

April 26, 2024



Senate Chair Marty, Chair Dibble, and Finance Committee members,

The Coalition for Clean Transportation (CCT) strongly supports the Zero-Emissions Transit Bus provisions in SF 5284.

CCT is a coalition of non-profit organizations that take action to support a future where all Minnesotans, from urban centers to rural areas, live in just and sustainable communities with equitable access to clean transportation options that promote the health and connection of all.

CCT has long championed electric transit buses for the purposes of health, climate, and equity. We fully endorse SF 5284's Zero-Emissions Bus provisions, which require the Met Council to aim for at least 50% zero-emissions bus purchases by 2030 and a complete transition by 2035.

We are deeply aware of the challenge ahead in meeting our state's climate goals of net zero-emissions across all sectors by 2050.<sup>1</sup> However, the 2035 100% purchase goal in this bill was chosen intentionally to provide a clear and necessary signal to Metro Transit to plan for a fleet transition that will enable Minnesota to meet its climate goals. Since transit buses have a lifespan of 12 to 15 years, Metro Transit would need to purchase only zero-emission buses starting in 2035 to ensure its transit fleet is wholly zero-emissions by 2050. This 2050 deadline is internationally recognized as the deadline for all sectors to have net-zero greenhouse gas emissions, in order to avoid even more costly and tragic consequences of a changing climate.<sup>2</sup>

We also understand that funding remains a challenge to electrifying transit fleets. As a result, SF 5284 (line 90.1) also lays out a process for the Met Council to seek an extension for this purchase goal. This "off-ramp" allows an extension for reasons such as lack of funding, as well as adverse impacts to bus reliability and service (lines 90.24-28).

Beyond climate, environmental justice and public health are at the heart of this effort. Under the status quo of a diesel fleet, as our transit system expands and the frequency of service increases, particularly in communities of color and low-income communities, so does the amount of diesel pollution and the resulting detrimental health impacts on overburdened communities.

We believe that the Met Council *can and must* balance transit expansion with cleaning up our regional bus fleet needs *simultaneously*. The Zero-Emission Bus Transition Plan underscores this point by asking the Met Council to consider how it can optimize greenhouse gas emissions reductions from both zero-emission technology and transit service expansion (lines 112.1-5).

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<sup>1</sup> In 2023, the Minnesota State legislature updated the state's greenhouse gas reduction goals to include a 50% reduction of greenhouse gas from 2005 levels by 2030, with net-zero greenhouse gas emissions reached by 2050. See [Minn. Statute, Sec. 216.H02. Subd. 1.](#)

<sup>2</sup> The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recommends greenhouse gas emissions must be halved by 2030 from 2019 levels and net-zero by 2050 in order to keep the average global temperature increase below 1.5 degrees Celsius. More on the IPCC and its recommendations can be found [here](#).

Furthermore, the Zero-Emission Bus Transition Plan will allow policymakers and advocates to understand the Met Council's funding needs, and take actions to address them in the near-term, due to updates to the Transition Plan in SF 5284 that will require Met Council to more clearly forecast implementation costs and identify potential funding sources (lines 112.21-25).

We are also in a period of unprecedented funding for electrification. While the sales tax revenue will support some of the Met Council's electrification efforts, it is by no means the only source of funding. Metro Transit regularly seeks federal funds to electrify its buses (e.g. the FTA Low- and No Emissions grant program<sup>3</sup>). There are also other federal funding sources available, like the recently announced U.S. EPA Clean Heavy-Duty Vehicles Grant Program.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, given the historic federal funding available to tackle air and climate pollution, there has truly been *no better time* to plan for zero-emission transit buses and thereby secure these available funds. In addition, state funding from entities like the Minnesota Climate Innovation Finance Authority (state green bank) or the State Competitiveness Fund also remain options for the Met Council to pursue. Finally, as with many clean energy technologies, we expect the cost to procure zero-emission buses to fall over the coming years as the market matures.

Flexibility is at the forefront of this proposal, providing the Met Council with exemptions for constraints in technology, infrastructure, utility interconnection, funding, or bus availability. Beyond the off-ramps specifically listed in the proposal, funding concerns are further ameliorated by the historic funding available to electrify transit buses. Lawmakers and advocates like CCT also stand ready to keep doing the necessary work to support the Met Council in meeting this zero-emission transit bus purchase goal.

For all these reasons, we support the Zero-Emission Transit Bus provisions in SF 5284, and strongly support keeping the purchase goals in as-is.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely, Coalition for Clean Transportation member organizations:



<sup>3</sup> In the last few years, Metro Transit has applied for and received almost \$22 million in funding from the Federal Transit Administration's Low- and No-Emission grant program to support its electrification efforts, with [\\$4.2 million awarded in fiscal year 2021](#) and [\\$17.5 million awarded in fiscal year 2023](#).

<sup>4</sup> The [Clean Heavy-Duty Vehicles Grant Program](#) is funded by the Inflation Reduction Act and was [launched April 24, 2024](#), with almost \$1 billion available this year to fund clean heavy duty vehicles, including zero-emission transit buses.