



TESTIMONY
of the
CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF MUNICIPALITIES
to the
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

March 14, 2011

CCM is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent about 90% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony to you on issues of concern to towns and cities.

CCM opposes HB 5941 "An Act Concerning the Use of School Buses Powered by Electricity" which would mandate that all newly-purchased school busses be electric.

While this proposal has its merits, if enacted this bill would create yet another unfunded state mandate on towns and cities.

New, large school buses have seen steady price increases over the past several years due to advanced electronics and strict engine and emissions requirements from the federal Environmental Protection Agency. It's not uncommon for school districts to already pay well over \$100,000 for a new school bus. This price tag more than doubles -- \$250,000 to \$300,000 -- when you're talking electric or hybrid, and that's not including additional maintenance costs.

In addition to the usual maintenance problems that school buses often have, electric buses present several new and potentially costly challenges to local school districts.

In July 2010 Iowa State University's Institute for Transportation in consultation with the Hybrid-Electric School Bus (HESB) Project, a program organized by Advanced Energy, issued a report¹ outlining a study in two Iowa school districts where the fuel economy hybrid-electric school buses was compared to that of conventional school buses. The study highlighted the most notable maintenance issues for the two school districts:

- **Recharging system problems:** the initial charging connections and power cords furnished with the buses proved to be inadequate for the function for which they were needed. Both

¹ *In-use Fuel Economy and Emissions Benefits of Hybrid-Electric School Buses in Iowa*, July 2010, Iowa State University, Institute for Transportation

districts' chargers burned (or shorted) out, and had to be replaced with heavier duty cords and more positive (locking) connections.

- ***Insufficient battery charge for entire school day:*** the batteries required about eight hours to achieve a full charge, so the intermediate charge between the typical morning and afternoon routes was insufficient to provide full electrical power in the afternoon. This problem was much worse during the winter (cold weather) months, when the buses had to be brought in from the morning routes and warmed up before charging could begin, as the districts reported that the batteries would not take a charge without that warming. The cold weather also reduced the power that the batteries could sustain while on the route.
- ***Battery Corrosion:*** both districts had multiple problems with the battery cable ends corroding, this lessened the efficiency of the recharge until it became so bad that the batteries simply would not recharge at all. Frequent cleaning was tried on the terminal ends but it seemed difficult to stay ahead of the problem. Despite the replacement of all ends was performed on one bus additional corrosion problems occurred in another few months.
- ***Inadequate heating system:*** during periods of maximum electrical use (and minimal engine use), the idling engine did not circulate and heat enough water in its cooling system to provide adequate heat to the interior of the bus.
- ***Tire wear:*** both districts were concerned that the additional weight of the batteries would shorten the life of the tires.

Overall, while electric school buses have proven to increase fuel efficiency and reduce emissions, they remain more expensive to purchase, and maintain than conventional school buses. These increased costs would place a heavy burden on local school budgets at a time when municipalities are already struggling to do more with less. Mandating that all newly-purchased school buses be electric would make a bad situation at the local level even worse.

Connecticut cannot go on conducting business as usual. Whether we like it or not, we are in an era of limits. Every mandate has its constituency – but it's time to make the difficult decisions necessary so that we will be able to maintain core government services over the next few years. The alternatives – higher property taxes, cutbacks in services, and massive layoffs of local government employees – will benefit nobody.

CCM urges the Committee to **take no action** on this bill.

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