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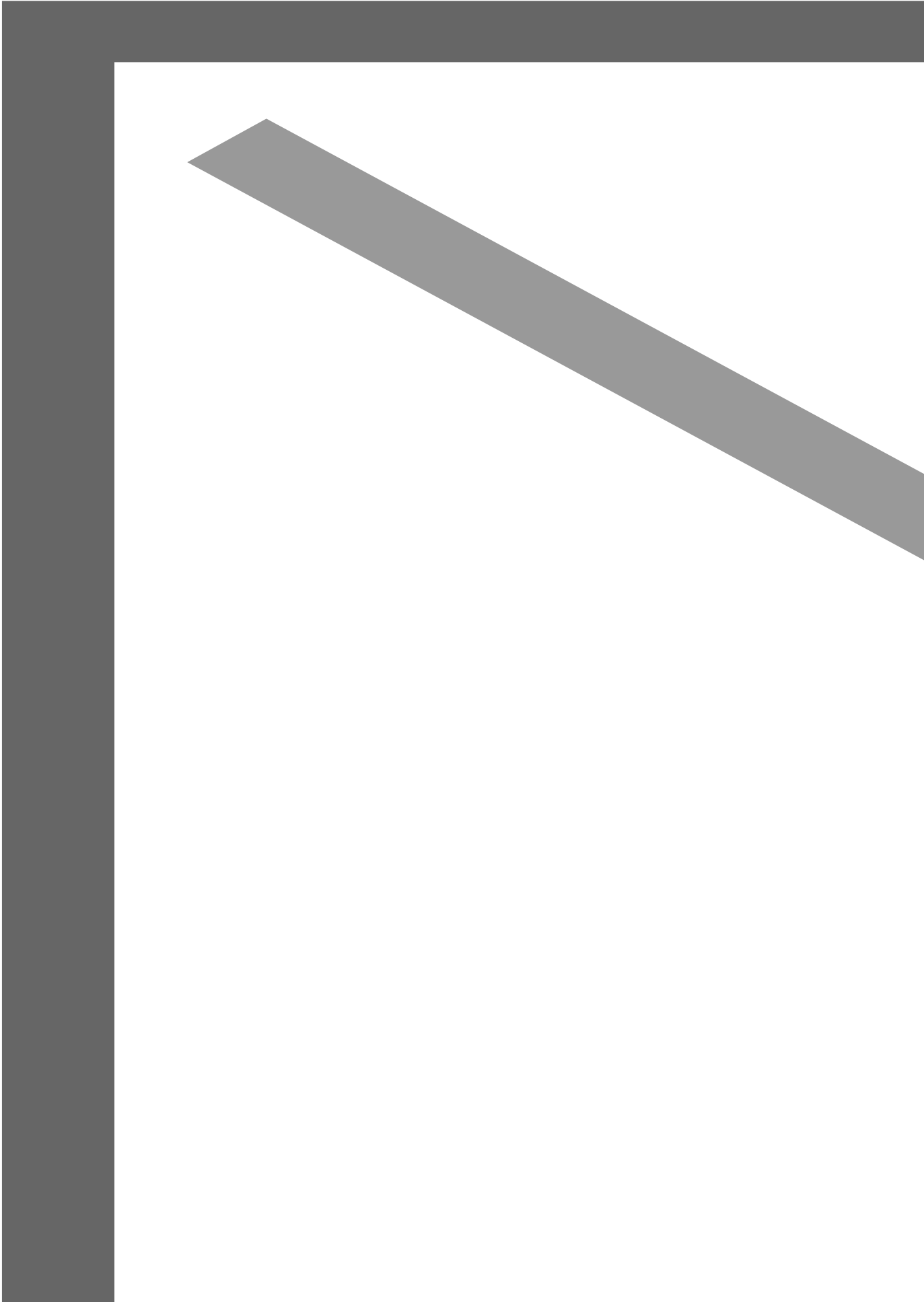
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***From METRO Magazine:***

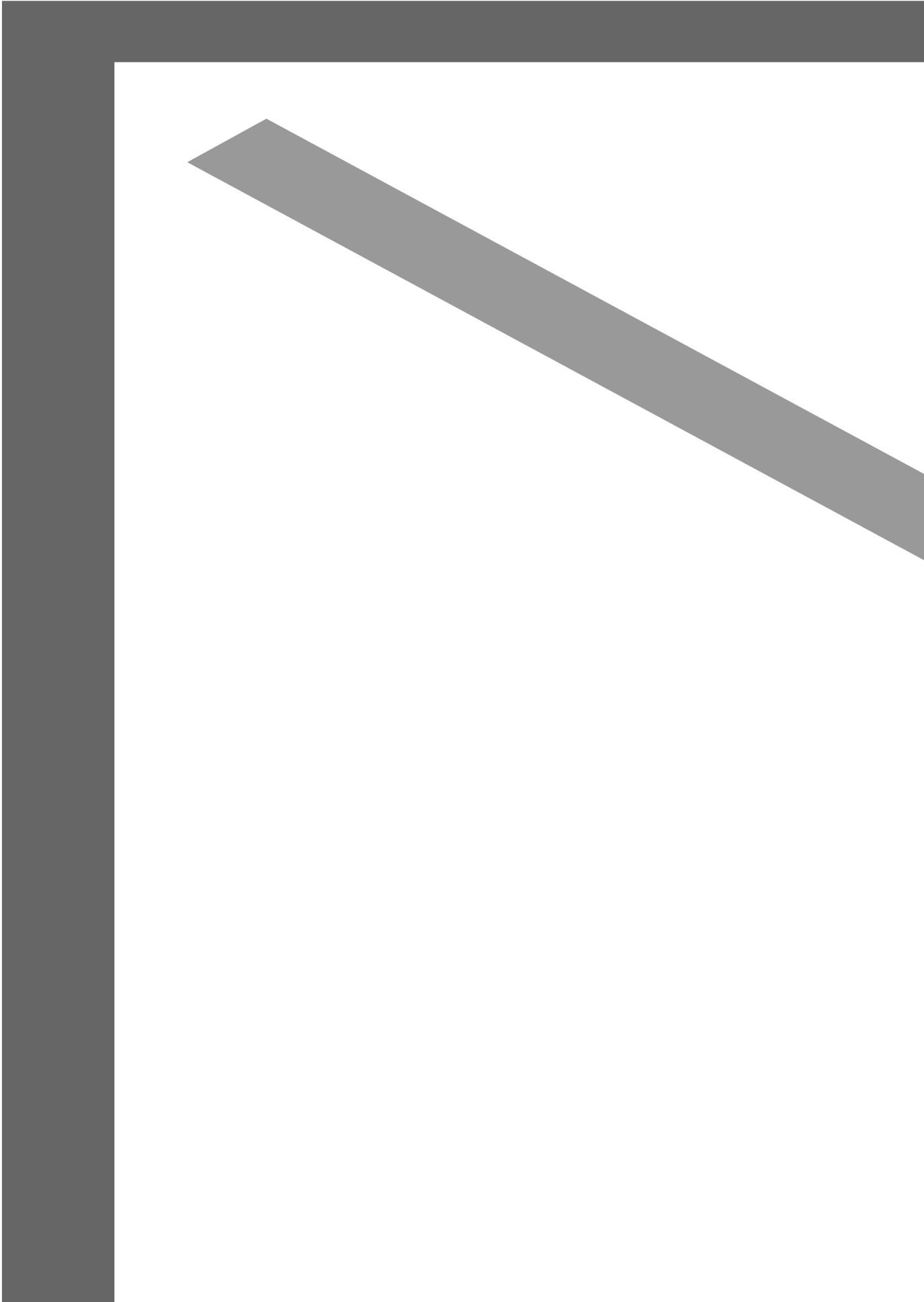
Long a proponent of alternative fuels, the San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) recently added 31 minibuses and 46 paratransit buses to begin transitioning its smaller vehicle fleet to propane autogas.

“We have a few commuter buses that are still using diesel, but for the most part our entire fixed-route fleet runs on CNG,” explains Bill Spraul, COO for MTS. “A couple of years ago, we began taking a look at our smaller buses, which were still using gasoline, to see if we can find an alternative cost-efficient alternative fuel, while also achieving significant emission reductions.”

Spraul explains that MTS quickly landed on propane autogas because it immediately filled those two important factors. In fact, the agency predicts the first 77 vehicles — 46 2016 Starcraft Allstars on Ford E450 chassis and 31 2016 ENC (formerly EIDorado National) Aero Elite 320s on Ford F550 chassis, which both feature a Ford 6.8L V10 engine with a ROUSH CleanTech propane autogas fuel system — will save somewhere between \$750,000 to \$1 million in fuel costs, as well as reduce two million pounds of greenhouse gas emissions per year.

Also, even with the additional cost of \$20,000 per paratransit vehicle and \$27,000 per minibus vehicle, MTS expects payback on the extra capital cost to occur somewhere between one-and-a-half to two years.

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For other agencies looking to make the switch, Spraul says that MTS did an exhaustive cost analysis of propane versus gasoline, which included the examination of the propane market to understand the volatility of the fuel, so that it could project forward what the cost savings could be.

“A system has to really pay attention to make sure the savings are there for their operation based on how many miles they operate and the prices they pay for propane versus gasoline,” he says.

“We get the question a lot if there is a still a business case to make the switch to propane since gas and diesel are so cheap right now, and the answer is yes,” adds Todd Mouw, VP, sales and marketing at ROUSH. “Even with depressed fuel prices of gas and diesel, we have such a great supply that propane is cheap as well. Most of our customers on the transit side are paying about a buck a gallon for propane, or under, just based on the volume they are buying.”

“Most of our drivers tell us that their experience with propane compared to gasoline is better, in terms of acceleration and operation of the vehicle. Another side benefit is that both our drivers and our customers say that these vehicles operate much more quietly than the gasoline vehicles.”

— Bill Spraul, COO for MTS

The vehicles are part of an approximate 215-vehicle fleet that operates out of MTS' Copley Park Division, which houses its entire paratransit fleet and covers 30 of the agency's bus routes, serving 1.3 million passengers annually. Spraul says, right now, the agency is bringing in two fueling trucks nightly to fill the vehicles, but plans to implement the necessary fueling infrastructure as its propane autogas fleet grows.

“One of the plans we are looking at now, is when we have more propane-fueled vehicles than we do gasoline, we would take the footprint where the gasoline tanks are now, remove those, and put propane tanks in,” says Spraul. “Then, we would begin to start bulk fueling onsite with propane and wet hose with gas. It's really when we get enough vehicles switched to propane that we'll begin to switch the tanks out.”

At this point, Spraul says feedback both from drivers and the agency's customers has been positive.

“Most of our drivers tell us that their experience with propane compared to gasoline is better, in terms of acceleration and operation of the vehicle,” he says. “Another side benefit is that both our drivers and our customers say that these vehicles operate much more quietly than the gasoline vehicles.”

Spraul adds that MTS began training its drivers a couple of months ahead of delivery and had to educate both its drivers and customers about the misperception that propane is volatile and explosive. “We just had to educate them a bit that the perception is different than the reality,” he says.

Although no timetable is yet set, the agency does plan to transition its entire smaller vehicle fleet to propane autogas.

**News Category:**

Bus

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