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SCAT introduces four smaller hybrid buses to its fleet

Less than three years after obtaining its first 10 diesel-electric hybrid buses, Sarasota County Area

Transit (SCAT) has added four of the smaller hybrid buses that are expected to be even more fuel-efficient and less costly to operate.

With their modern Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) style and distinctive bright green-blue-gold-white design, the hybrid buses are very visible as they travel throughout the community. The smaller buses will be used on both neighborhood and regular routes.

The hybrid buses are an important part of Sarasota County's commitment to reducing fossil fuel use through the 2030 Challenge initiative, which was adopted by the Sarasota County Commission in 2006.

The larger 32-seat bus is about 27 percent more fuel-efficient than the standard diesel bus, with an average annual reduction of 5,500 gallons of diesel fuel per year. At an average cost of \$3 per gallon diesel fuel, that translates into savings of about \$16,500 a year per bus.

In contrast, the smaller 23-seat bus is projected to be 35-40 percent more efficient than the standard diesel bus, with an expected annual savings of about \$21,000 per bus.

Together, the 14 hybrid buses are expected to save the county \$228,000 a year in fuel costs.

Among other benefits of a hybrid bus is an average 50 to 90 percent reduction in various environmentally harmful emissions -- and a noise level about 50 percent less -- compared to the standard diesel bus.

The 29-foot-long hybrids just purchased cost about \$517,000, compared to a standard diesel bus at approximately \$317,000.

SCAT plans to acquire six to 10 additional hybrid buses within the next two years to replace older standard diesel buses.

The four new hybrids were purchased with Federal Transit Administration grants. Allison Transmission Inc. of Indianapolis, In., developed the transmission and GILLIG of Hayward, Calif., designed and built the bus.

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000, or visit the Web site, www.scgov.net/scat.