

Amtrak locomotive gets an eco-makeover

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California's air may start to look a little cleaner, thanks to the California Department of Transportation and its project partners.

Caltrans's revolutionary "green locomotive" debuted Wednesday morning at the Amtrak Sacramento Valley station.

Members of Caltrans and its project partners assembled within the train station at a press release to make statements regarding the new locomotive, considered a major step toward reducing California's carbon footprint.

It is one of the 15 F59PHI model locomotives owned by Caltrans and operated by Amtrak that is now installed with a 710ECO Repower upgrade package. The package is said to consist of the latest microprocessor-controlled locomotive engine technology for lower emissions, increased fuel economy and predictable maintenance costs.

The F59PHI models were initially built by Electro-Motive Diesel, Inc. in October 2001 to meet Tier 0 Environmental Protection Agency emissions standards, the minimum EPA requirement for fuel emissions from passenger locomotives.

James Goldstene, executive officer of the California Air Resources Board, explained that in other words, the newly-installed technology in the F59PHI model makes the engine run cooler and uses fuel more efficiently, allowing the locomotive to advance from Tier 0 to Tier 2 EPA emission standards, resulting in a 50 percent reduction of operating emissions.

Sacramento County Supervisor Roger Dickinson said that the development is "an illustration of our willingness to work with anyone and everyone to clean up the air for Sacramentans." He added that climate change and global warming is an issue that must be addressed at the local level by communities, and that the newly-introduced technology makes riding the train a "smarter and better" decision than ever before.

Following the statements, the representatives of Caltrans, the EPA and other organizations descended into the tunnel beneath the Sacramento Valley rail tracks, resurfacing to stop and admire the "green locomotive."

The retrofitted model has already begun operating on the intercity passenger rail service Capitol Corridor between Sacramento and the Bay Area as of three weeks ago.

The Capitol Corridor serves the Sierra Foothills in addition to Sacramento and the Bay area, and it is operated by the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority in partnership with Caltrans and Amtrak.

Along with Amtrak California's Pacific Surfliner and San Joaquin intercity rail line, Capitol Corridor is the third busiest rail line in the nation with a ridership of 1.7 million.

Capitol Corridor alone is responsible for eliminating 559 million miles worth of highway travel, said Eugene Skoropowski, Capitol Corridor managing director.

Caltrans is working to convert the remaining 14 Amtrak-operated locomotives to this upgraded model — which is the cleanest diesel electric passenger locomotive in the country — as quickly as possible, stated Caltrans Division of Rail chief Bill Bronte. So far there is available stimulus funding for seven of the 14, he said.

Money for the project came from the Carl Moyer Program, a partnership between the California Air Resources Board and local air boards in the state that provides

grants for projects reducing pollutants from heavy-duty engines. Retrofitting the F59PHI involved both the Sacramento Metropolitan and Bay Area Air Quality Management districts.

Kevin Bahline of EMD said that the company is in the process of launching the eco-friendly technology globally.

See also: Eco train engine unveiled

Photo Credit: Images 1, 2, 4 & 5 by Ed Fogle; images 3 & 6 by Kati Garner.

Eco train engine unveiled

by Suzanne Hurt, published on July 17, 2009 at 5:51PM

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A greener locomotive will make its official California debut in Sacramento Wednesday.

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) will present the locomotive during a press conference at the Sacramento Valley Rail Station, which holds a prestigious spot in railroad history as the western starting point for the Transcontinental Railroad.

Caltrans and Amtrak are partners operating "Amtrak California." Caltrans owns this locomotive, plus 16 others and 88 train cars. Amtrak operates the trains and stations.

The first in the Amtrak California passenger fleet, the locomotive has been upgraded to operate using the cleanest diesel technology available for train engines.

"This is really a big step for Caltrans. We took a proactive role to get a cleaner locomotive on the tracks, and we're proud to see this project through," said Caltrans Director Will Kempton. "It aligns with Gov. (Arnold) Schwarzenegger's objectives to clean up Caltrans' carbon footprint, and it contributes to the bigger goal of California going green."

The locomotive -- built in 2001 by Illinois-based Electro-Motive Diesel -- was upgraded in May by the same company to produce lower greenhouse gas emissions and use less fuel, among other things.

The locomotive has been powering Amtrak trains on the Capitol Corridor Route between Sacramento and the San Francisco Bay Area since June.

Amtrak California expects to reduce its operating emissions by up to almost 50 percent after converting 14 other locomotives of the same model to this technology, according to Caltrans' rail division.