

Rural School Bus Pilot Project – Applicant Webinar
February 16, 2017
Grant Specific Q&A

Application & General Questions

Q. I would like to apply for this grant opportunity however it seems out of reach for the very districts that you are trying to target. Are you getting similar feedback from other small rural districts?

A. The feedback has been mostly positive. This grant program does have specific requirements for the new school buses that can be challenging to overcome. Please contact District Staff Erin Squire at 707-443-3093 x 111 or esquire@ncuaqmd.org to talk about how we can help you prepare an application.

Q. Can you please send the sample of the board resolution that we would have to submit to the Board?

A. We will have a template posted on our website shortly.

Q. What time does the old school bus have to remain as a back-up school bus? 3-Year Agreement Period? Does this mean that they have to be active with a current 45-day inspection and CHP inspection?

A. Yes. If you chose a zero-emission project type the old bus can remain part of your active fleet and only used in a back-up capacity for the length of the agreement period. If you no longer wish to retain the old school bus, you will be required to destroy it.

Q. These funds are only for Buses correct? What if you do not have a 20 year old bus?

A. The Rural School Bus Pilot Project grant funding is for school buses, taxes, electric charging infrastructure, and incremental renewable fuel costs. If you do not have a bus that is at least 20 years old, you do not qualify at this time.

Q: By "project" do you mean a single bus?

A. Yes. Each school bus is considered a separate "project."

Q: Please clarify earlier statement "up to 3 separate applications can be submitted"?

A. Applicants selecting zero-emission project types can submit up to three applications while hybrid or internal combustion engine projects can only submit one application.

Q. When applying for an electric project type, do you need to provide a separate old bus for each of the three projects being applied for?

A. Yes. Each application must identify a separate old school bus.

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Q. Can we use engine hours to determine engine miles?

A. No. The guidelines of the grant specifically require ranking of projects based on engine mileage.

Q. If one of the criteria for ranking is total mileage, then why does the application ask for annual mileage, i.e., what difference does the annual mileage make?

A. Annual mileage makes no difference in the project ranking. The District is collecting data points that can be used to calculate emission reductions at a later time. Knowing the annual mileage, age and the total engine miles of the bus that has been replaced can help in calculating emission reductions at a later time.

Q: Is there a list of what rural school districts are in CA?

*A. Yes. The list is available on our website here:
<http://www.ncuaqmd.org/files/List%20of%20Air%20Districts.pdf>*

Q: ZEV or electric doesn't have the range, propane and CNG Infrastructure is too costly and I can't get with my local provider renewable diesel they don't even know what this is...so what do I do?

A. You may want to contact another fuel distributor to inquire about the availability of renewable diesel.

Q: Can we apply for both an electric bus or 3 as well as hybrid bus?

A. No. Applicants must select one project type for this solicitation period.

Q: At what stage do we need board approval?

A. A School Board Resolution should be submitted with Application Part B. If scheduling of your board meetings does not allow this you can submit Application Part B without this document; however, project agreements will not be sent to Grantees until we have received this document.

Q: Once the application and selection process has finished, how long will it be before busses can be ordered and replaced? I am under contract from previous funding until 2019.

A. New school buses cannot be ordered until both the District and the Grantees have signed a project agreement. Once the agreement is signed by both parties, you will have 30 days to place the purchase order for the new school bus. If your old school bus is under contract for funding previously received, you must contact the entity you are under contract with and discuss how applying for this grant will affect your existing contract.

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Q: Does the requirement to be free from other grants apply to both electric and internal combustion applications.

A. All project types must disclose if they have ever received funding for the old school bus. If your old school bus is under contract for funding previously received, you must contact the entity you are under contract with and discuss how applying for this grant will affect your existing contract.

Q: To be eligible for a new internal combustion engine bus, can we replace a spare bus rather than one currently being used on a daily basis?

A. The eligibility requirements for the old school bus require that the old school bus be currently CHP Certified, be owned by the applicant, be at least 20 years old, and have a GVWR of 14,000 pounds or greater. If the spare bus meets these requirements it is an eligible "old school bus."

Q: So is this grant for electric buses only?

A. No. This grant has two main project categories:

1) Zero-Emission (Battery Fuel Cell or Electric)

2) Hybrid or Internal Combustion Engine, using renewable fuel (Renewable Diesel, Renewable CNG and Renewable Propane)

Q: Is it either or - application for hybrid & internal combustion (max 1) and/or zero emission technology (max 3)?

A. Yes. Applicants may apply for one hybrid or one internal combustion engine school bus or up to three zero-emission school buses.

Q: Not much talk about fuel cell buses any suggestions to get more info. Willits, CA

A. We suggest that you contact school bus vendors to discuss availability. At this time, we believe that there are no fuel cell powered school buses available for purchase in California.

Q: Are there any grants for high mileage 2001 buses?

A. You may wish to contact your local Air District and inquire about funding opportunities.

Q: what other grants are there?

A. You may wish to contact your local Air District and inquire about funding opportunities.

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Project Selection & Ranking Questions

Q. Can you confirm that our Local Air District is Shasta County AQMD? Also, where does Shasta County AQMD rank in size?

A. Shasta County is considered a Small Air District. You can use the Air District look-up page on the CARB website to verify what Air District you are in, or give us a call for assistance. A link to the look-up page is below.

<https://www.arb.ca.gov/app/dislookup/dislookup.php>

Q. Are we restricted to student enrollment for our district? What do you consider "rural"?

A. There is no restriction on student enrollment. Priority ranking is given to applicants located within a Small Air District. Air Districts meeting the CAPCOA definition of "Small Air District" are considered "rural" for the purposes of this grant.

Q: Is there a restriction to the school enrollment, student count for project?

A. No.

Q: Are there certain regions of the North Coast Air Quality District that are favored over others?

A. The Rural School Bus Pilot Project is open to all eligible applicants in the state of California. Priority ranking is being given to applicants located within a Small Air District, but all areas are encouraged to apply.

Q. Why is the size of an applicant's Air District matter? We are in an area of the San Joaquin that is considered disadvantaged in terms of air quality by the California Air Resources Board and CalEnviros 2.0. Does that make any difference?

A. The guidelines for this grant have identified that applications from eligible applicants located in a Small Air District must be given priority.

Q: Will all of the small air pollution districts applications be filled before the larger districts are considered?

A. Yes, the size of the Air District you are located in is the first tier of application ranking.

Q: Will engaging student and parents in the application help make the application more competitive?

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A. While student and parent engagement is always positive, it will have no bearing on application ranking or whether a project is selected for funding.

Q: For the Phase I applications, what factors determine whether an application is competitive? Or is it just an eligibility review?

A. Application Part A will be used for project ranking and to determine eligibility. For this grant, the award process is not competitive and will be based solely on the application ranking.

Q: Is project type a consideration when ranking priority of grant awards?

A. No. This grant is technology neutral.

Q: Is project type a consideration when prioritizing grant awards? For example, if an applicant is located in a small air district territory and has an old high mileage bus, will they get higher priority if they apply for electric as opposed to other ICE options?

A. No. This grant is technology neutral.

Q: There have been some question from some of the school districts in Tuolumne County dealing with the viability of fuel cell, electric, or plug-in hybrid school buses in foothill and mountainous regions of the state? They are concerned that zero/near zero buses do not have the performance capabilities as they would in the valley or low land areas. How would this affect eligibility for these school districts if they aren't able to utilize these buses?

A. If zero-emission or hybrid technology are not an option for an applicant; they may select the internal combustion engine technology using renewable fuel types option.

Q: Which criterion is more important, the age of the bus or its mileage, e.g., does a 30-year-old bus with 300,000 miles or a 25-year-old bus with 400,000 miles score higher?

A. Application are ranked first by the size of the Air District, second by the age of the bus, and finally by the mileage. Older buses will be ranked higher overall, and mileage will be used to rank all of the same aged buses.

Q: Are you looking at the age of the engine or the manufactured age of the bus?

A. Grant guidelines specify that the age of the vehicle chassis (Bus Model Year) be used and not the age of the engine (Engine Model year).

Q: Other than Vehicle Location, Age and Mileage, what other criteria will you use to score the choice of bus technology?

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A. The choice of technology will have no impact on application ranking. This grant is technology neutral.

Q: Ranking by annual current mileage or total odometer miles?

A. Total engine miles (odometer miles) will be used for application ranking purposes.

Fuel Related Questions

Q. Is there any way that a rural district can forego the purchasing of green diesel if there is no avenue for them to procure it?

A. No. If applying for a Hybrid or Internal Combustion Engine project, the use of a renewable fuel is required. Renewable Diesel is a “drop-in” fuel and can be used in an engine that runs on diesel.

Q: If we were fortunate enough to get selected for funding, and there is no renewable fuel in my area. Can we still get funding for a regular diesel bus?

A. No. If applying for a Hybrid or Internal Combustion Engine project, the use of a renewable fuel is required. Renewable Diesel is a “drop-in” fuel and can be used in an engine that runs on diesel.

Q. My busses that I would like to replace are 30 years and 27 years old so it seems that just replacing them with the new lower emissions units would result in a tremendous reduction in hydrocarbon emissions. Is the use of this alternative diesel an absolute set in stone requirement?

A. Yes. The use of a Renewable Fuel type is a requirement.

Q. I ask one of our fuel vendors if they have renewable diesel, he is not sure what I am talking about. Is Biomass-based diesel ASTM D975-14a what we are wanting?

A. Renewable Diesel meets specifications for ASTM D975 (Biomass-based diesel). However, the current standard is ASTM D975-16a. Meeting that fuel standard does not guarantee that it is Renewable Diesel. For information on the availability of renewable fuels, please call Erin Squire at (707) 443-3093 x 111

Q: Is there a difference between propane and renewable propane? If so, what are the differences?

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A. Yes. To be considered “renewable”, the propane must be originate from a renewable source.

Q: Can you explain renewable Hydrocarbon Diesel in terms of anticipated availability? Do you have any information on availability?

A. For information on the availability of renewable fuels, please call Erin Squire at (707) 443-3093 x 111.

Q: How available are the required CNG and Diesel fuels in Humboldt County CA.

A. For information on the availability of renewable fuels, please call Erin Squire at (707) 443-3093 x 111.

Q: Will you have a resource for us to view soon regarding where biofuels are available?

A. For information on the availability of renewable fuels, please call Erin Squire at (707) 443-3093 x 111.

Q: Where would I search to find providers of renewable diesel?

A. Start by calling the fuel distributor you currently are using. For information on the availability of renewable fuels, please call Erin Squire at (707) 443-3093 x 111.

Q: Can current buses with diesel run on the renewable diesel?

A. Renewable diesel is considered a “drop-in” fuel, meaning it can be used in existing diesel powered engines. You may wish to consult with the engine manufacturer prior to use.

Q: What is the availability of renewal fuel in rural areas and how is it stored.

A. For information on the availability of renewable fuels, please call Erin Squire at (707) 443-3093 x 111, or check with a fuel provider.

Q: What is the availability of renewable diesel?

A. In California, Renewable Diesel is available from multiple providers. Please call Erin Squire at the District to discuss renewable fuel availability (707) 443-3093 x 111.

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Funding Related Questions

Q. I would love to get a natural gas burning bus, but unfortunately, we have no sources to purchase natural gas within 50 miles of the District. My understanding is that even new def/diesel fuel buses are excluded from the grant, so I believe that will exclude us as well. Unless the grant would cover the cost of an electric bus. My understanding is electric buses are as much as double the cost of a regular bus, which is not cheap to begin with.

A. New school buses with internal combustion engines that run on renewable diesel fuel are eligible for funding. These buses are also capable of operating on conventional diesel. The zero-emission project category has a funding level of \$400,000 with an additional \$5,000 for electric charging infrastructure. You will need to contact a school bus vendor to determine the cost of an electric bus.

Q: Why only \$5,000 for EV Charging Stations? That doesn't cover full cost of equipment and installation in most cases. Can that amount be increased?

A. Grant guidelines limit the award amount to \$5,000.

Q: Does the grant fund for ongoing costs such as Battery replacement?

A. Equipment maintenance and replacement costs are not eligible for funding.

Q: Is it 400k per bus for electric or 400 total toward 3 buses?

A. Each electric school bus project is eligible for \$400,000 for the vehicle and \$5,000 for infrastructure. If applying for 3 electric buses: \$1.2 million for vehicles and \$15,000 for infrastructure.

Q: Are the buses we can purchase are these stripped down buses or can be we purchase with lifts?

A. The Rural School Bus Pilot project will not fund school bus options outside standard requirements (basic options) with the exception of the following:

- *Automatic Snow Chains*
- *Long Range Battery Capabilities*
- *Air Conditioning*
- *Handicap & ADA Accessibility Options*

Q: Is the \$400K for electric bus include the \$5K infrastructure, or is the total project cost with infrastructure \$405K for a ZEV vehicle?

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A. The total funding available for an electric school bus project is

\$400,000 for the vehicle and an additional \$5,000 for infrastructure. If not applying for infrastructure, the maximum grant award for an electric school bus is \$400,000. Q: How much total monies will be available for the entire Pilot program?

A. The Rural School Bus Pilot Project is currently funded at \$10 million.

Q: Can the prorated part of an old PM trap grant be included as part of the \$400K grant for a ZEV vehicle?

A. No. The Grantee will need to pay any prorated amount due for the old school bus out-of-pocket, and not utilize grant funding.

Q: Is there a matching fund that needs to be met?

A. There is currently no matching requirement.

Q: Are we able to apply for HVIP grant funds to offset any shortage in RSBPP funds?

A. Co-funding is encouraged. However, an applicant may not receive more funds than the eligible project costs, whether funded solely with the Rural School Bus Pilot Project grant award funds or funded with multiple funding sources (no double-dipping).

For more information and to access a recording of the webinar, please visit the Rural School Bus Pilot Project webpage at: <http://www.ncuaqmd.org/index.php?page=rural.school.bus>

For additional questions please contact Erin Squire at (707) 443-3093 x 111 or by email at esquire@ncuaqmd.org.