# A sneak-peek



PHOTOS BY JESSICA NELMS | THE JOURNAL

Proterra Marketing and Sales Vice President Ian Shackleton stands inside one of the company's electric buses parked on Ram Cat Alley on Thursday morning. Proterra featured the electric bus during WHNS Fox 21's Celebrate the Carolinas event to give city residents a taste of what one of four new electric buses will look like once they arrive in Seneca in 2013.

# Proterra electric bus rolls into Seneca



Seneca received $4.1 million in grants to purchase four electric buses from Greenville company, Proterra. The electric buses are described as being "extremely quiet" and release no emissions. The buses will be fare-free to the public.

BY LADONNA BEEKER
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — Seneca residents got a peek Thursday at an electric bus that will soon roll through city streets via fare-free busing.

Proterra, a Greenville electric-bus manufacturing company, was one of many vendors at WHNS Fox 21's Celebrate the Carolinas event Thursday morning on Ram Cat Alley in downtown Seneca. Proterra parked one of its electric buses so attendees could take a tour and build excitement for what is to come in Seneca.

"Everybody is tickled pink," said Proterra Founder Dale Hill. "... Like it or not, this is putting Seneca on the map for sure."

Proterra's electric buses are Hill's brainchild, but he said it was the company's engineers who put all the parts in place and brought the buses to life.

"I drew the coloring book, and the engineers colored the pictures," Hill said. "I had the idea and got the funding to start the work. I did the physical design and appearance (for the electric bus)."

In November, Seneca announced a $4.1 million grant from the Federal Transit Authority's Transit Investment in Greenhouse Gas and Energy Reduction program. The grant will provide four electric buses to the city, which will make Seneca the first all-electric bus city in the nation.

Each electric bus — seating 35 and allowing 32 people to stand — charges in 10 minutes from a pole that connects to the roof of the bus. The buses cause no emissions and require no oil changes. The city will save $500,000 per bus in fuel costs during a 12-year period and will bring in thousands more in maintenance savings to the city.

"It's extremely quiet and rides smoother than a conventional CAT bus," Hill said, adding he started designing the electric bus in 2007 and had the first one created in 2010. "... Very few (developers) get to live to see (a product) totally commercialized. They get the idea rolling, but don't have the opportunity to stay with it to see it come forward. I'm the Col. Sanders of Proterra."

Proterra has electric buses in several cities in California, Texas and Florida. The electric bus also passed a 15,000-mile test, which checked its safety and mechanical ability on the road.

Seneca's electric buses are being built in Greenville with bodies made in Summerville. Hill said the project has created more jobs at Proterra, which also helps Seneca since many company employees reside in Oconee County.

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# BUS: 'I'm the Col. Sanders of Proterra,' Hill said

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"We are very excited," said Mayor Dan Alexander. "A lot of doors have opened in Seneca. ... The (electric) bus is an amazing bus."

Alexander said the city's partnership with Proterra and the Clemson Area Transit (CAT) made this opportunity possible in the city, while also recognizing the late Clemson Mayor Larry Abernathy. Alexander said having an electric bus system was just as much Seneca's idea as it was Abernathy's dream.

Clemson is also considering utilizing electric buses on its CAT routes.

City Administrator Greg Dietterick said the electric buses in Seneca are another way the city is settling into its niche.

"Economic development is not just about industries," Dietterick said. "... Industry is a critical piece to discover (the city's) natural resources. Industries look for quality of life as much as they look for (property and location). Our goal is to attract businesses."

According to Hill, Seneca is doing just that with visitors coming to the 75,000-resident county from India, China, South America, Canada and several cities in the United States to see first-hand Proterra's buses and what the area has to offer for a cutting-edge industry.

The electric buses are expected to be in Seneca by early 2013.

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