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**School Bus Internet Access**  
2026 GENERAL SESSION  
STATE OF UTAH  
**Chief Sponsor: Tiara Auxier**  
Senate Sponsor: David P. Hinkins

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**LONG TITLE**

**General Description:**

This bill creates a grant program to provide internet connectivity on school buses in rural school districts.

**Highlighted Provisions:**

This bill:

- defines terms;
- creates a grant program for rural school districts to install and operate internet connectivity systems on school buses;
- establishes priority criteria for awarding grants;
- allows districts to combine grant money with district funds;
- requires grant recipients to commit to long-term operation of internet connectivity systems; and
- requires the State Board of Education to make rules for grant administration.

**Money Appropriated in this Bill:**

This bill appropriates \$325,000 in operating and capital budgets for fiscal year 2027, all of which is from the various sources as detailed in this bill.

**Other Special Clauses:**

This bill provides a special effective date.

**Utah Code Sections Affected:**

ENACTS:

**53F-2-402.5**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

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*Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:*

Section 1. Section **53F-2-402.5** is enacted to read:

28 **53F-2-402.5 . Rural school district transportation grants.**29 (1) As used in this section:30 (a) "Eligible school" means a public school within a school district:31 (i) located in a county of the fourth, fifth, or sixth class, as defined in Section  
32 17-50-501; or33 (ii) with fewer than 3,000 students enrolled in the school district.34 (b) "Rural school district" means a school district that operates one or more eligible  
35 schools.36 (2) Subject to legislative appropriations, the state board shall distribute grant money to rural  
37 school districts to install and operate internet connectivity systems on school buses.38 (3) A rural school district may apply to the state board for a grant under this section.39 (4) The state board may award a grant to a rural school district that:40 (a) submits an application in accordance with state board rule; and41 (b) agrees to the requirements in Subsection (7).42 (5) In awarding grants under this section, the state board shall give preference to rural  
43 school districts that do not currently have internet connectivity systems on school buses.44 (6) Notwithstanding Subsection (5):45 (a) subject to legislative appropriations, the state board shall ensure each eligible rural  
46 school district receives funding for at least two school buses; and47 (b) the state board may not award a grant to a district in an amount that exceeds the total  
48 cost to:49 (i) retrofit two school buses with internet connectivity systems; and50 (ii) pay for internet connectivity services for two school buses for one year.51 (7) A rural school district that receives a grant under this section shall:52 (a) use grant money to:53 (i) retrofit school buses with internet connectivity systems; and54 (ii) provide internet access through a terrestrial wireless provider or a satellite  
55 internet service provider;56 (b) assume responsibility for the cost of internet connectivity services after the grant  
57 money for services described in Subsection (7)(a)(ii) is expended;58 (c) maintain internet connectivity systems and services on the retrofitted school buses  
59 for at least three years after receiving the grant;60 (d) where applicable, coordinate with the Utah Education and Telehealth Network in the  
61 implementation and operation of internet connectivity systems;

- 62 (e) ensure that internet connectivity provided on school buses under this section  
63 complies with the same content filtering and internet safety policies that apply to  
64 internet access in the district's school buildings; and
- 65 (f) comply with reporting requirements established by the state board in rule under  
66 Subsection (10).
- 67 (8) A rural school district may:
- 68 (a) use grant money awarded under this section in combination with the district's own  
69 funds to:
- 70 (i) retrofit more than two school buses with internet connectivity systems; or  
71 (ii) pay for more than one year of internet connectivity services for school buses; and
- 72 (b) if the cost of internet connectivity systems and services is less than the grant award  
73 amount, use remaining grant funds to:
- 74 (i) retrofit additional school buses with internet connectivity systems; or  
75 (ii) pay for additional years of internet connectivity services.
- 76 (9) If a grant recipient fails to maintain internet connectivity systems and services for the  
77 three-year period required under Subsection (7)(c), the state board may require the  
78 district to repay all or a portion of the grant money.
- 79 (10) The state board shall make rules in accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah  
80 Administrative Rulemaking Act, to implement this section, including rules that establish:
- 81 (a) the grant application process and timeline;  
82 (b) required elements of a grant application;  
83 (c) a methodology for determining:
- 84 (i) the total cost to retrofit two school buses with internet connectivity systems; and  
85 (ii) the annual cost for internet connectivity services for two school buses for one  
86 year for purposes of the cap described in Subsection (6)(b); and
- 87 (d) reporting requirements for grant recipients.

88 **Section 2. FY 2027 Appropriations.**

89 The following sums of money are appropriated for the fiscal year beginning July 1,  
90 2026, and ending June 30, 2027. These are additions to amounts previously appropriated for  
91 fiscal year 2027.

92 **Subsection 2(a). Operating and Capital Budgets**

93 Under the terms and conditions of Title 63J, Chapter 1, Budgetary Procedures Act, the  
94 Legislature appropriates the following sums of money from the funds or accounts indicated for  
95 the use and support of the government of the state of Utah.

