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## MURPHY ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF GROUNDBREAKING SCHOOL BUS ELECTRIFICATION PROGRAM TO PROTECT HEALTH OF CHILDREN AND COMMUNITIES

**(24/P002) TRENTON** – Environmental Protection Commissioner Shawn M. LaTourette today announced the launch of a groundbreaking program that will protect school children from harmful air pollutants, particularly in overburdened communities, by providing grants for school districts and school bus operators to purchase electric school buses and install charging infrastructure.



New Jersey's Electric School Bus Grant Program is made possible by [legislation Governor Phil Murphy signed in 2022](#) to provide up to \$45 million in funding over three years to replace diesel school buses with battery-electric school buses and to install associated charging infrastructure across the state. The new program will also fund pilot projects that use the battery on the bus to provide power to a building during off-peak hours when the bus is parked. The DEP will hold a series of three webinars on Feb. 1, Feb. 6 and Feb. 14 to discuss the advantages of the program and to assist school districts and operators apply for funding.

"There is nothing more important to all of us than the health and wellbeing of our children," **said Commissioner LaTourette**. "Yet the fact is that many thousands of them are transported back and forth each day in fossil fuel-powered buses that emit particulates and other pollutants that are especially harmful to their developing lungs and bodies. Electric school buses are our solution and a proven technology that will improve the health of kids and our communities. The DEP's Electric School Bus Grant Program will jump start these efforts across the state, spurring the wide use of these buses in cities and towns across New Jersey."

As the State's first comprehensive effort to help school districts and operators make the switch to electric school buses, the program will ultimately lead to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions that fuel global warming and worsen the impacts of climate change.

Transportation is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the state, making up 37 percent of all emissions. Of the 21,700 school buses registered in New Jersey, more than 99 percent run on fossil fuels. While providing vital transportation services, these buses negatively impact the health of students and residents of the communities in which they operate.

Diesel exhaust contains multiple pollutants, such as sulfur dioxide and fine particulate matter, as well as compounds, such as formaldehyde, that are classified as toxic. Fine particulate matter in diesel exhaust can be especially harmful. Smaller than 1 micron in diameter, these particulates can penetrate deep into the lungs, leading to decreased lung function, increased asthma severity and increased risk of lung cancer. Children, whose lungs are still developing, breathe at faster rates than adults, making them more susceptible to these health risks.

Over the years, the DEP has assisted school districts with retrofitting and/or upgrading diesel-powered school buses to better protect students. The DEP succeeded in having more than 7,000 school buses retrofitted with upgraded cabin ventilation systems that prevent diesel fumes from entering the buses each time the door opened. Electric school buses represent the next generation of protection by eliminating all emissions from buses.

In launching the Electric School Bus Grant Program, the DEP is making the first \$15 million round of funding available following the allocation of funds by the New Jersey legislature last month. Legislation for the grant program was signed in 2022. Grants are available to school districts and school bus operators seeking to purchase two or more electric school buses and for a bi-directional bus and charging infrastructure pilot, which enables electricity to flow from vehicles to buildings to offset building energy demand. The program is funded through the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities' Clean Energy Fund. Electric school buses qualify for the state's sales-tax exemption.

**The solicitation is posted on DEP's [Electric School Bus Grant Program webpage](#). Applications are due Friday, May 17.**

DEP will host a series of three Microsoft Teams webinars that include question-and-answer sessions on the program:



- **Feb. 1 - Why Electric School Buses?**
  - Join 12 to 2 p.m. for an overview of electric school buses and an expert panel of electric school bus owners.
- **Feb. 6 - An Overview of New Jersey's Electric School Bus Program Solicitation**
  - Join 12 to 1 p.m. for details on the solicitation and how to apply for a grant.
- **Feb. 14 - Interested in applying for the Bi-directional Charging Pilot?**
  - Join 12 to 2 p.m. to learn about the bi-directional charging pilot program.

“The switch to electric school buses is great news for New Jersey communities, especially those that bear a disproportionate amount of air pollution,” **said Kandyce Perry, Director of DEP’s Office of Environmental Justice.** “Diesel buses spew harmful air pollutants that can lead to premature death, asthma and heart disease, and exacerbate these issues in communities already burdened with poor air quality.”

“This should be the last generation of New Jersey kids that grow up breathing diesel fumes on the school bus. Electric school buses provide a zero-emission tailpipe ride to school thanks to legislation and funding signed into law by Gov. Murphy – now it's time to get them on the road across the state,” **said Doug O'Malley, Director of Environment New Jersey.** “NJDEP’s release of the electric school bus solicitation will provide a one-stop shop for school districts to learn more on electric school buses and how they can apply for grant funding and generate real-time data for bus performance in districts across the state. Electric school buses can be a win-win for our kids and districts – it's time for every school district to think about this transition and join these webinars.”

“The NJ Clean Cities Coalition has been working with DEP and others to provide forums for showcasing electric school buses across the state for the past few years and we believe it is extremely important that people realize that these vehicles are here and available now. While we must increase our efforts to decarbonize transportation across the board, deploying zero emission school buses to carry our most precious cargo is a critical area for all of us to focus on. We are thrilled that the State of New Jersey is moving forward with the electric school bus program, and we encourage all school districts to give a serious look at participating,” **said Chuck Feinberg, Executive Director of NJ Clean Cities Coalition.**

“The New Jersey Electric School Bus Program is a win for clean air, climate, and our public health. The New Jersey Sierra Club is eager to see the program get started and see holistic action to transition our school bus fleet to electric, for the sake of our school communities who are exposed daily to dirty fumes from diesel buses. We encourage school districts to take full advantage of this funding opportunity,” **said Anjuli Ramos-Busot, NJ Sierra Club Director.** “These buses symbolize a brighter and safer future for our students and provide a real air quality solution in our local communities just by driving down the street to school. There is no better time than right now to make the switch to zero emission buses.”

A recent [ChargEVC-NJ study](#) quantified the massive air quality, health, equity and economic benefits that will accrue to students and their communities as a result of increased electric school bus use.

“This new DEP funding program will help ensure that a significant number of electric school buses can be put into service quickly, including advanced pilots for key solutions such as bi-directional charging and resiliency. This early experience, over a multi-year period, will accelerate learning and make it easier for other districts to electrify too,” **said Mark Warner, lead author of the ChargEVC study on the electric school bus opportunity in New Jersey.**

Momentum for state and federal efforts to transition to low- and zero-emission vehicles continues to build, increasing New Jersey’s capacity to fund and incentivize the purchase of electric cars, trucks, and buses, as well as install charging infrastructure.

Since 2019, the State has awarded over \$360 million to purchase hundreds of electric trucks and cargo vans, electric school, public transportation and shuttle buses, and electric airport and port vehicles and equipment. Last year, DEP awarded nearly \$13 million in Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative auction proceeds to fund 45 electric garbage trucks, dump trucks, shuttle buses and charging stations in overburdened municipalities throughout the state.

To learn more about New Jersey’s Electric School Bus Grant Program, visit [dep.nj.gov/stopthesoot/electric-school-bus-program/](https://dep.nj.gov/stopthesoot/electric-school-bus-program/)



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