



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NEWS

URBAN MASS TRANSPORTATION ADMINISTRATION

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Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe announced today the award of two additional contracts in connection with the Transportation Department's program for development of the Tracked Air Cushion Vehicle (TACV).

The two contracts were awarded to the Rohr Corporation of Chula Vista, California, and the Vought Aeronautics Co. of Dallas. The two awards totaled \$2,850,000.

Under the contracts the two aerospace firms will produce designs and mock-ups of a 60-passenger vehicle which would be powered by an electric linear induction motor at speeds up to 150 miles per hour. The mock-ups are to be delivered within six and a half months. It is expected that one or more prototypes could be contracted for and built for testing purposes within a year thereafter.

The contracts were awarded by the Department's Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA). Another phase of the TACV development program was covered in a contract issued earlier by the Department's Federal Railroad Administration. This contract, awarded to Grumman Aerospace Corporation in the amount of \$3.5 million, called for construction of a research vehicle capable of speeds up to 300 miles per hour.

"I believe in the TACV," Secretary Volpe said in announcing the contracts. "The award of these contracts is further evidence of the Department's commitment to TACV as one means for improving the nation's transportation system."

"Our TACV program is an overall Department effort on several fronts utilizing the capabilities of the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, the Federal Railroad Administration, and others to provide high-speed, point-to-point travel," Secretary Volpe added. "New systems must, however, be what the public wants and be fully compatible with the environment and life around us."

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Carlos C. Villarreal, Administrator, Urban Mass Transportation Administration, said in discussing the awards, "We see the application of an urban TACV in providing a fast transit link to new regional airports and for trips from 10 to 50 miles in metropolitan areas."

Subsequent phases of the UMTA program call for testing and demonstrating the vehicles. The purpose is to measure performance, environmental impact, safety, public acceptance, costs, and other factors. While test and demonstration sites have not been determined, consideration is being given to using the Department's High Speed Test Center at Pueblo, Colorado.

Rohr and Vought are two aerospace manufacturers who have made significant commitments to the field of new ground transportation systems. The two contractors will build vehicles different in several respects, notably in air suspension and guideway design. The purpose of the two awards is to compare design and operating characteristics and determine their suitability for public use in future revenue service.

For two years, demonstration vehicles of this type have been operating in France and plans have recently been announced for a revenue service airport access system near Paris. The British expect to operate a prototype vehicle later this year. The Department of Transportation demonstration project is building on the French and British experience as a necessary step to the development of an acceptable vehicle for revenue service.

The 60-passenger urban TACV will have space for baggage, seats will be of the comfortable aircraft type and much of the control will be automated. It will be the first vehicle in the nation's ground transportation system which will operate without wheels. Instead it will ride on a thin cushion of air along a concrete guideway which can either be built at ground level or elevated above the ground to minimize interference with roadways, walkways and other transportation modes.

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