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Metro Liner Makes 'Sneak Peek' Appearance on Gateway Plaza

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Sept. 16, 2004) What's silver and gray, 60 feet long, has three doors, room for 58 passengers to sit down and bends in the middle?

It's the new Metro Liner articulated bus, and it was on display, Thursday, on Gateway Plaza. The vehicle, with its unique aerodynamic styling is the first of a new class of 200 the agency has ordered for operation on the Metro Orange Line and on other heavily traveled transit corridors.

The streamlined coach, with its huge curved windshield, fender skirts and mid-section pleated bellows, drew the immediate attention of pedestrians on the Plaza – exactly the reaction planners hoped to get for the vehicle.

'Biggest leap in styling'

"This is the most advanced transit vehicle to hit North America, ever," says John Drayton, Metro's vehicle acquisition manager. "It really is the biggest leap in styling and appearance inside and out our industry has seen since the mid-1970s."

The \$632,000 bus, built by North American Bus Industries (NABI), sports three 44-inch wide doors for easier boarding and off-loading. The 58 brightly patterned seats are contoured and padded for extra comfort. There also are two wheelchair securement areas and three

PHOTOS BY BILL HEARD



The advanced-design Metro Liner articulated bus will be used on the Metro Orange Line and on other heavily traveled transit corridors.



The huge curved windshield is one of the Metro Liner's most prominent features. The headsign can display multiple colors.



Brightly patterned seats are contoured and padded for passenger comfort.

bicycle racks positioned among the seats.

"We pushed NABI very hard to make the interior styling very comfortable for our passengers," says Drayton. "This is probably the most comfortable interior we've seen on a transit vehicle."



The operator's station was designed for comfort, with remote controlled mirrors and read-at-a-glance console.

Powering the Metro Liner is a six-cylinder 320-hp, 8.9-liter Cummins CNG engine designed from scratch to handle the heavy-duty demands of Los Angeles terrain and traffic. Previously, most CNG engines were adaptations of diesel engine designs.

'Runs smoother, quieter'

The engine has 30 percent more horsepower than the four-cylinder engines installed in conventional buses and, according to Drayton, "runs smoother and is 50 percent quieter."

With 12 tanks containing 28,000 cubic feet of compressed natural gas, the Metro Liner will have an effective operating range of 400 miles. "It's the first time the transit industry will be able to get a realistic, full-day's range out of a CNG articulated vehicle," says Drayton.

The first 30 of the silver and gray Metro Liner coaches, due for delivery to Los Angeles by June 30, 2005, will be designated for operation on the Metro Orange Line. The remaining 170, sporting a wide red stripe for use on Metro Rapid lines, are to be delivered by June 30, 2006.