Press release

Autonomous vehicles at the Rivium business park score high on safety, security and reliability

Utrecht, 21 August 2018 - The autonomous vehicles that the Dutch municipality of Capelle aan den IJssel deploys to connect the Rivium business park and metro station Kralingse Zoom are considered safe and reliable by passengers. This is the outcome of a quantitative study into the ease of use of the ParkShuttle connection. Furthermore, the study shows that reliability is ultimately the decisive factor in passengers' readiness to use any kind of autonomous public transport.

The study (N=109) was conducted by Jochem van der Burg, a social geography student at Utrecht University. He focused on seven operational factors of the ParkShuttle: (1) safety and security, (2) reliability, (3) travel time, (4) information services, (5) price and payment system, (6) comfort and (7) integration in the public transport network. The aim was to establish which of these operational factors most determine ease of use and how the insights gained from the study could be used in the decision-making process of autonomous transit systems elsewhere.

Overall, 90% of the respondents were positive about the ease of use of ParkShuttle, giving it an average mark of 7.2 on a scale of one to ten. Reliability proved to be the most decisive factor: four out of five respondents said they felt the system was reliable, mainly because of its frequency and punctuality.

This will only get better in the future, said Robbert Lohmann, CCO of 2getthere (the developers of the shuttles). "The autonomous vehicles currently in use are in excellent condition, but nevertheless they are 15 years old. When we introduce the third generation of vehicles, reliability will further improve and as a result so will ease of use. The same applies to comfort, another factor of influence."

Demonstrations versus live situations

Despite the fact that ParkShuttle in Rivium is still unique as it is the only permanent autonomous shuttle system integrated in a public transport schedule, Van den Burg was able to compare the results of his study with those of various demonstrations across the globe. This led to some surprising conclusions.

For instance, it became clear that ParkShuttle passengers' appreciation of security was relatively high (they felt that criminal activity on the shuttle was very unlikely), despite the absence of on-board stewards. This contrasts remarks by passengers in a demonstration in Vantaa, Finland, who provided a low score for security despite the presence of safety stewards in its set-up. A possible reason for this lies in ParkShuttle's passenger capacity and the resulting social control. Vehicles in the Finnish demonstration carry no more than ten passengers, whereas the autonomous shuttles in Capelle aan den IJssel carry up to 24.

Lohmann's response to this: "Another obvious difference lies in the fact that response in the Rivium study is based on the experience of commuters who have been using the shuttle service for several years. Finnish respondents were asked for their impressions after a ride in a temporary demonstration, meaning their response is more likely based on expectation than actual experience. As far as we're concerned, this shows the relatively low value of such demonstrations. If we really want to learn more about autonomous transit systems we'll have to look at permanent systems in daily use. Sadly, those are still few and far between."

Information services leave room for improvement

Although information services play a relatively minor role in ease of use, this factor received the lowest scores. This applied to the information provided at stops and on the shuttles, as well as the ready availability of information in case of delays or cancellations.

Lohmann: “This will soon be a thing of the past. As part of the renewal and extension of the system for Rivium 3.0 we will be installing information kiosks at shuttle stops to display system status and the time that the next shuttle will arrive. Inside the shuttles the current single information displays with push buttons will be replaced by two 19” vertical touch screens displaying up-to-the-minute information about the shuttle’s travel time.”

Lohmann is convinced that this study will help the organization of future autonomous systems in public transport. “Many demonstrations are set up to find out if people are prepared to use autonomous public transport systems,” says the 2getthere executive. “This study shows that such demonstrations are no longer necessary, as it’s now clear that people have no trouble embracing systems that are punctual, safe and reliable. Add to that a solid business case and you're ready to take the next step towards a permanent application.”

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Note to editors

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About 2getthere
2getthere develops and implements sustainable autonomous passenger transit systems. Our vision is to develop sustainable mobility as the leading supplier of automated passenger transit systems. We realize efficient, high-quality, certified and customized transport solutions, building on more than 25 years of technological developments and experience with several projects all over the world, in diverse and often demanding environments.

The systems of 2getthere are unique because they do not require any physical guidance (rails). The outstanding availability, reliability and safety of the systems offer passengers efficient transportation, while clients (airports, developers and local authorities) benefit from lower capital expenses and operational costs. Applications currently in use are the ParkShuttle at the Rivium Business Park in the Netherlands (http://www.2getthere.eu/projects/rivium-grt/) and the PRT system in Masdar City in the United Arab Emirates http://www.2getthere.eu/projects/masdar-prt/).

2getthere is a member of the Advanced Transit Association (ATRA) and founding member of its Industry Group. Transit Association (ATRA) established the Industry Group.

For more information, visit the website www.2getthere.eu.