

HOW TO PREVENT POLLUTION ON THE BEAUTIFUL NORTH COAST WITH ZERO EMISSION VEHICLES

Feasibility for Public Transit in a Rural Region

Prepared by

Lead Author: Janet M. Orth, Deputy Director - Administration
Mendocino Council of Governments
and Renewable Energy Development Institute, Board of Directors

Co-author: Steve Turner, Assistant General Manager
Mendocino Transit Authority

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ABSTRACT

A proactive approach of anticipating pollution problems before they occur can be a valuable planning tool for maintaining livable communities. While rural areas with good air quality status receive low priority for clean-air vehicle deployment by state and federal agencies and manufacturers, local governments may choose to participate on their own initiative. Three main factors are driving development and use of zero emission vehicles: clean air goals, global warming impacts, and energy security issues.

Mendocino Council of Governments, as the Regional Transportation Planning Agency in a rural area, conducted a planning project demonstrating zero emission vehicles. Current-model electric vehicles were tested in this mountainous, remote environment. Infrastructure and renewable energy were explored. Local planning staff and decision makers were given hands-on experience, and the public was educated. A report of this Zero Emission Vehicle Demonstration Project was produced.

Based on experience with DaimlerChrysler's Electric Powered Interurban Commuter (EPIC), further research was made of technology options, focusing on public transit applications. MCOG's public-private partners include Mendocino Transit Authority, the Renewable Energy Development Institute, and County of Mendocino Air Quality Management District.

The only currently practical option for rural use of alternative vehicles in public transit are small electric-powered vans. This conclusion may change as new technology develops and becomes available. Electric vehicles are the only vehicles widely available with zero emissions. Mendocino Clean Air Transportation coalition has identified a variety of resources and will continue pursuing pollution prevention in this region of natural beauty on California's North Coast.