



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (September 7, 2022) - Pittsburgh Regional Transit today announced its plan to transition to a zero-emission bus fleet by 2045.

“Over the last decade, whether at the county or in county agencies, we have focused on working collaboratively and strategically to reduce our impact on the community and environment. This announcement by Pittsburgh Regional Transit is the latest investment in a more sustainable county,” said County Executive Rich Fitzgerald. “Congratulations to Katharine and her entire team on this visionary approach to transit, and for taking proactive steps that will improve your operations, the health of those who call our community home, and our county itself.”

Pittsburgh Regional Transit will begin to increase its replacement of diesel buses with zero-emissions buses beginning in 2025 and will only purchase zero-emissions buses after 2032. The agency expects to spend an estimated \$1 billion over the next 20 years on the transition. A full report will be presented to PRT’s Board later this month.

“We recognize our responsibility to move as quickly as possible to replace our fleet with zero-emissions vehicles to improve the health, safety, and welfare of the communities we serve,” said PRT CEO Katharine Kelleman. “This investment in our system touches upon so many of the values that will propel our region toward a more equitable and sustainable future.”

Transitioning to a zero-emissions bus fleet will greatly improve the region's overall air quality while continuing to provide riders with reliable and efficient service. Although riding public transportation is significantly better for the environment than driving in a personal vehicle – even when it's powered by a diesel-powered engine – PRT projects that transitioning to a zero-emissions fleet will even further reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

“In Allegheny County, emissions from vehicles, like buses, contribute to air pollution and the quality of air we breathe,” explained Allegheny County Health Department Director Dr. Debra Bogen. “We anticipate that PRT replacing its current buses with a zero-emission fleet will have a positive effect on the area’s air quality and health.”

Zero-emissions vehicles have grown in popularity in recent years. PRT put its first two battery-electric buses in service in 2020 and followed up with six battery-electric buses in 2021. PRT’s Board recently approved funding for another 15 battery-electric buses that will operate on the future Downtown-Uptown-Oakland BRT. PRT has a fleet of 730 buses.

“Congratulations to Pittsburgh Regional Transit for this bold commitment to reducing emissions on such an impressive scale. Decisions like this benefit all Pittsburghers across the region, including frequent riders like myself,” said Anna J. Siefken, U.S. C3E Ambassador, and Commercialization Executive, Office of Technology Transitions, U.S. Department of Energy.

PRT's commitment to shift 100% of its fleet to zero-emissions vehicles by 2045 puts it in line with other transit agencies across the country.

“Pittsburgh Regional Transit’s plan for a zero-emission bus fleet is an exciting and critical step toward a more sustainable Pittsburgh region, with benefits to health and climate,” said Joylette Portlock, Ph.D., Executive Director of Sustainable Pittsburgh. “This is leadership in action.”

While PRT plans to deploy battery-electric buses in the initial years of the transition, the agency will continue to evaluate developments in hydrogen fuel cell vehicles and other technologies. This approach will enable PRT to purchase the newest, smartest technology as advancements develop in this rapidly evolving field and gives the agency time to install infrastructure – such as charging stations – and train employees to operate and maintain this technology.

“We cannot underestimate the impact our built environment and related infrastructure have on public health and social equity,” said Jenna Cramer, executive director of Green Building Alliance. “We are excited to see this investment from PRT, which will improve quality of life for residents thanks to more equitable access to clean transportation and improved air quality.”

The transition to a zero-emissions fleet will include retrofitting each of PRT's four bus garages and maintenance facility and training its workforce of 1,400 bus operators and 800 mechanics on the new technology.

Non-revenue vehicles, charging infrastructure, and facility upgrades required to support a zero-emission fleet will be an additional cost.

"On behalf of CMU's Scott Institute for Energy Innovation, we could not be more excited and supportive of PRT's commitment to a sustainable, clean energy future," said Dr. Jay Whitacre, director of the Wilton E. Scott Institute for Energy Innovation at Carnegie Mellon University.

Duquesne Light Company, which has been a key partner for PRT in making electric public transportation more accessible, provided the high-powered charging infrastructure to support the agency's first eight electric buses at the agency's bus garage in East Liberty.

"Part of DLC's commitment to ensuring a clean energy future for the Pittsburgh region is to give everyone a chance to experience the benefits of electric mobility," said Kevin Walker, president and CEO of DLC. "In recent years, DLC has made significant investments in charging infrastructure to support the region's first eight electric buses. We look forward to furthering our partnership with Pittsburgh Regional Transit as we strive to make electric mobility even more accessible and equitable for our customers and communities."

Electric buses cost about 60% more than their diesel counterparts, with the average cost of a 40-foot electric bus being approximately \$950,000.

Federal funding is expected to be used to make up the difference in cost for the vehicles, employee training, and charging infrastructure.

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