

Newsletter 1:

ME Clean School Bus Program

What if you could electrify your school bus fleet for free? For a limited time, the vast majority of schools in Maine can receive **full funding** for up to 25 clean electric school buses and charging equipment.

Electric school buses drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions while providing a **quiet, safe, and dependable** ride for our students. Speaking of safety, did you know that older diesel buses can have 5-10 times the level of pollutants **inside** the bus compared to outside? **Diesel exhaust is a known carcinogen**, so we owe it to our students to choose the cleaner alternative. This funding opportunity is directly with the EPA so **the standard bus procurement process is not needed**, however the **application must be submitted by August 19th**.

Here is how to make the switch:

1. Check to make sure your entity has an active SAM.gov registration. If you do not, apply for one as soon as possible.
2. Read the eligibility guidelines for the program [HERE](#). Some districts may not be eligible for full funding but can still expect funding for the cost difference between a diesel bus and an electric bus. And yes, even if you contract your service, you can still receive the benefits of this program in partnership with your contractor and a school bus vendor.
3. Engage with your facility and fleet directors to start the planning process. Do not worry about finishing the plan before applying since you can decline the funding if things do not pencil out.
4. Work with the Maine Clean School Bus program for any technical or application assistance you need. The Maine Department of Education sees this funding from the EPA as a significant opportunity for Maine and wants to see you succeed.
5. Apply at least a week before the August 19th deadline just in case any issues pop up. The award will be announced in October of 2022.

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. **Do we have to go through the normal school bus purchasing process for this opportunity?** No, this funding opportunity is available directly through the EPA. Once the funding is awarded and a purchase order is placed, the EPA will pay your bus vendor directly.
2. **We heard electric buses have limited driving range and it is made worse by winter. Will they really work in Maine?** Electric school bus manufacturers offer buses with cold weather equipment and multiple battery sizes so school districts can purchase a bus that is best suited for their climate and needs. Most bus manufacturers offer a model with up to 150 miles of range. MDI High School is the first school in Maine to purchase an electric school bus. All winter they were still able to cover their rural 80+ mile route with ease.
3. **We heard the funding is for the next 5 years. Why should we apply now?** While it is true the EPA opportunity has been allocated funding for the next 5 years, it is unclear if future rounds of funding will be as generous as the current one.
4. **We do not think we are eligible for the funding. Why should we look into this?** Almost all public schools in Maine are eligible for funding under this program. Schools with contracted bus services, schools with newer buses, and schools not on the priority funding list are all still

eligible for funding. Reach out to [the Maine Clean School Bus Program](#) for additional information.

5. **Are electric school buses built to the same safety standards as diesel school buses?** Yes, electric school buses are designed to the same safety standards as conventional buses. However, unlike diesel buses, electric school buses do not produce harmful diesel exhaust while running or idling, reducing the exposure to carcinogens and fumes. As of 2022, electric school buses are providing safe and clean transportation in 24 states across the country.

A Success on Mount Desert Island



In the fall of 2021, the Mount Desert Island High School became the first school in Maine with an electric school bus. Over the following school year, Mount Desert Island High School put the bus through its paces, assigning it both a local pick-up and drop-off route as well as a longer distance route to Ellsworth. Bus #3 or “Sparky”, as one of its drivers affectionately calls it, has performed admirably. “It performs equal to or better than a diesel bus” says driver Doug Van Gorder “and it has composite body panels, so it won’t suffer from rust as much.” Indeed students, parents, and drivers have all provided positive feedback on the new bus. Many people wonder about range and cold weather performance with electric vehicles. Bus #3 was able to complete its daily assignments with ease and preliminary data shows roughly a 10% loss of range due to cold weather. In fact, Bus #3 has made it as far as Bangor and back without needing additional charging. As with all new technologies, there have been moments where there are challenges – such as a replacement part being held by customs at the US border – but none of them were related to the electric drive train. Other Maine school districts have taken notice of Mount Desert Island High School’s success and are now ordering electric school buses of their own. Will you join them?