Seneca celebrates being 1st with all-electric public transit

STAFF REPORT
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Seneca officials celebrated the Upstate community's first all-electric bus fleet with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the new system's state-of-the-art maintenance facility. Government officials and representatives of the bus manufacturer, Proterra Inc., in Greenville, also acknowledged Seneca's status as the first city ever to convert its entire fleet to battery power.

Seneca Mayor Dan Alexander, as well as federal, state and other local government officials, attended the ceremony, along with representatives of the Center for Transportation and the Environment, which helped secure grant funds, and Clemson Area Transit, which manages and operates the transit system fleet.

"This is a great day for Seneca," Alexander said. "The technology is amazing."

The fleet has been operating in revenue service since September, and officials said the buses save 3,000 gallons of fuel each month and eliminate routine maintenance such as oil changes, which diesel buses require. The project has also prevented more than 500,000 pounds of emissions, a Proterra statement said.



Business and government officials at a ribbon-cutting ceremony for Seneca's all-electric bus fleet. Officials say the buses save 3,000 gallons of fuel each month. (Photo/Provided)

"I think with the deployment in Seneca, we've proved that an electric vehicle that's four to five times more energy efficient than a diesel vehicle can do the job," said Proterra CEO Ryan Popple.

"With the first fleet in the world to go 100% electric, we've demonstrated this is the future of the industry," he said.

The city obtained U.S. Department of Transportation grants totaling $4.1 million to purchase the $1 million buses. Al Babinicz, CEO of the Clemson Area Transit system, has said up to $1 million in local funding has been invested, and the S.C. Department of Transportation is spending about $500,000.

Clemson Area Transit manages and operates the bus system in Oconee County and Seneca and has routes that extend to the Clemson University campus.

Babinicz said, "Our immediate goal was to save money on fuel and maintenance, and the broader goal was to reduce our environmental footprint."