

# Turkish bus builder could create at least 80 jobs in Miami with natural gas deal

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One of the largest bus builders in Turkey plans to open a manufacturing facility in Miami-Dade County and create at least 80 jobs, if its team wins a compressed natural gas (CNG) contract with the county.

Founded in 1966, Karsan has made more than 113,000 buses and provides a fleet of 550 buses serving Istanbul and its millions of riders, said Vice



Karsan would like to build buses like this for Miami-Dade County in a local manufacturing plant.

Chairman [Claude Nahum](#). It also has operations in Italy. He'd like the company to open a plant in Miami-Dade to build CNG-powered buses for the county, and then for other customers in North America.

This would be only the second major bus manufacturing facility in the United States, Nahum said.

"Our intention is too be part of the change in the urban transportation industry" Nahum said.

"We are considering Miami as a stepping place to enter the U.S. for manufacturing."

Karsan has teamed with Coral Gables-based CNG fueling provider Nopetro to bid on two request for proposals (RFPs) from the county. One RFP is to manufacture 300 CNG-powered buses along with the stations to service them and the other is for a CNG station to serve waste management trucks.

Two other companies are competing with Karsan and Nopetro for the RFPs. The county staff has yet to rank the competitors' bids.

Nopetro currently provides CNG fueling service in Leon, St. Johns and Charlotte counties and for Central Florida's Lynx transit system. Many public transit systems and vehicle fleets are switching to CNG because it's about \$1.50 per gallon cheaper than diesel, it's cleaner for the environment and it's produced in the U. S., said Nopetro CEO [Jorge Herrera](#), who founded the company in 2007.

Karsan would invest \$5 million into an existing building to make it a bus manufacturing facility and create 80 jobs. The long term potential is for 150 jobs should the company land contracts with other municipalities, Nahum said. The location of the plant has yet to be determined, the company said.

Karsan commissioned a study from the [Washington Economics Group](#) that said its project would have a \$20 million annual economic impact initially and up to \$44 million if it expands to 150 jobs.

The company would sell the buses to Miami-Dade for \$514,000 each, which Karsan said is less than its competitors. Karsan Executive Director [Jan Nahum](#) said the buses would be equipped with WiFi and have wheelchair access. His company would purchase at least 60 percent of the components for the buses in the U.S., he added.

"We see an evolution for urban transport vehicles and the size of the vehicle will evolve," [Jan Nahum](#) said. "Once we have a plant that can produce we want to keep that operation here and see other U.S. opportunities."

Herrera said the county needs to replace almost 500 buses because they've been in service so long and many municipalities are in the same boat because they cut back on new orders during the recession. Nopetro plans to build a CNG station at each of the three county transit fueling stations and make the fuel available to private vehicles as well, he said.

Many large fleet operators, including Doral-based Ryder System (NYSE: R), are switching to CNG.

Nopetro's plan includes capturing the methane emissions from the North Dade Landfill and utilizing them to make CNG for fueling. Herrera said this could be accomplished using the existing natural gas pipes. The landfill's methane, a greenhouse gas, is currently flared into the atmosphere.

"Miami-Dade County, through us, would be converting its garbage to its transportation fuel," Herrera said.

He expects the county staff to reveal its rankings of the RFP bids within 90 days, he added. After that, the county commission would vote to award the contracts.

Miami-Dade Transit provided 76.6 million bus rides during the fiscal year ended Sept. 30.

<http://www.bizjournals.com/southflorida/news/2015/03/13/turkish-bus-builder-could-create-at-least-80-jobs.html?page=all>