February 28, 2023

Superintendent Dr. Troy Pitsch: Good afternoon and welcome to USD 329 Wabaunsee School District. We are honored to be joined by students, parents, media representatives, and government officials, to celebrate a truly historic moment for our community. Today we proudly feature our electric buses purchased through the Environmental Protection Agency's Clean School Bus Program. Adding these electric buses will help us reduce our carbon footprint, improve air quality, and significantly impact the environment for generations to come. We are truly grateful for the support and recognition from the EPA, and we are honored to be part of a growing movement of organizations and communities that are taking meaningful steps to address the challenges of climate change. As a school district, we are responsible for providing a safe healthy and sustainable environment for our students, staff, and community. Introducing these electric buses will help us achieve our environmental goals and provide an opportunity for our students to learn the importance of renewable energy and sustainable transportation. We are also proud to be a leader in implementing new and innovative technology in our school district, and we are confident that these electric buses will set a standard for other school districts to follow. In closing, I would like to thank the EPA, our media representatives and government officials for joining us today to celebrate this pivotal moment. Together we can positively impact the environment and inspire future generations to take action on the issues that truly matter most. Thank you, and I look forward to the future of sustainable transportation in our school district. This time I would like to introduce our honorable mayor, Maurice Baker, Mayor of Alma Kansas.

Maurice Baker: Welcome to Alma. The only involvement we really had as far as the city goes is we ran power to the battery chargers, which we were asked to do and would have done it for anybody that built a new house or a new business in town. So, it was pretty painless on our end. So that's all I have. Thank you.

David Campbell: Hi, I'm David Campbell. I'm with Energy and I'm speaking on behalf of investor and electric utilities. I’m really happy to be in Alma today. Congratulations on getting the first electric school bus in the state of Kansas, that's well done. And a visit from the EPA administrator, a U.S. cabinet member, so thanks to the EPA for your support of this Clean School Bus Program, as well as support to Alma and coming out today. So as electric utilities it's very important that we provide support to school districts as they evaluate opportunities to transition their bus fleet. So, we help with communications around what the opportunities are, how you take advantage of things like this program. We help provide technical support around what infrastructure you need, what kind of plug you need to run to your charging station, what kind of charging station you need, and we help find funding sources. So my colleague Julie Dietrich who's here has worked with more than 200 school districts to help provide that support because we are very excited about the opportunities that will come from electrifying the school bus fleets across our state. So, thank you all for being here. And I will now turn it over to Alex Hoffman who's the COO of the Beneficial Electrification League. (Applause)

Alex Hoffman: Thanks everyone. I really appreciate it had a great discussion inside and I think you know a lot of what we think about um when we come out to events like this is how an electric school bus is kind of like a giant mobile billboard for beneficial electrification in the

community. And what's better than that, right? It's got lower fuel cost, smooth ride, no fumes, kids love it, parents like it, just can't complain. I think with BEL in particular, what we do is we help bring municipal electric and cooperative utilities together with their associated school

districts across the country to try and help them learn and grow and utilize new technologies like this and we really want to appreciate the administrator for all the activity that the EPA has taken to bring electric school buses to small, rural and remote communities. We think that's essential and important for communities across the country to have a successful experience with these new electrification technologies, and it's something that we're proud to be supporting and helping with today. And now I want to introduce Cheryl and Brandt for some remarks.

Cheryl Hurla: Ladies and gentlemen, as parents we all want the best for our children. When it comes to their daily commute to school, safety and comfort are of the utmost importance. That's why I'm proud to say that our school district has embraced electric buses as a new form of transportation for our children. Electric buses are not only environmentally friendly, they emit zero emissions, they reduce our carbon footprint, and they are also equipped with the latest safety features, such as, seat belts, cameras, and GPS tracking. Our children now can enjoy a quiet, smooth, and safe ride, to and from school. Not only that, electric buses also save money in the long run, as they are more energy efficient and require less maintenance. One of the positive attributes is that knowing our school district is going to save money on these buses compared to the regular, excuse me on these electric buses versus the regular buses. This benefits not only the school district, but also our local community, as it helps to reduce dependence on fossil fuels. In conclusion, I want to commend our school district for their commitment to providing the best possible transportation for our children. Let's continue to work together to create a better and safer future for our kids. And I'm very proud to announce Brandt Hurla.

Brandt Hurla: Hello, my name is Brandt Hurla, I'm a third grader here at Alma. My younger brother and I both ride the electric buses, and we both like the fact that they have heat throughout the bus. I would like to introduce our keynote speaker. Michael Regan is currently the United States Environmental Protection Agency Chief Administrator. He was appointed by President Joe Biden and assumed the role in March 2021. Before his appointment, Regan served as the Secretary of North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality where he was recognized for his efforts to promote clean energy. With over two decades of experience in the environmental policies, Regan is well respected in the field and brings a wealth of knowledge and passion to his role at the EPA. He is committed to protecting public health and the environment and we want to welcome him to our charter nation. Ladies and gentlemen may I introduce you to Mr. Michael Regan. (Applause)

Administrator Michael Regan: Well, Brandt, that's a hard act to follow. Thank you for that introduction. You know, I want to start by thanking Brandt, and thanking his mother. You know, as I travel the country, the moms always show up and represent, and our mothers are the backbone for a lot of our progressive policies, so thank you mom. You know, I want to thank everyone that is sharing the stage with me today. I think this is exactly what the president envisioned when he set out to electrify the nation's yellow school bus fleet, and that was federal, state, and local governments, partnering effectively with private partnerships as well. Without these people standing with me we would not be able to do this. I can say that events like this are easily the most rewarding things for me because who doesn't like an electrified yellow school bus. But the first hat that I wear, before EPA administrator, is a proud father of a nine year old, who is in the third grade, and when I think about what we're doing for my son, and for the Brandts of the world, it gives me a lot of joy. This is not a responsibility that I take lightly, or that anyone takes lightly, but we do take pleasure in these opportunities because every day millions of children across this great nation ride the yellow school bus to and from school each and every day. For many, it's a quintessential childhood experience. Traditional vehicles that transport our students rely on the internal combustion engine that emits toxic pollutants into the air. On the ride to and from, that we did a demo of, I got a first-hand account from a student who talked about having asthma and what the difference is like riding an electric school bus versus a diesel-powered school bus, and he talked about not only the pollution and the inability to breathe sometimes, but he talked about the anxiety that comes along with that. So, I’m excited to say that we are a part of changing people's lives. And I'm also excited today to highlight one of our earliest successes of EPA's Clean School Bus Rebate Program. This past May, thanks to President Biden's vision for Investing in America, EPA announced $500 million in available rebate funds to upgrade our school bus fleet all across the country. Now, due to that overwhelming response we received from school districts all across the country, we had to double the amount of funding to close to $1 billion just the first year alone. That’s $1 billion with a B. In October we announced that roughly 400 … the sound of an electric school bus (laughter) we announced 400 school districts across the country would be the recipients of these grants. And today, I took a ride on a bus that was fully funded through our rebate program. Two brand new electric school buses arrived for the Wabaunsee School District, excuse me that's eastern North Carolina, Wabaunsee School District in mid-December. Just over a month after the rebate competition closed, and they've already, as you can tell, been integrated into the district's fleet. Wabaunsee is one of the first school districts in the nation to receive buses that were awarded through our program, and these buses are the first ever electric school buses to hit the road here in the great state of Kansas. Two out of 17 electric school buses that will be here in the great state of Kansas. This district worked closely with their local municipal utility provider here in Alma to install the charging infrastructure that enabled the buses to be deployed almost immediately. And we know this kind of collaboration between school districts, their local electric utility providers and manufacturers are critical to the success, to the successful deployment of electric school buses. In partnership with EPA, Edison Electric Institute and the Beneficial Electrification League, they've come together to commit to proactively supporting school districts with the electric utility pledge. These groups will facilitate communication between school districts and electricity providers contributing technical assistance as needed and working together to identify opportunities to increase funding and deployment of electric school buses all across the country. You all are demonstrating exemplary leadership through your collaboration at the forefront of what we hope to be a widespread national movement. This program is one of several EPA programs that will assist us in cleaning the air we breathe, and ultimately electrifying school bus fleets all across the country. Investments like these will transform how millions of students get to and from school and protect public health for generations to come. You know, I'll reiterate what the president has said last night, which is you know I couldn't be more optimistic about where we're headed together as a country. And I couldn't be more grateful to President Joe Biden and Vice President Harris who are working every single day to build a brighter and better future for our children. Mark my words folks, zero emission school

buses will be the American standard. Thank you all for helping us get there and now it's time for all of us to hit the accelerator. Thank you all. (Applause)

Timothy Carroll: We have a few minutes for questions from the press if anybody from the press wants to ask questions of the administrator or anyone else here.

(Unidentified speaker): Where did the idea of the school bus come from?

Can you talk about that a little bit more. When you guys were sitting around trying to figure out what to use the funding for from EPA, where did the school buses kind of come up?

Administrator Michael Regan: You know, this is part of the program what President Biden campaigned on, which is investing in America's infrastructure. And while these school buses are mobile, they're very much an integral part to how we create an advanced technological infrastructure. Yes, these school buses are electrified, and they carry our students to and from school each and every day, but what we hope to see is when these buses are parked, as the electricity utility providers can share with you, these batteries are instrumental in facilitating clean energy and reducing the amount of energy or electricity that's wasted. So, this is a technological revolution that happens to clean our air and help our kids breathe, but it's also a part of the smart technological infrastructure investments that we're making all over the country. This is part of what the president campaigned on. He worked with Congress to give EPA $5 billion to electrify our yellow school buses and we designed our programs around towns and cities like Alma and school districts that are prepared to receive, and grab hold to the future.

(Unidentified speaker) Another question I had, just real quick was, Alma, KS, it’s a pretty small district in Kansas. And you had, I understand about a couple thousand requests for these electric school buses. Why Alma?

Administrator Michael Regan: You know, not that there are any biases, but I'm from rural eastern North Carolina, and a lot of times when we talk about advanced technologies and winning the 21st century, people don't immediately think about our rural communities, but in our rural communities as you can see today, is where a lot of our innovation and technological advancements are happening. The real reason is we chose Alma because we knew that we had leaders on the ground that could demonstrate public-private partnerships, put together competitive grants, and be ready to hit the ground running on day one. This city was prepared to receive these resources, which is why you all are some of the first in the nation to receive these electric school buses. And so, we're here today because of local leadership. End of video.

Timothy Carroll: Any other questions from the press? Alright, thank you everybody.