



NEWS RELEASE

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FUTURE OF TRANSIT TAKING SHAPE AT THE BIG BLUE BUS

- ***Big Blue Bus and Art Center College of Design Partner to Create High Concept "Bus of the Future"***
- ***New Blog Launched to Encourage Input from the Public, Transit Advocates, Futurists, Environmentalists and Others***

SANTA MONICA, Calif. – What should buses look and ride like in 2050?

Some compelling, out-of-the-box, eco-friendly and even unorthodox answers to that question are emerging via a talented team of designers from one of the most advanced and influential transportation design schools in the world who, in tandem with Santa Monica's Big Blue Bus, are taking part in a project to create a "big picture" vision of the next generation of transit.

A key goal of the unique collaboration is to begin a thought-provoking and ongoing dialogue between the transit industry and the public regarding how to evolve transit design into creating vehicles that are more progressive, meaningful and pleasurable to use.

"We need bold new visions of where transit can ultimately go, so that we can engage the public and make transit a desirable and regular part of people's lives," said Stephanie Negriff, director of transit services for the Big Blue Bus. "We're hoping through this innovative partnership with Art Center College of Design that we can help inspire not only the public's imagination, but also provide fresh new ideas and solutions to the country's bus manufacturers to seriously consider."

An important interactive aspect of the project is the blog that the public can use to interact directly with the design team (www.BusOfTheFuture.com). The blog includes polling questions, progress reports written by the design students themselves, rough sketches of the concept vehicles, and an area where people can post messages and comments.

According to Negriff, the idea for this unusual collaboration came about when the agency was researching options for new buses to purchase. "As we looked around at what was available, it became clear that although bus technology has rapidly improved, bus design is still lagging behind. That's something that definitely needs to change."

"Buses today look pretty much like they did 50 years ago, and I think the industry is aware that to encourage the public to ride more and drive less, tomorrow's buses will need to be sleek and sexy, environmentally friendly, customized for maximum comfort and responsive to all the different ways people want to use transit."

The design team from Art Center College of Design includes Geoff Wardle, Director of Advanced Mobility Research and Associate Chair of Graduate Industrial Design, and design students Mike Peterson (8th term, Environmental Design), Gabriel Wartofsky (6th term, Transportation Design) and Giuseppe Filippone (6th term, Transportation Design).

"Art Center is very committed to exploring, researching, defining and designing the very best transportation solutions for tomorrow's world," said Wardle, "so it is very appropriate for us to be partnering with the Big Blue Bus on this visionary Bus of the Future project."

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Wardle emphasized the importance of developing urban environments and transportation systems hand in hand so that day-to-day mobility becomes seamless, comfortable, convenient, accessible and stress-free.

"The greatest challenge with all public transportation systems is to ensure that passengers feel in complete control of their journeys so they can travel at times completely convenient to them, and relax and enjoy their experience," said Wardle.

The best way to ensure this, he said, is to bring professional transportation designers into the equation at a very early stage. "Designers understand what people respond to and how to make the total experience compelling. Buses should be as exciting as cars to ride in!"

The first phase of the project involved extensive research by the design team, including riding around the Los Angeles-area on various bus lines and asking passengers what they liked - and didn't like - about riding the bus. They found that people were happy to share their thoughts, concerns and opinions about their experiences in riding on public transportation, the Big Blue Bus, and with transportation issues in general.

According to Wardle, the three student designers have a passion for transportation in all its forms. "Historically, we feel that buses have not received as much passion in their design as other forms of transportation. That must change if we are to encourage more people to use them as part of their everyday lives."

The project - announced at the Big Blue Bus' 80th anniversary celebration in April - is scheduled for completion at the end of August. The designers will create six conceptual versions of the "Bus of the Future," including three 3-D models, to demonstrate how people might travel in the future. Other project elements will include animation of a ride experience from a passenger's point of view and a video chronicling the lifespan of the project. The 3-D models will be judged by a prestigious panel of transportation and design experts at AltCar Expo in Santa Monica on September 26.

For more information about the Bus of the Future project, contact Dan Dawson of the Big Blue Bus at 310-458-1975 x5831, dan.dawson@smgov.net, or Christine Hanson of Art Center College of Design at 626-396-2394, christine.hanson@artcenter.edu. For media inquiries, interview requests and hi-res images, please contact Francine Pares at 949-481-7559, fpares@intelibrand.com.

About the Big Blue Bus

The Big Blue Bus (www.bigbluebus.com) operates a fleet of over 200 energy efficient vehicles, transporting more than 80,000 passengers a day across a nearly 52-square mile service area. Nationally recognized for its long-standing commitment to a cleaner environment, the entire fleet operates on alternative fuels, including liquefied natural gas (LNG), which helps cut emissions by over 80 percent. Serving Santa Monica and the Los Angeles area since 1928, the Big Blue Bus has an 86 percent on-time performance record and has won numerous national awards for its customer service, safety and efficiency.

About Art Center College of Design

Art Center College of Design (www.artcenter.edu) is a global leader in art and design education. Since its founding in 1930, Art Center's alumni continue to have a profound impact on popular culture, the way we live, and important issues in our society today. The first design school to receive the United Nations' Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) status, Art Center provides opportunities for students to create design-based solutions for humanitarian and non-profit agencies around the world. Located in Pasadena, California, Art Center offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in a wide variety of art and design disciplines, as well as public programs for all ages and levels of experience.