Bob Clark's Electric Transit Talk

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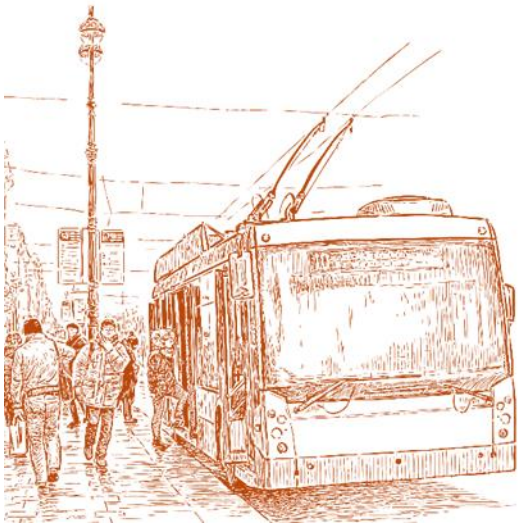

World's Newest Trolleybus System Debuts in Pescara, Italy

Pescara, the capital of the Italian province of Pescara, is a beautiful city on the Adriatic coast. About 350,000 people live in the immediate metropolitan area. And on September 11th, 2025, it officially became home to the world's newest trolleybus operation as six Van Hool ExquiCity 18-metre trolleybuses went into service on an 8-km route stretching from Stazione Centrale to Montesilvano.

After many years of waiting, a modern means of public transportation that meets with the wholehearted approval of the citizenry has finally come to Pescara. The line is known officially as "La Verde", 'the Green One', and averaged more than 6,500 passengers per week during its first two months of service. "Bellissimo" is the most common descriptor used by the public after trying out the new electric service.

About 6.1 km of the route takes the form of a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line, running on its own right-of-way constructed on what was formerly the trackbed of a railway line. This right-of-way is equipped with trolleybus overhead. Near the ends of the line, trolleybuses travel off-wire in battery mode along local roads to the termini. There are 23 stops along the line, and the service runs at 10-minute intervals.

The six Van Hool trolleybuses that serve the line are equipped with two 160 kW motors and battery packs with a capacity of 45 kWh. Each vehicle can carry up to 134 passengers, with 37 seated. The acquisition of two more trolleybuses for the service is in the works, but these vehicles will come from Chinese manufacturer Yutong.

Interestingly, Pescara was also home to Italy's first electric trolleybus operation back in 1903.

[Sources: Urban Transport Magazine, Sept. 28, 2025; Sustainable Bus, November 27, 2025; Trolleymotion; Trolleybus Magazine, Jan.-Feb. 2026]

Hyundai Rotem High Floor LRT Cars for Edmonton

The City of Edmonton has contracted with Hyundai Rotem for the design and manufacture of 32 new light rail vehicles that will be used to replace the city's aging 37 Siemens U2 cars, some of which date back to 1977 and 1978 when the first LRT line opened. The contract is worth $300 million Canadian. Design and manufacture will start later this year, with delivery scheduled for 2029-30.

The vehicles will operate on the City's Capital and Metro lines. An extension to the Capital Line to the South is currently under construction and scheduled to open in 2029.

Hyundai Rotem says it will customize the LRVs for operation in the local environment, where temperatures can dip as low as -40° C in the harsh Alberta winter with heavy snowfall. The vehicles will also be equipped with a collision warning system.

The Korean manufacturer is also supplying 46 low-floor LRVs for Edmonton's Valley Line West under a previous contract. The first of those vehicles was delivered in August of 2025.

[Source: International Railway Journal, February 5, 2026]

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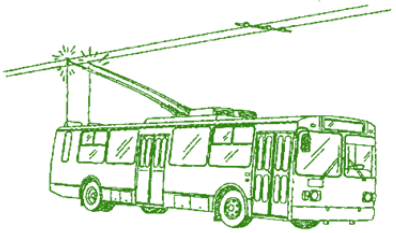
Sustainable Transit for Liveable Communities



Current Flashes

☞ Since 2019, *Mexico City* has placed 502 new trolleybuses in service built by Chinese manufacturers Yutong and Zhongtong. 425 are owned by Servicio de Transportes Eléctricos (STE), and 77 by private operators. 17 new trolleybuses are on order for a new route, Route 14, on which construction was expected to begin this January.

☞ Turkish trolleybus manufacturer Bozenkaya displayed a new 18 metre articulated trolleybus, model SNG18T, bearing the brand name Lamis at the *Busworld Exhibition in Brussels* in October 2025. Lamis branded 12- and 18-metre vehicles are already in service in Timisoara, Romania.

☞ *Bucharest, Romania* introduced a nighttime trolleybus route in mid-November, the N105. It is the first nighttime service in the Romanian capital to use trolleybuses. Like many other European cities, Bucharest is making use of In-Motion Charging to extend its electric operations. The new nighttime route has unwired sections at both ends, which the vehicles traverse on battery power.

☞ Five new Solaris Trollino IV 12 trolleybuses entered service on or about October 1st in *Mediaș, Romania*. The vehicles feature electrical equipment by Polish manufacturer Medcom.

☞ In late 2025, construction on two new sections of trolleybus overhead to extend the system in *Bratislava, Slovakia* was underway. One section will be served by a new trolleybus route, Route 32, which will run between Dlhé Diely and Jalačičova. The other extension is part of current Route 61. Both sections are expected to be in operation by mid-year.

☞ 18 new Solaris Trollino 12 trolleybuses are entering service in Tychy, Poland. The vehicles are equipped with air conditioning, advanced safety systems and batteries for off-wire operation. The batteries can be charged either from the overhead wires or via a plug-in socket in the garage. An official presentation of the new vehicles took place on February 14th.

☞ Work on the installation of overhead wiring between Kreuzstutz and Michaelshof *in Lucerne, Switzerland* began in August of last year, paving the way for the conversion of a diesel route to trolleybus operation.

☞ Route 7 in *Winterthur, Switzerland*, will be converted from diesel to trolleybus operation in December of this year. In preparation for this, the installation of a 3 km section of overhead wiring began in December 2025. New Hess lighTram trolleybuses continue to arrive in the city.

☞ In late August, a construction permit was granted to the City of *Marburg, Germany* to erect the required infrastructure for the implementation of an IMC-trolleybus system. According to plans, wiring was to be erected for around 50% of the proposed routes, with the remaining portions served in battery mode. Finances, however, have not yet been secured.

☞ Transit operators in *Ukraine* continue to demonstrate remarkable resilience in the face of disruptions to the power supply and damage from bombings. Trolleybus service on some routes was reinstated in both the cities of *Khartsyzsk* and *Zaporizhzhya* late last year. The Ukrainian cities of *Kremenchug* and *Mikolayiv* have received deliveries of new trolleybuses.

☞ Historic Marmon-Herrington trolleybus 559 with its Christmas livery returned to the streets of *Dayton, Ohio* again for the 2025 Christmas Season, debuting in the annual Christmas parade and appearing for public rides on selected dates. The Christmas Trolley is a hit with the public.

☞ Closure *of San Francisco's* Potrero Trolleybus Yard for rebuilding took effect in February, with the last services operating out of Potrero on February 13th. Affected routes 5, 5R, 14, 22, 30 and 49 will be served by other MUNI divisions.

[Sources: Trolleybus Magazine, Sustainable Bus, SFMTA]

LaVerde, "The Green One", Pescara, Italy's new trolleybus BRT service, launched September 11th. Here, one of the Van Hool ExquiCity vehicles is seen during testing on a portion of the ROW. See p. 1 [Balfour Beatty]

One of 18 new Solaris Trollino 12 trolleybuses now entering service in Tychy, Poland. Solaris trolleybuses are designed and manufactured in Poland. See p. 2 [Solaris Bus and Coach]

Toronto received the last of its order of 60 streetcars from Alstom in January. In five-module configuration, there is space for 251 passengers. See p. 5 [railway.technology.com]

Seen here inside the garage at 600 Longworth in December, Dayton's famous Christmas trolley made the rounds again for the 2025 Christmas Season. See p. 2 [D. McElrath]

The Kansas City Streetcar's 3.5-mile Main Street Extension opened on October 24, 2025 to rave reviews. Here a streetcar pulls into the new Plaza Stop. Ridership on the line had doubled by November. An extension to the Berkley Riverfront will open later this year. See p. 6 [Kansas City Star]

The Edmonton Radial Railway Society's car No. 33, a double-ended St. Louis-built car dating from 1912, took 17 years and over 35,000 volunteer hours to restore. It operates on the ERRS High Level Bridge line and was decked out for Christmas rides in November and December. [CTV]

Charge Less—Drive More: 15th European Trolleybus Day

Under the motto "Charge Less – Drive More", a number of cities across Europe celebrated European Trolleybus Day on September 20th in conjunction with European Mobility Week. The events were designed to showcase the benefits of modern trolleybus technology with In-Motion Charging as a sustainable, efficient and future-proof urban transport solution. Featured were information events, citizen dialogues, test rides and workshops. European Mobility Week is an annual event intended to promote sustainable mobility solutions that are accessible to everyone.

An important theme of the 2025 events was In-Motion Charging (IMC). Trolleybus cities sought to demonstrate how IMC technology combines the best of overhead electric and battery bus systems. Trolleybus-IMC systems charge their batteries while driving and do not require extensive charging infrastructure, lengthy charging layovers or the large spare ratios necessary with battery buses. The benefits are a resource-efficient system that is highly effective, reliable and cost-effective. It is proving to be a future-proof solution in over 100 cities across Europe.

eBRT2030, Bus Rapid Transit with Electric Technology, was also a feature of the events—designed to show cutting-edge, sustainable solutions for building bus rapid transit systems.

Bus manufacturer Solaris was involved in the planning and staging of the European Trolleybus Day. To date, Solaris has delivered 2,300 trolleybuses across Europe, and is presently working on an order for Vancouver, Canada. [Source: Solaris Bus and Coach, September 19, 2025]

King County Metro to Upgrade Atlantic Base Trolleybus Facility

King County Metro, transit service provider to greater Seattle, began work in January on upgrading its Atlantic Base Yard Facility to deliver a number of infrastructure improvements. Atlantic Base was expanded in 1979-80 to house at least 200 trolleybuses, with parking lot facilities for these vehicles constructed of Portland cement.

Capital improvements needed at the site were identified in an engineering report. The work will include replacement of all concrete paving, the replacement of underground infrastructure such as storm drainage and sanitary sewer systems and the replacement of buried power lines. Underground storage tanks will be rehabilitated while they are exposed. The overhead wire system used by the trolleybuses will be upgraded to support KC Metro's electric trolleybus fleet for the future.

The project is estimated to cost $45 million and will be completed in phases to ensure minimum disruption to transit operations. All work is expected to be completed by 2028. This project is part of King County Metro's initiatives to transition to a fully zero-emission fleet by 2035. [Source: Metro Matters, December 15, 2025]

Will DC Streetcar Service be replaced by a Trolleybus?

The Washington DC Department of Transportation announced in October that service on the DC streetcar line will officially end on March 31, 2026. The closure comes a year earlier than originally planned as a result of a funding cut by the DC Council.

Department officials said that the decision is a result of years of low ridership on the line. They also indicated that, because of its operation in mixed traffic, the streetcar racked up high operational costs relative to its earnings. Much of the blame for the streetcar's failure is no doubt also a result of the failure to expand streetcar service.

The DC streetcar was inaugurated in 2016. It runs between Union Station and the Robert F. Kennedy Stadium Campus, covering a distance of about 2.2 miles.

Mayor Muriel Bowser told reporters that the streetcar line would be replaced by late 2028 or mid-2029 by an electric trolleybus "charged from overhead wires". She referred to the replacement as a "next generation streetcar". [Sources: WTOP News, October 29, 2025; Greater Greater Washington, May 28, 2025; Washington Post, May 27, 2025]

Toronto Receives 60th New Alstom Streetcar

The Toronto Transit Commission took delivery of its 60th new streetcar, completing an order of vehicles dating from 2021. The 60 new vehicles have allowed the TTC to expand its streetcar fleet by nearly 30%, helping to improve reliability on the network while at the same time modernizing the fleet. The fleet now stands at 264. All TTC streetcars are fully accessible and, of course, are emission-free, helping Toronto to achieve its climate goals.

The new streetcars were produced by Alstom at its plant in Thunder Bay, Ontario—a plant formerly occupied by Canadian Car and Foundry that at one time produced trolley and motor buses.

The additional vehicles will support six-minute service or better on streetcar routes, helping to realize a recommendation in the TTC's 5 Year Service and Customer Experience Action Plan, as well as the proposed expansion of streetcar service along Queen's Quay.

The purchase was supported by funding from the Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario to the tune of $388 million. Also covered by this funding are upgrades to the Hillcrest Streetcar Complex to maintain and store the new streetcars.

Toronto has 11 streetcar routes covering some 308 kilometres, making it the largest and busiest streetcar network in North America. In 2024, commuters made over 24.5 million trips by streetcar in Toronto.

[Source: Alstom, January 14, 2026; TTC, January 13, 2026]

ERRS rolls out Christmas Streetcar for Fourth Season

The Edmonton Radial Railway Society in Edmonton, Canada rolled out its Christmas streetcar program again for the 2025 Christmas Season beginning on November 28th. This was its fourth year. The tour took guests on a 45-minute round-trip ride, travelling from the Old Strathcona stop across the High Level Bridge to Government Centre Plaza, and then returning to Old Strathcona.

During this trip, the motormen provided historical information about Edmonton and the car as well as some holiday cheer.

The festive tours were already booked at 98% capacity at the start of the season. The tours were to run until December 21st, but sadly a problem with one of the axles on the historic streetcar caused the cancellation of all trips midway through December.

The program uses restored Edmonton streetcar No. 33 dating from 1912. The streetcar is decorated with garlands and lights and features a Christmas tree. Vintage music is played inside. The program is run entirely by volunteers.

[Sources: CTV News, November 28, 2025; CurioCity, November 24, 2025; ERRS, December 10, 2025; CTV News, December 22, 2025]

Atlanta Streetcars Back in Service

Streetcar service in Atlanta, Georgia resumed on Tuesday, February 3 following the completion of underground utility repairs by Georgia Power. The streetcar service was suspended effective September 8, 2025 in order to complete the repairs and, at the same time, make scheduled infrastructure upgrades along the route. The work required a lane closure between Courtland Street and Peachtree Center Avenue with excavation work taking place.

Shuttle buses were used to provide transit service during the suspension.

Service provider MARTA used the down time to undertake inspection and repairs to the streetcar catenary, perform track maintenance, refurbish stations, trim trees, improve signage and perform general cleaning and maintenance work.

Atlanta's original streetcar system was closed in 1949. The current streetcar line opened in 2014 and covers 4.3 km in the Downtown core, serving 12 stops or stations. A fleet of four Siemens S70 light rail vehicles is used to provide the service. An expansion onto the BeltLine surrounding Central Atlanta is planned.

[Source: MARTA, January 12, 2026]

Kansas City Streetcar Updates

The Kansas City Streetcar successfully opened its Main Street Extension on October 24, 2025. The extension is a 3.5-mile expansion from Union Station to the University of Missouri—Kansas City. It is a major milestone in connecting Downtown, Midtown, the Country Club Plaza and the University by means of reliable and fare-free public transit. More than 60% of the extension operates in reserved lanes.

Ridership on the KC Streetcar line more than doubled in the first month after the new extension was opened. On average, 11,397 people took the streetcar each day in November 2025 compared with only 4,186 a year ago.

The $352 million extension was funded through federal and local dollars. In 2018, voters in Midtown agreed to a sales and property tax increase to help fund the streetcar. About $174 million came from a Federal grant.

Another 0.7-mile extension is slated to open early in 2026. The Riverfront Extension will bring riders from the University to the Berkley Riverfront, a five-minute walk from CPKC Stadium. Dead wire testing on this extension was completed in early December, with live wire testing beginning on December 17th. Pre-revenue operations will focus on operator training, safety drills and real-world service simulations. While this is ongoing, crews are busy putting some of the finishing touches on the extension, such as completing shelters and stops and installing train and traffic signals. [Sources: Mass Transit, October 28, 2025; Kansas City Star, October 24th and December 18, 2025]

Light Rail News

Toronto's Line 6 Finch West opens

In what has been termed the most significant expansion of Toronto's transit network since the Spadina Subway extension in 2002, Line 6 Finch West LRT went into operation on December 7th.

The line includes two stations and 16 stops across more than 10 route kilometres and is projected to carry 12 million riders a year by 2031. It runs on a dedicated, mostly street-level track along Finch Avenue West from Finch West Station (where it connects with TTC Line 1 Yonge-University) to Humber Polytechnic's North Campus at Humber College Station. The line is expected to move about 51,000 riders per day.

Line 6 Finch West construction began in 2019. The TTC operates the line under agreements with Metrolinx and the City of Toronto. Made-in-Ontario Alstom Citadis low-floor light rail vehicles are used on the line.

While the launch of Line 6 was applauded by Ontario Premier Doug Ford and Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow as providing a faster and more reliable means for people to get to and from work or school, the line met with some harsh criticism not long after its opening. Within the first week of operation, the line was out of service 12% of the time. Freezing temperatures wreaked havoc with its switching systems, causing the suspension of service and forcing passengers onto shuttle buses. The line had to be shut down on Boxing Day and again in January due to a winter storm. The line was also said to be slow: The CBC stated that runners in the recent Toronto Marathon could cover 10 kilometres in less time than it takes the Finch line trains.

A key issue has been freezing switches. The system uses electric heaters to keep the switches working in cold weather—the same technology that caused problems on Ottawa's LRT. The cars themselves, according to manufacturer Alstom, are good down to at least -38° C, as they were specially designed for Canadian winters.

On February 11th, a spokesperson pointed out that there had been recent schedule improvements and said that personnel were gaining experience and becoming more familiar and comfortable with the system.

[Sources: Government of Ontario, December 5, 2025; Canadian Press, December 7, 2025; CBC News, December 8, 2025; Global News, February 11, 2026]

TTC's LRT Line 5 Eglinton West begins Phased Opening

After 15 years of construction that was plagued by delays and technical problems, the TTC's Eglinton Crosstown LRT service opened on Sunday, February 8th. The opening will be phased, and the TTC will gather feedback from riders before moving to full service, according to TTC CEO Mandeep Lali. (con't on p. 7)

Eglinton (con't)

The line runs along Eglinton Avenue, serving 25 stops from Mount Dennis Station to Kennedy Station. It is reported to be 17 minutes faster than the bus service that operates between Kennedy Station and Yonge Street. An end-to-end trip on the line should take just under an hour—about 47% faster than the same trip by bus.

During the first phase of opening, the line will operate with 24 trains, increasing to 28 during a later phase. Reduced operating hours will also be in effect. Buses will provide service between the hours of 10 pm to 1 am until the Blue Night Network service kicks in. Once the line is fully operational, it will run right up until the night bus service starts. Lali indicated that improvements to operating speeds and transit priority signals will come in March and May, as software is updated.

As of Fall 2025, the line had a price tag of $13 billion, up from the $11.78 billion that was projected in 2018. It was originally set to open in 2020.

Prior to opening, a software issue had to be addressed that was causing the brakes to be applied unexpectedly. Councillor Diane Saxe expressed concern that this could be an issue for people on board, if the train were to suddenly jerk to a stop.

Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow said she is glad the line is open. "The TTC has century-long expertise in operating public transit, and I am confident in their ability to operate the new line, provided the line itself is well built and maintained well by Metrolinx and Crosslinx." [Source: CBC News, February 3, 2026]

Sound Transit's Crosslake Connection slated to Open March 28th

In Washington State, Sound Transit's Crosslake Connection light rail extension, joining Link's 1 and 2 Lines, is set to open on March 28th. It will cross Lake Washington on a one-of-a-kind floating bridge, creating a fully integrated light rail system in the region.

This final segment of East Link includes two new stations, one at Mercer Island and one at Judkins Park. It will increase the region's light rail system from 55 to 63 miles.

The crossing is not a typical bridge-and-rails project. The I-90 span over Lake Washington is a floating bridge—a structure that makes transportation in the Seattle area both iconic and complicated. Sound Transit and its engineering partners have had to develop specialized approaches for running rail across a structure that moves with wind, waves, and temperature. This has been described as a world-first application—light rail operating on a floating bridge.

According to Sound Transit CEO Dow Constantine, the Crosslake Connection is a "transformational achievement that took grit, persistence and ingenuity, and it fulfills a generational promise to unite both sides of Lake Washington with high-capacity transit".

Light rail trains are scheduled to run every eight minutes at the two new stations during peak hours and on a ten- to fifteen-minute headway the rest of the day.

With the opening of the full 2 Line, Sound Transit will have opened six new light rail extensions within five years. The Federal Way 1 Line Link extension opened recently on December 9th, 2025, adding three new stations, parking facilities and new options for travel between Seattle, Sea-Tac Airport and Federal Way. Pinehurst Station, on the Lynnwood Link extension, is expected to open later this year.

[Sources: KOMO News, January 23, 2026; Sound Transit, January 26, 2026; American Rails, February 17, 2026; Sound Transit: Pinehurst Station Web page, accessed February 18, 2026]

Utah Transit Authority Doubles LRT Car Order

On October 31st, Utah Transit Authority increased its order of CityLink light rail vehicles destined for use on the authority's TRAX service in Salt Lake City from 20 to 40. The vehicles will be custom manufactured for the UTA by Stadler at its Salt Lake City facility. They will be low-floor, fully accessible cars with low vibration.

The purchase is part of the TRAX Forward project, a plan to expand transit services throughout the Salt Lake City region over the next ten years. [Source: Stadler, October 28, 2025]

Minneapolis Green Line Extension enters Testing Phase

The Metropolitan Council in Minneapolis announced in late October that light rail trains had begun rolling on the region's Green Line Extension for track, signal and system testing between St. Louis Park and Eden Prairie.

The new service will connect Downtown Minneapolis with Eden Prairie and the existing light rail system in the region. It adds some 14.5 miles and 16 stations to the line that currently connects Minneapolis and St. Paul. Passenger service on the extension is expected to begin in 2027. Significant development in the area is suggestive of high passenger potential. [Source: Metropolitan Council Web site, accessed February 18, 2026]

Battery Bus News

Calgary hopes for Savings with Battery-Electric Buses

The City of Calgary is hoping to save close to $900,000 per bus in life-cycle costs by buying Quebec-built Nova battery buses instead of diesel-powered ones according to a November 28, 2025 memorandum.

Calgary Transit will be purchasing 120 40-foot battery buses to replace aging diesel buses that will be retired by the end of 2027. Total cost of the purchase will be $450 million, to be paid for with $100 million from the City, $220 million from Canada's Zero-Emission Transit Fund and a $123 million loan from the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

The memo estimates the operating and maintenance costs for a 40-foot battery bus at $815,000 over 16 years, whereas a diesel bus would cost around $1.71 million over that same period. The estimates include two battery replacements for the battery vehicles--one at the six-year mark and one at the twelve-year mark—at $300,000 per bus total, and diesel engine and transmission refurbishment on the diesels.

The claimed savings amount to $895,000 per bus over 16 years, with the savings being used to pay off the loan from the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

A total of 128 charging stations will be installed at transit facilities, including 88 at Spring Gardens and 40 at the Anderson Garage. More charging stations than buses mean greater flexibility, according to Calgary Transit officials. The vehicles will have a range between 340 and 470 km, according to Nova Bus.

To avoid the range pitfalls that have plagued some other cities with battery vehicles, Calgary Transit plans from the outset to schedule the vehicles mostly on shorter routes and trippers that are in service for only part of the day. [Sources: Global News, December 1, 2025; Calgary Herald, August 8, 2025]

WMATA orders More Battery-Electrics and Hybrids

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) has exercised its contract options to order an additional 25 New Flyer Xcelsior CHARGE NG™ battery-electric 40-foot transit buses as well as 75 New Flyer Xcelsior® hybrid-electric 40-foot transit buses to replace aging stock in its fleet. The purchase will be supported by federal, state and local funding as well as funds awarded through the U.S. Federal Transit Administration Low or No Emission grant program.

WMATA's original long-term plan envisions transitioning its 1,600 buses fully to zero-emission vehicles by 2045, with five out of nine garages being zero-emission-bus ready by 2031 and 50% of the fleet to have been converted to zero-emissions by 2033. For the shorter term, a contract was awarded in November 2024 for the purchase of up to 275 zero-emission buses by the end of 2029. [Sources: New Flyer of America Media Release, Feb. 10, 2026; WMATA Web site, accessed Feb. 23, 2026]

New York's MTA finds Reliability Issues with Battery Buses

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) is the largest public transit operator in North America, providing service to New York City and its surrounding communities. The agency had 205 battery buses on order with New Flyer Industries, but in mid-2025 there was talk of delaying the acceptance of further vehicles due to serious reliability problems.

The 60 vehicles that the MTA had in service at mid-year were deemed "extremely unreliable" because of batteries that overheat or fail to charge fully. The agency also has doubts that the batteries will last the 8 years that the vehicle manufacturer claims.

The reliability issues mean that the vehicles are not available for a full day's service, and that they break down much more frequently than their diesel counterparts. According to MTA, only 60% of the battery fleet is typically available for a full day of service compared to 91% of diesel buses. Each electric bus can travel, on average, only 2,111 miles before needing major repairs as compared to 13,000 miles for a diesel unit.

MTA notes that it's not just batteries that are failing on the vehicles. Daniel Cardoza, Chief Maintenance Officer for the MTA, says they get a lot of road calls because of failed electrical components. "The air brake systems use an electric compressor, and the compressors are failing on the road," he said. "It's not an issue with the manufacturer, it's an issue with the technology."

The MTA has committed to a state mandate to have a fully electric fleet by 2040, so it is hopeful that by working with manufacturers, some of these issues can be sorted out. [Source: Streetsblog New York City, June 24, 2025]

Lane County Oregon to Reduce Number of Battery Buses

Lane Transit District (LTD) in Oregon will be reducing the number of battery buses in its fleet after experiencing a host of problems with the vehicles.

Chief Operating Officer Mike Hursh stated that of the 30 battery vehicles LTD has, nearly half are not available for service on any given day. As many as 23 of the vehicles have been down at one time.

Since entering service, the New Flyer vehicles that the agency operates have required excessive battery replacements due to cell failure, according to Hursh. The downtime for battery replacement is now two weeks. That is down from six weeks only due to the ingenuity of LTD mechanics, but the agency has also had to shell out $50,000 for specialized battery testing equipment to make quicker diagnosis and repair possible.

Microprocessor issues have also been responsible for lengthy out-of-service times. Fault codes have to be sent to the manufacturer for a diagnosis, which can take considerable time. And there are also inverter challenges.

In addition to this, there are range issues that make scheduling reliable service very difficult. "Imagine you refuel your car and can go 200 miles with that fuel one day, and then the next day, you can only go 80-90 miles on that same amount of fuel," says Hursh.

LTD also cites the rising cost of battery buses, which has gone up 35% since the pandemic. Tariffs also now come into play on purchases, often up to 4% of the purchase price.

Lane Transit will be going back to diesel buses. A November 2025 report states that less than half of the 30 battery vehicles will remain. [Sources: LookOut Eugene-Springfield, November 20, 2025; Whole Community News, March 21, 2025]

Warranties Voided on Battery School Buses

Following two fires in Lion battery-powered school buses in Montreal, Quebec in early September, the Quebec Ministry of Education ordered that all Lion battery-powered school bus models be removed from service.

Lion Electric was dissolved during the summer of 2025, and the new owners of the company have now voided all warranties on any vehicles in operation outside of the Province of Quebec, leaving many school districts in the U.S. that purchased the vehicles in the lurch.

Dr. Richard Decman, Superintendent of Herscher School District No. 2 in Herscher, Illinois told reporters that several of their Lion battery vehicles are in dire need of repair. Lion school buses represent half of Herscher's fleet of 50 buses. According to Winthrop Public Schools Transportation Director Coleen Souza, her district has four Lion battery buses that are parked and cannot be used. Yarmouth School District in Maine tells a similar story, saying that their Lion battery vehicles only see sporadic service due to repeated electrical glitches.

While some of the school districts are working with alternate vendors to have the problems addressed, one thing is clear: Lion Bus is not helping them. [Source: Electrek, November 1, 2025]

King County Metro launches Gillig Battery Buses

On February 2nd, King County Metro, which serves the Greater Seattle area, launched its first Gillig battery-electric buses. The vehicles are being deployed in South King County communities that are disproportionately affected by air pollution. They serve on Routes 105, 128, 161, 165 and 184 as well as on the RapidRide F line. KC Metro will evaluate their performance as it ramps up deployment.

The vehicles will feature new operator safety partitions, making good on commitments to improve protection following the death of operator Shawn Yim, who was killed by a passenger while working his shift in December of 2024.

The new 40-foot electric vehicles can travel 240-280 miles on a charge and are equipped with larger batteries than KC Metro's existing battery buses. The full capacity of each bus is rated at 69 people, including standees and the operator.

The 89 new Gillig vehicles will add to KC Metro's existing fleet of 40 battery buses. The new vehicles will begin charging at Tukwila Base in spring. The Base will be equipped to support 120 battery-electric buses. [Source: Mass Transit Magazine, February 2, 2026]

Ground Broken on New Renton Transit Center
to be served by Double Decker Battery Buses

Sound Transit has broken ground on the Renton Transit Center project in Washington State. The work undertaken will essentially relocate and rebuild the center to better serve the future Stride S1 regional line, local King County Metro services and the future Rapid Ride I-line.

The center is a key component of the planned Stride S1 Bellevue to Burien line, which will offer service on double-decker battery buses operating every 10 to 15 minutes, running mostly in HOV and dedicated lanes. The agency says its Stride fleet will be Sound Transit's first battery bus fleet, and the first in the U.S. to use battery-electric technology on double-decker vehicles.

Stride S1 will transform travel between Burien, Renton and Bellevue, allowing passengers to speed by traffic on 405 and seamlessly connect to local bus routes, Link light rail and the future RapidRide I and Stride S2 lines. [Source: Sound Transit, February 4, 2026]

☞ In October, the *Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority of Florida* launched its first battery-operated express bus service connecting Eckerd College and the Skyway Marina District with Downtown St. Petersburg and St. Pete Beach. Known as Spark, the service operates every 15 minutes during the day, and every 30 minutes early mornings and late evenings.

☞ The *State of New York* has awarded nearly $80 million in funding to help seven transit providers in that state expand their use of zero-emission vehicles.

☞ The Alexandria Transit Company operating in *Alexandria, Virginia* has begun construction on a facility expansion project to expand its current operations and house chargers for battery buses. Up to 24 overhead chargers will help to support future battery bus operations.

☞ While interest in battery buses continues, the *Government of Canada* recently invested $1.25 million to explore hydrogen fuel cell buses in the Greater Toronto-Hamilton Area. The project will look at fuelling operations for such vehicles and how fuel cell buses might play a role in the transition to a low-carbon fleet.

[Sources: Mass Transit Magazine, Government of Canada]