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The Punjab Government has awarded a contract for the world's first urban Passenger Rapid Transport (PRT) system in Amritsar, India to Ultra Fairwood.

At peak capacity the PRT system can carry up to 100,000 passengers a day on an 8km elevated guideway in over 200 specialist vehicles between seven stations, making it the world's largest PRT system to date.

Financed entirely by private funding on a build, own, operate transfer (BOOT) basis, the passenger services will go live in 2014.

Although the cost of the scheme is subject to commercial confidentiality, it demonstrates that a large scale urban PRT system can be delivered on a financially viable, fare-based model and offer very real returns for financial backers.

The Ultra PRT system uses driverless, electric-battery powered, computer driven, zero emission vehicles called "pods" which:

- can each carry 4-6 people in privacy and comfort
- provide an on-demand, non-stop journey to anywhere on the system
- use one third of the energy of a car, and are virtually silent with no emissions

- travel on a segregated guideway that can run over/alongside roads, rail tracks and buildings
- never get held up by congestion, so reduce travel time

Amritsar is home to the holiest shrine of Sikhs, the Golden Temple, and is rich in historical, religious and heritage sites. As such it's a big draw for large numbers of visitors, especially during festivals and religious events, as pilgrims flock to the area. Up to 500,000 people visit the Golden Temple on important religious festival days. The PRT system will ease congestion and reduce the current long travel transit times.

The route will focus on taking passengers from the railway and bus stations to the Golden Temple and will:

- Take 35% of daily visitors to the Golden Temple
- Save up to 30 minutes on the current journey times
- Attract passengers from a wide geographic and demographic profile, from regular commuters to "one off day trip" users.
- run from 04.00 – 24.00 seven days a week
- Charge fares competitive with alternative modes such as taxis and auto-rickshaws.



"The Punjab Government and city of Amritsar are leading the world in the application of a PRT system to provide volume transport in a major city environment. As a result Ultra Fairwood is also in discussions with the authorities in other major Asian cities which suffer from major transportation infrastructure issues – congestion, space constraints, pollution problems, capacity restrictions and passenger service issues. The Ultra PRT system can help to solve these issues.

"In one city by installing a PRT system we could potentially reduce a current journey of up to one hour in peak hours to around seven minutes, in another country we may be able to reduce the number of cars on a major city's streets by up to 20%. People are at last starting to understand how this innovative technology can play a role in city transport solutions" said Ultra Fairwood's CFO and Deputy CEO Alan Moore.

A sentiment echoed by Fraser Brown, MD of Ultra Global PRT, “The pod PRT system is an idea whose time has well and truly come. Using British technology and knowhow, we’ve proved it works at Heathrow and now with Fairwood we’re creating bigger systems, on larger routes, with more stations and pods.

“We’ll be carrying 35% of the visitors in the area and removing 2.2m car trips in Amritsar per annum. It’s the future of environmental green travel.

“Research has shown that by 2020, there could be between 50 to over 600 PRT system installations worldwide; a real achievement for a system that came out of research from Bristol University.”

“Ultra Global sees the confidence that the Punjab Government have shown in PRT as further evidence of the growing sentiment amongst architects, transport planners and governments that PRT systems can sustainably and quickly transform an urban transport environment and provide users and other stakeholders with another viable transport mode in which to manage their cities and campuses.” Brown adds.

Ultra Fairwood is a joint collaboration between Ultra and Fairwood created in 2010 bringing the revolutionary Ultra technology to Asia. Ultra Fairwood conceives, designs, finances, constructs and operates complete PRT solutions, typically on a BOOT basis. The company is working on PRT projects for cities, campus environments and airports.