

Miami-Dade mayor recommending hybrid buses

By Bill Frogameni

Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos Alvarez's office is recommending that county commissioners green-light the purchase of 13 diesel/electric hybrid buses for \$7.5 million.

The 40-foot hybrid buses would be the first purchased by the county, which eventually wants to replace all of its about 1,000 conventional buses with hybrids, Miami-Dade Transit spokesman John Labriola said. He did not know if the county has a target date for replacing the whole fleet.

A memo from the mayor's office said that the cost of the buses would be split evenly between the Florida Department of Transportation and the county.

The mayor's office recommended the county commission waive competitive bidding and purchase the busses from North American Bus Industries.

The memo comes the week after Vice President Joe Biden visited Miami and touted how federal stimulus funds will benefit transportation infrastructure. While on a visit to the construction site for the Miami Intermodal Center, a future transportation hub near Miami International Airport, Biden pointed to a hybrid bus brought for the occasion and said it is an example of how the county will meet economic and environmental challenges.

Though it's not clear exactly how or when stimulus funds will make it to the county for transportation programs, Biden said the federal money would help the county pay for some of the new busses.

"What's happening here in Miami, we need to have happen all over the U.S.," Biden said.