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Office of the Premier
Ministry of Transportation

WORLD'S FIRST HYDROGEN BUS FLEET ONE STEP CLOSER

VANCOUVER – The Province is a step closer to deploying the world's first fleet of hydrogen buses with $45 million that will go toward the production of 20 buses and development of hydrogen fuelling stations in Whistler and Victoria, Premier Gordon Campbell announced today at the Hydrogen and Fuel Cells 2007 international conference and trade show in Vancouver.

"Our goal is to see the world's first fleet of fuel cell buses on B.C. roads by the end of 2009 to showcase B.C.'s commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the potential of hydrogen technology as an energy solution," said Premier Campbell. "This funding will ensure that the hydrogen highway that will run from Whistler to Vancouver, Surrey and Victoria will become a reality. We will continue our work with our partners in the U.S. to extend the Hydrogen Highway from Whistler to San Diego by 2010."

The Province committed in the throne speech that a federal-provincial partnership will be investing $89 million for fuelling stations and the world's first fleet of 20 fuel cell buses. In November, the Province dedicated an initial $10 million of that funding to the first phase of the project with a Request for Proposals that called for the development of a pre-production hydrogen fuel cell bus. BC Transit is now in contract negotiations with the top proponent for this initial bus and the subsequent production phase. This second $45-million allocation, which comes from the federal Public Transit Capital Trust, will go toward production of the 20 hydrogen buses and to develop hydrogen fuelling stations in Whistler and Victoria. BC Transit issued a Request for Proposal last week calling for the development of the fuelling stations. The remaining $34 million of the overall funding will be used by BC Transit to operate the fleet for up to five years, bringing the total commitment to the fleet to $89 million.

The ultimate goal of the project is to demonstrate for the first time the integration of hydrogen fuel cell buses into the regular operational service of an urban transit system, allowing monitoring of operations, maintenance and fuelling over a sustained period.

"B.C. is a leader in hydrogen fuel cell technology and we can harness this innovative technology to achieve environmental sustainability in transportation," said Campbell. "This is the type of project we can look to as we move to reduce B.C.'s greenhouse gas emissions by 33 per cent by 2020. It is also the type of project that can help build momentum towards reducing greenhouse gases across all borders as we work with our partners in the U.S. and across Canada."

British Columbia joined with five western U.S. states to partner in the new Western Regional Climate Action Initiative (WRCAI) earlier this month. The purpose of the WRCAI is to identify, evaluate and implement ways to collectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the region and to achieve related co-benefits.

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Premier Campbell also announced $155,000 in government funding to support the development of a new undergraduate fuel cell systems design laboratory at the Institute for Integrated Energy Systems at the University of Victoria. The new facility, a first-of-its kind lab in the province, will help prepare future graduate engineers for employment with B.C. hydrogen and fuel cell companies. In addition, British Columbia's Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Strategy will receive $50,000 for continued outreach and communications about hydrogen and fuel cell technology in action in B.C., highlighting the viability of the technology in the mainstream marketplace.

Hydrogen fuel cell-powered vehicles produce no smog-creating emissions, and no greenhouse gas emissions, and can be twice as efficient as internal combustion engines. Life cycle costs for fuel cell buses once they become commercially available are expected to be lower than existing internal combustion engine technology. These buses will reinforce British Columbia's commitment to hydrogen and fuel cell development as a zero-emission transportation solution.

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