

## Electric School Buses

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Districts, received a grant from the Public Purpose Charge. The Public Purpose Charge is a state senate initiative to raise funds for improvements to school energy infrastructure. The funds are provided by a 1.5 percent share of Portland General Electric and Pacific Power's revenue. Lewis Transportation however, are applying for a grant through the EPA's Clean School Bus Program.

"With funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the EPA's Clean School Bus (CSB) Program provides \$5 billion over five years (FY 2022-2026) to replace existing school buses with zero-emission and low-emission models. Under the Program's multiple grant and rebate funding opportunities to date, the EPA has awarded almost \$2 billion to fund approximately 5,000 school bus replacements at over 600 schools" states EPA.gov on the grant program.

Back on Tuesday January 11th, Oregon lawmakers announced that Beaverton, Gresham, Portland, Willamina, Amity, Dayton, and McMinnville school districts will receive federal funds under the Environmental Protection Agency's Clean School Bus Program, which is allocating \$5 billion to schools across the country to help schools make the move towards electric bus fleets.

"Making the switch to cleaner, greener school buses is good for our children's health and good for our environment," Rep. Andrea Salinas said then in a statement. "I'm grateful to the Biden Administration and the EPA for investing in Oregon's future, and I look forward to seeing these dollars put to good use in our communities."

Rep. Earl Blumenauer said the old diesel buses threaten air quality and the health of children, adding, "Our community is well positioned to help accelerate the transition to electrification and today's grants are a reflection of our leadership in this vital effort. I'm hopeful that this is just the beginning of a cleaner, more efficient transportation system."

"Every child," Sen. Jeff Merkley explained, "should be able to travel to and from school without having to be exposed to toxins and dangerous air pollution that drives asthma and other diseases."

Senator Merkley continued, "This historic investment will secure support for several Oregon school districts to purchase electric school buses to keep the air cleaner for our kids and save school districts money. I'll keep fighting for the investments and legislation we need to upgrade school bus fleets around Oregon."

Lewis Transportation has been in a grant application process with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with the intention of fully electrifying their fleet. The company is hoping to secure funding for a fleet of 10 buses, including a wheelchair accessible model. Currently in their third round of the application process, the bus service is being assisted by Byd, an electric vehicle company based out of Lancaster, California. Byd, who provided Lewis Transportation with the opportunity to demo the bus, are developing a host of zero emission technologies ranging from vehicles such as buses, forklifts, and rail transport, to energy solutions like battery energy storage and solar.

The Type-D school bus they provided is a full 36-foot bus that uses Byd's proprietary lithium iron phosphate batteries and are fully rechargeable. In contrast to dangerous lithium-ion batteries, susceptible to combustion when punctured or warped, lithium iron phosphate is a safer power source. The buses have a capacity of 84 students and are more than capable of serving the local area. School buses are a smart choice for conversion to electric with mostly shorter routes and longer sitting periods.

Concerned citizens have cited worries over the energy grid. Lewis Transportation have done their research on this matter. In applying for the grant, they have partnered with the Central Lincoln Public Utilities District to assess the capacity for an electric fleet and its required charging infrastructure. They found that the area had more than adequate capacity to accommodate. Lewis Transportation will be hopeful their grant applications are successful. Any positive move toward lowering emissions can contribute to preserving our beautiful Oregon environment for generations to come.

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## OREGON'S OLDTIME FIDDLERS CONVENTION

For the complete schedule, go to [www.oofa.org](http://www.oofa.org)

Wednesday evening's meet-and-greet potluck and jam will occur in the church foyer from 4 - 10 pm for early arrivals. Public activities happen on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Educational and fun workshops will be offered all three days, as well as a Thursday evening "Band Scramble," Friday Dance, and Saturday Youth & Fiddle Contest Showcase. The public is welcome, and all events are at Winston Assembly of God Church, 360 SE Darrell Ave., Winston, OR. Bearded Guy Bites food truck will be on-site all three days from 10 am - 6 pm.

Jude Kuether, the 2024 convention's co-chair states, "Our goal for this year's convention is to have fun playing music we love with friends, old and new, and to conduct OOTFA business as quickly and efficiently as possible."

During the 1980s and 90s, OOTFA's state convention was held in Roseburg and attracted large crowds of old-time musicians and music-lovers. For a couple decades, the convention was held in other parts of Oregon. "In 2022, it returned to Roseburg," says Kuether. "We'll be so excited to see everyone at 2024's church venue in Winston. The church is ideal. We'll have plenty of room for shows, jams and workshops. Youth are very much included, with dedicated spaces to help all ages feel welcome. The next generation will keep this music vibrant, relevant and alive." Please pre-register to attend or to reserve a campsite at [www.oofa.org](http://www.oofa.org)

OOTFA is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, events are free, but a suggested donation at the door will be appreciated but not required. OOTFA is dedicated to perpetuation and promotion of old-time music, loosely defined as music played on traditional instruments dating from the first half of the 20th century and earlier. Oregon Oldtime Fiddlers' Association formed in 1964. They publish and distribute a monthly newsletter, The Hoedowner to all members. Meetings, jams, and performances happen regularly around the State. To become a member, go to [www.oofa.org](http://www.oofa.org)

For more info about the 2024 OOTFA State Convention, contact Jude Kuether at 541-430-2080 or E-mail [jude999s@gmail.com](mailto:jude999s@gmail.com)

## Pet RSV Concerns

Since the summer, the Oregon Department of Agriculture has received more than 200 reports of what is being called an 'atypical canine infectious respiratory disease.' The disease is causing pneumonia- and bronchitis-like symptoms, leading to illness and, in severe cases, even death.

"Nobody really knows where it's coming from. Nobody knows the etiology of it, in other words, what's causing it, and nobody knows what kind of dogs are getting it," said Dr. Teri Sue Wright

While uncertainty swirls around the origin of this virus, what is clear is that certain activities can increase the likelihood of your pet coming in contact with a dog carrying the pathogen.

"Shared spaces and breathing on each other and salivating on each other and coughing at each other's faces."

According to Dr. Wright, finding a way to balance limiting your dog's exposure to the virus and keeping them active is important. Talking to your vet about ways to ensure you limit your pet's risk is a great place to start.

As information continues to come in about this virus, state-level research into the origin and treatment options will come closer to reality. In the meantime, you may want to get creative about how you keep your pet active and healthy.

# Governor will Sign Bill

## Overhauls M110 to include Jailtime & Treatment

Story by Rusty Savage

**Salem OR** - Gov. Tina Kotek announced she plans to sign the new legislation that makes possessing small amounts of hard drugs such as cocaine and fentanyl a criminal offense once again.

House Bill 4002 sped through both the Oregon House and Senate in less than a week. The bill, surprisingly received overwhelming support in bipartisan fashion. It transforms Measure 110, the voter-backed 2020 policy change, that decriminalized drugs and allocated funding to expand services to help people living with addiction, into a system that still prioritizes treatment while making possession of small amounts of drugs a misdemeanor crime punishable by up to 180 days in custody.

There was little question about whether Kotek, a Democrat, would sign the legislation. Still, the governor's office remained tight-lipped throughout the legislative debates, saying only that she would review a bill only after it reached her desk. The governor's announcement offers certainty that Oregon's drug decriminalization experiment is over.

Gov. Kotek said in a statement on (March 7th, "As Governor, my focus is on implementation. House Bill 4002 will require persistent action and commitment from state and local government to uphold the intent that the legislature put forward: to balance treatment for individuals struggling with addiction and accountability."

The governor is particularly focused on estimates from the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission. She said, the state agency "projected disproportionate impacts to communities of color and the accompanying concerns raised by advocates."

Those figures suggest 1,333 new convictions every year for people whose only criminal charge is possessing a small amount of an illicit drug such as methamphetamine, fentanyl, or cocaine, according to the Criminal Justice Commission. The commission also estimates that 533 people per year could receive jail sentences after having their probation for a drug charge revoked. Some of those could also be served in a treatment facility, so far Oregon has not been able to provide treatment to everyone

who wants it.

Lawmakers have stressed the bill prioritizes treatment, but the system is complex. Across the state it will look different depending on whether counties have agreed to deflect people found with drugs from the criminal justice system into treatment following an encounter with law enforcement. The bill would. Lawmakers are also expanding funding for treatment and will make it easier for prosecutors to charge drug dealers.

There has been a resounding criticism of Measure 110's effects on communities across Oregon. In September, a group of political leaders, announced they would push a ballot measure of their own to recriminalize drugs and overhaul Measure 110. Last week, the Coalition to Fix and Improve Ballot Measure 110 said HB 4002 achieved 85% of what it wanted and the group would withdraw its ballot initiatives if the governor would sign it. Governor Kotek signaled she would be open to a bill that recriminalized drug possession at the beginning of the session, but added she was more interested in opportunities to get people treatment.

"I want to see a proposal that answers a set of questions," Kotek said in late January. "One piece will be criminalization, but if we just look at criminalization in isolation, I think it's missing the point. So my question is going to be ... what else are you going to do different to make sure we have better outcomes?"

In her statement on March 7th, Kotek said she would sign the legislation sometime during the next 30 days.



# Bill to Cap cost of Insulin at \$35 passes Oregon Senate

Story by Scooter Brown

**Portland, OR** — On Tuesday, February 13th the Oregon Senate passed a bill that would cap the cost of insulin at \$35 a month for Oregonians.

"No Oregonian should suffer because they can't afford basic, life-saving medication," said Sen. Deb Patterson, D-Salem.

In addition to limiting the cost of insulin, Senate Bill 1508 would also prevent the Health Evidence Review Commission (HERC) and Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee (P&T) from using Quality Adjusted Life Years (QALY) formula to determine coverage for those on Medicaid and Medicare. Patterson said QALY discriminates against people with chronic illnesses and disabilities, making it harder and more expensive for those individuals to get the care they need

"No Oregonian should have to ration their medication or choose

between paying for prescriptions or basic necessities like food or housing," Patterson said. "SB 1508 works to make sure that every Oregonian, regardless of their health or disability status, gets the care they need."

More than 37 million people in the U.S. have diabetes, a chronic illness that affects how a person's body turns food into energy. Insulin is the main medication that many people living with diabetes need to use to survive. However, the price of the 100-year-old drug has more than tripled in the last two decades, forcing people to pay thousand of dollars a year for life-saving medication.

Patterson said this bill would help protect Oregonians on Medicaid, the Oregon Health Plan and those with private insurance from the rising costs on insulin, especially seniors.