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Sustainable rail transport: Stadler brings battery trains to the USA

Utah State University (USU), the ASPIRE Engineering Research Center and Stadler today signed a contract to develop and test a battery-powered passenger train. Based on the successful FLIRT Akku concept, Stadler will bring the first multiple-unit train with battery drive to North America.

The aim of the project is to develop, build and test a FLIRT Akku battery-powered two-car multiple unit. Stadler's FLIRT Akku model is a single-decker, lightweight multiple-unit train for regional transport. Thanks to its battery drive, it allows CO₂ emission-free rail transport on non-electrified lines. Stadler has already sold over 110 FLIRT Akku vehicles. In Germany, for example, the battery-powered trains have replaced diesel fleets in Schleswig-Holstein, Rhineland-Palatinate and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

In cooperation with ASPIRE, Stadler is now developing a FLIRT Akku model tailored to the American market. This requires extensive research and development work to adapt the vehicle to the American infrastructure and national regulations. While Stadler is concentrating on the design and production of the train, ASPIRE is working on the development of the trackside charging infrastructure for the vehicle. During subsequent extensive test runs, ASPIRE, USU and Stadler hope to gain important insights for the decarbonisation of American passenger transport through the use of battery-powered trains.

«We are honored to partner with Stadler on this groundbreaking project. Success will bring design and manufacturing jobs to Utah. It will also chart the path to electrified commuter and light rail systems along the Wasatch Front. The battery-electric train solution will improve air quality and reduce operating costs while supporting shared charging infrastructure with trucks, buses, and cars. We're beyond pleased to have such an incredible opportunity to be working with a world class manufacturer here in the state», said Dr. Regan Zane, Director of the NSF ASPIRE Engineering Research Center.

«With little to no electrified routes in the North American public rail transit system, a battery train is a great zero-emission alternative to diesel-powered vehicles. After a contract for a hydrogen-powered FLIRT for California, we are now excited to bring our battery solution to the United States. In ASPIRE we have found an excellent partner to develop the most efficient and fully integrated system for environmentally friendly mobility. We are proud to be able to work with local talent to design and build this technology here in Utah», said Martin Ritter, CEO of Stadler US, Inc.

«The Utah Legislature is committed to developing strong public-private partnerships like this, that result in innovative solutions to critical issues facing our state. We are thrilled to be partners in this project and look forward to its success» said Mike Schultz, Majority Leader, Utah House of Representatives.

FLIRT Akku: the world record-beating train

The FLIRT Akku is the battery-operated version of Stadler's FLIRT model. The vehicle has an operating range of around 100 kilometres. Having covered 224 kilometres in battery-only mode, the FLIRT Akku holds the world record for the longest journey travelled by a regional train in battery-only mode without additional charging. As well as the purely electric and battery-electric versions, Stadler also makes a FLIRT model that runs on hydrogen. Stadler is currently developing the first hydrogen-powered FLIRT for the San Bernardino County Transportation Authority (SBCTA).

About Stadler

Stadler has been building trains for over 80 years. The provider of mobility solutions in rail vehicle construction, service and signalling technology has its headquarters in Bussnang, eastern Switzerland. It has a workforce of over 13,000 based in various production and engineering locations as well as more than 70 service locations. The company is conscious of its social responsibility for sustainable mobility and therefore stands for innovative, sustainable and durable quality products. The product range in the field of mainline railways and city transport includes high-speed trains, intercity trains, regional and suburban trains, metros, tramways and trams. Stadler also manufactures main-line locomotives, shunting locomotives and passenger carriages. It is the world's leading manufacturer in the rack-and-pinion rail vehicle industry.

Media contact:

Stadler Rail Group

Gerda Königstorfer
Head of Group Communications
Tel.: +41 71 626 19 19
E-mail: medien@stadlerrail.com

www.stadlerrail.com