

January 9, 2024



Testimony of the American Lung Association
In favor of Assembly Bills 846 & 847
In front of the Assembly Committee on Energy and Utilities

Chair Steffen and members of the committee,

Good morning. My name is Molly Collins, and I am the advocacy director in Wisconsin for the American Lung Association, the oldest voluntary public health organization in the United States. One of our four strategic imperatives is to champion clean air for all. I am speaking in favor of Assembly Bills 846 & 847, which help us create the infrastructure we need to support a transition to electric vehicles, moving us towards that goal.

As you know, transportation sources like cars, buses and trucks are the largest source of smog-forming emissions and climate pollution in the U.S. The rapid shift away from combustion to zero-emission technologies is critical to securing clean air and healthier communities today and for the long-run. This is especially true in lower-income communities and communities of color which too often bear disproportionate health burdens due to increased pollution exposures from high traffic hubs. This is borne out by data – the American Lung Association’s [2023 State of Air report](#) revealed that several Wisconsin counties received failing grades for air quality. This is concerning because [Wisconsin also ranks high for asthma prevalence](#). Breathing air pollution can cause asthma attacks, respiratory and cardiovascular harm, including heart attack and stroke, and even early death.

In addition to the air pollution health impacts, we know that climate change makes the job of cleaning our air and defending clean air progress more difficult. We must act with the urgency our situation requires. We are seeing the effects of this crisis unfold in the news every day as poor air quality days and extreme weather events.

To address air pollution challenges and climate change, Wisconsin should lead on zero-emission transportation – which will yield major health benefits along the way. According to the American Lung Association’s 2022 [Zeroing in on Healthy Air Report](#), the 2020 passenger vehicle fleet represents approximately 94 percent of the nation’s on-road vehicle fleet and generates over 1 million tons of ozone- and particle-forming NOx emissions, and over 33,400 tons of fine particles annually. Heavy-duty vehicles represent approximately six percent of the on-road fleet in 2020 but generate 59 percent of ozone- and particle-forming NOx emissions and 55 percent of the particle pollution (including brake and tire particles). All segments produce harmful pollutants and creating infrastructure to charge all vehicle types must be a priority to help realize health benefits more quickly.

Facilitating publicly-available charging is a critical pathway to the health benefits of zero-emission transportation, and will also help boost public awareness of the accessibility of charging in our communities around the state. We agree that the bill could be made more expansive by applying the same criteria to the state government as are applied to local government units. Not only do we need to transition and charge our state and municipal fleets, but we should also ensure that charging is available to the public in our treasured state parks and other state-owned properties.

These types of measures are widely popular, and we have done [polling](#) that shows that voters overwhelmingly support policies that will put the country on the path to zero-emission vehicles. Passing AB 846 & 847 with the suggested changes will enable the state to utilize the \$78 million it was awarded through the Federal Highway Administration's National EV Infrastructure (NEVI) program, enabling reliable and fast charging.

Building our state's electric vehicle infrastructure provides opportunities for major benefits in the near term and establishes pathways for generations to breathe healthier air. At every level of government, transportation and energy decisions are essentially public health decisions. Thank you for considering crucial legislation today that will impact our public health for generations.

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