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Air District to replace old, high-polluting school buses for Fowler Unified

Officials gathered for the unveiling of a zero-emission electric school bus

Together with A-Z Bus Sales, Blue Bird, Cummins Electric and the Valley Air District, the South Central Fresno community celebrated delivery of the first of nine all-electric school buses for Fowler Unified School District. This is the first electric school bus funded by the Valley Air District under Assembly Bill (AB) 617 Community Air Protection Program and will serve students attending Malaga Elementary School and other Fowler Unified schools.

“Fowler Unified prides itself on addressing the needs of the whole child, including health and wellness. Our new electric school bus will benefit our environment and our students,” said Interim Superintendent Lori Gonzalez of Fowler Unified School District.

“Our partnership with the Valley Air District for the past three years has encouraged us to become more active members of our community by informing our parents on how they can make a difference in their children’s health and quality of life. The new electric bus is the latest addition in this endeavor,” stated Principal Luisa Custodio Lopes of Malaga Elementary School.

AB 617 provides a community-focused action framework to improve air quality and reduce exposure in communities throughout California that are most impacted by air pollution. South Central Fresno was among the first communities selected as an AB 617 community in 2018 by the California Air Resources Board (CARB).

“Transitioning older school buses into new zero-emission buses is a critical piece in improving the Valley’s air quality and public health,” said Executive Director/Air Pollution Control Officer Samir Sheikh of the Valley Air District. “Protecting the health of our most vulnerable residents – our children – is paramount.”

This project is replacing a total of nine old, high-polluting school buses with new, state-of-the-art, zero-emission electric buses and will result in estimated emission reductions of 1.647 tons per year of Nitrogen Oxides (NOx), Reactive Organic Gases (ROG), and Particulate Matter (PM). Over the next ten years the Valley will see 16.47 tons of emissions reduced for all nine buses.

"A-Z Bus Sales is excited to partner with Fowler Unified School District in bringing the very first Blue Bird all electric Type D school bus to central California. As the leader in alternative fuel school buses in California, we are proud to play a role in cleaning the air for the school children and community of the Central Valley and look forward to supporting these buses for the duration of their duty cycles," stated John Landherr, President and CEO of A-Z Bus Sales, Inc.

The zero-emission buses are rated to travel 100-125 miles and have a seating capacity of 78 passengers. Charge time is six to eight hours for a full charge after full usage and depending on the electric rate negotiated, there is up to an 80% savings in fuel, as well as 50% cost savings in maintenance.

"This is another example of smart investments by California Climate Investments (CCI) and the San Joaquin Valley APCD. It provides the cleanest possible transportation technology-- in this case a zero-emission school bus-- to protect the health of schoolkids, among the most vulnerable when it comes to air pollution. And it helps clean the air in the neighborhoods this all-electric bus drives through," said Karen Magliano, Division Chief, Office of Community Air Protection.

California Climate Investments provides annual funding to support the Valley Air District's Community Air Protection Program projects. CCI is a statewide California Air Resources Board (CARB) initiative that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy and improving public health and the environment – particularly in disadvantaged communities.

The total cost of this project is nearly \$3.9 million, with the Valley Air District providing \$3.6 million through the Community Air Protection Program under California Climate Investments. Fowler Unified School District contributed the remaining \$300,000. School districts interested in upgrading their bus fleets can call 559-230-5800 or visit <http://valleyair.org/grants/electric-school-bus.htm> to learn more.