Greenville electric bus maker names CEO

By Rudolph Bell
Staff Writer
dbell@greenvillenews.com

Electric bus maker Proterra has announced a new chief executive officer.

Proterra, which manufactures its battery-powered transit vehicles in Greenville, said in a news release that David Bennett, a former Eaton Corp. executive, was its new CEO.

Proterra made the announcement at a trade show, the 2011 American Public Transportation Association EXPO in New Orleans.

The company said Bennett was a vice president for business development in Eaton's industrial sector and also worked as an executive with Honeywell and General Electric.

Bennett has a bachelor's degree from Duke University and a master's of business administration from Drexel University, the statement said.

No mention was made of Proterra's former chief executive officer, Jeff Granato, who has left the company.

At least two other key executives have left Proterra since Kleiner Perkins, a California venture capital firm, became involved with the startup: Bharat Dave, Proterra's former chief operating officer; and Westy Bowen, former vice president of integrated supply chain.

Proterra founder Dale Hill said he is still with the company.

Kleiner Perkins, GM Ventures, Mitsui & Co. Ltd., and other companies announced a $30 million investment in Proterra in June.

The cash infusion allowed Proterra to survive a financing crunch brought on when the Securities and Exchange Commission took action against the Michael Kenwood Group, a Connecticut investment firm that had put $20 million into Proterra.