



NEWS

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MTA ROLLS OUT 'STEALTH BUS' FOR EVERYONE TO SEE AND RIDE; PASSENGERS TO RIDE FOR FREE DURING 7-MONTH TEST RUN

After investing \$10 million to develop a prototype, the MTA today began testing the very visible "Stealth Bus" on Wilshire and Western boulevards with Metro Bus passengers on board for the first time, free-of-charge.

A low-weight, low-emission bus built with similar materials as used in the construction of the B-2 Stealth Bomber, the Earl Clark Advanced Technology Transit Bus (ATTB) may someday become the mainstay of the MTA's 21st Century bus fleet. It would cost significantly less to operate and maintain while preserving passenger comfort levels.

All passengers, including individuals with disabilities and the elderly, will be able to board, exit and maneuver about the bus much more easily as a result of the low floor and wider aisle design. The bus, which meets all Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards, features a front door ramp making it easy for all passengers in wheelchairs to gain access.

Hitting the scales at approximately 9,000 pounds less than a standard 1990s public transit bus, fuel consumption will be greatly reduced resulting in operating savings. On the maintenance side, a computerized diagnostic system that identifies problems faster will cut down on the amount of time needed to make basic repairs, also saving the MTA money. Speed and ease of replacing parts also is expected to reduce costs. Its electronic braking system even reduces noise.

Even the region's highways and surface streets stand to gain something. The pounding inflicted on these roads will be appreciably lessened, which will cut down on the need for costly street restoration projects.

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The MTA and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funded development of the bus. The two agencies as well as 22 other transit agencies worked with Northrop Grumman to design and develop the ATTB.

"The ATTB is a giant step forward in Los Angeles transit," said Los Angeles Mayor and MTA Board Chairman Richard J. Riordan. "This high-tech transportation advancement will make our system more efficient to operate and comfortable to ride. The bus for the 21st Century is here today."

Los Angeles County Supervisor and MTA First Vice Chair Yvonne Brathwaite Burke has been a chief proponent of the ATTB from the very start.

"Our passengers can now experience and then report to us on what it feels like to ride on a bus that everyone agrees is more comfortable, more reliable and environmentally cleaner than a traditional bus," said the supervisor. "The debut of the ATTB on the streets of Los Angeles is the culmination of years of hard work."

Northrop Grumman has produced six prototypes, all of which are to be tested in Los Angeles and other cities to determine production worthiness.

"The design of transit coaches has progressed dramatically over the years, and the new ATTB certainly appears to be the bus of the future," said MTA CEO Julian Burke. "We are proud to have worked with Northrop Grumman and FTA in the ATTB design and development over the past five years. If testing proves successful, and we believe it will, production of the ATTB could begin in the next couple of years."

The light-weight material, similar to fiberglass, has allowed engineers to produce a strong, damage-resistant shell using techniques developed for the B-2 Stealth Bomber. Virtually every element of the bus has been redesigned to lower the overall weight of each coach by nearly 9,000 pounds, which permits the use of smaller engines, thus lowering emissions.

The buses to be tested in Los Angeles are fueled with compressed natural gas (CNG) which power a hybrid CNG/electric propulsion system that exceeds state and regional clean air requirements.

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Northrop Grumman was selected by the MTA in 1992 to conduct a systems integration and design program that has led to development of the bus.

Passengers who travel on the ATTB during this seven month test period will not be charged fare. Initially, the futuristic bus will operate on a part-time basis but will eventually increase to seven days a week. At no time however will the bus be assigned to a fixed route or follow a set timetable.

Navigating the ATTB on its maiden voyage to Santa Monica was MTA Operator Hugh Cooper, one of 22 Metro Bus operators trained to guide the coach of the future.

This morning's maiden voyage took place on Line 20, which continued on to Santa Monica.

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