

Background

The Government of New Brunswick (N.B.) has prepared an in-depth greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction plan by 2024, in its 2022–2027 climate change action plan, [Our Pathway Towards Decarbonization and Climate Resilience](#), that will detail how the province will achieve emissions reductions in the range of 20–40 percent in its buildings and its fleet by 2030. In line with this commitment, N.B. is conducting a feasibility study on the viability of electric school buses (ESBs) in the province and has recently announced the order of 20 new ESBs for the 2023–2024 school year. To this day, there is **only one ESB out of the province’s fleet of over 1,200 school buses**, and the government of N.B. has no clear strategy to make the transition, despite the fact that federal funding programs for ESB purchases are available.

Why do we need to act now?

Accelerating the electrification of the school bus fleet represents a unique opportunity to achieve meaningful progress on N.B.’s climate target while generating complementary health and economic benefits for the province.

It is estimated that, for each diesel school bus replaced with an ESB, **18 tonnes of carbon could be removed each year**.¹ Electrifying school buses also holds significant potential to reduce diesel-related air pollutants (nitrous oxides, sulfur oxide, particulate matter)², which primarily affect the health of bus drivers, the **85,000 children** who ride the bus to school every day³, as well as disadvantaged communities who are more likely to live near major roadways and thus daily bus routes. Considering the significant economic cost of premature deaths due to air pollution (**\$1.2 billion annually** in N.B.)⁴, such reductions could amount to substantial savings in health care costs for the province. Transitioning to ESBs could also provide energy and maintenance savings to fleet operators, due to the lower cost of electricity and fewer parts for electric models. In light of these advantages, there is no reason to delay this transition that will benefit everyone.

What are the main barriers?

- Acquiring an electric school bus remains **up to three times the cost of a diesel equivalent**, while also requiring significant investments in charging infrastructure and potential electrical upgrades;
- The **lack of charging infrastructure** currently in place;

¹ Conservation Council of New Brunswick. (2022). [The Benefits and Challenges of Electrifying New Brunswick’s School Bus Fleet](#)

² Conservation Council of New Brunswick. (2022). [Switching to Electric School Buses: It’s good for our children’s health.](#)

³ Government of New Brunswick. (n.d.). [Pupil Transportation – School Bus: General Statistics.](#)

⁴ Health Canada. (2021). [Health Impacts of Air Pollution in Canada – Estimates of premature deaths and nonfatal outcomes.](#)

- The **lack of information, resources and logistical support** for fleet managers on the operation and transition to ESBs
- The **lack of training for drivers and technicians.**

Recommendations

In order to maximize the health, economic and environmental benefits of electrifying school transportation and to help the province meet its climate target, it is key that N.B. sets an ambitious but realistic target of **100% ESBs by 2035**, and aligns with its neighbours in Prince Edward Island. To this end, we recommend that the government of N.B.:

1. Expands its future electric vehicle strategy, promised in its climate change action plan, to include school buses (and other heavy-duty vehicles) and specify the required incentives, regulations, policies and programs to achieve its target for ESB adoption, taking inspiration from other jurisdictions, including Québec, Prince Edward Island and British Columbia;
2. Takes advantage of the federal funding for ESB purchase through the Zero Emission Transit Fund and the Canada Infrastructure Bank loan program, that could help overcome the higher upfront costs of ESBs;
3. Expands collaboration with NB Power and private partners on the eCharge Network to school bus charging stations;
4. Provides financial support to assist fleet managers in operating and transitioning their bus fleets, particularly in planning their charging infrastructure needs;
5. Increases accessibility to charging infrastructure through support programs and new services to meet the diverse needs of fleet operators, particularly those in rural and remote areas where bus drivers often take their bus home;
6. Invests in the development of ongoing training programs for the workforce in heavy electric transportation, including transitional training for workers currently employed in maintenance of internal combustion fleet.

We are available to provide more detail on these recommendations and to contribute to discussions on these issues.

Contact

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About CESBA

Led by Équiterre in partnership with Green Communities Canada, the **Canadian Electric School Bus Alliance (CESBA)** is an initiative that brings together provincial and federal school transportation stakeholders – from school boards passing through environmental organizations to national health associations, to advocate for measurable policies that will accelerate the transition to a 100% zero-emission school bus fleet by 2040, in alignment with Canada's climate targets. [Website](#)

