



Josephine County News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Josephine Community Transit maintains services despite vehicle fire in charging area

JOSEPHINE COUNTY, Ore. — Josephine Community Transit services were unaffected by a fire that engulfed a vehicle at the Josephine County Public Works charging area. No one was harmed in the fire, and similar vehicles have been temporarily taken out of service as a precaution.

The 35' low-floor Gillig Battery Electric Bus was not scheduled for service Jan. 8 when a transit operator saw a fire emerging from the vehicle's roof. The operator immediately called emergency services and other operators followed existing protocol to move other vehicles away from the area.

"Our team's quick actions prevented further loss of equipment and ensured the safety of everyone at the charging area," said Scott Chancey, JCT program supervisor. "I'm thankful no one was hurt and that we were able to continue serving our residents without interruption."

Chancey said the incident is categorized as a runaway thermal event, which happens when a battery cell shorts out or is damaged, causing it to discharge its electrical energy.

Grants Pass Fire Rescue aided in the emergency by keeping the thermal event from spreading from the battery packs on the top of the bus to the remaining battery packs at the back of the bus. The Josephine County Fleet Maintenance group assigned specifically to the Transit fleet maintenance disconnected the remaining undamaged battery packs immediately after the GPFR stopped their operations.

Josephine County Public Works employees assisted throughout and after the fire with directing emergency responders, moving vehicles and clean-up operations.

The situation was monitored for 24 hours to ensure that the existing damaged battery cells did not heat back up and reignite. The charging area for buses is purposely separated from any other vehicles, any other flammable substances and materials, or nearby structures.

"This charging area was specifically selected and designed for the safety of the rest of the transit fleet, Josephine County Public Works fleet all the campus structures and the safety of the neighbors surrounding the facility," Chancey said. "The charging location was selected for this exact scenario."

Chancey said JCT should be able to continue all services without issue, though the Rogue Valley Transportation District has offered to loan Josephine County a vehicle or vehicles if necessary.



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JCT operates a fleet of 26 vehicles, including four electric vehicles. The three other electric vehicles were taken out of service as a precaution pending the completion of a full investigation.

The four electric buses were purchased with Federal Transit Administration funds provided for the purpose of financing alternative-fuel vehicles. Two of the vehicles — including the bus that caught fire — were purchased in 2019, and another two were purchased in 2023.

“Without the FTA funds, we wouldn’t have enough vehicles to provide the level of service we currently do,” Chancey said. “All our local and non-federal funds are used entirely for operations.”

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For more information, please contact Jason Roberts, Josephine County public information officer, by phone at (541) 474-5151 or online at [JosephineCounty.gov/PIO](https://josephinecounty.gov/PIO)