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The district will acquire five electric buses for the 2021-2022 school year, with plans to convert up to 20% of its fleet to zero emissions by 2026

By Hannah Gross • Published June 15, 2021 • Updated on June 15, 2021 at 5:42 pm



NBC10

The School District of Philadelphia will be the first district in Pennsylvania to add all-electric school buses to its fleet.

The district will acquire five electric buses for the 2021-2022 school year, with plans to convert up to 20% of its fleet to zero emissions by 2026, according to a news release. Five electric buses will be added to the fleet each year to replace older diesel buses.

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The switch to electric buses will help address climate change, improve students' health and reduce noise pollution, according to the school district. Removing one diesel bus from the fleet is equivalent to removing 23 tons of greenhouse gases per year, the district said in the news release.

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"We're going to give the children a clean, safe and comfortable ride," Bill Rosetti, fleet manager for the School District of Philadelphia, said. "We're trying to get away from diesel, which is actually becoming a thing of the past."

The district had a demonstration bus on-site on Tuesday so the district's transportation staff could learn more about the bus operations. Rosetti said at the demonstration that drivers will receive special training to learn how to operate the new buses.

Some changes might take some getting used to, such as the new music the buses will play as they approach a bus stop to make clear the bus is coming since they are so quiet. Rosetti said the song will likely resemble an "ice cream truck tune" and may change with the seasons.

Funding for the new buses comes from the [Diesel Admissions Reduction Act](#), which funds grants and rebates to protect human health by reducing emissions from diesel engines, as well as other grants.

Each electric bus costs about \$368,000, compared to \$130,000 for diesel-powered buses. Rosetti said, however, that the maintenance for electric buses will be about half the price.

Electric buses are also more affordable for districts to operate than diesel buses, with approximately 60% less maintenance cost and 80% less energy cost, according to the news release.

The move away from diesel is part of the district's sustainability plan, [GreenFutures](#), which focuses in part on energy and efficiencies.

The District bought the buses from Lion Electric, which produces zero-emission passenger buses with wheelchair lifts and a range of up to 125 miles with a single charge. Each bus will seat 54 passengers.

The buses will arrive over the summer ahead of the first day of school. Rosetti said he is not yet sure which neighborhoods the buses will service.

“While we’ve previously purchased clean diesel buses to replace our aging fleet, we are proud to be the first school district in the Commonwealth to begin investing in all-electric buses, providing not only climate and health benefits for our community, but allowing students to benefit from having a quiet, more relaxed ride,” Danielle Floyd, general manager of Transportation Services for the School District of Philadelphia, said in the news release.

Students in Philadelphia schools in first through sixth grade, and who live 1.5 miles or more from their assigned school, are eligible for school bus transportation.

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