SB137: Maryland Transit Administration – Conversion to Zero-Emission Buses (Zero-Emission Bus Transition Act)
Senate Committee on Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
Position: Favorable
January 26th, 2021

Maryland PIRG is a state based, citizen funded public interest advocacy organization with grassroots members across the state and a student funded, student directed chapter at the University of Maryland College Park. For forty years we've stood up to powerful interests whenever they threaten our health and safety, our financial security, or our right to fully participate in our democratic society.

Environment Maryland is a citizen-based environmental advocacy organization. We work to protect clean air, clean water, and open space.

Maryland PIRG and Environment Maryland support SB137 to transition the Maryland Transit Administration's (MTA) bus fleet to Zero-Emission buses. Starting in FY 2023, the bill prohibits MTA from entering into new contracts to purchase buses that are not Zero-Emission.

Buses play a key role in Maryland's transportation system, reducing traffic congestion and helping Marylanders get to work, school, and play. Yet, the vast majority of these buses remain dirty – burning fossil fuels like diesel that put the health of our children and communities at risk and contribute to global warming. Commuting to work or school shouldn't include a daily dose of toxic pollution, or increase the chances that people will get sick. And why would we continue to use dirty diesel buses if they are making the climate crisis worse?

Numerous studies have shown that inhaling diesel exhaust can cause respiratory diseases and worsen existing conditions like asthma. Diesel exhaust is internationally recognized as a cancer-causing agent and classified as a likely carcinogen by the U.S. Environmental

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Protection Agency.[1] In a study of 61 million people in 2015, researchers found that exposure to diesel soot and ground-level ozone created by diesel exhaust was linked to higher rates of mortality.[2] Diesel pollution is especially dangerous for children -- for children there is no established safe level of exposure to diesel exhaust pollutants.[3]

Each year, pollution from cars, trucks and other vehicles cuts short an estimated 58,000 lives in the United States, and increases the risk of lung cancer, stroke and heart disease. Transportation is also now Maryland's number one source of greenhouse gases, with emissions from cars, trucks, buses and other vehicles surpassing every other source.

The good news is that Maryland can clean up its buses by making them electric. All-electric buses are here, and they're cleaner, healthier and often cheaper for the state and bus contractors to run in the long-term. With no tailpipe emissions, electric buses can drastically reduce the pollution Maryland's children and families are exposed to.

Dramatic declines in battery costs and improvements in performance, including expanded driving range, have made electric buses a viable alternative to diesel-powered and other fossil fuel buses.[4] So while electric buses are essential to protect public health and the environment, they are also smart investments.

As we respond to the COVID-19 crisis, and work to safely reopen and recover, we must do so in a way that moves Maryland forward to improve our health, builds stronger communities, and creates accessible, safe ways to get around.

Marylanders deserve access to transportation and safe air to breathe. Thanks to pollution, they're not getting safe rides on diesel buses. It's time to switch to all-electric buses.

We respectfully request a favorable report.

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[1] International: World Health Organization, International Agency for Research on Cancer, "IARC: Diesel Engine Exhaust Carcinogenic" (press release), 12 June 2012, available at http://www.iarc.fr/en/media-centre/pr/2012/pdfs/pr213_E.pdf; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "IRIS Assessments: Diesel Engine Exhaust – CASRN NA," 28 February 2003, archived at https://web.archive.org/web/20180412031944/https://cfpub.epa.gov/ncea/iris2/chemicalLanding.cfm?substance_nmbr=642
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[2] Quian Di et al., "Air Pollution and Mortality in the Medicare Population," *The New England Journal of Medicine,* 376:2513-2522, DOI: 10.1056/NEJMoa1702747, 29 June 2017.

[3] Children are most vulnerable to the negative health effects caused by air pollution; their respiratory systems are still developing and they inhale more air per pound of body weight than adults. C. Li, Q. Nguyen, P. Ryan, G. LeMasters, H. Spitz, M. Lobaugh, S. Glover and S. Grinshpun, 2009, Journal of Environmental Monitoring, "School Bus Pollution And Changes in The Air Quality at Schools: A Case Study."

[4] Each electric school bus can save districts nearly $2,000 a year in fuel and $4,400 a year in reduced maintenance costs, saving tens of thousands of dollars over the lifetime of a bus. Clinton Global Initiative V2G EV School Bus Working Group, ZEV School Buses – They're Here and Possibly Free (presentation), 22 April 2016, available at https://green-technology.org/gcsummit16/images/35-ZEV-School-Buses.pdf.