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Environment Chair
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The first all electric school bus started carrying students in Copiague this past September. The new, ultra quiet vehicle charges overnight. It emits no exhaust, has no need for engine oil and uses regenerative braking to save power in traffic.

Diesel, still the energy king when it comes to buses, comprises approximately 78% of the 40,190 new school buses sold in the United States and Canada in 2015. But federal emission standards could make this old standby increasingly expensive over the next five years. This could improve the outlook for alternatives like natural gas, propane, and the newcomer – electric.

Besides Copiague, electric buses are being used in more than two-dozen school districts across the country. Many of which are located in California. An industry insider said, “Electric is just being tested now, and we need to see what the results are going to be.”

The maintenance cost of an electric bus is about a third of a diesel’s, and the cost of the electricity to run it is about five to ten cents per mile versus about 50 cents per mile for the fuel on a diesel bus. Educational Bus Transportation, the private company that serves Copiague schools picked Copiague for a trial run because of the district’s compact dimensions and relatively short bus routes.

Electric buses fit well into shorter routes with lots of stop-and-go. Bus company president Sean Corr says, “It’s never going to be the sports-trip bus, but it’s the perfect daily school – route bus.” The cost of an electric bus is about \$250,000 versus \$50,000 for a diesel-powered vehicle. However, the savings on fuel and maintenance will earn a return in approximately five years.

Educational Bus Transportation is applying for a federal grant to purchase five more electric buses. Widespread adoption of electric vehicles could improve air quality in our region. Mr.Corr sums it up like this, “There are so many vehicles that we operate down here it would definitely help reduce some of the carbon emissions. If we could put more of these in service, it would help everyone on Long Island.”