September 24, 2018

California Air Resources Board, Members

1001 I Street, Suite

Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Response to the Initial Statement of Reasons for the Proposed Innovative Clean Transit Regulation**

Chair Nichols and Members of the California Air Resources Board:

On behalf of ARBOC Specialty Vehicles, LLC, I submit the following comments in response to the Initial Statement of Reasons for the Proposed Innovative Clean Transit (ICT) Regulation. ARBOC Specialty Vehicles, LLC is a low floor cutaway & medium duty transit bus manufacturer that provides innovative products to transit agencies across North America in an effort to improve efficiencies and aid in mobility for all users of public transit, including many in California.

As currently drafted, the proposed regulation improves on the Draft Regulatory Concept for the Proposed Innovative Clean Transit Regulation, released December 2017. Improvements to the proposed regulation reflect ongoing discussions between California Air Resources Board staff and the leadership of the California Transit Association. While the progress made on the proposed regulation is substantial, we remain concerned that the imposition of the zero-emission bus (ZEB) purchase requirement is not tied to benchmarks for ZEB cost and performance, infrastructure buildout costs, and funding availability. Moreover, we see significant risks in assuming, as ARB staff has, that data gathered from limited, short-term ZEB deployments will accurately reflect the realities of ZEB deployments at-scale. We assert that, despite the claims of some interest groups, ZEB cost and performance, infrastructure buildout, and the cost of electricity as fuel, are still issues.

As you move to finalize the proposed regulation, ARBOC Specialty Vehicles, LLC believes you should be guided by one question: “*What will happen to transit service, if the assertions made by ARB staff and interest groups are wrong, and the cost and difficulty of the transition to fully electrified bus fleets more closely align with the warnings of California’s public transit agencies?”* To help navigate this question, we urge the Air Resources Board to review current range and cost-specific data obtained and provided by both large and smaller operator’s experience as well as unbiased consultants when estimating the actual impact of Innovative Clean Transit on public transit service delivery and review the following considerations:

* **Benchmarking and Regulatory Assessment:** This provision would require the California Air Resources Board to conduct a regulatory assessment – *before* a ZEB purchase requirement goes into effect – that evaluates real-world ZEB cost and performance with benchmarks for ZEB cost and performance established at the time of rule adoption. This regulatory assessment should allow the Board to issue an across-the-board suspension of the ZEB purchase requirement, much like the original Transit Fleet Rule did, if real-world ZEB cost and performance is not yet at parity with the cost and performance of conventionally-fueled transit buses. This provision would have no impact on the ZEB purchase requirement, if benchmarks for ZEB cost and performance are being met, as anticipated by ARB staff and interest groups.
* **Incentives:** The staff report supporting the proposed regulation emphasizes the importance of incentive funding to minimizing adverse impacts to transit service (see Initial Statement of Reasons, pages ES-8, III-8, VIII-26). Given the stated importance of this funding and our shared goal of protecting vital transit service, this provision would require ARB to revise its current policy disallowing the use of incentive funding to meet regulatory compliance to explicitly allow transit agencies to use incentive funding whenever they are prepared to purchase a ZEB.
In addition, the HVIP is an equitable and efficient process for offsetting the cost of a zero emission bus. However, CARB must express its support for creating an infrastructure funding program. This program should also be available to small operators to finance the rollout plans. Without a secure source for infrastructure investments in fueling/charging facilities, maintenance facilities, and storage capacity, the ability to meet the goals of this rule is doubtful.
We urge the Air Resources Board to review and compare purchase orders and actual costs associated with the purchase of CNG/Clean Diesel vehicles and Battery-electric vehicles. Battery-electric buses are more than double the cost of CNG/Clean Diesel Buses *after* HVIP vouchers. The HVIP program and PG&E transit budgeting are non-dedicated, temporary funding sources available to implement a costly and sometimes unreliable form of technology. Dedicated and reliable funding and incentive programs will allow for continuity of services when implementing the technology.
* **Delayed Compliance:** ARBOC Specialty Vehicles, LLC strongly supports the delayed compliance for small operators with adopting the rollout plans and purchase mandates. For a small operator, additional time will be needed to secure funding for developing and adopting the rollout plans. The additional time needed to develop the rollout plans support the need for the later purchase mandate timeline. The later purchase mandate should also benefit agencies to take advantage of lower vehicle prices as demand increases and supply chains mature. Delayed compliance will allow many agencies to begin purchasing Electric Buses as the technology advances and begins to meet range requirements for their standard routes. Earlier compliance may force agencies to otherwise cut services, some of which provide lifeline services to individuals with limited mobility options.
* **Cutaway Definition:** ARBOC Specialty Vehicles, LLC also supports the proposed definition of a cutaway bus. These vehicles are the workhorse of small transit systems due to their lower capital and operating costs. These vehicles are produced in a wide variety of sizes, and the proposed definition specifying vehicles weight of 14,000 pounds to 26,000 pounds is appropriate. In addition, the rule recognizes that a commercially available zero emission cutaway bus is currently not available.
* **Small Operator Definition:** Additionally, we urge the Board to reconsider the definition of a “small operator” and use the definition employed by federal and state programs for compliance purposes. The proposed regulations define a small operator as any operator with less than 100 buses. ARBOC Specialty Vehicles, LLC urges the Board to rely on the current federal definition that specifies a small operator as having less than 100 buses during peak operations. The number “100” is nominal and does accurately portray the size of an operator as a whole. Many vehicles in a fleet may not be regularly used: some may only be used during emergencies or during fleet maintenance, may be retired, or may be vehicles that have met their useful life. We urge CARB not to rely solely on NTD data for the total number of buses because these numbers can represent total buses on the lot including buses being sold or disposed that have met their useful life and back up vehicles used for emergencies.
* **Funding Considerations:** We urge the Air Resources Board to consider the vast difference between agencies considered small to both the Federal Transit Administration and California Department of Transportation but not the Air Resources Board. These agencies are traditionally rural or non-profit/ADA providers with inequitable funding in comparison to “other” large operators pooled into the same definition by the Air Resources Board. These agencies have much smaller staffing capacities and current transit employment trends, such as driver and maintenance staff shortages are exacerbated in smaller communities. These agencies often have much larger routes and service areas. Rural transit systems and ADA/non-profit providers face unique challenges that are not considered in the regulation as it exists today due to vague definitional standards.

 We respectfully ask that you consider the comments we have provided in addition to those provided by the California Transit Association and the California Association for Coordinated Transportation (CALACT.) Our company is committed to alleviating providing mobility options to communities and transit agencies as well as reducing the dependence on single use vehicles. We support efforts to reduce pollution in communities in California but ask that you consider our comments as to protect California’s transit agencies, and the riders who rely on their service, from the risks associated with this transition. We greatly appreciate your continued commitment to working with the California Transit Association to get this proposed regulation right.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at 574-825-6476.

Sincerely,

Kim Yoder

Vice President of Sales & Marketing

ARBOC Specialty Vehicles, LLC

cc: Richard Corey, Executive Officer, California Air Resources Board

Steve Cliff, Deputy Executive Officer, California Air Resources Board

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