UK-made driverless shuttle bus takes to streets of Prague

A company that makes driverless pods and shuttle buses is deploying its transport tech in mainland Europe for the first time. Coventry-based Aurrigo International, which listed on AIM in 2022, has seen its Auto-Shuttle vehicle take to the cobbled streets of Prague as part of the €305,000 (£263,000) EU-backed project.

The Auto-Shuttle is an electric powered, 10-seat passenger vehicle which can either drive itself or be driven by a person. It is the first road legal vehicle to be manufactured by the group, designed to provide economical public transport in places that might traditionally be under-served.

It can also be used to move shift workers, weekend shoppers and people out on the town at night, and in airports to move passengers to and from terminals and to provide airside VIP and crew transport.

The Prague shuttle will initially have a driver on board, before moving to remote monitoring.

The LivingLAPT project is being led by University College London (UCL) and will also eventually run across Brno, which is another city in the Czech Republic, and Milton Keynes in the UK.

By using the shuttles in different places the team will be able to see how they cope with different types of street layouts, road conditions and public attitudes to driverless vehicles.

Aurrigo International chief executive David Keene said:

“Although we work all over the world, this is the first Auto-Shuttle deployment in mainland Europe for Aurrigo, and we are delighted to be working with such a prestigious group of partners to move towards this important step in autonomous public transport.

“The medieval, cobbled streets of Prague – built before cars or buses were even dreamt of – are in stark contrast to the modern roads of Milton Keynes, which shows the importance of testing in multiple cities.

“Our Auto-Shuttle is a perfect vehicle for this project, because we create the vehicle, software and autonomous driving hardware in-house, to work in perfect harmony and this level of integration is vital when breaking new ground in driverless technology.”

The project, which is funded by the European Institute for Innovation and Technology (EIT), hopes to build trust in autonomous driving, with safety at its core. The vehicles use 3D LiDAR mapping and cameras to provide an all-weather picture of the surroundings.

Bani Anvari, Professor of intelligent mobility at UCL, said: “Cities face challenges such as reducing emissions, improving the safety and mobility of cyclists or pedestrians and increasing quality of life for citizens.

“Driverless shuttles or pods can be a game changer for cities as they address many of these challenges.

“However, current solutions lack a transferrable regulatory and safety framework among European cities.

“Low public acceptance, in combination with high investments in the new technology (including insurance and safety driver), are a barrier to adoption for many cities.

“LivingLAPT will deliver sustainable driverless shuttle and

logistics services among various European cities by phasing out the need for safety drivers in shuttles and moving towards remote operators who overlook several services simultaneously.”

Some 90 percent of Aurrigo’s project costs (€275,820) come from the EU via the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, with 10 percent contributed by the company (€30,506).