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Fuel Cell Bus Debuts In City

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The first bus in New England to be powered by a hydrogen fuel cell made its debut Tuesday in Hartford, quietly navigating downtown streets and emitting no harmful fumes.

The fuel cell that powers the 30-seat bus, provided by South Windsor-based UTC Power, combines hydrogen with oxygen to produce water and electricity. Development of the bus was funded by a \$2.9 million federal grant.

The bus's fuel economy, maintenance costs and reliability will be recorded and compared with other fuel cell buses in operation, including three in California.

The bus, which has three doors and four ports for passengers in wheelchairs, is to begin service today at 7 a.m. The bus will first run on a downtown loop that includes the convention center and nearby hotels, and will later be used on other routes.

It can be recognized by the big green leaves on its side under the banner "zero emission hydrogen fuel cell bus."

The Greater Hartford Transit District signed a contract with UTC Power, a unit of Hartford-based United Technologies Corp., to build the bus last year.

Vicki Shotland, executive director of the transit district, said UTC Power will also provide two years of program support, including the use of Connecticut's only hydrogen refueling station at UTC's headquarters.

"The people who live and work in Hartford and the people who visit the city are not only going to enjoy riding this quiet bus, but also will like the fact it emits nothing but water vapor, making for cleaner air for all of us to breathe," said Jan van Dokkum, president of UTC Power.

Al Ortiz, CT Transit's training supervisor, said the bus can travel 300 miles before it needs to be refueled. "It's like driving a 30-passenger golf cart: no sounds," Ortiz said.

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