“Make Them Affordable for Everybody” – GreenPower Motor Company’s Green Electric Stars and Beautiful BEASTs

By Lynn Walford - June 13, 2022

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GreenPower Motor Company makes purpose-built commercial electric vehicles in various sizes of vans and buses. Auto Futures talked to Michael Perez, Director of Contracts and Grants at GreenPower inside the very comfortable GreenPower BEAST school bus, during the recent ACT Expo.

“GreenPower is the developer, designer, and manufacturer of battery-electric buses and trucks. Our mantra is to make them affordable for everybody. A lot of our customers are small businesses, especially on some of our newer models, like the EV Star, 22-Foot cargo van,” says Perez.

“We believe that affordability will enable the trans

Our biggest differentiator between us and other manufacturers is that our vehicles are purpose-built. We are not doing any conversions. We are not doing any retrofits. Every vehicle we make is a GreenPower chassis, through and through."

EV Star Shines for Many Types of Vehicles

"By being a purpose-built entity, everything is a clean-sheet design, meaning we have designed it around the batteries and the electric drive," says Perez.

The EV Star is a multipurpose class for battery-electric commercial vehicles. It can be built as a bus, truck high roof passenger vans, in cargo vans and we make box trucks out of it, says Perez.

Plus, GreenPower provides a chassis for Workhorse Group's W750 all-electric class 4 van. The company will be delivering 1,500, starting in July 2022.

GreenPower is working to have EV Stars and all vehicle models outfitted with Momentum Dynamics inductive wireless charging, adds Perez.

ADA Built for All

The company makes ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant vehicles because the company sells to federal agencies, transit agencies and through CALSTART.

“ADA is baked into the specifications,” says Perez.

GreenPower supplied the AV Star for Perrone Robotics , while Perrone provided the autonomous side of that vehicle. Perrone Robotics is building in extra ADA features, says Perez.

“When you buy GreenPower you are not buying anyone else’s vehicle. It is our vehicle. Another thing that separates us from the others is that we are delivering. We are the second highest delivered manufacturer on the California HVIP program, now with over 150 vehicles on the road,” says Perez.

Cloud Rides and Storage

GreenPower also makes electric school buses. The Class D model is the BEAST, which stands for Battery Electric Automotive School Transportation.

Other school bus designs, used since the 1950's are body on chassis design. The beauty of the BEAST school bus is made more like a road coach rather than the traditional body-on-chassis school bus design. It is safer because it has a monocoque chassis, says Perez.

The monocoque chassis also ensures optimal weight distribution. And the Eco range aluminium body is 10 times stronger than a conventional school bus body. The BEAST seats 90 passengers.

GreenPower offers the only Type D school bus now with pass-through storage for things like musical instruments, luggage and sports equipment, says Perez.

To make the school buses GreenPower is opening up a facility in South Charleston, West Virginia. The company also has f

British Columbia, Porterville and Rancho Cucamonga, California.

“If you’re looking at making the biggest impact quickly – it is school buses. Most school buses drive 75 miles or even less. The range on the BEAST is 140 miles. That means there are about 80 to 90% of routes that can be easily done by the GreenPower BEAST.”

The BEAST has features that are not standard in most other school buses. It has air conditioning, ABS brakes, aluminium wheels, a backup camera and a child checkmate system. The checkmate system requires the driver to tap a button in the back of the bus to ensure that every seat is checked, says Perez.

“With air suspension – it feels like running on a cloud,” says Perez

The current roadmap is focused on school buses, the commercial side and gearing things up to go across the US.

“We get many compliments on how the BEAST looks. It is different. It is shiny. It is beautiful. The biggest thing is just the health benefits,” says Perez, “The students are young and their lungs are developing.”

Most US school buses run on diesel fuel which can cause health risks, including increased rates of respiratory illnesses and cancer.

GreenPower also makes the smaller Type A Nano BEAST school buses that seat 24 passengers.

New Incentives for BEASTs

Recently US President Joe Biden (a former school bus driver) and his administration, through the Environmental Protection Agency Clean School Bus Program, funded $500 million for electric school buses this year.

“This historic investment under President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will forever transform school bus fleets across the United States,” said EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan, when the funding was announced.

“These funding opportunities to replace older, heavily-polluting buses will result in healthier air for many of the 25 million American children who rely on school buses, many of whom live in overburdened and underserved communities. Today we take a major step toward a future where clean, zero-emissions school buses are the American standard,” added Regan.

Under the EPA program, qualified purchasers of GreenPower’s BEAST Type D all-electric school bus are eligible for a rebo

up to $285,000 for GreenPower's Type A Nano BEAST.

"GreenPower has the knowledge and expertise in successfully working with incentive programs. We are here to navigate interested school districts through the process," says Perez.

Lynn Walford

NEXT STORY

GM's BrightDrop Acquires Tech Startup Marain's AI Software

By Staff Writer - June 11, 2022

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GM's BrightDrop is acquiring fleet optimisation software from Marain Inc., a California-based technology startup. BrightDrop will integrate Marain's artificial intelligence-powered software into its ecosystem of last-mile solutions to analyse, forecast and identify multi-modal solutions for fleet customers as they plan their journey to full-fleet electrification.

BrightDrop will integrate this technology into its software solution to model the efficiency gains that can be captured as customers adopt new technologies like the BrightDrop Zevo and BrightDrop Trace products for these multi-segment delivery and logistics scenarios.

This software enhancement will also help BrightDrop customers see exactly what efficiencies are possible and how to capture them, helping drive lower operational costs and higher profitability.

Rachad Youssef, chief product officer, BrightDrop, says: "We're bringing entirely new ways of doing business to the delivery market by providing a holistic, one-stop-shop portfolio of first- to last-mile solutions that allow fleet customers to do their jobs more efficiently while helping alleviate strain on the workforce, and the environment. Part of that includes building a software platform that leverages data and simulation to demonstrate how new technologies can work for them. This integration will take our software capabilities to new heights, while continuing to deliver as promised for our customers."

“The opportunity to electrify the delivery sector is massive, and it will benefit significantly from sophisticated planning and operations software as fleets introduce multi-modal solutions,” adds Damien Scott, CEO and cofounder, Marain. “BrightDrop is extremely well positioned to lead the transformation of first- to last-mile deliveries with its integrated vehicle, software and services portfolio. We are delighted that Marain’s technology and expertise will uniquely add to BrightDrop’s software capabilities helping to decarbonize the last-mile at scale.”

BrightDrop has secured more than 25,000 EV production reservations, and its flagship vehicle, the BrightDrop Zevo 600, is currently in production and on roads today with high-volume production beginning later this year.

BrightDrop is a wholly owned subsidiary of General Motors.

Staff Writer