

Stadler hands over first of 53 trains to Liverpool City Region

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Following an intensive period of testing on the Merseyrail network and the recent authorisation from the UK rail regulator, the first of 53 trains being made by Stadler has been officially passed on to the client, Merseytravel, on behalf of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. This is a landmark achievement in a project that will see the entire legacy fleet replaced by state-of-the-art, safe, reliable and comfortable electrical multiple units, designed to transform the passenger experience for local people.

The first of the new trains has officially transferred ownership from Stadler and is now the property of the Liverpool City Region. The handover comes after a comprehensive programme of testing and the authorisation from industry regulator, the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), secured this summer. Over the coming months, Stadler will hand more trains to the client, ahead of introduction into commercial service.

Testing involved thousands of driving hours on the Merseyrail network and a dedicated test-track in Germany. More than 100 different tests have been conducted to ensure that trains meet UK and European safety standards. They covered every aspect of the trains' design from the traction supply and braking systems to digital passenger information screens and CCTV cameras.

The new, modern trains boast a wide range of customer-focused features and functions, including sliding step technology, on-board wifi, intelligent air-conditioning, improved passenger information screens and more space for wheelchairs, bicycles and prams.

Matthias Hämmerle, commercial project manager at Stadler, commented: “We are very pleased to have reached this highly symbolic moment in the programme, with one train officially transferring ownership from Stadler. These trains have been custom-made for the Liverpool City Region and take into account not only the characteristics of the network itself, with its pronounced curves, tunnels and Victorian infrastructure, but the requirements and priorities of local people, as well.”

Fadi Khairallah, technical project manager at Stadler, said: “Over the last few years, we’ve worked closely with our client and other key stakeholders to come up with a train that really works for the Liverpool City Region. It’s this collaborative approach that’s enabled Stadler to produce a fleet that we are confident will be popular with passengers and serve the area for decades to come.”

Steve Rotheram, Metro Mayor for the Liverpool City Region, added: “These new trains are a near half a billion-pound investment in our region’s transport network and will transform the way people get around in our region. They’re a major part of my vision for a London-style transport system that will make getting around quick, cheap and reliable.”

“They will be the greenest and most accessible trains in the country and, best of all they’re owned by us. We’ve designed them around the needs of local residents, who I’m sure will all absolutely love them.”

David Powell, programme director for the Liverpool City Region, commented: “Acceptance of the first Class 777 is a huge milestone in the project which takes us one step closer to introducing the new fleet into passenger service. The new fleet will provide greater capacity, much higher levels of comfort, greater accessibility, improved safety and reduced journey times. These trains will be owned by the people of the Liverpool City Region and will provide a much better travelling experience in a light, bright, open environment which has been designed specifically to meet our passengers’ needs with direct involvement from local rail users.”

“Despite the challenges associated with the global pandemic over the last eighteen months, the testing of our brand new train has now been successfully completed and I would like to pay credit to the engineers and technicians who undertook this work in extremely challenging circumstances.”

Andy Heath, managing director for Merseyrail, concluded: “The acceptance of this train marks an important landmark in the new fleet project. People will be rightly excited about travelling on the new fleet of trains which feature cutting-edge technology, and which have been designed with the help the people of the Liverpool City Region.”

“It has been a challenging 18 months during the COVID-19 pandemic and whilst there remains further work to be done before we see them in passenger service, we are delighted to be taking this next step along that journey with our partners Stadler, Network Rail and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.”

Last month, trials undertaken on new Stadler-built trains using battery technology were successfully completed. This paves the way to the potential expansion of the Merseyrail network, with services reaching as far as Wrexham and Preston. In June, Stadler displayed a prototype of a battery train –also referred to as an independently powered multiple unit –for the Liverpool City Region, at the annual UK rail industry event, Rail Live, in Long Marston. Producing fewer carbon emissions than standard vehicles and enabling the operator to run on an extended network, the battery train boasts enviable green credentials and provides clients with greater flexibility than a standard train.

Photo credit: Stadler