

## **Visalia Transit service to add CNG buses**

By Luis Hernandez

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Visalia Transit service will add six Compressed Natural Gas-powered buses to its fleet, one of four environmental-friendly moves for the local bus service.

Visalia Transit will also move six diesel-powered buses to the Sequoia Shuttle. Three buses will be in use for the 2016 season while three Next, three diesel-powered buses will be listed as surplus and offered for sale.

Lastly, Visalia Transit, partnering with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, will apply for up six electric buses, using \$725,400 from Proposition 1B. If the grant is received, the buses would join Visalia Transit fleet next year or 2018.

First the added buses.

At no cost, Visalia Transit will receive two 2009 Orion VII and four 2006 Orion VII 35-seat buses from the Merced bus system. According to Visalia transit, the Merced bus system made changes to its routes and the buses, funded by the Federal Transit Administration, are in excess.

The buses, which have a 12-year service life, are obligated to remain in service.

Transit Manager Monty Cox said Visalia has a fleet similar to the one from Merced.

“Making it very feasible for us to integrate them into our fleet,” he said. “The Merced buses are powered by Compressed Natural Gas and will be replacing our last diesel buses ahead of our current schedule.”

With the addition of the buses from Merced, Visalia Transit’s fixed routes, Diel-A-Ride and Trolley fleet units will be powered by natural gas, Cox said.

“All that would be required is to rebrand our color scheme,” he said.

Already, Visalia Transit staff has reviewed the buses from Merced and deemed them in good condition. The buses could join the Visalia service by the end of next month.

In total, Visalia Transit has 75 buses and also serves the Visalia LOOP Bus, the Sequoia Shuttle and the newly-added V-Line, the service to Fresno.

Visalia Transit will have to dispose of three older buses after receiving the ones from Merced and assigning six to the shuttle. The buses to be disposed of will be sent to an auction in Southern California. Money made will be assigned to the transit division.

### **Going electric**

Visalia Transit will also team up with the air pollution control district to apply for two grants to purchase electric buses. An estimated \$725,400 from Proposition 1B would be needed as a grant match.

Once all actions are taken, Visalia Transit will increase \$5 million in vehicle assets.

more will be on the reserve fleet for future use.