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VEIC Media Contact

Alayna Howard
ahoward@veic.org
802-540-7656

Agency of Natural Resources Media Contact

Elle O'Casey
Elle.OCasey@vermont.gov
802-760-9967

Three schools, one transit agency selected for VT Electric Bus Pilot Program Electric buses coming to Chittenden, Franklin, Rutland, and Washington Counties

December 19, 2019 – Barre, VT – Today, officials from the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) and VEIC gathered at Barre Town Middle & Elementary School to announce the selected project partners for the Vermont Electric Bus Pilot Program. Barre Unified Union School District, Champlain Valley School District, Franklin West Supervisory Union, and Marble Valley Regional Transit District were chosen from a competitive pool of applicants to receive Volkswagen (VW) Environmental Mitigation Trust (EMT) funds to test the use of electric buses in Vermont.

“Congratulations to our project partners, we are excited to work with them to bring electric buses to four counties across the state,” said Emily Boedecker, Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation. “Not only will this program help us to determine the feasibility of electric buses in Vermont, it will also serve to introduce students and public transit riders in our communities to cleaner vehicles while improving the air quality of our public spaces.”

The pilot will be administered by VEIC, a nonprofit sustainable energy company with experience designing and implementing electric school and transit bus pilot programs. With administrative and technical assistance from VEIC, each of the school districts and the transit agency will evaluate the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of electric buses in Vermont. This pilot is the first program in the state to purchase electric vehicles utilizing Vermont’s VW EMT funds.

“We are thrilled to see the VW Settlement Funds working to benefit Vermonters and to advance electric vehicle use,” said Jennifer Wallace-Brodeur, Director of Clean Transportation, VEIC. “The transportation sector is the largest source of harmful greenhouse gas emissions in our state and it is vital that we seek solutions to reduce these emissions. This pilot will help us to evaluate the benefits of electric buses and assess how they perform in a range of typical Vermont conditions and terrain. With this information we hope to build confidence that electric buses can work in Vermont and support greater adoption and impact in the future.”

Over the next several months VEIC will work with each participating school district and transit agency to purchase vehicles, acquire the necessary charging infrastructure, and identify facility upgrades needed to support buses. Once the buses and equipment are delivered, they will be tracked and evaluated for a full year. Throughout this year of operation VEIC will provide technical assistance to project partners while also evaluating and reporting on the performance of the vehicles.

Representatives from each of the participating school districts and transit agency shared their thoughts on being selected for the program.

"Beyond the economic factors, our school administrators, teachers and support staff see intangible value in electric buses, they are also educational. The district continuously encourages students to compost, recycle, and take care of their environment. The buses represent another teachable moment in this area. This is an exciting learning experience for Barre students. Most children have only read about this in books, we are excited that the children in this community will actually be able to say, 'I rode to school in an electric bus!'" – John Pandolfo, Superintendent, Barre Unified Union School District.

"MVRTD is proud to be contributing to the revitalization and Innovative mindset in Rutland. We are looking forward to the arrival of the electric buses and to begin the testing phase of the project" – Ken Putnam, Executive Director, Marble Valley Regional Transit District.

"The Champlain Valley School District community prides itself on being a leader in sustainable practices. This opportunity allows us to not only transport students more safely and efficiently, but to make a concrete example of how we live up to our values. We are excited to take such an important role in helping Vermont reduce carbon emissions and improve energy efficiency." – Jeanne Jensen, Champlain Valley School District Chief Operations Officer.

"Our climate action club at BFA has been growing this year, both in numbers and opportunities. Receiving our new electric bus is an incredible contribution and accomplishment for our community. It will give us the opportunity to practice green transportation, spread more awareness about climate change through our community, and demonstrate taking action in our little state. We are so excited!" – Eleventh Grader, Bellows Free Academy, Franklin West Supervisory Union

Many partners contributed to the launch of this program. Vermont Energy Education Program (VEEP) helped lead outreach to school districts. The Vermont Agency of Transportation, the Vermont Superintendents Association, and the Vermont Department of Public Service provided guidance on selection of project partners.

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The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources is charged with oversight and management of Vermont's natural environment on behalf of the people of Vermont. We endeavor to draw from and build upon Vermonters' shared ethic of responsibility for our natural environment, an ethic that encompasses a sense of place, community and quality of life, and an understanding that we are an integral part of the environment, and that we must all be responsible stewards for this and future generations. <https://anr.vermont.gov/>.

VEIC is a sustainable energy company with a mission to enhance the economic, environmental, and societal benefits of clean and efficient energy use for all people. Headquartered in Vermont with offices in Ohio, Washington D.C., and New York state, VEIC has over 32 years of experience transforming energy systems, specializing in energy efficiency, clean transportation, and renewable energy. In addition to its full-service consulting business, VEIC operates three large-scale energy efficiency utilities: Efficiency Vermont, Efficiency Smart, and the DC Sustainable Energy Utility (DCSEU); and launched three mission-aligned subsidiaries that promote community-level solutions for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. www.veic.org.