

Fine to help retrofit polluting Valley school buses

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A fine of \$103,000 against a Minnesota company selling illegal diesel filter systems will help school buses in the San Joaquin Valley comply with clean air regulations.

The California Air Resources Board fined the Donaldson Company of Minneapolis for selling 103 filter systems that did not include a back pressure monitor, a device essential to the performance of the filter and the engine of the vehicle.

The filters were intended for use on trucks and buses in order to limit the amount of particulate matter and other forms of pollution present in diesel exhaust.

Of the total fine, \$25,750 went to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District to support a project that retrofits school buses with diesel filters.

Another \$77,250 went to the California Air Pollution Control Fund to support projects and research to improve the state's air quality.

Donaldson has since mounted a service campaign to upgrade its systems sold in California with a back pressure monitor and other modification.

[S.F. Chronicle blog, Thursday, March 8, 2012:](#)

SF Bay Area Bike Share: the joys and challenges

Bike share is big across the planet, and San Francisco and the peninsula are finally on their way to getting their first large-scale bike share program. 'Finally' because there are now more than 300 bike share systems in the world, and the Bay Area is just one of thousands of systems in the works. The project is in the proposal phase now, so exact details of how the pilot will work won't be available until later this spring when the project is awarded.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is working with the SFMTA to bring the 50 bike share stations and 500 bikes to San Francisco's downtown core later this year. The pilot project will place another 500 bikes along the Caltrain corridor, in Redwood City, Palo Alto, Mountain View and San Jose.

Public bike share – bicycles in a public system that users can borrow to get around a town or campus – is not new. The first systems date back to 1965. And while they were once the province of major cities like Paris, the systems are now making their way into the suburbs – and into corporations.

The concept is simple: users check out a bicycle from a station and return it to a different station near their destination. The stations feature kiosks with credit card technology to pay for and unlock a bike. The bikes range from cool to goofy in appearance but ride well enough, and use wireless Internet and GPS technology, as well as adjustable seats, baskets, lights and other accessories. The systems are easy to use, self-service, and available around the clock.

Now imagine experiencing SF this way – neighborhood to neighborhood – Fillmore to the Haight, Soma to the Ferry Building to North Beach. All with no worries about driving, traffic and of course, parking. For tourists, this is the genius of bike share – it lets you experience an area more intimately and in smaller pieces, rolling station to station. Using the map or just wandering, you learn your way around and are free to bar- or museum-hop, whatever you want. It's also a great solution for lunch or errands during a work day.

Bike share is a way to reduce traffic congestion and pollution as well as provide the "last mile" solution for users of public transit who have that first and last bit to cover on either end of their commute.

Part of the emphasis of the Bay Area pilot is to make it possible for Caltrain riders to get to and from the station on a bike share bike. Since bikes relieve the maddening waste of space of single

occupant cars and don't have the scheduling problems of buses, the more of the traffic load they support in a city center the better.

So rather than a bike fad, this is a solution to a bundle of urban issues, starting with the most basic one: how to get around a crowded urban core. As one of the densest cities in the country, both the tourist and transit benefits apply to San Francisco.

Paris is often noted as the first major city that figured out a way to structure the system for maximum effect, and despite significant teething problems, their Velib system has transformed the way people, both residents and tourists, experience the city. Vélib stations are closer together than the otherwise very convenient Métro (subway) stations and there are easy web pages that show how many bikes are available at each station, in real time.

Vélib users can explore the City of Light for little to no money by simply stringing together a series of bike trips, moving from station to station while stopping and wandering at will. Paris is one of many systems that's free for the first 30 minutes, so you can just swap out your bike for a new one every half hour and cruise for free. A subscription to the system costs just over \$3 a month.

Meanwhile, major systems are in place in Boston, Minneapolis, Barcelona, Mexico City and many others. Hangzhou, China, has the largest at 60,600 bikes for a city of 7 million, with plans to go to a staggering 175,000 by 2020. This is not simple transportation but Mass Transit.

Boston has a similar size and density to San Francisco, and their system rolled out last year (although they closed down for what turned out to be a very mild winter.) Lyon, France is also similar in size to San Francisco, and they've enjoyed a robust and stable system called Velov since 2005, which now has 4,000 bikes.

Bike share systems take away some disadvantages of owning a bike, such as theft and parking, but do limit users to the network of stations. This will be one of the challenges of the pilot stage, since the stations will not cover much of the city and could easily be overwhelmed by demand. Fifty stations doesn't go far for a city that could easily end up with 500.

There's also the issue of who foots the bill for the system in the long run. The biggest, most viable programs have been underwritten by advertising agencies such as JCDecaux in France or by Barclays in London, allowing the cities to run them as cost-neutral services, or are run by state-owned corporations, such as in China. Washington DC's Capitol Bikeshare is a taxpayer-supported program involving both the District of Columbia and Arlington County. Startup costs were supported by grants and subsidies from the US Department of Transportation, Virginia, and other agencies. Administrators there hope that project revenues will cover 50% of annual operating costs.

The Bay Area pilot project is funded through a combination of local, regional and federal grants with major funding coming from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's Bay Area Climate Initiatives Grant Program (BACI). With the pilot getting off the ground later in 2012, it might be some time before a full-scale system can be in place.

Although just a pilot, the idea is clearly to add San Francisco and the peninsula to the list of major metro areas that have a complete system. It's not hard to imagine a system covering all of San Francisco, and the peninsula/Caltrain corridor, allowing people to move easily across San Francisco's neighborhoods for work or play, seamlessly combining bike travel with bus, BART, and Caltrain. Such a system would greatly improve the urban experience, since it answers a basic need at a much lower full-system cost – moving humans around using the current infrastructure.

And while it would be great to have the system running in a robust way for coming events such as the America's Cup there is still the question of coordination with San Francisco's extensive and healthy bike rental market and the intense infrastructure requirements along the waterfront from Embarcadero up to the Golden Gate Bridge.

Bike share has shown that it works best when it's carefully integrated into the natural and planned flow of traffic, such as in Paris or Hangzhou – and when there's funding to provide sufficient concentrations of bikes and stations to meet demand.

Bike share happens at an intersection of private and public space, and the rules and options are changing rapidly while cities try to figure out what works. So while San Francisco looks to implement the pilot, we'll continue to learn from municipal and corporate bike share systems around the world.

