Ready to roll

Seneca prepares to start routes with new buses

BY CARLOS GALARZA-VEVE
THE JOURNAL

SEE BUSES, PAGE A3



FILE

One of Seneca's electric buses gets a boost at the downtown charging station. The bus has a range of 30 miles or more.

SENECA — After a couple of weeks of "shadowing," testing and tweaking, the city's fleet of electric buses looks ready to begin service next week.

The four battery-operated buses with a price tag of $950,000 each will replace the three diesel buses on the Clemson Area Transit (CAT) routes Monday.

To get drivers acclimated, they've been driving the new buses without passengers while following or shadowing the diesel buses on the routes. It's easy to tell them apart. The sleek, noiseless vehicle that emits no fumes is the environmentally friendly e-bus.



Halbig

Seneca Planning Director Ed Halbig said Proterra, the Greenville-based company that makes the electric buses, reports that their range is 30 miles or better. The range easily handles the three CAT routes — the 7.5-mile residential loop, the 10-mile commercial loop and the 20-mile express loop round trip to and from the Hendrix Center in Clemson.

"The drivers have not reported any bugs," Halbig said. "They have been learning to operate the buses over the past few weeks."

Halbig said that Proterra technicians have been closely monitoring the new buses and have reported and addressed all the kinks to date.

Once the new buses go into service, the diesels will be held in reserve for the remainder of the contract, which ends June 30, 2014.

Halbig said the diesel buses were used when bought for more than $200,000 with mostly federal money. He said the South Carolina Department of Transportation was the first lienholder on the diesels.

"(SCDOT) makes the determination as to how the buses will be used beyond that," Halbig said.

The electric buses were purchased with a $4.1 million Federal Transportation Adminstration (FTA) grant. Halbig said the city will buy a fifth bus with what is left from a separate $1.8 million grant.

carlos@upstatetoday.com | (864) 973-6686

BUSES: City plans on purchasing fifth bus

FROM PAGE A1