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Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe today announced the selection of two major American industrial firms to help build a radical new Personal Rapid Transit (PRT) system in Morgantown, West Virginia.

Contracts for the transit project totaling nearly \$4 million are now being negotiated with the Boeing Co., of Seattle, Washington, and the Bendix Corp., of Ann Arbor, Michigan. Boeing will develop and construct prototypes of the vehicle system and Bendix will design and develop the automated control and communication system.

The PRT system is a computer-operated, small-car demonstration transit project of the Department of Transportation's Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA). The system will be built around and through the West Virginia University campus in Morgantown. It will be designed and managed by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) of the California Institute of Technology, one of the nation's leading centers in space exploration.

"Today's selection by JPL of Boeing and Bendix as subcontractors will insure that this vital demonstration project will continue underway as planned," Secretary Volpe said. Preliminary design and engineering work already has been accomplished by JPL, with actual construction scheduled to begin this fall, the Secretary said.

In addition, a third firm, Frederic R. Harris, Inc., of Stamford, Conn., has been under subcontract with JPL to do architect and engineering design work on the system's structures and power distribution.

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The new PRT system at Morgantown will consist of fully automated transit cars which will link West Virginia University's downtown campus with its Evansdale campus, carrying passengers at speeds up to 25-miles-an-hour.

The first section of the system is scheduled to start experimental operation by the end of next year. It will use a "dedicated guideway," which will be mostly elevated and partly on ground level.

The PRT system is being designed to move large numbers of passengers rapidly with more convenience and capability than existing transit systems. The Morgantown project is one of several new concepts in mass transportation currently being developed, tested and evaluated by UMTA to help relieve traffic congestion and pollution in American cities.

Under the terms of today's subcontractor selection, the Boeing Co., will develop and construct prototypes of a rubber-tired, electric-propelled PRT car. At the same time, Bendix Corp., will be working on the PRT automated control and communication system. Both firms will assist JPL with the design and testing of the system.

Administrator Carlos C. Villarreal of UMTA said that "JPL will be working with Boeing, Bendix, Harris and West Virginia University to develop the overall system, place it in operation and evaluate its performance.

"We are very pleased to have all these fine organizations on our team, helping us to come up with new methods for tomorrow's transportation," Mr. Villarreal said.

Under its demonstration program authority, UMTA plans a series of urban transit projects, each to evaluate a new concept in transportation. Such demonstration projects are mainly financed by the Government through the construction phase and during a period of operational demonstration.

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