



Maine School Bus Purchase Program

Data, Process, and FAQs

June 21, 2021

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 emergency special bus needs



School Bus Safety

- The school bus is different by design and protected by law. It is the safest vehicle on the road. After purchase, to stay safe, buses must be maintained in safe operating condition through a systematic preventative maintenance and replacement plan.



SAUs are responsible for school bus maintenance

Learning Objectives

1. Highlight school bus purchase steps
2. Explain the Maine School Bus Purchase Program data and process
 - What is the history of program data?
 - How can districts be considered for a bus purchase?
 - How are bus approval decisions made?
3. Review frequently asked questions

This program supports a Maine DOE Strategic Priority to “ensure student and school safety...”

School Bus Purchase Steps

1 Fund

SAU

State

Federal

2 Bid

SAU

State

AL #24

3 Purchase

Order

Receive

Report

Nov. 1-Nov. 25

MDOE SBPP

School Bus Purchase Steps (cont.)

- Fund
 - Plan about 1 year to complete the process
 - Determine funding source (SAU, State, Federal)
- Bid
 - Determine additional bus options the SAU needs
 - Use State School Bus Bid or bid locally (see AL#24)
- Purchase
 - Place an order with 1 of the 4 school bus vendors
 - Receive the bus and report delivery in NEO (EFT-20)
 - Retain bus documents, e.g., invoice, title, loan, etc.

Administrative Letter #24 Excerpt

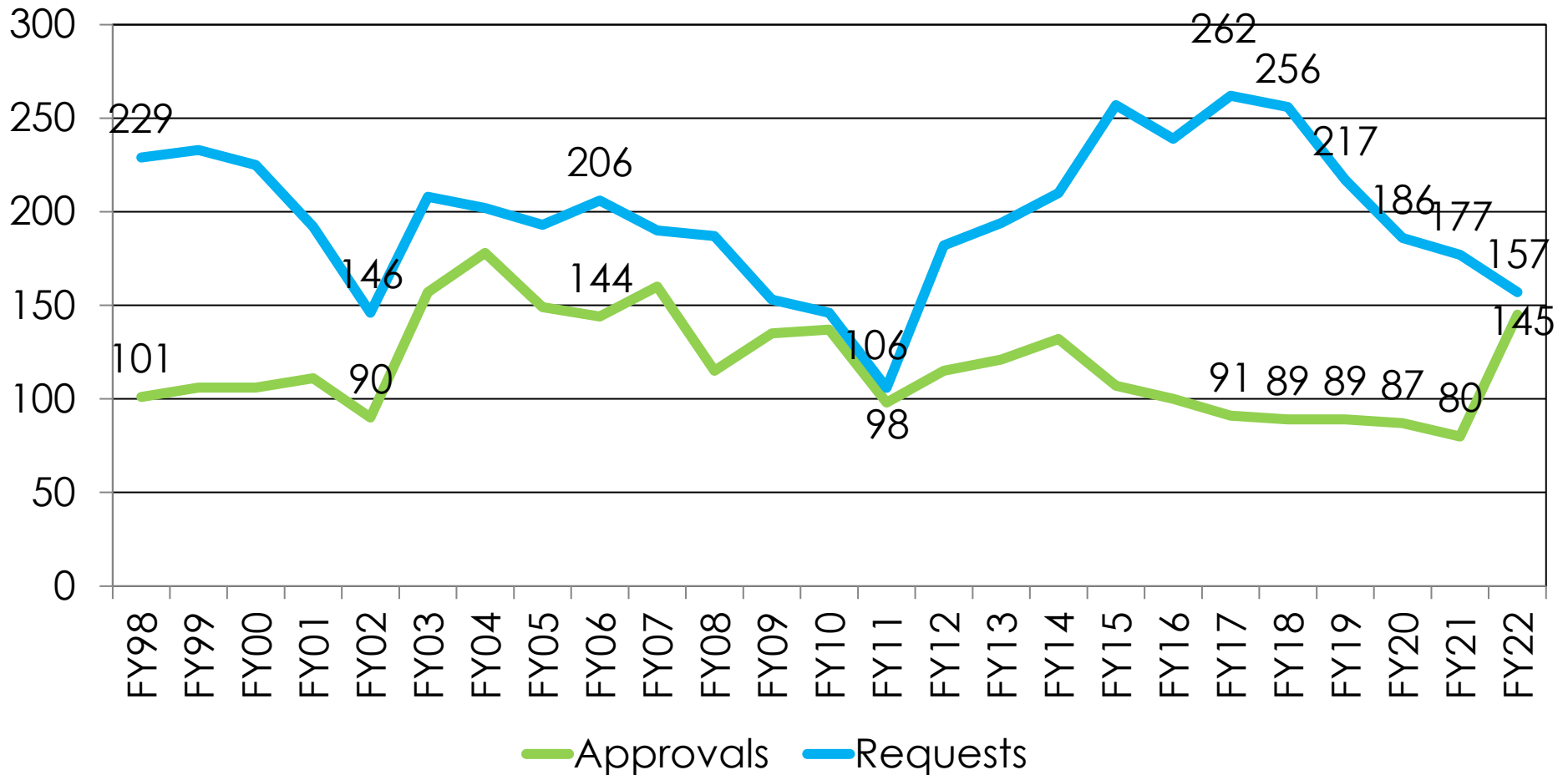
. . . The information in the letter has been reviewed and confirmed by our legal team in the Office of the Attorney General.

For a school bus purchase to be eligible for State subsidy, per 20-A M.R.S. § 5401(15) and § 5402, the school administrative unit (SAU) **must**:

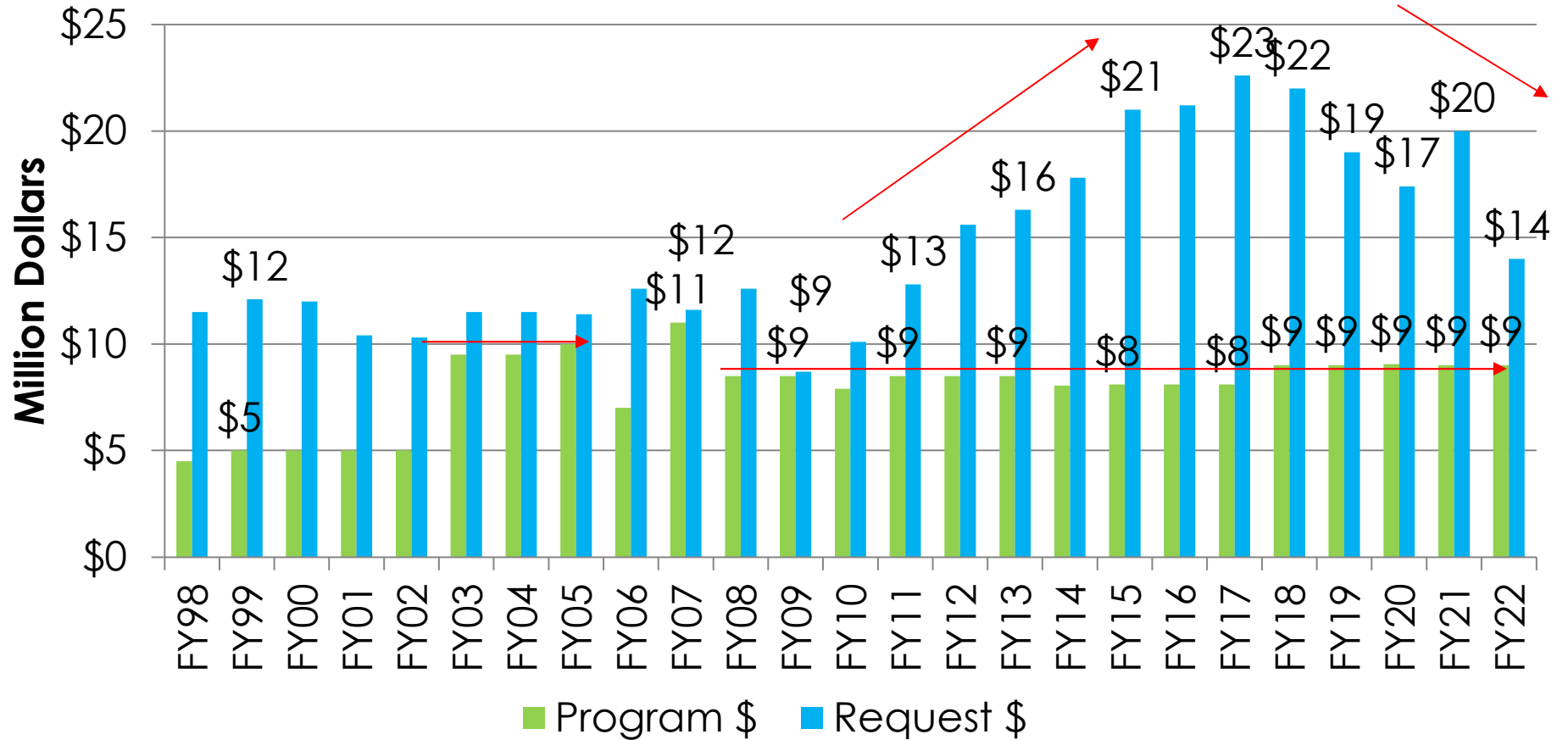
- (1) purchase the bus from the bidder selected through the State of Maine Division of Procurement school bus bid Request for Quotations (RFQ) for bus Type and capacity **or**
- (2) upon request, provide to the Department documentation that demonstrates the purchase was the result of a competitive bidding process conducted by the SAU following, 20-A M.R.S § 5402 bid procedures.

For school buses purchased by a SAU when the SAU is **not** seeking subsidy, the SAU must still engage in competitive bidding, as outlined above. . . .

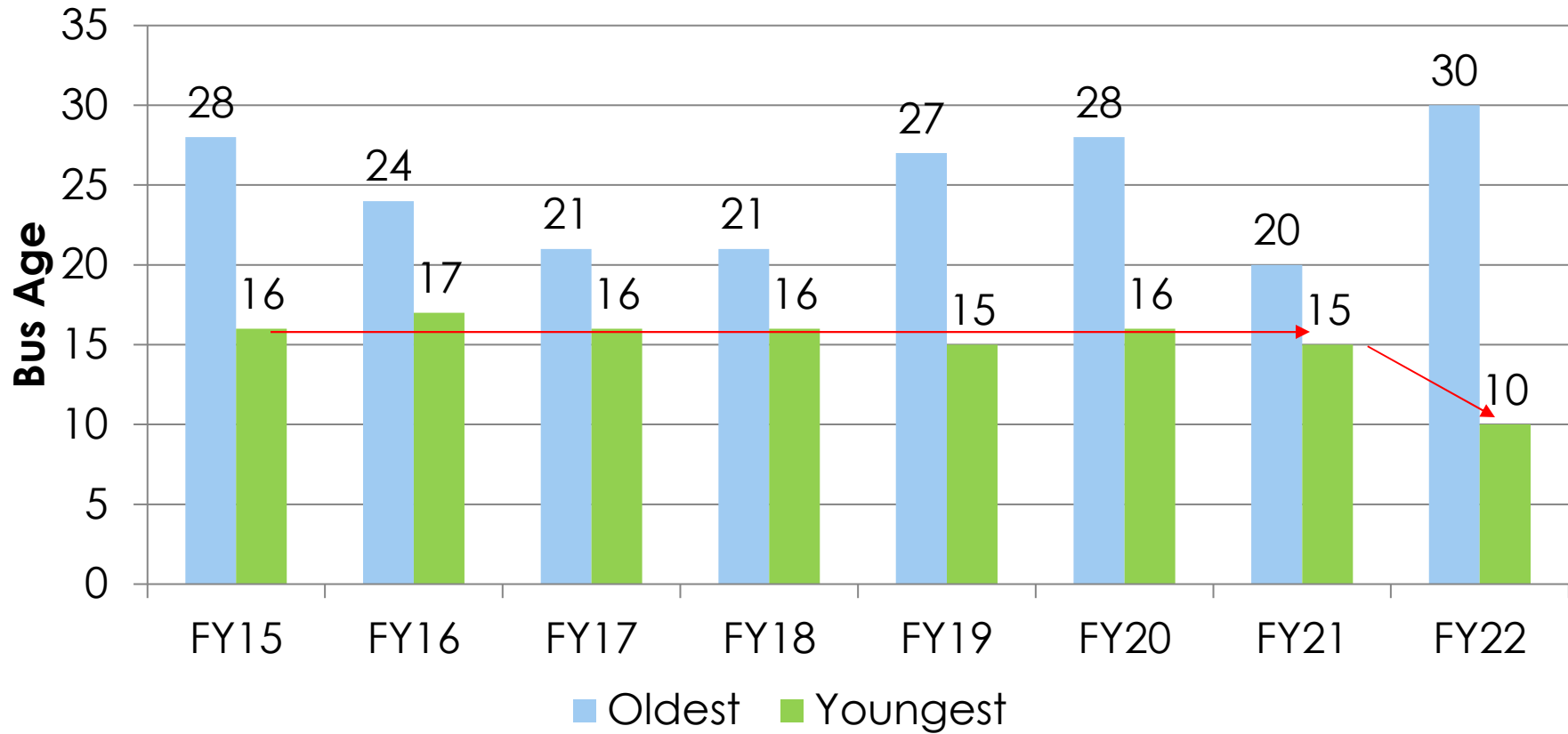
Data: SAU Applications vs State Approvals



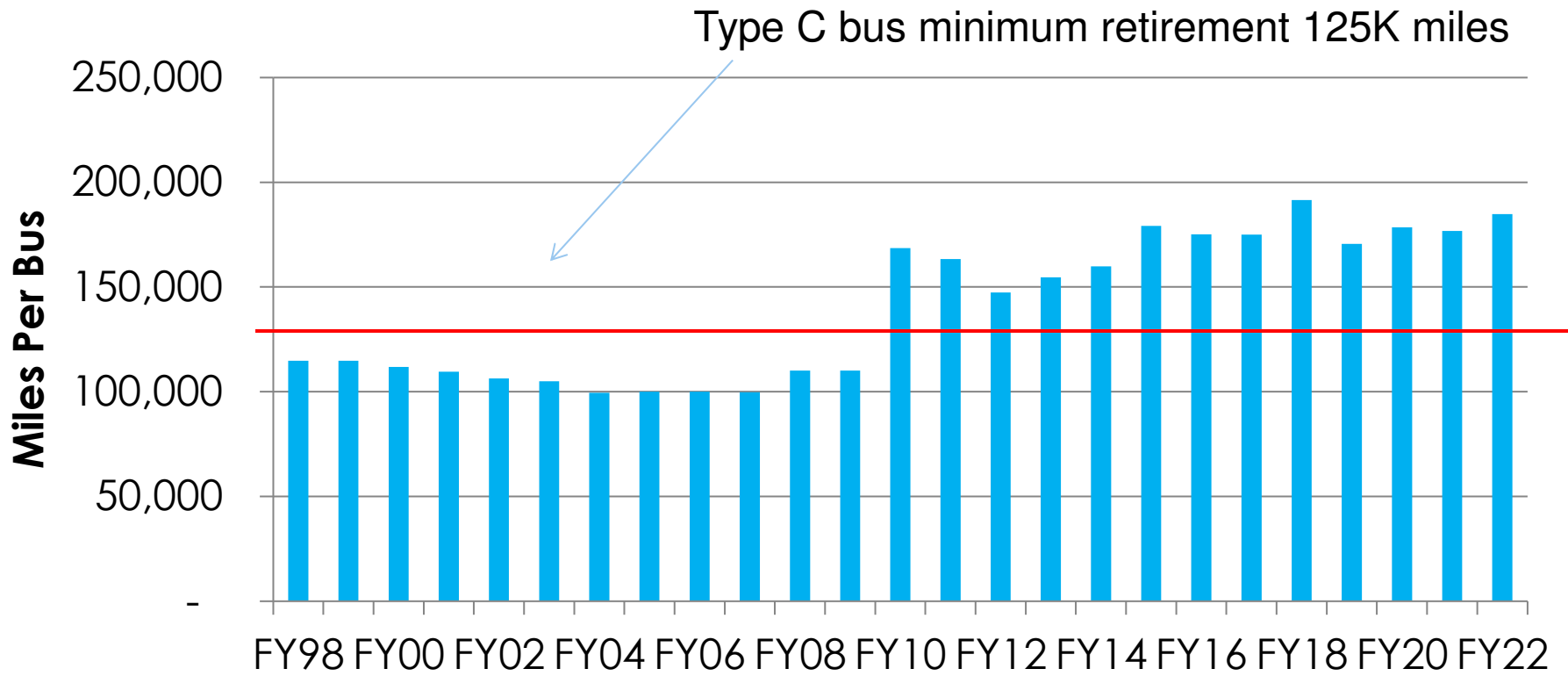
Data: SAU Dollars Requested vs State Budget



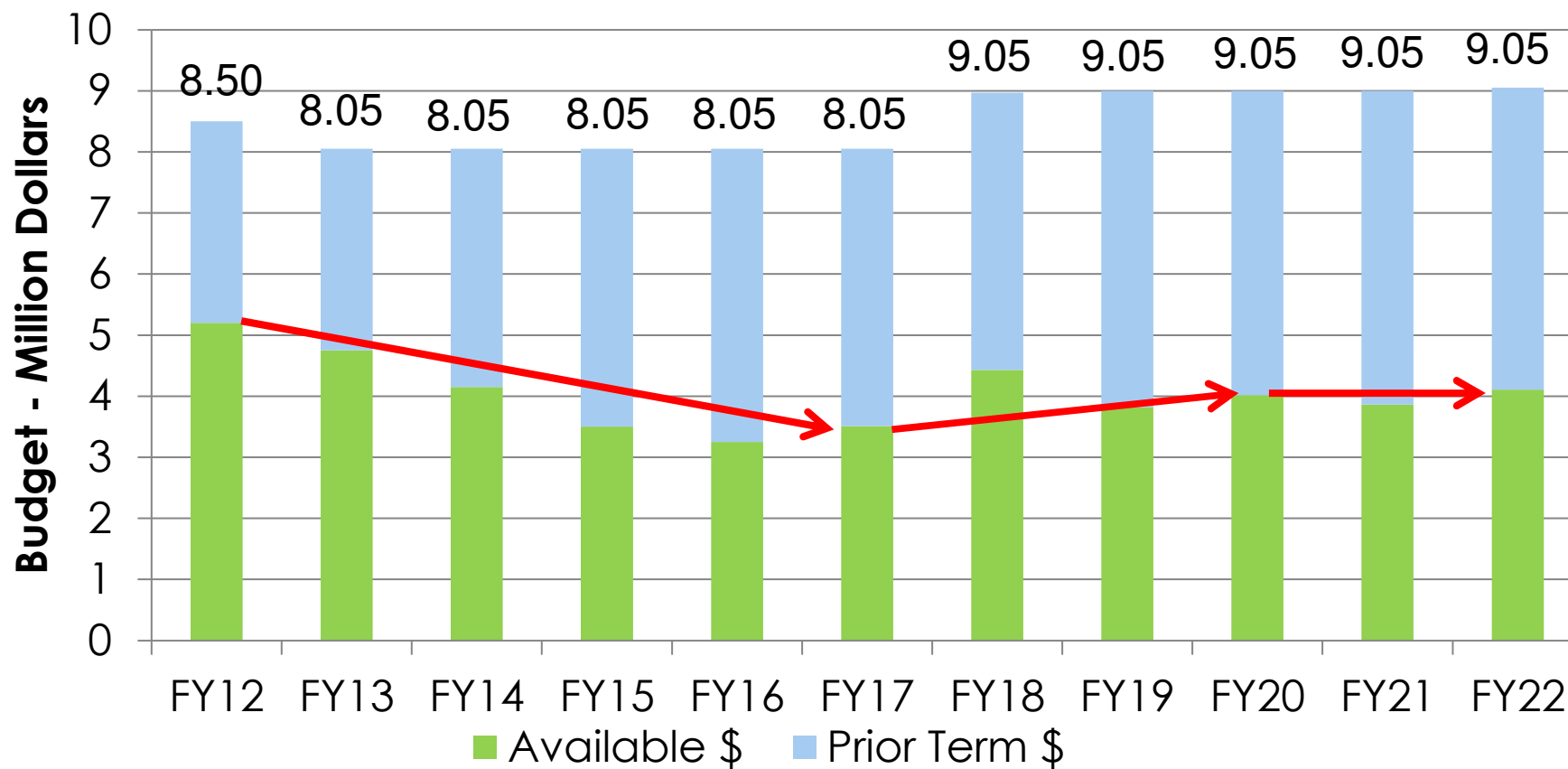
Data: Age Range of Approved School Buses



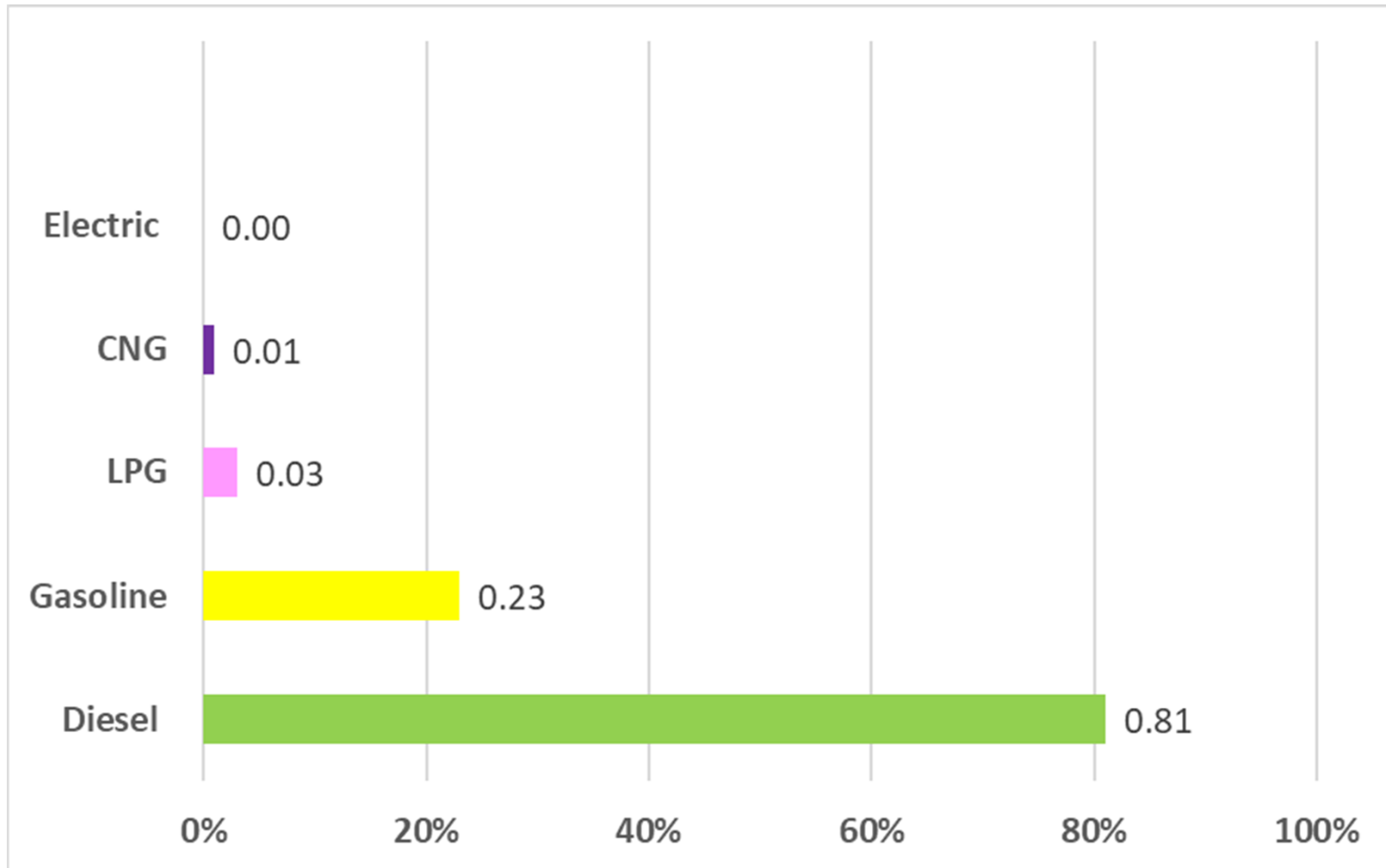
Data: Average Miles When School Bus Is Retired



Data: Budget



Data: School Bus Fleet Fuel Types

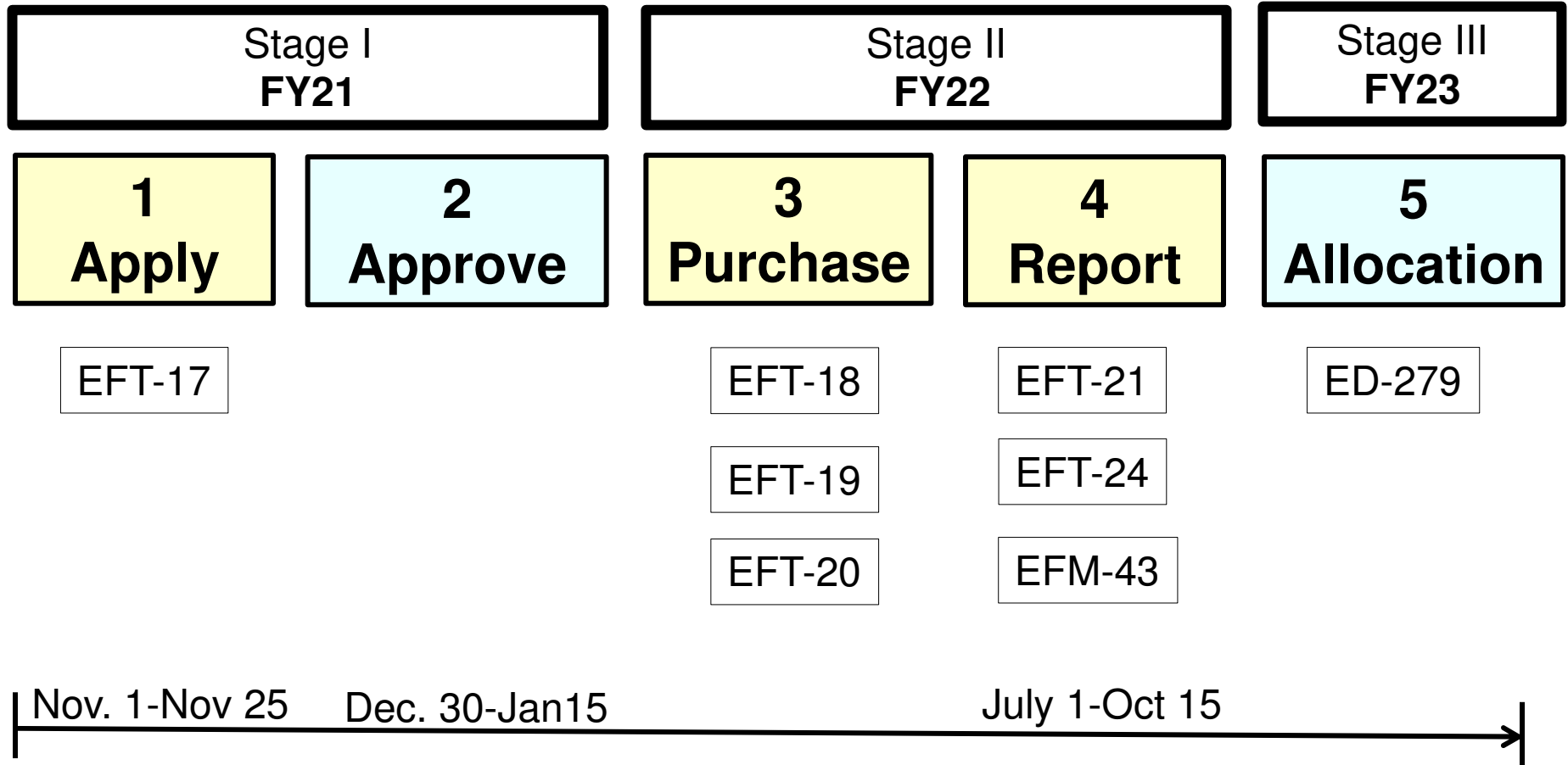


Program Cycle

– 3 Stages and 5 Steps Per Cycle

- Stage I
 - 1. Apply (EFT-17) (Nov. 1 – Nov. 25) ←
 - 2. Approve (Dec. 30 to Jan. 15)
- Stage II
 - 3. **Purchase** (EFT-18) (EFT-19) (EFT-20)
 - 4. Report year-end reports
- Stage III
 - 5. Subsidy begins (ED 279)
 - Fiscal year after taking possession of the new bus and making the first year payment

Program Cycle (cont.) – 3 Stages Over 3 Years



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” (A)

- Passenger Vans
 - Shall have **seven (7) years** useful life **and** accumulated 100,000 miles (replace van with bus)
- Type C school buses
 - Shall have **ten (10) years** useful life **and** accumulated 125,000 miles
- Type D school buses
 - Shall have **fourteen (14) years** useful life **and** accumulated 245,000 miles (effective 09/16/17)

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:
 1. Accidents
 2. Fire
 3. Vandalism or
 4. Other [total] losses

NOTE: to qualify districts must meet 1 of the 4 emergency qualifications

Minimum Program Qualifications – “Addition To Fleet” (unique) (B)

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

NOTE: to qualify districts must meet 1 of the 5 addition to fleet qualifications

Transportation Reports

- Supporting Student and School Safety

- Bus purchase
 - EFT-17 Request a new school bus
 - EFT-18 Superintendent authorizes bus purchase
 - EFT-19 Cancel a bus approval
 - EFT-20 Report a new school bus purchase
- Annual year-end transportation data reports
 - EFT-21 Safety and training
 - EFT-24 Vehicle mileage and operations
 - EFM-43 OOD, SPED, homeless, and CTE

How Can Districts Be Considered For A Bus Purchase?

- A district must submit an **application** for a new bus
 - School Bus Purchase Request (form EFT-17)
 - “Bus replacement” or
 - “Addition to fleet”
 - Forms and instructions are located on the Maine DOE NEO data system dashboard
- Applications are received by the state annually (R1)
 - 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.)

Submitting a bus request

- A – Replacement
- B – Addition to Fleet
- C – Emergency

Dashboard Home **Vehicle Inventory and Requests** Annual Data Reports Help

Vehicle Inventory and New Bus Request

SAU Name: Status:

Bus Request for Addition To Fleet
*This is for state subsidy approval only

Show entries

VIN	LVN	Make	Vehicle Type	Bus Type	Capacity	Model Year	Mileage	Status	Replacement Eligibility	Navigation
1BAKGCKA16F233929	33	Blue Bird	School Bus	C	77	2006	186365	In Service	Yes	Select Link
1D4GP45R56B562517	26	Other	Minivan		7	2006	207214	In Service	Yes	Select Link
1BAANCPA0YF089707	09	Blue Bird	School Bus	D	84	1999	218195	In Service	No	EFT-17 Request Replacement EFT-16 Emergency Replacement Request Refurbishment Edit Vehicle Dispose Take out of Service
1BAANCPA6YF093518	17	Blue Bird	School Bus	D	84	2000	216803	In Service	No	Select Link
1BAANCPA92F204005	11	Blue Bird	School Bus	D	84	2002	219952	In Service	No	Select Link
1BABNC0A14F216540	34	Blue Bird	School Bus	D	84	2004	145212	In Service	No	Select Link
1BABNC0A34F216541	35	Blue Bird	School Bus	D	84	2004	226668	In Service	No	Select Link
1BABNCPA0CF288477	29	Blue Bird	School Bus	D	84	2012	93552	In Service	No	Select Link

Sample: District Bus Application (EFT-17)

Retiring Bus

Replaced Bus (Old):

VIN:	1HVBBPPP8NH467295
Model Year:	1992
Bus Type:	C
Capacity:	77
Manufacturer:	
Make:	Thomas
LVN:	25

Note: Approvals are based on district requests. If actual approval terms are changed (without prior Department approval) when the district purchases a bus, the approval will be canceled or subsidy will be reduced.

Replaced Bus (Old) - Program Regulation Details:

Age (in years):	28
Mileage (as reported 6/30/2018):	258,391
Mileage at Date of Possession:	1,150

***If the Annual Data (EFT-24) report has not been certified, the mileage at date of possession will be used.

New Bus

Replaced Bus (New):

1. School Bus Data:	
1.1 Bus Capacity:	77
1.2 Lift Equipment:	No
1.3 Type:	C
2. Request Details:	
2.1 Purchase Fiscal Year:	2020
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:	\$94,000.00
3.4 State Bid Value (Previous Fiscal Year):	\$95,198.40

Sample: NEO Notice For Status of Bus Request

Approval Step 1 of 3 (state)

Dashboard Home **Vehicle Inventory and Requests** Annual Data Reports Help

Bus Requests Summary

Select SAU:
 Purchase Fiscal Year:
 Status:

[Export to Excel](#)
 * 0 mileage = EFT-24 is incomplete for that FY

Show entries Search:

SAU	Fiscal Year	Request Type	Replacement Bus (old)						Requested Bus (New)						
			Vehicle Identification Number (VIN)	Bus Type	Capacity	Model Year	Prior FY Mileage(as of 06/30) *	Current reporting Mileage(as of 06/30) *	Bus Type	Capacity	Requested Payment Years	SAU Cost Estimate	Request Status	DOE Approval Date	Superintendent Authorized Date
RSU 19	2020	Replacement	1HVBBAAN21H360693	C	77	2001	145148	153335	C	77	5	\$95,000.00	State Approved	12/28/2018 4:22:20 PM	N/A
RSU 19	2020	Replacement	1HVBBABN3WH570175	C	77	1998	182176	186139	C	77	5	\$95,000.00	State Approved	12/28/2018 4:22:19 PM	N/A
RSU 19	2020	Replacement	4UZAAXCT17CW10431	C	77	2006	161091	164815	C	77	5	\$95,000.00	Applied - Round 1	N/A	N/A

NOTE: Superintendents receive approval notice by email

Sample: State Approval Superintendent Notice



doe-neo-account-do-not-reply@maine.gov

pdoyen@rsu56.org; Hindkley, Pat ▾

12/28/2018

Transportation Vehicle request Approval Email : RSU 56

Approval Step 2 of 3 (state)

Transportation Vehicle Approval - SAU: RSU 56

RSU 56 **Replacement request** to retire VIN # 1BABKCOA92F204920 for purchase **FY 2020** was Approved on 12/28/2018 .

To authorize this purchase the Superintendent must go to NEO Transportation Bus Request Summary Tab, Click the details link and then click the Superintendent Authorized For Purchase button.

Note: In order to receive state funding, Superintendents authorization for purchase is required and districts must purchase the new bus and make at least one payment during the Fiscal Year of the approval.

Do not reply to this message as it comes from an automated service and will not be answered.

Thank you

Maine Department of Education
School Transportation

Sample: Superintendent Purchase Authorization

Approval Step 3 of 3 (SAU)

Bus Requests Summary

Select SAU:

Purchase Fiscal Year:

Status:

Click on "Details"
 _ scroll to bottom of page
 _ click on "Superintendent Authorized For Purchase"
 _ time date stamp will populate

Export to Excel

* 0 mileage = EFT-24 is incomplete for that FY

Show 25 entries

Search:

SAU	Fiscal Year	Request Type	Replacement Bus (old)						Requested Bus (New)								Details	
			Vehicle Identification Number (VIN)	Bus Type	Capacity	Model Year	Prior FY Mileage(as of 06/30) *	Current reporting Mileage(as of 06/30) *	Bus Type	Capacity	Requested Payment Years	SAU Cost Estimate	Request Status	DOE Approval Date	Superintendent Authorized Date	Estimated State Bid		Final State Bid
RSU 52/MSAD 52	2018	Replacement	4UZAAXCS43CK32414	C	77	2003	199131	199131	C	77	3	\$85,000.00	State Approved	11/17/2017 5:41:07 PM	N/A	\$79,332.00	\$79,361.00	Details
RSU 52/MSAD 52	2018	Replacement	1BAKGCKA14F215833	C	60	2004	221129	230342	C	77	3	\$85,000.00	State Approved	1/19/2018 1:07:11 PM	N/A	\$79,332.00	\$79,361.00	Details
RSU 52/MSAD 52	2018	Replacement	4UZAAXBV82CJ83924	C	72	2002	243555	243555	C	77	3	\$85,000.00	Purchase Complete	1/13/2017 12:29:45 PM	9/5/2017 3:09:13 PM	\$79,332.00	\$79,361.00	Details

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

Note: Districts are responsible for school bus maintenance

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”

May Districts Buy A Bus Different From The Bus That Was Requested and Approved?

- Bus approvals are based on the **original bus request**
- **Can SAUs change fiscal year of purchase?**
 - **No changes** are permitted
 - Bus approvals are valid one (1) year
 - Approvals are not carried forward
 - If a district cannot purchase a bus during the fiscal year of a Department bus approval:
 - The district must cancel the approval
 - Failure to cancel a bus prevents redistribution of funds to other districts in need of buses

May Districts Buy A Bus Different From The Bus That Was Requested and Approved? (cont.)

- Bus approvals are based on the **original bus request**
- **Can SAUs change bus type: A, C, or D?**
 - Requires Department approval before purchase
 - **Bus allocation will be reduced**
 - Change down: D to C or A; C to A
 - Total state bus approval allocation is reduced to the lower bus Type rate
 - Change up: A to C or D
 - Total state bus approval allocation is held at lower bus Type rate

May Districts Buy A Bus Different From The Bus That Was Requested and Approved? (cont.)

- Bus approvals are based on the **original bus request**
- **Can SAUs change bus capacity?**
 - Requires Department approval before purchase
 - **Bus allocation will be reduced**
 - Change from larger to smaller bus
 - Total allocation will be reduced to the max approval amount for the **smaller bus**
 - Change from smaller to larger bus
 - Total allocation will remain the same as the max approval amount for the smaller bus

May Districts Buy A Bus Different From The Bus That Was Requested and Approved? (cont.)

- Bus approvals are based on the **original bus request**
- **Can SAUs change bus purchase payment terms?**
 - Requires Department approval before purchase
 - Change from cash (1 year) to term (2 to 5 years)
 - District total allocation will remain the same
 - Change from term to cash (1 year)
 - **Bus allocation will be reduced**
 - Change term payment years
 - Increase years, e.g. from 2 to 3: no reduction
 - Decrease years, e.g. from 5 to 2: **reduction**

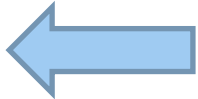
Program Application Rounds

- Round 1
 - Occurs annually
 - Applications open Nov. 1 and close Nov. 25
 - State 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 Reports

- Bus Purchase Program reports
 - EFT-17 bus request
 - EFT-18 superintendent intent to purchase bus
 - EFT-19 bus cancellation
 - EFT-20 bus purchase
- Annual transportation reports (July 1 through Oct. 15)
 - EFT-21 Transportation Safety and Training
 - EFT-24 Vehicle Mileage and Operations
 - EFM-43 OOD, SPED, Homeless and CTE

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 (EFT-19)
 - Delayed cancellation reports prevent redistribution of bus money to other districts
 - Bus **purchase** report (EFT-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.”

EPS Model Review Cycle

- Statute requires EPS model review every 3 years
 - Transportation is in the FY 2019-20 group review
- Maine DOE contracts the review with USM
 - CEPARE studies are for the Commissioner who may use the analysis to make recommendations for changes to funding of transportation operating
 - Funding formula changes do need approval of the Committee to move forward to the full Legislature for enactment

- EPS website:

<http://www.maine.gov/education/data/eps/epsmenu.htm>

Frequently Asked Questions

- **Q1: How do I know if we received a bus approval?**
 - Superintendent receives an email; approvals post on NEO Bus Approval Summaries screen
- **Q2: Does an approval roll over to the next FY?**
 - No. Approvals are valid for 1 year
- **Q3: My application met the program requirement; why wasn't my bus approved?**
 - Being eligible does not guarantee an approval; about 1/3 to 1/2 of requests are approved; bus age, special needs transport, emergencies, and additions to fleet take precedence

Frequently Asked Questions (cont.)

- **Q4: Do the Maine school bus specifications include extra vehicle features?**
 - No. The state specs provide basic safety features
 - Districts determine extras features for their driving conditions and negotiate feature costs
- **Q5: How does a district bid their school buses?**
 - Districts may directly purchase buses from low bid vendors for each bus *Type/capacity* based on current Maine State School Bus Bid result
 - Per 20-A M.R.S. § 5402, districts bid their buses if they don't use the state *Type/capacity* low bidder

Frequently Asked Questions (cont.)

- **Q6: What is the Maine State School Bus Bid?**
 - State Division of Procurement initiates a RFQ inviting vendors to submit quotes for school buses that meet the *minimum* state specifications
- **Q7: Can a district order a bus before the purchase FY?**
 - Bus orders can be placed when the state bus approval is issued but possession must occur the year the bus is approved to purchase
 - The bus order should identify the FY the district may take possession of the new bus

Frequently Asked Questions (cont.)

- **Q8: Is it OK to change the payment term on my bus approval?**
 - Yes and subsidy is **reduced** if payment years are reduced, e.g., 5 year term to 1 year cash
- **Q9: Is it OK to buy a different bus type or capacity than the bus that was approved?**
 - Yes and subsidy is **reduced** if type or capacity are less than the approved type or capacity
- **Q10: How much subsidy will the district receive?**
 - Transportation provides **maximum** bus approval amount; finance provides **final** subsidy calculation

Frequently Asked Questions (cont.)

- **Q11: Is it OK to retire a different bus than the bus (VIN) that was submitted and approved on the original bus request (EFT-17)?**
 - No. Bus approvals are based on the original bus request (EFT-17) retiring bus age and mileage
 - However, the district may cancel the original request and approval then submit a new request (EFT-17) using a different bus (VIN)

Frequently Asked Questions (cont.)

- **Q12: When does a district take possession of a new approved school bus?**
 - During the fiscal year the bus is approved to purchase
- **Q13: When does a district make the first payment on an approved school bus?**
 - During the fiscal year the bus is approved to purchase

Frequently Asked Questions (cont.)

- **Q14: When is a district required to report that they have purchased and taken possession of a new school bus?**
 - After taking possession of the new bus, during the fiscal year the bus is approved to purchase, and no later than **June 30** of the approved purchase fiscal year
 - Late EFT-20 School Bus Purchase Reports delay district subsidy per 20-A M.R.S. § 6801-A(2)

Frequently Asked Questions (cont.)

- **Q15: When does state subsidy begin?**
 - The year **after** the district takes possession of the new approved bus **and** makes a bus payment
- **Q16: When must the retiring vehicle be disposed (decommissioned, sold, scrapped, etc.)?**
 - When a SAU takes possession of a new bus that was approved under the School Bus Purchase Program, the SAU shall decommission or sell the retiring vehicle within **one year** of receiving the new bus.

Frequently Asked Questions (cont.)

- **Q17: Can buses with high maintenance cost be submitted for replacement under the Program?**
 - No. Maintenance is the responsibility of the local school district.
 - Examples of maintenance issues include:
 - engine failure (districts are responsible to maintain regular engine maintenance cycles and report potential defects to vendors)
 - rust (use undercoating appropriate for Maine, include undercoating in maintenance cycles, include washing in regular maintenance)

Frequently Asked Questions (cont.)

- **Q18: What payment choices do districts have when purchasing a new school bus?**
 - Cash
 - Lease
 - Loan

Frequently Asked Questions (cont.)

- **Q19: When are year-end transportation reports due?**
 - EFT-21 Safety & Training Report
 - open July 1 close Oct. 15
 - Report data for the prior closed FY
 - EFT-24 Vehicle Mileage & Operations Report
 - open July 1 close Oct. 15
 - Report data for the prior closed FY

Frequently Asked Questions (cont.)

- **Q20: When are School Bus Purchase Program reports due?**
 - EFT-16 emergency – FY emergency occurs
 - EFT-17 requests open Nov. 1 close Nov. 25
 - EFT-18 super. authorize – before bus delivery
 - EFT-19 cancel – date of vote and before end of FY
 - EFT-20 purchase – date of bus delivery

Contact Information

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Abstract

Safety is priority one when transporting students. This clinic will focus on the Maine School Bus Purchase Program that is designed to help school districts replace the aging fleet. Participants will learn the program purpose, qualifications, and process while exploring how buses are put on the list and how decisions are made. This clinic will include historic data on program funding, applications, and approvals.