

Bishkek Smog Civil Society Organization
Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic
Through ADB Kyrgyz Resident Mission (KYRM)

Dear Sir or Madam,

Subject: Response to Information Request Dated 29 March 2025: Urban Transport Electrification Project (UTEP)

Following your request dated 29 March 2025 (Attachment 1), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) herewith responds to your questions as listed below:

- 1) Question 1: Did ADB plan to replace any trolleybuses with electric buses beyond the 25 outdated trolleybuses, that needed replacement as they met their end of technical lifetime?**

Response: From the outset, the Urban Transport Electrification Project (UTEP) was designed to be complementary to the existing trolleybus fleet in Bishkek as present in 2021. The project's primary objective is to improve the air quality in Bishkek. To this end, UTEP was designed to compensate for the long-term decline in the fleet of low-emission electric trolleybuses, which, over recent decades, have been increasingly crowded out by fossil fueled public buses, negatively impacting local air quality. In line with this, the project planned to replace 95 diesel buses and 25 trolleybuses, which, due to their ages, would not be able to operate anymore, as those buses have reached the end of their technical lifetimes. As the nature of the project is to strengthen the fleet of zero-tailpipe emission electric trolleybuses to lower the overall emissions of the Bishkek public transport sector, UTEP did not plan to replace any trolleybuses beyond the 25 outdated units.

- 2) Question 2: According to ADB Urban Transport Electrification Project, which bus types will be replaced by the 120 new battery-electric buses?**

Response: Please refer to the response provided to Question 1 above.

- 3) Question 3: Did the Bishkek City Hall contact ADB and make an agreement about changing trolleybuses by electric buses?**

Response: ADB emphasizes that the 120 new battery-electric buses under the UTEP are not intended to replace trolleybuses beyond the originally planned 25 outdated units, which had to be retired after reaching the end of their technical lifetimes. The project was designed to supplement, not replace, the existing zero-emission trolleybus fleet, introducing modern technology to provide additional flexibility, efficiency, and route coverage. UTEP aimed to increase the share of clean public transport modes (i.e. trolleybuses and battery-electric buses) versus existing fossil fueled buses, which negatively affect air quality.

ADB confirms that there is no agreement between Bishkek Mayor's Office and ADB to replace trolleybuses with battery-electric buses, beyond the 25 trolleybus units which are dilapidated and have reached the end of their technical lifetimes. The majority of the buses being replaced under UTEP are diesel buses, which significantly contribute to air pollution.

4) Question 4: Who made the decision to replace trolleybuses with electric buses?

Response: As elaborated above, the new electric bus fleet is not intended to replace the Bishkek trolleybus fleet. ADB has previously shared the construction plans of both trolleybus depots that are currently being completed, showing that the battery-electric bus parking and charging spaces are situated in previously unused land slots, to avoid negatively impacting existing trolleybus operations. The decision to remove trolleybuses from Bishkek City was made unilaterally by the local municipal authorities. ADB was not formally or informally consulted on this decision.


For further clarifications we are also attaching a counterstatement shared in June 2024 in response to misleading media coverage regarding UTEP. This document provides essential context about UTEP and addresses previously published misleading information.

In its joint effort to improve air quality and promote low-emission transport in Bishkek City, ADB would highly appreciate it if Bishkek Smog could share the attached document (Attachment 2) through its communication channels.

On 1 April 2025, the first two battery-electric buses were delivered to Bishkek, with the remaining 118 buses scheduled for delivery in June and July 2025. Following the successful deployment of the electric bus fleet this year, ADB plans to discuss a second phase of the project with the Bishkek Mayor's Office. To deliver enduring air quality improvements for the citizens of Bishkek, ADB hopes to obtain the support of Bishkek Smog for this important future initiative.

We thank you for your understanding and continued support.

Sincerely,


L. Mtchedlishvili
OIC 3 Apr 2025
Joonho Hwang
Director
East, Central and West Asia Team
Energy Sector Office
Sectors Department 1

CBS

J. Vepel



Attachments: Attachment 1 – E-mail Inquiry 29 March 2025
Attachment 2 – ADB Counter Statement – June 2024

cc: Mr. Zhamalbek Yrsaliev, Vice Mayor, Bishkek Mayor's Office (BMO)
Mr. Ulan Beishenbaev, Director, Department for Transport and Development of Road and Transport Infrastructure, BMO
Mr. Talantbek Kaparov, Director, Municipal Enterprise "Bishkek City Transport", BMO
Mr. Zheng Wu, Country Director, ADB KYRM
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