



January 3, 2025

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Ms. Veronica Vanterpool
Deputy Administrator
Federal Transit Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
Docket Operations
M-30, West Building Ground Floor, Room W12-140
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

**Re: Notice of Proposed Buy America Waiver for Battery Electric
Minibuses and Request for Comment (Docket No. FTA-2024-0018)**

Dear Deputy Administrator Vanterpool:

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) represents a \$79 billion industry that directly employs 430,000 people and supports millions of private-sector jobs. Our members include more than 340 US public transit agencies, many of which provide public transportation services using vans and minivans.

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to respond to the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Notice of Proposed Buy America Waiver for Battery Electric Minibuses and Request for Comment (Docket No. FTA-2024-0018), published in the *Federal Register* at 89 FR 104285 on December 20, 2024.

APTA strongly supports Buy America and applauds the Administration's continued efforts to ensure the use of American-made materials in FTA-funded projects. These Buy America requirements are critical to U.S. job creation, timely project delivery, quality, and building U.S. manufacturing capacity.

To help achieve these Buy America goals, APTA strongly supports the phased three-year general non-availability waiver of Buy America requirements proposed by FTA for battery electric minibuses used in public transportation.

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On November 18, 2024, FTA issued a five-year partial, time-limited general unavailability waiver of Buy America for vans and minivans because FTA was unable to identify any manufacturer of non-Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-accessible vans and minivans that fully complies with Buy America. APTA had urged and fully supported that waiver. The proposed waiver for battery electric minivans used in public transportation is appropriate and important for the same reason: the unavailability of Buy America-compliant electric vehicles. Approximately 150 letters have been submitted to FTA in support of the waiver. Granting the waiver will enable public transportation agencies to procure electric minivans, providing safe and climate-friendly transportation to thousands of transit riders.

APTA members deploy minivans for on-demand, paratransit, and carpool services. The use of electric minivans helps transit agencies meet state zero-emission and climate mandates and supports important community efforts to provide non-polluting transit vehicles. The use of larger zero-emission buses to serve on-demand and paratransit needs typically is neither economical nor operationally feasible. Electric minivans are sized to serve these smaller, highly specialized markets in an environmentally friendly manner. Unfortunately, as FTA has concluded, there simply are no electric minibuses available in the United States that meet FTA's domestic content or final assembly requirements under Buy America.

APTA was very fortunate to participate with FTA and the members of the Administration at the White House Clean Bus Manufacturing Roundtable held in February 2024. Through the APTA Bus Manufacturing Task Force, we have worked together with bus manufacturers, suppliers, and public transit agencies to build a more competitive, financially stable bus manufacturing capacity in this country. These efforts are critical as the nation's transit agencies transition to zero-emission bus technologies. In February 2024, the FTA issued a "Dear Colleague" letter that recommended a number of commercial practices, all endorsed by the APTA Bus Manufacturing Task Force, to strengthen U.S. bus manufacturing as this industry transition to zero emission takes place. Unfortunately, more work is required to ensure that all types of zero-emission buses—from heavy duty buses to minivans—can be manufactured in the U.S. in compliance with Buy America.

The proposed phased waiver will provide a two- to three-year cushion for building U.S. capacity to manufacture electric minivans, while preserving the ability of transit agencies to meet their immediate needs for such minivans. Moreover, the procurement of minivans now will help demonstrate to manufacturers and suppliers that there is a strong and long-term market in the United States for U.S.-manufactured and US-assembled buses and bus components. APTA, of course, strongly encourages foreign minivan manufacturers to incorporate American-made and compliant parts and components that are readily available and would not adversely impact delivery requirements.

APTA expresses its appreciation to FTA for proposing to grant the phased waiver and commits to continue working with FTA and the public transportation industry to build a more competitive, financially stable, and Buy America-compliant bus and minivan capacity.

Deputy Administrator Veronica Vanterpool

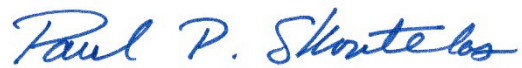
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If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact David Carol, Chief Operating Officer, at dcarol@apta.com.

Thank you for your consideration and support for public transportation in the United States.

Sincerely,



Paul P. Skoutelas
President and CEO