

MTA Completes Alcohol to Clean-Air Diesel Conversion

Even Division 9's ol' Number 1259 - the last holdout among the methanol buses - has been converted, a fact that has fleet managers singing, "Hallelujah!!"

(March 13) After more than a year-and-a-half of intense labor, the MTA has completed the conversion of its 333 alcohol-fueled buses to clean-air diesel power--on budget and ahead of schedule.

The conversion program began in late summer, 1998. To date, all but 10 of the converted buses are back in service and those 10 are being refitted with new wheelchair lifts.

Meets all emission standards

Each of the converted buses now has a Detroit Diesel 6v92 engine that meets all current federal and California emission standards. The company even developed a new fuel injector, used for the first time on MTA buses, to keep emissions as low as possible.

"This was a great team effort," says John Drayton, manager, Vehicle Acquisition and Technical Support. "Everyone involved in supporting this program, including fleet management, the RRC, Inventory Control, the operating divisions and Detroit Diesel, deserves credit. There truly were a lot of heroes in this program."

As a result of the \$5.5 million conversion program, the repowered buses are doing "far better," says Drayton. Prior to conversion, the alcohol-fueled engines were failing about every 20,000 miles, requiring up to two engine rebuilds per bus each year. Alcohol fuels were two-to-three times more expensive to operate than diesel and it was operationally difficult to schedule the unreliable buses.

More dependable configuration

"The bottom line," says Drayton, "is that the repowered configuration is far more dependable and that helps ensure that buses are there when our passengers expect them."

"It's a credit to all on the maintenance staff that we put 70 million miles on the ethanol- or methanol-fueled buses," he says. "There's nothing inherently wrong with the alcohol fueled technologies, but these technologies weren't well-suited to the severe demands of our working environment."

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