Press release

Deutsche Bahn and Siemens develop digitalized operation of the Hamburg S-Bahn

Hamburg is a partner city and will be a trailblazer for digitalized rail operations in Germany • By the opening of the ITS World Congress in October 2021, four trains will operate fully automatically on a pilot line

(Hamburg/Berlin, July 12, 2018) For the first time in Germany, a highly automated S-Bahn will begin operating in Hamburg in 2021. A cooperation agreement for the "Digital S-Bahn Hamburg" was signed today by Dr. Peter Tschentscher, Mayor of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, Dr. Roland Busch, Chief Technology Officer and Member of the Managing Board of Siemens AG, and Ronald Pofalla, Member of the Deutsche Bahn Management Board for Infrastructure. Hamburg is thus a pioneer for digitalized operations in a German rail network.

The agreement specifies that a 23-kilometer-long section of the S-Bahn Line 21 between the Berliner Tor and Bergedorf/Aumühle stations will be equipped for fully automated operation, and that four trains will at the same time be equipped with the required technology. The three partners agreed to share the approximately €60 million in costs for the project. In October 2021, when Hamburg hosts the World Congress for Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS), these trains will be operated fully digitally.

Ronald Pofalla, Member of the Deutsche Bahn Management Board for Infrastructure: "In Hamburg we are starting to digitalize operations in one of our most important S-Bahn networks in Germany. This is a milestone in our future-oriented "Digital Tracks for Germany" program, for it marks the launch of the biggest technological change in years. This project will be an important reference for designing and developing the intelligent and climate-friendly rail networks that we need, especially in large cities. This is a good day for railways in Germany."

Dr. Peter Tschentscher, Mayor of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg: "Hamburg is on the way to becoming a model city for modern mobility. We want to make transport in our city – on roads and rail – more reliable, environmentally friendlier and safer. So we are a good partner for Deutsche Bahn in developing the first pilot rail line in Germany for highly automated S-Bahn operation."

Dr. Roland Busch, Chief Technology Officer and Member of the Managing Board of Siemens AG: "The S-Bahn in Hamburg is an excellent example of how the digital transformation can have a positive impact on many areas of our lives. Intelligent transport will enable us to have more and more people use urban public transport. Automated rail operations have many advantages: considerably more people can be transported with higher capacities on the same line, energy consumption can also be cut, and costs for the operator can be reduced, such as through optimized travel profiles."

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The “Digitale S-Bahn Hamburg” will be developed and tested on the line section between the Berliner Tor and Aumühle stations. The technical basis for the highly automated operation on the line is the future European Automatic Train Operation (ATO) standard via the radio-based European Train Control System Level 2 (ETCS). The four trains will be controlled by radio signals. Data will be transmitted between the trains and the block control center. A driver will continue to be on board each train in the automated section. They will intervene in operations only if required by disturbances in the system or irregularities.

As of 2021, however, four specially equipped trains will roll fully automatically out of and into the siding at the Bergedorf station, located roughly between the Berliner Tor and Aumühle stations. Between the siding and the Bergedorf platform and back again, the train will operate over 1,000 meters alone and without personnel on board.

Following a successful pilot phase, it is planned to digitalize the entire Hamburg S-Bahn network. Over the long term, the effects of the new technologies will be particularly noticeable through the increased throughput of trains on the sections. For passengers, this means a substantially improved mobility offering.

The cooperation agreement is the result of the Memorandum of Understanding signed last year for the Smart City partnership between DB and the Hanseatic city. A joint feasibility study agreed upon at that time is the basis for the “Digital S-Bahn Hamburg” pilot project.

Editors note:

More detailed information about the Digital S-Bahn Hamburg, including graphics and technical explanations, is available at: www.deutschebahn.com. Photos of the event can be downloaded as of 12 noon.

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