

Issues Brief

City of Yakima e-Newsletter

✦ Yakima Transit Test Driving Battery-Powered Bus

Throughout the month of May, bus riders in Yakima will have an opportunity to take a ride on a shiny, new battery-powered, all-electric bus. The 40-foot-long bus is on loan from BYD Motors, Inc., a Chinese company that is hoping to expand its presence in the United States.

While the prospects of zero emissions and lower operating costs are attractive, the electric bus costs around \$800,000, which is nearly double the price of a diesel-powered bus. Yakima Transit currently has no electric buses in its fleet and is in the process of purchasing three new diesel-powered Gillig buses this year.

The 40-passenger electric bus can operate up to 10 hours between charges and reach a top speed of 45 miles per hour, with a range of 155 miles. A 324 kilowatt-hour, iron-phosphate battery powers the bus, which was built at a plant in Lancaster, California.



A BYD Motors, Inc. battery-powered bus is being test driven along Yakima transit routes. The bus was also tested in Spokane and the Tri-Cities earlier this year.

A company spokesman said that 70% to 80% of the components for the electric bus are manufactured in the United States.

BYD, which stands for "Build Your Dream", is considered an international leader in battery and alternative-energy technology and has investment backing from Warren Buffett's Berkshire-Hathaway. In addition to a manufacturing plant, the company also has a factory in California to produce its iron-phosphate modules, which it says will last 20 years.

During the month-long evaluation, the all-electric bus will be running each day on a different Yakima Transit bus route. Yakima is the third stop for the battery-powered bus demonstration project in Washington State, with previous evaluations being conducted earlier this year in Spokane and the Tri Cities.

"So far the response from Yakima Transit riders to the electric bus has been very positive," said Transit Operations Supervisor Wayne Parsley.

"We are excited to have the opportunity to see how an all-electric bus performs and to hear from our passengers about the riding experience," said Yakima Transit Manager Ken Mehin. "However, at the present time we have no plans to purchase an electric bus," added Mehin.

MLK, Jr. Boulevard Underpass Heading Toward Completion

Anyone driving past the MLK, Jr. Boulevard underpass construction site can help but notice a sure sign that the roughly \$10.6 million project is moving forward toward completion. Recently, for the first time since the project began in early 2013, dirt was cleared from beneath two newly-built bridges allowing construction vehicles to travel from one end of the underpass to the other.



The new North Front Street bridge above the MLK, Jr. Blvd underpass now stands freely. Another bridge, which will carry BNSF train traffic, is also complete.

"We can now see the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel underpass," said City Communications & Public Affairs Director Randy Beehler. "The construction crews have been working very hard to keep the project on schedule and on budget, which they've been successful at doing. The project has gone along very smoothly and we're thankful for that," said Beehler.

Many of the major elements of the underpass are already in place. Construction activity now is being focused on completing the critical bottom seal that will create a watertight barrier to protect the underpass from groundwater infiltration. Crews are also working on underground drainage systems and making traffic signal modifications that will be needed to handle traffic when the

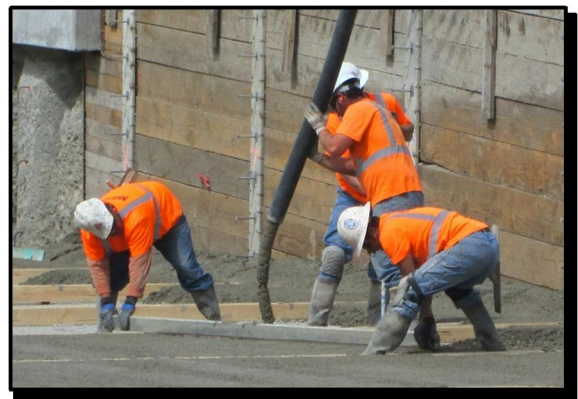
underpass opens. Final work is also underway on the underpass retaining walls.

Mowat Construction Company, a firm based in Woodinville, is the primary contractor for the underpass, which, when opened, will allow traffic to travel below the new bridges, one of which will carry vehicle traffic along North Front Street and the other which will allow BNSF Railway trains to pass above vehicles using the underpass.

The underpass was scheduled to be open to traffic by late summer or early fall, but could open before then if construction continues at its current pace.

You can watch progress on the underpass project by visiting a page on the City of Yakima website at <http://bit.ly/12q70a8>. Two cameras are focused on the construction site and pictures are updated every 30 seconds.

Both the MLK, Jr. Blvd underpass and the Lincoln Avenue underpass, which opened in May 2012, have been designed to improve driver and pedestrian safety, reduce exhaust emissions from cars waiting for trains to pass, and speed the response times for police, fire and other emergency service providers. The majority of funding for the two underpasses has come from grants provided by state and federal agencies. A small portion of the money used to build the underpasses has come from local sources.



Crews pour concrete to form the new roadbed for the MLK, Jr. Blvd underpass. The underpass could open sooner than originally expected.

Free Music and Movies Back in Yakima Parks This Summer

For many years, spending warm summer evenings in one of Yakima's parks leisurely watching a movie or listening to live music has been something people in our area have looked forward to. The wait for the return of the venerable *Summer Sunset Concert Series*, *Yakima Valley Community Band Concert Series*, and *Outdoor Cinema Series* is almost over as all three Yakima favorites get set to make their 2014 debuts in July.

In addition, the new *Viva La Musica Concert Series* will make its debut this summer.



The Yakima Sunrise Rotary Pavilion at Franklin Park is the site for the Summer Sunset Concert Series. This year's series will run from July 11th through August 15th. All shows begin at 6:30 pm and will last until 8:30 pm.

The *Summer Sunset Concert Series* at Franklin Park will kick off its 2014 season on July 11th and will continue every Friday through August 15th. The performances run from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm at the Yakima Sunrise Rotary Pavilion.

This year's lineup includes folk rock group ***Shelby Earl with Planes on Paper*** on July 11th, country artist ***Jessica Lynne*** on July 18th, ***Little Big Band*** with its classic rock style on July 25th, the folk rock sounds of ***The Senate*** on August 1st, country rock group ***The Pony Boys*** on August 8th, and folk rock music from ***Matt Hopper & The Roman Candles*** on August 15th.

The 2014 *Yakima Valley Community Band Concert Series* will begin its run of free Wednesday evening performances at Randall Park on July 2nd and will continue through July 30th. Performances start at 7:00 pm and last about an hour. As is tradition, the *Yakima Valley Community Band* will also play a special concert to celebrate our nation's birthday beginning at 7:00 pm on the 4th of July, which this year falls on a Friday.

Gilbert Park will host this year's free *Outdoor Cinema Series*, which will feature nearly-new releases every Sunday from July 20th through August 24th. The lineup of movies this season includes ***National Treasure*** (PG) on July 20th, ***Despicable Me 2*** (PG) on July 27th, ***Jumanji*** (PG) on August 3rd, ***The Hunger Games*** (PG-13) on August 10th, ***The Blind Side*** (PG-13) on August 17th, and ***Frozen*** (PG) on August 24th. *Outdoor Cinema Series* movies begin at sunset, which is usually around 8:30 pm.

The new *Viva La Musica Concert Series* will feature free Sunday evening performances at Miller Park from July 13th through August 3rd. The lineup for the inaugural series run includes ***Tormenta de Durango*** on July 13th, ***Domador de la Sierra*** on July 20th, ***Rebeldes de la Sierra*** on July 27th, and ***Hermanos Gonzales*** on August 3rd.

The concert series at Franklin Park, the movie series at Gilbert Park, and the community band series at Randall Park have become summertime traditions in Yakima, said Yakima Parks and Recreation Manager Ken Wilkinson. Now we are hopefully starting a new tradition with the *Viva La Musica* series at Miller Park. We're really proud to be able to provide this kind of quality, free entertainment for the community, said Wilkinson. We couldn't do it without the support of our sponsors. They deserve a lot of credit for making these events possible.