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Some of TransLink's new trolley buses should be back on the road around March 18 after repairs.

Some of Vancouver's defective trolley buses could be back on the road in about two weeks, seven weeks after they were taken out of service with power-steering problems, a TransLink official said Monday.

Bus manufacturer New Flyer Industries has identified the problem and last Friday proposed a 12-step repair program, TransLink vice-president Sheri Plewes said.

It will take about two weeks to fix the first 20 buses, which will then be road-tested and quickly put back in service if they pass.

Some of the buses lost their power steering when they passed couplings in overhead trolley wires, making them difficult to drive and raising safety issues.

Thirty-nine New Flyer buses that were already in service were pulled off the road and TransLink refused to accept delivery of a dozen more newly arrived buses.

"There was a loose connection to the power steering that was fixed," Plewes said, but that didn't end the problem. Technicians gradually focused on the power steering's hydraulic system.

"The power steering pump is not supplying enough hydraulic fluid to the system at a fast enough pace," Plewes said. "So we are working on that now."

The pumps are being replaced with more powerful units and some electrical changes are being made.

She said TransLink had ruled out the possibility that a pilot bus that arrived two years ago and didn't display any problems during extensive road tests was outfitted with more robust hydraulics than the rest of the buses.

She said the test bus had similar equipment to the others, but the problem was "very intermittent" and didn't show up on every bus.

When the first 20 buses are repaired they'll get a road test and will be checked by the provincial Motor Vehicle Branch.

"If they get a clean bill of health, they'll be out on the road" by around March 18, Plewes said.

She added that New Flyer has been charged with \$258,000 in penalties under its contract with TransLink because of the problems. The buses are part of an order of 228 buses, worth \$273 million.

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