

DALLAS MORNING NEWS March 7, 2007

BNSF buying engines that pollute less

Railroad's move follows news of EPA's tougher rules

By KATHERINE YUNG / The Dallas Morning News kyung@dallasnews.com

Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corp., the country's second-largest freight railroad, announced new efforts Tuesday to reduce emissions from its diesel locomotives.

The Fort Worth-based railroad made the announcement just days after the Environmental Protection Agency proposed stringent new emissions standards for diesel locomotives, which spew soot and nitrogen oxides, a key ingredient in smog.

"It's very important that railroads reduce emissions so that we all have cleaner air," said Mark Stehly, Burlington Northern's assistant vice president of environment and research development. "We will work with the EPA to make sure the regulations ... can be achieved. We are supportive of it."

Thanks in part to state grants, the railroad is adding 14 ultra-low-emission locomotives made by National Railway Equipment Co. for its rail yards in Houston and the Dallas area. It's planning to buy 50 more.

The locomotives, which cost about \$1.4 million each, discharge only 10 percent to 20 percent as much pollution as regular locomotives. They're up to 20 percent more fuel-efficient, which will save the railroad money.

But they lack the horsepower necessary to haul freight over long distances.

For these kinds of trips, Burlington Northern is buying 200 of the new Evolution Series locomotives made by General Electric Co. It has already added 600 to its fleet.

At a cost of \$2 million each, these are the lowest-polluting long-haul locomotives in the U.S., Mr. Stehly said. They generate only a third as much nitrogen oxide as regular locomotives, but that won't be enough to meet the proposed new EPA standards.

Burlington Northern will need to modify the engines and eventually add devices to clean their exhaust.

The railroad has been retrofitting its locomotives that were built after 1973 with kits that reduce emissions of nitrogen oxides by a third.

About 2,000 locomotives have undergone the retrofitting, with 2,000 more to go. Burlington Northern maintains a fleet of 6,600 locomotives.

ASSOCIATED PRESS March 6, 2007

With taxpayer help, BNSF buying cleaner locomotives

By DAVID KOENIG, AP Business Writer

FORT WORTH (AP) — Facing tougher environmental regulations and rising fuel bills, freight railroads are buying new locomotives that spew less exhaust and get better mileage.

In the past two weeks, Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corp. has taken delivery of two gleaming locomotives it says will help clear the air around its yards in Houston, Fort Worth and other big cities.

The new machines cut nitrogen oxide and diesel exhaust by 80 to 90 percent. BNSF has 12 more on order, and recently put out bids to buy another 50.

Texas taxpayers are picking up most of the tab.

Eighty percent of the roughly \$1.5 million cost of the first 14 locomotives is being paid

out of a state environmental program funded by vehicle registration fees. After that, the state and BNSF will split the cost 50-50.

Company officials say it's a fair deal. They say that with the taxpayers' help, they will be able to move more quickly to replace older locomotives that guzzle more diesel and produce more emissions.

"Reducing emissions and improving air quality is good for everybody," said Mark Stehly, a vice president at BNSF Railway Co., Burlington Northern's operating division. "It's good for our employees. It's good for the people who live near our yards."

By getting better mileage, the trains are also good for Burlington Northern's bottom line.

The company has been upgrading its fleet for several years, retrofitting about half its 6,000-plus locomotives to burn fuel more efficiently.

BNSF spent \$2.73 billion on fuel last year, the company's second-biggest cost at 24 percent of operating expenses, behind only wages and benefits at 33 percent.

The railroad's 2006 fuel bill was 40 percent higher than the year before. That's because prices went up, from \$1.40 to \$1.85 per gallon on average, and so did consumption nearly 1.48 billion gallons of diesel last year as train traffic increased.

The two newest locomotives were made by National Railway Equipment Co. and have three 700-horsepower engines that turn on and off automatically to reduce idling time. They burn about one-sixth less fuel than other locomotives with similar power.

Last month, National Railway announced it would build 60 copies for Union Pacific Corp. and two each for the Fort Worth & Western Railroad and the Dallas, Garland & Northeastern Railroad.

Burlington Northern officials say the locomotives will meet new emissions standards that the EPA proposed last week until 2015.

But the new locomotives, called generator-set or GenSets, will solve only a tiny part of Burlington Northern's challenge in meeting tougher emissions regulations.

For one thing, the GenSets will hardly make a ripple in BNSF's fleet. The railroad must keep upgrading its other locomotives to meet emissions standards.

Also, the GenSets will be used in a very limited way gathering and moving small numbers of cars at rail yards in heavily polluted cities such as Houston and Los Angeles.

At 2,100-horsepower, they aren't strong enough to pull a full train. Heavy lifting takes locomotives with bigger engines.

"And bigger engines are dirtier," said William C. Hawkins, National Railway's vice president of engineering.

National Railway and others are working on more powerful low-emission locomotives that could haul coal, crops and other freight. But so far, nobody has figured out how to fit enough small, cleaner engines on the limited frame of a typical locomotive.

General Electric Co., the largest U.S. producer of locomotives, says technological breakthroughs are needed to produce locomotives that will meet EPA's proposed new emission rules. GE's resistance to the EPA proposal enraged environmentalists.

"GE has to get in gear," said Jenny Powers, a spokeswoman for the Natural Resources Defense Council. "They're putting the brakes on this, and we're not happy."

Burlington Northern, which buys many locomotives from GE, says it hasn't taken a position in GE's fight with the EPA.

"It's really a manufacturer's issue," Stehly said. "We want (emissions) to go as low as they can go and still give us a locomotive we can use every day."