No electric buses anytime soon



JESSICA NELMS | THE JOURNAL

A Proterra electric bus recently visited Ram Cat Alley to show Seneca what a "greener" public transportation system looks like.

BY MONICA KREBER
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SENECA — New electric buses for Seneca are in the process of being built, but they won't be on the street until May, at the earliest, said Ed Halbig, planning and development director for the city.

"The buses are in construction now, and we're waiting on them," Halbig said.

He said it is not an issue that the buses will arrive later than a previously hoped-for date of March or April.

"We don't want them that fast," he said. "We don't want the buses to be rushed. We want everything done as it should be done."

Halbig said he thinks at least one of these new buses is on the line for construction completion.

"We couldn't accept the buses now, because we've got work to get done here (on infrastructure)," he said.

The buses will come from Proterra in Greenville and are expected to be "greener" by eliminating the use of diesel fuel.

Mayor Dan Alexander said Seneca received a $4.1 million grant in November 2011 to retire its diesel buses and create only fare-free electric buses for the area. The grant came from the Federal Transit Authority's Transit Investment in Greenhouse Gas and Energy Reduction program. Receiving these electric buses would make put Seneca is a league of its own.

"It is a big deal," he said. "We'll be the first city not just in the state but in the nation to be totally electric. This is something for all people to see."

Alexander said one unique thing about the electric buses is they can be charged in seven to eight minutes, all done by computer. The timing for the electric buses is good too, he said, because Seneca was looking to update its current buses.

mkreber@upstatetoday.com | (864) 973-6685