



BLUE BIRD[®]

Case Study

Georgia School District Chooses Gasoline School Buses, Reduces Maintenance Costs 40 Percent

District: Cobb County School District
Industry: Education
Location: Marietta, Georgia
Vehicles: 2016 Blue Bird Vision Gasoline (32)

By the Numbers

- Maintenance costs reduced 40 percent
- Purchase price of school bus \$4,000 less

Challenge

Invest in school buses that reduce the school district's operating costs.

Background

Cobb County School District is the second largest school district in Georgia and the 23rd largest in the United States. The district transports about 93,000 students to school each day on 870 daily bus routes. The school district's attendance area spans over 348 square miles, comprising 112 schools and multiple cities including Marietta, Smyrna and Kennesaw.

Of Cobb County School District's 1,151-bus fleet, the majority of the buses run on diesel; 32 buses are fueled by gasoline.

"With gasoline buses, we see long-term savings in total cost of ownership as well as a larger pool of qualified mechanics," said Rick Grisham, executive director of transportation. "Our initial numbers are showing a great amount of savings on both fuel and maintenance costs. It's truly a win-win for us."

Gasoline Technology

Common decades ago, gasoline school buses were phased out in favor of diesel. In 2016, Blue Bird reintroduced the Blue Bird Vision Gasoline bus, powered by a Ford engine and a ROUSH CleanTech fuel system. Cobb County School District was an early adopter of these gasoline buses, purchasing its first order in 2016.

Cobb County School District chose gasoline buses for economic reasons. The infrastructure for other alternatives, like compressed natural gas and propane, would have been more difficult to implement, since many of the district's buses park away from central fueling and shop locations.

The district also chose gasoline buses, which replaced older diesel rear-engine models, for their trusted certifications. The Environmental Protection Agency and the California Air Resources Board certify the fuel systems. The Blue Bird Vision Gasoline bus, equipped with a Ford 6.8L V10 engine, is certified to the EPA standard of 0.20 grams per brake horsepower-hour of nitrogen oxide emissions.

All of Cobb County School District's Blue Bird gasoline school buses meet and exceed Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards.

Ownership Savings

Cobb County School District is realizing savings from maintenance, fuel costs and bus costs. Up-front, the district saved \$4,000 on the purchase price of a gasoline bus compared with similar diesel models.

Because the bus doesn't require thousands of dollars of additional equipment to run cleanly, maintenance costs are low. "We have found that the cost to maintain our gasoline buses in our preventative service program is 40 percent lower than that of our diesel buses," said Grisham.

Cobb County School District has zeroed-in on gasoline's simplicity: the buses are easier to maintain, with gasoline technicians often more readily available and typically less expensive to hire than diesel mechanics. Some of the savings come from preventive maintenance. Gasoline-fueled school buses do not require costly diesel after-treatment systems. EGRs, DEF and DPF are just some of the expenses that are eliminated.

Fuel costs are also a savings factor for the gasoline buses. The school district reports that it saves \$500 per year in fuel costs due to lower per gallon prices and projects an increase in savings each year, with substantial savings after the seventh year.

“We are still collecting data, but we are seeing the cost of ownership to be around 5 percent lower than the same year diesel buses,” said Grisham. “Because of this savings, we are able to return money to the schools’ general fund which translates to funds back into the classroom.”

Driving Results

The gasoline school buses have positively impacted the drivers. “Every one of our drivers loves these buses because they are quiet and have better power and acceleration,” said Grisham. He also cites that the quieter-operating buses give drivers the opportunity for better student management; the buses do not have cold-weather startup issues; and fueling is easily accessible.

The gasoline-fueled buses also have driver-forward visibility and a unique mirror system to improve driver awareness and safety.

“One of our drivers recently told me that if we took his gasoline bus away, he’d quit!” said Grisham. “That’s a true testament to the passion our drivers have for the drivability and comfort of these new buses.”

Cobb County School District has a five-year purchase plan to diversify its school bus fleet. The district’s goal is to have school buses that are powered by a variety of fuels, including gasoline, diesel and propane autogas.

As an early adopter of gasoline, the district has shared its experience with many other school districts across the nation. “School districts looking for new fleet technology that helps them stretch tight budgets will find gasoline buses ideal,” said Grisham.

About Blue Bird Corporation: Blue Bird (NASDAQ: BLBD) is the leading independent designer and manufacturer of school buses, with more than 550,000 buses sold since its formation in 1927 and approximately 180,000 buses in operation today. Blue Bird’s longevity and reputation in the school bus industry have made it an iconic American brand. Blue Bird distinguishes itself from its principal competitors by its singular focus on the design, engineering, manufacture and sale of school buses and related parts. As the only manufacturer of chassis and body production specifically designed for school bus applications, Blue Bird is recognized as an industry leader for school bus innovation, safety, product quality/reliability/durability, operating costs and drivability. In addition, Blue Bird is the market leader in alternative fuel applications with its propane-powered, electric and compressed

natural gas-powered school buses. Blue Bird manufactures school buses at two facilities in Fort Valley, Georgia. Its Micro Bird joint venture operates a manufacturing facility in Drummondville, Quebec, Canada. Service and after-market parts are distributed from Blue Bird's parts distribution center located in Delaware, Ohio. For more information on Blue Bird's complete line of buses, visit www.blue-bird.com.

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