

CARLOS GALARZA-VEVE | THE JOURNAL

A worker sweeps the concrete driveway built next to the downtown Seneca electric bus charging station under construction. The charging station downtown, and another being built at Oconee Medical Center, will be equipped with charging attachments that give battery-operated buses a 10-minute boost good for a couple of round trips. Both are expected to be operational within 30 days.

Futuristic bus-charging stations almost ready

BY CARLOS GALARZA-VEVE
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SENECA — The future of "go-green" transit is closer to becoming reality in Seneca.

Two charging stations that will keep a new fleet of electric buses humming pollution-free throughout Seneca are expected to be completed and operational within 30 days, City Planning Director Ed Halbig said Wednesday.



Halbig

Concrete work at the downtown charging station under construction, and another one being built at Oconee Medical Center (OMC), are in their final stages. The electrical components that will charge the buses will be set up once concrete work is completed.

City officials expect four buses ordered from Proterra, Inc., to arrive before the year ends. The city and Proterra amended their contract, which extended the delivery deadline to Jan. 31.

"I am in contact with Proterra weekly via status conference calls," Halbig said. "The buses are being prepared for painting and going through final quality control inspections. I anticipate they will be in Seneca well ahead of the January 31 deadline."

The four electric buses and the two quick 10-minute boost charging stations have a $3.8 million price tag and are being paid for by a $4.1 million grant awarded to the city by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in 2011.

Halbig said a separate $1.8 million "livability" grant from the South Carolina Department of Transportation is being used to add bus-stop shelters at the charging stations downtown and on the hospital grounds.

The livability grant is also being used to upfit a portion of the building at the Seneca Rail Site (former Propex building) for bus storage and maintenance.

"That work is expected to begin in early 2014," Halbig said.

The city leveraged $1.2 million in the Rail Site building property values as an in-kind local match for the livability grant, Halbig added.

City officials expect to use money left over from the grants to buy a fifth electric bus.

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