

Resolution on Public Transit Electrification

Whereas, climate change is an existential threat to humankind and much of life on earth,

Whereas, according to Saul Griffith, author of *Electrify*, the only chance we have of meeting climate goals is to immediately commit to not purchasing any new infrastructure dependent on fossil fuels; to continue using such existing infrastructure through the end of its lifetime but that when replacements are necessary, they should be electric,¹

Whereas, transportation accounts for 29% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, making it the largest contributor of greenhouse gasses,²

Whereas, Washington State GHG emissions from transportation have increased by more than 9% between 2015 and 2018, including a 9% increase in the emissions created by on-road diesel fuel,³

Whereas, the City of Bellingham Climate Protection Action Plan seeks to reduce emissions within Bellingham city limits by 40% from the 2000 baseline emissions by 2030,⁴

Whereas, Whatcom County climate targets seek to reduce emissions throughout the county by 45% of 1990 levels by 2030 and government emissions by 85% of 2000 levels,⁵

Whereas, The Washington State Legislature has set the target to eliminate GHG emissions by 95% of 1990 levels by 2050,⁶

Whereas, the Santa Barbara Metropolitan Transportation District has been operating battery-powered electric buses since 1991, and four years ago adopted a goal of a 100 percent zero-emissions fleet by the year 2030,⁷ and the Antelope Valley Transit Authority has just become the first fleet in the U.S. to become fully electrified with the acquisition of its 77th electric bus,⁸

Whereas, as of four years ago, the city of Shenzhen, China, had already electrified all of its more than 16,000 buses,⁹

Whereas, although electric buses are twice as expensive to purchase as diesel buses, they are considerably less expensive in lifecycle costs, because maintenance is far less expensive, and the price of diesel fuel is at an all-time high, up roughly 50% from last year,¹⁰ way beyond the cost of electricity,

Whereas, federal and state grants are currently available for purchase of electric buses,¹¹

Therefore, be it resolved, the Whatcom Democrats calls on the Whatcom Transportation Authority to reverse its decision to order eight new diesel buses and instead purchase only electric or non-carbon emitting buses going forward, and immediately implement strategies to achieve the goals of the WTA 2040 Long Range Plan,

Therefore, be it further resolved, the Whatcom Democrats calls on the Washington State Legislature to set electrification targets for local transportation agencies in line with statewide zero-emission targets and to establish a grant program with labor protections including living wage and to fund such modernization of the infrastructure to support electrification.

Adopted unanimously by a vote of 50-0 at the April 23 General Membership Meeting of Whatcom Democrats.

¹ “It has to be now—not 10 years from now, or even a month from now. We have arrived at the last moment when we can shift global energy infrastructure without passing a 1.5°C/2.7°F-2°C/3.6°F temperature rise. ... The notion that we have 10 years also fails to recognize ‘committed emissions,’ those that are locked in because we have already invested in infrastructure that will emit carbon dioxide throughout its useful life. An example is the car sitting in your driveway that burns gasoline but is too new to trade in for an electric vehicle. ... This scenario of replacing everything that uses energy with a zero-carbon solution when it’s retired is called a 100% adoption rate. Today, when a car reaches retirement age, there is only a small chance that it will be replaced by an EV. If 1 in 10 people buys an EV, then we say the adoption rate is 10%. Because machines like your car have long lifetimes, that means that traditional gas-powered cars will remain on the road for a long time. To reduce emissions, though, our world can no longer afford those slow adoption rates. We need everyone buying electric vehicles. ... While that sounds dramatic, it doesn’t mean you have to run out to buy a new EV today. It means that the next time you need to retire a car or any other machine, it should be replaced with one that doesn’t emit CO2.” Saul Griffith, *Electrify: An Optimist’s Playbook for Our Clean Energy Future* (MIT Press, 2021).

² United States Environmental Protection Agency, “[Carbon Pollution from Transportation](#),” 2021.

³ Washington State Dept. of Ecology, “[Washington State Greenhouse Gas Emission Inventory: 1990-2018](#),” 2021.

⁴ City of Bellingham, “[Climate Protection Action Plan](#),” 2018.

⁵ Whatcom County, “[Whatcom County Climate Action Plan](#),” 2021.

⁶ RCW 70A.45.020(1)(a).

⁷ Santa Barbara MTD, “[Electric Future](#).”

⁸ Alissa Walker, “[The Electrification Revolution Can Start in Smaller Cities](#),” *Curbed*, April 1, 2022.

⁹ World Resources Institute, “[How Did Shenzhen, China Build World’s Largest Electric Bus Fleet?](#)”

¹⁰ <https://markets.businessinsider.com/commodities/diesel-price?op=1>

¹¹ Connecticut Dept. of Transportation, “[CTDOT Receives \\$11.4 Million Federal Grant to Replace Diesel Buses with Efficient Battery Electric Buses](#),” March 15, 2022.