

1. *What are the propositions for the December 3rd Bus Referendum?*

**Answer:**

**PROPOSITION I** (*Electric and Gasoline School Bus Proposition*)

Shall the Board of Education of the Onondaga Central School District be authorized to purchase and finance two (2) electric school buses and one (1) gasoline school bus, including necessary furnishings, fixtures and equipment and all other costs incidental thereto, and expend a total sum not to exceed \$1,016,508, which is estimated to be the total maximum cost thereof, and pay for such vehicles by applying \$441,000 in available grant funding from the New York School Bus Incentive Program and, for the balance, by the levy of a tax upon the taxable property of said School District to be collected in annual installments as provided by Section 416 of the Education Law; and, in anticipation of such tax, obligations of said School District, in the principal amount not to exceed \$575,508 shall be issued.

**PROPOSITION II** (*Gasoline School Bus Proposition*)

If Proposition I does not pass, shall the Board of Education of the Onondaga Central School District be authorized to purchase and finance three (3) gasoline school buses, including necessary furnishings, fixtures and equipment and all other costs incidental thereto, and expend a total sum not to exceed \$436,480, which is estimated to be the total maximum cost thereof, and pay for such vehicles by the levy of a tax upon the taxable property of said School District and collected in annual installments as provided by Section 416 of the Education Law; and, in anticipation of such tax, obligations of said School District, in the principal amount not to exceed \$436,480, shall be issued.

2. *Why are there 2 bus propositions?*

**Answer:**

A school bus proposition is always part of the annual budget vote in May. Onondaga Central has secured funding through the New York State School Bus Incentive Program (NYSBIP) for a \$441,000 voucher toward the cost of two (2) 66-passenger electric buses which will expire if the district waits until the annual vote. The Onondaga Central School District Board of Education nor the Superintendent have the authority to make this bus purchase without voter authorization. The community has a choice as to whether or not they want the electric buses and the District is



committed to presenting taxpayers with any available information to support an informed decision.

There are two propositions being offered simultaneously in an effort to provide transparency and choice. Proposition I will be the first time Onondaga Central School District voters have the opportunity to vote on electric school buses and why it is the first proposition. Proposition II is what voters have come accustomed to seeing on the annual May ballot.

3. *What is the difference in cost between a gasoline and an electric bus?*

**Answer:**

Total cost of an electric 66-passenger bus \$457,077.16. Total cost of a gasoline 66-passenger bus \$167,063.43. The difference between an electric and a gasoline bus is \$290,013.73.

4. *How much will these electric buses cost the taxpayers?*

**Answer:**

Onondaga Central School District applied for and was awarded a \$441,000 voucher for two 66-passenger electric buses, or \$220,500 per bus. This means a 66-passenger bus will cost the district \$236,577.16 for an electric bus. The district has a ~78% state aid ratio but at this time, the district will receive aid on the cost of the bus before the voucher but not to exceed the amount paid by the district. The District will receive aid on 100% of the \$236,577.16, which means that the local share for these two electric buses is \$0.

5. *Some districts voted on electric buses in May of 2024, so why didn't the district put one up for a vote then? Why are you asking the public now if they want you to buy a couple electric buses?*

**Answer:**

Onondaga Central had not yet secured funding from the New York State Bus Incentive Program (NYSBIP), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), or the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA). Plus, by the time we learned of the funding, there wasn't enough time to add another proposition to the ballot for the May vote.



These funding sources will significantly assist with the purchase and infrastructure costs if the electric bus proposition is approved. Combined with New York State Transportation Aid, this grant funding positions Onondaga Central to acquire two electric buses at **no cost** to the local community.

6. *There is a public forum Thursday, November 21 to discuss this bus referendum. What are a couple of the key points that will be discussed?*

**Answer:**

- A reminder to taxpayers that school districts always need your approval to purchase buses.
- Voters have three choices: two electric and one gas bus, three gas buses or no buses purchased.
- **Without grant funding**, electric school buses have a significantly higher upfront cost compared to diesel or gasoline-powered buses.
- **With State/Federal grants and incentives**, Onondaga Central can purchase two electric buses at no cost:
  - Grant fund per bus: \$220,500
  - Cost after NYSBIP voucher: \$236,577.16
  - District Transportation Aid ratio: ~78% (Received on full \$457,077.16) = \$351,949.41 over 12 years (up to the total cost but not more than the purchase price)
  - Total cost to the District: \$0
  - Without grant funding, the district cannot afford the electric buses.
- If voters approve these electric buses, it allows us to test the efficiency and practicality on regular bus routes, starting with the shortest bus routes.
- Alternative: If electric buses are not approved, traditional gasoline buses are still a necessity in maintaining the district bus replacement schedule.

7. *How is the infrastructure at your bus garage for handling electric buses?*

**Answer:**

Onondaga Central electrical infrastructure will need updating, adding conduit and two charging stations. OCS is positioned to receive grant money from the EPA for charging stations and infrastructure.

Thanks to taxpayers' approval of the 2017 Capital Renovation Project, the bus garage lifts were replaced with lifts that handle a weight that exceeds the electric buses.

8. *What would two E-buses do towards the State mandate to have a zero emission fleet by 2035?*

**Answer:**

These purchases could be the most cost-effective opportunity for OCS to acquire electric buses. The purchase of two electric buses will support Onondaga Central in meeting the New York State Zero-Emission school fleet mandated timeline.

Onondaga Central has 30 school buses in the fleet scheduled for replacement. The plan is to replace three per year, representing ~6% of the fleet and progress toward compliance with the NYS mandate by 2035.

9. *What are you hearing, if anything, from the State about modifying the mandate, helping more with funding or borrowing?*

**Answer:**

Communication from New York State regarding future developments remains limited, but there is a consistent indication the NYS Zero-Emission Program will remain in place. While not yet official, we understand that the bonding period for bus purchases may be reduced from 12 years to 8 years.

Additionally, we have no information regarding the possibility of a second Environmental Bond Act following the full allocation of funds from the Environmental Bond Act of 2022.

10. *Will there be a bus proposition in the May 2025 vote?*

**Answer:**

**No bus proposition for May 2025.** This vote will replace the May bus proposition on the ballot. The reason for a vote in December is that we

are taking advantage of grant money that has an expiration date prior to the May vote.

11. *Do these electric buses have an impact on taxes?*

**Answer:**

**With** grant money, **no**. Electric buses will **not** have an impact on taxes, because of the grant money, and NYS Transportation Aid will cover the cost of the electric bus. The one gasoline bus will have an estimated 12% cost to the local tax base and 78% of the bus is covered by NYS Transportation Aid.

**Without** grant funding, electric buses will have a significant impact on taxes!

12. *The forum is Thursday. What time and where?*

**Answer:**

**OCS Public Forum**

**Date: November 21, 2024**

**Time: 6:30 p.m.**

**Location: Onondaga Jr/Sr High School Cafeteria**

Onondaga Central residents can cast your vote on December 3, 2024 from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. at either location: Rockwell ES Gymnasium or Jr./Sr. High School Lobby.

13. *Will there be any more opportunities to ask questions?*

**Answer:**

**OCS Public Forum**

**Date: December 2, 2024**

**Time: 6:30 p.m.**

**Location: Onondaga Jr/Sr High School Cafeteria**



**Onondaga**  
Central Schools

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***WE GET YOU READY FOR LIFE!***