

New Stadler Metro train completes its first test run

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The new Stadler Metro train has successfully completed its first test run on the network as part of the detailed preparations to get it ready for entering service at the end of the year.

Nexus, the public body which owns and manages the Tyne and Wear Metro, said the test went smoothly and that the new train had performed well.

The testing, which is the latest phase of the £362m new Metro fleet programme, took place during the early hours of the morning on a section of line between South Gosforth and Monkseaton.

It was the first time that the new Metro train has had a run on the mainline.

The Stadler Class 555 Metro train, the first of 46 that Nexus has on order, is undergoing a period of testing and driver training before entering service for customers.

The new Metro fleet will offer a comfortable, new, air conditioned, open plan layout, sleekly modelled interior, transforming the customer experience, while setting new standards for accessibility.

Major Projects Director at Nexus, Cathy Massarella, said: “We’re really pleased to say that our new Metro train has completed its first test run out on the network and performed really well.

“This a considerable period of detailed testing to get the trains ready for our customers. Further test runs will be taking place over the coming weeks and months.

“It was a proud moment for us to see the train leave the depot at Gosforth and join the mainline. There were no glitches to report.

“The first test was from South Gosforth to Monkseaton and then back again. Other test runs will be taking place on different parts of the network.

“Our customers, employees, specialist user groups and trade unions helped to design the new trains as part of a far-reaching consultation exercise that received 23,000 responses. We are getting a bespoke design from Stadler, with a sleek modern appearance, inside and out.

“These trains will have to go through a phase of rigorous testing on our network, and all our drivers will need to undertake a period of train handling experience during the implementation phase of the project.

“Once the trains are in service they are going to be transformative for our customers and our workforce in terms of comfort, quality and reliability.”

Claudius Oblasser, project manager for Stadler, commented: “The runs taking place last night mark the beginning of a rigorous programme of testing to interrogate the safety and performance of the entire fleet. Scores of tests will be carried out over the coming month to make sure it’s ready for passengers. They will cover every aspect of the train’s design, from the power supply and braking systems to digital passenger information boards and CCTV cameras. We’re pleased to have got to this point in the production process, which brings the fleet one step closer to entry into service.”

Stadler, the Swiss train manufacturer, are building a total of 46 new Metro trains on behalf of Nexus.

The fleet will enter service in phases and the aim is to have all of the new trains in service by 2025.

Stadler has delivered three new trains to North East England so far, and more are set to arrive later this year.

The Class 555 Stadler train is a unique design for Metro and in the months ahead will undergo rigorous testing to ensure that it interfaces correctly with signalling systems and other Metro infrastructure.

Metro drivers will also start a process of training at the controls of the new train.

The new trains have been designed and shaped by customers, and in response to vast consultation will include modern features such as linear seating, charging points, air conditioning and will deliver a step-change in accessibility.

Among the new features will be an automatic sliding step at every door to enable seamless boarding, making travel easier for Metro's 50,000 wheelchair passengers as well as people with children's buggies, luggage or bicycles.

Photo credit: Tyne and Wear