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Hydrogen Hybrid Bus Returns to Columbia

Training and Demonstrations to Begin This Fall

Columbia, SC (Aug. 6, 2009) – Columbians will see a new bus around town as The Hydrogen Hybrid Bus arrives this week to start a yearlong visit of testing and evaluation with CMRTA and the University of South Carolina.

Premiered earlier this spring at the National Hydrogen Association Convention in Columbia, the Hydrogen Hybrid Bus returned to Colorado for further testing and final construction. Now completed, the bus will begin its initial testing and evaluation cycles in Columbia.

Called the most technologically advanced bus on the planet, the Hydrogen Hybrid Bus represents the fusion of hydrogen fuel cell technology with advanced battery propulsion. A pilot project with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) the Hydrogen Hybrid Bus will be used to carry passengers on various CMRTA routes and the University of South Carolina shuttle service.

Appearances are also planned for many community festivals and functions including the South Carolina State Fair, multiple home Gamecock football games and various other engagements.

Columbia was selected for the first phase of testing for several reasons. The support from the greater Columbia community including the city, the South Carolina Research Authority, Engenuity and other entities were instrumental in the decision. In addition, because of the temperature, grades and climate variations the terrain and climate were also ideal for testing. While carrying passengers, the bus will be evaluated by USC researchers for various elements of performance and efficiencies.

“We are very excited to have the bus in Columbia so we can start evaluating it,” said Jason Bakos of the University of South Carolina. Bakos heads the USC team of researchers evaluating the bus’ performance data including fuel cell performance, hydrogen consumption, charge rates and many other factors to determine the powerplant’s efficiencies and energy consumption. Those results will be sent to the National Renewable Energies Laboratory (NREL) for distribution and use in future projects.

“This is a great opportunity for the university. This bus is a new prototype. Mass transit technologies are evolving and we have a state-of-the-art vehicle to study for a year,” added Dr. Tom Davis, Principal Investigator of the project.

The term state-of-the-art describes a variety of features of the bus. One of the most significant is the propulsion suite. The bus is built with two Hydrogenics hydrogen fuel cells in the rear and hydrogen storage tanks on the roof, similar to a compressed natural gas bus.

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Hydrogen Bus 2-2-2

The bus is constructed of carbon fiber and fiberglass, which makes it much stronger and lighter than conventional buses. In the bottom of the bus are lithium titanate batteries that power the electric drive motor and the related accessories. These batteries are regarded by bus manufacturer Proterra as the solution to hybrid transportation for mass transit. The batteries can recover and recharge rapidly and don't require prolonged charging cycles.

Daily operation of the Hydrogen Hybrid Bus will include a nightly recharge using a fast battery charger at CMRTA and a refueling at the Hydrogen Fueling Station, recently opened in Columbia. The hydrogen fuel cells aboard the bus provide electricity to recharge the batteries as the bus operates.

“We are very excited to see the bus in regular operation. We feel the bus will represent, the cutting edge of new technology applications including batteries and fuel cells,” said Proterra president/chief technology officer Dale Hill, the bus' manufacturer.

According to Jason Hanlin, Director of Technology Research for the Center for Transportation and the Environment, (CTE) the bus will arrive in August for driver training and data collection and will deploy for passenger operations in September/October.

For more information about the Hydrogen Hybrid Bus visit the website at www.hydrogenhybridbus.com. To arrange a media availability, contact Jeff Ranta at (803) 600-3091 or (803) 777-4614.

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