

New Tyne and Wear Metro train unveiled

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The Tyne and Wear Metro's first train has been officially unveiled at a celebration event marking the start of an exciting phase of the £362m programme.

Nexus said the event was an opportunity to thank many different people who have helped make the new fleet a reality: Metro customers who have shaped the design, local politicians and business leaders who campaigned for funding, some of its many employees and trade union reps involved in the project, and local firms now supplying parts and technology to the new train.

Transport Minister, Richard Holden MP, joined with other invited guests to get a first look at the brand new Stadler train, the first of 46 that Nexus has on order.

He said: "Today marks a new bright chapter for passengers in Tyne and Wear and the North East who will benefit from some of the most modern metro trains in the country thanks to over £360 million in Government investment.

"These sleek new trains will offer cleaner, smoother and more reliable journeys as we leave no stone unturned to boost clean travel, level up transport and grow the economy."

Managing Director of Nexus, Martin Kearney, said: "We are at the beginning of an exciting new era for transport in North East England.

"The Stadler trains are going to be transformative, and we are really excited to get them into service for our customers.

"Stadler are a world class train manufacturer. What they are delivering are trains with the very latest modern technology, which is a massive leap from our current 43-year-old fleet.

"This is a new train whose design has been shaped by customers, employees, trade unions and specialist user groups. We believe this to have been the most far-reaching consultation yet staged into a new train design. Over 23,000 customer responses have helped to shape the design.

"The hard work starts now to get the trains ready to go into service. The new Metro 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.

"We will then be able to put the new train into service so that all of our customers will get to feel the benefits, and share in this moment of history for the Tyne and Wear Metro."

Cllr Martin Gannon, Chair, North East Joint Transport Committee, said: "I am delighted to see the new train take pride of place in our region's Metro fleet.

"The technology onboard is very impressive and I'm sure passengers can't wait to see the new fleet in action. My congratulations to the team at Nexus for their hard work getting the trains ready to enter service - it is an exciting time for public transport in the North East.

"This investment is a result of the whole region pulling together to secure major funding from government, recognising the huge importance of our Metro system to residents, businesses and of course the region's economy.

"The new fleet alongside other significant investments in public transport such as the recently completed Metro Flow programme and our Bus Service Improvement Plan, will help to transform the sustainable travel options available for many people - ensuring our transport system delivers an enjoyable, reliable and safe service which meets the objectives of our region's Transport Plan."

Michael Steiner, programme director at Stadler, commented: "The new trains that we are supplying are safe, reliable, highly comfortable and designed with the 21st century passenger in mind. The arrival of the first ones in Newcastle is a highly symbolic occasion for Stadler, Nexus, our stakeholders and the passengers who will have the pleasure of travelling on them, heralding an important milestone in the project.

"We are pleased also to be on the way to completing the new purpose-built depot, which will accommodate the new fleet. Configured to facilitate a range of activities, it will enhance efficiency and vastly improve the working environment, boasting a range of features to promote sustainability and the

environment.”

The new Metro fleet heralds a bright future for the Metro network, its customers, and its workforce.

More 23,000 people have helped to design the new fleet in what was an award-winning consultation which Nexus believes to be the more far-reaching public consultations ever conducted into a new train fleet.

The event was a chance to sample the new train’s bright, clean and modern new interior and transformative technology, which includes an automatic sliding step at each door for seamless boarding.

Customers will get to travel on the first new train when it enters service at the end of the year.

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 and energy efficiency.

Stadler, the Swiss train manufacturer, are building a total of 46 new Metro trains on behalf of Nexus, the public body which owns and manages Metro.

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

The Class 555 Stadler train is a bespoke design for Metro. In the months ahead it 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, which replace Metro current 43-year-old rolling stock up to 2025, will have modern features including 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: Nexus