

Opinion

Letter: NFTA should consider electric-powered buses

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As the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority experiments with replacing its diesel buses, the Sierra Club strongly recommends that the authority consider electric buses. The technology for battery-powered buses is currently available from worldwide manufacturers, including U.S. producers. According to National Geographic, some 15 U.S. cities are using domestically produced electric-powered buses. Los Angeles has ordered 25 battery-run buses from overseas producers.

Even with methane gas prices bottoming out, battery-powered buses can provide lifetime savings of up to \$225,000 in fuel costs compared with the compressed natural gas (CNG) buses. Electric-powered buses can save up to \$365,000 compared with diesel fuel. Maintenance costs of electric buses are also much less expensive. Battery buses have zero emissions.

The NFTA's recent decision to commence using some CNG buses is the same as replacing dial telephones with push button phones at a time when cellphone technology is available. CNG buses still emit carbon dioxide. As mentioned by The News, the methane gas to fuel CNG vehicles is also a much more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide, contributing to the rate of climate change. The methane gas used in CNG vehicles is obtained from dangerous high-volume hydrofracturing, which has been banned in New York. Building up an expensive infrastructure for fracked gas burdens ratepayers with additional costs. Expected increase in the cost of methane gas after the current fossil fuel market "bust" will increase the fares of NFTA riders in the future.

A beauty of electric buses is that they may be charged by renewable energy sources such as wind and solar power. The NFTA might even explore taking advantage of low-cost Niagara Falls hydropower to power the plug-in battery buses.

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