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Santa Cruz METRO Announces FTA Funding to Support Zero-Emissions Master Plan Representatives Lofgren and Panetta speak at media event

Santa Cruz, Calif. (Monday, July 3, 2023): The Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO) today announced it has been awarded \$20,381,950 in FY23 Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Bus and Low- and No-Emission Grant Award, with METRO funding the required local match of \$3,690,050, to buy fuel cell electric buses to replace older diesel and Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses, and develop a workforce training plan. The funding announcement was made this morning at the Watsonville Transit Center. United States Representatives Jimmy Panetta and Zoe Lofgren both spoke at the event.

“The people of Santa Cruz have long been at the forefront of addressing climate change by playing their part and taking the appropriate steps to reduce their carbon output,” **said Rep. Panetta**. “I’m proud to play my part as their U.S. Representative by securing this major amount of federal funding for zero-emission buses and improvements to clean energy storage and maintenance infrastructure. Such a significant investment, made possible through Congress’ work on the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), will allow Santa Cruz Metro to enhance its public transit system, encourage ridership, lower maintenance and fuel costs, and reduce carbon emissions as we continue our fight against climate change.”

This includes the replacement of 12 diesel-fueled and compressed natural gas (CNG) buses that have reached the end of their useful life with four 40-foot, and eight 60-foot hydrogen fuel cell-electric buses (FCEBs). The four buses will enable METRO to convert 100% of its fleet serving Watsonville service area to zero-emissions buses (ZEBs) by 2027 that the District initiated in 2019 with the procurement of METRO’s first four Battery Electric Buses (BEBs), which began free fare service in 2021 on a new Watsonville Zero-Emission Circulator route. Furthermore, deploying higher capacity articulated FCEBs on routes serving UCSC will help resolve overcrowding, pass-bys and stranded passengers. The investment will help transform transit in Santa Cruz County, eliminating 15,504 metric tons of CO2 emissions over the useful life of the project, and increasing equity by providing clean transit services, creating good-paying jobs and increasing transportation options for low-income and minority communities.

“As our country faces an impending climate disaster and crumbling infrastructure, Rep. Panetta and I worked on and voted for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law in the democratic majority to make robust investments like the one we’re proud to announce today,” **said Rep. Lofgren**. “Public transit connects our communities and community members, reduces congestion on roads, and protects the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Building up, modernizing, and improving Santa Cruz County’s public transit system is good news all around.”

In addition, the award includes workforce training to help METRO’s employees’ transition to operating and maintaining these new, clean energy fleets. The award will support training METRO’s employees to keep pace with changing technologies including operational training for its bus operators, mechanics, and other support employees. This will help METRO retain well-qualified transit workers to fill METRO job opportunities related to ZEB.

This award is a vital piece of METRO’s plan to convert 100% of its fleet serving Watsonville service area to ZEBs by 2027 and meet the state of California’s clean energy mandates. The award will reduce 614 metric tons of GHG annually by helping convert 13% of METRO’s CNG and diesel buses to ZEB and will support the transition of 100% of METRO’s fleet to zero-emission technology by 2037, which is three years ahead of the deadline set in the Innovative Clean Transit (ICT) Regulation.

METRO plans to purchase 54 hydrogen fuel cell-electric buses (FCEBs). This will be one of the largest single fuel cell purchase in North America. Furthermore, the eight 60-foot FCEBs will be the largest deployment in the nation.

Currently, 10% of METRO's fleet is ZEB and this single purchase will increase METRO's ZEB fleet to over 60%.

Taken as a whole, converting over 60% of METRO's CNG and diesel fleet to zero-emission Fuel Cell Electric Buses (FCEB) by 2027 will also result in a total GHG emission reduction of 1,155,000 MTCO_{2e}.

"METRO has a long standing commitment of being an environmental partner to our community and now thanks to this award, with support from our U.S. Representatives, we can further enhance this commitment by planning the largest single fuel cell purchase in North America with a total of 54 hydrogen fuel cell-electric buses increasing METRO's ZEBs to over 60% of our entire fleet," **said METRO Board Chair, Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson.** "Making METRO a national leader in environmentally-friendly public transportation and a key environmental community partner."

Moreover, this transition will support the President's efforts to address climate change, environmental justice, and racial equity goals by reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, job creation, and increasing transportation access for low-income and minority communities.

To also support METRO's efforts, as an environmentally focused community partner, METRO also gives riders the opportunity to protect Santa Cruz County's extraordinary natural resources just by simply riding the bus via the One Ride at a Time (ORAT) program. Thanks to ORAT, every ride on a METRO bus contributes to our partners in protecting the environment, the [Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation](#) and the [Bay of Life Fund](#) through the [GO Santa Cruz](#) ridesharing incentive program. To participate, riders simply need to log 25 rides to make a \$10 contribution to one of METRO's local environmental non-profit partners.

For more information on METRO visit scmetro.org or to learn more about METRO's One Ride at a Time program visit scmetro.org/onerideatatime.

About Us

Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO)

Established in 1968, METRO'S mission is to provide easy-to-use, convenient transportation for residents while protecting the environment and building better communities. METRO directly operates county-wide, fixed-route and Highway 17 commuter service, with connections to Santa Clara County and Monterey Salinas Transit at our Watsonville Transit Center. The agency also operates ParaCruz paratransit service. Today METRO operates a fleet of 94 buses on at least 25 fixed routes and 32 paratransit vehicles.

Every ride on a METRO bus takes cars off the road, significantly reduces greenhouse gas emissions, and supports economic opportunity and quality of life in our community. Moving into the future, METRO strives to meet the following goals:

- Increase transit ridership to 7 million trips annually within the next five years
- Transition to a zero-emissions fleet with a mix of hydrogen and electric vehicles
- Increase affordable housing at METRO-owned transit centers to 175 units in the next 10 years.

For more information, visit scmtd.com.