



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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Jan. 22, 2010

Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

NEW ERA OF PUBLIC TRANSIT ARRIVES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

WHISTLER – The world’s largest fleet of hydrogen fuel cell buses is now in operation, marking the beginning of a new era in zero-emission public transit.

The Honourable Stockwell Day, President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, BC Transportation and Infrastructure Minister Shirley Bond, West Vancouver-Sea To Sky MLA Joan McIntyre and Resort Municipality of Whistler Mayor Ken Melamed welcomed the buses into service while officially opening BC Transit’s new Whistler Transit Centre, which includes the world’s largest hydrogen vehicle fuelling station.

“Under the leadership of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, our Government is investing in projects that create a stronger economy and a healthier environment,” said Minister Day. “The opening of this Hydrogen Bus Maintenance Facility demonstrates how our Government is working together with partners to get shovels in the ground and deliver real results to the people of British Columbia.”

The hydrogen fuel cell buses produce no smog-creating or greenhouse gas emissions at the tailpipe. The \$89.5-million project is jointly funded by the governments of Canada and British Columbia, the Resort Municipality of Whistler and the Canadian Hydrogen Fuel Cell Association.

“British Columbia is a world leader in the development of hydrogen fuel cell technology,” said Bond. “We’ll showcase our achievement for the world to see during the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games – the greenest Olympic Games ever.”

“Public transit is extremely popular in Whistler,” said McIntyre. “And now we have hydrogen fuel cell buses, making the Whistler bus fleet one of the greenest in the world.”

British Columbia has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 33 per cent by 2020. The ultimate goal of the hydrogen fuel cell bus project is to demonstrate for the first time the integration of hydrogen fuel cell buses into the regular operational service of an urban transit system.

“The Whistler community is deeply committed to public transit,” said Melamed. “Our award-winning transit system has a very high ridership and this new facility will allow our service to continue to grow.”

“Whistler has been in need of a new operation and maintenance centre for years,” said Manuel Achadinha, president and CEO of BC Transit. “This facility will meet the expanded needs of today and address the demands of the future.”

Whistler’s transit system has one of the highest riderships of any BC Transit system in the province. It is projected to serve 2.8 million passengers this year. The new Whistler Transit Centre is expected to house the local transit system for the next 40 years.

A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUND

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THE HYDROGEN FUEL CELL BUS DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Hydrogen Fuel Cell Buses

- BC Transit has purchased 20 hydrogen fuel cell buses and the hydrogen and infrastructure to fuel them.
- The total budget of the demonstration project is \$89.5 million, covering capital and operating costs to March 2014. The funding partners are:
 - Government of Canada (\$45 million through the 2006 Public Transit Capital Trust Fund)
 - Government of British Columbia (\$26.7 million)
 - Resort Municipality of Whistler (\$16.8 million)
 - Canadian Hydrogen Fuel Cell Association (\$1 million)
- The low-floor buses have a range of 450 – 500 kilometres (280 – 310 miles) and a top speed of 90 km/h (55 mph).

Whistler Transit Centre

- The new Transit Centre is equipped with:
 - Six maintenance bays
 - One diesel fuelling station
 - One hydrogen fuelling station (the largest hydrogen vehicle fuelling station in the world)
 - An operations building
 - 36 sheltered stalls with space to hold up to 50 buses
 - One automatic hybrid bus wash
 - A number of environmental enhancements, such as oil and water separators and a bio-filtration pond.

Construction of the facility was completed under budget by \$2 million. The \$23.2-million transit centre received \$772,568 from the federal Public Transit Fund, \$455,105 from the provincial Public Transit Infrastructure Program, \$11.7 million from the Resort Municipality of Whistler, and \$10.26 million from BC Transit.

-30-

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