

TAXI COMPANY ADDS CNG CAPABILITY

Transit Cab has a fleet of 20 roomy sedans serving the public in San Diego County 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Only two of the taxis run on gasoline. The other 18 taxis run on clean-burning, compressed natural gas (CNG).

“One of the reasons we chose CNG cabs was because we wanted to help create a clean environment. It’s also good business,” says Gabe Bakit, treasurer and co-owner of San Diego-based Transit Capital, which does business as Transit Cab.

Permits to operate taxicabs can be difficult to acquire because cities typically limit the number of available permits, also known as medallions. Bakit and fellow investors acquired Transit Capital – along with the CNG cabs and medallions – in October 2004.

Before that, the initial purchase of the CNG taxis had been partially funded through a pilot program by the San Diego Regional Air Pollution Control District to improve air quality. Natural gas vehicles contribute to clean-air goals by reducing emissions of smog-forming pollutants by up to 95% compared to gasoline- and diesel-powered vehicles, and reducing carcinogenic particulate emissions by 99%. To meet the requirements of the three-year pilot program, Transit Capital agreed to report annually on the efficiency and performance of the CNG cabs compared to gasoline-powered cabs.

Cost-effective cabs, favorable responses

“CNG vehicles have a proven track record in our industry,” Bakit comments, “and we’re happy with them. We performed a cost comparison and concluded that the CNG cabs are more cost effective to operate than ones that run on gasoline. Our drivers love them because CNG costs less than regular gasoline. And our customers almost always comment that by using natural gas, we are contributing to a cleaner environment.” He notes, too, that his Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas®) Account Executive proved to be “very helpful when we set up the account for CNG. Anytime I need something from him, he gets back to me soon.”



Transit Cab has 18 taxis that run on clean-burning, compressed natural gas, including the ones shown here at Seaport Village in downtown San Diego.

SoCalGas offers training

The SoCalGas Account Executive personally conducted the required safety training for Transit Cab drivers. He adds that “Transit Cab mechanics have actively participated in training on CNG vehicles offered by SoCalGas. Some components of the fuel system are under pressure, so you have to know what you’re doing. But the basic things, like changing the oil and fluids, are the same.”

“We have had no major problems with the CNG cabs with the exception of two that had pump and transmission problems,” Bakit acknowledges, adding, “If they do break down, service can be hard to get. They are expensive to maintain mechanically. Also, drivers sometimes run out of fuel due to longer trips and this requires towing because refueling stations are not easy to find.”

Although he wishes there were more CNG refueling stations in San Diego, he’d still choose CNG vehicles again if he had to start over.



Photo courtesy of Transit Cab

Is CNG right for you?

To find out if CNG is right for your taxi or other fleet, contact your SoCalGas account executive or call **1-800-427-2000**. Visit us online at **socalgas.com** (search "NGV")

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