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SunLine Celebrates 20 Years of Providing Public Transit Using Alternative Fueled Vehicles

(Thousand Palms, CA) May 6, 2014 • In 1992, long before "go green" became a common term, the SunLine Board of Directors directed SunLine staff to focus on alternative fueled vehicles. The Board's commitment to air quality in the Coachella Valley and the technologies that assure that commitment, laid the groundwork for the Agency to move forward as a leader of providing public transit using alternative fueled vehicles. On May 6, 1994, at 9:00am, SunLine Transit Agency rolled out 40 brand new compressed natural gas (CNG) buses onto the streets of the Coachella Valley. SunLine became the first transit agency in the nation to convert its entire fleet to CNG vehicles.

In 2000, SunLine pursued the use of hydrogen fuels continuing its leadership in the development of alternative fueled technology in collaboration with the California Fuel Cell Partnership. SunLine conducted a thirteen-month demonstration of the Zebus powered by a hydrogen fuel cell. Since then, SunLine has continued to add hydrogen fuel cell buses into its fleet. In 2012, SunLine welcomed its 7th generation, first of its kind, made in America, "Buy America Compliant" hydrogen fuel cell bus into its feet, with two 8th generation fuel cell buses to be put into service this summer. SunLine's staff has been instrumental in providing technical and operational input that lead directly to design improvements in fuel cell technology. Not only has the Agency invested in seven generations of hydrogen fueled vehicles, with three more fuel cell buses to arrive the year, SunLine was the first transit agency to own and operate a hydrogen generation and dispensing station.

Indio Councilmember and Chairman of the SunLine Board of Directors, Glenn Miller states, "The Board is extremely proud of the Agency's courage twenty years ago to pursue the use of alternative fuels. The vision of the Board and staff throughout the years has helped preserve the environment and reduce air pollution here in the Valley."

SunLine General Manager Lauren Skiver states, "SunLine is excited about the history of advancements in alternative fuel technology and the future of hydrogen fuel cell technology with the goal of commercialization. This year SunLine will put three new hydrogen fuel cell buses on the road.

SunLine remains a leader in alternative fuels and we continue to share our knowledge and lessons learned with transit organizations around the world."

As the Agency looks to the future, the focus is on becoming a Center for Excellence for fuel cell electric buses. The Agency looks to be a resource for the transit industry to assist in converting to hydrogen vehicles. SunLine, a small transit agency, continues to leave a big footprint in the alternative fueled vehicles arena.

More information about SunLine can be found at sunline.org. • Media inquiries contact Norma Stevens at 760-250-5366 or e-mail nstevens@sunline.org.

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SunLine Transit Agency is a joint powers authority formed in 1977 to operate the Coachella Valley's public transportation system. SunLine offers fixed route bus service and curb-to-curb paratransit for the mobility impaired. Its fixed route and paratransit vehicles travel more than 4 million miles per year, covering over 619 bus stops located throughout a 1,120 mile-service area, carrying approximately 4.82 million riders. SunLine Services Group regulates three taxi franchises who provide taxi services throughout the Valley. SunFuels alternative fueling station offers compressed natural gas and hydrogen for SunLine and the public 24 hours a day, seven days a week. To learn more, please visit sunline.org.