



NEWS

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MTA BOARD APPROVES PURCHASE OF 315 NEW CNG BUSES; MORE THAN 200 MORE BUSES MAY BE ORDERED NEXT MONTH

The MTA today took another major step toward revamping its Metro Bus System by placing a new order for 215 new low-floor Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses costing \$75.7 million.

The Board today also gave final authorization for the negotiation and exercise of a change order with Neoplan USA to purchase up to 100 additional Neoplan high-floor CNG buses. The MTA has purchased 594 CNG buses from Neoplan in two separate orders beginning in 1994. The delivery of the additional buses could begin as early as January 1999.

The bus moves make good on a promise made by the MTA Board last month to speed up the pace of procuring new buses and, in the process, improve reliability of the Metro Bus fleet and reduce overcrowding. The 215 new buses will be manufactured by Anniston, Ala.-based North American Bus Industries (NABI).

The 215 NABI buses will employ a new low-floor design, which will make it easier for wheelchair patrons and the elderly to board, and will be delivered between December 1999 and June 2000.

A separate decision on exercising an option to purchase between 223 and 278 additional CNG buses from the New Flyer bus manufacturing company is expected to be made by the MTA Board of Directors at its regularly scheduled November meeting.

In late September, the Board approved MTA CEO Julian Burke's recommendation to purchase 2,095 buses between FY 1998 and FY 2004. The total cost of the accelerated plan is projected to be \$817.3 million.

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The new plan will add nearly 800 buses to the scheduled purchase of 1,313 buses outlined in a previously approved six-year plan and will cost \$310.6 million more than the original plan.

The Accelerated Bus Procurement Plan, given final approval today by the MTA Board, will help lower the average age of the MTA's bus fleet from more than 9 years old to below 6 years old by the end of calendar year 2000, and it will do it seven years earlier than the previous plan. The accelerated program also provides up to \$40 million in capital improvement funding to municipal bus operators for fiscal years 1998 to 2004.

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