

# A Vision for Climate Leadership in Washington, D.C.

## *Seizing the Economic, Climate and Public Health Benefits of Electrifying WMATA's Transit Bus Fleet*

The Sierra Club and its allies are calling on the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) **to commit to fully electrify its fleet** of more than 1,500 public transit buses no later than 2045 and to take immediate steps toward achieving that goal.

Cities across the country, including Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, San Francisco and Seattle, have all committed to fully electrify their bus fleets, and smaller municipalities such as Alexandria, Virginia, are also well on the way to electrifying their fleets. Transportation electrification is critical to meet Washington D.C.'s climate goals, and shifting WMATA's fleet away from diesel buses on a firm timeline is necessary to comply with the mandates of the **Clean Energy Omnibus Amendment Act** of 2018. Electrifying the fleet along Clean Energy Act timelines — 50 percent by 2030, 75 percent by 2035, 90 percent by 2040, and 100 percent by 2045 — would provide WMATA with a realistic, 25-year glide path toward full electrification.

The benefits are big. Using Argonne National Lab's AFLEET modeling, **a new Sierra Club report** shows that electrifying WMATA's fleet would save the agency hundreds of millions of

dollars on lifetime fleet operating costs, reduce annual carbon pollution by more than 58,000 tons by 2030 (and more in later years), and reduce the public health toll that toxic air pollution has on the area's most vulnerable residents, saving them millions of dollars in avoided healthcare costs.

The Sierra Club and its allies urge WMATA to take concrete steps to ensure that it meets — or preferably exceeds — the electrification timelines set in the Clean Energy Act, promote retention and job training for its workforce throughout the electrification process, and guarantee that transit electrification first and foremost benefits low- and moderate-income metro region residents. As detailed in **the report**, these steps include:

- Publicly committing to meeting, and ideally exceeding, Clean Energy Act electrification timelines for 2030, 2035, 2040 and 2045, as numerous other transit agencies are doing.
- Drafting and publicly releasing a bus electrification plan by the spring of 2021. The plan should include opportunity for input from the general public; government agencies; WMATA workers; utility commissions in Washington D.C., Virginia and Maryland; and other transit agencies.
- Phasing out the purchase of new internal combustion engine buses immediately, and publicly committing to stop buying diesel buses by 2025.
- Prioritizing the deployment of electric buses in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods and environmental justice communities to ensure electrification benefits metro residents who are disproportionately harmed by smog and other transportation-related air pollution.

Transportation is now responsible for more carbon pollution than any other sector of the U.S. economy and cities across the country are demonstrating that transit electrification offers a local solution to help address this global problem. Given that it serves the national capital region, WMATA has an opportunity to lead on climate and public health and save metro area taxpayers money at the same time. WMATA's plans for an equitable and sustainable electric bus future can and should be accomplished without raising fares for the riders who depend on WMATA every day.



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