



Press release

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The Autonomous Airport Shuttle a step closer

Rebel, The Future Mobility Network, RET, Rotterdam The Hague Airport, the Rotterdam The Hague Metropolitan Area (MRDH) and the municipality of Rotterdam have joined forces. Today these parties signed a letter of intent for a self-driving electric minibus called "Airport Shuttle". This will entail a long-term service between the Meijersplein metro/bus public transport stop and the airport terminal. The initiators expect that at least 4 to 6 shuttles are needed. The parties will use the coming months to elaborate their declaration of intent and to prepare for implementation. The parties expect to be able to give the go-ahead later this year to start driving in 2020.

Automatically running minibuses are an opportunity to fill in the "last mile" between stations or stops of public transport and the final destination. At the airport, this concerns a distance of more than 2 kilometers between the Meijersplein metro station and the arrival and departure hall of Rotterdam The Hague Airport. The emission-free vehicles are better for the environment and can be deployed more flexibly than regular public transport. Often people now take the car because the first and last part of their journey does not connect well with public transport. Self-driving minibuses are particularly useful for bridging short distances for airports, business locations and hospitals. Rotterdam The Hague Airport and the municipality of Rotterdam see these self-driving shuttles as an important driver of the "RHIA" innovation program, which has recently been housed in a separate foundation.

Experimentation Act

It is intended that multiple shuttles will be running in order to offer good services to travelers to and from the airport and employees at and around the airport. A phased introduction is necessary, because safety is paramount for all parties. The shuttles initially run with so-called stewards. These stewards are trained, act as hosts and can intervene especially if the situation requires it. Last week the new Experimental Act ("de Experimenteerwet") entered into force, which should make driving without a steward on these types of transport services possible. The intention is that after a period of testing and guaranteeing safety, an application is submitted for permission to drive without a steward.

Challenges

During further elaboration in the coming months, the parties still face a few challenges. The shuttles run almost entirely on public roads and between other traffic. This means that the speed difference with cars must not be too large. In addition, work is being done with the municipality of Rotterdam and the Metropolitan Region of Rotterdam The Hague on a solution for traversing two intersections. Finally, the passenger capacity and luggage space in the shuttles is important, so that travelers can take their bags with them.

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