

# **WISPIRG Foundation, Wisconsin Environment Research and Policy Center: New report outlines how electric school buses could speed Wisconsin's transition to clean electric grid**

Posted on Thursday, Mar 17, 2022

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Cutting-edge technology could enable electric school buses to store energy and return it to the grid, creating flexibility and stability for a renewable-powered future

MILWAUKEE — As early as [next month](#), billions of new federal dollars will start to become available for school districts across the country to transition to clean, electric school buses. Today, most of the nation's nearly half a million school buses run on diesel fuel, producing harmful emissions that children are forced to breathe. With the support of the World Resources Institute's Electric School Bus Initiative, WISPIRG Foundation, Wisconsin Environment Research & Policy Center and Frontier Group are releasing a [new report](#) examining how the transition to electric school buses, in addition to keeping diesel exhaust out of developing lungs, could help speed up the expansion of clean energy by providing a critical source of reliable battery storage.

"Getting to school shouldn't include a daily dose of toxic pollution," said **WISPIRG**

**Foundation transportation associate [Mac Dressman](#).** “Transitioning to all-electric buses would first and foremost ensure our children have a clean and healthy ride to school. But beyond that, it also provides an excellent opportunity to make dramatic improvements to Wisconsin’s electric grid, providing significant new benefits for communities.”

“Students in every community deserve the health and air quality benefits of electric school buses. With record funding on the way, now is the time to make it happen,” said **Sue Gander, director of the Electric School Bus Initiative at WRI**. “But the benefits don’t stop there. We are excited about this report, which shows that, with the right policies and investments, electric school buses can play a crucial role in promoting grid reliability and transitioning to renewable energy.”

The report, entitled *Electric School Buses and the Grid: Unlocking the power of school transportation to build resilience and a clean energy future*, finds that if every yellow school bus currently in operation across Wisconsin were replaced with an electric bus equipped with the right vehicle-to-grid technology, this would add over 1,281 MWh to the state’s capacity to store electricity, enough to power more than 39,000 average American homes for a day.

“Electric school buses represent a major step forward in helping to make our most impactful institution, our public schools, one of our most sustainable,” said **Dr. Tim Nordin, President of Eau Claire Board of Education**. “They not only provide an impact on our climate but provide a first-person learning opportunity about climate, science, and green careers for the students who ride them.”

This additional storage could speed the transition to a renewable energy grid and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from both the transportation and power generation sectors. As electric school buses are mostly only in use during short, specific periods, buses could absorb renewable energy when it is available in abundance and release it during periods when it isn’t, such as at night. It could also

allow electric school buses to provide additional power during unexpected demand spikes or emergency power during outages. Electrical utilities and system operators could compensate school districts for the grid services their buses provide, allowing school districts to save significant money over time.

“Since the U.S. electricity grid was built, the way we produce, distribute and use energy has changed dramatically,” says **James Horrox, lead author of the report**. “The shift to renewables brings a whole range of new challenges, and battery storage will be crucial in meeting those challenges. Vehicle-to-grid technologies can be a key part of that, and electric school buses are ideally suited to lead the way.”

The report gives recommendations for lawmakers, utility companies and schools, including:

- Lawmakers should provide funding for electric school buses, vehicle-to-grid and energy storage pilot programs and support research to develop and standardize technology, regulations and practices regarding the use of electric vehicles to store and return energy to the grid. Lawmakers should prioritize funding for underserved communities.
- Utility companies and regulators should establish partnerships with school districts and public officials, help finance electric buses, restructure electricity rates to accommodate electric vehicle technology, and clarify regulations regarding the use of electric vehicles to store and return energy to the grid.
- School districts should commit to a full transition to electric buses on a specific timeline and invest in as large a fleet as possible as soon as possible. They should also establish solid collaborative partnerships with utilities from an early stage.

“Electric school buses provide kids with a safe ride to school today and help ensure a future powered by reliable, renewable energy tomorrow,” said **Wisconsin Environment Research & Policy Center’s Eve Lukens-Day**. “The Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act got the ball rolling on school bus electrification, but we can’t pump the breaks yet. We need both increased federal funding in electric

buses and in climate solutions that help green the grid. This way, we can accelerate the rollout of these clean vehicles while cleaning up the energy that powers them all at the same time.”