



# Electric School Buses: The Opportunity for Colorado

## Roundtable Discussion

With remarks from Colorado  
Governor Jared Polis



WORLD  
RESOURCES  
INSTITUTE



Electrification  
Coalition

## Speaker Bios

January 27, 2022

### Speaker

### Bio

**Aaron Viles**, Program  
Manager, Electrification  
Coalition



**Aaron Viles** is a program manager for the Electrification Coalition, focused on helping accelerate community efforts to increase adoption of EVs. He is based in Lexington, KY. With over 20 years of experience in advocacy, Aaron comes to the EC from a stint in electoral politics, recently working with the Kentucky Democratic Party. Aaron brings experience with environmental, energy, and online advocacy to the EC team. He is currently the volunteer chair of the board of directors of Healthy Gulf, a New Orleans-based regional environmental group.

**Justin Balik**, Senior  
Manager, State Policy for  
Transportation  
Electrification, World  
Resources Institute



**Justin Balik** is Senior Manager, State Policy for Transportation Electrification. He currently leads state level engagement and strategy for WRI's Electric School Bus Initiative.

Justin has an extensive background in sustainable transportation policy and advocacy, as well as urban affairs and state and local government. Prior to joining WRI, Justin was Deputy Chief of Staff at the New Jersey Economic Development Authority and was previously Director of State and Federal Affairs for the New York City Department of Transportation. Additionally, Justin recently served as a leading volunteer on the Biden for President Campaign's Infrastructure Policy Committee.

Justin holds a Master of Public Administration degree from Northeastern University, as well as a BA in American Studies from Brandeis University. Justin currently lives in South Orange, New Jersey with his wife and two children. In his free time, he enjoys swimming, exploring cities, and eating delicious food with friends and family.

**Ean Thomas Tafoya,**  
Colorado State Director,  
GreenLatinos



**Ean Thomas Tafoya** is active in Denver Public Affairs, Colorado Public Policy, and Federal Environmental Policy. He has worked for three branches of local government, worked at three levels of American government, run for Denver City Council, and has directed many local and state political races. Currently, he serves as the Colorado State Director for GreenLatinos. Ean has received recognition for his work from both the Denver Regional Council of Governments, the Denver Regional Air Quality Council, and most recently was named a River Hero by the National River Network. He loves to dance whether it be at a concert or in politics! As Mr. Denver, a local music DJ and radio host, he uses the media to uplift locals in the community. Follow Ean @believeEan on all platforms. Ean is a water protector that holds a B.A. in Political Science with a Minor in Native American Studies, a Water Studies Certificate, and Early Childhood Education Certificate from Metropolitan State University of Denver as well as a Horticultural Therapy Certificate for Colorado State University.

**Sue Gander,** Director,  
Electric School Bus  
Initiative, World  
Resources Institute



**Sue Gander** is the Director of the Electric School Bus Initiative. She leads a cross-organizational team in advancing the goal of electrifying the US fleet of 480,000 school buses by 2030 with a focus on equity and inclusion.

Prior to WRI, Sue was Managing Director of Policy for the Electrification Coalition, where she lead policy and advocacy efforts to electrify transportation at scale. Sue was previously the Director of the Energy, Infrastructure and Environment Division at the National Governors Association for more than a decade and spearheaded work on transportation electrification, power sector modernization and resiliency. She also lead initiatives on clean energy, climate change and air quality initiatives at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Center for Clean Air Policy. She has authored many reports and papers and is a frequent presenter.

Sue holds an MA in Public Affairs from the University of Wisconsin, with a certificate in Energy Analysis and Policy. She earned a BA with Honors in Public Policy from Brown University.

Sue lives with her family in Kensington, Maryland, where she enjoys riding her e-bike and walking their dog Zoey.

**Senator John  
Hickenlooper**



**John Hickenlooper** is a U.S. Senator for Colorado who brings people together to address our nation's toughest problems — whether rebuilding a stronger, more resilient economy, lowering the costs of health care and prescription drugs, or combating climate change and protecting our public lands. He started his career in Colorado as a geologist before being laid off and opening the state's first brewpub. After successfully running a small business, John was elected Mayor of Denver and then Governor of Colorado, where he served for two terms from 2011-2019 and helped the state become the number one economy in the nation.

**Jason Wilcox**, Legacy Fleet Incentives and Assessment Center, US EPA Transportation & Climate Division



**Jason Wilcox** works in EPA's Transportation and Climate Division within the Office of Transportation and Air Quality. He has helped to coordinate the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) School Bus Rebates and State Grants since 2016.

**Mark Silberg**, Special Advisor for Climate and Energy for Governor Jared Polis



**Mark Silberg** is the special advisor for climate and energy for Governor Jared Polis. Mark joined the Governor's Office in November. Previously he was a manager at RMI (Rocky Mountain Institute) where he worked with states to develop near-term climate action plans, facilitated strategy sessions with NGOs as part of the largest single philanthropic investment in climate action in U.S. history, and was on the founding team of RMI's federal policy and building electrification initiatives. He has led projects with utilities, startups, governments, and regulatory agencies, including Commonwealth Edison, WattTime, National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC), Renewable Energy Buyers Alliance (REBA), state agencies in Washington and New Mexico, and senior leadership from the Department of Defense. Prior to his time at RMI, Mark was a founder of a business accelerator that led the Department of Energy's Cleantech University Prize program. Mark has a degree in Philosophy from Northwestern University and in 2016 was named to Forbes' 30 under 30 in Energy. He was a policy volunteer for the Biden Presidential Campaign on the Subcommittee on Environmental Justice, and is working on a book on climate change solutions with Justin Gillis and Hal Harvey.

**Christian Williss**, Senior Director, Transportation Fuels and Technology, Colorado Energy Office



**Christian Williss** is Senior Director, Transportation Fuels and Technology at the Colorado Energy Office. Christian leads office efforts to accelerate adoption of zero emission vehicles through policy, planning, and research, management of statewide infrastructure grant programs, and education and outreach. He previously served as Director of Programs and Initiatives where he oversaw a team of program managers and engineers responsible for managing existing programs and launching new initiatives in the energy efficiency and alternative fuels markets. Prior to coming to the Energy Office he worked as Sustainability Program Administrator at the City and County of Denver where he led a number of citywide sustainability initiatives including the City's energy efficiency program. Christian holds a BA in Political Science and an MS in Construction Management.

**Steve McCannon**

Mobile Sources Program  
Director, Colorado  
Department of Public  
Health and Environment  
(CDPHE)



Steve is the Director of the mobile sources program for CDPHE’s air quality department. Formerly the deputy director for the Regional Air Quality Council (RAQC), he was focused on strategies to reduce mobile source air pollution through policy development and incentivizing the purchase of alternatively fueled vehicles (i.e., natural gas, electric and propane), retrofitting the legacy diesel and gasoline fleet and repairing/salvaging high-emitting and smoking vehicles. Steve graduated from the University of Iowa with a Bachelor of Arts in political science in 1992 and completed his Master of public administration at the University of Colorado – Denver in 1997.

**Governor Jared Polis**



**Governor Jared Polis** is an entrepreneur, education leader, and public servant. After launching several successful companies, Governor Polis committed himself to making sure other Coloradans had the opportunity to pursue their dreams through founding schools for at-risk students and new immigrants and started nonprofits to help veterans. Prior to serving as Governor, Polis served on the State Board of Education and represented Colorado's 2nd Congressional district.

**Landon Hilliard, Safe  
Routes Program  
Coordinator, Boulder  
Valley School District**



**Landon Hilliard** is a Safe Routes Program Coordinator who leads car-trip reduction programming for the Boulder Valley School District. In recent years, electric vehicle adoption in support of environmental health has been a primary calling.

**Adam West**, Project and Energy Efficiency Specialist, Denver Public Schools



**Adam West** is a Project and Energy Efficiency Specialist on the Sustainability Team at Denver Public Schools. He is responsible for advancing sustainable design and construction, energy and water efficiency, and alternative energy. He has a technical role and assists with team strategy. Previously, Adam was a Project Manager for Southface Institute, where his responsibilities included LEED certification consulting, energy and water audits, and solar grant management. Adam has a BA in Environmental Studies from George Washington University and an MS in Civil and Environmental Engineering from University of Colorado Boulder.

**Casey Ungs**, Steamboat Springs School District



**Casey Ungs** is a high energy transportation and logistics professional with demonstrated people management experience. Focused on cost reduction, route optimization, and process improvement strategy. Casey has a diverse operations background that spans school transportation, inside operations, customer delivery/pick up, line haul, compliance, health & safety, and intermodal operations. He is the transportation manager for Steamboat Springs School District RE-2.

**Stacey Simms**, Senior Business Consultant, Excel Energy



**Stacey Simms** began her energy career after serving overseas in the Peace Corps (El Salvador) where she learned the role of energy plays in the everyday human experience. Stacey's professional life has included program and project management in commercial energy efficiency, renewable energy generation, energy policy, and utility electric vehicle programs.

Stacey started in fleet electrification leadership in the early 2000's with the Dept of Energy Clean Cities Program. She has implemented programs as large as \$200M, and thrives on bringing excellence in delivery and customer experience. At Xcel Energy, Stacey is currently the senior business consultant working with commercial and industrial customers to electrify their operations and expand electric infrastructure.

**Todd Hawkins**, Senior Vice President, First in Charge, First Transit, and First Student Transit and First Vehicle Services



**Todd Hawkins** is the Senior Vice president for first in charge of First Student, First Transit and First Vehicle Services. He is responsible for maintenance of 44,000 school buses, 13,000 transit buses and 38,000 municipal fleet vehicles in 480 locations. Between the three companies First Group maintains about 130 electric buses and have about 300 on order. First has 180 ASE Blue Seal Shops more than any other company. Todd has been with First for 42 years.

**Joel Danforth**, Energy Programs & New Business Director, United Power



**Joel Danforth** is the Energy Programs & New Business Director for [United Power](#), a utility cooperative serving the exurban and rural communities north of Denver. Joel has over 15 years of energy industry experience, including work on American Recovery & Reinvestment Act programs as a Project Officer with US DOE Golden Field Office; as a Project Manager for the National Advanced Vehicle Testing programs; and as the Distributed Energy Resources Manager at Platte River Power Authority. Joel has a Bachelor's of Science degree in Energy Infrastructure from the Metropolitan State University of Denver and a graduate certificate in Energy Innovation & Emerging Technologies from Stanford University.

**Dominic May**, Energy Resource Program Architect, La Plata Association



**Dominic May** is the Energy Resource Program Architect at La Plata Electric Association where I've been for the past three years. He joined the coop after working as a product manager in the utility software space in Boulder. Dominic is responsible for the development and implementation of innovative energy resource programs. These include distributed generation, energy efficiency, controllable loads, and beneficial electrification.

**Ben Prochazka**, Executive Director, Electrification Coalition



**Ben Prochazka** joined the Electrification Coalition (EC) in October 2012 as the Director of Strategic Initiatives to help lead the Outside the Beltway Initiatives and now serves as the Executive Director. Ben has spent more than a decade working on environmental, human rights, and voter engagements efforts. His experience includes leadership roles as the Campaign Director for the Save Darfur Coalition, the Legislative Director for the Colorado Environmental Coalition, the Colorado State Director for the New Voters Project, and numerous public interest campaigns as the Western States Field Organizer for U.S. PIRG. Ben has led numerous innovative and impactful e-mobility programs and provided thought leadership at international electric mobility conferences and strategic program development through his work with the EC.

**Senator Stephen Fenberg**, Colorado State Senate Majority Leader



**Steve Fenberg** was originally elected to the Colorado State Senate in 2016, representing Senate District 18. He has served as Senate Majority Leader since 2019. Before entering the Senate, Steve served for a decade as the founding Executive Director for New Era Colorado, the largest state-based young voter mobilization organization in the country. Under Steve's leadership, New Era Colorado registered hundreds of thousands of young people to vote, helping shape Colorado's current political landscape. Steve is a progressive voice at the Capitol, championing legislation to combat the climate crisis, increase election access, and make structural reforms that advance economic and social justice. As Senate Majority Leader Steve serves on the Executive Committee and the Legislative Council. He has previously served on the State, Veterans, and Military Affairs Committee, the Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee, the Governor's Council on Blockchain Technology, and the Bipartisan Election Advisory Committee.

**Representative Alex Valdez**, Colorado House District 5



**Alex Valdez** represents Colorado’s House District 5, which encompasses the urban core of Denver. He was elected in 2018 to succeed former-House Speaker Crisanta Duran. Alex Valdez was born and raised in the Denver Metro area. After the recession hit, he started a solar business with a grassroots campaign out of a co-working space in the River North Art District (RiNo). Today, his dedication and hard work has helped that company flourish into one of Colorado’s largest solar companies. As a young adult, Alex found his calling in the Democratic Party. He is a lifelong Democrat and proud to be part of a party that is inclusive of his values as an LGBTQ person of color and a believer in equal rights and opportunity for all. Alex believes that it is critical, especially in times like these, that we stay focused on policy that will create a better living world. He currently serves as the Chair of the Energy and Environment Committee, as well as on the State, Civic, Military, and Veterans Affairs Committee. He was elected to serve as the First-Year Representative to Leadership, the first incoming member in the history of Colorado to be elected to this role. Alex is Chair of the Latino Caucus, and serves on the LGBTQ Caucus and the recently founded Aviation Caucus.

**Orville Thomas**, Government Relations Director, Lion Electric



**Orville Thomas** is the Director of Government Relations for Lion Electric. He comes to Lion after spending the last decade working in California politics and influencing federal policies on transportation and health issues. Orville originally worked in journalism as a TV news reporter in Northern California until attending the University of California, Berkeley to get his Master of Public Policy degree. Since then he has worked as a spokesperson for the California High-Speed Rail Authority, served as the Deputy Director of Public Affairs for the California Department of Public Health, and was the Government Affairs Director for the California Alliance for Jobs and the California Immigrant Policy Center.

**Jacqueline Piero**, VP Policy, Nuvve Holding Corp



**Jacqueline Piero** is the Vice President of Policy for Nuvve responsible for assessing the state of policy and regulatory landscape, market structures, and energy ecosystems to determine what business models and services are possible. She also determines what barriers need to be addressed before charting policy and an advocacy path for each new jurisdiction where Nuvve will operate. Jacqueline has a Masters in Policy from the University of Delaware.

**Matt Stanberry**  
Managing Director,  
Highland Electric



**Matt Stanberry** is currently a Managing Director at Highland Electric. Matt is an energy expert covering the industry as well as its environmental and public health impacts. Previously Matt was the AEE's analytics team. Before that, he was a management consultant within Navigant's Energy Practice, focused on renewable energy, energy efficiency, and emerging technology markets, business strategy, and implementation. Before Navigant, Matt was a consultant for ICF International addressing energy, climate, and other environmental and public health issues. He holds a Bachelor's degree from Duke University and a Masters in Public Health from Johns Hopkins University.

**Nick Bettis**, Director of  
Marketing & Sales  
Operations



**Nick Bettis** is the Director of Marketing & Sales Operations for Lightning eMotors, a leading manufacturer of zero emissions battery electric and fuel-cell electric commercial vehicles including shuttles buses, transit buses, delivery trucks, last-mile delivery vans, ambulances, work trucks, school buses, and motor coaches. Lightning also offers robust telematics on all vehicles and comprehensive fleet charging solutions. Nick has been with Lightning for over two years and has a passion for sustainable transportation, having worked with hundreds of fleets to help design optimal end-to-end electrification solutions for their specific needs. Prior to Lightning eMotors, Nick was the Vice President of Marketing at RLE Technologies, a data center monitoring equipment manufacturer.