

2024-2025 Mississippi Diesel School Bus Replacement Program

APPLICATION PACKAGE

(Addendum Feb. 24, 2025: **deadline extended**)



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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Application Release:

January 13, 2025

Application Submittal Deadline:

March 14, 2025

INTRODUCTION

This Application Package outlines the process of applying for the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) funding, allocated under the Environmental Protection Agency's 2023-2024 Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) State Grants and/or DERA Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP) Funds, to implement diesel emissions reduction projects through the Mississippi Diesel School Bus Replacement Program. This package contains information on the background of the program, as well as information about the application process and the timeline of awarding diesel emissions reduction rebates. Project requirements and selection criteria are also included in this package. If you would like more information about diesel emissions reduction projects or have questions about this application package, please contact David Matranga at (601) 961-5536 / dmatranga@mdeq.ms.gov or Jaricus Whitlock at (601) 961-5303 / jwhitlock@mdeq.ms.gov.

BACKGROUND

Reducing diesel emissions remains one of the most important air quality challenges in Mississippi. Although more stringent emission standards have taken effect for new, heavy-duty on-road and non-road engines, older diesel engines still in use will continue to emit larger amounts of nitrogen oxides, particulate matter, and hydrocarbons for years to come. These pollutants adversely affect air quality and potentially hinder our ability to comply with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS), but most importantly, they contribute to public health problems, including respiratory and cardiac illness. This program will assist public entities in replacing older buses with newer, lower-emitting buses or zero-emissions buses. Replacing older buses will help the state maintain compliance with the NAAQS and will also result in a better environment for children, schools, and the surrounding communities.

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

The MDEQ invites school districts and other public entities to submit applications for the Mississippi Diesel School Bus Replacement Program. The goal of this funding continues to be the replacement of older diesel buses with new, lower-emitting buses, which ultimately results in a reduction of diesel emissions and associated air pollutants throughout our state.

PROGRAM TIMELINE

Date	Task
January 13, 2025	Application Release
March 14, 2025	Application Submittal Deadline
March 24, 2025	Selection of Projects by Review Committee
March 31, 2025	Announcement of Awards
April 21, 2025	Execution of Contracts
September 30, 2026	Projects Completed
Up to 45 Days from Project Completion	Final Report and Invoices Due

PROJECT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The school bus replacement must meet the following requirements to be eligible for a rebate towards the cost of replacement:

- Eligible existing buses for replacement must be owned and operated by the school district or other public entity and must meet the following criteria:
 - Be diesel-powered Class 3 through Class 8 school buses powered by a 2009 or older model year engine;
 - Be able to start, move in all directions, and have all operational parts;
 - Have at least three years of remaining life at the time of the upgrade; and
 - Have accumulated at least 7,000 miles per year during the two years prior to upgrade.
- The replacement bus purchased must be a new school bus (i.e., Engine Model Year 2024 or later) powered by diesel, a clean alternative fuel (including gasoline), or a zero-tailpipe emissions power source (e.g., battery or fuel cell).
- The purchase of a new school bus to expand a fleet rather than replace an existing bus is **NOT** covered by this program.
- MDEQ's portion of any project **cannot exceed 25% of the cost of a new school bus**, with the minimum mandatory cost-share of the school district being at least 75%.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

The following requirements must be met by all applicants:

- **Complete applications must be received by 5:00 p.m. Central Time on Friday, March 14, 2025. Applications received after this deadline will not be accepted for any reason.**
- The submission of an application does not constitute an award. MDEQ reserves the right to accept, reject, or negotiate any or all applications received. The final decision to award funds rests solely with MDEQ.
- The Application Form in [Appendix A](#) must be completed and shall include the following information:
 - 1) A budget of the project cost, which entails the proposed funding plus matching and in-kind funds. (MDEQ anticipates awards of approximately \$20,000 to \$25,000 per school bus. The final amount may vary.)
 - 2) A project description and timeline/schedule of the project, with the length of time to complete each task or phase.

- 3) A School Bus Idling Reduction Policy or commitment to create a policy. (See Sample School Bus Idling Reduction Policy [Appendix B.](#))
 - 4) Information on each bus to be replaced, including a certified eligibility statement.
- Applications must be signed by the school district superintendent, transportation director, or other designated employee responsible for preparing budgets and overseeing transportation expenditures.

SUBMITTAL INSTRUCTIONS

Applications must be submitted by one of the following two methods no later than **5 p.m. Central Time on Friday, March 14, 2025:**

- 1) Submit an electronic copy by email to DERAGrant@mdeq.ms.gov, **or**
- 2) Submit a hard copy by mail to the following address, which must be postmarked **March 14, 2025** or earlier:

Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality
Attn: David Matranga, Air Division
P.O. Box 2261
Jackson, MS 39225-2261

Incomplete applications will not be considered. All application requirements must be met. For Questions Contact: David Matranga at (601) 961-5536 / dmatranga@mdeq.ms.gov or Jaricus Whitlock at (601) 961-5303 / jwhitlock@mdeq.ms.gov.

PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS

EVALUATING CRITERIA

Only complete applications submitted by the deadline will be considered. A committee consisting of MDEQ staff will review the applications and evaluate them based on the following criteria:

- Age (i.e., engine model year) of bus(es) to be replaced;
- Frequency and amount of prior DERA rebate awards;
- School districts located in counties listed in EPA's 2023-2024 DERA State Grants Priority Area List (i.e., DeSoto County) and counties above the 80th percentile for diesel PM concentrations nationwide as identified by EPA's annual Air Toxics Screening Assessment (i.e., Hinds County);
- School districts located in counties containing one or more census block groups with the 80th percentile or greater for the Diesel PM environmental justice (EJ) indicator as noted in EPA's latest version of [EJScreen](#).

SELECTED PROJECTS

The following requirements apply to those projects selected for funding¹:

- Only work completed and verified during the period of performance specified in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) may be reimbursed (i.e., the execution date of the agreement through September 30, 2026). However, costs incurred after the notification date of the rebate award but prior to the execution date of the MOA are allowable upon written approval of MDEQ.
- **Projects, including receipt of the new bus(es) and decommissioning of the old bus(es), must be completed by September 30, 2026.**
- Reimbursement will occur at the end of the project work (i.e., after receipt of the new school bus and appropriate decommissioning of the replaced school bus). A copy of the paid invoice and title for the new school bus and verification of decommissioning the old bus are required for reimbursement processing.
- Replaced school buses must be rendered permanently disabled within 90 days of being replaced by the following methods:
 - Cutting a 3-inch by 3-inch hole in the engine block, and
 - Disabling the chassis by cutting through the frame or frame rails on each side at a point located between the front and rear axles.
- The following digital photos providing evidence of decommissioning must be provided:
 - Side profile of the school bus, prior to disabling;
 - VIN tag on the school bus;
 - Engine label (or nameplate) showing the serial number, engine family number, and engine model year;
 - Engine block prior to hole;
 - Engine block after hole; and
 - Cut frame rails.
- Verification of decommissioning the old bus and a copy of the paid invoice for the new bus must be received by MDEQ **no later than November 14, 2026**. Invoices may require up to 45 days for payment.
- All awardees will have to comply with all applicable federal conditions listed in the award document from EPA and Regulatory Authority 2 CFR 200.

¹ Nothing contained in this application package is intended to supersede the terms and conditions of any grant agreement entered into for project administration purposes.

Appendix A

MDEQ Diesel School Bus Replacement Program Application

Instructions:

General Information

School District Name: Provide the complete name of the school district applying for the rebate.

SAM.gov Unique Entity ID: The Unique Entity ID is a 12-character alphanumeric ID assigned to an entity by SAM.gov and required for grantees and sub-grantees to receive federal funds. More information on this ID and how to obtain it may be found at <https://sam.gov/content/duns-uei>.

Contact Name and Information: Enter the name, mailing address, and contact information (i.e., phone and email) for the person who is the primary contact for the school bus replacement application. This will be the person MDEQ contacts to notify of the award and subsequent sub-grantee requirements.

Alternate Contact Name: Provide an alternate contact for the project, including contact information.

Bus Barn Address: Provide the physical address for the bus barn where the new school bus(es) would be located.

Project Information

Project Description: Provide a brief description of the project, including the type(s) of bus(es) to be purchased.

Total # Buses in Fleet: Provide the total number of operating buses in the fleet (including the buses proposed to be replaced).

of Buses to be Replaced: Indicate the number of buses to be replaced for which the applicant is requesting a rebate from MDEQ.

Proposed Project Budget: Indicate the amount of the rebate requested, which cannot exceed 25% of the cost of the new bus(es). Indicate the remaining cost-share and source(s) of funding for the cost-share required to purchase the new bus(es).

Proposed Budget Timeline: Provide actual and estimated dates, as appropriate, indicating completion of the listed tasks. Note that a purchase order may not be submitted to the vendor prior to notification of the rebate award, expected **March 31, 2025**. Also, all invoices must be submitted no later than November 14, 2026.

Idle Reduction Policy

If the school district already has a written Idle Reduction Policy being implemented, provide a copy of the current version of the policy, which should have the adoption date or most recent revision date noted. If the school district does not have an Idle Reduction Policy, they must commit to implement such policy no later than the beginning of the 2026-27 school year, or by September 30, 2026, whichever is earlier. A sample policy for use is available in [Appendix B](#).

Bus and Engine Information

Information on the bus proposed to be replaced is required. Although, specific information pertaining to the engine is not required, please note that the engine must also be a model year 2009 or earlier engine (not just the bus) to qualify, which will be verified at the time of decommissioning. If more than four buses will be replaced, additional forms (i.e., page 2) must be submitted.

Eligibility Certification

By signing the Application Form, the applicant is certifying that the bus(es) to be replaced meet the eligibility criteria listed. Following award of a subgrant, should information become available to MDEQ that the eligibility criteria are not met, MDEQ may terminate the subgrant in accordance with conditions outlined in the subgrant agreement.

Signature

The application must be signed by the school superintendent, transportation director, or other or other designated employee responsible for preparing budgets and overseeing transportation expenditures.

MDEQ Diesel School Bus Replacement Program 2024-2025 Application

School District/Entity Name: _____

SAM.gov Unique Entity ID: _____

Contact Name: _____ Title: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ County: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Alternate Contact Name: _____ Title: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Bus Barn Address (physical address): _____

City: _____ County: _____ Zip: _____

Project Information

Project Description:

Total # Buses in Fleet: _____ # Buses to be Replaced: _____

Cost of Each New Bus: _____

Proposed Project Budget

Requested Rebate Amount: _____ Funding Source: DERA Award

Cost-Share Amount: _____ Funding Source(s): _____

Total Cost: _____

Proposed Project Timeline:

DATE

*Assume notice of award is Obtain Quotes _____

made by **March 31, 2025.** Board Approval _____

Purchase Order to Vendor _____

Receive New Bus(es) _____

Decommission Old Bus(es) _____

Submit Invoice(s) for Rebate _____

Idle Reduction Policy

Do you implement an idle reduction policy? Yes No

If **yes**, attach a copy of the policy (date of adoption/last revision should be noted).

If **no**, will you commit to developing and implementing a policy? Yes No

MDEQ Diesel School Bus Replacement Program 2024-2025 Application (cont.)

Bus and Engine Information (Information must be completed for both the bus and engine)

Bus #1 Information:

Model Year: _____

Make: _____

Model: _____

VIN#: _____

Odometer reading: _____

Vehicle License #: _____

Bus #2 Information:

Model Year: _____

Make: _____

Model: _____

VIN#: _____

Odometer reading: _____

Vehicle License #: _____

Bus #3 Information:

Model Year: _____

Make: _____

Model: _____

VIN#: _____

Odometer reading: _____

Vehicle License #: _____

Bus #4 Information:

Model Year: _____

Make: _____

Model: _____

VIN#: _____

Odometer reading: _____

Vehicle License #: _____

****If more than four buses will be replaced, submit additional forms as necessary to address all buses.***

Eligibility Certification

I certify that the following statements are true regarding the bus replacement(s) identified above:

1. The existing bus(es) is (are) fully operational.
2. The applicant has owned and operated the bus(es) during the two years prior to the replacement.
3. The existing bus(es) has (have) at least three years of remaining life at the time of the replacement.
4. The existing bus(es) has (have) accumulated at least 7,000 miles/year during the two years prior to the upgrade.

Signature

Date

Printed Name

Title

APPENDIX B:

Sample School Bus Idling Reduction Policy

School District Name: _____

Policy Number: _____

Effective Date: _____

Applicability: _____

This policy applies to the operation of every district-owned and/or contracted school bus.

Rationale:

Diesel exhaust from idling school buses can accumulate in and around the bus and pose a health risk to children, drivers and the community at large. Exposure to diesel exhaust can cause lung damage and respiratory problems. Diesel exhaust also exacerbates asthma and existing allergies, and long-term exposure is thought to increase the risk of lung cancer. Idling buses also waste fuel and financial resources.

Purpose:

Eliminate all unnecessary idling by _____ school buses such that idling time is minimized in all aspects of school bus operation.

Guidance:

- 1) When school bus drivers arrive at loading or unloading areas to drop off or pick up passengers, they should turn off their buses as soon as possible to eliminate idling time and reduce harmful emissions. The school bus should not be restarted until it is ready to depart and there is a clear path to exit the pick-up area. Exceptions include conditions that would compromise passenger safety, such as extreme weather or idling in traffic.
- 2) At school bus depots, limit the idling time during early morning warm-up to what is recommended by the manufacturer (generally 3-5 minutes) in all but the coldest weather.
- 3) Buses should not idle while waiting for students during field trips, extracurricular activities or other events where students are transported off school grounds.
- 4) In colder weather, schools are directed to provide a space inside the school where bus drivers who arrive early can wait.
- 5) In colder weather, if the warmth of the bus is an issue, idling is to be at a very minimum and occur outside the school zone. The "warmed" bus is to enter the school zone as close to pick-up time as possible to maintain warmth and then shut down.
- 6) All service delivery vehicles shall turn off the engines while making deliveries to school buildings.
- 7) Transportation operations staff are directed to revise bus schedules so that school bus caravanning can be avoided and the cleanest buses assigned to the longest routes.
- 8) All drivers shall receive a copy of this policy at the beginning of every school year.