

PUBLIC FEEDBACK: Rule Chapter 85: School Bus Purchase Program

Dear Champions of Education:

Since 2017, Rule Chapter 85 has outlined the processes by which SAUs may request subsidy assistance with school bus purchases through the Maine School Bus Purchase Program. The Maine Department of Education (DOE) seeks to update this rule to align with the Governor's electric school bus initiative as well as clarify practical elements of the rule. To accomplish this task, the DOE seeks your input in the rulemaking process.

The Department intends to take the following steps with respect to review of these rules:

1. Begin speaking with experts in the field
2. Revise necessary sections of Chapter 85
3. Invite public feedback on the revisions
4. File updated rule

The DOE will hold four regional meetings focused on ideas and goals relating to school transportation regulations in a general sense. These meetings will be held in-person and will have Zoom links available for folks who are unable to attend in Augusta in person. Stakeholders are invited to attend and provide input. These conversations will be facilitated by Maine DOE rulemaking liaison Laura Cyr. Other Maine DOE members may join the conversations as their schedules allow. These conversations will be guided by the following discussion prompts:

1. Does your school utilize the school bus purchase program – if yes, what has your experience been?
2. What is a reasonable distance to travel for school bus maintenance and repair?
3. Do your schools have plans for infrastructure to support any busses purchased?
4. What do you need to make the electric school bus program successful at your town?
5. What considerations go into your town choosing an electric school bus over a diesel bus?
6. What types of bus purchase training opportunities would be helpful for your town?

Dates and locations for these conversations are as follows:

- a. Thursday, August 15th (3pm,-5pm) Augusta: Cross Office Building, 111 Sewall Street, Room, 103 - [Zoom Link](#)
- b. Thursday, August 22nd (3pm-5pm) Kittery: Kittery Community Center, 120 Rogers Road, Kittery – [Zoom Link](#)
- c. Wednesday August 19th (4-6 pm) Old Town; Leonard Middle School Cafeteria, 156 Oak St, Old Town – [Zoom Link](#)

Taking into consideration the insights gained from these discussions, the DOE will propose updates to Rule Chapters 85 and begin the Maine Administrative Procedures Act (A.P.A.) routine technical rule process pursuant to Title 5 MRS §8052 (public notice of filing, public hearing, open public comment period). Once the proposed rules have been filed, the public will be notified of the scheduled public hearing and comment period. This will be an opportunity to provide written and oral comments regarding the proposed rules. The DOE will review all comments and respond accordingly. Updates to the rules will then be submitted for review as to form and legality before final adoption.

For more information about the conceptual conversations for Rule Chapters 221, 225, or 229, contact Laura Cyr at laura.cyr@maine.gov.