



SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION COALITION

STRATEGIC EDUCATION SERVICES

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Re: HVIP: OPPOSITION TO DEFUNDING LOW NOx SCHOOL BUSES THIS YEAR

On behalf of the School Transportation Coalition and the California Association of School Transportation Officials, we oppose defunding low NOx near-zero heavy-duty school buses under Hybrid and Zero-Emission Truck and Bus Voucher Incentive Project (HVIP) at this time.

We thank the California Air Resources Board for their support and dedication to removing dangerously old school buses off the road through funding low to zero-emission technology replacements. The replacement of these old dirty buses allows the community and students on the bus cleaner air to breathe. School Districts are embracing Zero Emission Fully Electric School Bus technology. School districts have oversubscribed the Rural School Bus Pilot Program, and the energy commissions Prop 39-School Bus Replacement Program. Where appropriate, School Districts are eager to apply for the Volkswagen Mitigation Funding. However, we urge caution in the move to remove CNG as an eligible funding recipient under HVIP, since full electric technology is not fully adaptable for all districts. Fully Electric School bus technology is not able to be utilized in some regions due to operational needs.

California has over 1,000 school districts governing over 10,000 schools with a diverse set of operational needs. Each school district faces a unique combination of challenges in transporting students to and from school safely. Some of the obstacles that districts face are distance and infrastructure.

The amount of time to charge and get back is not enough for the afternoon route at least one day per week for districts where their shortest route exceeds 70 miles. Compounding the distance issue are those in the South Coast Air District where a moratorium on diesel school buses exists. For those in rural areas of the state, which is the majority of the state, it has been difficult for the infrastructure to meet the charge times required for afternoon routes.

School districts only provide school transportation when necessary. School districts must invest considerable funding out of the classroom just for ongoing costs as state funding formula for Home-to-School Transportation has remained stagnant since 1981. School Districts rely on grants and subsidies, like HVIP, for school bus replacement. The ongoing costs are so burdensome, without grants or subsidies, dedicating the capital required to replace a school bus is unrealistic for many districts.

Eliminating Low NOx engines from HVIP funding will force districts to make tough decisions at the expense of students. School districts unable to implement electric school buses will be forced to go with cheaper, dirtier, school buses rather than the more expensive Low NOx near-zero options set to be eliminated from HVIP eligibility.

We request Low NOx engines continue to be eligible for school bus replacement funding under HVIP until Electric School Bus Technology has a few more years to improve. We look forward to transitioning into electric school bus technology and cannot be more appreciative of the support the California Air Resources Board has provided and continues to provide School Districts across the state as we work to improve the air quality for the students and communities.

We thank you for your consideration on this issue.