

BlueGo fleet to be exclusively diesel powered

By Kathryn Reed

Soon Tahoe Transportation District's fleet of BlueGo buses on the South Shore will all be diesel.

This is because the board this month voted to get rid of the compressed natural gas buses and the fueling station it operates at Lake Tahoe Airport.

"CNG has not been that great of a performer in mountain environments like ours, especially when you have hills to climb. When you combine that with where diesel technology has come, it is very clean and definitely more affordable and provides the power we need," TTD Executive Director Carl Hasty told *Lake Tahoe News*.

It costs TTD about \$72,000 to operate the station. They are responsible for nearly 98 percent of the usage. Other users have been notified it will be closing this summer.

TTD will also save money by not needing staff to maintain the facility or have parts for that fleet.

Placer County's TART bus service uses CNG. Four of TTD's CNG-fueled buses will go there.

"The TTD fleet includes 15 CNG powered buses. Buses 3281 and 3282 are currently not in service and were scheduled for disposal this year and buses 3283 and 3284 have exceeded their federal useful life and have CNG storage tanks that will expire in the next two years," the staff report says. "The cost to replace CNG storage tanks is typically around \$20,000 per bus. Another five CNG vehicles have exceeded their federal useful life and are also eligible for disposal. Of the

remaining six CNG vehicles, buses 3274 and 3275 are specialized CNG-powered trolleys that will be retained for use on the West Shore. These buses will fuel at Placer County's Cabin Creek CNG station. Placer County is interested in acquiring the other four CNG buses. These four buses have remaining federal interest and must be transferred to another grantee to avoid repaying FTA a prorated share of the federal interest."

TTD added five buses to its fleet in May and will add another four in September.

The now defunct South Tahoe Area Transit Authority, which used to run BlueGo, began acquiring CNG buses about 13 years ago at a time when it was deemed this would be the more environmentally friendly route. That is not the case now. Hasty said TTD will keep looking at alternatives, but added electric vehicles won't be purchased in the near future.

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Note:

- TTD staff will be giving a presentation to the South Lake Tahoe City Council on July 21 at 9am at Lake Tahoe Airport.