

Industry named

By Rick Elkins

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Company will assemble electric buses

A soon-to-be major player in the green movement in California will be putting down roots in Porterville and sprouting hundreds of new jobs.

GreenPower Motor Company is close to purchasing 10 acres of city property to construct a plant to assemble electric-powered buses.

GreenPower develops electric-powered vehicles for commercial markets, including transit, tour and charter buses.

The company made it official today by appearing before the city's Project Review Committee with its plans for a 145,000 square-foot plant. It also plans a two-story, 6,000-square foot office at the same site on Hope Drive at the Porterville Municipal Airport.

City Manager John Lollis said the city and the company have a tentative agreement on the land purchase, close enough to now identify the company.

"This will be the largest economic boost to our city in a long, long time," said Mayor Milt Stowe, who has likened the development to when Walmart announced its plans to build its first West Coast Distribution Center here 25 years ago.

The city has been working with the Vancouver, Canada company since early November in landing a site for its operation to assemble buses. The company plans to bring in the components, then assemble the 40- to 60-passenger buses here.

"The effort by staff and working with GreenPower has been outstanding," added Stowe. "They've (GreenPower) been very cordial. They are just not a big corporation and demanding. They've been very easy to work with. They haven't asked for anything. They've been a partner," added the Mayor.

City officials said the company will employ as many as 60 workers at the start, but could grow to more than 1,000 employees. The jobs are factory jobs with good pay and benefits.

Lollis said the company plans to grow in phases with more than \$10 million being invested locally over the next two years.

GreenPower offers seven different buses, ranging in length from 35- to 45-feet. They hold anywhere from 25 to 100 passengers and have a range of 175 to 240 hours. All can come with air conditioning.

The company delivers buses all over the world.

Stowe said the renewable energy company should be here for many years to come with the demand for more electric vehicles.

GreenPower will be only the third electric bus maker in the state and already the state has placed orders for electric buses. City officials have said there is a push to replace many of the transit and school buses in the state with electric buses over the next 10 to 20 years.

In 2014 GreenPower launched the EV350 transit bus, which is an electric-powered transit bus deploying electric drive and battery technologies with a lightweight chassis and low-floor body. GreenPower's bus is based on a flexible clean-sheet design and utilizes a custom battery management system and a proprietary Flex Power system for the drive motors.

The company has already test-driven one of its buses in Porterville.

GreenPower integrates global suppliers for key components such as Siemens for the two drive motors, Knorr for the brakes, ZF for the axles and Parker for the dash and control systems, according to the company's website. This OEM platform allows GreenPower to meet the specifications of various operators while providing standard parts for ease of maintenance and accessibility for warranty requirements.

GreenPower Motor Company Inc. is listed on the TSX Venture Exchange under the symbol GPV and on the OTCQB under the symbol GPVRF.