

## Hybrid bus line passes test, now eligible for federal funds

Feb 13, 2009 12:38 PM, By Michael Keating

Azure Dynamics' Balance Hybrid Electric shuttle buses have been certified through rigorous "Altoona" testing, making the vehicles eligible for federal financial assistance for public transit agencies.

The shuttles feature Azure's powertrain that sits on a Ford E-450 van platform.



Azure Dynamics' Balance Hybrid Electric shuttle buses have been certified through rigorous "Altoona" testing.

The Altoona Bus Research and Testing Center in Altoona, Pa., subjects vehicles to an accelerated seven-year, 200,000-mile cycle using real-world road conditions over the span of a few months. The Altoona test demonstrates the ability of the Balance shuttle to withstand the rigors of operating in a demanding urban-transit-bus environment.

Altoona testing and certification is part of the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) New Model Bus Testing Program, which is designed to promote the production of better transit vehicles and components and to ensure that transit customers purchase safe vehicles able to withstand the rigors of transit service. The Thomas D. Larson Pennsylvania Transportation Institute operates the Altoona testing center.

The newly certified Ford E-450 shuttle buses built with the Azure Dynamics' Balance Hybrid Electric drivetrain system now qualify for FTA programs that offer up to 80 percent funding when purchased by public transit agencies across the United States. In addition to FTA funding, the company's shuttle line may qualify for up to a \$3,000 U.S. federal tax credit and/or numerous individual state and agency programs.

"With the successful completion of the Altoona testing, now our municipal and government customers have another Azure hybrid shuttle-bus option that qualifies for federal funding support," Scott Harrison, Azure's chief executive officer, told *GovPro.com*. "We believe that our public transit customers share Azure's desire to be 'part of the solution' by providing energy-efficient, reliable and clean transportation within our cities. With this federally funded program

now available, U.S. shuttle-bus operators can cost-effectively adopt an environmentally cleaner and more fuel-efficient hybrid shuttle-bus solution.”

### **Shuttle cuts fuel use by 40 percent**

The new shuttle line cuts fuel consumption by up to 40 percent and reduces greenhouse gas emissions by more than 30 percent, according to Azure Dynamics. In addition, the firm’s hybrid technology can reduce vehicle maintenance costs by 30 percent, thereby further reducing overall fleet operating costs, according to the company.

The E-450 shuttle bus with the company’s Balance Hybrid System, along with the company’s G1 Series-Hybrid HD Senator CitiBus, are the only hybrid shuttle buses that have successfully completed the Altoona durability testing series, according to Azure Dynamics.



The shuttle line can be used in a variety of settings, Azure Dynamics spokesman Patrick Liebler told *GovPro.com*.

“These vehicles are used for short-route paratransit, airport shuttles, corrections, transportation – really just about any department that transports people and is looking for more cost-efficient and environmentally friendly solutions,” Liebler said.

A few other applications include on-demand service for the elderly or handicapped (dial-a-ride), and on feeder routes from smaller communities or neighborhoods to main bus lines.

Liebler told *GovPro.com* that the line’s seating capacity “can be somewhat flexible depending on the customer’s needs.”

“One configuration that is interesting allows for 12 passengers – six seated and six wheelchair or any combination of seats and chairs as desired,” Liebler said. “In the Azure classes, we are talking of mid-sized buses with no more than 18 total passengers.”

There’s a significant market in government for energy-saving, clean-running buses. According to the latest Federal Highway Administration “Highway Statistics” report, there are just under 490,000 buses in state, county, municipal and federal civilian agency fleets.

[http://govpro.com/fleets/vehicles/Hybrid\\_Altoona\\_testing\\_9134/](http://govpro.com/fleets/vehicles/Hybrid_Altoona_testing_9134/)