

Transportation Matters

Centro Enters Hybrid Era



Centro's new hybrid buses debut on March 22, 2007. They are quieter and produce fewer emissions than previous Centro buses.

Centro has added nine diesel-electric buses to its fleet, bringing hybrid technology to Central New York's public transit system for the very first time.

"We are proud to embark on our next phase of clean-air bus technology," said Centro Executive Director Frank Kobliski. "Thirteen years ago we brought Compressed Natural Gas Buses (CNG) to Central New York and today we enter the world of hybrid technology. Our community will reap the benefits of a more fuel efficient, environmentally cleaner, and quieter bus ride." Centro first introduced CNG buses to Central New York in 1994 and currently operates 120 CNG buses in Syracuse and surrounding suburbs.

Over the next few years, Centro plans to convert its fleet to hybrid technology estimating it will reduce fuel usage by more than 4 million gallons. In addition to a significant reduction in emissions - a 33% reduction compared to CNG buses - the hybrid buses also reduce noise pollution, operating at sound levels approaching passenger cars.

The hybrid buses were unveiled March 22, 2007 during a bus parade from the campus of the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY-ESF) to downtown Syracuse. A brief ceremony followed with local government leaders, who declared the day - "Centro & SUNY-ESF Green Day."

"I am very pleased that the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry is part of Centro's very significant transition to even cleaner and quieter technology making public transportation in Central New York even better," said SUNY-ESF President Neil Murphy. "We know it is going to take a collective effort to resolve the current energy constraints and the impact on climate change. It is not enough to just develop alternative fuels, we have to use fuel more efficiently and this commitment is a major step in that direction."

The hybrid buses were manufactured by Gillig Corporation in California and are powered by the GM Allison Hybrid Ev System. The system recaptures energy during the braking process and converts it to electricity, which is used to accelerate the bus. This unique process makes the bus more efficient in city driving than highway use.

The \$466,000 price tag on the hybrid buses is higher than CNG or traditional diesel buses, but the cost is expected to be recouped during the 12-year life span of the buses.

"When you add up the reduction in fuel consumption and the savings on maintenance because this technology allows you to extend the life of brakes, engine oil and transmission fluid, we expect to more than make up the costs," said Kobliski. "We've also been fortunate because our local congressman, James Walsh, has been a tenacious and persistent supporter of clean air buses and has secured substantial federal funding for our CNG and Hybrid bus purchases."

The early feedback from bus operators is positive. The buses have excellent acceleration and handle very smoothly, making them easier to maneuver in heavy traffic situations. The quieter ride offers an improved work environment for drivers who spend long hours behind the wheel.



Centro Welcomes New York Transportation Commissioner



Newly appointed New York State Commissioner of the Department of Transportation Astrid C. Glynn visited Centro's headquarters in March. The Commissioner toured the entire facility and got a quick peak at Centro's new Hybrid buses and its bus simulators used to train Bus Operators. (Pictured are NYSDOT Regional Director Carl Ford, CNYRTA Chairman Robert Colucci, Glynn, and CNYRTA Executive Director Frank Kobliski).

Centro offers Service to Syracuse Chiefs Home Games

Centro offers shuttle service to Alliance Bank Stadium for all Syracuse Chiefs home games.



Centro operates regular route service between Common Center (Fayette and Salina Streets) and Alliance Bank Stadium, on its North Salina & Buckley and Oak-Butternut bus lines. Please use the Regional Transportation Center time points to approximate the arrival/pick up times at the stadium.

Following the game, buses will shuttle back to Downtown as filled, until all patrons have been accommodated. Regular fares apply; transfers are accepted.

Couple Finds True Love on a Centro Bus

"My single friends tell me 'Well, we'll have to start riding the Centro bus!'" boasts Kathleen Tills-Storsberg. Tills-Storsberg is a newlywed and she met her husband, of all places, on a Centro bus.

Kathleen would get on the Camillus bus everyday on her way to her job at Syracuse University. John Storsberg, a fellow passenger, noticed.

"She would get on the bus, pay her fare quickly and then scoot to the back of the bus," says Storsberg. "I thought she had personality."

Storsberg decided he wanted to strike up a conversation. But there was a challenge. John is blind, and the object of his affection, Kathleen, is legally blind. So one morning, John gussied up his courage. He waited for the bus to take a familiar dip in the road and then stop, listened for the sounds of the coins in the fare box and that familiar voice saying hello to the driver, and then sensed the footsteps rushing past him heading to the back of the bus.

"I screamed 'Hey Kathy' but she didn't answer," recalls Storsberg. "Then Bob (Bus Operator Bob Soloski) said to me, 'John, she's wearing headphones and she can't hear you, you need to go back there to talk to her!'"

From there a relationship blossomed. The two discovered mutual interests - books on tape, the outdoors, and especially music. During the next few weeks, the two would sit next to each other every morning and talk. They exchanged CD's and listened to each other's music. In an act of chivalry, Storsberg offered to exchange numbers.

"I wanted to be able to call her in case the bus was running behind in inclement weather," says Storsberg who admits he may have had ulterior motives. "I didn't want her standing outside any longer than she needed to, so I'd call her when the bus was nearby."

The bus rides lead to long conversations, which lead to phone calls, which lead to what the couple calls "music jam sessions" - get-togethers where they just listened to music. Then after about a year and a half, they started dating.

"Every time I talked to Kathy I just felt good" says Storsberg. "It seems kind of strange to get up every morning and look forward to a bus ride, but that's how I felt. I couldn't wait to get on the bus every morning to be with her."

After months of shared bus rides, stories and trips to the Adirondacks, the two decided to tie the knot. The two wed in a ceremony at the Clay Town Hall this past President's Day. Among the attendees was Bob Soloski.

"It was Bob and his outgoing personality that brought us together," says Storsberg. "If he didn't speak up and tell me Kathy was wearing headphones, we probably would have never gotten together."

And while some might find this story strange, Tills-Storsberg doesn't think so.

"People don't realize the bus is like a small community. You meet the same people every day and you start to care about them. You worry if they don't show up on the bus. You really build a bond with the regular riders."

John and Kathleen built something more.



John Storsberg and Kathleen Tillis met on a Centro bus and were married in February

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