



City of Arts & Innovation

News Release

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City of Riverside Reaches Agreement with Riverside Transit Agency to Operate, Staff and Maintain Electric, Autonomous Ohmio Shuttles During Trial Period

Unique transportation opportunity expected to begin in January

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – The electric, autonomous Ohmio shuttles are one step closer to hitting the streets in Riverside after the City Council approved an agreement that calls for the Riverside Transit Agency (RTA) to operate, staff and maintain three of the vehicles during a two-year trial period.

The partnership creates an opportunity for this two-year pilot to be the first deployment of all-electric, autonomous shuttles by a public transit agency in the United States as soon as January 2025. Because RTA sees the opportunity for Ohmio shuttles to add value to its existing bus service, it's zero emissions objective and provide one-of-a-kind training and experience, the agency will contribute \$500,000 to the effort, reducing the City's cost.

RTA's contribution, along with \$1 million from the South Coast Air Quality Management District, drops the City's initial cost of \$2.5 million to \$1 million. That will be recouped because Riverside is the point of sale, meaning sales taxes from each vehicle will accrue in Riverside. Projections call for the City's investment to be repaid in four years.

“Ohmio is an innovative company at the forefront of this exciting transportation technology,” Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson said. “This agreement with RTA means we will have a trusted local partner putting these vehicles on the street, helping the agency fill gaps in transit usage and contributing financially to the success of the effort.”

The Ohmio shuttles are designed to operate on low-speed roads. The maximum speed is 31 miles per hour (mph), but they typically operate at about 15 mph. The actual speed in Riverside will be determined by factors such as traffic and route location. Options for the first year of deployment include the Airport area, Downtown, and UC Riverside.

Ohmio relocated its international headquarters from New Zealand to a facility near the Riverside Airport to create a home base for the company in the United States. Riverside embraced the company because it fits with the ongoing development of Riverside's clean tech and advanced manufacturing

sectors and matches well with the California Air Resources Board (CARB), which has its Southern California headquarters in Riverside.

“This agreement is a win for everyone,” Mayor Pro Tem Jim Perry said. “RTA gets a new tool in its transit toolbox, Ohmio gets to show off its vehicles on United States soil, and the City remains a leader in innovation while defraying a chunk of the initial costs.”

The City has been working with Ohmio for about 18 months to create a two-year pilot program, and the City Council approved an initial agreement about a year ago. Once routes have been approved by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and DMV, the first three shuttles will move people around the city, at no cost to the public, emitting no emissions and improving air quality by taking cars off the road.

Ohmio has committed to hire locally and anticipates adding seven jobs in the first year of operation and at least 25 jobs by the third year.