

AUTOMOTIVE

Mercedes demonstrates technological prowess with un-piloted 12-mile bus drive

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Mercedes-Benz Future Bus

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

German automaker Mercedes-Benz is addressing urbanization and environmentalism with the Mercedes-Benz Future Bus.

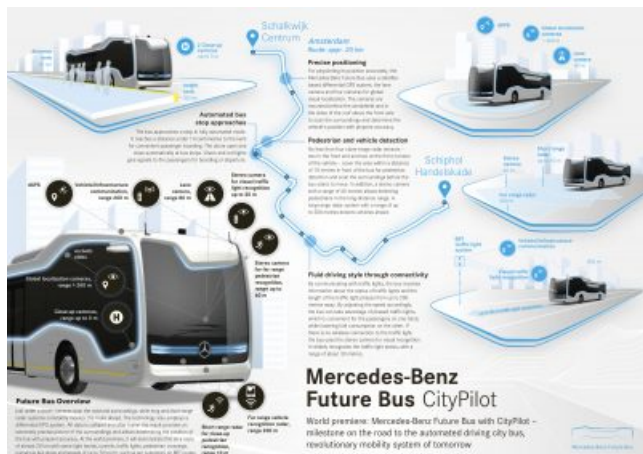
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As cities bear the brunt of worldwide population growth and the effects of global warming are gradually felt, public transport is a necessity. Focusing on the public transit market as the market poises for growth will keep revenue high while also allowing the brand to show off technology and position itself as a leader.

"In luxury, acting as an advancer is expected, particularly considering German engineering," said Chris Ramey, president of **Affluent Insights**, Miami. "Luxury demands a higher standard."

Hop on the bus

Using connectivity and cameras, Mercedes' semi-automated city bus will provide a solution to traffic and environmental concerns while transforming the bus ride into a more comfortable experience. With vehicular purchase rates for millennials underperforming previously held expectations, adapting to the mobility market is a survival tactic for automakers.



Mercedes-Benz Future Bus CityPilot infographic

As the brand explains in a video, the Mercedes-Benz Future Bus with CityPilot is an update to the brand's Actro trucks with Highway Pilot from two years ago. The updated system can recognize and communicate with traffic lights or detect obstacles and pedestrians and respond with autonomous braking.

Other tasks, including pulling over when approaching bus stops and opening or closing doors, are also automated and demonstrated in the video.

Mercedes-Benz Future Bus explanation & driving on the Road

In the aftermath of a fatality that occurred while Tesla autopilot was activated ([see story](#)), autonomous vehicles have seen a new wave of skepticism from consumers. Carefully explaining and demonstrating the technology to assure consumers of safety can help them understand the safety capabilities of autonomous and semi-autonomous driving.



Mercedes-Benz Future Bus interior

The bus first navigated a Bus Rapid Transit route in the Netherlands linking the Schiphol airport in Amsterdam to the city of Haarlem. The 12-mile route included bends, tunnels and junctions with traffic lights.

CityPilot represents another milestone on Mercedes' route toward autonomous vehicles.

Alongside a video detailing the full unveiling, Mercedes has released a slew of videos demonstrating the bus' performance. One video shows off the interior and exterior, while another shows the vehicle turning and moderating speed without the assistance from the driver.

Mercedes-Benz Future Bus - Autonomous driving & traffic light recognition

While the name Mercedes-Benz more typically conjures images of personal vehicles, the brand has been making buses since 1895. The Future Bus allows the brand to show off its autonomous technology and also embodies social values that will endear the brand to consumers, visibly positioning it as a category leader.

Piloted pageant

Recent weeks have seen other automakers also announce renewed vigor in bringing autonomous vehicles to the market.

For example, compatriot BMW Group has an open platform with technology partners to attain its goal of bringing street-ready autonomous vehicles to production by 2021 ([see story](#)).

BMW Group, along with collaborators Intel and Mobileye, sees the potential autonomous cars hold to make driving safer and easier, with implications for highway driving as well as ridesharing in denser city streets. While many automakers and consumers still see sophisticated self-driving vehicles as a distant dream, BMW is aiming to make them a reality sooner rather than later.

With so many rival brands pursuing technology with the same function, British automaker Jaguar Land Rover has announced intentions to effectively one-up competitors' attempts for an autonomous vehicle.

Jaguar Land Rover has demonstrated in videos a number of technologies that will pave the way for a vehicle that can drive itself on all terrains, not simply on roads. As autonomous vehicles are met with both excitement and skepticism, illustrating the mechanics and offering a point of differentiation will help the company retain its fans ([see story](#)).

"Fascinating clients is key for luxury buyers," Mr. Ramey said. "The autonomous bus reinforces and solidifies Mercedes as the leader.

"GM had a similar challenge many years ago with hybrid engines," he said. "They chose the bus market while Toyota chased the consumer. The 'Law of First in Mind' belongs to Toyota; GM is a distant second place.

"Perhaps Mercedes-Benz already lost the consumer market to Tesla and chooses to own the bigger vehicle with a 'must be superior' strategy."

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