

AB 579

Electrifying School Buses

Assemblymember
Phil Ting
19TH DISTRICT



SUMMARY

Multiple studies have shown that the use of diesel school buses exposes our children to toxic air pollutants. While the state has made significant investments in grants and incentives to support the widespread adoption of school buses with reduced tailpipe emissions, electric school buses make up only 2% of school bus fleets. To accelerate our progress on limiting children's exposure to harmful pollutants, AB 579 requires that all new school bus purchases be zero emission after 2035 and extends transportation services and leasing contracts for zero emission school buses.

BACKGROUND

Studies have shown that children riding school buses are exposed to significantly higher concentrations of vehicle-related pollutants than that measured in the ambient air and frequently in higher concentrations than those measured on roadways.¹ Even though the time children spend in school bus commutes accounts for less than 10% of a child's day, these commutes account for 33% (or one-third) of a child's daily exposure to toxic air pollutants² due to tailpipe exhaust from the school bus.

California has recognized the need to transition to cleaner and safer school transportation for our students by investing in a series of programs that help schools obtain zero emission buses. The California Air Resources Board (CARB) and California Energy Commission (CEC) will be directing upwards of \$3 billion in program investments over the next 5 years to facilitate the availability of zero-emission school buses and associated charging infrastructure for school districts ready to replace or retire their aging diesel school buses.

Despite these efforts, of an estimated 24,000 school buses already operating in California, only 560, or 2% of the entire school bus fleet, are zero-emission vehicles. Though new funding resources

at both the state and federal level are poised to help grow the proportion of clean vehicles in school fleets over time, a consistent statewide planning goal to obtain zero-emission buses is critical to improving air quality and student health outcomes, especially in communities already disproportionately impacted by severe air pollution.

California currently caps lease terms for contracted school buses at 5 years. In addition to increasing the cost of vehicle leases for municipalities, this five year limit does not align with the 12-15 year time range that research predicts is optimal for electric school buses to reach cost parity with diesel school buses. Extending lease terms to 15 years would substantially improve the financial feasibility of transitioning to electric school buses for school districts.

THIS BILL

AB 579 requires that all purchases of new school buses be zero emission buses beginning in 2035. The bill also extends the allowable contract length for the lease or rental of zero-emission school buses from 5 years to 15 years, enabling schools to realize the total cost of ownership savings from these vehicles sooner. The bill also allows for a one-time 5 year extension for school districts that are unable to obtain a zero-emission school bus capable of meeting terrain and route constraints. The California Air Resources Board, in consultation with the Department of Education and the California Energy Commission, will be responsible for reviewing requests for the extension.

SUPPORT

Advanced Energy United (Co-Sponsor)
CALSTART (Co-sponsor)
GENup (Co-sponsor)
BP Pulse Fleet
CALPIRG

¹ Fitz, D. "Characterizing the range of children's pollutant exposure during school bus commutes." Oct. 2003.

² CARB. "Children's School Bus Exposure and Mitigation Studies."

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Elders Climate Action NorCal and SoCal chapter
1000 Grandmothers For Future Generation
350 Bay Area Action
350 Conejo / San Fernando Valley
350 Sacramento
350 South Bay Los
350 Southland Legislative Alliance
Active San Gabriel Valley
California Climate
California Environmental Voters (Formerly CLCV)
California Interfaith Power And Light
California State Parent Teacher Association
Ceres
Citizens Climate Lobby Sacramento / Roseville
Chapter
Climate Action California
Climate Health Now
First Student
National Express
Nuvve Holding Corp
Peninsula Interfaith Climate Action
Regional Asthma Management & Prevention
San Francisco Bay Physicians For Social
Responsibility
San Ramon Valley Climate Coalition
Santa Cruz Climate Action Network
Streets For All
Sunflower Alliance
Sustainable Rossmoor
Transform
Transformative Wealth Management LLC
World Resources Institute
Democrats of Rossmoor
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