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IMPACT OF PERSONAL RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM TO BE STUDIED

"I always said I'd never trust anything without a steering wheel. But you know, I really like these little cars," a passenger recently remarked about the Morgantown, West Virginia, Personal Rapid Transit System.

The feelings and attitudes of other passengers, residents and businessmen toward the driverless "little car" system will be included in a study to be conducted for the U.S. Department of Transportation's Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA), it was announced today by UMTA.

The study of the Morgantown, West Virginia, Personal Rapid Transit system will provide data for preliminary engineering for future Automated Guideway Transit (AGT) installations, such as the proposed Downtown People Mover (DPM) projects in Cleveland, Los Angeles, St. Paul and Houston. UMTA recently selected these four cities for funding of up to \$220 million for engineering and DPM demonstration of projects aimed at a reliable and economic solution to the local circulation problems in congested downtown areas.

The Morgantown AGT study will be conducted by N.D. Lea and Associates, Inc., Huntsville, Alabama, through a \$114,579 UMTA contract. Interim data will be available in mid-1977.

Morgantown - the most sophisticated AGT system in operation today - belongs to the family of AGTs that includes Downtown People Movers. Morgantown is a system of 21-passenger (13 standees), driverless, rubber-wheeled vehicles operating on an exclusive elevated

guideway. The electrically-powered system connects the Morgantown business district with the widely separated West Virginia University campuses and the campuses among themselves. Aided by a recent \$63.6 million UMTA capital grant, the 2½ mile dual lane elevated system will be expanded another 2.1 miles and two stations will be added, bringing the station total to five. Up to 33 new vehicles also will be purchased with this grant, giving the Morgantown system up to a 78-vehicle fleet.

Since it began revenue service in the Fall of 1975, the Morgantown system has logged over 900,000 fleet miles, carrying two million passengers. Between September 1976 and January 1977, the automated transit system has carried an average of 10,000 students over 2700 vehicle miles on an average school day. An average of 20 of the 45 vehicles are in service during the 13 hour operating day. On weekends the system operates five hours per day.

Besides obtaining relevant social, economic, environmental and system performance data, the Morgantown study includes a review of design, development and implementation experiences which can be used in future AGT planning and development.

AGT systems consist of driverless vehicles which operate over exclusive guideways, elevated, street level or below ground. The three categories of AGT systems are shuttle and loop transit (people movers), group rapid transit (Morgantown), and personal rapid transit.

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