



**CALIFORNIA  
ENERGY COMMISSION**



School Bus Replacement Program/Clean Transportation  
Program

## **FINAL PROJECT REPORT**

# **Fall River Joint Unified School District Electric School Bus and Charging Infrastructure Project**

**Prepared for: California Energy Commission**

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# California Energy Commission

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## PREFACE

Assembly Bill 118 (Núñez, Chapter 750, Statutes of 2007) created the Clean Transportation Program. The statute authorizes the California Energy Commission (CEC) to develop and deploy alternative and renewable fuels and advanced transportation technologies to help attain the state’s climate change policies. Assembly Bill 8 (Perea, Chapter 401, Statutes of 2013) reauthorizes the Clean Transportation Program through January 1, 2024, and specifies that the CEC allocate up to \$20 million per year (or up to 20 percent of each fiscal year’s funds) in funding for hydrogen station development until at least 100 stations are operational.

The Clean Transportation Program has an annual budget of about \$100 million and provides financial support for projects that:

- Reduce California’s use and dependence on petroleum transportation fuels and increase the use of alternative and renewable fuels and advanced vehicle technologies.
- Produce sustainable alternative and renewable low-carbon fuels in California.
- Expand alternative fueling infrastructure and fueling stations.
- Improve the efficiency, performance, and market viability of alternative light-, medium-, and heavy-duty vehicle technologies.
- Expand the alternative fueling infrastructure available to existing fleets, public transit, and transportation corridors.
- Establish workforce-training programs and conduct public outreach on the benefits of alternative transportation fuels and vehicle technologies.

Senate Bill 110 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review, Chapter 55, Statutes of 2017) created the School Bus Replacement Program, appropriating up to \$75 million from the California Clean Energy Jobs Act (Proposition 39), an initiative that voters approved in 2012. The statute authorizes the CEC to provide school bus replacement grants to school districts, County Offices of Education, and Joint Power Authorities operating the oldest school buses in disadvantaged communities.

To be eligible for funding under the Clean Transportation Program, a project must be consistent with the CEC’s annual Clean Transportation Program Investment Plan Update. The CEC issued GFO-17-607 to provide funding opportunities under both the School Bus Program to fund projects that replace the oldest diesel school buses in California with electric vehicle school buses and the Clean Transportation Program to fund infrastructure projects that support the electric vehicle school buses. In response to GFO-17-607, the recipient submitted an application which was proposed for funding in the CEC’s notice of proposed awards on November 12, 2019, and the agreement was executed as ARV-19-073 on December 6, 2019.

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# ABSTRACT

Fall River Joint Unified School District submitted an application to receive grant funding under the California Energy Commission (CEC) Solicitation GFO-17-607 to replace one old diesel school bus. Fall River Joint Unified School District was awarded funding for one vehicle-to-grid ready electric school bus and supporting electric vehicle charging infrastructure. Fall River Joint Unified School District purchased one electric school bus and installed a 15-kW solar system through the CEC. The bus was placed into service January 12, 2021, and the district was offered workforce training to help support the successful deployment of the new electric fleet. The old, diesel-powered bus was also dismantled and removed from service. This project found that the electric school bus reduced lifetime greenhouse gas emissions by about 254 short tons.

**Keywords:** GFO-17-607, grant funding, electric school bus, diesel, greenhouse gas emissions, cost savings, vehicle-to-grid, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, workforce training.

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The priority of Fall River Joint Unified School District has always been student health and educational success. Fall River Joint Unified School District embraces continuous improvements to its transportation department and fleet to help keep students safe and healthy. This project sought to replace an old diesel school bus with a zero-emission electric school bus. The replacement bus will improve air quality and reduce school energy and maintenance costs while providing students with necessary school transportation.

The first stage focused on installation of charging infrastructure. This installation included coordinating with the local utility company, producing engineering and design drawings by subcontractors, purchasing charging equipment, and constructing the charging station. The electric vehicle charging infrastructure is located and maintained at 44154 Walnut St. McArthur, California, 96056 (Shasta County).

The second stage dealt with the procurement of electric school buses. Fall River Joint Unified School District applied for and was awarded grant funding for the purchase of one new electric school bus. Fall River Joint Unified School District selected a school bus manufacturer, placed a purchase order for bus procurement, and placed the bus into service on January 8, 2021.

The third stage required Fall River Joint Unified School District to scrap the old diesel school bus within 12 months from the delivery of the new electric school bus. This disposal is to ensure that the old diesel school bus does not continue to produce emissions.

The final stage involved 12 months of data collection on the electric school bus. These data were used to analyze the economic and environmental impacts that resulted from the electric for diesel school bus replacement.

Fall River Joint Unified School District's electric school bus has helped save money on fuel and maintenance costs. The new bus has also improved the health of students by reducing their exposure to toxic air contaminants. Fall River Joint Unified School District recommends school districts across the state replace their old diesel-polluting school buses with clean, all-electric school buses.



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# CHAPTER 1:

## Introduction

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### Background

Senate Bill 110 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review, Chapter 55, Statutes of 2017) appropriated funds to establish the School Bus Replacement Program at the California Energy Commission (CEC). The CEC provided one-time funding of \$75 million from Proposition 39 for the replacement and scrapping of old diesel school buses in disadvantaged and low-income communities throughout California.

To allow wider coverage of the program, the funds were distributed among four regions in California: Northern California, Central California, Southern California, and Los Angeles County. Additional funding of almost \$14 million from the CEC's Clean Transportation Program was leveraged to provide schools the necessary charging infrastructure to operate the buses. Also, \$1 million in Clean Transportation Program funds were set aside for workforce training and development to ensure proper operation and maintenance of the buses.

The CEC received more than 200 applications for more than 1,600 diesel school buses requested for replacement, some buses as old as 1978. CEC staff then evaluated the buses based on three factors: age of bus, applicant's percentage of free and reduced-price meals recipients, and applicant's disadvantaged community score according to the CalEnviroScreen 3.0. From the applications received, an initial list of ranked buses was released in November 2018.

The second phase of the program included selecting a manufacturer or dealer that could design, construct, and deliver electric school buses. In November 2018, the CEC released a solicitation to establish a bulk purchase price for replacement buses. Applications were evaluated and scored for the technical evaluation portion based on the following criteria:

- Relevant experience and qualifications
- Project readiness and implementation
- Client references
- Battery and fuel range
- Warranty, service, and support
- Innovation
- Economic benefits to California
- Ability to leverage funding

Applications passing the technical evaluation advanced to the next screen, where the lowest-cost bid was selected for each school bus type (Type A<sup>1</sup>, Type C<sup>2</sup>, Type D<sup>3</sup>, and each type with or without chair lifts). The bus bid forms were ranked in order from lowest to highest cost per bus by type. Table 1 shows the manufacturer's awarded bids, which did not include an awarded Type B bus.

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<sup>1</sup> A Type "A" school bus is a van conversion or bus constructed utilizing a cutaway front section vehicle with a left-side driver's door. This definition includes two classifications: Type A-I, with a Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR) less than or equal to 14,500 pounds; and Type A II, with a GVWR greater than 14,500 pounds and less than or equal to 21,500 pounds.

<sup>2</sup> A Type "C" school bus is constructed utilizing a chassis with a hood and front fender assembly. The entrance door is behind the front wheels. A "type C school bus" also includes a cutaway truck chassis or truck chassis with cab, with or without a left side door, and with a GVWR greater than 21,500 pounds.

<sup>3</sup> A "type D school bus" is a body installed upon a chassis, with the engine mounted in the front, midship or rear, with a gross vehicle weight rating of more than 10,000, designed for carrying more than ten persons. The engine may be behind the windshield and beside the driver's seat; it may be at the rear of the bus, behind the rear wheels, or midship between the front and rear axles. The entrance door is ahead of the front wheels. A type D school bus has a maximum length of 45 feet.

**Table 1: School Bus Replacement Program Awarded Bids**

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Bus Type</b>	<b>Bid Amount</b>
The Lion Electric Co.	Type A Without Chair Lift	\$271,389
A-Z Bus Sales, Inc. – California (Micro Bird)	Type A With Chair Lift	\$293,424
The Lion Electric Co.	Type C Without Chair Lift	\$321,184
The Lion Electric Co.	Type C With Chair Lift	\$329,627
The Lion Electric Co.	Type D Without Chair Lift	\$332,009
The Lion Electric Co.	Type D With Chair Lift	\$339,370

Source: CEC

Once the manufacturers were selected, CEC staff was able to allocate funding based on bid price, using the rank list to determine which applicants would be awarded buses. From the initial rank list of buses, the CEC was able to fund 228 electric school buses, with an additional \$60,000 in infrastructure funding per bus.

Recipients also had the option to procure their bus(es) outside the CEC awarded manufacturer bid, as long as the recipients used their own established procurement procedures while adhering to all applicable state and local laws and terms and conditions of the grant agreement.

## **School Bus Replacement Program Objectives**

The School Bus Replacement Program is helping schools throughout the state transition from old, polluting diesel school buses to electric school buses, reducing exposure to harmful emissions and helping the state reach its climate and air quality goals. This program also supports the state’s overall energy goals such as the Low Carbon Fuel Standard target for 2030 and the Senate Bill 32 (Pavley, Chapter 249, Statutes of 2016) target goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 40 percent below the 1990 level by 2030. The agreement objective is to purchase electric school buses to replace diesel buses that will be removed from service and scrapped and install or upgrade electric bus charging infrastructure at grant recipient transportation sites.

# CHAPTER 2:

## Project Details

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### Electric School Bus Funding

Fall River Joint Unified School District was awarded \$332,009 to replace one old diesel school bus with one all-electric school bus, as well as purchase and install the associated charging infrastructure. The district selected Type D without wheelchair lift based on the following needs:

- Total cost of bus (CEC share)
- Quoted bus range and battery capacity (kWh)
- Bus Route Profiles
- Upgrade Options Available

Fall River Joint Unified School District is responsible for transporting 481 students per day, with an average route distance of 71 miles. Fall River Joint Unified School District has a fleet composed of 20 school buses featuring a total of three electric school buses and 17 diesel buses using some renewable diesel.

Fall River Joint Unified School District decided to procure an electric school bus from Blue Bird for a variety of reasons. The Type D bus had the following upgrades: additional heater, defroster fan, and automatic tire chains. These upgrades were necessary due to winter driving conditions in the area. The total cost for the new electric school bus was \$378,477.47. Of that total, 87 percent was covered by the CEC. Figure 1 below shows the district's new electric school bus funded by the CEC.

## Figure 1: Fall River Joint Unified School District Electric School Bus and Solar Charging



Source: Fall River Joint Unified School District

The replaced diesel bus must be scrapped and removed from service within 12 months from delivery of the new bus. Each district was required to show proof of scrapping, which included photographs of bus/engine destruction, vehicle identification number, engine serial number, and method used to dismantle the engine and non-engine components. Figure 2 illustrates one of the acceptable methods of scrapping the chassis of a vehicle. As of July 20, 2021, Fall River Joint Unified School District's old diesel bus #5 has been scrapped.

**Figure 2: Example of Acceptable Method to Dismantle Vehicle Chassis**



Source: Fall River Joint Unified School District

## **Infrastructure Funding**

The CEC's Clean Transportation Program allocated \$14 million to the School Bus Replacement Program to fund electric school bus charging infrastructure. The CEC provided up to \$60,000 per awarded bus for purchase and installation of the associated infrastructure. This allocation enabled Fall River Joint Unified School District to install two Blink IQ 200 Charging Stations and a 15 kW solar structure. The infrastructure was completed on October 14, 2020, and PG&E approved of operation on December 1, 2020. For the 21/22 school year, the solar structure at McArthur Bus Garage produced 24,272 kWh of clean solar electricity.

The CEC worked with electric utilities, both public and private, to assist in upgrading electrical infrastructure required to charge the awarded buses while emphasizing the need to plan for future electrical capacity needs. Electric vehicle supply equipment was required to be, at a minimum, a Level 2<sup>4</sup> ENERGY STAR®-certified, networked charger capable of charging a vehicle at a minimum of 6.2 kilowatts (kW); however, the CEC recommended electric vehicle supply equipment capable of charging at 19.2 kW. These high capacity 19.2 kW chargers only require 6–8 hours of charging time to power a school bus battery from 0 to 100 percent, as indicated by the school bus manufacturers selected for the School Bus Replacement Program. Networked electric vehicle supply equipment provides recipients with the ability to set charging for buses to off-peak-demand hours, provide remote diagnostics, and allow remote start of connected vehicles.

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<sup>4</sup> Level 2 Chargers operate between 208 and 240 Volts with output of anywhere between 3 kW and 19 kW of alternating current power.

## **Obstacles, Delays, and Lessons Learned**

FRJUSD's biggest obstacle and delay was the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Pandemic caused a global shutdown which led to supply chain issues and labor shortages. The project was completed on time but took longer than expected due to limited resources. Another delay that the project team faced was being able to find a solar structure that would fit the needs of FRJUSD along with a contractor to install it. There was only one solar contractor available within the area to install the solar structure for the district, which made scheduling difficult.

Throughout this project, FRJUSD has learned a few lessons that may be of use for other school districts interested in electrifying their fleets. For instance, FRJUSD learned that the local county (Shasta County) does not inspect or approve structures for school districts, the Division of the State Architect (DSA) does. FRJUSD knew it needed to have the solar structure inspected and thought that Shasta County Building Department would be the ones to approve this. However, FRJUSD learned that DSA is the department that performs this function on public property.

FRJUSD also found that it takes a lot of electricity to run the heaters on the new electric school bus. As an example, one electric school bus that ran a 39-mile bus route on a 70-degree day would go from 90 miles at the start of the route to 53 miles at the end of the route without using any heaters and would use around 50 kWh to recharge. On a 25-degree morning, the same bus would go from 90 miles at the start of the route to 37-miles at the end of the route and would require 83 kWh to recharge. This example demonstrates how temperature can influence the range of an electric bus.

Most of FRJUSD routes require some charging between routes. With mid-day trips such as going to the pumpkin patch six miles one way, the added mileage and not being able to charge between routes would not leave enough battery life for the afternoon route.



# CHAPTER 3:

## Workforce Training Funding

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In anticipation of the CEC's School Bus Replacement Program, in 2018 the CEC began to work with California school districts, county offices of education, and joint power authorities to understand the importance and role of school bus training for zero-emission school bus technology. Many school districts expressed the need for training of school bus maintenance and service technicians, as well as training for bus operators for battery-electric technology.

In 2019, the CEC approved a \$1 million contract with Cerritos Community College to develop and implement the "Electric School Bus Training Project." Cerritos Community College developed the curriculum with the Southern California Regional Transit Training Consortium and college faculty throughout the state. Faculty from the colleges provided training in the school bus regions through a hybrid of in-person and online training.

The training project included automotive instructor led training to maintenance and service technicians for 96 hours. It also included 12 hours of school bus operator training. The training content consisted of:

- Electric Vehicle School Bus and Charging Infrastructure Familiarization.
- Circuit Diagnostic With Digital Volt Ohm Meter.
- Computerized Engine Management Systems.
- Complexity of the Harness and Computer Functions in the Modern Chassis.
- Programmable Logic Controller Input/Output Systems Diagnostics.
- Network Systems Electronics Diagnosis and Repair
- Electric Bus Driver Training Familiarization.

Two FRJUSD technicians received online training for circuit diagnostics from Cerritos Community College. A total of three technicians and 10 bus drivers from FRJUSD received training from A-Z Bus Sales. A-Z Bus Sales also conducted safety training for first responders.

Workforce training is an important consideration when incorporating zero-emission school buses into a fleet. As with most new technologies, there is a learning curve and operational adjustments the fleet must make to maximize the benefits of the technology. Compared to conventional-fueled school buses, there are differences in zero-emission school bus maintenance and operation. For example, zero-emission school buses have fewer moving parts, do not have an exhaust system, or require oil changes, and the braking systems of these buses last longer. For these reasons, along with many more, electric school buses have proven to be a cost-effective solution.

# CHAPTER 4:

## Data Collection

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### 12-Month Data Collection

A requirement of the School Bus Replacement Program was to collect 12 months of data and metrics on the usage of the new buses. These data points will be used to determine the financial, environmental, and health benefits of replacement school buses funded by the CEC. Listed below are the specific data points for the one bus funded by the School Bus Replacement Program.

#### Fall River Joint Unified School District

When placed into service over a 12-month period, Fall River Joint Unified School District's Bus 105 traveled 5,999 miles for the 21/22 school year. The replaced diesel bus averaged 12 mpg for the 21/22 school year. The miles traveled over the reporting period equate to a total reduction of 499.92 gallons of diesel. This reduction in total gallons of diesel equates to a lifetime reduction of 253.65 short tons of GHGs, 406.83 lbs. of NO<sub>x</sub>, and 3.23 lbs. of PM<sub>2.5</sub>.

The average cost of a gallon of diesel fuel was \$4.03 during the reporting period. This equals a diesel cost of \$2,014.68. The total replaced diesel maintenance cost of the scrapped bus was \$0.14 per mile. Over the 12-month period, the new electric school bus used 15,575.51 kWh. The total cost for this electricity usage was \$3,893.88. Total maintenance cost for the new electric school bus was \$0.12 per mile.

During the first year, the new electric bus cost more to fuel compared to the replaced diesel bus. However, in the beginning, it takes time and effort for the district to learn how to achieve the utmost efficiency out of the new electric bus. As the district's bus drivers become more accustomed to driving the electric bus, they will learn different driving techniques to help get the most range out of the bus's battery. There is also a learning curve in deciding when to charge the vehicle, which can be overcome by working with the local utility to find the lowest rates and times to charge.

The CEC's School Bus Replacement Program will help reduce tailpipe emissions of smog-forming nitrogen oxides by 98,000 lbs. and toxic diesel soot by more than 2,500 lbs. Minimizing exposure to hazardous emissions reduces the risk to adolescent bus riders of developing respiratory diseases such as asthma and helps the state achieve emissions reductions goals.

## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **Conclusion**

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The School Bus Replacement Program was vital to the long-term success of transporting students to and from school. Not only is the program saving districts time and money, it is also helping reduce the total amount of emissions released into the environment. Fall River Joint Unified School District is dedicated to contributing to California's overall goals of decreasing greenhouse gas emissions and improving overall air quality. Fall River Joint Unified School District's next steps are to apply for funding to replace more diesel buses.

# GLOSSARY

CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION (CEC) — The state agency established by the Warren-Alquist State Energy Resources Conservation and Development Act in 1974 (Public Resources Code, sections 25000 et seq.) responsible for energy policy. The CEC's seven major areas of responsibilities are:

1. Advancing State Energy Policy
2. Achieving Energy Efficiency
3. Investing in Energy Innovation
4. Developing Renewable Energy
5. Transforming Transportation
6. Overseeing Energy Infrastructure
7. Preparing for Energy Emergencies

KILOWATT (kW) — One thousand watts. A unit of measure of the amount of electricity needed to operate given equipment. On a hot summer afternoon, a typical home — with central air conditioning and other equipment in use — might have a demand of 4 kW each hour.

KILOWATT-HOUR (kWh) — The most commonly used unit of measure telling the amount of electricity consumed over time, means 1 kilowatt of electricity supplied for 1 hour. In 1989, a typical California household consumed 534 kWh in an average month.

LOW CARBON FUEL STANDARD (LCFS)—A set of standards designed to encourage the use of cleaner low-carbon fuels in California, encourage the production of those fuels, and therefore reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The LCFS standards are expressed in terms of the carbon intensity of gasoline and diesel fuel and their respective substitutes. The LCFS is a key part of a comprehensive set of programs in California that aim cut greenhouse gas emissions and other smog-forming and toxic air pollutants by improving vehicle technology, reducing fuel consumption, and increasing transportation mobility options.

NITROGEN OXIDES (OXIDES OF NITROGEN, NO<sub>x</sub>)—A general term pertaining to compounds of nitric oxide (NO), nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), and other oxides of nitrogen. Nitrogen oxides are typically created during combustion processes and are major contributors to smog formation and acid deposition. NO<sub>2</sub> is a criteria air pollutant and may result in numerous adverse health effects.

PARTICULATE MATTER (PM)—Unburned fuel particles that form smoke or soot and stick to lung tissue when inhaled. A chief component of exhaust emissions from heavy-duty diesel engines.

SHORT TON—An imperial unit of mass equal to 2,000 pounds.