

- User Services
- TOP STORIES**
- Front Page
- By Section
- COMPLETE COVERAGE (Archived for 7 days)**
- Business
- Canada and World
- Detour
- Editorial Pages
- Entertainment
- Life
- Local
- Sports
- The Tab
- The View From the West
- FEATURES**
- Automotive Showcase
- Books
- Columns
- Comics
- Computers & Technology
- Crossword Puzzles
- Faith
- Fashion
- Food and Recipe Swap
- Homes
- Movie Reviews and Listings
- Restaurant Reviews and Listings
- Stock Quotes
- Town & Country
- Travel & Leisure
- TV Listings
- Video Reviews
- Winnipeg Neighbours
- SERVICES (Available to All)**
- Automotive Picture Listings
- Careers and Job Opportunities
- Classifieds
- Contests
- Obituaries
- Press Card
- Special Sections
- Weather
- INFORMATION (Available to All)**
- Advertising Information
- Contact the Free Press
- History of the Free Press
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- Privacy Policy
- Send a Letter to the Editor
- Search Help
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New Flyer parking 'green' buses in U.S. City firm shipping 76 hybrids to six California cities

Thu Mar 10 2005

By Martin Cash

NEW Flyer Industries continues to solidify its position as the North American leader in hybrid-fuel buses with the shipment this week of the Winnipeg bus-builders' first-ever gasoline-electric buses to a California client.

New Flyer is scheduled to ship 76 gasoline-electric hybrid buses to six California municipalities in 2005. Both the gasoline and hydrogen power-trains have been developed by ISE Corp, a San Diego company, and then installed into New Flyer bus shells.

The shipment of the first gasoline-electric hybrid buses is one of two new developments this week for New Flyer. Thursday, several public and private sector participants were to demonstrate the cold-weather performance of a hydrogen-electric hybrid fuel bus the company has built. Winnipeg Transit has been testing the new bus over the past two months.

The hydrogen bus, owned by Sun Line Transit Agency near Palm Desert, Calif., is of particular interest to the provincial and federal governments because of the potential economic development opportunities in Manitoba for the hydrogen fuel economy.

'Full suite of hybrids'

Paul Smith, New Flyer's executive vice-president of sales and marketing, said, "The gasoline and hydrogen hybrids are further examples of New Flyer's full suite of hybrid buses we now have available." In a telephone interview from Washington, D.C., Smith said different customers have different requirements for emissions and environmental features on the buses they run on their transit systems.

Those requirements depend on several factors, including Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations and the requirements under the more stringent California Air Resources Board (CARB).

New Flyer has more alternative-fuel buses, including natural gas and diesel, gas and hydrogen-electric hybrids, in service in North America than all of its competitors combined.

Dave Chomiak, the province's minister of Energy, Science & Technology, said yesterday the Winnipeg study that has been done on New Flyer's hydrogen-fueled bus shows that such technology is doable.

"We can't pretend to be all things to all people in Manitoba, but we have identified some niche areas and bus building and transportation are some," he said.

"We may be a few years away from the commercialization of the hydrogen economy, but we believe there are opportunities in Manitoba." Paul Zanetel, New Flyer's chief technology adviser, said the first commercial production run of the gasoline-electric buses will have extremely low emissions output, virtually no nitrous oxide or particulate matter emissions, and improved fuel economy. They also will feature a quieter ride than conventional diesel buses.

Smith, who was in Washington attending a conference where the U.S. federal

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government's multi-billion allocation for municipal transit authorities was being discussed, said most of the orders New Flyer now bids on include at least an inquiry about the cost of hybrid fuel buses.

In addition to the provincial government's participation in today's hydrogen bus event, the hydrogen bus cold-weather test also included participation from several federal government departments, Red River College's Princess Street campus, the City of Winnipeg and Winnipeg Transit, Krauss Global the manufacturers of hydrogen fuel dispensing systems, ISE Corp., and Stuart Energy, makers of a mobile hydrogen production system.

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[Return to Top](#)
[Return to Business Index](#)



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