



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NEWS

URBAN MASS TRANSPORTATION ADMINISTRATION

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The Nation's first Personal Rapid Transit System (PRT), which may revolutionize public transportation in congested urban areas, was dedicated today in Morgantown, West Virginia.

The President's daughter, Tricia Nixon Cox, Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe and Urban Mass Transportation Administrator Carlos C. Villarreal flew from Washington to Morgantown to join a group of notables participating in the dedication. West Virginia Governor Arch A. Moore, Jr.; the State's two Senators, Jennings Randolph and Robert C. Byrd; West Virginia Representative Harley O. Staggers; State and local leaders, and officials of West Virginia University which the new system will serve were among the participants.

The new transit system, when completed, will connect two university campuses and the Morgantown business district by means of 2.2 miles of two-way concrete guideways. Over these guideways will run small, automated, pollution-free cars capable of moving 1,100 passengers every 20 minutes. The cars are personalized to the extent that they can be summoned and directed to the desired destination by pushing a button at the station at which a passenger boards.

The service will be available to anyone wishing to use it, but the principal patronage is expected to be by students. The President's daughter hailed the system as symbolic of the efforts being made to meet the needs of the Nation's students and at the same time make a major contribution to solving the problems of urban congestion and pollution.

In ribbon-cutting ceremonies signaling the activation of the first mile of the System, Secretary Volpe said the project has resulted from the "high priority President Nixon has given to programs designed to solve the pressing problems of the Nation's cities."

"This system," said the Secretary, "represents a revolution in public transportation in congested urban areas. Its purpose is to give fast, clean and convenient transportation to the public and at the same time move toward clearing city streets and reducing air pollution. It is a hybrid of transportation technologies and it demonstrates that brainpower, not horsepower, will find the solution to public transportation problems."

The Morgantown system is financed by the Transportation Department's Urban Mass Transportation Administration as a demonstration and development project. Total cost to the conclusion of testing by the middle of 1973 is placed at \$43.7 million. Additional financing will be required to provide the number of cars and allied equipment necessary for the full transportation service now scheduled to begin in late 1974.

While the Department of Transportation is providing financing, Secretary Volpe said major tribute must be paid to Dr. James Harlow, President of West Virginia University; Dr. Samy Elias, the University's project manager for the PRT, and the people of the State, the city and the county. "Without their dedication and cooperation," he said, "this project would not be here now."

The section of the system activated at today's dedication is the first leg of the 2.2-mile guideway and is about a mile long. Testing will start immediately and will be extended to additional sections of guideway as construction progresses. The service will not be available to either students or the public until testing and any necessary modification have been completed. The fare, once the system is opened to the public, has not yet been determined but it is expected to be lower than fares presently charged on other transportation modes.

The long period of testing is designed to determine the system's feasibility and demonstrate its effectiveness in other cities with public transportation problems. Urban Mass Transportation Administrator Villarreal said that during the coming year "Morgantown will be a laboratory for further development of this revolutionary concept."

"What we will be attempting to show," said Villarreal, "is that large numbers of people can be moved rapidly, efficiently and comfortably without adding to congestion and pollution. Morgantown is well suited for such studies because of its narrow streets, congestion, hilly terrain and variable climatic conditions."

The PRT is not intended to take over to any major degree the functions of existing transportation modes. It is designed rather as a distribution system in central cities. An \$11 million grant already has been approved by the Department of Transportation for the beginning of a similar project in Denver.

The Morgantown project demonstrates the PRT's capacity for meeting special needs. Because of the distance between university buildings, traffic congestion and the lack of adequate transportation facilities, students have difficulty in scheduling classes. Moving along guideways largely elevated and entirely separated from other traffic, the PRT cars can move students from one campus to the other at speeds up to 30 miles an hour in a few minutes.

The cars are completely automated, all their movements being controlled by a computer. The computer causes them to respond to calls, directs them to station stops where passengers wish to be discharged and causes them to by-pass stations which have not been selected as a destination by any of the passengers. No operator is required. The passenger calls the car and selects his stop much as he does in using an elevator.

The cars are capable of carrying 21 passengers--eight seated and 13 standing. They are made of fiberglass, and are equipped with electrically-powered motors and rubber-tired wheels which run on the concrete guideways which can be heated to prevent icing conditions during cold weather.

Five such cars will be used during the testing period. When full service begins in 1974, the number will be increased to 45 or more.

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