewater treatment plants. It is also the lowest carbon fuel available today. RNG is currently available for public and private fleets in New York City from a fueling station in Hunts Point, the Bronx operated by Clean Energy Fuels. Manhattan Beer Distributors is a private beverage distribution company with a warehouse in the South Bronx. They currently operate approximately 200 natural gas vehicles in New York City and are prepared to continue their transition to an alternative fuel fleet. During the webinar, Manhattan Beer Distributors provided a testimonial on the feasibility of switching to alternative fuels in day to day business operations, and the resulting cost savings and public health benefits.

Funding for Replacement Trucks in NYC

Luckily for fleets such as Manhattan Beer Distributors, the New York City (NYC) Clean Trucks Program officially launched on June 3, 2020 and is now accepting applications. The program is administered by the NYC Department of Transportation using New York State Volkswagen Settlement Funds. The program makes \$12,000 to \$185,000 available for fleet applicants in Industrial Business Zones (IBZs) to replace older, diesel trucks with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) emission compliant electric, alternative fuel (natural gas, diesel-electric hybrid, and plug-in hybrid electric) or new diesel trucks. Local commercial fleet operators are encouraged to apply for the rebate incentive funding to assist in their transition to clean trucks and technologies. For more detailed information on the NYC Clean Trucks Program, visit the program [website](#), or read Empire Clean Cities recent [article](#) in ACT News.

Funding opportunities such as the NYC Clean Trucks Program offer immense benefit to communities that are burdened with heavy traffic congestion from diesel trucks and suffer from the resulting poor air quality. By prioritizing truck replacement projects in IBZ areas such as Hunts Point and the South Bronx, the NYC Clean Trucks Program ensures that available Volkswagen Settlement funding addresses health and race disparities related to our transportation industry. Cecil Corbin-Mark, Deputy Director of WE ACT for Environmental Justice, drew a connection between recent weeks of protest and the environmental justice movement in New York City. According to Corbin-Mark, “These events are not only talking about the issues of policing which have to be addressed in our country, but for those of us in the environmental justice movement, we’ve been talking about air quality as it relates to health, climate and our communities. And it is time that we stop avoiding dealing with the heart of these issues, and the systemic racism that has pervaded this country for far too long.”

Private Funding Source Through Clean Energy Fuels

In addition to public funding sources, Clean Energy Fuels announced its Zero Now program that provides financing for fleet owners to convert to RNG. According to Mark Riley, the Vice President for Canada and the Eastern US, Clean Energy Fuels is offering up to \$40,000 towards the purchase of new natural gas trucks. The funding can be combined with the NYC Clean Trucks Program funding for fleets looking to make a large transition and impact. However, the applicant must check with the Program Administrator first, as some restrictions may apply. As summarized by Matt Tomich of Energy Vision, a nonprofit dedicated to advancing commercial and emerging technology solutions that will enable a low-carbon future, “The barriers to entry are lower than they’ve ever been, and there are lots of new programs and resources to help fleets in and around the South Bronx to make the transition away from diesel.”

For fleets interested in adopting alternative or electric fuels, the US Department of Energy Clean Cities Coalitions provide additional tools and resources that can help fleet owners analyze and plan for the conversion to clean truck technology. Coalitions such as Empire Clean Cities can help fleet owners with funding and incentive programs, vehicle search tools, station locators and online calculators. You can find more information about these tools on the website [Empire Clean Cities](#). A recording of the webinar event can be found [here](#). For the original event press release, please visit [Energy Vision](#).