

THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Gatineau to test hybrid bus system

Federal, Quebec governments to fund diesel-electric combo

BY DAVE ROGERS

The federal and Quebec governments are funding an experimental fleet of hybrid diesel-electric buses in Gatineau and Montreal that are expected to cut fuel consumption by 33 per cent and save thousands of tonnes of greenhouse gases per year.

In June, Gatineau's bus company, the Société de transport de l'Outaouais, will begin operating two hybrid buses for a year on a "Green Line" along Gréber, Fournier and Maison-neuve Boulevards to the Portage Bridge.

Montreal will operate eight buses during the 12-month pilot project. The project will determine how well the buses perform throughout the year and whether riders like them enough to justify the cost. STO spokesman Alain Pilon would not provide a figure for the cost, but he said it was about four times the price of a conventional bus. He said the price of the project in Gatineau, including the two buses and changes to traffic signals so the buses stop less frequently at intersections and signage for bus lanes would be \$8 million.

The Novabus vehicles will be the first hybrid buses in Quebec.

Alex Cullen, chairman of Ottawa's transit commission, said Ottawa plans to spend \$46 million on an undetermined number of hybrid buses in 2008, using a grant from the Ontario government and money the city collects from gasoline taxes.

Gatineau's 41-passenger buses use a combination of diesel power and electricity generated from braking. The electric power is stored in a 400-kilogram battery pack on the roof and used to power electric motors.



PAT MCGRATH, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Gatineau will get two hybrid buses, which are expected to cut fuel consumption by 33 per cent.

Mr. Pilon said Gatineau's two buses are expected to save about 1,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases between them per year.

Particulate, carbon monoxide and hydrocarbon emissions are expected to be reduced by up to 90 per cent compared with conventional diesel buses. Nitrogen oxide emissions could be reduced by up to 50 per cent.

Novabus, which is owned by Volvo, says the vehicles are quieter and smoother than conventional buses and are made with corrosion-free stainless steel, plastic and fibreglass materials.

The Gatineau and Montreal project is to cost \$19.7 million. The STO will pay \$2.2 million, the Société de transport de Montréal \$3.2 million, Québec \$6.4 million, the federal government \$4 million and a Quebec-Canada infrastructure program will contribute \$3.9 million.

Federal Transport Minister Lawrence Cannon said he hopes the new buses will encourage more Canadians to use public transit.

"This will be a legacy for future generations," Mr. Cannon said. "(Yesterday's) announcement is a step towards making public transit more energy-efficient and attractive to riders."