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Mayor and councillors get look at new hybrid buses

ALEX BOUTILIER

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It's the most councillors you're likely ever see on one bus.

Energy Minister Bill Estabrooks announced a \$600,000 provincial contribution toward two new hybrid Metro Transit buses yesterday. Halifax regional councillors, staff and media piled on to one of the buses to hear the announcement, and take a test ride around the block.

The buses, which went into service yesterday, cost \$1.3 million each. The province's subsidy means HRM will hold a \$2 million price tag for both.

"(These buses are) further evidence to our continued commitment in developing a sustainable public transit system here in HRM," said Pat Soanes, general manager of Metro Transit.

Estabrooks called the announcement a good day for both the environment and HRM.

"This hybrid bus can use up to 30 per cent less diesel than a traditional bus. That means on their own Metro Transit's two hybrid buses could reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 49 tonnes each year," he said. "In short, these very long buses present one of the best opportunities we have to use less fuel, save money, and reduce air pollution."

The province will monitor the emissions of the new buses for the next year and a half. Estabrooks said if the buses achieve expectations, he hopes they will represent a strong business case for more hybrid buses in HRM.

Mayor Peter Kelly said the provincial contribution is "much appreciated."

"This is a direction that council has asked that we as an operation look in terms of reducing greenhouse gases, and making sure these are highly efficient for the downtown," he said. "And these are that."

Routes 1 and 10

The new hybrid Metro Transit buses are scheduled to be used on routes No. 1 and No. 10.



Ryan Taplin/Metro Halifax

Mayor Peter Kelly walks back to city hall after going for a ride aboard a new hybrid bus yesterday. Two new hybrid buses were unveiled yesterday to initially be used in the downtown core.

for Metro Halifax