

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend. I'm Jim Burke, with your local news and commentary for Tuesday, October 24, 2023.

This is from the *Peninsula Daily News* this morning: The Jefferson Transit Authority (JTA) board has approved the purchase of a second electric bus as the department transitions toward a fully zero-emissions fleet. The bus is a 35-foot Gillig Electric Bus, General Manager Nicole Gauthier said. It won't arrive in the county for more than a year, but JTA hopes to put its first electric bus into service in early November.

Gauthier said, "Jefferson Transit is moving in the direction of transitioning its fleet to a zero-emission fleet. The best way the community can contribute is by riding one of our buses. Every time community members get out of their vehicles and onto a bus, that helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions." A side note here: in terms of greenhouse gas emissions here in Jefferson County, transportation is far and away the greatest contributor to our carbon footprint.

The \$1.3 million bus is being largely paid for through a state Green Transportation Capital grant program, which awarded Jefferson Transit \$1 million to upgrade to electric buses. The remaining \$345,000 will come from local sales tax revenue. The bus does use some diesel fuel for its pre-warming system, said Desiree Williams, fleet and facilities manager. The fuel is used to warm the battery in cold weather and in the morning before service starts. The new bus also will come equipped with a new disabled passenger restraint system, which will allow passengers who use wheelchairs to operate independently, without the assistance of the driver as is the case on most buses.

Jefferson Transit has installed plug-in chargers at its facility on Four Corners Road in Port Townsend and has plans to install induction chargers – which charge batteries simply by driving over it and do not require plug-in connections – but Gauthier said supply-chain issues raised the cost of those chargers and the plans have been postponed. Gauthier said the department's first electric bus is expected to have a range of about 200 miles. The range of electric buses can vary depending on the temperature and whether or not additional power is used for things like heating, air conditioning or the window defroster. Gauthier said, "We're still testing all of that out. It takes us a little bit of time to adjust to the new vehicle. The next six months will be a really interesting time while we're tracking that data."

The bus ordered last week will have an enhanced battery pack, which will give it a longer range than JTA's first electric bus. Gauthier said the bus probably won't run a specific route but will fit into JTA's existing schedule, likely operating on multiple routes. Personnel expect the electric bus will be able to run a route in the morning before having to return to its charging station and then running afternoon routes. All of Jefferson Transit's routes are currently zero fare, with the exception of the Kingston Express, which is free only to those 18 and younger.

Today, U.S. Representative Derek Kilmer (WA-06) applauded the Biden-Harris administration's designation, through the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA), of the Pacific Northwest Mass Timber Tech Hub (PNW Tech Hub) in Oregon and Washington. It's one of the 31 inaugural Tech Hubs in regions across the country that show potential for rapid growth in key technology sectors.

The PNW Tech Hub, a consortium led by Oregon State University, will build off the region's wood products research and development expertise and density of architectural, engineering, and construction firms, to position mass timber as a viable and sustainable construction alternative. This, in turn, will lower the construction

industry's carbon footprint while increasing housing affordability. This designation is part of the first phase of the novel Tech Hubs program, authorized by the CHIPS and Science Act, which will invest directly in high-potential U.S. regions and aim to transform them into globally competitive innovation centers. The designation is an endorsement of the region's strategy to supercharge their respective tech industry to create jobs and strengthen U.S. economic and national security.

Designated Tech Hubs are now eligible to apply for the next phase of the Tech Hubs Program which will invest between \$50 and \$75 million in each of 5 to 10 Designated Hubs. For a full list of Tech Hubs, visit <https://www.eda.gov/funding/programs/regional-technology-and-innovation-hubs>.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news Monday through Friday at noon and 5pm and at noon on Saturday. You can reach out to us at news@kptz.org. This is Jim Burke. Thanks for listening.