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SunLine Transit Agency Paves the Way to All Zero-Emission Buses by 2035

(Thousand Palms) – SunLine Transit Agency’s Board of Directors has approved its Zero-Emissions Bus Rollout Plan outlining how the Agency will convert all vehicles to zero-emission technology by 2035, five years ahead of the deadline set by the California Air Resource Board’s (CARB) Innovative Clean Transit (ICT) Regulation.

CARB requires all public transit agencies to submit a board approved Rollout Plan describing how they will gradually transition to a 100-percent zero-emission bus fleet. SunLine’s submission this month marked the first from a small sized transit agency. The deadline to submit a Rollout Plan for an agency of SunLine’s size is 2023.

The Agency has successfully completed construction of a hydrogen electrolyzer, which has created infrastructure that promotes low- and zero-emission technology for the region and sets SunLine up well to establish a fleet that is entirely zero-emission. SunLine’s completion of its hydrogen electrolyzer, which is the largest producing station in the country for transportation, is an important step not only for the Coachella Valley, but also for fuel cell vehicle adoption across the country. SunLine’s innovative step positions the Agency as a forerunner, leading the way to zero-emission solutions.

“SunLine Transit Agency wanted to ensure that we submitted our plan early to allow for other small to mid-size systems to have a model to follow. It also positions SunLine to be first in line for any grants or funding programs that expand our zero emission program,” said Lauren Skiver, CEO/General Manager of SunLine Transit Agency. “Our Agency has a reputation for taking on a number of ‘firsts’ in the industry, and it is an honor to be a part of the progress made for clean air and alternative fuel technology..”

According to the SunLine Rollout Plan, starting in 2021, all new fixed-route vehicle purchases will be zero-emission buses (ZEBs). Since each bus will operate for their entire useful life of 12-14 years, the last compressed natural gas (CNG) buses purchased will dictate the year in which the fleet is fully transitioned to zero-emission.

The paratransit cutaway buses will be replaced on schedule with the ICT regulation. However, the turnover of these vehicles is quicker because they are designed for a shorter lifespan. This will enable the paratransit CNG vehicles to be phased out of the fleet by 2030.

Since 1993, SunLine has pursued an aggressive strategy for incorporating clean technologies into its fleet. SunLine took action to replace its entire fleet overnight from diesel engines to cleaner burning CNG. This was a huge investment that exemplified the Agency's commitment to clean air and greenhouse gas emission reduction.

Since deploying the first Buy-America compliant fuel cell bus in the nation, SunLine has added 15 hydrogen electric fuel cell buses to its fleet. These vehicles proudly produce zero tailpipe emissions. Additionally, the Agency has added four battery electric zero-emission buses to its service network. The Agency's longstanding focus on the environment with its clean fuels fleet helps SunLine do its part to ensure natural resources are preserved for future generations.

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About SunLine

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 4.1 million miles per year, covering over 619 bus stops located throughout a 1,120 mile-service area, carrying approximately 4.2 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 www.sunline.org.