



Community Toolkit

This toolkit has been designed to help parents, teachers, school officials, and other community leaders that are interested in urging school boards to commit to electric school bus fleets. Here you will find logistical steps and resources to guide your community and school district on your electrification journey. This toolkit will address bus electrification in four ways:

- Get the Facts
- Spread the Word
- Take Action
- Access Additional Resources

The Facts: electric vs. diesel buses

The problem

Diesel exhaust is toxic, especially for children

In Texas alone 1.3 million students are transported by school bus every day and exposed to toxic diesel exhaust on their ride to school. Diesel exhaust is a known carcinogen and contributes to asthma and other respiratory diseases. Children have developing systems and faster respiration rates, making them more vulnerable to the adverse health effects of diesel exhaust. Not only does exposure to these fumes negatively impact student health, but recent studies also show that it significantly contributes to cognitive developmental delays.

School buses increase diesel exhaust exposure

With 95% of school buses in the country still running on diesel fuel, children are at risk of exposure during transport to and from school as well as from idling buses on school grounds and bus depots. Diesel particulates and other toxic fumes concentrate inside the cabin of the school bus, with levels inside up to 10x higher than outside the school bus. 60% of school bus riders are from low-income families and studies show that disabled students, rural students and students of color spend more time on school buses.

Diesel fuels worsen the climate crisis

Diesel fuel is refined from crude oil and releases a plethora of gasses and particulate matter when it is burned. Out of the emitted particulate matter, 70% of this is black carbon particulate. Upon the successful transition to a zero-emissions school bus fleet in the United States, we will prevent 7.2 cubic tons of this carbon pollution from entering our atmosphere every year.

Electric buses have a lower lifetime cost compared to diesel models

While new electric buses have a higher upfront cost than traditional diesel buses, the total lifetime cost is lower than diesel buses because of savings on fuel and maintenance. Everman ISD near Fort Worth, TX first purchased electric buses in 2020 and has saved the District nearly \$4,000 a year in fuel and \$2,000 a year in reduced maintenance costs per bus, totaling tens of thousands of dollars in savings over the lifetime of a bus. There is ample potential to lower the upfront cost of electric school buses through federal and state funding, creative financing solutions and re-powering existing diesel school buses.

Solutions

The cleaner electric bus

With zero tailpipe emissions, electric buses are the cleaner option for both students and the environment.

Apply for federal funding

Through the [Clean School Bus Program](#), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will distribute \$5 billion over the next five years to fund school districts wanting to replace existing diesel school buses with electric or low-emission models. The grantees of the 2022 Clean School Bus Rebates have already been selected for the year with over \$50,000,000 awarded to 13 Texas school districts. However, interested districts will have another chance to apply when the second round of funding opens. School districts that applied but were not accepted are immediately placed on a waitlist.

Available state funding

In addition to available federal funding, the state of Texas also offers funding opportunities through the [Texas Clean School Bus Program \(TCSB\)](#). The TCSB program provides grants to replace or retrofit school buses to lower children's exposure to diesel exhaust. Texas public school districts are eligible to apply if their diesel buses were purchased pre-2007.

Make the commitment to electric

Even if your school district received federal funding from the Clean School Bus Program that does not mean the entire fleet will be electric. This federal funding can also cover the purchase of low-emitting models, such as buses that run on propane. However, propane fuel is not the cleaner, safer alternative that it appears to be as it still emits air pollutants harmful to health and the environment. This is why urging your district to commit to an entirely electric transition is crucial.

Get the school board on your side

However, to make this transition possible, you need to get the decision makers - the school board and district - on your side. It is important to understand what concerns and specific priorities the school district may have for an electric transition. For instance, some districts prioritize having support from the mechanics and school bus drivers since they will be on the ground operating the new technology. Other districts are concerned about bus routes - if an electric bus can support the existing plan on one battery charge or if redesigning bus routes is a feasible solution. Districts also want to hear from the taxpayers themselves: parents. If parents or parent-teacher organizations are behind this transition, the district will know that this will be a good use of public spending.

Advocacy Tools

Find out about bus electrification at your school

Contact the parent-teacher organization (PTO) at your school and share this toolkit. Then working with the PTO, ask your school's principal, superintendent, or school board the following questions:

1. Has the school district applied for funding from the EPA's Clean School Bus Program?
2. Is the District considering making a commitment to bus fleet electrification?
3. What concerns, if any, does the district have with making this transition?

It is relatively easy to identify who the school board members are in your district. A quick google search and scan on your school district's website will usually show you the school board members, the department of transportation, and the superintendent. In most cases, the school board is the most influential decision maker that we need on our side, but an enthusiastic superintendent or director of transportation will help your case.

Spread the word

Twitter/Facebook/Instagram

If you're on social media, share these posts or something similar to boost community engagement and interest.

Asthma is lifelong and no joke, yet @[YOUR DISTRICT] still runs on diesel buses. Tell @[DECISION MAKER] to #GoElectric by applying for clean school bus funding. My children can't wait.

What's with the hold up @[DECISION MAKER]? Over \$5 billion in grants is available for school districts to get electric buses, and @[YOUR DISTRICT] still hasn't applied. #GoElectric

The verdict is in - diesel buses are out! With more funding for electric school buses than ever, time for @[LOCAL DECISION MAKER] to #GoElectric. Sign our petition. [INSERT LINK TO LOCAL PETITION]

You remember that nasty school bus smell as a child? Well it's diesel exhaust and it's - no shocker - not good for you! Tell @[YOUR DISTRICT] to #GoElectric by signing our petition. [INSERT LINK TO LOCAL PETITION]

Create an online petition

Linking to an online petition in emails and social media posts can help maximize your number of signatures compared to in-person petitioning alone. The easiest way to create an online petition is

through [Change.org](https://www.change.org). You can reuse the same language seen in this toolkit. Make sure to include a section for the signer's address so that decision makers can see that they are residents of the district. Also include a section for contact information to build your list of supporters.

Video

Share [this video](#) about the deployment of electric school buses at Everman Independent School District. Show your community that the future of electric buses is here and how some districts are already reaping the rewards.

Hold a webinar

Austin Independent School District (AISD) recently committed to transition to an entirely electric bus fleet by 2035. Prior to this victory, Environment Texas organized a community [webinar](#) to discuss the environmental, health, and financial benefits of this transition. This is a helpful tool to educate people on how going electric serves the community. If this is something you might be interested in, the Texas Electric School Bus Project would be happy to work with you and connect you to experts in the field. Contact Jessica Keithan at jessica@texaselectricschoolbusproject.org for more information.

Sample emails

TIP: If appropriate, utilize your district's parent-teacher organization (PTO) to send out a mass email to the community. An email coming from the president of the PTO could have more sway, especially if they are particularly involved in the community.

#1. Email to parents and community members

Subject: Tell the School District to Electrify their School Bus Fleet

Hello,

My name is [INSERT NAME] and I am [SHORT INTRODUCTION]. I am working to push [YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT] to apply for available federal and state funding and convert their diesel school buses to an entirely electric bus fleet.

Simply sending our children to school should not increase their risk of adverse health effects, yet over 95% of school buses in the country still run on diesel fuel, including our very own school district! Not only is this bad for the climate, but also harmful for our children who inhale it. You all remember the smell. Or have seen the plumes of smoke behind the tail pipes. And we also already know that diesel exhaust is [harmful](#). It can cause children's asthma and cancer.

Cleaner, electric alternatives weren't available when we were young, but our children should have the healthiest learning environment possible, including the cleanest air. While most of us will never forget that smell of smoke on our morning bus ride, the cleaner electric options already exist for our children.

Electric school buses have zero tailpipe emissions, so whether your child takes the bus to and from school or simply encounters idling buses on school grounds, they will be breathing cleaner air and learning in a healthier environment.

However, to get the school district to make this commitment to go electric, the school board needs to know that the community is concerned about these health effects and wants this transition. The school district has the power to make this decision, but they need to hear from you: the concerned parents and community members.

We shouldn't put our kids on buses that we know are causing them asthma. And now, with funding through EPA's Clean School Bus program, \$5 billion over the next five years is available for school districts wanting to replace existing diesel school buses with electric or low-emission models. We just need to urge our school district to apply! This program could drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions and students' exposure to diesel exhaust, but you need to let your school district know that our community is interested.

Get involved by adding your name to our online petition below and sharing this email with as many community members as possible.

[INSERT PETITION LINK]

Can we count on you to support this initiative?

#2. Email to decision makers (school boards, superintendent, director of transportation)

Subject: Calling on [SCHOOL DISTRICT] to electrify their school bus fleet

Hello,

My name is [INSERT NAME] and I am [SHORT INTRODUCTION]. I am working to push [YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT] to apply for available federal and state funding and convert their diesel school buses to an entirely electric bus fleet.

Simply sending our children to school should not increase their risk of adverse health effects, yet over 95% of school buses in the country still run on diesel fuel, including our very own district! Not only is this bad for the climate, but also harmful for our children who inhale it. You remember the smell. Or have seen the plumes of smoke behind the tail pipes. And we also already know that diesel exhaust is harmful. It can cause children's asthma and cancer.

Cleaner, electric alternatives weren't available when we were young, but our children should have the healthiest learning environment possible, including the cleanest air. While most of us will never forget that smell of smoke on our morning bus ride, electric options with zero tailpipe emissions already exist for our children. We shouldn't be putting children on buses that we know cause lifelong asthma, and now, the necessary funding to support this mission is available.

One opportunity is through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's [Clean School Bus Program](#), which provides \$5 billion over the next five years to fund school districts wanting to replace

existing diesel school buses with electric or low-emission models. While the first round of funding has closed, I urge the school district to thoughtfully consider this opportunity and apply for the second round of funding - as an investment for both the fight against climate change and for the future of our children (your students). Another funding opportunity for public school districts is in the [Texas Clean School Bus Program](#) which aims to reduce exposure of diesel exhaust from school buses.

The future of electric school buses is here and we strongly urge the district to (1) apply for available federal and state funding and (2) make a commitment to a complete electric transition.

I am eagerly awaiting your response and hope to hear what the district is considering regarding this school bus electrification. I hope this is the beginning of many conversations.

Best,
[YOUR NAME AND CONTACT INFO]

