

EL MONTE UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT CLEAN MOBILITY IN SCHOOLS PILOT PROJECT



PRESS RELEASE

UPDATE: This press release now features revised links to the animated short following the identification of a minor typo.

El Monte Union Partners with Award-winning Cartoonist to Promote Clean Transportation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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This work is funded through the Clean Mobility in Schools Pilot Project grant awarded to the El Monte Union High School District. The Clean Mobility in Schools Pilot Project is part of California Climate Investments, a statewide initiative that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment – particularly in disadvantaged communities.

When El Monte Union High School District applied to be part of the California Air Resources Board's (CARB) Clean Mobility in Schools Pilot Project, their goals were twofold: begin to build clean transportation infrastructure for the District and help the greater El Monte community understand the benefits that clean mobility brings to everyone.

The District's second goal unexpectedly connected the Clean Mobility team with two-time Pulitzer Prize finalist Lalo Alcaraz and his team at Pocho Villa Productions, resulting in the creation of the animated short "Taking a Healthy Ride on the Green Side." The animation project was the brainchild of Clean Mobility project partner VMA Communications, a firm that specializes in increasing awareness of projects that enhance the quality of life in the communities they serve.

The [90-second animation](#) and companion 30-second PSAs in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) focus on green mobility options and benefits and will be available on the El Monte Union High School District's Clean Mobility [website](#), as well as their social media channels. The PSAs will be offered for broadcast statewide, amplifying the clean mobility message to communities across the state.

The City of El Monte sits in the middle of four heavily used Los Angeles freeways and its population is disproportionately affected by poor air quality. A \$9.8 million grant from CARB allowed the District to purchase a fleet of electric school buses and utility vehicles, build charging infrastructure, and undertake an array of educational activities about clean mobility.

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“As part of this grant, we wanted to start a conversation in our community about clean transportation,” District Facilities and Energy Manager Lena Luna said. “Lalo and his team gave us the perfect vehicle to introduce ways students and their families can contribute to green mobility, and the benefits going green brings to the whole El Monte community.”

The animation encourages the El Monte Union community to embrace clean transportation methods for commuting to school, including walking, using public transportation, scootering, biking, or carpooling. It features El Monte Union Superintendent Dr. Edward Zuniga, alongside Luna and student characters, including those inspired by real El Monte Union students who engaged in a focus group with Alcaraz at the project's outset.

“Meeting with the students at the start of the project was really cool,” Alcaraz said. “They gave it to us straight when talking about their environmental concerns, the challenges they face, and how they and their families get to and from school. We came out of that meeting revved up about the project and what it will mean for students and families to get this information.”

Alcaraz, who is also the creator of the nationally syndicated comic strip “La Cucaracha,” said he wanted to make sure the animation felt relevant to its audience and called on another group of students from El Monte’s Mountain View High School to voice the characters, recording them in the school’s own podcast studio at the invitation of VISTA Academy Coordinator and teacher John Mann.

The District’s dedication to clean mobility extends beyond this project’s scope. Thanks to the grant from CARB, El Monte Union is also developing a career technical education curriculum that will prepare students for an array of job opportunities in the clean energy sector.

“Green energy is a vital part of our future, and we want our students to have the tools they need to pursue careers in this important sector,” Zuniga said. “We also want our community to benefit from the reduced pollution and cleaner air that green transportation will bring. We are grateful to Lalo and his team for helping us find a creative way to get this message out to the El Monte community.”

The Clean Mobility in Schools Pilot Project is part of California Climate Investments, a statewide initiative that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment – particularly in disadvantaged communities. For more information, visit emuhsdmobility.com.

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PHOTO CAPTIONS:

EMUHSD ANIMATION PROJECT 1: Award-winning illustrator Lalo Alcaraz works with students from Mountain View High School in El Monte to voice the characters in an animation project to promote clean mobility in the El Monte Union High School District. The California Air Resources Board recently awarded a grant to the District to add electric buses and vehicles to their fleet, engage students in clean energy pathways, and promote clean mobility in their community.

EMUHSD ANIMATION PROJECT 2: “Taking a Healthy Ride on the Green Side,” an animated short by Los Angeles Times cartoonist Lalo Alcaraz, features the voices of students and administrators from El Monte Union High School District to promote the benefits of clean mobility.

INTERVIEW AVAILABILITY

Lalo Alcaraz is available for interviews about this project on request.

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