

12-20-23 School Board Agenda Item

EPA & PGE Electric School Bus Grants

There is an opportunity for our School District to qualify to get an Electric School Bus paid for by the EPA Clean School Bus Rebates Program and PGE's Electric School Bus fund program. The Deadline for the EPA application is 1-31-24 and the PGE deadline was 12-1-23. Curtis Young has been working on the PGE grant portion and I believe has submitted all the necessary paperwork for PGE.

The EPA grant application will be prepared by Western Bus Sales pending signed approval from the Board (2023 Clean School Bus (CSB) Rebates Program School Board Awareness Certificate). We have chosen to use Western Bus Sales to prepare the grant application for our District as their product and service has been the most reliable for our district. The staff at Western Bus Sales is also very familiar with the EPA Grant Application process. There is no cost to the District for their services. The only requirement is that if we qualify and choose to go ahead with accepting the funds we have to purchase the bus from Western Bus Sales. In my experience Blue Bird buses are built to last which is why our fleet is almost entirely Blue Bird. With newer technologies I prefer to stay with a manufacturer that has a solid foundation and good reputation. I also understand newer technologies still have bugs to work out. Western Bus Sales always fits our district into their service schedule when the need arises while some of the other suppliers have been months out to get into their service schedule.

If our District applies for this Grant and we are approved the EPA funds might cover from \$200,000 to \$345,000 for an electric school bus and the charging infrastructure. The amount we are approved for is based on if we are considered Prioritized by the EPA's criteria. We do not meet the Rural Designation Criteria as we are not identified with the locale code "43-Rural: Remote" by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Although we are not listed in the SAIPE dataset for Title I-funded School Districts we did receive Title I funds last year. Our District can self certify that we received Title I funds for last school year and this will give us prioritization in the grant application process. It is recommended that we provide a copy of the official letter from the State Educational Agency (SEA) indicating division-level Title I award(s) for the 2022/2023 academic year and/or similar documents. If we meet prioritization criteria we could possibly qualify for the maximum allowance of \$345,000. If we do not meet prioritization criteria then the maximum amount we could receive would be \$200,000.

This grant alone would not cover the cost of an electric school bus as currently they start in the high \$400,000's and go up from there. This grant award is also supposed to help with the cost of infrastructure. The level 3 charging system, software, permits and installation could cost close to \$100,000 or more depending on availability and access.

If we were to qualify for this grant and went ahead with the purchase of the bus our district would need to make up the difference which could total up to \$250,000 or more to have a fully operational Electric School Bus. It is my understanding that it is best to have an enclosed area for charging electric buses as the weather significantly impacts the capability of the charging system and our district is situated in an area prone to drastic weather conditions. I would also prefer to have the charging system in an enclosed secure area as our district has been experiencing a significant increase in theft and property damage in the past few years. A building to house the charging system and the electric bus could also cost the district a significant amount. I received a very rough estimate of \$650,000 from a local contractor on a climate controlled pole building, 60'W X 80'L X 28'H with all the permits.

The PGE grant that Curtis Young has been working on could help with these shortfalls. From my research PGE covers the difference in cost for an electric bus. If a diesel bus cost \$200,000 and an electric bus was \$500,000 and we qualify for the PGE funds they would pay the \$300,000 difference. It is my understanding that the EPA funds and PGE funds could be combined together if our district qualifies. If we qualified for both we might get the electric school bus and charging infrastructure at no cost to the District. It also appears that PGE has funding for infrastructure for electric buses if our district is approved. It has been explained to me by Curtis Young that these funds might be used to build the pole building to house our charging system and electric bus(es). Curtis has also reported that he has several other sources for possible funding to cover the costs of infrastructure not covered by grants.

It is my recommendation that our District pursue the EPA grant and PGE funding. If our District is approved for both funding opportunities and we are fully funded for an electric school bus, charging infrastructure and a new pole building to house the electric school bus that would be a huge benefit to our Transportation Department and our School District. If our applications are accepted but we don't receive full funding we are not obligated to accept the funds.

If we do proceed with pursuing the EPA grant with Western Bus Sales the 2023 Clean School Bus (CSB) Rebates Program School Board Awareness Certification form will need to be completed before Western Bus Sales can start the application process. A representative for our District will also need to complete the 2023 Clean School Bus (CSB) Rebates Program Electric Utility Partnership Template form with PGE. I have included these forms and some of the fact sheets from the EPA and PGE websites.

Todd Williams

12-15-23