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Infratil and NZ Bus lead the way in transitioning NZ's public transport to electric powered vehicles

Infratil today announced a US\$30m deal with Wrightspeed Inc. to supply its first-in-kind, award-winning electric powertrain technology – the Route™ 500, which it intends to deploy on its public transport business through NZ Bus.

California-based Wrightspeed, founded by New Zealand-born Ian Wright who was a co-founder of Tesla, manufactures range-extended electric vehicle powertrains, which are already in use successfully in the U.S.A. in waste management and delivery vehicles. This deal with Infratil and NZ Bus marks Wrightspeed's entry into passenger transport.

Kevin Baker, Infratil executive and NZ Bus Chairman, said Infratil and NZ Bus were delighted to team up with Wrightspeed to bring innovation through electric powertrain technology to New Zealand. An electric public transport fleet would enable New Zealand to transition to a clean energy public transport system and play a significant role in decarbonisation and reducing noise pollution in New Zealand cities.

Zane Fulljames, CEO of NZ Bus, said with nearly 82% of New Zealand's electricity from renewable energy sources, transition to electric-powered public transport alongside private vehicles will deliver a step change in reducing the country's carbon footprint. As owners and operators of fleet, bus companies have a key role to play.

"We have explored all the options on the market for future-proofing our fleet. Wrightspeed's powertrains outperformed the competition on nearly every metric and will provide us with the fuel source flexibility and economically compelling technology to achieve that. In the near term, the technology will enable us to repower our trolley buses, to enable them to be used anywhere in New Zealand. Upon successful repowering of the trolleys, the next stage of the journey to commence would be the retrofitting of the Wrightspeed powertrains to other selected vehicle types in the fleet," said Mr Fulljames.

Wrightspeed's Route 500 range-extended powertrain is capable of powering vehicles weighing up to 36,000 pounds, in grades as steep as 40%, and maintains an efficient drive, with an estimated 11.1 miles per gallon gasoline equivalent. The 80kW, fuel agnostic Fulcrum™ Turbine Generator charges on-board batteries, which provide power to turn the wheels and give the buses unlimited range with refuelling. The company's patented Geared Traction Drive (GTD)™ digitally drives each wheel of the vehicle, providing the slip control needed to manage New Zealand streets.

"New Zealand's commercial fleets have been challenged by some of the most rigorous road conditions," said Ian Wright, CEO and Founder of Wrightspeed. "Our technology offers an ideal and economically attractive match for these conditions and is a proven solution to support New Zealand's transition to clean transportation."

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NZ Bus will receive its first Wrightspeed powertrains by mid-2016, and begin the process of fitting and testing immediately, with a view to having a first electric-powered bus on the road by the last quarter of this year.

“As a major transport operator, we have the scale for investment of the kind this deal with Wrightspeed represents. We are committed to continuing to lead the industry and contribute to reducing New Zealand’s carbon footprint through innovation,” said Mr Fulljames.

For more information please contact:
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