

**CHUFSD 2020-21 Budget: Bus Purchase Proposition
Facts and Frequently Asked Questions**

- CHUFSD transports almost 1,300 students daily to over 32 different schools, covering more than 400,000 miles a year.
- Our buses are owned and operated by the school district and maintained by staff mechanics, a system that has proven to be efficient and effective and has enabled us to limit costs and maintain high safety standards.
- Our in-house operation enables drivers to know their students, and more important, it allows for daily oversight of our drivers, which could not be achieved with a contracted transportation service. We know every driver and have visual check-ins and interactions with them before they leave to pick up our students. This is the most important safety and prevention practice a district can implement to determine, daily, if a driver is fit to drive according to the US National Transportation Safety Board.
- To fulfill our transportation responsibility, the district maintains 44 vehicles, including:
 - 20 minibuses (gas-fueled)
 - 17 buses seating 66 passengers (diesel-fueled)
 - 6 Dodge Caravans (gas-fueled)
 - 1 Ford SUV (gas-fueled)
- Croton-Harmon Transportation has maintained one of the highest safety inspection ratings in New York State for over 15 years.

Q1. What is included in the bus proposition on the 2020-21 CHUFSD ballot?

A1. The proposition calls for the purchase of vehicles in an amount not to exceed \$225,000 and will be funded using Bond Anticipation Notes over five years. The original proposition was reduced from \$355,000 in an effort to lessen the impact on taxpayers and to refrain from purchasing an additional gas-fueled bus. **The proposal has zero impact on the 2020-21 tax levy** and supports the NYS Comptroller’s recommendations for fiscally responsible vehicle replacement.

The district proposes* to purchase the following vehicles:

2020 Chrysler Pacifica/Nissan-Hybrid	7 passenger
2020 Blue Bird Vision bus (gas)	65 passenger
2020 Chevy van	34 passenger

*Our bond proposition allows for flexibility in vehicle purchasing should a more suitable or less expensive model become available or should our transportation requirements change.

The vehicles intended to be replaced are:

2006 Thomas bus (#117)	80,000 miles (diesel)	66 passenger
2007 Dodge Caravan	165,000 miles (gas)	7 passenger
2007 GMC van	80,000 miles (gas)	28 passenger

These vehicles are almost 15 years old and, therefore, no longer cost effective to meet and maintain safety standards. New buses have fewer maintenance needs and meet much higher fuel efficiency standards. The proposed purchase supports the district's fiscally responsible vehicle replacement plan based on industry standards and is in accordance with recommendations from the Office of the State Comptroller.

Q2. What is the position of the Croton-Harmon Union Free School District (CHUFSD) on purchasing electric buses?

A2. The district is actively pursuing the transition to EVs and is in favor of zero-emission vehicles. The administration has conducted extensive research on vehicle procurement and has met with several local authorities, including Sustainable Westchester, NYSERDA, the Village of Croton Sustainability Committee and various consultants and vendors, to obtain updated information and pursue potential opportunities. The district is committed to serving as a role model and good citizen in lowering emissions and reducing its carbon footprint.

The district's intention to shift to electric vehicles (EVs) requires strategic planning to ensure a successful transition and minimize financial risk due to the capital investment and long-term implications. Shifting to a zero-emission bus system requires much more than purchasing new buses. Electrification requires a comprehensive rethinking of operations which includes some of the following: infrastructure assessment and preparedness; determining technology and vehicle specifications based on terrain, mileage and climate; achieving charging adequacy; utility and vehicle procurement; and maintenance and driver training.

The district is also on an Energy Performance Contract. We are incorporating infrastructure upgrades to electrify our vehicles at the Transportation Garage. Further, we intend to meet with our utility company to evaluate the electric grid capacity at our bus garage as a first step to ensure we can provide sufficient and reliable power to charge buses. Due to frequent electrical outages at the garage, we have recently installed a generator to support our minimal electrical needs, but it does not have the capacity to support charging stations for large vehicles. Once sufficiency is attained, we can move forward with vehicle identification, funding opportunities and procurement.

Q3. Why isn't an electric bus being considered for purchase as part of the bus proposition on this year's school budget ballot?

A3. Aside from the cost, which is more than two and a half times the cost of a traditional bus, our space constraints, lack of infrastructure and septic issues at the bus garage are currently our biggest challenges. It is our hope that upgrades made through our Energy Performance Contract will help remedy these issues and move us to the next phase of implementation.

The district is keeping a close eye on developments in the efficiencies of EVs and is committed to moving to electric transportation as soon as it is feasible.

Q4. What happens if the bus proposition on this year's ballot is not approved by voters?

A4. Without the addition of the vehicles in the proposition, and with the necessary retirement of older vehicles, the district does not believe that it can adequately meet the transportation needs of its students.

Q5. What are other districts doing to electrify their vehicles?

A5. Currently there are no other districts in the county utilizing EVs with the exception of White Plains, which has five (5). It is our understanding that the buses were donated to White Plains and that this is a pilot program. This recent [New York Times article](#) gives more details.

According to the National Association of Pupil Transportation, there are approximately 485,000 school buses nationwide, of which just a few hundred are electric. This is primarily because electric buses are still very costly compared to their gas or diesel counterparts. Like White Plains, the vast majority of the districts using EVs around the nation have had the cost offset through state grants or funding from local utilities.

Q6. Has CHUFSD reached out to NYPA (our electric provider), Con Edison, and other organizations with interest in being part of electric bus programs and pursued other funding options?

A6. Yes, we are actively pursuing all grant possibilities, some in cooperation with our community partners. These include the EPA's Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) Grant and support from NYSERDA. The EPA is currently at the mid-point of the grant cycle and will reopen for applications in October 2020, at which time we intend to apply, though there are 260 applicants on the national waitlist.

We have aligned with BOCES to identify a grant writer to help with this important effort and will continue to seek other grant opportunities. Additionally, CHUFSD is spearheading a combined effort among surrounding districts to encourage governing agencies to partner with school districts to make electric buses more affordable and leverage our collective buying power.

Q7. Does CHUFSD consider emissions when developing transportation policy?

A7. The CHUFSD Transportation Department is constantly seeking ways to reduce emissions. A no-idling policy has been in place for many years, and we design our vehicle routes with efficiency in mind. We assign vehicles based on the number of students, length and topography of the runs, distance and fuel costs. Our large buses are equipped with diesel particulate filters and utilize ultra-low sulphur diesel fuel.

Even though our buses are currently powered by diesel and gas, using the school bus remains the most environmentally sound way of getting students to and from school, unless they can walk or ride a bike. We encourage all eligible students to ride the bus. Data shows that each bus replaces up to 36 cars on the road.

Q8. How can the community be sure its voice is being heard during these discussions?

A8. We appreciate the community input and partnership as we look to the future and plan for a move to an electric bus fleet. We are always open to learning of ways we can reach our goals in a more timely manner. We strongly encourage parents, students and other community members to participate in the district's discussions about all our sustainability goals. An Environmental Sustainability Steering Committee comprised of 14 members, 10 of whom are parents, community members and students, meets regularly and welcomes community input. Meeting dates are published in the Board of Education section of the district's website.

Q9. What is a Bond Anticipation Note through which these bus purchases will be made and how will this not affect the tax levy?

A9. A Bond Anticipation Note (BAN) is a borrowing instrument that supports our state-recommended vehicle replacement plan, which is designed to ensure the safety and efficiency of the District's vehicles. Through the issuance of an annual BAN, the district is able to level its annual expenses and receive 35+% in corresponding state aid reimbursement on the purchase of these vehicles. After adding bond interest and deducting state aid reimbursement, the actual cost to the District will be significantly less than the amount requiring voter approval. This bond will be paid over five years and will not affect the levy until the 2021-22 school year.