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NEWS RELEASE



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Santa Monica's Big Blue Bus to Receive Nearly \$13 Million in Federal Economic Stimulus Funds; Plans to Infuse Money Back into Economy with New Contracts

- *Transit agency plans to purchase 10 new hybrid buses from local bus manufacturer.*
- *More than a dozen additional businesses will benefit from contracts, including makers of fuel systems, tires, seats, rubber flooring, GPS systems and security cameras.*
- *Longer articulated buses will also be purchased to add capacity to popular Rapid 3 and 7 lines.*

SANTA MONICA, Calif. – The City of Santa Monica's Big Blue Bus has announced it will receive \$12.8 million from the federal government's economic stimulus package, which will be used to upgrade the agency's fleet and improve its infrastructure.

Specific provisions in the grant require that the money be used for capital expenditures and not for operating costs or service enhancements. Big Blue Bus will be contracting with a number of companies and manufacturers across the country to infuse much needed capital back into the economy, especially the local Southern California area.

"It's very rewarding to be a catalyst for getting dollars circulating back into both the local and national economy, and to be able to develop the infrastructure for better community service all at the same time," said Stephanie Negriff, director of transit services for the Big Blue Bus.

"If you add up all the transit agencies across the country who are getting similar stimulus funds, that's a lot of new business that companies can expect to receive very soon, which means jobs saved and maybe even new ones created. I think this will have a very positive ripple effect across our economy and country," said Negriff.

Negriff noted that Big Blue Bus Deputy Director, David Feinberg just returned from a successful meeting in Washington, D.C. where he met with staff members of Representative Henry Waxman, Senator Dianne Feinstein and Senator Barbara Boxer to review specifics of how the stimulus dollars would be spent by the agency, including the array of industries that would be positively affected by the new business.

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Negriff said the stimulus funds will allow the transit agency to solve several key community needs, including offering quieter and environmentally-friendly hybrid buses on its Mini Blue neighborhood routes, and also the ability to replace older diesel buses in the fleet and introduce new articulated buses on the agency's busiest lines.

The Big Blue Bus is planning to allocate its economic stimulus funds to purchase:

- 10 new 30-foot gasoline-electric hybrid buses for use on neighborhood Mini Blue lines.
- Three 60-foot flexible articulated buses that will be added to the busy Rapid 3 and Rapid 7 lines.
- Up to three 40-foot alternative fueled buses that will replace several of the agency's older diesel models.

"The addition of the new hybrid buses will allow us to put into place an even greater network of transit services that will help people who live and work in Santa Monica to be car-free," said Negriff.

Negriff said they were very pleased to be acquiring the hybrid vehicles from EIDorado National, a local bus manufacturer located in Riverside County.

"EIDorado National is an excellent transportation manufacturer that's been in business over 30 years, and we're very happy to be purchasing these advanced, alternative fueled buses from them," said Negriff.

"This purchase will help to stimulate our own Southern California economy, as well," said Negriff, "which makes it even more meaningful."

In fact, studies show that for every dollar invested in a transit capital project there is a three to one return on the investment. Santa Monica's City Council was able to quickly respond to the current situation by getting the projects approved quickly so that the money can get back into the economy.

Negriff said a key benefit that will result from the new stimulus funding is that it will allow the agency to build the infrastructure necessary to connect the network of feeder lines to the Expo light rail line when it opens.

"It's vital that we be ready when Expo gets here," she said, "so we can make it easy and affordable for people to access the excellent and integrated transit system that's already in place."

The agency is also enthusiastic about the addition of new 60-foot articulated buses to the fleet, which will allow for more passenger boardings and less crowding on several popular lines, including the Rapid 3 and Rapid 7 lines. The new buses are expected to be in service by the second quarter of 2010.

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“The timing will be especially good for the arrival of these buses, because the transit maintenance facility now under construction will be completed by then, and we’ll have the special bays up and running to accommodate the longer buses,” said Negriff.

Negriff noted that the agency plans to eventually purchase a total of 21 articulated buses for the fleet, which will help improve service, increase passenger comfort and lower operating costs.

According to the American Public Transportation Agency (APTA) in Washington, D.C., public transit use continues to rise across the country, even though gas prices have declined sharply from last year. APTA reports that Americans took 10.7 billion trips on public transportation in 2008, the highest level of ridership in 52 years, and up 38 percent since 1995.

Based on the latest figures, it is estimated that a regular public transit rider can save as much as \$708 a month (based on the cost of gas and parking) or \$8,500 a year. In addition, employees whose companies offer monetary rewards for taking transit are now eligible for a higher transit benefit as part of the recent economic stimulus package approved by Congress.

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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.