



MEDIA RELEASE

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Busways to trial driverless vehicle in Coffs Harbour

The future of passenger transport is coming to Coffs Harbour with the innovative trial of a Connected Automated Vehicle (CAV) to begin in November this year.

Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight, Melinda Pavey, announced the trial on Monday - the first of its kind in regional Australia.

“We want to test this technology outside of the Greater Sydney area so our regional communities can be part of our future planning of connected and automated vehicles,” Ms. Pavey said.

The project will see the driverless vehicle trialled in Coffs Harbour over a 12 month period. The trial will progress through three phases of gradually increasing levels of operational complexity in real world environments.

The project is the result of Transport for NSW seeking expressions of interest for innovative Regional Automated Vehicle Trials that explore the potential for CAVs to improve customer outcomes in regional areas. The trial will test the role of government and industry in enabling autonomous vehicles to operate as part of an integrated and customer focused transport network.

A joint initiative between Busways, Transport for NSW’s Smart Innovation Centre, Coffs Harbour Council, EasyMile, and Via, the Coffs Harbour trial will test the use of automated vehicles in three unique environments culminating in the introduction of the CAV to mainstream roads.

“It’s great to see the NSW government investing in new technologies that can integrate into and enhance the transport network” said Byron Rowe, Busways Group Managing Director.

“The way we travel is constantly evolving, not just in the big cities but in all towns and villages. This trial will explore the future of transport for rural and regional communities, while getting feedback from local users”.

“Coffs Harbour is the second region in the state to trial this vehicle, it’s a great opportunity for the community to be part of such a transformational period in transport” he added.

Project Phases

1. **Phase 1:** The EasyMile CAV will travel along the Coffs Harbour Northern Breakwall to Mutton Bird Island, giving local residents and tourists the opportunity to experience the CAV within a high-profile, controlled environment.
2. **Phase 2:** The CAV will enter Marian Grove Independent Living Village to address the mobility needs of an ageing population. An on-demand service will also be tested using technology developed by Via.
3. **Phase 3:** The final phase of the project, the CAV will be trialled along a 2.6km path from the Coffs Harbour CBD to the jetty precinct and will use existing bus stops along the route, effectively doubling the frequency of the service.

The progression through the three phases of the trial ensures the safety of all users including customers, pedestrians, cyclists and other road users. Each transition to a new phase will meet a safety milestone before moving to a more complex environment.

The Vehicle

The EZ10 driverless vehicle is supplied by leading company in automated vehicles EasyMile and embodies the technology and features needed to successfully trial the CAV in the nominated location.

The EZ10 has already successfully been trialled in multiple locations nationally and internationally including the Northern Territory and Singapore. Similar autonomous vehicles have been trialled in Sydney Olympic Park and in Canada.

Project Partners

Transport for NSW's Smart Innovation Centre

Transport for NSW (TfNSW) is leading the way in the application of new technology to the planning and management of future transport systems.

Through partnerships within all levels of Government, the private sector, academia and investors, and through the funding of industry trials, TfNSW is creating shared learning environments. The Coffs Harbour project will explore how connected autonomous vehicle technology, products and services can improve transport mobility for customers now and into the future.

“We know driverless technology has the potential to transform the lives of rural and regional communities, from reducing isolation, improving mobility, enhancing the way we move goods across our state and saving lives on country roads.

There’s still some way to go before automated vehicles become common place on our roads, but we’re committed to preparing our communities for the future.” Ms. Pavey said.

Busways Group

Busways Group is the largest family owned bus operator in NSW with 75 years’ experience providing exceptional standards of public transportation to communities in Sydney, the Central Coast and the NSW north coast. Busways is interested in how innovative transport solutions can enhance mobility and access for customers groups in the rural and regional communities.

Busways will manage the Connected Autonomous Vehicle Trial (CAVT) in Coffs Harbour, overseeing all aspects for the safe and successful execution of each phase. Through effective evaluation and community and stakeholder engagement Busways will facilitate community participation and input at all stages.

“It’s exciting for us to lead this trial where we already operate the school and route bus network and understand transport needs and challenges,” Mr Rowe said.

"We're looking forward to bringing autonomous passenger vehicles to Coffs Harbour and involving the community to test how this technology can serve the transport needs of many different groups in a regional town."

Coffs Harbour Council

Coffs Harbour Council champions innovation and pushes technology to stimulate economic growth, investment and local jobs. They effectively manage the planning and provision of regional public services and infrastructure for the community, embracing the introduction of new technology to help deliver better outcomes.

Council will collaborate with Busways and TfNSW to engage the community on new mobility solutions, and will manage traffic infrastructure change within the project.

EasyMile

EasyMile is a leading provider specialising in autonomous vehicle technology. They have global reach with headquarters in France, and offices in Australia, the USA, Europe and Singapore, with more than 150 connected autonomous vehicles trials around the world.

EasyMile will supply an EZ10 CAV for the trial and participate in the Steering Committee, bringing their insights and expertise from global projects.

“From operations through to maintenance and support, Busways has full service capabilities and EasyMile is delighted to be part of the trial,” Head of EasyMile Asia-Pacific Simon Pearce said.

“EasyMile is very passionate about deploying our vehicle in regional New South Wales. Coffs Harbour offers a unique ability to not only deploy in regional New South Wales but also to deploy our fleet management solution in an on demand capacity.”

Via

Via will lend support to the project in Phase 2 where residents of Marian Grove Retirement Village will have the opportunity to utilise an on-demand service that enables a customised transport solution, putting public transport in the individual’s hands.

“At Via we believe that the future of autonomous transportation is a system of self-driving on-demand ‘shuttles’ that provide low-cost, efficient, and safe shared rides,” Daniel Ramot, co-founder and CEO of Via, said.

“We’ve built the world’s most powerful on-demand operating system, seamlessly integrating with public transit infrastructure to redefine the way people move around their communities.”

Media Release Ends

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