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Kate Withall
Elmore Public Relations
kate@elmorepr.com
(713) 524-0661

Free Greenlink Bus Service now in Operation

Clean-operating buses will service the downtown community Monday through Friday

Houston, TX (June 15, 2012) – Free and convenient transportation in downtown is now available, with the Greenlink buses officially on the streets. Running Monday to Friday from 6:30 a.m. – 6:30 p.m., the buses will span a 2.5 mile route with 18 stops, connecting major office buildings along Smith and Louisiana streets to METRO transit stops, the convention corridor, hotels, restaurants, shopping and entertainment.

“There has been great excitement since the announcement in October and I’m thrilled to see the buses operating and the downtown community utilizing this service,” said Bob Eury, executive director of the Houston Downtown Management District (Downtown District). “Our goal was to make them noticeable and unique. You can’t miss the bright green and orange Greenlink logo rolling down the street.”

“We would have never been able to launch this program without the support of our valued partners including Senator John Cornyn, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee and Mayor Annise Parker; bus sponsors BG Group and Houston First Corporation; and our operating partner METRO,” Eury said. “This has truly been a team effort!”

Fueled by compressed natural gas (CNG), the Greenlink buses are manufactured in the USA by Gillig, LLC, and are a cleaner transportation alternative, producing less emissions and waste than other comparable buses. Recently, the CNG bus was shown to travel 1.02 miles per pound of CNG, or a diesel equivalent of 6.01 miles per gallon; a comparable diesel bus, on average, travels around 3 miles per gallon.

In addition, Gillig has considered the full life-cycle of the buses by manufacturing them in an energy-efficient plant using sustainable processes including recycling oil, water and packaging waste, reducing solvent use, using low VOC water-based paint and using zero-emission machinery. The buses’ body structure and panels are made with 100% recyclable aluminum and a stainless steel understructure that combats corrosion, meaning they have more materials that can be recycled at the end of the buses service life compared with similar buses.

“Downtown employees and visitors can now take advantage of a new resource for connecting local destinations,” said Michael Mott, BG Group’s senior vice president, Americas. “The first thing Greenlink riders will notice is greater convenience. Further, Greenlink is powered by natural gas – a low cost, low emission fuel, of which the U.S. has abundant reserves. For these reasons, BG Group is proud to help bring this initiative to downtown Houston.”

A multi-modal transit program is critical to the growth of Houston. Over the years, the Kinder Houston Area Survey has documented an expanding interest among Harris County residents in being able to visit and to live in more walkable, transit-oriented urban areas.

With the combination of the Greenlink service, the new Houston B-cycle bike share program, METRO Park & Ride services and current and future METRORail lines, downtown has never been easier for workers and visitors to navigate and explore.

“Navigating a convention’s host city is something all meeting planners come to grips with,” said Dawn Ullrich, president and CEO of Houston First, which manages the George R. Brown Convention Center. “The more convenient those transportation options are, the better. The bikes and buses certainly fit those criteria.”

The Greenlink fleet consists of seven buses and ridership is expected to average 1,500 to 2,000 people per day.

Greenlink will be operated by METRO. The inter-local agreement between the Downtown District and METRO is for four years, at which point there will be an option to renew for multiple two-year periods. The buses will be stored, maintained and serviced at METRO’s Kashmere Bus Operating Facility located at Loop 610 North and US 59 and will be fueled at either of two Clean Energy fueling stations at 227 McCarty Street or 7721A Washington Avenue.

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About Downtown District

The Houston Downtown Management District was formed in 1995 for the purpose of revitalizing the urban core of the country’s fourth largest city. Over the past decade, the Downtown District has used a combination of public funds and private resources to catalyze area improvements focusing on the city blocks bordered by Interstate 10, Highway 59, and Interstate 45. Since the Downtown District began operating in 1996, Downtown Houston has seen \$4 billion of construction completed in over 110 public and private projects, the creation of 3.2 million square feet of new Class A office space, \$500 million of infrastructure improvements, 3,000 new hotel rooms spanning 11 different projects, and a 250% increase in the population of permanent residents. For more information on getting around downtown, visit www.downtownhouston.org.

About BG Group

BG Group is a world leader in natural gas, with a strategy focused on connecting competitively priced resources to specific, high-value markets. Active in more than 25 countries on five continents, BG Group has a broad portfolio of exploration and production, LNG and transmission and distribution business interests. It combines a deep understanding of gas markets with a proven track record in finding and commercializing reserves.

About Houston First

Houston First is a local government corporation that generates economic growth through the business of conventions and the arts. Houston First is responsible for management and operation of more than 10 city-owned buildings and plazas, and underground and surface parking for nearly 7,000 vehicles. Facilities include Wortham Theater Center, George R. Brown Convention Center, Jones Hall, Miller Outdoor Theatre and the Hilton Americas-Houston. For more information, visit www.houstonfirst.com.

About METRO

The Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO) is the region’s largest public transit provider, offering safe, reliable and affordable transportation services about 370,000 times per day. Besides operating more than 1,200 buses, METRO is currently expanding its 7.5-mile light-rail line (Red Line), with three new lines under construction. METRO’s services also include: Star Vanpool, METROLift, HOV lanes, HOT lanes, Bikes-on-Buses/Trains program, Park & Ride and road improvement projects.