



**Non-Binding Notice of Intent to Issue
Funding Opportunity Announcement No. FY2023-ACTNow-01: Accelerating Clean Transportation
("ACT") School Bus: Fleet Deployment Program**

May 2023

The Massachusetts Clean Energy Technology Center ("MassCEC") intends to issue a Funding Opportunity Announcement ("FOA") for a second round of the Accelerating Clean Transportation School Bus ("ACT School Bus") Fleet Deployment Program (the "ACT School Bus Deployment Program"). As currently envisioned, funding for the FY23 round of ACT School Bus will be set at approximately Five Million Dollars (\$5,000,000) for public school districts or eligible private third-party fleet operators, however MassCEC reserves the right to increase or decrease program funding at its discretion.

MassCEC developed the ACT School Bus Deployment Program in 2022 to amplify the federal Environmental Protection Agency's ("EPA") Clean School Bus Program¹ funding and to build on learnings from MassCEC's previous school bus electrification projects under the Accelerating Clean Transportation Now ("ACTNow") Program. MassCEC recognizes school bus electrification as an important challenge for market development in the transportation sector. The ACT School Bus Deployment Program is intended to enable successful electric school bus deployment projects that demonstrate major steps toward full-fleet electrification. Through the Deployment Program, MassCEC intends to:

- Deploy additional electric school buses across major fleet operation models in Massachusetts;
- Provide school districts with technical assistance to ensure successful school bus electrification deployment projects; and
- Provide grant funding to public school districts, with a focus on school districts located in underserved communities, to electrify school bus fleets.

Purpose

The purpose of this Non-Binding Notice of Intent is to notify public school districts, third-party school bus providers, fleet management advisors, EV station and EV service providers, utilities and other relevant stakeholders of MassCEC's objective to administer a second round of the ACT School Bus Deployment Program and to provide preliminary eligibility, award, and timeline information.

This is solely a Non-Binding Notice of Intent and not a Request for Proposals ("RFP"). MassCEC is not accepting applications at this time. Please submit all questions to CleanTransportation@masscec.com.

¹Please find more on EPA Clean School Bus Grant programming, including timeline, application requirements, and additional resources on the [Clean School Bus Program webpage](#)

Background

The ACT School Bus Program is deploying a grand total of Eighteen Million Three Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$18,300,000) over the FY23 and FY24 program years to advance school bus fleet electrification by providing deployment assistance services, advisory services, and financial support to Massachusetts public school districts. **ACT School Bus programming is intended to complement the federal EPA's Clean School Bus Program.**

In December 2022, MassCEC awarded six (6) public school districts across the Commonwealth under the first round of the ACT School Bus Deployment Program.² These six (6) school districts are currently receiving MassCEC funding and technical assistance from MassCEC's hired Technical Consultant Team, led by ERG (Eastern Research Group). With the help of the Technical Consultant Team, the awardees will procure electric school buses and associated charging equipment and will subsequently deploy the electric school buses by the end of the project period.

MassCEC is also currently offering the [ACT School Bus Advisory Services Program](#) (the "[Advisory Program](#)"). The Advisory Program provides **free** consultant services to public school districts across Massachusetts that are in the early stages of fleet electrification planning. School districts and third-party fleet operators enrolled in the Advisory Program will work with the Advisory Consultant Team, led by VEIC (Vermont Energy Investment Corporation) to form a clear path towards school bus electrification. Interested fleets can fill out the [application form](#) to be considered for this program. **Please note that MassCEC does not anticipate offering another round of the Advisory Program this year. MassCEC will be selecting new fleets for participation in the Advisory Program on a rolling basis through the spring of 2023.**

It is the intention of MassCEC to continue ACT School Bus Deployment Programming by introducing a second round of the ACT School Bus Deployment Program. The second round of funding is intended to achieve the same goals as outlined in the first round of the ACT School Bus Deployment Program and will incorporate learnings from the first round as the 2022 Projects progress.

Eligibility and Prioritization Criteria

Eligibility for the ACT School Bus Deployment Program mirrors eligibility criteria for EPA's Clean School Bus Grant Program. Eligible Applicants for the ACT School Bus Deployment Program include:

1. Public school districts that are eligible under EPA's Clean School Bus Program. This includes Massachusetts public school districts, including charter schools, that have an [NCES District ID](#); and
2. Private third-party fleet operators that are eligible under EPA's Clean School Bus Program. Note that private third-party fleet operators can only apply on behalf of their associated **Massachusetts** public school district(s).

Eligibility criteria will be clarified and established upon the release of the ACT School Bus Deployment Program RFP. In the interim, MassCEC welcomes stakeholder feedback on eligibility criteria for this Program.

² [December 2022 ACT School Bus Press Release](#)

MassCEC will give preference to applications from school districts on the FY23 EPA Clean School Bus Grant Program [priority district list](#),³ however eligibility is not limited to these districts.

Applicants are encouraged to form teams comprised of several entities (“[Applicant Teams](#)”), to work together on the proposed project, with the school district or eligible private third-party fleet operator designated as the lead applicants (the “[Lead Applicant](#)”). The Lead Applicant will contract directly with MassCEC. Applicant Teams may include:

- Public schools
- School bus dealers
- Private third-party fleet operators
- Energy-as-a-service providers

Preliminary Timeline

ACT School Bus is intended to complement federal EPA’s Clean School Bus Program. Thus, the ACT School Bus Deployment timeline follows the EPA Clean School Bus Grant timeline⁴ and is subject to change at MassCEC’s discretion.

MassCEC anticipates the second round of the ACT School Bus Deployment Program award process to proceed along the following timeline:

Release of NOI	May 2023
Release of RFP	September 2023
Webinar hosted by MassCEC	September or October 2023*
Questions due to MassCEC via email to CleanTransportation@MassCEC.com	October 2023
Questions with Answers Posted to MassCEC Website	October 2023
Proposals Due	January 2024**
Interviews of Top Applicants	January 2024
Notification of Award	February 2024

*MassCEC will host a webinar approximately one month after the RFP is released

**Per the EPA Clean School Bus Grant Program timeline, EPA intends to announce Clean School Bus awards between November 2023 and January 2024. If MassCEC learns that EPA intends to conclude

³ A list of Massachusetts priority school districts can be found on page 3.

⁴ The EPA Clean School Bus Grant timeline can be found on the [Program homepage](#)

award announcements prior to January 2024, MassCEC may shift the application due date to remain in line with the EPA Clean School Bus award decision timeline, with ample notice to applicants.

MassCEC welcomes stakeholder feedback on this proposed timeline. In particular, MassCEC wishes to provide sufficient time for team formation and application preparation and seeks input on the proposed interval between RFP release and proposal deadline.

[Award Expectations](#)

Proposed projects must support electrification of public school bus fleets. MassCEC anticipates giving preference to applications from school districts on the EPA Clean School Bus priority list to create a more impactful award.

MassCEC anticipates making at least one (1) and up to three (3) awards under this ACT School Bus Deployment Program funding opportunity. **MassCEC welcomes stakeholder feedback on the proposed award cap and cost share requirements.**

Stakeholder feedback will be accepted until the release of the RFP. However, MassCEC wishes to note that early feedback will likely be more effective in informing program design. Please email CleanTransportation@MassCEC.com with any questions or feedback.

Appendix Deployment Program: Scope of Work

School districts awarded under the ACT School Bus Deployment Program are expected to demonstrate replicable electric school bus adoption models as well as business and service delivery deployment models. By working with the Technical Consultant Team, awarded Projects will also reveal key learnings regarding bus electrification that will be shared with other school districts across the Commonwealth.

An integral goal of the ACT School Bus Deployment Program is to showcase electric school bus deployment across major fleet operation models. Through ACT School Bus, MassCEC seeks to provide bus fleet electrification deployment assistance that will prepare school districts for future funding opportunities and eventual full-fleet electrification. Projects under ACT School Bus will result in emissions reduction (both of greenhouse gases and air pollutants) through the reduction of fossil fuel usage. ACT School Bus aims to grow Massachusetts' clean transportation sector, improve school districts' access to federal and state funding opportunities, demonstrate a feasible and equitable path to electrification, and serve as guidance for other school bus fleets in the Commonwealth.

Project Requirements

Successful projects under the ACT School Bus Deployment Program will result in partial or full electrification of a given school district's bus fleet as well as the installation of charging stations to charge the buses, and training of staff and drivers to manage charging and fleets. Awardees can anticipate working closely with MassCEC and the Technical Consultant Team throughout the duration of the program. Awardees are required to:

- Collaborate with the Technical Consultant on project design, deployment, and reporting on project outcomes;
- Provide the Technical Consultant with baseline fleet assessment data, e.g., fleet size and makeup, routes data and schedules, current fuel types and costs; and
- With help from the Technical Consultant, deploy electric school buses and associated charging infrastructure to serve the school district for a minimum of five years.

Current ACT School Bus Deployment Projects

In October 2022, EPA awarded Twenty-Nine Million Five Hundred Seventy Thousand Dollars (\$29,570,000) under the Clean School Bus Program to support the deployment of seventy-six (76) electric school buses across five (5) Massachusetts public school districts. To complement federal EPA electric school bus funding, MassCEC awarded a total of Nine Million Four Hundred Eighty Thousand Dollars (\$9,480,000) under the ACT School Bus Deployment Program to support all five (5) Massachusetts public school districts that received Clean School Bus funding and one (1) Massachusetts public school district that received Two Hundred Sixty Thousand Dollars (\$260,000) in EPA Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) funding.

The six (6) ongoing ACT School Bus Deployment Projects demonstrate the intended Program scope and use of MassCEC funding:

Fall River Public Schools was awarded Two Million Dollars (\$2,000,000) under MassCEC's ACT School Bus Deployment Program and Three Million Eight Hundred Ninety-Five Thousand Dollars (\$3,895,000) under EPA's Clean School Bus Program to deploy a total of eleven (11) electric school buses. Fall River is a Gateway City and an Environmental Justice ("EJ") community with eighty percent (80%) of the city's

population residing in an EJ Block Group. Fall River will also be working in partnership with Whaling City Transit Company to ensure successful deployment.

Lawrence Public Schools was awarded One Million Six Hundred Seventy Thousand Dollars (\$1,670,000) under MassCEC's ACT School Bus Deployment Program and Nine Million Eight Hundred Seventy-Five Thousand Dollars (\$9,875,000) under EPA's Clean School Bus Program to deploy a total thirty-five (35) electric school buses. Lawrence is a Gateway City and an EJ community with one hundred percent (100%) of the city's population residing in an EJ Block Group. The Lawrence Public Schools Deployment Project will be partially funded by and run in partnership with the school district's third-party fleet operator, Beacon Mobility.

Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative ("LPVEC") was awarded Two Million Dollars (\$2,000,000) under MassCEC's ACT School Bus Deployment Program and Nine Million Eight Hundred Seventy-Five Thousand Dollars (\$9,875,000) under EPA's Clean School Bus Program to deploy a total of twenty-five (25) electric school buses. LPVEC operates within a regional framework in Western Massachusetts, serving seven (7) communities in both urban and rural environments with multiple depot sites. LPVEC will own and operate the electric school buses and install associated infrastructure.

New Bedford Public Schools was awarded Two Million Dollars (\$2,000,000) under MassCEC's ACT School Bus Deployment Program and Five Million Five Hundred Thirty Thousand Dollars (\$5,530,000) under EPA's Clean School Bus Program to deploy a total of eighteen (18) electric school buses. New Bedford will perform depot upgrades with assistance from ACT School Bus funding and technical support. New Bedford is a Gateway City and an EJ community with eighty percent (80%) of the city's population residing in an EJ Block Group. New Bedford will work in partnership with their third-party fleet operator, Whaling City Transit Company to ensure successful deployment.

Quincy Public Schools was awarded Three Hundred Fifty-Five Thousand Dollars (\$355,000) under MassCEC's ACT School Bus Program and Two Hundred Sixty Thousand Dollars (\$260,000) under EPA's Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) Program to deploy a total of four (4) electric school buses. The Three Hundred Fifty-Five Thousand Dollars (\$355,000) award from MassCEC provides necessary gap funding to allow Quincy to leverage EPA's DERA award. Quincy is a large, urban community with ninety percent (90%) of the population residing within EJ Block Groups. Quincy will own and operate the electric school buses and install associated infrastructure.

Upper Cape Cod Regional Technical School ("UCT") was awarded One Million Four Hundred Eighty Thousand Dollars (\$1,480,000) under MassCEC's ACT School Bus Program and Three Hundred Ninety-Five Thousand Dollars (\$395,000) under EPA's Clean School Bus Program to deploy a total of three (3) electric school buses. UCT will perform depot upgrades with assistance from ACT School Bus funding and technical support. Like LPVEC, UCT operates within a regional framework. UCT's school buses service five (5) rural towns in the Upper Cape Cod region. UCT will own and operate the electric school buses and install associated infrastructure. The three (3) electric school buses will also serve as a learning tool for UCT students enrolled in vocational technical programs including but not limited to Environmental Technology, Electrical, Automotive, Carpentry, Horticulture and Engineering.

Each of the six (6) awarded school districts under the ACT School Bus Deployment Program are collaborating with MassCEC's hired Technical Consultant Team on Project design, deployment, and reporting on Project outcomes.