



Manufacturing Electric School Buses: Taking the High Road to a Clean Ride for Kids

High-Road Manufacturing

The \$5 billion authorized for clean school buses under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) is transforming the U.S. school bus market, with thousands of school districts applying to receive funding for electric school buses. States and municipalities are matching this momentum, setting goals and establishing complementary funding programs to support school bus electrification. Manufacturers are racing to meet overwhelming demand for electric school buses.

In addition to cleaner air and reduced pollution for children and our communities, **the transition to a clean ride for kids has the potential to provide quality job and career opportunities for millions of Americans.** The billions in public dollars that advocates have secured for electric school buses will have a lasting impact on the thousands U.S. workers who make up the school bus manufacturing industry. We can, and must, ensure that this impact is a positive one.

We believe all workers deserve good jobs¹ that provide:

- Fair and transparent wages;
- Family-sustaining or wealth-building benefits such as high-quality, affordable health care, adequate paid time off, sick leave, and retirement plans;
- Quality training, especially for a new technology like electric school buses;
- Equitable² opportunities for career advancement, such as apprenticeships and promotions;
- A safe working environment that respects worker dignity and health;
- The free and fair choice to bargain collectively and join a union without retaliation; and
- Active recruitment from communities underrepresented in U.S. manufacturing

Protecting workers and their jobs requires intention and commitment to an equitable, high-road manufacturing industry. High-road manufacturing means companies invest in good jobs and skilled training for their workers. School bus manufacturing workers are already asking for this; after calling for higher wages, better benefits and safer working conditions and failing to see any improvement, workers at Blue Bird in Georgia voted to join a union.³

Without high-road manufacturing, workers face job losses⁴, decreasing wages, and increased poverty and inequality. Without good jobs, the manufacturing industry will not be able to retain talent, scale production and deliver on the urgent need to produce clean, electric school buses.

¹ The federal government has its own definition of what constitutes a good job via the Good Jobs Principles. <https://www.dol.gov/general/good-jobs/principles>

² In this case, we define equitable as reasonably available to workers of all backgrounds.

³ Georgia Law News, "Workers at Georgia school bus manufacturer begin voting to form a union-wabe/

<https://georgialawnews.com/workers-at-georgia-school-bus-manufacturer-blue-bird-begin-voting-to-form-a-union-wabe/>

⁴ Jim Barrett and Josh Bivens, The stakes for workers in how policymakers manage the coming shift to all-electric vehicles (Washington, D.C.: Economic Policy Institute, September 22, 2021), <https://files.epi.org/uploads/232751.pdf>.

Policies for Good Job Creation & High-Road Manufacturing

The Alliance for Electric School Buses is committed to an equitable transition to a clean ride for kids. **Members of the coalition who work on workforce policies are calling for decision makers and communities to ensure that this transition promotes high-paying jobs with family-sustaining benefits *and* safe, inclusive workplaces that provide career opportunities for displaced workers and low-income communities, people of color, and other communities underrepresented in manufacturing.**

Here's what policymakers can do to promote good, equitable jobs in school bus manufacturing:

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

The EPA has taken important steps towards providing transparency around working conditions and job quality at school bus original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) through its webpage "[Bus Manufacturer Job Quality and Workforce Development Practices](#)" as part of the [Clean School Bus Program](#). EPA can build on this initiative to create real accountability for manufacturers by:

1. Making the questionnaire mandatory to receive funding from the Clean School Bus Program.
2. Increasing the specificity of questions in order to be able to make apples-to-apples comparisons between companies. For example, EPA should solicit information on the minimum wage paid to employees in each employment classification, and more detailed information on health benefits.
3. Scoring questionnaire responses according to job quality.
4. Providing higher subsidy amounts for buses that receive higher scores (up to 10% of award).
5. Continuing to make all information public on the EPA website.

State Lawmakers

U.S. Jobs Plan

State agencies that provide funding for electric school buses should adopt the [U.S. Jobs Plan \(USJP\)](#) as a part of their funding programs. To do so, manufacturers that want their electric school buses in the state to be eligible for purchase using state program funding would submit a form outlining their public commitments to a strong workforce. Manufacturers would detail wage and benefit levels by employee classification, as well as how they practice inclusive hiring, retention, training, promotion, and apprenticeship.

Agencies then score manufacturer commitments. Buses purchased from high-scoring manufacturers receive additional funding, up to 10% of the base funding amount. Manufacturers provide regular reporting to demonstrate compliance with job quality and hiring commitments, and commitments are tracked on public government websites.

This incentivizes procurement from manufacturers that create and maintain good jobs for workers, without limiting purchasing choices. The USJP has been authorized by the U.S. Department of Transportation and implemented by the nation's largest transit agencies, including Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro), the Chicago Transit Authority, the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority (NY MTA), as well as Amtrak.

Success Stories:

- [LA Metro](#): LA Metro has used the USJP eight times, leading to the creation of more than 550 direct jobs and thousands of additional jobs throughout the supply chain. In 2011, LA Metro

became the first transit agency in the country to use the USJP for the purchase of new rail cars, on a bid that resulted in (1) the award of an \$890 million contract to Kinkisharyo International for light rail vehicles; (2) a new factory in Los Angeles County; and (3) the creation of 404 high quality jobs in the county. In 2013, LA Metro again used the USJP to purchase 550 buses, awarding a \$305 million contract to New Flyer Industries. In 2018, LA Metro committed to implementing its own Manufacturing Careers Policy, which would apply the USJP to all future railcar, bus, and manufactured equipment purchases above \$100 million. The policy is estimated to support up to 22,000 jobs as LA Metro replaces its fleet.

- **Amtrak:** In 2014, Amtrak used the USJP in its purchase of \$2 billion worth of new high-speed trains for its Northeast Corridor Acela line. Alstom Transport, a manufacturer headquartered in France, won the contract and committed to creating 400 jobs in upstate New York to build Amtrak's new rail cars. The trains will be manufactured at Alstom's Hornell and Rochester facilities in New York. Parts for the new train sets will come from more than 350 suppliers in more than 30 states, generating an additional 1,000 jobs nationwide. More than 95 percent of the train set components will be manufactured in the U.S.

Community Benefits Agreements

Community benefits agreements, or CBAs, are legally-binding agreements between companies and communities that ensure that companies using public money provide quality jobs for workers and other community benefits. CBAs can be negotiated at any time, but are often agreed to during deliberations around subsidizing and entitling major real estate or manufacturing projects.

Under CBAs, local coalitions of community-based organizations, workforce development agencies, unions, and other impacted stakeholders negotiate with a company to secure commitments to strong labor standards and community benefits. These benefits can include establishing a fair process for employees to decide on union representation and collective bargaining, commitments to diverse hiring from within the community, and a jobs pipeline with skills training so that workers have pathways to promotions and higher benefits. They can also include environmental mitigations and other needs like affordable housing.

By signing CBAs, electric school bus manufacturers can demonstrate their commitment not only to their employees, but to an equitable transition that recognizes workers' dignity and invests in the talent and expertise of local community members. This kind of leadership matches the public health and environmental imperatives driving school bus electrification.

Success Stories:

- **New Flyer.** In 2022, Jobs to Move America signed a historic multi-state community benefits agreement with transit bus manufacturer New Flyer and communities in California and Alabama. The agreement has created apprenticeship programs that have [brought new workers into the industry](#), such as Black and Latinx community members, women, and those impacted by the criminal punishment system.
- **BYD.** In 2017, Jobs to Move America's community-labor coalition in California signed a landmark CBA with BYD. The CBA helps create family-sustaining jobs through investments in pre apprenticeship and training programs. BYD has surpassed its goal of recruiting and hiring 40% of its workers from populations facing significant barriers to employment, including women, African Americans, people exiting the carceral system, and veterans. Through this CBA, BYD implemented the country's first-ever electric bus apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship program.