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Program

FINAL PROJECT REPORT

La Mesa Spring Valley School District Final Project Report

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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 June 3, 2019 and the agreement was executed as ARV-19-038 on September 16, 2019.

ABSTRACT

La Mesa Spring Valley School District submitted an application to receive grant funding under the California Energy Commission (CEC) Solicitation GFO-17-607 to replace nine old diesel school buses. La Mesa Spring Valley School District was awarded funding for nine vehicle-to-grid ready electric school buses and the supporting electric vehicle charging infrastructure. La Mesa Spring Valley School District purchased nine electric school buses and installed nine chargers through the CEC. The buses were placed into service in the 2021/22 school year, and the old, diesel-powered buses were dismantled and removed from service. This project found that the electric school buses reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 1.112 short tons of oxides of nitrogen, 133.3 short tons of carbon dioxide, reduced 11,847 gallons of diesel, and resulted in a cost savings of \$4,613 during the project's 12-month reporting period.

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 La Mesa Spring Valley School District has always been student health and educational success. La Mesa Spring Valley School District embraces continuous improvements to its transportation department and fleet to help keep students safe and healthy. This project sought to replace old diesel school buses with zero-emission electric school buses. The replacement buses 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 3838 Conrad Drive, Spring Valley, California, San Diego County.

The second stage dealt with the procurement of electric school buses. La Mesa Spring Valley School District applied for and was awarded grant funding for the purchase of nine new electric school buses. La Mesa Spring Valley School District selected a school bus manufacturer, placed a purchase order for bus procurement, and placed the buses into service in the 2021/22 school year.

The third stage required La Mesa Spring Valley School District to scrap the old diesel school buses within 12 months from the delivery of the new electric school buses. This disposal is to ensure that the old diesel school buses do not continue to produce emissions.

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

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

CHAPTER 1:

Introduction

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 A¹, Type C², Type D³, 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.

¹ 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.

² 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.

³ 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

Applicant	Bus Type	Bid Amount
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 buses 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 (LCFS) 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 bus(es) 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

Electric School Bus Funding

La Mesa Spring Valley School District was awarded \$3,540,425.00 to replace nine old diesel school buses with nine all-electric school buses, as well as purchase and install the associated charging infrastructure. The district selected six Type C school buses without wheelchair lift and three Type C school buses with 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

La Mesa Spring Valley School District is responsible for transporting approximately 650 children per year, with an average route distance of 19.87 miles. La Mesa Spring Valley School District has a fleet composed of 39 featuring a total of nine electric school buses, 27 of diesel buses, and three of compressed natural gas (CNG) buses.

La Mesa Spring Valley School District decided to procure electric school buses from IC Bus because of the pricing and district needs. The Type C buses had the following upgrades: Two-way radios, Global Positioning System (GPS), Audio/Visual monitoring systems, and child check systems. These upgrades were necessary to ensure school bus driver and student safety, communication between school bus drivers and dispatch, and to monitor assets speed and location. The total cost for the new electric school buses was \$2,915,985.00. Of that total, 100% percent was covered by the CEC. Figure 1 below shows one of the district's new electric school buses funded by the CEC.

Figure 1: Electric School Buses Numbers 27E and 29E



Source: La Mesa Spring Valley School District

Figure 2: Electric School Bus Number 24E



Source: La Mesa Spring Valley School District

The replaced diesel buses must be scrapped and removed from service within twelve 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 3 illustrates one of the acceptable methods of scrapping the chassis of a vehicle. As of July 19, 2022, all nine of La Mesa Spring Valley School District buses have been scrapped.

Figure 3: Example of Acceptable Method to Dismantle Vehicle Chassis



Source: La Mesa Spring Valley 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 La Mesa Spring Valley School District to initially install nine 12 kW Level 2 chargers. The initial charging infrastructure became operable in December of 2020. After operating the electric school buses and charging infrastructure, the district identified need for faster and higher-powered chargers to meet its service needs. A second installation of eight 19.2 kW Level 2 chargers and one 60kW DC fast charger replaced the previous chargers and became available for charging in January 2025.

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 2⁴ 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.

Obstacles, Delays, and Lessons Learned

La Mesa Spring Valley School District encountered some obstacles and learned the following lessons while deploying their electric school buses and charging infrastructure. For a few months, some of the electric school buses were out of service while the dealers worked to resolve IC Bus battery recalls. The district also expressed an interest in investing additional wheelchair upgrades for future electric school bus deployments to meet its students' transportation service needs.

While installing the charging infrastructure, the district learned the importance of anticipating and scheduling construction and installation timelines during school breaks to avoid service disruptions. The district also learned about key design considerations. After the original nine chargers were installed, the district learned that its operations required higher powered chargers to meet charging needs for their routine routes and field trips. The district also learned that the distance from the charging station to the bus must be considered before purchasing charger cords, or there is a risk they will be too short.

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

CHAPTER 3:

Data Collection

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 nine buses funded by the School Bus Replacement Program. La Mesa Spring Valley School District

When placed into service over a 12-month period, La Mesa Spring Valley School District's nine buses traveled 59,234 miles. The replaced diesel buses had a miles per diesel gallon of five. The miles traveled over the reporting period equate to a total reduction of 11,847 gallons of diesel. This reduction in gallons of diesel equates to an annual reduction of 133.3 short tons of carbon dioxide, 0.274 short tons of carbon monoxide, 0.105 short tons of hydrocarbons, 0.041 short tons of particulate matter 2.5, and 1.112 short tons of oxides of nitrogen.

The average cost of a gallon of diesel was \$3.45 during the reporting period. This reduction of diesel usage equals cost savings of \$40,871. The total replaced diesel maintenance cost of the scrapped buses was \$13,660. Over the 12-month reporting period, the new electric school buses used 84,427 kWh. The total cost for the electricity was \$41,818. The total maintenance cost for the new electric school buses was \$8,100. During the 12-month reporting period, La Mesa Spring Valley School District was able to save \$4,613.

CHAPTER 4:

Conclusion

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. La Mesa Spring Valley School District is dedicated to contributing to California's overall goals of decreasing greenhouse gas emissions and improving overall air quality. La Mesa Spring Valley School District's next step is to go solar across all of our campuses to help California achieve its climate goals.

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. Planning and Policy Development
2. Renewable Energy Growth
3. Energy Efficiency
4. Energy Innovation
5. Cleaner Transportation
6. Responsible Electricity Infrastructure
7. Emergency Response

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_x)—A general term pertaining to compounds of nitric oxide (NO), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), and other oxides of nitrogen. Nitrogen oxides are typically created during combustion processes and are major contributors to smog formation and acid deposition. NO₂ 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.