

Clean Transit for America

Moving our public transit systems to zero emission fleets

The Problem

- Today, there are approximately 70,000 mass transit buses and 85,000 cutaway vehicles and transit vans in America. Approximately 2% of those buses are zero emission vehicles.
- According to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), fuel use from transit buses alone accounts for more than 5.5 million metric tons of carbon pollution spewed into the atmosphere annually.
- The volume of air pollutants-like Sulphur Oxides (SOx), Nitrogen Oxides (NOx), Particulate Matter (PM), Carbon Monoxide (CO), and Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC)-emitted from diesel buses is significantly higher than from electric buses, meaning this transition helps improve local air quality for riders and community members alike. While great progress has been made in lowering the emission of pollutants from diesel transit buses, bad air quality disproportionately impacts low-income communities of color and a transition to electric buses will help.
- According to recent data, the average cost of a battery electric bus is between \$850,000 and \$900,000, and hydrogen fuel cell buses average \$1 million per bus or more. Zero-emissions vehicles will be cheaper to operate and maintain once deployed, helping agencies provide more frequent, high-quality transit services, but the upfront cost of zero-emission vehicles and charging infrastructure are an obstacle to adoption. Significantly increasing the size of orders for zero-emissions buses will lead to major reductions in prices.
- In Fiscal Year 2020, the Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA) “Low-No Program”—the federal government’s premier competitive grant program for the procurement low or no emission transit buses—was appropriated \$75 million in addition to \$55 million in contract authority. Yet, \$130 million in annual funds is woefully inadequate to meeting the challenge ahead of us.

The Solution: 100% Zero Emission Buses

\$73 billion for Zero Emission Bus deployment

- The federal government can and should be in the business of aiding transit agencies in shifting their bus fleets to zero emissions.
- The Low-No bus program is a good model for a federal-state-local partnership.
- The Zero Emission Bus (ZEB) transit program outlined here will increase funding to the Low-No bus program and aid agencies in replacing their conventional buses with ZEBs and replacing cutaway vehicles and transit vans with zero-emission vehicles.
- This program will prioritize funding for areas with the worst air quality, to ensure the funding targets the areas with the greatest need first.
- According to a study from the Center for Transportation and the Environment (CTE), it is estimated that the cost to transition to an all ZEB fleet by 2035—including related infrastructure and administrative costs—is between \$56-89 billion.

- Accordingly, Clean Transit for America will authorize \$73 billion for ZEB procurement, deployment, and related infrastructure improvements, including charging infrastructure installation.

Zero-Emission Transition in the Public Transportation Workforce and Supporting New Employment Opportunities

- The public transportation workforce that maintains and operates diesel-powered buses and vehicles will need to be retrained to allow transit agencies to efficiently deploy ZEBs and other zero-emission vehicles.
- All of the standard federal requirements that protect transit workers and promote U.S. employment will apply to this program, including prevailing wage requirements and worker protective arrangements under §5333. No federal dollars may be used to subsidize the displacement of workers.
- “Buy America” requirements will be applied to the program to ensure all ZEBs and zero-emission vehicles funded by the plan are made in the U.S., supporting manufacturing across the nation.
- The plan will also incentivize manufacturers bidding for ZEB contracts to commit to creating good jobs and create new pathways for persons that have traditionally been left out of the manufacturing sector, including women, people of color, veterans, and the formerly incarcerated.
- The plan will provide \$60 million for a joint labor-management national transit frontline workforce training consortium dedicated to ZEB training.
- It will also provide \$500 million in funds to be administered by FTA and disbursed to transit agencies to help ease the financial burden of worker re-training necessary to maintain and efficiently operate ZEBs.
- All technicians involved in charging station installation will be certified through the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Training Program (EVITP).