

Reform Zero-Emission School Bus Law

The Zero Emission Bus (ZEB) law must be reformed. The proponents of the law to require schools to purchase only ZEBs by July 1, 2027 and utilize only ZEBs by July 1, 2035 were well intentioned. But the law will be doomed to fail absent substantial changes.

After two years of efforts by schools to plan for this massive transportation transition, utility providers, manufacturers, feasibility studies have all made it clear a 100% ZEB world for school transportation will not happen over the next decade.

We urge the state to make a modest shift in direction to have a chance to greatly reduce the number of internal combustion vehicles servicing schools. Beyond additional funding to offset the significant increase in the cost of ZEB's compared to traditional buses, the state must adopt three critical reforms.

1. State Funded Feasibility Studies to Determine Required Number of ZEBs

The state should provide necessary funding to each district to finance a ZEB transition study. Following such a study, the district should only be required to purchase ZEBs for routes that will culminate with the vehicle having approximately 20% available charge, even in sub-optimal conditions to avoid stranding school children on the road. A route should not be considered feasible if the district were required to purchase a level 3 charging station to complete that vehicles routes for the entire day.

Such an approach would move the state away from the 100% ZEB requirement but provide a practical approach that may succeed in achieving much wider ZEB usage. This approach can also be reevaluated as the technology improves and the costs of the vehicles decreases.

2. Independent Range Estimates

Currently, ZEB manufacturers determine their own range estimates without independent verification. It is well documented that electric vehicles, even with EPA determined range estimates, rarely meet the EPA range estimate through real world driving conditions.

As well intentioned as the manufacturers may be in determining their range estimates, the state should mandate that an independent entity verify actual range estimates in a variety of weather and driving conditions before such ZEB may be sold to a school district. Purchasing a bus that fails to meet the advertised real world range estimate could be a catastrophically expensive mistake for schools.

3. Amortization Period Reduction to Seven Years

The ZEB law changed the amortization period for ZEBs from five years to 12 years. This change results in schools receiving transportation aid for these buses at a much slower rate than for

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traditional internal combustion engine vehicles. This is particularly problematic given the significant additional expense of purchasing a ZEB.

Reducing the amortization period from 12 to 7 years will help schools manage the additional costs of these vehicles.

There are significant health and environmental benefits to ZEBs. There are also significant additional costs and feasibility challenges. School leaders want to partner in this goal but absent significant reforms, the law is unlikely to succeed.