

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE BOARD



ASSOCIATION
OF SCHOOL
BUSINESS OFFICIALS



New York State
PTA
everychild.one voice.®



In partnership with:



Zero-Emission School Bus Lobby Day

We believe in a healthy learning environment to support our students, staff, and communities. However, the barriers of the zero-emissions school bus (ZEB) transition are increasingly insurmountable. While notable changes have been made to the transition, including laudable steps taken in the recently enacted budget, until or unless the timeline is repealed, significantly altered, or truly tailored to individual district circumstances, the transition still presents issues for school districts that are likely to negatively impact important programs and services.

Barriers

- ZEB costs are unsustainable and rising faster than inflation
 - ZEBs cost 3-4x more than traditional buses
 - Prices of the buses under the statewide contract let by the Office of General Services has gone up 10.6% since December 2022, against 7.75% inflation
 - The estimated total cost (to the state and school districts) to transition the statewide fleet to ZEBs is between \$8 and \$15.25 billion more than the cost of replacing current buses with traditional models – without facility or infrastructure upgrades
 - Extreme uncertainty due to tariffs
- Electrical capacity is a serious concern
 - Significant number of bus garage/depot sites do not have electrical capacity for pilot projects
 - Many others will not be able to build up required electrical capacity in time to be compliant
 - Even where a site can be electrified, costs can be prohibitive to do so
- Ranges of buses are insufficient and unpredictable
 - Range is worse in cold weather, with reported range decreases of over 40%
 - Varying topography can have a variable effect on ZEB range
 - Without predictable range, it is impossible to effectively plan a fleet transition to accommodate existing routes
- Numerous predictions made or assumed when the transition was enacted have not come to fruition, including:
 - Costs have not fallen, nor has total cost of ownership parity been achieved
 - Federal support is unclear and at risk
 - Voter approval is not occurring at normal rates for proposition votes
 - Manufacturing has not increased as needed, and wait times are out of hand
- Fleets may need to be expanded to keep current service levels
 - Due to range variation, reduced payload capacity, and significant “downtime” for ZEBs when they are not able to run at all
 - Significant issue not only in cost, but running up against a severe driver shortage which many districts are facing

Proposed Bills

- **S.98 (Comrie) / A.491 (Woerner):** Creates a reliable funding stream for cost of infrastructure upgrades
 - Due to the district-by-district nature of the need for infrastructure costs, there should be reliable funding to accommodate districts on an as-needed basis
- **S.6221 (Mayer) / A.8035 (Kassay):** Allows for transportation storage facility costs to be aidable
 - A host of new costs that do not exist for traditional buses exist, including the need for indoor storage, fire suppression systems, new or updated power lifts, increased size of garage doors and others, are not captured by current aid formulas
- **S.6893-B (Fahy) / A.6760-B (Woerner):** District-specific feasibility planning
 - Each district is unique as to whether it manages or contracts out its transportation, its pre-existing electrical capacity, fiscal situation, voter sentiment, topography, severe cold conditions, and other factors; transition timelines should reflect that

Additional Solutions

- Full state funding of the transition
 - The state-led initiative should be funded by the state
 - The state is better able to absorb the increased, unpredictable, and fluctuating costs
- Ensure third-party transportation providers have equitable access to funding
 - While often third-party transportation providers have access to the same funding streams, it is often at lower rates than for district-based transportation providers
- Require utilities to provide specialized rate structures for school districts and contractors
 - The transition to ZEBs can provide benefits to the utilities and statewide grid, due to: charging during off-peak times; summer demand is minimal, when the grid is most stressed; demand is predictable; ZEBs can utilize Vehicle to Grid (V2G) technology, which allows them to essentially act as batteries that can distribute power back to the grid when overall demand is high, or when emergency backup power is needed
 - Utilities should be required to provide specialized rate structures for providers that engage in electrification; this will also further incentive the ZEB transition for districts.
- Regular stakeholder engagement
 - In late 2023, the chairs of the Assembly's Education, Energy, Science and Technology, and Transportation committees convened a roundtable for several statewide groups to discuss the transition, which led to a session with robust discussion, relationship-building, and information sharing
 - Future sessions should be convened, and include stakeholders from schools, transportation providers, bus distributors, bus manufacturers, administrative agencies, the Governor's office, and the legislature