

Hydrogen Buses  
TPC - Oct. 9. 2013

Hi. For the record, my name is Susan De Vos and I speak for myself. Thank you for calling a session that asks people for some vision rather than a response to a proposed fare hike, new stroller policy or bus stop elimination. My general response is to also say how good the former Dane County RTAs Plan for Transit suggestions were for Madison, and to suggest that you could do much worse than to try implementing one or another of those suggested enhancements.

The major focus of my remarks is on the issue of new bus procurement since the traditional mechanism has been eliminated while rising fuel costs is causing consternation. It may be time to experiment with hydrogen buses. Other places, including London, are using them but they are still very much in the experimental stage. Some years ago when still on the TPC, Kevin Hoag correctly pointed out that burning hydrogen might be clean, but we use electricity to get it, and our electricity is presently coming primarily from burning coal. As a consequence, it was more environmentally friendly to get hybrid buses.

But we were no longer able to afford hybrid buses without special allotments last year, and now buying any new bus at all is a stretch. So it could make sense to experiment with the currently less than ideal hydrogen bus IF we could get those buses at a drastic discount in exchange for experimenting with them. My understanding is that we COULD. The buses would also be in place to take advantage of our inevitable movement toward using wind, solar and geothermally-generated electricity.