CASE STUDY

AUGUSTA COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS SOLAR E-VANPOOL PILOT: FASTER, CLEANER RIDES TO SCHOOL

THE CHALLENGE

Cut long bus routes without having to hire more professional drivers while using cleaner vehicles.

THE RESULT

Two long rural routes were each reduced by 1.5-2 hours round trip with volunteer drivers, and the vans can be charged with on-campus solar power.

In October 2024, Augusta County Public Schools (ACPS) began a pilot program to reduce the length of two long rural school bus routes by implementing Secure Solar Futures' Solar E-Vanpool Program.

Using two Ford E-Transit 10-passenger vans, which are small enough to be driven without a commercial driver's license, the schools set up a vanpool with teacher's aides as drivers. Secure Solar Futures was able to provide this size of van, which is hard to acquire on the open market, through a special dealer relationship. The vanpool vehicles can be powered by solar energy systems installed on several campuses of ACPS, making them a truly clean ride.

The drivers keep the vehicles at their homes, where charging stations have been installed. On school days, each driver picks up half a dozen students from the far end of a long bus route and takes them to the campus where the students go to class and the driver goes to work. During the day, the e-van is plugged into a vehicle charger on campus. At the end of the school day, the driver takes the same students back home and then drives herself home, where she plugs in the e-van to fully charge overnight.

By using Solar E-Vans to cut two long rural school routes, the ACPS Transportation Program was able to provide improved service to students in several ways:

SHORTER COMMUTES Round-trips were cut by 40-61 miles per van, saving students between 1.5 and 2 hours in travel time per day. This applies to the 6-8 students riding the new Solar E-Vanpool vehicles and to the other students who have remained on the orange buses, whose routes were shortened.

DOOR-TO-DOOR PICKUP Students in rural areas who previously had to travel up to a mile to reach their school bus stop now get picked up by e-vans at their front door.

ENHANCED SAFETY ON THE ROAD Vans can navigate narrow rural roads easily and avoid three-point turns sometimes required by large school buses.

SMOOTHER, QUIETER RIDE OF EV OVER DIESEL Parents and drivers report that students are calmer and better behaved.

Best of all, providing better service through the Solar E-Vanpool involved no additional cost. Quite the opposite: **ACPS acquired the vans with no upfront cost** through a 5-year lease with $0 down from Secure Solar Futures, making them more affordable than a vehicle purchase. And the schools have **saved about $500 per month per vehicle** on fuel.

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If you'd like to know more and see if your school might be a good candidate for our Solar E-Vanpool Program, visit **securesolarfutures.com** and contact us for a free consultation.