

High Capacity 'CompoBUS' is MTA's Next Stop on High-Tech Road

By ED SCANNELL

(Jan. 24, 2002) The MTA stepped up its pursuit of high-tech transit solutions, today, as the Board approved plans to purchase 30 lightweight high-capacity buses.

North American Bus Industries of Anniston, Ala. will manufacture the "CompoBUS," which could chart the future of MTA bus purchases for years to come.

Powered by compressed natural gas, the low-floor "CompoBUS" will be 45 feet long, five feet longer than current MTA coaches. The "CompoBUS" will transport 47 seated passengers, four more than a traditional high-floor bus and seven more than a low-floor bus.

Priced at \$368, 053, the "CompoBUS" employs some of the technology developed by the MTA in its Advanced Technology Transit Bus program, including a shell constructed of lighter composite materials. Hence the name "CompoBUS." The composite material used is primarily fiberglass with a balsa core construction method similar to that found in the marine industry.

Simplicity of repairs

The "CompoBUS" will be 20 percent lighter than a conventional 45-foot steel-framed bus, resulting in better fuel economy and reduced brake wear. Other benefits of using composite material include simplicity of repair and absolute resistance to corrosion.

Until now, transit authorities have been reluctant to use 45-foot buses because the larger buses required a dual rear axle. A dual rear axle increases vehicle weight, thereby increasing fuel and maintenance costs. The 45-foot "CompoBUS" uses only a single rear axle, similar to MTA's 40-foot buses, resulting in a bus that is less expensive to operate and maintain.

"We see tremendous potential in the 'CompoBUS,'" said John Catoe, MTA deputy chief executive officer. "We're adding capacity while saving weight, a rare combination in bus manufacturing."

The first of the 30 "CompoBUS" coaches will begin arriving in summer 2003, while later this year 20 coaches of a shorter, 40-foot design will arrive and be placed into service.

"We're on a mission to provide the best service possible for the 1.2 million passengers we carry every day on the Metro Bus system, while making the best use of the taxpayer dollars we spend," said Board Chairman John Fasana. "The 'CompoBUS' is an excellent example of how new technologies can give us better value for our dollars in a package that combines innovation with proven reliability."

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