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SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION BOND CITIZENS' OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

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The LAUSD School Construction Bond Citizens' Oversight Committee (BOC) is authorized by the California Strict Accountability in Local School Construction Bonds Act of 2000 [Education Codes 15264 - 15288] and the LAUSD BOC Charter and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

August 21, 2026

Scott Schmerelson, Board President
Andres Chait, Superintendent
Los Angeles Unified School District
333 South Beaudry Avenue, 24th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90017

RE: BOC Consideration of the Purchase of 50 Electric School Buses

Dear Board President Schmerelson and Superintendent Chait,

At its August 13, 2026 meeting, the Bond Oversight Committee (BOC) considered recommendation of a District proposal to approve up to \$5.5 million of bond funds toward the purchase of 50 electric school buses (Board Report No. 030-26/27). This proposal is scheduled to be included on the Order of Business for the September 15, 2026 Board of Education (BOE) meeting.

Mr. Daniel Kang, Director, Transportation Services Branch, presented the item. Mr. Kang made an extensive and detailed report regarding the proposed purchases, including comprehensive context regarding the specifications of the buses and how they would be utilized to provide transportation services across the District. He addressed many questions regarding reliability, cost, useful life, practicability and how the purchases furthered and implemented the District's policy goals related to the environment and the use of green technology.¹ Many members

¹ Transitioning Los Angeles Unified School District to 100% Clean, Renewable Energy Resulting in Healthier Students and More Sustainable, Equitable Communities (Res-018 19/20) (Noticed November 5, 2019 and Discussed at November 14, 2019 Committee of the Whole)

commended and thanked Mr. Kang for his earnestness, knowledge and candor related to this proposal.

After approximately an hour of open discussion regarding the electric bus purchase proposal, the BOC did not adopt Resolution [2026-19](#) recommending the action. Eight votes were needed to adopt the resolution.² The resolution did not pass by a vote of 2 ayes, 11 nays, and 1 abstention with 0 members absent (2-11-1-0).

The purpose of this letter is to inform the Board of Education, Superintendent and the public of the concerns expressed by the members of the BOC during consideration of the action. The BOC recognizes that only the Board of Education has the power to approve projects and may do so subsequent to the BOC's consideration.³

Various BOC members expressed the following concerns about the proposed action:

1. Legal Permissibility

Section 7.6 of the BOC Charter and MOU states:

“The Committee has the responsibility to recommend against the expenditure of bond funds when District does not provide adequate information for effective oversight, or when a project or program appears to be impermissible or imprudent.”

The BOC has historically characterized the issue of permissibility as one of *legal* permissibility. The BOC does not draft or publish its own independent legal opinions about the permissibility of a proposed bond funded project. The BOC does not have access to bond counsel opinions deemed confidential by the District. It relies on the District to make this determination of legal permissibility. However, the BOC does have the responsibility to ask the question and inquire as to what factors the District considered related to its determination. The District did inform the BOC that District legal counsel had reviewed the proposed use of bond funds for electric bus purchase and determined the project may proceed to the BOC for its consideration.⁴

That said, in the course of the meeting discussion, a member raised the question as to whether Section 15100(a)(9) of the California Education Code relating to the useful life of school buses was considered by the District in its determination of legal permissibility. That Education Code provision states that bond funds may be utilized to purchase school buses with a useful life of at least 20 years.⁵ District staff during the presentation stated that

² Recommendations to the District to approve or disapprove a project must be approved by a majority of the active members of the Committee. There are 14 active members; thus approval of a project recommendation requires eight votes. Section 4.2.2 MOU.

³ Once the BOC has had the opportunity to consider a project, the Board of Education may act on the project, with or without a BOC finding or recommendation. Section 7.6 MOU.

⁴ Proposed BOC Resolution 2026-19 includes the provision: “WHEREAS, the District’s Office of the General Counsel has reviewed the proposed Projects and determined that they may proceed to the School Construction Citizens’ Bond Oversight Committee (BOC) for its consideration for recommendation to the Board of Education;”

⁵ Education Code section 15100(a)(9).

the estimated useful life of an electric school bus was expected to be 10 to 15 years and that the manufacturer's warranty was limited to eight years. So, it seemed the proposed bus purchase did not conform to this Education Code provision regarding the minimal useful life of the school buses. No District legal staff were present at the meeting to clarify or address this question.

It should be noted that at its April 30, 2026, regular meeting the BOC voted to approve BOC Resolution [2026-10](#) recommending approval of the San Julian Electric School Bus Purchase Project, Including the Use of Bond Program Funds to Support the Purchase of 79 Electric School Buses (Board Report 422-25/26). At that meeting, the question as to the applicability of Education Code Section 15100(a)(9) was not raised by any BOC member. Therefore, this question of legal permissibility may have been the primary reason the BOC collectively voted to not recommend this project now.

It would also be relevant for the BOC to understand the District's legal basis for concluding bond funds can be used to purchase school buses in general. This also includes whether the purchase of school buses falls within the categories of expenditure permitted by Article XIII A, Section 1(b)(3) of the California Constitution, which authorizes bonded indebtedness for the construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, or replacement of school facilities, including the furnishing and equipping of school facilities, or the acquisition or lease of real property for school facilities. It would also follow as to how the District interprets The California Strict Accountability in Local School Construction Bonds Act of 2000 [Education Codes 15264 - 15288] related to bus purchases and its ultimate finding that school buses are permissible bond fund expenditures.

2. Range of Electric Buses

It was reported by Mr. Kang that the expected range of the proposed electric buses is approximately 100 miles, based on actual usage experience. He stated that the manufacturer claims a maximum range of 150 miles. In contrast, the expected range of internal combustion engine buses is approximately 300 miles. Consequently, the electric school buses provide approximately 1/3 of the functional range of internal combustion engine buses requiring the District to carefully consider where electric buses can be used effectively.

The reduced range of the electric buses means that the buses are unable to service many routes without needing an additional electric charge during the route. This is problematic because of both the lack of charging stations and the lack of accessibility to existing commercial charging stations. Mr. Kang stated that the District is taking a phased strategy by allocating electric buses primarily to shorter daily routes where their current range is sufficient, while retaining internal combustion-engine school buses for longer routes. As such, this creates challenges in route scheduling and limits the District's ability to meet student's longer-distance transportation needs.

3. Charging Stations

The accessibility of charging stations is critical to the District's successful transition to electric buses. Construction of charging stations is not yet complete. Current sites and

those under construction have been restricted to existing District bus yards. As such, the District is constrained in its implementation of electric school bus service by limited charging locations. The lack of charging stations also diminishes the functionality to provide transportation for other services such as athletic events and field trips.

Further challenges related to charging stations include the relatively high cost of the infrastructure and space to accommodate the size of a school bus. Mr. Kang shared that school buses are approximately three times larger than a standard vehicle. As such, installing charging stations, designating adequate parking, and circulation areas that would allow for charging at school sites is a significant constraint especially at those sites with limited space.

4. Value and Cost

Mr. Kang stated that the cost of an electric bus is approximately \$500,000. This is three times more than the cost of a \$150,000 internal combustion engine bus. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposed to provide grant funding for 78% of the expense for the purchase of 50 electric school buses. Even so, the BOC questioned whether it is appropriate for the District to commit taxpayer-supported bond funds to adopt a costly and still evolving technology. Moreover, the transition to electric school buses will require additional funding for the installation and expansion of charging infrastructure.

5. Public and Student Safety

The District has yet to release the report of the investigation into a fire incident involving an electric bus under a 210-freeway overpass in December 2025. As a result, it is unclear what circumstances may have led to the fire and to what extent the electric bus itself was the underlying cause. It remains a question as to whether an electric bus presents a greater safety risk for students and staff. However, Mr. Kang did state that the District has already included recommendations from preliminary findings from the fire into specifications for the 50 proposed new electric school buses.

The District may certainly seek to utilize bond funds where legally permissible to offset potential general fund obligations. In this case, the District proposes to purchase electric school buses with bond funds. In doing so, it becomes the BOC's responsibility to consider the bond project proposal and to make an advisory recommendation regarding the project's legal permissibility and its prudence based on the information the BOC has at the time of its consideration. For the reasons described above, the BOC did not recommend Board approval of the project.

On behalf of the members of the BOC, thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal.

Sincerely,

/D. Michael Hamner/

D. Michael Hamner, FAIA, BOC Chair