



The Electrifying Rural Transportation Act (ERTA)

Introduced By: Senator Peter Welch (D-Vt.)

Background:

The transportation sector is one of the largest contributors to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the United States, accounting for [28%](#) of total U.S. GHG emissions in 2022. Transitioning America's public transportation fleets to zero-emissions vehicles is an essential step towards reducing national reliance on fossil fuels and lowering GHG emissions. However, electrifying public transit fleets can be especially challenging for smaller transit agencies and local governments. For example, while the number of zero-emissions buses in the United States has increased by [112%](#) in recent years, only [2%](#) of buses in the current American transit fleet are electric.

Electrifying public transit can be especially difficult in rural areas due to their low population density and smaller tax pools, which often result in smaller transit budgets for the community. For rural residents who rely on public transit for critical services, a lack of reliable public transportation is consequential. Medical services make up nearly [9%](#) of final destinations for all public transit riders in small urban and rural areas, while nearly [34%](#) of all riders' primary destination is their workplace. As more transit fleets make the transition to electric vehicles, it is crucial that rural communities and smaller transit agencies receive the support they need to decarbonize public transportation.

Legislation:

The *Electrifying Rural Transportation Act (ERTA)* will create the Rural Public Transportation Electrification Program, administered by the Department of Transportation, to award grants to states to support the decarbonization of rural public transportation fleets. Eligible projects include purchasing new electric buses or other fleet vehicles used for microtransit; updating existing or installing new charging infrastructure; and operating assistance for electrified routes.

Additionally, local governments may use up to 5% of funds towards workforce development to supplement costs associated with training employees on electric vehicle maintenance and obtaining the proper licenses to operate public transportation vehicles.