



# EPA CLEAN SCHOOL BUS PROGRAM

*Third Report to Congress • Fiscal Year 2023*



**U.S. EPA Office of Transportation and Air Quality**

**February 2024**

EPA-420-R-24-001



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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ADA</b>	Americans with Disabilities Act
<b>ARP</b>	American Rescue Plan
<b>BEL</b>	Beneficial Electrification League
<b>CFR</b>	Code of Federal Regulations
<b>CNG</b>	Compressed Natural Gas
<b>CSB</b>	Clean School Bus
<b>DCFC</b>	Direct Current Fast Charging
<b>DERA</b>	Diesel Emissions Reduction Act
<b>EEI</b>	Edison Electric Institute
<b>EPA</b>	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
<b>EV</b>	Electric Vehicle
<b>EVSE</b>	Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment
<b>FHWA</b>	Federal Highway Administration
<b>FY</b>	Fiscal Year
<b>GHG</b>	Greenhouse Gas
<b>IIJA</b>	Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act
<b>NCES</b>	National Center for Education Statistics
<b>NEVI</b>	National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure
<b>NOFO</b>	Notice of Funding Opportunity
<b>NO<sub>x</sub></b>	Nitrogen Oxides
<b>NREL</b>	National Renewable Energy Laboratory
<b>OEM</b>	Original Equipment Manufacturer
<b>OMB</b>	Office of Management and Budget
<b>PM</b>	Particulate Matter
<b>SAIPE</b>	Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates
<b>V2B</b>	Vehicle-to-Building
<b>V2G</b>	Vehicle-to-Grid
<b>ZE</b>	Zero-Emission

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Credit: Mark Rich, Uintah School District  
Student Transportation Supervisor; Utah.

## Executive Summary

**S**chool buses in the United States travel more than 4 billion miles each year, providing the safest transportation to and from school for more than 25 million American children every day.<sup>1</sup> However, most school buses on the road are powered by diesel-fueled engines that pre-date EPA's latest emission standards. These buses emit higher levels of pollutants, including nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) and particulate matter (PM), in diesel exhaust than newer models. These pollutants can contribute to poor air quality and negatively impact human health, especially for children, who have a faster breathing rate than adults and whose lungs are not yet fully developed.<sup>2</sup> Bus drivers and other school staff are also exposed to these pollutants from diesel-fueled school buses.

EPA's Clean School Bus (CSB) Program funds the replacement of school buses emitting higher levels of pollutants with buses that emit zero or lower levels of pollutants (i.e., zero-emission [ZE] or clean school buses). These replacement buses ensure cleaner air for students, bus drivers, school staff working near bus loading areas, and the communities through which the buses drive each day. The reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from these bus replacements will also help address the outsized role of the transportation sector in fueling the climate crisis.<sup>3</sup> ZE and clean school buses can also cost less to maintain or fuel than the older buses they are replacing, which can free up needed resources for schools.<sup>4</sup>

The first funding opportunity under the CSB Program was a rebate program that opened in 2022. In 2023, the CSB Program issued rebate awards to schools around the country selected under the first CSB rebate funding opportunity, administered the first CSB Grant competition, launched a second rebate program, and developed several technical assistance and educational resources to support clean school bus deployment. As of January 2024, EPA has awarded approximately \$1.84 billion to fund 5,103 clean school buses – 96% of which are electric – and related charging infrastructure at 642 school districts in most states and territories, and at schools operated by federally recognized Tribes. Of the school districts awarded CSB Program funds to date, 602 are defined as prioritized based on program criteria (see Section I for more details on prioritization). This report covers CSB Program developments during fiscal year (FY) 2023.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> EPA. 2021. *Clean School Bus Program: Building a Better America with the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law*. <https://nepis.epa.gov/Exe/ZyPDF.cgi?Dockkey=P1013NR1.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> EPA. n.d. "Fast Facts on Transportation Greenhouse Gas Emissions." <https://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/fast-facts-transportation-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

<sup>4</sup> EPA. n.d. "Benefits of Clean School Buses." <https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/benefits-clean-school-buses>

<sup>5</sup> Detailed information about 2023 CSB Grant Program awards and other fiscal year 2024 CSB Program developments will be covered in the Fourth CSB Report to Congress.



## I: Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

President Biden signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, into law on November 15, 2021. Under Title XI: Clean School Buses and Ferries, the IIJA provides \$5 billion over five years (FY 2022–2026) for the replacement of existing school buses with ZE and clean school buses. The IIJA authorizes EPA to administer rebates, grants, and contracts to replace a substantial portion of the nation’s fleet of nearly 500,000 school buses with ZE and ZE models to reduce harmful emissions from older, dirtier buses that predate the more stringent EPA engine standards.

This historic investment in school buses will transform fleets across the United States, especially in communities marginalized by underinvestment and overburdened by pollution. “President Biden’s Investing in America agenda is already transforming school bus fleets across the nation, passing on cost savings to districts while improving air quality. With new funding available, we will accelerate our work to transition to electric and low-emission school buses further and faster than ever before,” said EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan at the CSB Grant Program announcement event in Nanticoke, Pennsylvania, on April 24, 2023.<sup>6</sup> The CSB Program also supports domestic manufacturing and American jobs. School bus manufacturers have facilities across the country that produce ZE and clean school buses.

Under the statutory design for this program, half of the CSB Program’s available funding of \$5 billion is dedicated for ZE school buses and half is for ZE and clean school buses. A ZE school bus produces zero exhaust emissions of air pollutants and GHGs, and a clean school bus reduces emissions by operating entirely or in part using an alternative fuel, such as propane or natural gas, or is a ZE bus. EPA may make awards up to 100% of the cost of the replacement bus and charging or fueling infrastructure.

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<sup>6</sup> EPA. 2023. “Biden-Harris Administration Announces \$400 Million Grant Program to Fund Clean School Buses That Reduce Emissions and Protect Children’s Health.” <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/biden-harris-administration-announces-400-million-grant-program-fund-clean-school>

## EPA Experience Funding School Bus Replacements and Improving School Attendance



Credit: Michelle Moyer; EPA staff; Nanticoke, PA, April 2023.

EPA has managed the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) Program since funding began in 2008. Although DERA funds projects in diverse sectors, over 40% of the vehicles and equipment upgraded through DERA have been school buses.<sup>7</sup> In addition to funding the replacement and retrofit of older, higher-emitting diesel school buses through the National and State DERA grant programs, EPA had a dedicated DERA School Bus Rebate Program from 2012 to 2021. The DERA School Bus Rebate Program awarded funds to replace more than 3,100 school buses with cleaner models. Compared to older diesel

buses, these new buses offered the potential to reduce emissions of pollutants like NO<sub>x</sub> and PM by over 90% and achieve GHG reductions as well. Separate from the DERA School Bus Rebate Program, the 2021 American Rescue Plan (ARP) Electric School Bus Rebate Program offered \$7 million to low-income and disadvantaged school districts, Tribal schools, and private fleets serving those schools for the replacement of 23 old school buses with new electric school buses.

Researchers at the University of Michigan and University of Washington have assessed the impact of EPA's DERA school bus rebate funding on student attendance.<sup>8</sup> In examining school district attendance rates of schools that received rebate funding through DERA between 2012 and 2017 compared to those that did not, the study found that the districts awarded EPA rebate funds had greater attendance improvements – resulting in over 350,000 estimated additional student days of attendance annually. These improvements were most significant when the oldest school buses were replaced and when ridership was highest. Given the strong correlation between student attendance and achievement, EPA hopes to accelerate these observed student attendance improvements through CSB Program funding.

[Learn more about the DERA School Bus Rebate Program.](#)

## 2023 Omnibus Funding Bill Amendments

The FY 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act, also referred to as the 2023 Omnibus Funding Bill, included amendments to the CSB Program that impacted the list of eligible applicants and bus usage requirements in future funding rounds. Specifically, the Act expanded eligibility for the program to include certain charter schools and entities that lease, license, or contract for school bus services. It also allowed an exception to the requirement that a bus serve the school district in the application for five years in the case that a private bus fleet contract expires and the bus continues to serve another similarly prioritized district.<sup>9</sup> The 2023 CSB Grant Program was the first funding opportunity to reflect these two changes.

<sup>7</sup> EPA. 2022. *Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA): Fifth Report to Congress* (page 9). <https://nepis.epa.gov/Exe/ZyPDF.cgi?Dockkey=P1015S8Q.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Pedde, M., Szpiro, A., Hirth, R., and Adar, S.D. 2023. "Randomized Design Evidence of the Attendance Benefits of the EPA School Bus Rebate Program." *Nature Sustainability* 6: 838-844. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-023-01088-7>

<sup>9</sup> Congress.gov. 2022. "Section 405." <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/2617>

## Eligibility

As amended by the 2023 Omnibus Bill, the IIJA defines eligible recipients as:

- State or local governmental entities that are responsible for:
  - Providing school bus service to one or more public school systems; or
  - The purchase, lease, license, or contract for service of school buses;
- Eligible contractors, which may be for-profit, not-for-profit, or nonprofit entities, that have the capacity to:
  - Sell lease, license, or contract for service clean school buses, zero-emission school buses, charging or fueling infrastructure, or other equipment needed to charge, fuel, or maintain clean school buses or zero-emission school buses, to individuals or entities that own, lease, license, or contract for service a school bus or a fleet of school buses; or
  - Arrange financing for such a sale, lease, license, or contract for service;
- Nonprofit school transportation associations;
- Charter schools (as defined in [section 7221i of title 20](#)) that are responsible for:
  - The purchase, lease, license, or contract for service of school buses for that charter school; and
- Indian Tribes, Tribal organizations, or Tribally controlled schools that are responsible for:
  - Providing school bus service to one or more schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs; or
  - The purchase, lease, license, or contract for service of school buses.

The IIJA allows EPA to prioritize applicants that:

- Propose to replace buses that serve:
  - High-need local educational agencies;<sup>10</sup>
  - Schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs; or
  - Local educational agencies that receive basic support payments<sup>11</sup> for children who reside on Indian land;
- Serve rural or low-income areas; or
- Complement the assistance received through the award by securing additional sources of funding for the activities supported through the award.

## Cost Share Considerations

The IIJA allows EPA to prioritize applicants that provide cost share through public-private partnerships, grants from other entities, or school bonds. While EPA did not prioritize such applicants during the CSB Rebate Programs, the Agency did consider leveraged external funds when evaluating 2023 CSB Grant Program applications by awarding additional points in the scoring criteria.

<sup>10</sup> The IIJA defines a “high-need local educational agency” as a local educational agency with high percentages of children counted under section 1124(c) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. See <https://www.congress.gov/117/plaws/publ58/PLAW-117publ58.pdf> for additional details.

<sup>11</sup> As authorized under 20 U.S.C. § 7703(b)(1).



## Bus Scrappage

While school buses provide the safest transportation to and from school from a vehicle safety and accident perspective, students riding on older school buses often experience high exposures to diesel exhaust during their bus rides.<sup>12</sup> Diesel exhaust can enter school buses indirectly via leaky cabins or directly through open windows or doors, which can result in exposures to pollutants that are as high as ten times those in ambient air. These exposures can have significant impacts since exposures to traffic-related pollutants are linked to inflammation, reduced lung function, and increased asthma attacks. Data suggest that school buses typically operate on the road for 16 years, which indicates that millions of students likely ride school buses that predate 2011 or older.<sup>13</sup>

Replacing the number of older buses on the road is thus a key component of the CSB Program. The IJA describes the CSB Program as a bus replacement program to reduce air pollution by taking existing buses off the road and replacing them with ZE and clean buses. To ensure emissions are not simply transferred to another community (e.g., through the sale of an older bus from one district to another), EPA requires existing diesel school buses predating 2011 to be scrapped, often by cutting a hole in the engine block and by cutting or crushing one chassis rail between the axles, after a school's new buses are delivered and in use.<sup>14</sup> The CSB Program's scrappage requirement helps to ensure the air and health benefits of the program are fully realized, which aligns with EPA's commitment to advancing clean air and improving public health.

## Other Considerations

In making awards for ZE or clean school buses, EPA must consider the following criteria without preference to any individual criterion:

- Lowest overall cost of bus replacement;
- Local conditions, including the length of bus routes and weather conditions;
- Technologies that most reduce emissions; and
- Whether funds will bring new technologies to scale or promote cost parity between old technology and new technology, particularly for production in the United States.

Each fiscal year, EPA must ensure that the funding amount awarded to all eligible entities in a state from grants and rebates does not exceed 10% of the total funding amount awarded.



Credit: Beth Clemons, EPA staff; EPA Region 10 Administrator Casey Sixkiller in Tacoma, WA, August 2022.

<sup>12</sup> Pedde, M., Szpiro, A., Hirth, R., and Adar, S.D. 2023. "Randomized Design Evidence of the Attendance Benefits of the EPA School Bus Rebate Program." *Nature Sustainability* 6: 838-844. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-023-01088-7>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Under the 2023 CSB Grant Program, EPA allowed low-income applicants seeking to purchase ZE buses through the School District Sub-Program to request an exception to the scrappage requirement at the time of application if the applicant planned to own the new replacement buses and the current school bus contract provider was unwilling or unable to replace buses with ZE buses. This exception was designed to provide additional flexibility for applicants in these very specific circumstances.

EPA is continually collecting stakeholder suggestions and feedback on the CSB Program. Prior to the first round of funding, EPA identified the following goals for the CSB Program based on stakeholder input. These goals continue to guide program design and outreach:

- Engage stakeholders in program development.
- Evolve the program, as needed, based on successes and lessons learned.
- Promote cost parity between bus technologies.
- Allow school districts multiple opportunities to apply for funding.
- Maximize the number of ZE and clean school buses that receive funding.
- Ensure a broad geographic distribution of awards.

## II: Justice40 and Prioritizing Low-Income and Disadvantaged Communities

Established in Executive Order 14008, the Justice40 Initiative is a whole-of-government effort to ensure that 40% of the overall benefits from federal investments, including climate and clean energy investments, reach disadvantaged communities. The IJA allows EPA to prioritize applications that will replace buses serving high-need local educational agencies, Tribal schools, and rural or low-income areas. This prioritization helps support Justice40 goals.

EPA used the U.S. Census Bureau's [Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates \(SAIPE\) School District Estimates](#) dataset to determine which local educational agencies qualified as "high-need local educational agencies" for the CSB Program's priority list. Specifically, school districts listed as having 20% or more students living in poverty based on the SAIPE data qualified as "prioritized." The SAIPE dataset was selected because it is the most comprehensive public nationwide data on student poverty and numerous programs at both the federal and state level use the SAIPE Program to identify "high-need local educational agencies." Nevertheless, EPA recognizes that some school districts may not be listed in the SAIPE data, and therefore the 2022 CSB Rebate Program allowed school districts to self-certify as having 20% or more students living in poverty pursuant to the federal poverty threshold in order to qualify as "prioritized." School districts located in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands were also prioritized as "high-need school districts."<sup>15</sup> Prioritizing districts in these territories is consistent with both the Omnibus Territories Act of 2013 and the broader Agency-wide effort to not require cost shares for territories.

Based on feedback from stakeholders on the 2022 Rebate Program, EPA adjusted the self-certification process such that large school districts with subsets of high-need schools could self-certify. In the 2023 CSB Grant and Rebate Programs, applicants were given the option to self-certify the low-income priority status of their districts. This option was available for public school districts, including public charter school districts, not represented in the 2021 SAIPE dataset that received a Title 1, Part A grant in the 2021/2022 academic school year. Additionally, large school districts with more than 35,000 students and/or more than 45 schools were able to self-certify their low-income priority status. These schools could either self-certify for the entire school district if 80% or more of schools in the district received a Title 1, Part A grant in the 2021/2022 academic school year, or they could self-certify for a sub-group of schools within the district if all of the schools in the sub-group individually received a Title 1, Part A grant in the 2021/2022 academic school year and all school buses requested in the application would continue to primarily serve the schools identified in the sub-group. The Agency continues to examine the CSB Program's prioritization criteria as applied under the law and may adjust as appropriate to address program goals in future funding opportunities.

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<sup>15</sup> Puerto Rico was not included in this list of prioritized high-need school districts located in territories because it is the only territory with SAIPE data available and was already prioritized under the 20% threshold.

EPA focuses education and outreach efforts on low-income, disadvantaged, and other high-need communities in rural, urban, and Tribal areas, including partnering with stakeholders to reach communities that may have never applied for a federal grant or rebate (see the “Stakeholder Engagement” section for more information).

### III: Differences Between Clean School Bus Rebates and Grants

In 2023, EPA issued two new CSB funding opportunities: a rebate program and a grant program. EPA issued funding through both program types to accommodate a diverse array of applicants, some of whom may be better positioned to apply for one program type over the other depending on fleet size, staff resources, and a variety of other factors.

Both CSB Rebates and Grants are payments from EPA to an eligible entity to subsidize the purchase of a ZE or clean school bus and eligible infrastructure. While both CSB funding program types provide selectees with awarded funds *prior* to purchasing eligible buses and infrastructure, there are a few key differences between the two, outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Overview of Differences Between the CSB Program’s Rebate and Grant Funding Opportunities

	Rebates	Grants
<b>Application Process</b>	Quick and simple; applications submitted through EPA portal	Longer, more detailed; applications submitted through grants.gov
<b>Selection Process</b>	Random number generated lottery process	Evaluation of application materials and scoring criteria
<b>Project Period<sup>16</sup></b>	Shorter project period	Longer project period
<b>Selectee Support and Flexibility</b>	EPA provides less support and flexibility in funding to selectees	EPA may offer more support for selectees during the project, as well as flexibility in funding (such as covering project implementation costs) and timing of the project (such as extending the period to complete the project)
<b>Number of Replacement Buses</b>	Funds the transition of smaller fleets (lower bus replacement minimum and maximum)	Funds the transition of larger fleets (higher bus replacement minimum and maximum)

EPA encourages applicants to consider which CSB funding structure (grants or rebates) best suits their needs. Eligible applicants may apply for all future funding opportunities under the CSB Program, regardless of whether they applied for and/or received funding under a past funding opportunity. However, applicants must submit a new application for each funding opportunity.

<sup>16</sup> Duration of time within which a selectee must complete their bus replacement project, including any extensions approved by EPA.

## Benefits of Clean School Buses



Credit: Beth Clemons, EPA staff, Tacoma, WA, August 2022.

Electric school buses have zero tailpipe emissions, meaning that students, drivers, and members of the community are exposed to significantly lower concentrations of harmful diesel pollutants like PM and NO<sub>x</sub>. This can significantly improve public health, especially for children, whose lungs are still developing. The transport of students with low-emission and ZE school buses has also been linked to improvements in student attendance and academic achievement.<sup>17</sup> (See “EPA Experience Funding School Bus Replacements and Improving School Attendance” for more information.)

Replacing diesel buses with electric buses reduces GHG emissions, maintenance costs, and fuel costs. When they are not being used to transport students, electric school buses can be

used as sources of power via their battery storage. Experts are exploring advancements in bidirectional charging technologies, also known as vehicle-to-grid (V2G) technologies, that can store surplus energy and then return it to the grid during peak times of use. This will allow electric buses to play an important role in bolstering grid resiliency during times of peak usage and during power outages resulting from weather-related events, which may increase in frequency over the coming years. Additionally, vehicle-to-building (V2B) technologies, which allow vehicles to transfer surplus energy to a building, can further support schools in areas with low power resilience.

Other types of clean school buses can also reduce tailpipe pollution, GHG emissions, and fuel costs relative to diesel engines, depending on the alternative fuel that is used.

Visit EPA’s website for more information about the [benefits of ZE and electric school buses](#) as well as [bidirectional charging technologies](#).

## IV: 2022 Clean School Bus Rebate Program

The first CSB funding opportunity EPA offered was the 2022 CSB Rebates. In May 2022, EPA announced \$500 million in available funding for the 2022 CSB Rebates. By the time the application window closed in August, EPA had received about 2,000 applications requesting approximately \$4 billion to replace more than 12,000 buses. More than 90% of applications were for ZE buses. Nearly 9% of applications were for propane buses and 1% were for compressed natural gas (CNG) buses. The applicant pool included submissions from all 50 states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and federally recognized Tribes.

Given the tremendous response, EPA decided to award up to \$965 million through the 2022 CSB Rebates. EPA notified rebate applicants of their selection status in October 2022. Once notified, selected school districts could proceed with purchasing new buses and eligible infrastructure.

Please refer to EPA’s [Clean School Bus Second Report to Congress](#) for details on the 2022 CSB Rebate Program’s eligibility, funding details, applications, and selection process.

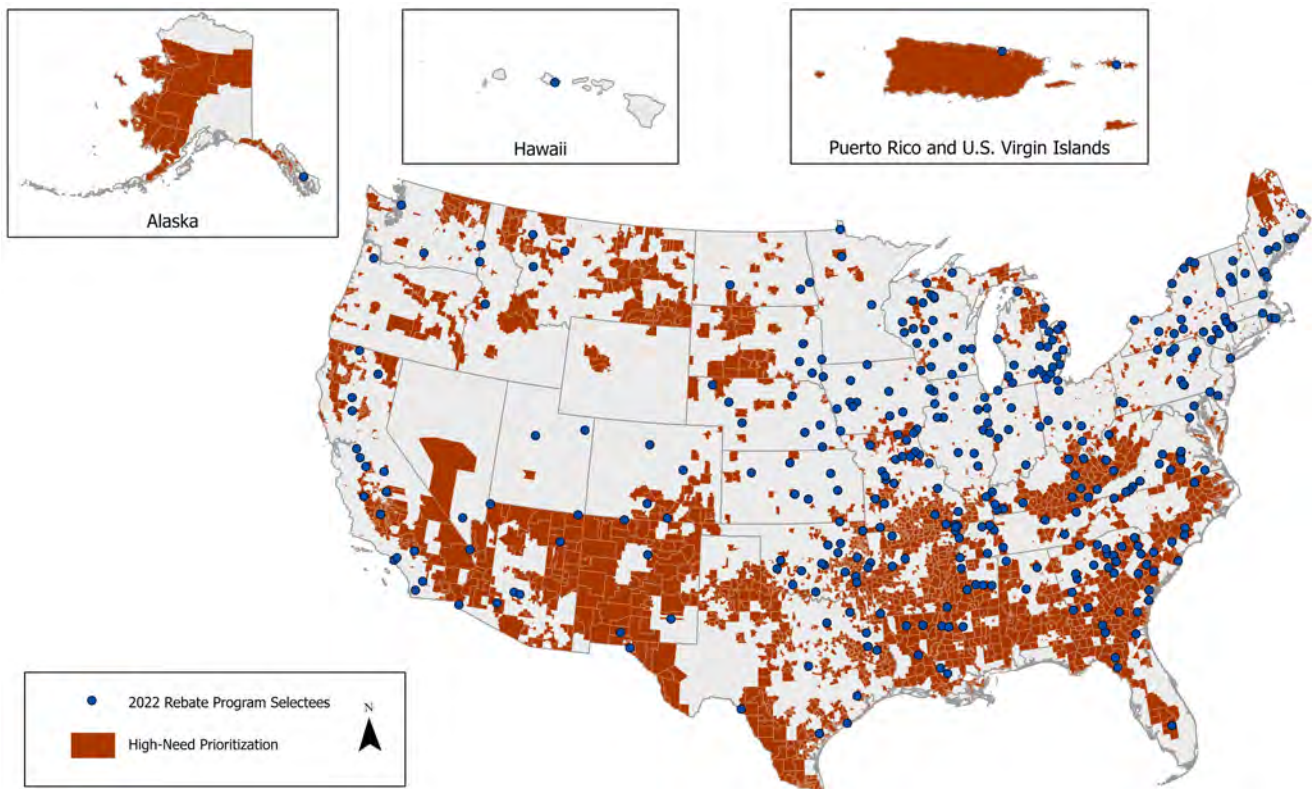
<sup>17</sup> Austin, W., Heutel, G., and Kreisman, D. 2019. “School Bus Emissions, Student Health and Academic Performance.” *Economics of Education Review* 70: 109-126. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2019.03.002>; Pedde, M., Szpiro, A., Hirth, R., and Adar, S.D. 2023. “Randomized Design Evidence of the Attendance Benefits of the EPA School Bus Rebate Program.” *Nature Sustainability* 6: 838-844. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-023-01088-7>

From the 2022 CSB Rebates' award pool of up to \$965 million,<sup>18</sup> EPA funded roughly 2,400 clean school buses for 376 schools. Included among the selectees were school districts from each state, along with districts from Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and federally recognized Tribes. A little over 200 buses were funded for replacement among 28 Tribal school districts. As of October 2023, 309 selectees have accepted their federal award and are in the process of procuring their buses and supporting infrastructure (Table 2).

Table 2. Summary of Awards for the 2022 CSB Rebate Program<sup>19</sup>

School District Type	Number of Selectees	Bus Information				Awarded Funding
		CNG	Propane	Electric	Total Buses	
Prioritized	374	1	115	2,249	2,365	\$885,650,000
Non-prioritized	2	5	1	23	29	\$5,799,000
<b>Totals</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>2,272</b>	<b>2,394</b>	<b>\$891,449,000</b>

Figure 1. Map of 2022 Rebate Selectees and High-Need Prioritized Areas by School District



<sup>18</sup> As previously noted, not all funds in the award pool were distributed during this funding cycle due to a small number of selectees withdrawing from the program. Remaining funds will be distributed to selected applicants during subsequent CSB funding opportunities. See the [Clean School Bus Program Awards](#) webpage for the most up-to-date rebate selectee data.

<sup>19</sup> Reflects data as of October 25, 2023.

Figure 2. Map of 2022 Rebate Selectees and Rural Prioritized Areas by School District

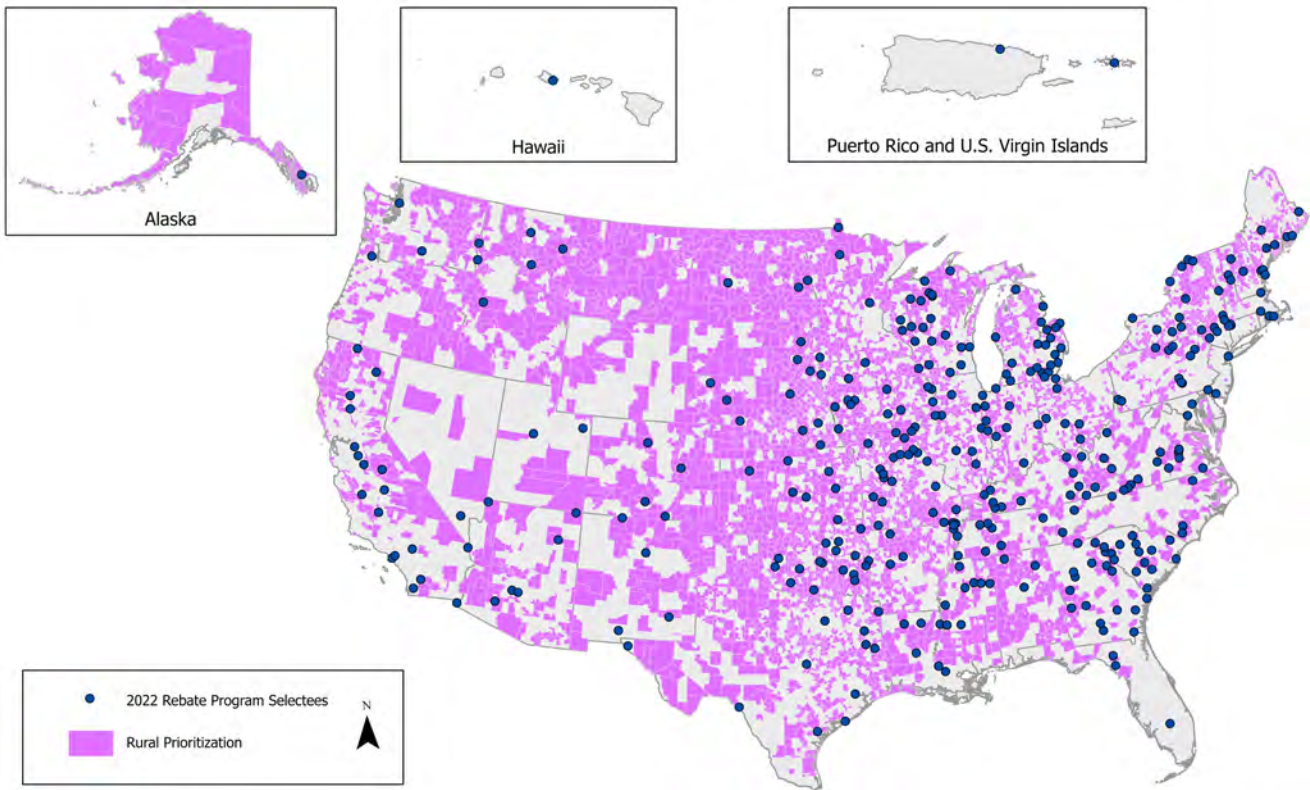
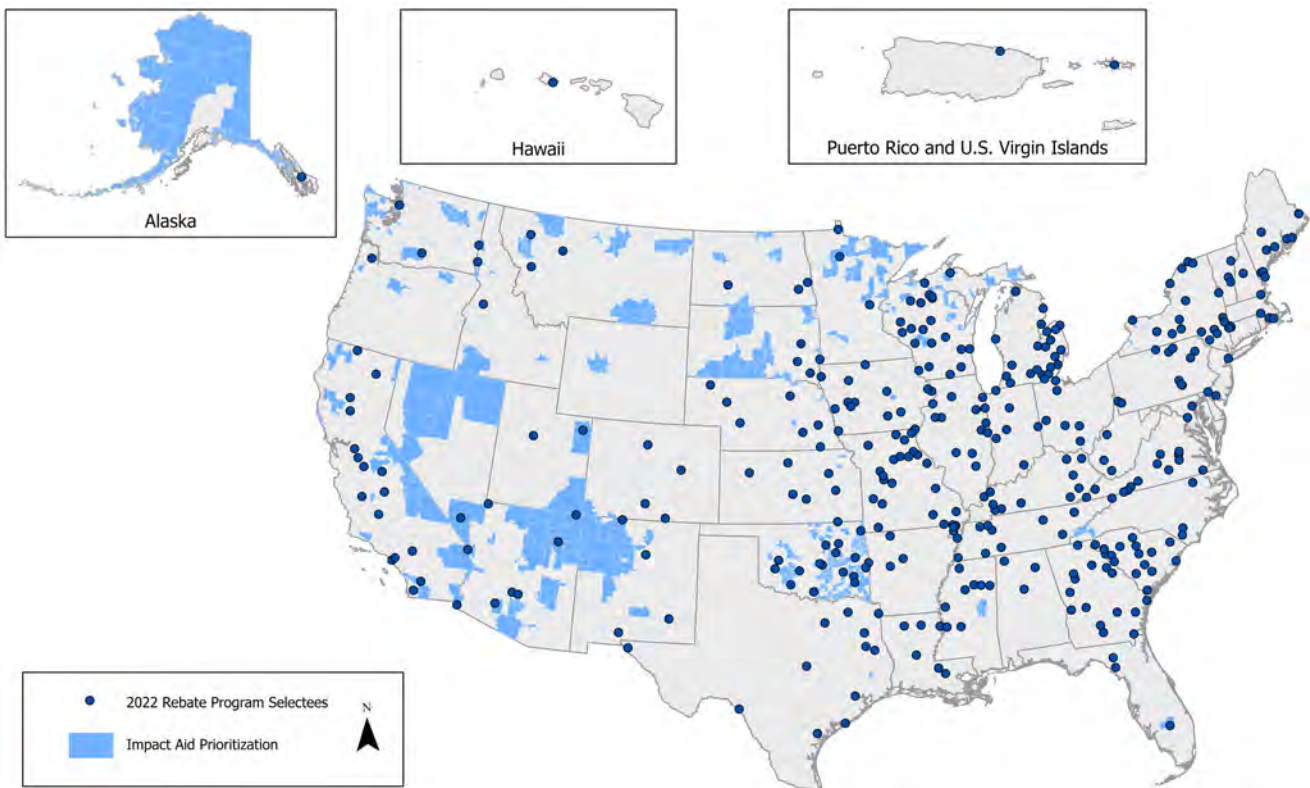


Figure 3. Map of 2022 Rebate Selectees and Tribal Prioritized Areas by School District



The 2022 CSB Rebates prioritized low-income, rural, and Tribal school districts. Over 99% of selectees met the priority definition under the 2022 CSB Rebates criteria, resulting in access to more funds for buses and EV infrastructure for schools in areas that need them the most. Figures 1, 2, and 3 depict 2022 rebate selectees in relation to each prioritized school district. The program also delivered on President Biden's Justice40 commitment.

EPA's [Clean School Bus Program Awards webpage](#) uses an interactive dashboard to provide up-to-date information about the awarded rebates. The dashboard features a map and data display showing the locations of selectees, the number and dollar figure of new buses funded, and their priority applicant status. All applicants not selected for funding in the initial lottery process were placed on a waitlist, which is also included on the webpage. If any 2022 CSB Rebate selectees were deemed ineligible, dropped out of the program, or otherwise reduced their funding request, EPA offered the remaining funds to previously unselected applicants, provided sufficient time remained in the project period.<sup>20</sup> In May 2023, EPA notified all waitlisted applicants that it was no longer pulling from the waitlist to ensure it had sufficient time to review and process selectees' payment request forms. Funding not assigned to selectees under the 2022 Rebate Program was rolled into future funding opportunities.

### EPA Region 9 Rebate Selectee Event



Credit: Michael Brogan, EPA staff; Modesto City Schools, Modesto, CA, November 2022.

On November 2, 2022, Administrator Regan announced the 2022 rebate selectees in EPA's Region 9, which serves Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, the Pacific Islands, and 148 Tribal Nations. The event was held at Modesto City Schools, one of the announced rebate selectees, and was attended by EPA's Region 9 Administrator, school officials, state and local government officials, parents, and students.

Other EPA regional offices held similar events announcing their region's 2022 rebate selectees and encouraging other schools to apply to the CSB Program's future funding rounds.

### EPA Region 2 Rebate Selectee Event

On May 31, 2023, EPA's Region 2, which serves New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and eight Tribal Nations, held a press event with 12 school districts that received 2022 rebate funds. The event was held in Saratoga Springs, NY, with Leonard Bus Sales, which is the direct applicant for six school districts across New York State. Attendees included EPA Region 2 Administrator Lisa F. Garcia, Congressman Paul Tonko, and school district staff.



Credit: Jennifer May, EPA staff; Leonard Bus Sales Depot, Saratoga Springs, NY, May 2023.

<sup>20</sup> At the time of the announcement of rebate awards, some applications remained under review. As their selection status was updated, those applicants either were added to the selectee list or withdrew.

## Payment Request Forms

2022 CSB Rebate applicants selected for funding were then able to request a rebate payment for their new replacement buses and related electric bus charging infrastructure by completing a Payment Request Form. Selectees had until April 2023 to submit Payment Request Forms with transaction confirmation documents such as purchase orders, sales order, and approved quotes. After selectees submitted the proper forms, EPA reviewed all paperwork through a multi-tiered review process to ensure requests complied with program requirements described in the [2022 CSB Rebates Program Guide](#). Once approved, selectees received their rebate funds based on their specific bus and charging infrastructure purchases.

Information selectees provided in the Payment Request Forms to verify compliance with program requirements included the type and price of purchased school bus(es) and electric vehicle supply equipment (EVSE). The overwhelming majority of selectees purchased Type C school buses, which have a maximum passenger load of approximately 75-80 passengers, while fewer selectees purchased Type D buses, which have a maximum passenger load of approximately 90 passengers. The majority of awarded electric school buses cost at or near \$375,000, while the many awarded propane school buses cost around \$150,000 (see Figure 4 and Table 3).

Figure 4: Distribution of Electric School Bus Prices by Vehicle Class

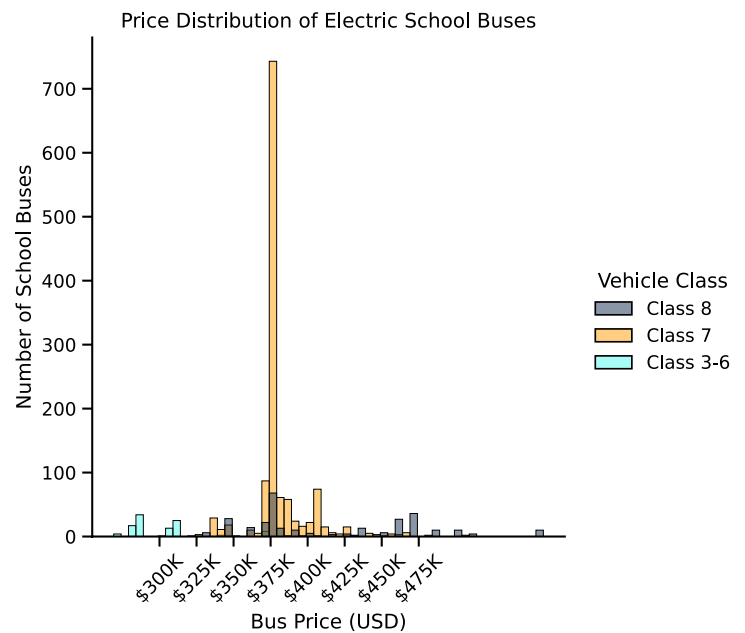


Table 3. 2022 CSB Rebate Program Bus Cost Statistics

	Count	Min	Median	Mean	Max
<b>Propane</b>	101	\$119,985	\$147,753	\$150,774	\$189,267
<b>All Electric</b>	1,630	\$269,085	\$375,000	\$381,190	\$556,325
<b>Class 7 Electric</b>	1,223	\$325,922	\$375,000	\$379,752	\$467,463
<b>Class 8 Electric</b>	300	\$331,290	\$379,088	\$415,465	\$556,325

Rebate selectees purchasing electric school buses could choose to purchase either Level 2 chargers or DC fast chargers (DCFCs) to power their electric school buses. Payment Request Form data indicated that less powerful Level 2 chargers' total costs were between \$5,000 and \$8,000, while total DCFC costs were between \$21,000 and \$27,000 (see Table 4, Figure 5).<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> This data reflects 346 Payment Request Forms submitted as of October 25, 2023; note that data for infrastructure costs may in some cases only reflect a portion of the total cost as applicants did not always submit complete information for infrastructure purchases over the \$20,000 per bus funding maximum.



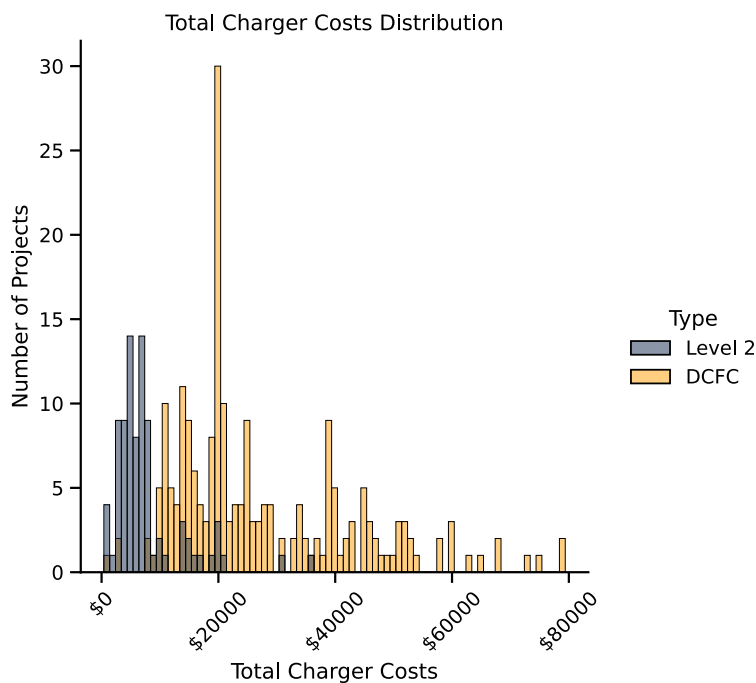
Compared to Level 2 chargers, there were about three times as many DCFC units purchased by 2022 CSB Rebate selectees. Larger DCFC units are typically configured to provide charging for multiple buses, so when calculating per-project infrastructure costs, even for higher-power DCFC, the costs for charging equipment were below the \$20,000 per bus maximum infrastructure rebate amount.

Certain electric school buses can only use DCFC, which may partly account for the higher number of DCFC units purchased.

Table 4. 2022 Rebate Program Total Charger Costs by Charger Type<sup>22</sup>

	Count	Min	Median	Mean	Max
All Chargers	1,393	\$386	\$19,280	\$21,679	\$79,204
Level 2	343	\$386	\$5,964	\$7,643	\$35,996
DCFC	1,056	\$1,200	\$21,143	\$27,320	\$79,204

Figure 5. Distribution of Total Electric School Bus Charger Costs by Charger Type



EPA considered extension requests for the Payment Request Form on a case-by-case basis and granted extensions when sufficient justification was provided. Reasons for extension requests included review needed from a school board or other entity to proceed with the rebate award, manufacturer or supplier issues and delays, utility-related issues and delays, a change in point of contact, and a change in buses to be replaced.

<sup>22</sup> Table 4 and Figure 5 depict total charger costs per charger type, which includes related charger expenses such as shipping, commissioning, installation, and charge management and connectivity software. Note that data reflects Payment Request Forms submitted by October 25, 2023. Both figures do not include one outlier that included infrastructure expenses funded by the school district, as that data point is not representative of CSB Program funding.

## Close Out Forms

In fall 2023, EPA launched the 2022 Rebates Close Out Form. Selectees provided details demonstrating that their awarded buses and charging equipment had been received and proved that their old bus(es) being replaced had been either scrapped, sold, or donated. Approval of the form successfully closed out a selectee's funding project. In September 2023, EPA hosted a webinar to walk selectees through the Close Out Form process.

### 2022 CSB Rebate Selectee Withdrawals

EPA and the Joint Office of Energy and Transportation ("Joint Office") met with selectees that were considering withdrawing from the program to provide the support needed to continue their participation.<sup>23</sup> In some instances, meeting with selectees considering withdrawing from the program supported the school district remaining in the program; however, in most cases the selectee still elected to withdraw from the program.

Of the almost 400 2022 rebate selectees, a total of 46 chose to withdraw from the program due to challenges encountered when proceeding with their rebate award.<sup>24</sup> The most frequently cited reasons for withdrawal were school boards voting against projects for various reasons, including challenges coordinating with electric utilities, sometimes lengthy and costly electric infrastructure upgrades required to install EVSE, or concerns around the maintenance and range of electric buses. In response, EPA launched an Electric Sector Pledge with two national electric sector organizations to provide further support to CSB Program applicants and selectees with the school bus electrification process. (See the "Technical Assistance Coordination and Outreach" section of this report for more information.) In other cases, school boards voted against projects because bus and infrastructure prices greatly exceeded rebate funds and the selectee was not able to cover remaining bus and infrastructure costs. Under the 2023 Rebate Program, EPA added a required "School Board Awareness Certification" form to ensure applicants met with the school board upon application and received support for pursuing a new bus deployment project. (See the "2023 Clean School Bus Rebate Program" section of this report for more information.)

## 2022 Rebate Selectee Spotlights

A growing number of 2022 CSB Rebate selectees have received and begun using their awarded buses and infrastructure. These schools are early adopters of clean school bus technologies and have demonstrated enthusiasm from students, parents, and faculty alike to drive their clean school buses, sometimes on their longest routes. Several 2022 CSB Rebate selectees have indicated that they are interested in or already have plans to purchase additional clean or ZE school buses to continue their transition to green student transportation. The following featured 2022 rebate selectees are a diverse group of schools around the country that were among the first to receive their new buses and EVSE.

### Mount Desert Island Regional School System, Maine

In coastal Maine, two school districts under the Mt. Desert Island Regional School System, Mt. Desert CSD and Southwest Harbor Public Schools, received a total of \$790,000 in rebate funding to purchase two ZE buses and chargers. The two school districts learned about the CSB Rebates through the Maine Department of Environmental Protection and Lion Electric, which applied to the rebate program on their behalf under the rural prioritization criterion. Prior to applying, Mt. Desert Island Regional School System had one ZE bus in its fleet, which was purchased through state Volkswagen settlement grant funding.

<sup>23</sup> The IIJA established a joint office between the Department of Energy and the Department of Transportation to achieve the law's EV goals.

<sup>24</sup> Data reflects information available as of October 26, 2023.

The school system was interested in acquiring additional ZE buses through the EPA CSB Rebates for several reasons – to reduce fueling and maintenance costs, to provide quieter bus rides, and to help the school system achieve its goal of being carbon neutral by 2030. Mt. Desert Island High School runs entirely on renewable energy generated by solar panels on the roof of the school, so its new electric school bus is charged at no additional cost. In describing the community’s attitude toward green initiatives, former Mt. Desert Island High School Maintenance Director Butch Bracy said, “I think, for the most part, people here in Bar Harbor where we’re located on the island are green people, and I think they’re excited about having electric buses. There’s a great deal of interest here for what we’re doing.”



Credit: Eric Hann, Operation Manager, Mt. Desert CSD; Maine.

Overall, the school districts’ new ZE buses were positively received by the broader Mt. Desert Island school community. Bus drivers have expressed their preference for driving a ZE school bus, with some drivers vying for who gets to drive one on their route. In describing his preference for the ZE school bus, bus driver Doug VanGorder said, “Kids aren’t breathing the diesel exhaust. I’m not breathing the diesel exhaust. I’m coughing less than I used to. The electric bus handles just the same as the diesel bus does, the advantages are that there’s no smoke, it’s quieter, and it actually has more power than a diesel bus does.” The students are also fans of the new buses. One day when a diesel school bus was deployed on instead of a ZE bus, some students asked their driver, “Where’s the electric bus?”

Despite being a rural area, Mt. Desert Island had no issues getting their new buses delivered. To build confidence that their ZE buses could operate on long routes in the cold or in traffic during tourist season, Mt. Desert CSD tested the new buses’ performance on shorter routes. At first, Mt. Desert Island High School’s ZE bus was used as a shuttle from the high school to the trade school to make sure the bus was reliable. Now, the ZE bus runs the longest route in the district – about 126 miles round trip. While the bus’s range goes down slightly in the cold, Mt. Desert CSD has determined that the bus is still reliable to use in the winter.

Due to the success of their first two ZE school buses, Mt. Desert Island Regional School System is in the process of acquiring two more electric buses and has submitted an application to the CSB Grant Program. “We have saved thousands of gallons of diesel fuel and the associated carbon emissions and my lungs. So I like it. I like the bus. The electric bus performs as well, traction wise and braking wise, as a brand new bus. I think it’s the way to go. I was always skeptical of electric vehicles, but I think it’s awesome. It’s the way to go. It’s perfect” – Andrew Keblinsky, Mt. Desert Island bus driver.

## Williamsfield Schools, Illinois

Prior to applying to the 2022 CSB Rebates, Williamsfield Schools had been searching for funding opportunities to pursue fleet electrification for a few years. Williamsfield Schools thought that the EPA CSB Rebate Program was its best shot to receive funding for ZE buses, so the district applied directly to the funding opportunity under the rural prioritization criterion.

The school district received \$2,675,000 for seven new electric buses and chargers, and it elected to install four DCFCs and three Level 2 chargers. The new buses have replaced almost all of Williamsfield Schools’ fleet of eight diesel buses. This has greatly benefited the school district’s students, approximately 45% of whom ride the bus to and from school. The school district’s one remaining diesel bus serves as a spare for long-range extracurricular trips.

Williamsfield Schools’ new electric school buses fit into the students’ broader clean energy sustainability initiatives. “We are very grateful that our kids and drivers will no longer experience the smell of diesel fumes on the ride to and from school each day. We are also extremely proud to fuel our new electric buses with solar energy produced onsite. Eight years ago, our students developed a



Credit: Tim Farquer, Williamsfield Schools Superintendent; Illinois.

model of a microgrid that would decrease emissions and increase energy resiliency to our remote rural community. Deployment of vehicle-to-grid technology, in conjunction with the energy storage capacity of our new electric school bus batteries, have us one step closer to achieving their dream,” said Tim Farquer, Williamsfield Schools Superintendent. Williamsfield Schools anticipates electrifying other district-owned vehicles in the future.

### Sentinel Public Schools, Oklahoma

Sentinel Public Schools in Oklahoma applied to the 2022 CSB Rebates under the rural prioritization criterion for the opportunity to reduce the school district’s pollution and carbon footprint. The school district received \$1,580,000 in rebate funds to replace four of the 14 diesel buses in its fleet with electric school buses and to install four DCFCs.

So far, the new buses have been received very well by the school community. Sentinel Public Schools noted that while some still have questions about the new buses, the school district has the answers to provide them with a realistic perspective. Sentinel Public Schools started using the new buses in the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year and the drivers and kids have loved them. The school district appreciates how much quieter the new buses are and how much “cooler” they are for the driver to operate. “I love the regenerative braking on our new buses. I think that is my favorite part of the bus. It’s so cool to know that you’re putting power back into the battery by just letting your foot off the accelerator!” – Glenette Carlson, Sentinel Public Schools secretary and bus driver.

As a fun personal touch, the school district assigned custom songs to their new buses to play for each driver as they drive their bus route and pick up kids. “I love that the buses play different music as they come pick up my kids. It’s a nice way for kids to get going first thing in the morning with something fun,” said one Sentinel Schools parent.

The school district found the rebate process easy to navigate and is considering increasing the number of clean school buses in its fleet in the future. However, Sentinel Public Schools said charging infrastructure would have to improve throughout the state, especially at other schools, as well as the distance that a bus could go on a single charge.

### Toledo City Schools, Ohio

In Toledo, Ohio, Toledo City Schools applied to the rebate program after learning about it through email and was awarded a rebate of \$750,000 for 25 propane school buses. The school district was pleased to receive funding to progress toward its goal of converting its fleet of 150 school buses to be 90% propane by 2028. Upon deployment of its awarded buses, Toledo City Schools received positive feedback from the school community for continuing to improve its fleet with quieter and more efficient buses that are better for the environment.

Toledo City Schools’ mechanics reported several benefits to the school district’s new propane buses, including a simpler engine and exhaust system to maintain, making it easier to diagnose vehicle problems and troubleshoot solutions. The propane buses’ exhaust system saves both mechanic time on diagnosing issues



Credit: Jason Goosetree, Sentinel Public Schools Superintendent; Oklahoma.



Credit: Jason Goosetree, Sentinel Public Schools Superintendent; Oklahoma.



Jake Jaworski, Toledo City Schools Mechanic; Ohio.

and making repairs and Toledo City Schools' money on bus maintenance and repairs, in addition to the fueling cost savings of switching from diesel to propane.

Toledo City Schools is looking forward to transitioning to a unified fleet consisting primarily of propane buses with the same engines and systems in the coming years, which will result in fewer emissions and make mechanics' jobs easier as they become familiar with repairing and maintaining the new bus type.

The school district reported no challenges with applying to the CSB Rebate Program or with deploying or operating their propane buses. In working with EPA regional staff, Toledo City Schools said they appreciated the quick responses to their questions and EPA staffs' detailed knowledge of the rebate process.

## Uintah School District, Utah

Uintah School District in rural Utah started to deploy clean school buses several years ago with the purchase of propane buses. Prior to applying to the 2022 CSB Rebates, Uintah School District's fleet consisted of 29 diesel and 21 propane school buses with student ridership at 57%. When Uintah School District learned about the 2022 Rebates through emails from EPA and the Utah State Board of Education, the school district decided to apply because it was a prioritized applicant and received support from its school board and the Utah Petroleum Association.



Credit: Mark Rich, Uintah School District Transportation Coordinator; Utah.

Uintah School District was awarded \$3,950,000 in rebate funding to purchase the first 10 electric school buses in its fleet, along with five DCFCs and five Level 2 chargers. The school district says that the more it becomes familiar with its new electric school buses, the more it likes them. Uintah School District Transportation Coordinator Mark Rich explained, "I am impressed with the electric buses we have received. Our testing has demonstrated good mileage range and the regeneration of the battery while driving is an outstanding feature. The best thing though is that there are no diesel emissions, which is better for students, drivers, and our community. We are cautiously optimistic about our electric buses for the coming school year."

Uintah School District recognizes the need to train drivers on operating electric school buses. "As we integrate the electric buses into our fleet, our drivers will need additional training," explained Georgene Scott, Uintah School District Bus Driver Instructor. "Pre-trip inspections, as well as throttle and braking processes will be a little different. It will be important to adjust our driving techniques to optimize battery regeneration while on route. I can honestly say I was a bit hesitant about adding electric buses to our fleet. There were several unknowns. But now, having had the opportunity to drive and learn more about the buses, my perspective is changing. I'm becoming more optimistic, and I believe our drivers will be pleasantly surprised by the electric buses."

Moving forward, Uintah School District plans to continue purchasing propane buses to replace its diesel route buses. Uintah says purchasing additional electric school buses is currently cost prohibitive unless it receives funding through grant or rebate programs.



Credit: Mark Rich, Uintah School District Transportation Coordinator; Utah.

## Overcoming Barriers



Credit: Jason Goosetree, Sentinel Public Schools Superintendent; Oklahoma.

As the CSB Program's first funding recipients, some 2022 Rebate selectees encountered hurdles with deploying their clean school buses – most commonly with installing EVSE. For example, Uintah School District said its largest challenge was installing and deploying its awarded EVSE. The school district had to create a contingency plan to address the lack of installed EVSE before the school year started. In describing the school district's experience with the 2022 CSB Rebates, Uintah Transportation Coordinator Mark Rich explained, "Electrifying part of our school bus fleet has been an interesting process. The EPA rebate application was comprehensive

but not overwhelming. The bus procurement was not difficult, but the infrastructure build has been challenging. Building the electrical infrastructure has required considerable coordination with our local power supplier, EV charging vendor, and facility management." Similarly, to prepare for its electric school bus deployment, Mt. Desert Island Regional School System needed time to develop a charging profile that works best for its fleets. The school system determined that overnight, mid-day, and weekend charging was the best schedule to fit its routes. Mt. Desert Island Regional School System also needed additional funding to cover infrastructure costs associated with installing its new EV chargers and started looking for other funding programs to apply to cover the additional ~\$14,000 needed.

While most selectees experienced an overwhelmingly positive response from their school communities about their awarded buses, others were met with some skepticism. Mt. Desert Island School System indicated that, while some parents love the new awarded ZE buses, others have mixed opinions about their use. Some parents expressed concerns about fire safety and range anxiety around bus use during the winter and tourist season when the island experiences increased traffic. Similarly, some Williamsfield Schools community members expressed their opinion that school bus electrification "was the wrong thing to do." Although selectees are not necessarily able to get the support of all school community members, both Mt. Desert Island and Williamsfield were equipped with the safety, performance, and charging data and information needed to answer questions and ease some community members' concerns about the new electric school buses.

The first cohort of CSB funding recipients are leading the nation's transition to clean school buses, while demonstrating to school bus fleet operators across the country that these buses can be successfully deployed in a range of different climatic conditions and geographies. In partnership with the Joint Office, EPA continues to offer CSB Program selectees technical assistance to navigate the electrification process. EPA has also taken feedback from 2022 CSB Rebate selectees into account when designing subsequent funding opportunities.



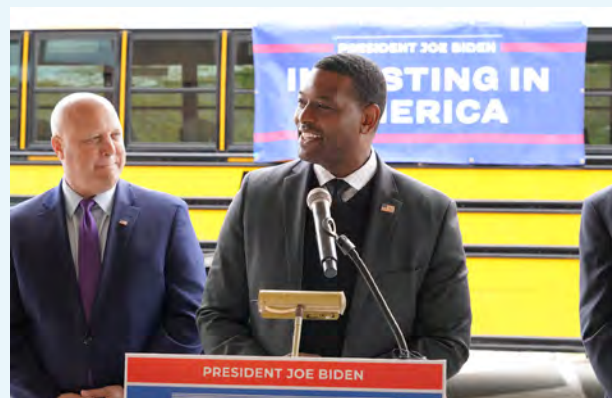
## V: 2023 Clean School Bus Grant Program

The second CSB funding opportunity EPA offered was the 2023 CSB Grants. In April 2023, EPA announced \$400 million in available funding for the 2023 CSB Grant Program. EPA accepted applications from April 24, 2023, until August 22, 2023. In order to address the unique needs of diverse recipients and address gaps identified in the 2022 CSB Rebate Program, the 2023 CSB Grant Program was split into two separate sub-programs under the same Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). (See “Differences Between Clean School Bus Rebates and Grants” for details on the differences between the CSB Program’s two funding opportunities.)

1. The School District Sub-Program, intended for school districts and Tribal applicants targeting large single-fleet turnovers that may have been limited by the 25-bus maximum in the rebate program.
2. The Third-Party Sub-Program, intended for third-party applicants to apply in partnership with school districts, particularly small, rural, Tribal, or low-income beneficiaries that may benefit from third-party technical support, grant administration, and coordination. Third-Party Sub-Program applicants were required to serve at least four school district beneficiaries to be eligible for funding under the 2023 CSB Grants.

### Grant Program Announcement Event

On April 24, 2023, EPA publicly announced the launch of the CSB Program’s first competitive grant opportunity in Nanticoke, PA. Administrator Regan was joined by White House Senior Advisor and Infrastructure Coordinator Mitch Landrieu, Senator Bob Casey (PA), Congressman Matt Cartwright (PA-08), local elected officials, and school leadership and students. During the visit, Administrator Regan delivered remarks announcing the new funding opportunity, took questions from press, and joined students on an electric school bus ride. In the days that followed, EPA regional offices throughout the country coordinated amplification events with local school districts, elected officials, and other key stakeholders.



Credit: EPA; EPA Administrator Regan in Nanticoke, PA, April 2023.

### Eligibility

All eligible entities in the 2022 CSB Rebate Program remained eligible in the 2023 CSB Grant Program. In addition, as a result of the 2023 Omnibus Funding Bill, both private contractors (including private bus fleets that lease, license, or contract for school bus services) and charter schools were also eligible to apply directly to the 2023 CSB Grant Program. Additionally, per the 2023 Omnibus Funding Bill, buses awarded to a prioritized applicant could serve another school district that meets the same or higher program prioritization criteria to meet the Program’s five-year bus service requirement. See Appendix A for a complete list of eligible applicants for the 2023 CSB Grants.

In general, the 2023 CSB Grant Program provided prioritization for school districts in a manner consistent with the 2022 CSB Rebate Program; applicants meeting one or multiple of the following criteria were considered prioritized:<sup>25</sup>

- High-need districts and low-income areas, limited to:
  - School districts listed in the SAIPE School District Estimates for 2021 as having 20% or more students living in poverty;
  - Title 1-funded school districts and charter school districts not listed in the SAIPE dataset;
  - Title 1-funded large public-school districts, defined as districts with more than 35,000 students and/or 45 public schools, that are in SAIPE but do not meet the 20% poverty threshold, were eligible to self-certify the low-income prioritization status for part or all of their district;
  - School districts located in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands;
- Rural school districts, limited to school districts identified with local code “43-Rural: Remote” by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES);<sup>26</sup>
- Bureau of Indian Affairs-funded school districts;
- School districts that receive basic support payments under section 7703(b)(1) of Title 20 for children who reside on Indian land.

## Funding Details

Under the School District Sub-Program, applicants were required to request a minimum of 15 school buses and could request up to a maximum of 50 school buses. Applicants applying under the Third-Party Sub-Program were required to request a minimum of 25 school buses and could request a maximum of 100 school buses. The maximum funding levels for buses are shown in Table 5 below; these funding levels were dependent on (1) the replacement fuel bus type, (2) the replacement bus size, and (3) whether the school district served was prioritized. The per-bus funding levels for ZE buses also included combined bus and EV charging infrastructure, allowing grant recipients the flexibility to determine the split between funding for the bus itself and the supporting infrastructure.

Table 5. 2023 CSB Grant Program Maximum Per-Bus Funding Levels and Prioritization Status.

School District Prioritization Status	Replacement Bus Fuel Type and Size					
	ZE – Class 7+*	ZE – Class 3-6*	CNG – Class 7+	CNG – Class 3-6	Propane – Class 7+	Propane – Class 3-6
Buses serving school districts that meet one or more prioritization criteria	\$395,000 (bus + charging infrastructure)	\$315,000 (bus + charging infrastructure)	\$45,000	\$30,000	\$35,000	\$30,000
Buses serving school districts that are not prioritized	\$250,000 (bus + charging infrastructure)	\$195,000 (bus + charging infrastructure)	\$30,000	\$20,000	\$25,000	\$20,000

\*Funding levels include combined bus and EV charging infrastructure.

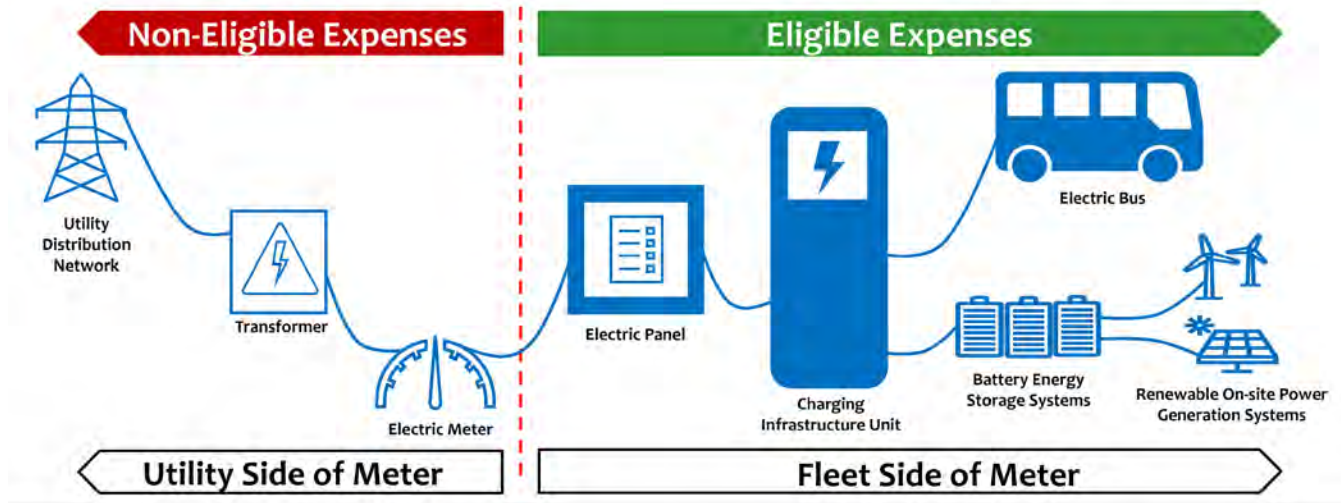
<sup>25</sup> As in the 2022 CSB Rebate Program, applicants meeting one or more of the prioritization criteria were considered prioritized; there were not multiple tiers of prioritization.

<sup>26</sup> Based on stakeholder feedback on the 2022 CSB Rebate Program, EPA removed locale code “42-Rural: Distant” from the rural prioritization criterion; this change was intended to ensure that the most rural districts (i.e., those designated as Code-43: Rural Remote) benefit from the prioritization process under the 2023 CSB Grant Program and was consistent with the 2023 Rebate Program discussed in the next section of this report.



Charging infrastructure expenses on the fleet's side of the electrical meter were eligible for funding. These expenses included charging equipment, V2G-enabled equipment, battery energy storage systems, and renewable on-site power generation systems (see Figure 6). Support for applicants in planning charging infrastructure selection and installation was made available through the Joint Office.

Figure 6. Eligible Expenses for Charging Infrastructure Installations in the 2023 CSB Grant Program.



### Additional Funding

In addition to the funding levels noted in Table 5, applicants were able to request funding beyond the per-bus funding levels for project implementation costs. Eligible implementation costs included costs directly related to the implementation, management, and oversight of the project, including recipient and subrecipient personnel and benefits, equipment, contractual, travel, supplies, subgrants and rebates, and indirect costs.

## Applications

EPA received 188 applications to the 2023 CSB Grant Program – 124 of which met all program requirements and were eligible for funding. Approximately 89% of the eligible applications included prioritized school districts.

## Selection Process

Awardees of the 2023 CSB Grant were selected using an objective, competitive process. After the NOFO closed, EPA regional offices first evaluated each application in their respective region against the threshold factors listed in Section V.A of the NOFO. Only those applications that met all threshold factors advanced to the second step of the evaluation process: the merit review.

The regional reviewers performed a merit review of each eligible application by evaluating application details against the ten scoring criteria listed in the NOFO. The applications were then ranked according to score, and these scores were the basis of a preliminary funding recommendation to the EPA Selection Official. School District Sub-Program applications and Third-Party Sub-Program applications were evaluated and ranked separately.

Each EPA Regional Selection Official considered funding recommendations and application scores along with other factors such as geographic diversity, number and size of awards, environmental benefits, applicability of different business models, and other agency and programmatic priorities. Due to the overwhelming demand and large number of high-scoring applications, including applicants in low-income communities, EPA nearly doubled the amount of awarded funding to approximately \$965 million. Once the EPA Regional Selection Official made the final award decisions, funding recommendations were developed and the EPA Award Official notified selectees of their award in late December 2023 and early January 2024.

## Awards

EPA awarded a total of 67 grants. Through these grants, approximately 2,700 buses will be replaced at 280 school districts serving over 7 million students across 37 states. Prioritized school districts in low-income, rural, and/or Tribal communities make up approximately 86% of the projects selected for funding.<sup>27</sup> Visit EPA's [Clean School Bus Program Awards webpage](#) for information on the 2023 CSB Grant Program selectees, which will be covered in greater detail in the FY 2024 Report to Congress.

## VI: 2023 Clean School Bus Rebate Program

In September 2023, EPA announced its second CSB Rebate Program. Given the significant number of applications to the Program's first rebate competition, EPA announced at least \$500 million in available funding for the 2023 Rebates.

The application period was open for 120 days, from September 28, 2023, to January 31, 2024. EPA lengthened and shifted the application period from that of the 2022 Rebate Program to provide applicants with additional time, and to avoid opening or closing the application window during summer and winter school closures.

### Eligibility

Eligibility under the 2023 CSB Rebate Program was consistent with eligibility under the 2023 Grant Program, as described in the "2023 Clean School Bus Grant Program" section above. See Appendix A for a complete list of eligible applicants for the 2023 CSB Rebates.

Applicants meeting one or more of the following criteria were prioritized equally in the 2023 CSB Rebate Program:

- High-need school districts and low-income areas limited to:
  - School districts listed in the SAIPE School District Estimates for 2021 as having 20% or more students living in poverty;
  - Title 1-funded school districts and charter school districts not listed in the SAIPE dataset;
  - Title 1-funded large public-school districts, defined as districts with more than 35,000 students and/or 45 public schools, that are in SAIPE but do not meet the 20% poverty threshold, were eligible to self-certify the low-income prioritization status for part or all of their district;
  - School districts located in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.
- Rural – School districts identified with locale codes "43-Rural: Remote" by the NCES;<sup>28</sup>
- Tribal – Bureau of Indian Affairs-funded school districts and school districts that receive basic support payments under section 7703(b)(1) of title 20 for children who reside on Indian land.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> More details about the 2023 CSB Grant Program Awards can be found in the press release published on January 8, 2024: <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/biden-harris-administration-announces-nearly-1b-awards-clean-school-buses-across>

<sup>28</sup> See Footnote 26 for more information on the change in rural prioritization between the 2022 CSB Rebates and the 2023 CSB funding opportunities.

<sup>29</sup> The list of Bureau-funded schools was pulled from <https://www.bie.edu/schools/directory> on March 10, 2022. EPA used a list of school districts that received basic support payments under section 7703(b)(1) of title 20 for children who reside on Indian land in 2021 created by the Department of Education's Impact Aid Office.

## Supplemental Applicant Forms

In order to set school districts up for success when making the transition to cleaner fleets and reduce future withdrawals, EPA required all applicants to submit one or more of the forms below:

- **School Board Awareness Certification:** School boards play a critical role in approving new bus deployment projects, so EPA required all applicants to complete an Awareness Certification. The form demonstrated to EPA that the applicant met with the school board prior to applying, ensuring that the board would be supportive of a new bus deployment project.
- Similarly, the **School District Approval Letter** was required for third-party applicants to complete to ensure that all parties involved in a rebate application wanted to engage together in a clean school bus deployment project.
- To ensure successful coordination with a selectee’s electric utilities, EPA required applicants applying for ZE buses to complete an **Electric Utility Partnership Template** to begin the infrastructure planning process and help prevent bus deployment delays caused by lengthy electric infrastructure upgrades.

## Funding Details

Consistent with the 2022 CSB Rebate Program, applicants could request funds to replace up to 25 buses. The maximum rebate amount per bus and associated charging infrastructure was dependent on (1) the replacement bus fuel type, (2) the replacement bus size, and (3) whether the school district served by the buses was prioritized. Table 6 below shows the maximum funding amount for buses and associated infrastructure. Unlike under the 2022 Rebate Program, but consistent with the 2023 Grant Program, discussed later in this report, the per-bus funding levels for ZE buses also included combined bus and EV charging infrastructure. EPA made this change from the 2022 CSB Rebate Program to provide rebate recipients the flexibility to determine the split between funding for the bus itself and the supporting infrastructure. In setting the per-bus amounts, EPA considered several factors, including the Clean Commercial Vehicle (45W) credit, authorized under the Inflation Reduction Act, that provides up to \$40,000 to eligible entities for the purchase of heavy-duty vehicles like electric buses.<sup>30</sup>

Table 6. 2023 Rebate Program Per-Bus Funding Levels and Prioritization Status

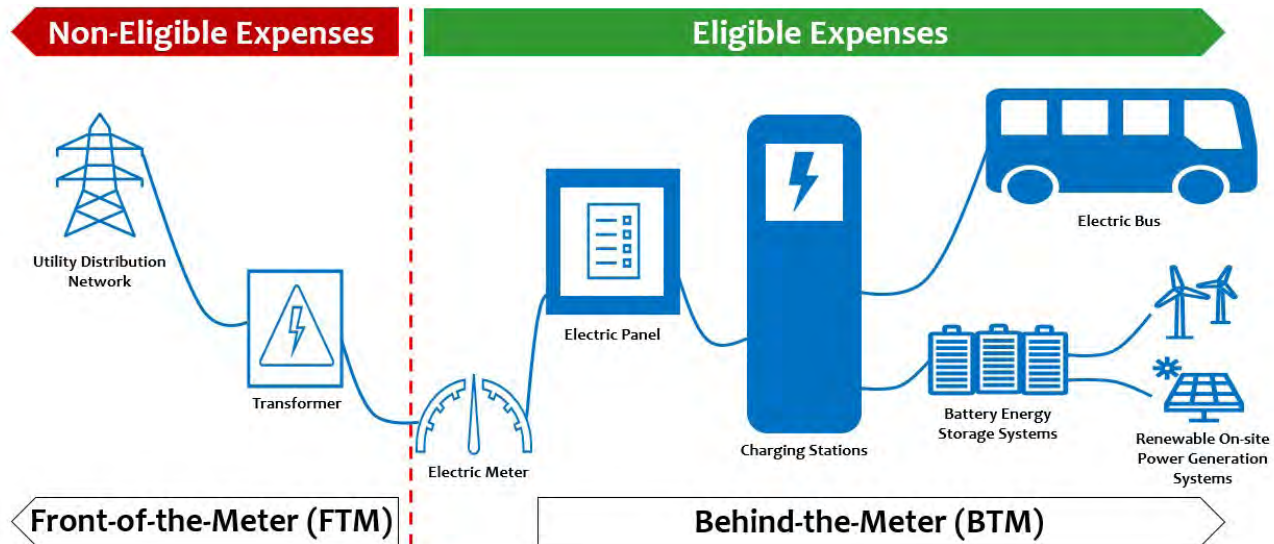
School District Prioritization Status	Replacement Bus Fuel Type and Size					
	ZE – Class 7+*	ZE – Class 3-6*	CNG – Class 7+	CNG – Class 3-6	Propane – Class 7+	Propane – Class 3-6
Buses serving school districts that meet one or more prioritization criteria	Up to \$345,000 (bus + charging infrastructure)	Up to \$265,000 (bus + charging infrastructure)	Up to \$45,000	Up to \$30,000	Up to \$35,000	Up to \$30,000
Buses serving school districts that are not prioritized	Up to \$200,000 (bus + charging infrastructure)	Up to \$155,000 (bus + charging infrastructure)	Up to \$30,000	Up to \$20,000	Up to \$25,000	Up to \$20,000

\*Funding levels include combined bus and EV charging infrastructure.

<sup>30</sup> Please refer to the IRS website for additional details on the 45W and other Inflation Reduction Act tax credits. <https://www.irs.gov/credits-and-deductions-under-the-inflation-reduction-act-of-2022>

Figure 7 depicts the split between eligible and non-eligible expenses for charging infrastructure installations in the 2023 CSB Rebate Program. To provide selectees with greater flexibility and to maintain consistency with EPA’s July 2023 “Build America, Buy America” (BABA) waiver, EPA shifted the line of eligible charging infrastructure expenses to directly in front of the meter instead of directly behind it, as was the case in the 2022 CSB Rebate Program. Funding could also be used for other eligible expenses, such as workforce training for drivers, mechanics, electricians, and other essential personnel, to ensure that selectees conduct proper workforce development planning and comply with the 2023 Rebate Program’s electrician training certification requirement.

Figure 7. Eligible Expenses for Charging Infrastructure Installations in the 2023 CSB Rebate Program<sup>31</sup>



EPA indicated that, if selected, applicants should plan to purchase American-made charging infrastructure products to comply with BABA Act requirements (see the “Build America, Buy America” section of this report for additional details).

### Additional Funding

In addition to the per-bus funding levels indicated in Table 6, EPA offered additional funds to certain applicants. EPA offered up to an additional \$20,000, per bus, to cover the higher costs of clean school buses with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant wheelchair lifts to ensure participation of schools with ADA-compliant buses. EPA also offered up to an additional \$20,000, per bus, to cover comparatively higher bus shipping costs to ensure participation of schools in Alaska, Hawaii, and non-continental U.S. territories.

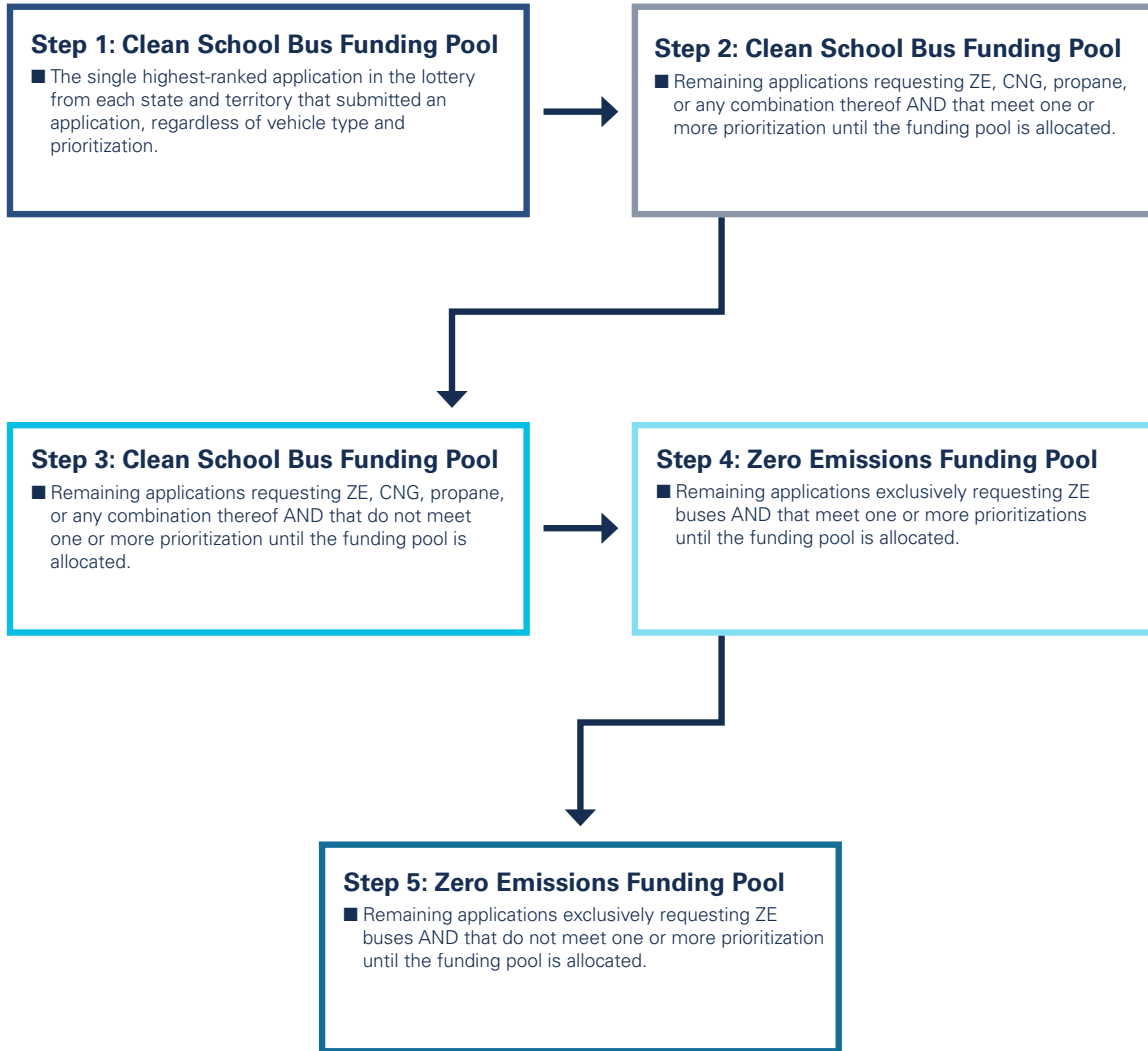
## Selection Process

As shown in Figure 8, the 2023 Rebate Program selection process is similar to the selection process for the 2022 Rebate Program, with a few notable changes.

First, the first applicant from each state will be selected, regardless of fuel type. This amendment to the lottery process will provide more flexibility for different fuel types. Second, EPA currently expects to award approximately 60% of total funding for the 2023 Rebate Program to applicants in prioritized school districts, in alignment with the [Justice40 Initiative](#). The Justice40 Initiative sets a goal of flowing 40% of overall benefits in covered federal programs to disadvantaged communities. This adjustment will help to increase the number of new ZE and clean school buses funded through the program.

<sup>31</sup> The 2023 CSB Rebate Program was the first CSB funding opportunity that included the electric meter as an eligible expense for funding. Prior, only expenses directly behind the meter were eligible for funding.

All eligible applications submitted to EPA by the deadline will be placed in a single-ordered list using a random number generator lottery process. EPA will select applicants for funding in the following order, working from the top (highest rank) to the bottom (lowest rank) of the list, until all funds are allocated from both the clean school bus and ZE halves of funding:



Pursuant to the CSB statute, EPA will ensure that the amount of funds awarded to bus fleets in a state does not exceed 10% of the amount made available during a fiscal year. Because of this, it is possible for an applicant to be skipped over in the selection process in favor of an applicant that has yet to hit the 10% limit.

*EPA currently expects to award approximately 60% of total funding for the 2023 Rebate Program to prioritized applicants.*

**Figure 8. 2023 CSB Rebate Program Selection Process**

Please see the [2023 CSB Rebates Program Guide](#) for more detailed information about the selection process. EPA anticipates announcing rebate selectees by April 2024 and will post the announcement to the [Clean School Bus Program Awards webpage](#). Application and selectee details will be shared in the FY 2024 Report to Congress.



## VII: Stakeholder Engagement and Resources

In its second year, the CSB Program continued to utilize a variety of tools to engage with stakeholders, receive feedback, and evolve the program in response to stakeholder input. These efforts involved coordination between staff and management in headquarters and regional offices.

### Clean School Bus Outreach Goals

EPA's education and outreach efforts were guided by the Program's outreach goals:

1. Maximize the number of applications and increase program adoption by educating prospective applicants and stakeholders about the CSB Program and the benefits of clean school buses.
2. Reach low-income and high-need populations through meaningful and intentional outreach to increase the number of prospective applicants who would most benefit from reduced emissions through the replacement of buses in their communities.
3. Explain the award process and program to prospective applicants in a simple and straightforward manner that will encourage application completion.
4. Empower, engage, and support clean school bus stakeholders throughout the implementation of this outreach program by equipping them with the information and data they need to develop their own outreach plans, amplify key messages, increase applications, and collaborate with the other members of the clean school bus community beyond EPA.
5. Improve the CSB Program and associated processes year-to-year by collecting stakeholder feedback and conducting internal "lessons learned" activities.



Credit: EPA; Nanticoke, PA, April 2023.

To achieve the CSB Program outreach goals, EPA continued to utilize several communication channels (e.g., listserv/newsletter, social media, website) to inform and educate the clean school bus community. EPA's communication channels included CSB stakeholder networks that helped amplify program messaging, including webinar dates; the application open and close dates; and other program announcements. These key stakeholders included other federal agencies, organizations working with priority applicants, associations related to schools and school buses, and other EPA offices. In addition, EPA continued to host a series of public webinars and listening sessions which provided overviews of program funding opportunities, as well as opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback and suggestions to aid in the development of program guidance. Attendees represented a wide array of stakeholder groups.

EPA Headquarters and regional offices worked collaboratively to support 2022 CSB Rebate selectees and reach as many potential 2023 grant and rebate applicants as possible, especially those in low-income and disadvantaged communities. EPA provided numerous responses to questions received through webinars and an email helpline from applicants to the 2023 CSB Grant Program, where questions ranged in topic areas from program requirements to navigating the federal grant application process. Where appropriate, the CSB Program also pointed applicants to the [EPA Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers](#) for

additional support. EPA headquarters and regional offices continued to meet and share tools and resources to support outreach efforts throughout the country, including problem-solving applicants' questions and hosting community outreach events.



Credit: EPA; Nanticoke, PA, April 2023.

## Coordination with Stakeholders to Inform Applicants and Develop Program Design

EPA conducted regular meetings with external stakeholder groups, including manufacturers, nonprofits, utilities, and school bus fleet providers, to gather information on industry trends and feedback on program successes and challenges. This meeting format allowed EPA to hear from several stakeholder groups within a sector at one time, thereby streamlining its stakeholder engagement process and meeting with more organizations than otherwise feasible through individual meeting requests.

EPA compiled all collected feedback from stakeholder meetings and feedback submitted to the Clean School Bus helpline ([cleanschoolbus@epa.gov](mailto:cleanschoolbus@epa.gov)) in a shared filing system to reference when planning future funding programs. After the close of the 2022 Rebate

Program, EPA considered all stakeholder feedback in planning for both the 2023 Grant and Rebate Programs.

While many stakeholders praised the overall success of the rebate program in terms of school districts' ability to apply and access program resources, others shared how program requirements posed barriers to some applicant groups. For example, school districts with larger fleets stated that the 2022 Rebate Program's 25 bus maximum per applicant limited their ability to transition their fleet at scale. As a result, the 2023 Grant Program was designed to accommodate large fleets with a 100 bus per applicant maximum under the Third-Party Sub-Program. Additionally, some larger school districts felt that the 20% SAIPE poverty threshold to be considered prioritized as high-need in the 2022 CSB Rebate Program masked the presence of sub-groups of high-need schools within these districts, even if the district overall did not qualify as high-need. To accommodate such school districts, the 2023 Grant Program allowed large school districts (more than 35,000 students and/or more than 45 schools) to self-certify their low-income status for all or part of the school district if they received Title I funding in the 2021/2022 academic year. In response to 2022 rebate selectee feedback on bus pricing, EPA combined awarded bus and infrastructure funds under the 2023 grant and rebate programs so grantees/selectees could have greater flexibility when negotiating prices with their bus and infrastructure vendors.

EPA continues to collect feedback from a diverse group of stakeholders to inform future funding program design and ensure each funding opportunity is accessible to schools around the country that are ready and interested in transitioning their school bus fleets to cleaner technologies.

## Technical Assistance Coordination and Outreach

In addition to continuing to work with stakeholders to reach selectees and potential applicants, as well as improve program design, EPA worked with several stakeholders to provide clean school bus technical assistance.

### Joint Office of Energy and Transportation

EPA continued its partnership with the Joint Office and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) to offer clean school bus technical assistance to school districts, including information and tools to successfully plan for and deploy their awarded clean school buses and infrastructure. The Joint Office and NREL served as the CSB Program's technical assistance leads by developing resources and providing effective customer service in response to stakeholder needs. Given both organizations' technical expertise and long-standing relationships with researchers and industry leaders, they were well positioned to successfully issue CSB Program technical assistance.

The Joint Office's technical assistance helpline ([cleanschoolbusTA@nrel.gov](mailto:cleanschoolbusTA@nrel.gov)) responds to any technical clean school bus deployment or maintenance question CSB Program applicants and selectees may have. Initial responses are provided within 48 hours and, when

needed, the Joint Office will connect school districts with applicable NREL experts to answer questions. The Joint Office helpline was a useful resource for CSB Program applicants and selectees who were pleased to have a direct contact for outreach and response.

Additionally, the Joint Office offers to meet one-on-one with school districts to discuss a range of topics such as energy needs and grid impact assessment, route analysis and planning routes, and workforce development and training. Furthermore, the Joint Office frequently joins EPA staff in meetings with selectees who have submitted requests to extend their Payment Request Form deadline for longer periods of time, and/or are considering withdrawing from the Program. During these conversations, Joint Office staff, EPA staff, and the selectee discuss options; and the Joint Office provides additional support if needed to enable the selectee to continue with the Program and successfully deploy their awarded buses and infrastructure.

EPA also co-hosted several public webinars with the Joint Office on clean school bus training and maintenance considerations, fleet planning and route analysis, utility planning, and other technical assistance topics. During each webinar, the Joint Office highlighted its technical assistance helpline.

In addition, EPA and the Joint Office developed resources for CSB Program funding recipients preparing for electric school buses. Some of these resources include:

- [The National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Utility Finder \(NEVI U-Finder\)](#) helps school districts identify active local utility partners supporting the installation of EV chargers.
- The [Route Analysis Tool](#) helps school districts understand their fleet's charging infrastructure needs.
- The [Electric School Bus Charging Station Planning Form](#) is a tool for fleets to gather their charging-related data and prepare to meet with their electric utility.
- The Joint Office created a [Cold Weather Considerations document](#) for schools located in cold climates to understand their electric school bus options.
- The CSB Program created a [Transition to Electric School Buses: Considerations and Resources guide](#) to facilitate the successful purchase and timely deployment of electric school buses and charging infrastructure.

All CSB Program technical assistance resources can be found on the [EPA CSB Program](#) and [Joint Office websites](#).

## EPA Electric Sector Pledge

One of the primary barriers CSB Program selectees are facing with electric school bus deployment is uncertainty around charging infrastructure and how to engage with electric companies. To be responsive to stakeholder needs and questions surrounding utility engagement and collaboration, EPA established a pledge with two national electric sector organizations in February 2023. Edison Electric Institute (EEI), the association that represents all U.S. investor-owned electric companies, and the Beneficial Electrification League (BEL), a nonprofit organization that works closely with rural electric cooperatives and public power utility providers on electrification initiatives, joined with EPA to pledge their support for school bus electrification. EEI members and BEL partners have pledged to proactively work with school districts to facilitate communication between electric providers and school districts, provide technical support, and work together to increase funding and deployment of electric school buses. All CSB Program applicants and selectees have free access to this resource, which is operated by EPA and Joint Office staff.

Since its launch, the Electric Sector Pledge has assisted school districts with locating and establishing relationships with their electricity providers; EPA is actively working with utility partners to develop additional resources related to the Pledge.

## Clean Cities Coalition Network

EPA continues to work with the Department of Energy's Clean Cities Coalition Network ("Clean Cities"), which consists of nearly 100 coalitions located across the country that work to advance affordable domestic transportation fuels, energy-efficient mobility systems, and other fuel-saving technologies and practices. EPA's regional offices utilized their existing relationships with their local Clean Cities Coalitions to direct applicants' locally-specific technical questions to the appropriate point of contact. Additionally, Clean Cities hosted a series of public webinars on a wide variety of topics, including Introduction to Electric School Buses, Infrastructure Planning and



## CSB Program Outreach

Given the positive stakeholder feedback EPA received regarding outreach for the CSB Program's 2022 Rebates, EPA continued to promote funding opportunities through a robust webinar schedule, presentations at conferences and external webinars, and question and answer documents. EPA hosted 12 public webinars on different topics (e.g., an overview of the CSB Program's grant and rebate application processes, panel discussions with selectees, and next steps for funding recipients). All webinars were presented in English and Spanish, and webinar slideshows and recordings were posted to the CSB Program's [Webinars webpage](#). EPA also continued to respond to stakeholder questions through Questions and Answers documents for the 2022 CSB Rebates, 2023 CSB Grants, and 2023 CSB Rebates; these documents capture key questions from webinar participants and helpline inquiries and share the answers with other interested stakeholders. As of October 2023, EPA has posted over 990 Questions and Answers and responded to over 3,990 email inquiries.



EPA staff continued to give presentations on the CSB Program at external conferences and webinars hosted by transportation and environmental organizations, Tribal and environmental justice organizations, education and school groups, and other external stakeholders. EPA received a significant volume of speaking requests to discuss the program and accepted as many offers as staffing capacity allowed.

After the 2023 Grants and 2023 Rebates funding cycles, EPA hosted a public listening session to collect stakeholder feedback on what went well and what could be improved in future funding rounds. Some of the common topics discussed included application process, application window, eligibility, funding levels, prioritization criteria, and outreach activities.

Given the success of the listening sessions and EPA's goal to continuously improve the program, EPA plans to continue to host listening, information sharing, and feedback sessions around each rebate and grant cycle.

## Educational Resources

EPA developed several educational resources to enhance the CSB Program's outreach. The [Electric School Bus Activity Book](#) for elementary school students (kindergarten through 5th grade) allows children to explore clean transportation, electric school buses, public health, and climate change through coloring, games, riddles, and storytelling. The resource comes with an implementation guide for teachers and parents to use in the classroom and at home. A Spanish version of the Electric School Bus Activity Book and implementation guide will be published soon.



To help spread the word about the CSB Program directly from selectees, EPA created a [Success Story Guide](#) that was distributed to selectees once they had installed their awarded infrastructure and begun using their new buses. The guide breaks down how to write an article that effectively communicates the positive impact of clean school buses with the intention that selectees will publish their clean school bus "success stories" to a school district website, local news outlet, and/or CSB Program champion's blog.

Similarly, EPA produced a [flyer](#) outlining engagement activities school districts could take before and after receiving CSB Program funds. The flyer highlights a handful of ideas for selectees to engage with students, parents, and the community about their new, clean school buses. These ideas aim to educate the school community on the new buses, provide a mechanism of "secondary outreach" to promote the CSB Program, and maximize the benefits of the new buses.



In addition to the mentioned resources, EPA developed one-page flyers to promote and summarize each funding

<sup>32</sup> All webinar recordings were made available to the public on [DOE's website](#).

opportunity. The flyers were posted to the CSB Program website and shared with program stakeholders. EPA continues to develop resources that support the education of clean school bus technologies and benefits and which also strengthen the CSB Program's outreach.

## Workforce Development

EPA recognizes that training and preparation for clean school bus drivers, mechanics, and transportation operators is essential to the success of the CSB Program. EPA's [Workforce Development and Training Resources](#) webpage features a list of resources about ZE buses, EVSE installation, vehicle operation training, and maintenance and repair. These resources are consistently updated to support school districts with the most up-to-date information from the industry.

Through the 2023 Grant competition, EPA encouraged school districts to prepare their workers for buses purchased through the program by including a detailed description about workforce development in their project narrative. Applicants' description of their plan for workforce development was a scored criterion in the application evaluation process. This component of the grant competition asked applicants to assess the impact the buses would have on their workforce and to propose solutions for training and worker readiness to encourage a smooth, safe transition to clean school buses. To support school districts in these efforts, driver and mechanic training related to the maintenance and operation of new technologies and training to certify licensed electricians to install EVSE were included as eligible project costs.

Similarly, in the 2023 CSB Rebates, EPA strongly encouraged applicants to prepare a workforce development plan for their project to ensure current drivers, mechanics, electricians, and other essential personnel are trained to safely operate and maintain the new buses and infrastructure. EPA's guidance also encourages school districts to clarify how they will prevent the replacement or displacement of current workers. Selectees can use bus/infrastructure funding for workforce development activities, such as driver and mechanic training and certification of electricians working on a CSB-funded project. EPA encourages applicants to partner with their manufacturers, local community colleges, labor unions, technical schools, and other education and training providers to provide training and support.

The Agency remains committed to collaborating with stakeholders to develop and promote workforce development resources so that all school transportation officials are equipped to safely and confidently drive, service, and manage their clean school buses.

In addition to focusing on school workforce readiness, EPA is also committed to supporting high-quality jobs in the growing clean school bus manufacturing sector. In 2023, clean school bus original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) were invited to respond to an EPA survey, developed in collaboration with the Department of Labor, regarding each OEM's job quality and workforce development practices. The goal of this tool is to provide stakeholders with transparent information about job quality among school bus OEMs. OEMs answered questions about their employee benefits, union neutrality, training and apprenticeship programs, community partnerships, and other important topics tied to job quality. The survey responses can be found on EPA's website. All OEMs shared that their permanent full-time employees are offered a retirement plan, many OEMs discussed their goals to expand diversity in the manufacturing sector, and several OEMs shared examples of robust training programs to create career pathways into advanced manufacturing and to promote upward mobility for current employees.

## Education and Outreach Continuous Improvement

EPA remains committed to continually improving the CSB Program's education and outreach efforts to meet or exceed all program outreach goals. To do so, the Agency regularly solicits program feedback through the CSB helpline, public webinars and listening sessions, stakeholder meetings, and other public presentations. In addition, EPA utilizes its CSB Program Regional Workgroup to hear and learn from EPA offices around the country that are directly engaging with program applicants, selectees, and stakeholders to share best practices and lessons learned.



Credit: Beth Clemons, EPA staff; EPA Region 10 Administrator Casey Sixkiller in Tacoma, WA, August 2022.



## VIII: Build America, Buy America

Enacted as part of the IIJA, the BABA Act requires the application of domestic preference requirements to infrastructure projects funded by federal financial assistance issued on or after May 14, 2022. EPA and the CSB Program remain committed to implementing BABA to cultivate the domestic manufacturing base for a range of products. All CSB Program-funded school buses are made in factories in North America, with the vast majority made in the U.S. On August 23, 2023, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a Notification of Final Guidance revising the Guidance on Grants and Agreements to support implementation of BABA requirements by adding part 184 to title 2 of the Code of Regulations (CFR), which went into effect on October 23, 2023. OMB issued subsequent guidance on October 25, 2023, in memorandum M-24-04, “Implementation Guidance on Application of Buy American Preference in Federal Financial Assistance Programs for Infrastructure.” Memorandum M-24-02 summarizes certain aspects of 2 CFR 184 and provides supplemental guidance for infrastructure projects subject to BABA, including how agencies should process waivers for a Buy America preference.

Market research conducted by both EPA and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) indicated that the electric vehicle (EV) alternating-current Level 2 and DCFC charger industry may not immediately be able to produce enough chargers to meet demand of infrastructure projects and satisfy full BABA requirements. EPA issued a time-limited [public interest product waiver for EV chargers](#) on July 21, 2023. This waiver is analogous to the FHWA’s EV charger waiver that was published February 21, 2023 (88 Federal Register 10619) and allows Buy America requirements for EV chargers to be applied uniformly, regardless of whether EPA or the FHWA is the source of federal funding.

The EV charger waiver is a phased approach that provides a clear timetable to increase domestic manufacture and assembly of EV chargers as quickly as possible and ensures that the current supply of available EV chargers is covered by this waiver and therefore are Buy America-compliant. The waiver covers EV chargers for which final assembly occurs in the United States and that are manufactured on or before June 30, 2024, and for which recipients begin installation by October 1, 2024. EV chargers manufactured on or after July 1, 2024, must comply with the Buy America Preference. The EV charger waiver expires when the program reaches full BABA compliance on July 1, 2024.



## IX: Looking Ahead

EPA currently anticipates administering a grant and rebate competition each fiscal year of the CSB Program. The Agency encourages school districts to consider the differences between the two funding opportunity structures and apply according to their fleet and staffing capacities. To achieve the Program's goal of providing school districts multiple opportunities to apply for funding, EPA encourages applicants not selected for funding to re-apply in future rounds. EPA will post program updates as they become available on the [CSB Program website](#).

EPA remains committed to engaging frequently with stakeholders to promote the CSB Program and collect feedback that informs program development. EPA will continue to provide stakeholders opportunities to share feedback through regular stakeholder meetings, public webinars, and the CSB Helpline ([cleanschoolbus@epa.gov](mailto:cleanschoolbus@epa.gov)). Such feedback will be utilized to evolve the Program, as needed, based on successes and lessons learned. Additionally, EPA plans to continue sharing information about each funding opportunity with stakeholders around the country to ensure potential applicants in all U.S. states and territories are aware of and able to apply to the Program. As more selectees start to use their new buses and infrastructure, EPA will continue to document and share their successes and challenges publicly.

CSB Program selectees and stakeholders have indicated that planning for, financing, and installing EV infrastructure remains one of the largest hurdles to completing their CSB Program-funded project and deploying electric school buses. To address this concern, EPA will continue working with interagency partners and stakeholders to develop clean school bus technical assistance and educational resources that are responsive to such stakeholder needs. These types of resources will aid CSB Program selectees and future applicants as they transition their fleets to electric school buses.

EPA prioritizes promoting cost parity between diesel and electric school buses to ensure that ZE buses are affordable for school districts in low-income and disadvantaged communities and are on a path to becoming the American standard. EPA will continue to work with stakeholders to design future funding opportunities that incentivize lower clean school bus costs and the adoption of affordable clean school bus technologies. In doing so, EPA will work to maximize the number of ZE and clean buses that receive funding through the Program.

The replacement of older school buses with newer, cleaner buses not only substantially reduces harmful emissions that increase the risk of asthma and other respiratory illnesses, but also reduces GHG emissions in the transportation sector and improves student attendance rates. The CSB Program is a critical step toward protecting and improving the health of students, bus drivers, school staff, and surrounding communities, and toward addressing climate change and environmental justice. The program also bolsters American manufacturing and contributes to good-paying U.S. jobs, all while putting the country on a path to 100% ZE school buses.



Credit: EPA; Nanticoke, PA, April 2023.

# Appendix A. Program Eligibility

The following table describes what entities were considered eligible to receive funds in each of the CSB funding opportunities to date.

CSB Program Eligible Entities		
Recipient Type	2022 CSB Rebates	2023 CSB Grants and 2023 CSB Rebates
Public School Districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ State and local governmental entities that provide bus service, including public school districts.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Public charter schools with an NCES District ID were eligible to apply directly for funding.</li> <li>■ Most state governmental entities were not eligible to apply, but some, like South Carolina, own bus fleets and would be eligible.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ One or more local or state governmental entities responsible for:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Providing bus service to one or more public school systems; or</li> <li>■ The purchase, lease, license, or contract for service of school buses.</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ A public charter school district responsible for the purchase, lease, license, or contract for service of school buses for that charter school.</li> </ul>
Tribal Applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Indian Tribes, Tribal organizations, or Tribally controlled schools responsible for the purchase of school buses or providing school bus service for a Bureau of Indian Affairs-funded school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ An Indian Tribe (as defined by section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, 25 U.S.C. 5304), Tribal organization (as defined by the same section), or Tribally controlled school (as defined by section 5212 of the Tribally Controlled Schools Act of 1988, 25 U.S.C. 2511) that is responsible for:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Providing school bus service to one or more Bureau-funded schools (as defined by section 1141 of the Education Amendments of 1978, 25 U.S.C. 2021); or</li> <li>■ The purchase, lease, license, or contract for service of school buses.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

CSB Program Eligible Entities		
Recipient Type	2022 CSB Rebates	2023 CSB Grants and 2023 CSB Rebates
<b>Nonprofit School Transportation Associations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A nonprofit school transportation association.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A nonprofit school transportation association.</li> </ul>
<b>Eligible Contractors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Eligible contractors, meaning for-profit, not-for-profit, or nonprofit entities that have the capacity to (1) sell clean or ZE school buses or related charging or fueling infrastructure to school bus owners or (2) arrange financing for such a sale. School bus dealers and OEMs that meet these criteria were eligible contractors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Eligible contractors, as defined by the IIIA, Public Law 117-58 (42 U.S.C. 16091), meaning any for-profit, not-for-profit, or nonprofit entity that has the capacity (1) to sell, lease, license, or contract for service clean school buses, ZE school buses, charging or fueling infrastructure, or other equipment needed to charge, fuel, or maintain clean school buses or ZE buses, to individuals or entities that own, lease, license, or contract for service a school bus or a fleet of school buses; or (2) to arrange financing for such a sale, lease, license, or contract for service. This group generally includes school bus dealers, OEMs, school bus service providers, and private school bus fleets that provide student transportation services.</li> </ul>