

PRT NEWS AND VIEWS

Sustainable City to Rely on PRT

Masdar, which means “the source” in Arabic, has set its sights on becoming the source of new energy technologies, positioning Abu Dhabi, capital of the United Arab Emirates, as a global leader in energy, sustainability and technology. The project, headed by the Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company (ADFE), was initiated in 2006. At a cost in excess of \$20 billion, Masdar City is estimated to take eight years to build. The first phase, managed by CH2M HILL, is scheduled to be complete and habitable in 2009.

Publicized as the world’s first carbon-neutral, zero-waste city, powered entirely by renewable energy sources, Masdar City will cover 6 square kilometers (2.3 square miles) and house roughly 40,000 residents and 1,500 businesses.

With approximately 50,000 additional people commuting in and out of the city, efficient transportation will create a challenge.

Although linked to surrounding communities, as well as the Abu Dhabi International Airport, by a network of rail, light rail, and roads, Masdar will be a car-free city. Once inside the boundaries of the city, the only powered transport will be “green” PRT.

Masdar City’s streets will be raised several meters above ground level, in order to create space for an underground personal rapid transit system, where people will travel by way of driverless, battery-powered transportation pods (T-Pods). Parking lots will be located outside the city, providing dedicated areas for residents and visitors who choose to own and operate cars.

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Prototype T-Pod unveiled at WFES

Sustainable City to Rely on PRT (continued from page 1)

Ten prototype T-Pods have already been manufactured by 2getthere, a Dutch firm specializing in high quality, efficient, custom-made Automated People Mover Systems. A model of the prototype was unveiled on the first day of the World Future Energy Summit (WFES), hosted by Masdar and held in Abu Dhabi. Robbert Lohmann, 2getthere Marketing and Sales Manager, described the vehicle as an “automated taxi” which combines the characteristics of a personal car with the advantages of public transportation. The passenger simply gets into the vehicle, selects a destination from a computerized screen, and the vehicle travels directly to the chosen location. The system is designed to take the shortest possible path, with no stops and no waiting for other passengers. In addition to the passenger vehicles, a flatbed version, capable of carrying larger loads, will be utilized for deliveries and waste removal.

The PRT system will begin with two stations, gradually adding vehicles and stations, until approximately 2,000 T-Pods will be in operation. The environmentally friendly and quiet vehicles can travel at around 25 kph (16 mph) and comfortably carry four adults, two children and their personal cargo. The biggest advantage of PRT is that it is “on demand,” even during off-peak hours. Much more efficient than operating empty light rail or buses all night, there are personal security advantages, as well.



Shared rides can be avoided and there are no crowds for terrorists to target. In addition, the actual cost of PRT is lower than the costs for a light rail of the same capacity.



T-Pod Interior View

For more information about the Masdar Initiative, please visit: www.masdaruae.com.

Source: Various websites; articles published in 2008 and 2009.

PRT Taxis into Position at Heathrow

The ULtra PRT system is taxiing into position for takeoff at Heathrow. Empty T-Pods are now running on the guideways in preparation for being tested carrying employees. Once all testing is satisfactory, the system will be opened for public use (expected later this year). Martin Lowson, developer of the ULtra system said, “Despite the extensive testing, we will still be ready for problems when we open to the public. With complex systems like this, it is common to have the unexpected occur.”



T-Pod and guideway under T5 access road



Parking lot station



T-Pod on guideway

Upcoming Conferences

Carbon Free Mobility Conference. March, 2009 Oakland, California
<http://www.advancedtransit.org/doc.aspx?id=2109>

ATRA Heathrow Conference. April, 2009 London's Heathrow Airport
<http://www.advancedtransit.org/doc.aspx?id=2042>

Automated People Movers 2009. June, 2009, Atlanta, Georgia
<http://content.asce.org/conferences/apm2009/index.html>