

MTA Receives Unprecedented Grants for its Continuing Commitment to Improve Air Quality

By Jose Ubaldo

(September 10) The MTA has received two landmark clean air grants totaling \$8.4 million to help purchase new CNG buses that will be in service by spring 2000.

The Mobile Source Air Pollution Reduction Review Committee (MSRC) -- a regional clean air funding group -- provided \$6.4 million to help purchase 277 CNG buses. This is the largest single clean air award of its type ever in Southern California.

The Air Quality Management District (AQMD) approved more than \$2 million to assist the MTA in purchasing 73 additional CNG buses. This award is funded by the State Air Resources Board.

"Thanks to the MSRC and the AQMD, these awards will help us to maintain our commitment to clean air and provide better bus service for the citizens of Los Angeles County," said CEO Julian Burke. "In a time of budget challenges, this assistance is welcome news."

The \$8.4 million in funding will help offset the difference between the cost of a CNG bus and a diesel bus. The average cost of a CNG bus is \$325,000 -- approximately \$40,000 more than a comparable diesel bus.

The buses will be built by North America Bus Industries (NABI), New Flyer of America and Neoplan. The MTA will begin receiving funding on a schedule matching the delivery of the new buses, to be completed by spring 2000.

"The financial assistance by the MSRC and AQMD are significant because they recognize the dedication and hard work MTA provides to improve air quality and bus service in the Greater Los Angeles area," said Tom Conner, executive officer, Transit Operations. "This should set a precedent for clean air funding programs in the future."

The MTA competed against other transit agencies in Southern California and submitted a cost effective proposal. The MTA awards are the result of months of work by the agency's staff and elected officials.

Instrumental in obtaining the clean air grants for the MTA were Douglas Kim, MTA Air Quality Program manager and a member of the MSRP's Technical Advisory Committee; George Karbowski, Equipment Engineering supervisor and an alternate on the committee; Charlene Lee, MTA Transportation planner and grant writer; and Bea LaPisto-Kirtley, the MTA's representative on the MSRP.

The MTA already has 696 Neoplan CNG buses and will soon begin receiving 223 CNG buses manufactured by New Flyer. In January, 2000, the MTA also will begin deploying 215 low-floor CNG buses manufactured by NABI.

The MSRC is an eight member committee consisting of representatives of Southern California county transportation commissions along with other state and local officials. The MSRC funds clean air projects from part of a \$4 fee paid through annual vehicle registrations.

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