



NEWS

September 25, 1996

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MTA, AQMD AND OTHER OFFICIALS GO FOR TEST RIDE ON FUEL CELL-POWERED TRANSIT BUS

MTA, AQMD and other officials took a test ride Wednesday on a fuel cell-powered transit bus to review the status of development of a propulsion system that in the near future could cut transit bus emissions to zero.

The fuel cell propulsion system converts hydrogen into electricity through a chemical process on the bus, which in turn powers an electric motor which runs the bus.

"The MTA continues to search for propulsion systems that will meet the national mandate for clean air," said Larry Zarian, MTA Chairman. "We are enthusiastic about this new technology which has been developed with the assistance of funding from the AQMD here in Southern California."

"As we work to improve air quality, it is important that we in Los Angeles stay on top of the technological advances aimed at reducing emissions," said Supervisor and MTA Board Member Yvonne Brathwaite Burke. Burke, who also serves as Chairperson of the Fuel Cell Buyers Consortium, is working on a program to integrate the fuel cell power system with the Advanced Technology Transit Bus. The ATTB is a new light-weight, low floor bus designed to better serve the disabled.

The fuel cell power system on display was developed by Ballard Power Systems Inc. of Vancouver, B.C. Fuel cells convert fuel into electricity without combustion and their only by-product is warm water vapor.

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Before their development for commercial applications, fuel cells were used in the Gemini and Apollo space programs in the 1960s.

MTA and Northrop next month will unveil the first prototype of the ATTB which has been designed, in part, to reduce the overall weight of transit coaches. The lighter the bus shell, the greater flexibility engineers have in the choice of propulsion systems.

"The name of the game is to come up with lighter equipment that will allow us greater flexibility in the choice of propulsion systems," said MTA CEO Joseph E. Drew. "We are determined to continue to be a pioneer in new technologies to help this region meet its clean air goals, and to help the nation in its quest for transit solutions for the next century."

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