



How Does The Maine School Bus Purchase Program Work?

April 2025

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the Maine school bus purchase program
 - What does the program data look like?
 - How are districts put on a list to be considered for a bus purchase?
 - How are bus approval decisions made?

This program supports the Maine DOE Strategic Plan core priority 5: coordinated and effective state support.

Maine School Bus Purchase Program




Program Purpose

- The purpose of the Maine School Bus Purchase Program is to achieve the most equitable distribution of limited dollars to maintain a modern safe fleet of school buses and respond to unique and emergency bus needs

Note: Districts are responsible for school bus maintenance.

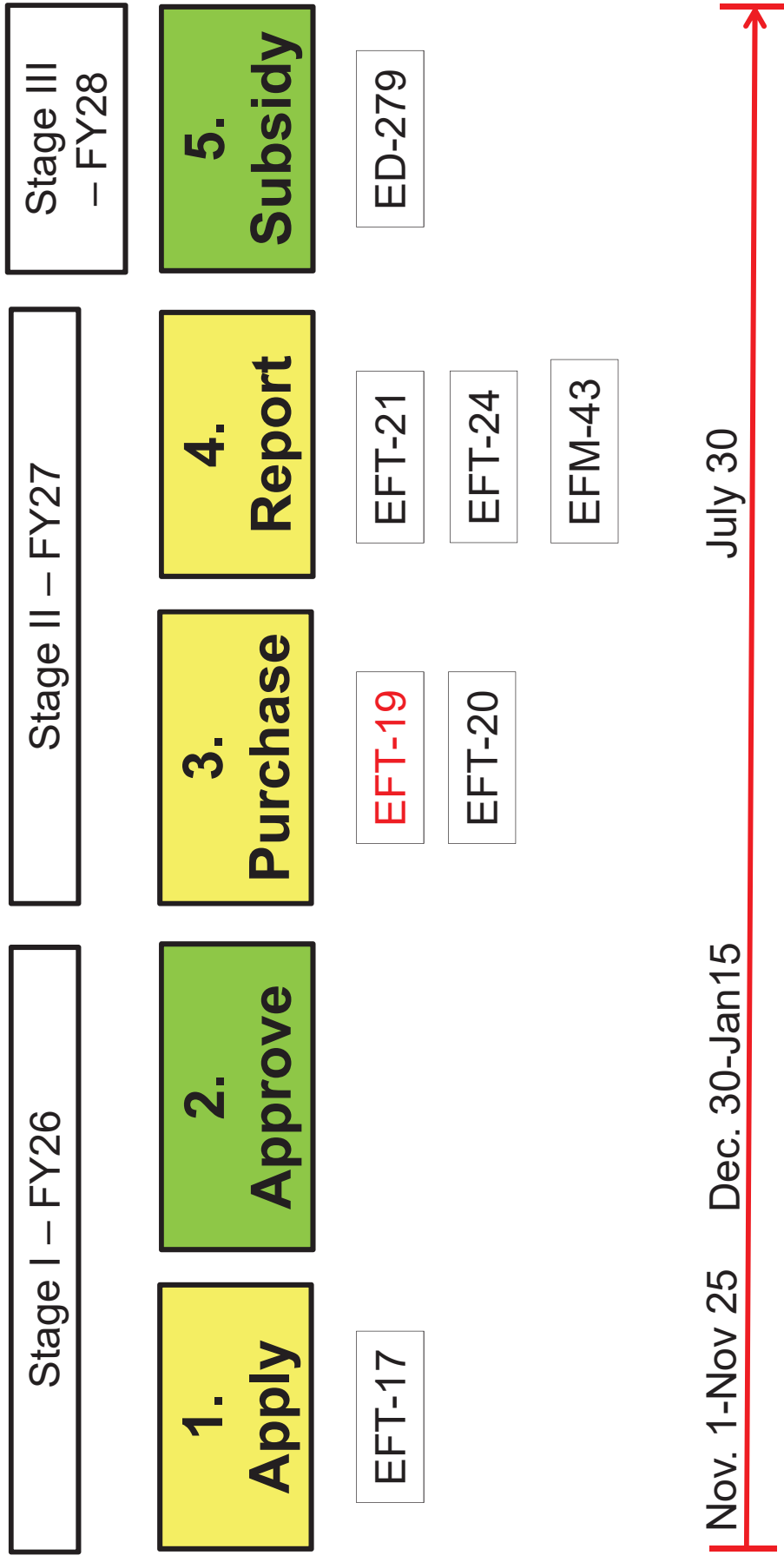
Program Cycle

– 3 Stages and 5 Steps Per Cycle

- Stage I
 - 1. Application Nov. 1 – Nov. 25 (EF-T-17)
 - 2. Approval (Dec. 30 to Jan. 15)
 - Stage II
 - 3. **Purchase** (EF-T-20) or cancel a bus (EFT-20A)
 - 4. Transportation reports
 - Stage III
 - 5. Subsidy begins (ED 279)
- 

Program Cycle (cont.)

- 3 Stages and 5 Steps Over 3 Years



Program Cycle (cont.)

- Different Stages Occur Each FY



	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29
Cycle FY26	Stage II	Stage III					
Cycle FY27	Stage I	Stage II	Stage III				
Cycle FY28		Stage I	Stage II	Stage III			
			Stage I	Stage II	Stage III		
			Stage I	Stage II	Stage III		
						Stage I	Stage II
						Stage II	Stage III
						Stage I	Stage II

Types of Program Applications

– Two (2) Types

- 1. “**Bus replacement**” application
 - Replace an existing bus lost due to **emergency**
 - Replace an existing bus near the **end** of useful life
 - Add a new bus to the district fleet and remove the existing bus from service (sale or parts)
- 2. “**Addition to fleet**” application
 - Respond to unique district situations
 - Add a new bus to the district fleet **without** taking an existing bus out of service

Minimum Program Qualifications

- “Bus Replacement” (end of life) **(A)**

- Vans
 - Shall have **seven (7) years** useful life **and** accumulated 100,000 miles
- Type C school buses
 - Shall have **ten (10) years** useful life **and** accumulated 125,000 miles
- Type D school buses
 - Shall have **fifteen (15) years** useful life **and** accumulated 300,000 miles

NOTE: qualification is shown in NEO vehicle inventory under “replacement eligibility”

Minimum Program Qualifications

– “Bus Replacement” (emergency) (A)

- A “bus replacement” emergency situation occurs when a bus is damaged beyond economic repair due to:
 - Accidents
 - Fire
 - Vandalism or
 - Other [total] losses

NOTE: to qualify districts must meet one (1) emergency qualification

Minimum Program Qualifications

- “Addition To Fleet” (unique) **(B)**

- An “addition to fleet” unique situation occurs when a district needs:
 - Buses equipped to transport the **handicapped**
 - Buses to accommodate increased **enrollment**
 - Buses for non-critical **special purposes**
 - Buses to replace **contracted services** (emergency)
 - Buses to replace **contracted services** (planned)

NOTE: to qualify districts must meet one (1) “addition to fleet” qualification

How Are Buses Put On A List To Be Considered For A Bus Purchase?

- A district must submit an **application** for a new bus
 - School Bus Purchase Request (form EF-T-17)
 - “Bus replacement”
 - “Addition to fleet”
 - The forms are located in NEO Transportation
- Applications are received by the state annually
 - Open date: November 1
 - Close date: November 25
 - Emergency requests are open all year

How Are Buses Put On A List To Be Considered For A Bus Purchase? (cont.)

SAU Existing Vehicle Inventory Summary

B →

SAU Name:

Status:

[Request Addition to Fleet](#)

Show entries

VIN	LVIN	Make	Vehicle Type	Bus Type	Capacity	Model Year	Mileage	Status	Replacement Eligibility	Navigation
1HVBBAA0XH207383	23	Blue Bird	School Bus	C	42	1997	189200	In Service	Yes	Select Link
1HVBBAA05VH482406	30	International	School Bus	C	42	1997	211345	In Service	Yes	Select Link
1HVBBAA0P1VH469587	21	Blue Bird	School Bus	C	75	1997	176775	In Service	Yes	Select Link
1BAKGCKA16F233929	33	Blue Bird	School Bus	C	77	2006	171396	In Service	Yes	Select Link
1D4GP45R56B62517	26	Other	Minivan		7	2006	186879	In Service	Yes	Select Link
1BAANCPA0YF089707	09	Blue Bird	School Bus	D	84	1999	211592	In Service	No	Select Link
1BAANCPA6YF093518	17	Blue Bird	School Bus	D	84	2000	211592	In Service	No	Select Link
1BAANCPA92F204005	11	Blue Bird	School Bus	D	84	2002	203092	In Service	No	Select Link

Search:

A →

- Select Link
- Request Replacement
- Emergency Replacement
- Request Refurbishment
- Prior Requests
- Edit
- Dispose
- Select Link

Sample: District Application (EF-T-17)

Details for School Bus Request Replacement

SAU: RSU 63/MSAD 63

Replaced Bus (Old)

VIN: 1HVBBAAP1VH469587
Model Year: 1997
Bus Type: C
Capacity: 75
Manufacturer: Blue Bird
Make: Blue Bird
LVN: 21

Replaced Bus (Old)

Age (in years): 20
Mileage (as reported 6/30): 176775

Requested Bus (New)

1. School Bus Data:

1.1 Bus Capacity: 78
1.2 Lift Equipment: No
1.3 Type: C

2. Request Details:

2.1 Purchase Fiscal Year: 2017
2.2 Replacement Reason: Meets minimum requirements
2.3 Replacement Justification: High Mileage, High Age
2.4 Replacement Advanced Justification: N/A

3. Financial:

3.1 Payment Type: Lease Purchase
3.2 Payment Years: 3
3.3 SAU Replacement Cost Estimate: \$90,000.00
3.4 State Bid Value (Previous Fiscal Year): \$80,000.00

Sample: State Approval Notice

Dashboard Home Admin Vehicle Inventory Bus Purchase Annual Data Reports Help

SAU Requests Summary

Select SAU:
 Purchase Fiscal Year:
 Status:

Show 25 entries Search:

SAU	Fiscal Year	Request Type	Vehicle Identification Number (VIN)	Bus Type	Capacity	Model Year	Mileage (as of 6/30)	Bus Type	Capacity	SAU Cost Estimate	Request Status
RSU 24	2017	Replacement	4UZAAXCS23CK32413	C	78	2003	163410	C	78	\$88,000.00	Applied - Round 1
RSU 24	2017	Replacement	1HVBBAPB91H395635	C	72	2001	141004	C	78	\$88,000.00	Applied - Round 1
RSU 24	2017	Addition	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	C	78	\$88,000.00	Approved
Totals	3									\$264,000.00	\$0.00

Showing 1 to 3 of 3 entries

Previous Next

A

B

How Are Bus Approval Decisions Made?

– First (1st) Priority

- “Bus Replacement”
 - Emergency situation
 - An emergency situation occurs when a bus is damaged beyond economic repair due to:
 - accidents
 - fire
 - vandalism or
 - other [total] losses

How Are Bus Approval Decisions Made?

– Second (2nd) Priority

- “Addition to Fleet”
 - Unique situation
 - An “addition to fleet” situation occurs when a district needs buses to:
 - Transport handicapped students
 - Transport for a special purpose
 - Transport increased enrollment students
 - Replace contracted services (emergency)
 - Replace contracted services (planned)

How Are Bus Approval Decisions Made?

– Third (3rd) Priority

- “Bus Replacement”
 - Age of the retiring bus
 - “Age as the primary consideration, tempered by both high and low mileage”

Program Application Rounds

- Round 1
 - Occurs annually
 - Applications opens Nov. 1 and closes Nov. 25
 - Approvals announced Dec. 30 to Jan. 15
- Round 2
 - Depends on cancellations, may **or** may **not** occur
 - Opens after Round 1 approval announcement
 - All applications that did not make Round 1 approval are automatically moved to Round 2
 - No specific approval date (March to Oct.)

Program Subsidy Reminder

- Subsidy Amount
 - ED 279 report, section 3 A, other allocations
 - Contact Maine DOE school finance
- Delayed district reports effect subsidy (ED 279)
 - Bus **cancellation** report (EF-T-19)
 - Delayed cancellation reports prevent redistribution of bus money to other districts
 - Bus **purchase** report (EF-T-20)
 - Delayed reports lead to withheld subsidy
- Timely transportation reports are important

Program Subsidy Reminder (cont.)

- Statutory Authority
 - “ Authority to withhold state subsidy until reports are received. Notwithstanding any other provisions of law, if a school administrative unit has failed to file the reports by this Title in the format and within the time periods specified, the Commissioner may withhold state subsidy payments until these reports are received.”

The Future of School Transportation



Thank you for your interest in school transportation
and your commitment to safety and security.

Contact Information

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