

Hop on the Bus Project FAQs

Why are you buying a school bus for Liberian children?

"Hop on the Bus" was conceived last year when Mr. Z.J. Jallah, the founder of YESLiberia, traveled back to Liberia. There, he stayed with the families of YESLiberia's students in four different communities— sleeping where the students slept, helping with their morning chores, and walking with them to school—to experience a typical day in the life of Liberian students, such as that of Jesse Cole.

Jesse lives in a three-room house in the rural village of Sugarhill Community in Kakata. Each night, he and his four siblings sleep on a dirt floor, separated by palm leaves between them. He wakes up early each morning, fetches water for his family at the community well, gets dressed, and walks along a pothole-marked, trash-strewn, road for 49 minutes and through dangerous areas before arriving at school.

Jesse's story is typical of many Liberian students who often live in rural areas and must walk long distances to attend school. The time it takes to travel to school and back prevents them from helping their families with farming and other efforts required to sustain them, which sometimes forces parents to choose between having their children help support their family economically now or educating them for a better future later.

The Hop on the Bus project intends to help minimize some of these transportation, safety, and economic challenges in a way that also maximizes benefits both for the students and their families – ensuring that students attend school AND meet their family obligations.

Why should subsidizing children's school transportation be a priority?

Student safety is one of our main concerns. According to a 2016 report, ["Step Change: An Action Agenda on Safe Walking for Africa's Children."](#) the combination of high vehicular speed, poorly maintained roads, and inadequate footpaths and safe crossings are deadly for children throughout the African continent. In fact, more than 85,000 African children are killed or seriously injured on roads each year. In addition, these long walks place children, especially girls, at a higher risk for sexual violence.

We also believe that the bus will offer students hope. The transportation will help improve school attendance and increase students' dedication to learning. Feeling secure and free of anxiety relating to transportation will foster academic success.

Additionally, the bus will allow our staff to take advantage of regular, uninterrupted time with students while traveling to and from school, which will allow us to teach them about service above self, the four-way test, volunteering, and sharing. We believe these are vital subjects that are not being taught in most Liberian schools.

Where will the bus come from? Why don't you just buy a bus in Liberia instead of shipping one from the US or one of the Gulf countries?

There are no busses manufactured in Liberia. Busses in the country of Liberia have been manufactured and shipped from the US (or one of the Gulf countries or China). Alternatively, they are sometimes bought second-hand from a neighboring country in West Africa at some point in time, and we are exploring all these options. Once these busses are shipped from the US and arrive in Liberia, however, they typically double in cost because of the limited supply and high demand.

So, why not buy a bus from a neighboring African country?

The history of colonization affects modern Africa in so many ways, and in this case, it plays a role in the types of transportation suitable in each West African country. The closest country to Liberia in which busses are manufactured is the Ivory Coast, but since the Ivory Coast was colonized by the French, it's electrical (110 v.) and mechanical system is European-based whereas Liberia, whose history has been tied to that of the US, operates on the American electrical (220 v.) and mechanical system.

Another issue is that a newer European bus would not work properly in Liberia as the fuels are different. A European spec bus runs on diesel sold in Europe and the engine is designed to work on a diesel standard, typically Euro 5 or Euro 6. Liberia is selling fuel that is Euro 3 or Euro 4 (or below), so a European bus would have all sorts of problems with fuel injectors, fuel pumps, etc. and would not last very long. A petrol bus might also be an alternative option since they don't have the same problems of fuel quality.

The above reasons are why the busses in Liberia are typically purchased from the States (or a Gulf country) rather than from a neighboring African country or even from Europe.

Additionally, last year we sent a team to the Ivory Coast and Guinea when we learned that there could be possible compatible busses there. Unfortunately, the options we saw were more than 15 yrs old and had several issues. Purchasing those busses would have caused us more setbacks than benefits.

How much will the project cost?

Our initial goal is to purchase, paint, ship, and maintain one school bus with a minimum seating capacity of 45 that would allow for the transport of 90 sponsored children to arrive and depart from the different schools they attend on time each school day. The total cost of the project is \$57,425, with the largest expenses being for the purchase of the bus and the shipment to Liberia. The estimated costs are itemized in the chart below.

How will one bus benefit students at various schools each morning?

With one bus it is impossible to transport all of YesLiberia's students from the 31 different schools our sponsored students currently attend. That's why we've identified the most central route that would benefit most for the students-- Currently, our identified route starts the intersection of Johnson Street and Haile Selassie Ave to GSA Road Intersection (a total of 25 mins drive). In the future we hope to supply multiple busses to Liberia for various routes-- maximizing our impact beyond the classrooms.

Will other non-YesLiberia's students be allowed to get on the bus?

Yes! We believe in making education appealing to students in Liberia. That includes supporting and assisting students beyond YesLiberia's network of students. Any student along the bus paths/routes (before school day starts and after the school day ends) would be allowed to get on the bus at no cost to them. However, while on the bus we expect all students to learn about YesLiberia, our partners, and the value of paying it forward or service beyond self.

When is the bus expected to be purchased and shipped to Liberia?

Our timeline is to purchase the bus in May and June of 2022. The projected time frame for the bus shipment is June to August **2022**; with the intention to be used for the 2022-2023 school year.

Will YesLiberia accept a donated bus in good condition?

ABSOLUTELY. Our initial goal was to obtain a used/donated bus, but it has been difficult to identify a donor or partner to help with this. If you or someone in your network has access to donated busses, please let us know. We will focus on fundraising on the shipping cost of a donated bus if that option exists for busses in good condition.

Where will the bus be parked in Liberia?

We currently have two options. One of our partners, the YMCA of Liberia has offered to assist with the parking of the bus at no cost to YesLiberia. Additionally, an advisory board member of YesLiberia also owns major businesses in Liberia. She has offered to provide free parking space, along with a security guard, in a fenced facility for the bus.

Capital Costs / Hop on the Bus!

Particulars	Required Units	Rate/Unit	Total Cost (est)
TATA School Bus (Brand New)	1	\$40,000	\$40,000
Independent Inspection	1	\$250	\$250
Towing	2	\$1,000	\$2,000
Title/Registration/Plate	1	\$400	\$400
Outside Signage ¹	4	\$400	\$1,600
Inside Signage ²	5	\$200	\$1,000
Repainting	1	\$1,500	\$1,500
Lockbox ³	1	\$400	\$400
Internal Mirror	1	\$350	\$350
DVD Player ⁴	1	\$25	\$125
DVD Screen	6	\$300	\$1,800
Shipment to Liberia	1	\$8,000	\$8,000
Total			\$57,425

Why is the shipping cost so high?

Remember the bus cannot be purchased in Liberia; there are no fleet of school busses the country. This high cost is an estimate of the cost to ship from countries like the UAE or the United States. Additionally, due to Covid, logistical costs have increased across the globe. This shipping cost may also increase due to the lack of the RORO shipping option (Roll On Roll Off shipping) in the industry for international cargo.

¹ Sponsors' names and logos will be painted on the sides of the school bus.

² Sponsors' brochures will be displayed or offered inside the bus.

³ Because Liberia is a country with high-security needs, an IA lockbox is essential to safeguard fare paid from passengers as well as documents including registration, insurance, and emergency contact information.

⁴ The DVD will be used to play informational videos from partners or other educational videos.

Who will drive the busses?

In addition to assisting students and their families with transportation, having a school bus would also provide employment opportunities in a country in dire need of jobs. YesLiberia, in conjunction with sponsor YMCA Liberia, has committed to hiring female bus drivers on a rotational basis. In doing so, the project will positively impact the lives of twelve women in need of employment. This rotational employment approach also eliminates or minimizes potential corruption from employees.

What are the projected annual operating costs, and how will these be met in order for the bus project to become self-sustaining?

Operational costs listed below include fuel and wages for the bus drivers. Please note that although we have accounted for the cost of three staff positions below, one of our goals is to hire three female drivers who will work part-time on a rotational basis. We will attempt to impact as many families as possible through providing income to women, a priority uncommon in Africa.

Annual Operational Costs /Hop on the Bus! Routine operational costs are charted below.

Particulars	Cost	Amount	Total Cost	Annual Cost
Fuel	\$5/gallon	50 miles/day 7.14 gallons	\$35.70 per day \$178.50 per week	\$7,140
Staff	\$138/month	3 staff positions	\$414/month	\$5,000
Maintenance	\$200	1	200/month	\$2,400

In order to cover the estimated annual operational costs of \$14,540, the bus will be utilized during hours outside of school delivery and pick up. For example, the bus could be used to transport college students during evening hours for a nominal fee to ensure the bus project is also revenue-generating and thus self-sustaining.

Below is a chart outlining three options for subsidizing operational costs to keep the service sustainable. After consideration of the three options, the YesLiberia board chose the highlighted option (option #2). As you will see, if the bus is used five days per week, the projected revenue will cover the operating costs outlined in the chart above. Any remaining revenue will be set aside in an account to be used for maintenance and repairs.

Revenue Options/ Hop on the Bus!

	Seating Capacity	Unit Fare/Fee	Revenue - Used 2 days per week	Revenue - Used 3 days per week	Revenue - Used 5 days per week
Option 1	30	\$1.50	\$90/week \$360/month	\$135/week \$540/month	\$225/week \$900/month
Option 2	45	\$1.50	\$135/week \$540/month	\$202.50/week \$810/month	\$337.50/week \$1350/month
Option 3	70	\$1.50	\$210/week \$840/month	\$315/week \$1260/month	\$525/week \$2100/month

If the bus comes from America, are there correct spare parts and mechanical knowledge in Liberia capable of repairing the bus when it breaks?

Yes, as mentioned above, most school busses shipped to Liberia are primarily shipped from the USA. In recent years, busses also have been shipped from India, Europe, and some Gulf countries. A few years ago, the Indian government donated 45 TATA Busses, diesel Euro 2 fuel, to the government of Liberia for transporting government employees. We rented one of those busses in November 2020 for one of our programs. It allowed us to test out the bus and ask the driver various questions. We are currently in talks with the nearest dealership for those busses in the Gulf.

As an alternative to shipping from the USA, we may buy a brand-new TATA school bus from the Gulf. This will be at a much higher cost but would prevent basic maintenance issues at least for the next five years. Additionally, since 45 of these busses are already on the roads in Liberia, there are parts, drivers, and mechanics who are familiar with these busses, a fact confirmed by the driver we consulted in November 2020. These busses are also highly durable and built to drive on rough roads. In fact, the engine in these busses are manufactured in the USA by the USA firm Cummins Inc., based in Indiana. A quick google search shows that Cummins is the global power leader for clean, efficient, dependable and durable engines. Cummins engines are found in nearly every type of vehicle and equipment on earth, from pickup trucks to 18-wheelers, berry pickers to 360-ton mining haul trucks.

How will you collect data and provide feedback on the efficacy of this project?

We plan to have two of our staff members (or staff from our partners) present on the bus whenever it is in use. This is necessary to prevent corruption while also catering to the safety and care of the students. The roles of these staff members will include: 1) greeting students affectionately by name, 2) informing parents when a student is not picked up and when all students are to be dropped off, 3) counting all students on the bus and giving them one lesson about service and volunteering each week, 4) collecting reduced fares

from college students during midday and evening hours trips, 5) refueling the bus and calculating the miles traveled and numbers of trips made, and 6) ensuring the routes identified are the only routes traveled. This will allow us to manually and accurately document specific data points for a monthly report we will share with all partners.

Do you have plans to expand the project in the future?

Yes, we plan for this first bus to be the "seed" bus that grows into a fleet of busses that will serve students attending most of the schools we support students at, the ETF program, Rotaract programs, and other student service and empowerment projects. In the future, if multiple busses are available, we also plan on using the busses as a mobile library on the weekend for younger students to learn to love reading.

Who are the partners on this project?

Local Partners in Liberia Commitments

Our local partners have made the following commitments.

Partners	Commitment
YESLiberia (Volunteer Staff in Liberia)	To maintain ownership and full operational oversight of the bus, will share monthly reports to all partners
Rotary Club of Sinkor, Montserrado County	To partner on the Rotary District 7390 Grant, will contribute funds (\$ TBD) to use the bus for occasional Rotaract Youth projects. Additionally, Rotarians and other professionals will be scheduled to profile On-The-Bus talk or presentation to students once a week. These presentations could focus on service beyond self. our rotary partners, self esteem, leaderships, volunteering, peer-pressure, or the value of education.
YMCA of Liberia	To provide overnight parking and one "ride-along" bus staff for documenting trip activities (valued at \$300 monthly)
Rep. George B. Samah	To donate cost of shipment to Liberia, if purchased in the USA (valued at \$ 6,000)
Mr. and Mrs. Jallah	To donate cost of installing tracking device on the bus for security (valued at \$2000)
ETF Liberia	To require 300 of their students to use our lower fare, school bus service to offset operational cost (valued at \$200-\$300 monthly)
KEEP Liberia	(Still in partnership discussion) To provide books for students to read regularly on the bus on weekends

Global Partners Commitments

Partners	Commitment
YESLiberia	Has raised \$11,680; and will continue to raise funds
Harrisburg Keystone Rotary Club	Sponsoring Club for the Rotary District 7770 Grant; Commitment of \$5,000 (hoping to maximize the potential \$25,000 total possible for a District Grant, now seeking partner clubs)
Mechanicsburg North Rotary Club	Financial contribution of \$5000
West Shore Rotary Club	Financial contribution of \$2000
Littlestown Rotary Club	Financial contribution of \$500
Rotary Club of York	Financial contribution of \$250
St. Andrews Rotary Club	Financial contribution of \$1000
Mr. Duke Adams and Dr. Meg Ramey	Donating up to \$6000 for a matching challenge to other District 7390 clubs

What are the potential benefits to our organization if we become project partners?

Organizational sponsors will have an opportunity to participate in our launching ceremony. As noted above, sponsors' logos will be painted on the sides of the school bus, and brochures on each organization will be displayed or offered inside the bus. Most importantly, ***Hop on the Bus!*** is an opportunity to achieve shared goals beyond borders. Let's make history together in a country where there is no school business system.