

Green transport gets boost

All-electric school buses to be made in Warwick



By [John Sullivan](#)

12/21/11

WARWICK — Already notable for its leadership in the Orange County sustainability movement, the Town of Warwick can now also boast of being home to the nation's first manufacturer of all-electric school buses.

Dan Daniels, president of Transportation Collaborative Inc., says his 65,000-square-foot bus factory on Lake Station Road will start pilot production next year of a 42-passenger yellow school bus called the eTrans.

School buses travel roughly 55 miles per day, Daniels said. The eTrans' 80-kilowatt battery is good for 125 to 135 miles on a single charge. Operators could install chargers at their bus garages.

The sleek, quiet, high-tech vehicle would cut fuel costs by more than half when compared with conventional diesel, he added.

Daniels hasn't finalized pricing on the vehicles.

The bus currently has only one buyer, but phone calls expressing interest have been flooding in since the bus was unveiled during a trade show on Oct. 25 in Cincinnati, Daniels said.

It is hoped that the new venture will mark a turnaround for TCI, which had to recall some 6,000 small school buses built by its former owner, U.S. Bus Corp. of Suffern, in 2009. Problems included weak seat and body panels and defective stop arms, brake lights and wheelchair lifts.

Daniels attributed the recalls to "management issues" under the former ownership, which has no ties to TCI, the latter of which is currently doing business as Trans Tech Bus .

The company has 55 employees, down from 100, and has been surviving the recession by redesigning buses to be more aerodynamic and sleek, Daniels said.

If demand is strong, the factory will hire 30 more workers, it says.

"We're absolutely looking at expansion," Daniels said.

The firm has contracted with Smith Electric, a former British truck chassis manufacturer in Kansas City. Smith has been building electric trucks for 70 years and plans to open a factory in the Bronx, where Trans Tech's bus chassis will be produced, Daniels said.

"We're still in the marketing infancy, but I think the electrification of vehicles is here to stay this time," he said.

jsullivan@th-record.com

The electric bus

The yellow school bus to be produced in the Town of Warwick by Transportation Collaborative Inc., the eTrans, will:

- Seat 42 passengers
- Have a 80-kilowatt battery that can go for 125 to 135 miles on a single charge
- Cut fuel costs by more than half