

# Anti-Idling

CASE STUDY

# Lexington

EDUCATION ENCOURAGEMENT ENGAGEMENT EVALUATION ENGINEERING EQUITY | URBAN RURAL **SUBURBAN**

## Background:

The goal of the [Massachusetts Anti-Idling Law](#) is to improve air quality by reducing unnecessary pollution from idling vehicles. Massachusetts General Law limits engine idling to **five minutes**, including on school grounds, with exception when idling is necessary. For example, school buses idling to operate required flashing lights is necessary, while idling to sit in a parking lot in mild weather is unnecessary.

Schools across Massachusetts are working with municipal officials to install permanent “NO IDLING” signage to remind staff, families, and bus operators to protect campus air quality. Ongoing education and awareness are essential to help school communities understand why anti-idling matters and how small actions can reduce pollution.

## Overview:

In 2004, the Town of Lexington formed an ad hoc Anti-Idling Committee in response to growing community concerns about pollution from diesel school buses, commercial and tour vehicles, and family vehicles during school arrival and dismissal. Committee efforts led to anti-idling workshops for school bus drivers, and a Town bylaw to strengthen the state law locally. “No Idling” decals were affixed to all Town vehicles, School Committee policies were updated, and regulatory signage was posted in 75 locations around schools, town buildings, parks, and playing fields. Student involvement was central to the campaign. Art contests engaged students with winning entries featured on informational “green tickets” distributed by Police. High School students collected idling data, and a science fair project visually demonstrated pollution buildup using a sock over a vehicle tailpipe. These efforts raised awareness and helped make Lexington a leader in reducing unnecessary vehicle idling.

## Lessons Learned:

- ✓ Education and positive enforcement can be more effective than punitive measures; a friendly “ticket” system and student art encourages compliance with a supportive approach.
- ✓ Aligning Municipal efforts to develop a Town bylaw reinforces the legitimacy of the anti-idling message.

**NO IDLING: TURN  
OFF YOUR ENGINES**

**Idling for more than 5  
minutes is not allowed in  
Massachusetts.**

Running your engine unnecessarily  
creates air pollution that is  
especially unhealthy for kids!



Thank you for keeping  
our air clean!

[www.lexingtonma.gov/NoIdling](http://www.lexingtonma.gov/NoIdling)



## Impacts



Increased public awareness of health and environmental harms caused by vehicle idling led to reduced unnecessary idling by bus drivers, tour bus operators, and residents.



The anti-idling initiative empowered local students to become changemakers in their community by taking an active role in data collection and communication.