



EPA CLEAN  
SCHOOL BUS

# COORDINATING WITH ELECTRIC UTILITY PARTNERS

As schools across the nation embark on the transition to electric transportation, **it is crucial that schools and school districts establish a strong relationship with the electric utility** responsible for supplying the power needed to charge their electric school buses. **This resource is intended to prepare schools and school districts for the first of many conversations they will have with utilities**, and provide a high-level overview of what schools can expect as they build out charging infrastructure to support electric school buses.



Please contact [cleanschoolbusTA@NREL.gov](mailto:cleanschoolbusTA@NREL.gov) if you have any questions and visit [epa.gov/cleanschoolbus](https://epa.gov/cleanschoolbus) to learn more about technical assistance. Technical assistance for Clean School Bus **planning and deployment** is available to school districts participating in the EPA Clean School Bus Program.

# Preparing for the Initial Utility Conversation

## Who should be included from your school district?

- The staff members who currently work with your district's electric utility(ies) (e.g., commercial accounts manager in the business office, facilities leadership).
- Designated point(s) of contact for all functions related to the transition to electric buses, including bus procurement and installation of electric vehicle supply equipment (EVSE) infrastructure (e.g., facilities manager, transportation director, business office staff).
- Transportation staff (e.g., fleet manager, transportation operations and maintenance workers), fleet (e.g., someone familiar with bus routes and driving conditions), and administration departments.
- Internal electrician or an existing electrical contractor, if the district already has one.

## How do I identify the appropriate utility point of contact?

- Start by identifying the electric utility(ies) that serve your district. Working with all the utilities that serve your district will enable you to identify the optimal charging location for your bus(es).
- The staff members responsible for working with your district's utility provider should reach out to your account manager. In some cases, an EV program manager or specialist associated with the utility may also be able to help.
  - » If you are unsure, email [CleanSchoolBusTA@nrel.gov](mailto:CleanSchoolBusTA@nrel.gov) to be connected to the appropriate point of contact at your electric utility.

## What should I do to prepare for meeting with my utility?

- Define what you want your fleet composition to look like in the next five years (e.g., fleet size, mix of electric buses vs. other, route changes).<sup>1</sup>
- Identify the addresses of several locations where buses could charge.
- Familiarize yourself with your bus routes (length, duration, frequency).
- Obtain a copy of your current electric bill with account number(s) listed.
- Optional, but highly recommended: review the [EPA Clean School Bus Program's](#) Grants Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), Rebates Program Guide, and supplemental forms including the Utility Partnership Template.

<sup>1</sup> See EPA Infrastructure Guide and the [Electric School Bus Initiative Guide](#) by the World Resource Institute (WRI) for more information.



# Having the First Conversation

The following questions can help guide your initial conversation with your electric utility.<sup>2</sup>

## Infrastructure Location

- Which locations maximize resilience to future potential climate impacts? Are any of our proposed charging locations particularly well- or poorly-suited for infrastructure development (e.g., existing utility-side infrastructure could support proposed charging stations versus need for installing new transformers)?
  - » Is there a better location we should consider for our charging infrastructure (e.g., a site with available utility grid capacity)?
- Is the charging equipment we are considering right-sized for our near-term needs? How can we work together as our fleet composition changes over the next five years?

## Timeline and Costs

- If utility-side infrastructure upgrades are necessary onsite, how should we approach the associated time and cost considerations?
  - » Is there anything we can change to reduce development timeline and costs (e.g., changing routes, flexibility on charging solutions—including size and number)?
- Can you outline the interconnection/energization process and provide an estimated timeline for a project of our scope/size?
  - » If our electricity usage increases, what changes can we expect to our future electricity bills?
- How can we maintain effective communication throughout this process?
  - » Will there be a designated point of contact for us?
  - » Would you recommend establishing a regular meeting time to ensure smooth coordination?
- What specific information do you require from us to facilitate deeper discussions in our next meeting?

## Incentives

- If applicable, what is the process and timeline for accessing electric vehicle or electric vehicle charger incentives the utility offers?

<sup>2</sup> Some of the questions listed above and more can be found in WRI's [\*Working with Your Utility to Electrify Your School Bus Fleet\*](#) guide.



## What Happens Next?

Once you have decided to electrify your fleet and have aligned on a location to charge your buses that meets your school district's current and future needs, **the next step is to apply for service energization (the process to connect new load to the distribution system)**. Every utility does this a bit differently, but the diagram below provides a high-level overview of what this process can look like.

### Energization Process and Key Activities for School Districts<sup>3</sup>

#### Pre-Application

- **Finalize site selection.**
- **Conduct a depot assessment** with your utility.
- **Prepare necessary documentation** (e.g., forecasted load, charger cut sheet/specifications, single-line diagram of the facility electrical system, existing site easements). Ask your utility what is required.
- **Identify the utility project manager** who will help you through the process.
  - » *Tip: Ask your utility if your school district (or your contractor) can initiate design and pre-engineering work before formal applications are submitted—this can save time down the line.*
  - » **Note: Pre-Application steps should be completed prior to submitting an application for a grant or rebate from the EPA Clean School Bus Program.**

#### Contract Negotiation

- **Submit the application for service energization;** your utility will begin feasibility study, including site inspections, grid capacity, and identification of necessary grid updates (note: utilities may require payment to cover this cost).
- **Review feasibility study results;** confirm if utility should proceed to final design and further refine infrastructure needs, costs, and timelines.
- **Negotiate a contract** with your utility detailing each parties' responsibilities, allocation of costs, and construction.
  - » *Tip: If significant or complex additional utility work is required to serve the forecasted load, it may be multiple years before construction is completed. Talk to your utility early so this doesn't come as a surprise.*

#### Pre-Construction

- **Meet all pre-construction legal requirements** (with help from your utility), including zoning, easements and land use authorizations, and all required local and state approvals.
- **All parties proceed to construction** of their contracted portions of infrastructure; any requisite civil work will precede electrical work.
  - » *Tip: The overall timelines for the energization process can vary widely and will depend on a variety of factors, such as whether it is a Level 2 or DC Fast Charger station, the availability of the equipment needed, whether any upgrades to the utility grid are needed, the site location, and other similar considerations.*

<sup>3</sup> See [Energizing EV Charging Stations: Issue Brief 1](#) for more information.

## Where Can I Find Additional Resources?

### EPA's Clean School Bus Program Website

- [Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Resources](#)
- [Clean School Bus Webinar Repository, including webinars specific to charging infrastructure deployment co-hosted with the Joint Office of Energy and Transportation](#)
- [Clean School Bus Program Utility Partnership Template \(refer to each funding opportunity for specific template\)](#)

### Utility Coordination Resources

- Alternative Fuels Data Center—[Working with Electric Utilities](#)
- Beneficial Electrification League—[Talking to Your Local Utility About Electric School Buses](#)
- Electric School Bus Initiative—[Working With Your Utility to Electrify Your School Bus Fleet](#)

### Utility Planning Resources

- WRI Electric School Bus Initiative—[Power Planner for Electric School Bus Deployment: Nine Key Steps for School Districts](#)
- American Public Transportation Association—[Checklist for Engaging on Fleet Electrification](#)
- Edison Electric Institute—[Preparing to Plug In Your Bus Fleet](#)
- Federal Energy Management Program—[Utility Partnerships for Fleet Electrification](#)
- Electric School Bus Coalition—[Electric School Buses: A Practice Resource Guide for School Districts](#)

### Technical Assistance Helpline

- Joint Office of Energy and Transportation—[Technical Assistance Contact Form](#)

### EV Utility Incentives

- Joint Office of Energy and Transportation—[NEVI U-Finder](#) for identifying local utility incentives for electric vehicles and charging infrastructure

Disclaimer: EPA is not responsible for updating or verifying accuracy of the information on the non-EPA linked pages in this document.



Clean School Bus Program: A Guide for Working With Electric Utility Partners  
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