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Los Angeles Metro Rolls Out North America's First 65-foot Articulated Compressed Natural Gas Bus on Metro Orange Line

- Super-sized Success

In response to greater than anticipated customer demand for Metro Orange Line service, the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) today announced the public debut of its gigantic new 65-foot Metro Liner demonstration bus for daily revenue service.

Just 10 feet shorter than a Metro Rail subway car, the extra-long transit vehicle made by North American Bus Industries, Inc. (NABI) is a first-of-its-kind, designed exclusively for operation on the Metro Orange Line, and is the highest capacity articulated compressed natural gas bus in operation in North America.

The bus is a full five feet longer than its 60-foot predecessor, and provides room for 66 seated passengers compared to the 60-foot model's 57 seats. These nine additional seats represent a 16 percent gain in seating capacity. When fully loaded with seated and standing passengers, the new 65-foot bus can accommodate up to 100 passengers compared to the 60-foot model's capacity of 84.

"Due to the overwhelming success of the Metro Orange Line, San Fernando Valley commuters have said 'Super-size me,' and Metro has listened," said Pam O'Connor, Santa Monica City Councilmember and Metro Board Chair. "This new vehicle is roomier, quieter, more streamlined and, what's more, operates on environmentally clean natural gas."

The addition of the extra-capacity bus comes at a time when the Metro Orange Line has reached a new ridership milestone. The line has recently logged its 10 millionth boarding since it opened in October 2005. Ridership has nearly doubled since the first month of operation. Boardings on the 14-mile line reached more than 24,000 per weekday during the most recent reporting period of July 2007.

Metro will evaluate bus performance, including its maneuverability, passenger capacity, passenger acceptance and operating range during the one-year demonstration period.

The vehicle should help alleviate the need of adding more buses to meet demand during peak periods, and could be flexibly phased into service as fleet replacements over time.

"The Orange Line has become a runaway success, and we're trying to keep up with demand in a way that does not have adverse impacts on local congestion," said Zev Yaroslavsky, L.A. County Supervisor and Metro Board member. "If this demonstration vehicle proves successful in meeting the rigours of daily Orange Line service, we could very well see more of them in Metro's bus fleet."

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New exterior touches that set the upgraded Metro Liner apart from previous 60-foot models include darkly tinted windows that run continuously the length of the coach, and molded wheel covers on even the front wheels.



The 65-foot Metro Liner will operate on the Metro Orange Line.

Innovations incorporated into the new vehicle design include an advance design exhaust system that reduces exterior noise. The manufacturer also moved the vehicle's air conditioner location for a quieter interior ride. Passenger feedback was also factored into the design. The bus now features an advance design frameless tinted window system that reduces passenger window glare. The frameless windows also give the vehicle a more streamlined, rail-like appearance.

To reduce vehicle weight, the 65-foot Metro Liner uses four less CNG storage tanks, and consequently weighs about the same as the 60-foot Metro Liner. Vehicle acceleration and braking is expected to be on par with the 60-foot models. The longer vehicle will have a tighter turning radius than many of Metro's existing 40-foot buses, easing steering for its operators.

In January 2007 the Metro Board approved a \$100,000 addition to the agency's existing contract that allowed NABI to produce one 65-foot articulated Metro Liner bus for demonstration purposes without significant cost, technical or mechanical challenges.

"The new 65-foot articulated CNG bus takes our current pace-setting vehicle design and moves it to the next level," said Roger Snoble, Metro CEO. "It will enable us to meet the increasing Orange Line passenger demand without increasing our operating costs."

"This new bus was designed exclusively for operation on the Metro Orange Line with our passengers in mind," added Richard Hunt, General Manager for Metro San Fernando Valley service sector. "It continues Metro's tradition of offering the latest innovations in transit technology that directly benefit our riders."

Metro has been granted an exemption from Caltrans to permit operation of the 65-foot vehicle exclusively on the Orange Line transitway.

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Inside, the extra five feet added to the front unit is noticeable in the lengthier aisle. Customers will enjoy thickly padded seats with comfortable lumbar support and enough leg room between rows for taller passengers. Overhead, longer-lasting LED lights have replaced fluorescent lighting.