

Smiling, hands-free driver sets comfort mood in Mercedes-Benz Future Bus

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(Tech Xplore)—There is lots to be happy about in looking at a future bus. Your ability to enjoy the bus would be thanks to forward thinkers like the teams at Daimler Buses. Imagine a day at Schiphol airport.

Leaving the terminal, off to some destination, you walk through the terminal to get to a place where a bus pulls up, and you and other passengers get on.

The driver does not seem to be doing much other than smiling pleasantly. Oh, wait. He is sitting with his hands completely off the wheel. The driver receives the information he requires from a large screen with an innovative display.

Of course, you guessed it. The bus is semi-automated. The bus approaches bus stops automatically, where it opens and closes its doors.

The technology involves connectivity along with cameras scanning the road and surroundings and [radar systems](#) with data fusion. Both long and short-range radar systems monitor the route ahead.

The video posted on Monday had notes about the technology, which is based on that of the autonomously driving Mercedes-Benz Actros truck with Highway Pilot. That was presented two years ago.

Now, however, the company has taken their development work further for use on a future look for a [city bus](#). They provided more functions. Daimler Buses made the announcement that the Mercedes-Benz Future Bus with City Pilot made its Hello World introduction, driving autonomously for the first time in Amsterdam on a route of about 20 kilometers. This marks its journey on a bus rapid transit line.

What can the bus do? It can recognize and communicate with traffic lights. The bus can negotiate junctions controlled by them. The bus, in recognizing obstacles, can brake autonomously.

The Mercedes-Benz Future Bus has interesting design features in the interior. Grab rails reflect a park-like theme by branching upwards like

trees towards the ceiling. The ceiling lighting resembles a leaf canopy.

Operators can relay information and entertainment by large monitors in the middle segment of the passenger compartment. The passenger space is divided into three zones for different lengths of stay.

But is the bus for real? The Mercedes-Benz Future Bus with CityPilot has made its first public [journey](#) on part of Europe's longest BRT route (BRT = Bus Rapid Transit) in the Netherlands. This links Amsterdam's Schiphol airport with the town of Haarlem.

The Daimler web site noted how that particular journey offers challenges for the Mercedes-Benz Future Bus. It is an almost 20-km long route with numerous bends and passes through tunnels and across junctions with [traffic lights](#).

The Mercedes-Benz Future Bus with CityPilot has a top speed of 70 km/h on the open road, said Daimler. *RushLane* noted an advantage: "CityPilot focuses on fuel efficiency with minimal stress on the engine. This in turn positively impacts operating and maintenance costs, vehicle lifetime and [availability](#)."



Tom Brant in *PCMag* described the ride:

"In the video, Mercedes tested the Future Bus on a 12-mile course near Amsterdam, which included an airport, dedicated bus lanes, mixed city traffic, and a tunnel. Along the way, its wireless charging stations and futuristic seats offered passengers a ride that was anything but the crowded, slow, and uncomfortable experience many Americans imagine when they think of city [buses](#)."

Andrew Krok commented in Roadshow by CNET: "It's not a fully autonomous system, but it appears to be damned [close](#)."

Krok noted the test route included tight corners, tunnels and stops. "If this is the future of the [bus](#), we might actually be excited to ride one."

More information: www.daimler.com/products/buses/future-bus.html

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