

## THANKS NATURE BUS IN JAPAN RUNS ON RECYCLED SOY OIL

ASA-IM Japan LaVerne Brabant and Akemi Ito accompanied USB Domestic Marketing Chair and Minnesota Soy Executive Committee Member Chris Hill on a “Thanks Nature Bio-Diesel Bus” ride in Jiyugaoka, a district in Tokyo, guided by Takayoshi Shimada, President of Shimasho, a large edible oil wholesaler and founder of the recycled tempura oil initiative.

Thanks Nature Bus has been operating in Jiyugaoka fueled on biodiesel made from recycled soy oil since 1997. Shimada and three other businessmen in Jiyugaoka started the initiative to expand access to and within the town for the community by providing transportation this unique and environmentally friendly alternative. The Nature Bus is entirely self-supporting with the operational costs covered through community sponsors such as retailers, schools, hospitals, etc. And, the bus ride is free for passengers as well as service oriented as by simply a wave of the hand, a passenger can get off anywhere along the way, not just at bus stops. According to the founders, the service is extremely popular in the community, especially with seniors, those with disabilities or folks that need to stop somewhere specific along the way.

One recent set-back has been a new Japanese Government Regulation effective Feb. 25 of this year that requires biodiesel fuel production from certified plants given the fuel is blended with regular diesel. So, the supply of biodiesel from Someya Shoten has had to temporarily stop producing bio-diesel but is expected to be back on track within the next few weeks.

Lewis Bainbridge and Chris Hill explained to founder Shimada and Thanks Nature Bus Chairman Kuriyama that biodiesel production faced many of the same challenges earlier in the U. S. Bainbridge and Hill encouraged the Thanks Nature Bus organizers to continue their efforts to educate the government as well as consumers about the benefits of recycled biodiesel use!

