



Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

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GOVERNOR RAIMONDO ANNOUNCES PROPOSED MITIGATION PLAN FOR RHODE ISLAND'S \$14.4 MILLION SHARE OF FEDERAL VOLKSWAGEN SETTLEMENT

Funds will be used to replace retiring RIPTA diesel buses with electric buses to reduce emissions, enhance air quality, and improve state's electric vehicle infrastructure. With new buses, low and zero-emission vehicles will constitute 36% of the state's fleet.

PROVIDENCE – Governor Gina Raimondo, along with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) and the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA), today announced that approximately \$14.4 million in Volkswagen settlement funds will give the state an opportunity to take important steps toward improving air quality in Rhode Island – including the purchase of electric buses and the installation of electric vehicle infrastructure for private vehicles.

The state's plan for the use of the settlement funds, called the Beneficiary Mitigation Plan (BMP), calls for a 10-year period for environmental mitigation projects to improve air quality in Rhode Island, reduce diesel and nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions, and install electric vehicle infrastructure. As the lead agency and administrator of the funds, DEM developed the draft environmental mitigation plan in conjunction with the Office of Energy Resources (OER), the RI Public Transit Authority (RIPTA), and the Division of Public Utilities (DPUC).

“Bringing cutting-edge electric bus technology to Rhode Island will drive economic growth while reducing our carbon footprint,” **said Governor Gina Raimondo.** “Continuing to invest in clean energy will lead to more jobs, better technology, and a more resilient state. I thank DEM, RIPTA, and all partners for working together to develop this plan. It will bring important economic, environmental, and public health benefits to Rhode Islanders.”

Under the proposed BMP, \$10 million will be used to replace approximately 20 retiring diesel buses with new, all-electric zero-emission vehicles. Funds also will be used to install charging infrastructure associated with all-electric zero emission transit buses. In Fall 2018, three electric buses will be leased for use immediately as part of RIPTA's bus fleet. **Starting in 2021, the first of 16 to 20 permanent additions to the fleet will enter service. The buses will be incorporated into RIPTA's current bus routes by replacing aging diesel buses that need to be retired, and with a focus on serving communities with poor air quality and asthma rates.** Rhode Island currently has 73 hybrid buses; with this investment, the state's bus fleet will be about 36 percent low

and zero-emission vehicles. The investment also supports the state’s greenhouse gas emissions reduction plan goals relating to vehicle miles traveled and electric vehicles.

Also, \$1.5 million will be used to develop a DC Fast Charging (DCFC) station network in Rhode Island for light-duty electric vehicles, adding 15 to 30 charging stations around the I-95 corridor in 2020. DCFC provides 60 to 80+ miles per 20 minutes of charging. Currently there are eight publicly available DCFC stations in the state.

Governor Raimondo has set bold goals for Rhode Island's clean energy and environmental efforts, including goals to produce 10 times as much clean energy and create at least 20,000 clean energy jobs by 2020. Last year, the Governor endorsed RGGI, a bipartisan, regional agreement to drastically reduce carbon emissions. After President Trump withdrew the United States from the Paris Climate Accord, Governor Raimondo signed an Executive Order committing Rhode Island to the principles of the agreement. Rhode Island has made a wide array of strategic investments that have paid off and put Rhode Island in the national spotlight, including [our most recent #3 ACEEE ranking on energy efficiency](#) and the Block Island Wind Farm. Rhode Island is “Leading by Example,” investing in LEDs for the state and municipalities, reducing the carbon emissions from the state fleet, and employing strategies to encourage clean energy alternatives.

“This proposal will play a major role in addressing climate change impacts from the transportation sector,” **said DEM Director Janet Coit**, who chairs the RI Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council. “Removing aging diesel buses from our roadways and replacing them with cleaner electric vehicles will reduce harmful emissions that contribute to climate change and smog and put Rhode Island in the forefront in developing a clean and efficient transportation infrastructure.”

Fifteen percent of the settlement funds, about \$2.5 million, would be split between RIPTA, DEM, and OER for administrative expenditures associated with implementing the mitigation projects.

“RIPTA is committed to exploring and employing technology that will allow Rhode Islanders to experience the benefits of clean transportation, both on and off the bus,” **said Warwick Mayor Scott Avedisian, who will become RIPTA’s new CEO on June 1.** “Electric buses are already on the road in other states, demonstrating both fiscal and environmental benefits. Our buses will contribute to cleaner air and less noise. This effort serves as a concrete example of Rhode Island’s commitment to lead by example in transitioning toward an emissions-free public transit system – a critical step in combatting climate change and improving air quality.”

An information session on the proposed BMP will be held on Thursday, May 17, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. at Rhode Island College. Staff from DEM’s Office of Air Resources, RIPTA, and OER will provide background information on the VW environmental mitigation trust, overall goals for use of funds, eligible categories to be funded, emission reduction estimates, and the administrative process for implementation. The public will have an opportunity to provide feedback on the proposal via email to Allison.Callahan@dem.ri.gov through June 11, 2018. DEM will consider all comments received, renew any new or revised requirements, make any relevant revisions, and post the final BMP on DEM’s [VW webpage](#). After revisions, DEM will submit the final BMP no later than 30 days prior to its first funding request.

Copies of the plan are available at DEM’s Office of Air Resources, 235 Promenade Street in Providence. For more information, call 222-2808 weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

In 2015, the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) found that Volkswagen had installed illegal software on their diesel engine cars, affecting about 3,000 cars in Rhode Island. The software made it appear that the cars were emitting less nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions than they actually were. Settlement funds were distributed among every state, based on the number of vehicles on their roads. As part of the settlement, states are eligible to receive funds to pay part of the cost of projects to reduce diesel emissions from vehicles and install electric vehicle infrastructure.