

# Exhaust: Just Needs a Nice Lilac Scent!



**H**ey, a little diesel exhaust won't hurt you. That was General Motors' line for decades. With time, more research found out what was harmful in bus emissions. In a morbidly fascinating 1961 article in *Metropolitan Transportation*, GM engineer SW Sinks said diesel exhaust was safer than that of gas or propane motors. His own figures, though, showed that diesel engines emitted more oxides of nitrogen and formaldehydes.

Then things got odd, really *really* odd. The discussion in 1961 turned to putting *perfumes* in diesel fuel. That year, for example, the Chicago Transit Authority spent \$8,000 on fragrances in an attempt to make the foul output from diesel engines less objectionable. (The article did not specify whether CTA used American scents or swankier stuff from, say, Chanel in France).

All of this might make a good Addams Family skit: "Here's a nice arsenic/polonium/strychnine cocktail for you, Uncle Fester. It's your favorite. Pina colada flavor!" These guys, however, were dead (get it?) serious.

