

POWER THE FUTURE

Environmental Protection Agency
Office of the Administrator
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

February 5, 2026

Dear Administrator Zeldin,

While recent national attention is rightly focused on fraud and misuse of federal funds in Minnesota, Winter Storm Fern exposed another area of federal spending that demands similar oversight: electric transit and electric school bus programs.

During the recent winter storm, five electric transit buses operated by Green Mountain Transit in Vermont were taken out of service due to frigid temperatures.¹ According to public reporting, these buses must be stored outside due to faulty batteries and fire risk. Costing nearly \$8 million, more than 95 percent of the funding for these five buses came from American taxpayers² requires serious questions be asked. These buses were purchased to operate in Vermont's climate, yet reports indicate they cannot be reliably charged in temperatures below 41 degrees. With the average winter temperature in Burlington hovering in the mid 20s, the vehicles, which cost more than \$1.5 million apiece, are unusable under predictable winter conditions.

These buses were purchased through the Federal Transit Administration's Low or No Emission (Low-No) Grant Program³, which received a \$1.6 billion funding increase under the Biden administration.⁴ Given the scale of this investment, there must be an examination into whether taxpayers are receiving the reliable, deployable transit assets capable of serving the communities for which they were funded.

¹ <https://vermontdailychronicle.com/5-gmt-e-buses-bought-for-8-million-out-of-service-due-to-fire-risk-frigid-weather/amp/>

² <https://www.vermontpublic.org/local-news/2024-06-18/green-mountain-transit-announces-five-new-electric-buses-for-chittenden-county>

³ [https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/fy23-faa-bus-and-low-and-no-emission-grant-awards#:~:text=Vermont%20Agency%20of%20Transportation%20\(VTrans\)](https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/fy23-faa-bus-and-low-and-no-emission-grant-awards#:~:text=Vermont%20Agency%20of%20Transportation%20(VTrans))

⁴ <https://www.transportation.gov/briefing-room/biden-harris-administration-announces-over-16-billion-bipartisan-infrastructure-law>

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This concern extends beyond transit buses to the federal Clean School Bus Program. A previous U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Inspector General report identified “material weaknesses and a significant deficiency” in the administration of this program⁵ during the Biden Administration. More recent reporting underscores these concerns. In Maine, multiple school districts have reported electric school buses that remain unsafe for the road, plagued by mechanical or charging issues.⁶ Additionally, districts that receive buses are struggling with maintenance and repairs because the manufacturer went bankrupt.⁷

Additionally, my watchdog organization, Power The Future, conducted its own review of electric school bus deployments in New Mexico where four school districts received early funding. One district reported satisfactory performance from two buses. Two other districts acknowledged persistent charging problems or buses already sidelined. Most concerning, the state’s second-largest district was slated to receive five electric buses worth nearly \$2 million in taxpayer funds. Yet, the district has not produced records providing evidence the buses are in use.

These concerns are reinforced by additional findings from the EPA’s Office of Inspector General. In a December 2024 audit⁸, the OIG concluded that EPA failed to meaningfully track the deployment of electric school buses funded through the 2022 Clean School Bus rebate program. More than \$836 million was distributed with minimal follow-up during the Biden Administration. Nearly two years after the money began to flow, fewer than seven percent of participating school districts had completed the process. Auditors found that most districts reviewed were still attempting to install basic charging infrastructure and were unlikely to meet program deadlines. When hundreds of millions of dollars are awarded without confirmation that buses are delivered, operable, or in service, the absence of oversight echoes the failures that are being highlighted in Minnesota.

These concerns are compounded by the Biden Administration’s broader record on so-called green infrastructure spending. Under the \$7.5 billion National Electric

⁵ <https://www.epa.gov/office-inspector-general/news-release-epa-oig-identifies-concerns-iija-clean-school-bus-program>

⁶ <https://wgme.com/news/local/we-got-bad-buses-winthrop-and-yarmouth-electric-school-buses-still-unsafe-for-the-road-maine-education-lion>

⁷ <https://freebeacon.com/energy/back-to-gas-school-districts-revert-to-diesel-because-bidens-electric-buses-cant-be-repaired/>

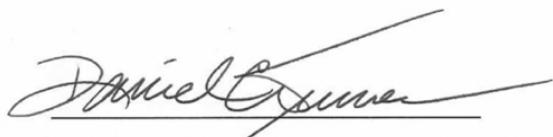
⁸ <https://www.epa.gov/office-inspector-general/report-epa-should-improve-monitoring-2022-clean-school-bus-rebate>

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Vehicle Infrastructure program, fewer than 400 charging ports had been built as of the most recent public accounting, an outcome disproportionate to the scale of taxpayer investment.⁹ When this failure is viewed alongside electric buses that cannot operate in cold weather, school buses that sit idle, and grants producing little to no functional infrastructure, a troubling pattern emerges. Taken together, these outcomes raise the same red flags now familiar from the Minnesota daycare fraud scandal: large federal payouts with minimal verification, poor oversight, and taxpayers left holding the bill. At a minimum, these programs warrant immediate scrutiny to determine whether incompetence alone explains the results or whether fraud and misrepresentation are also at play.

Given these facts, I respectfully request the office of the Inspector General initiate a thorough audit of both the Low-No program and the Clean School Bus Program, including procurement criteria, delivery verification, and post-award performance outcomes. Taxpayers deserve transparency, accountability, and assurance that federal transportation dollars are producing tangible, reliable results.

I appreciate your attention to this matter.



Daniel C. Turner
Founder and Executive Director
Power The Future

CC: Sen. Shelly Moore Capito, Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works

CC: Rep. Brett Guthrie, Chairman, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce

⁹ <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/climate-energy/less-than-400-ev-charging-ports-built-under-75-billion-us-infrastructure-program-2025-07-22/>