



To: Interested Parties
From: Andrew Baumann and Will Jordan, Global Strategy Group
Date: July 2021
Re: Survey Finds Broad Support for Infrastructure Investment in Zero-Emission School Buses

A new survey conducted by Global Strategy Group for the American Lung Association shows an overwhelming majority of U.S. voters support significant federal investments to transition one-fifth of the country’s school buses from diesel-powered vehicles to electric, zero-emission buses. For the survey, interviews were conducted with 1,005 registered voters nationwideⁱ. A majority of voters – across all major demographic groups, along with the majority of both political independents and Democrats and a near-majority of Republicans – support including these investments as part of the infrastructure legislation being considered by Congress.

Even after being exposed to a simulated debate that included the actual arguments from opponents claiming that such policies will cost school districts too much money and cause other problems, a majority of voters remain decisively in favor of the proposal for \$20 billion or \$25 billion to be invested (both dollar amounts were tested). Voters agree that the investment would be a positive step for the health of America’s school children, for efforts to fight climate change, for the economy, and for the nation’s transportation infrastructure.

Americans want zero-emission school buses to be part of the infrastructure bill

Two-thirds of voters nationwide support new investment to transition the country’s school buses from diesel-powered vehicles to electric, zero-emission buses. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of Americans support – and just 24% oppose – including the proposed investment in the infrastructure bill being considered by Congress. The survey tested two separate dollar amounts for the scale of the investment by randomly selecting half of respondents to hear a question with either version. However, the experiment revealed voters are equally supportive of \$25 billion (68% support-24% oppose) or \$20 billion (68%-25%).

Public approval extends across all major demographic groups. Whether dividing Americans by gender, age, race/ethnicity, or community type, over half of every demographic bloc backs the school bus proposal. The same is true among most self-described Democrats, independents and nearly half of Republicans. The policy is also especially popular (74%-18%) among those with children under 18 in their household.

Support is robust and moves only slightly when voters hear arguments against the proposal. After indicating initial support, each respondent read two statements: one statement making the case in favor of the zero-emission bus proposal, and one statement making the case against – which included claims that a transition would be costly to already cash-strapped school districts, that the buses have technical limitations, and that the buses still rely on coal and gas power plants. After voters hear this exchange, supports remain robust at a two-to-one ratio nationally (63% support/29% oppose). The full statements tested are included at the end of this memo.

Do you support or oppose this proposal to make investments to transition school buses from diesel-powered vehicles to zero-emission buses?*		
	Support	Oppose
National (%)	68	24
White Non-College	59	30
White College Grad	71	26
Black	84	8
Hispanic	73	18
Democrat	86	6
Independent	68	21
Republican	47	47
Urban	73	18
Suburban	67	25
Rural	63	30
Parents (kids <18)	74	18

**Full question text at end of memo*

Voters see wide-ranging benefits in expanding the use of zero-emission school buses.

Underlying support for the policy is a belief that policies protecting the health of children rise above politics. Four in five voters agree that “reducing air pollution around children is not a Republican or Democratic issue, it’s just common sense” (82% agree, 56% agree strongly). This sentiment extends to 91% of Democrats and 69% of Republicans. Moreover, three-quarters agree that “it is especially important to invest in zero-emission vehicles, like buses, that will reduce air pollution around children” (74% agree, 45% agree strongly). For most voters, it’s not political, it’s personal: 72% nationwide would prefer if school buses in *their own* communities were zero-emission instead of diesel-powered.

Question Text: Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Overall – U.S. Voters (%)			By Party ID (NET)		
	Agree	Disagree	NET	Dem	Ind	Rep
Reducing air pollution around children is not a Republican or Democratic issue, it’s just common sense.	82	14	+68	+85	+79	+43
It is especially important to invest in zero-emission vehicles, like buses, that will reduce air pollution around children.	74	19	+55	+84	+62	+18
I would prefer if school buses operating in my own community were zero-emission instead of diesel.	72	20	+52	+82	+60	+15
Transitioning school bus fleets to zero-emission buses would be an important investment in our children’s future.	70	23	+47	+83	+53	+3

Even after hearing opposition arguments, Americans believe the proposal would pay dividends for the health of America’s school children, the economy, and the climate. After hearing the arguments for and against, majorities of the public believe including the zero-emission school bus investment in the infrastructure bill would have a positive impact on the health of America’s school children, on American innovation, and on climate change. Meanwhile, clear pluralities believe it would have a more positive than negative impact on the educational performance of America’s school children (reflecting scientists’ findings that air pollution from diesel exhaust can have damaging impacts even down to students’ test scores) and on the economy.

Question Text: If Congress passed this legislation to transition school buses from diesel vehicles to zero-emission buses, what impact do you think it would have on the following things? Please indicate whether you think it would have a positive impact, negative impact, or no impact on each one.

	Positive impact	No impact	Not sure	Negative impact
American innovation	64	21	10	5
The health of America’s school children	64	22	9	5
Climate change	62	22	9	7
The educational performance of America’s school children	44	38	12	6
The American economy	47	14	16	23

Zero-emission buses belong in the “infrastructure” conversation.

More than supporting the proposal on zero-emission school buses, Americans think it aligns well with the goals and focus of broader efforts to improve the nation’s infrastructure. There is near-unanimous consensus around the idea that school bus fleets themselves are “an important part of America’s transportation infrastructure” (86% agree-10% disagree). Moreover, Americans overwhelmingly believe investments like those being discussed for zero-emission school buses should be among the steps taken to improve the economy in general, and the country’s transportation infrastructure specifically.

Question Text: Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.							
	<i>Overall – U.S. Voters (%)</i>			<i>By Party ID (NET)</i>			
	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>NET</i>	<i>Dem</i>	<i>Ind</i>	<i>Rep</i>	
School bus fleets are an important part of America’s transportation infrastructure.	86	10	+76	+84	+83	+63	
America should make significant investments in clean technologies like zero-emission school buses as part of our effort to rebuild the economy.	71	24	+57	+84	+59	-2	
Transitioning school bus fleets to zero-emission buses is an important part of improving America’s transportation infrastructure.	70	23	+47	+80	+47	+11	
By manufacturing clean technologies like zero-emission school buses here in the United States, we can help replace many of the blue collar jobs the country has lost over the last few decades.	65	22	+43	+81	+48	+9	

APPENDIX

Full Question Wording: Core Proposal

As you may know, Congress is considering an infrastructure bill that could fund improvements to roads, bridges, and water pipes along with other investments such as high-speed internet and clean energy. One proposal that may be included in the infrastructure bill is for the federal government to invest [SPLIT A: \$25 billion / SPLIT B: \$20 billion] in order to transition one-fifth of the country’s school buses from diesel-powered vehicles to electric, zero-emission buses.

Just based on what you know, do you support or oppose this proposal to make investments to transition school buses from diesel-powered vehicles to zero-emission buses?

Simulated Debate Message Statements

Supportive argument: (Some/Other) people say children are significantly more vulnerable to harm from air pollution than adults and close to 25 million American kids ride to school on diesel-powered buses every day. The toxic and carcinogenic compounds in diesel exhaust cause asthma attacks, heart disease, and cancer. Scientists say the exhaust can even impair brain development and lead to lower test scores. Investing in zero-emission buses will protect our kids from these harmful pollutants while creating thousands of good-paying American jobs in a growing industry.

Opposition argument: (Some/Other) people say that electric buses are a boondoggle that would cost taxpayers and cash-strapped school districts two to three times as much as regular buses up front, while

also requiring charging stations and special maintenance. In many cases, their range is too short for school districts in rural and suburban areas, and the places that have tried them have been plagued with problems. To top it all off, they mostly still rely on electricity from coal-and gas-power plants, which emit massive amounts of toxic pollution.

ⁱABOUT THE POLL

GSG conducted an online survey of 1,005 registered voters nationwide between July 1st and July 8th, 2021. The survey has a confidence interval of +/- 3.1%; the confidence interval is larger subgroups. Interviews were conducted via online web panel with respondents verified against a voter file. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic, demographic, and political divisions of the registered voter population are properly represented.