

I write today regarding the proposal to require mandatory elimination of gasoline/diesel powered vehicles in New York State. Conversion to electric vehicles can be desirable in a number of instances, but I have serious concerns regarding the logistics of such an implementation and the downstream impacts it could have on families such as mine and school districts such as the one my children attend.

I am the mother of 3 (soon to be 4) children in the Rensselaer City School District. I currently serve as the Vice-President of the School Board and am the immediate past President. I am also a former Rensselaer County Legislative candidate for the district that exclusively encompasses the City of Rensselaer.

Vehicles for a family the size of mine are limited. We currently drive a 2010 Honda Odyssey which gets reasonable gas mileage under normal road conditions. The most important trips we make are to visit my aging mother in New Hampshire. Such travel takes roughly 3.5 hours, crosses three states, and requires passing through the Green Mountains of Vermont. The roads available are rural in nature and can prove dangerous in inclement weather. If forced to use an Electric Vehicle we would not be able to make those trips. Range limits and inadequate charging infrastructure along the way indicate my family is likely to get stuck midway causing a potentially dangerous situation. Would any reasonable person take their family on such a trip knowing they could become stuck in a mountain pass?

Many families in my community face another fundamental, infrastructure challenge - a lack of adequate off-street parking. Rensselaer is an older industrial City whose housing stock was not originally designed for off-street parking. Want to add a driveway? It is no longer a matter of paving a portion of your lawn. To receive a "curb-cut" permit, portions of the sidewalk must be replaced to meet higher standards capable of supporting the weight of modern vehicles. Bluntly, the barriers are significant BEFORE the cost of installing a vehicle charging station are considered.

My role as a school board member also informs me of the fiscal challenges of a small school district, which has an Environmental Justice area located within its borders. Our school budget failed twice in 2020. The budget passed in 2021 but our expenditures for school buses, which required a separate ballot measure, was voted down. We did not propose it again in 2022.

Mandatory conversion to electric buses solves one challenge - diesel exhaust. That is a desirable goal. However, I have significant concerns about the funding mechanisms for schools to make the transition, add charging stations, and train staff to properly support these new vehicles. It's not obvious that a diesel mechanic would be immediately qualified to work on electric vehicles.

Who will provide the proper funding to make the switch? Will it be done on a reimbursement basis which is often the case for schools? We do not have the bonding capacity to front load the expenditures and we already have evidence there is little appetite for those costs to be absorbed by local taxpayers.

Our school children will inevitably suffer because there is not a comprehensive plan to help districts like Rensselaer. After stalling academically for two years of COVID related restrictions, our kids deserve more than an idea. They have earned a plan. I urge you not to adopt the draft scoping plan until you have more answers.

Sincerely,

Lark Rutecki