

The arrival of the first new Tyne and Wear Metro train

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The Tyne and Wear Metro's first new train has arrived in North East England, after being successfully delivered from Switzerland – heralding a landmark moment for the £362 million programme.

The Stadler Class 555 Metro train, the first of 46 that Nexus has on order, will undergo a period of testing and driver training before entering customer service in the autumn.

Nexus, the public body which owns and manages Metro, said it was a proud moment for the network, its customers, and its workforce. More new trains will arrive in the region later this year.

Stadler delivered the new train to the Gosforth Metro Depot in the early hours of Tuesday morning after a locomotive had towed it across mainland Europe and into the UK via the Channel Tunnel.

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.

Managing Director of Nexus, Martin Kearney, said: "It was a proud moment for us to welcome the first new Stadler train to North East England today. The £362 million programme is now entering a significant phase.

"To see that train arriving at our Gosforth depot was a moment of history for the Tyne and Wear Metro. Everyone is excited to get the testing and driver training process underway, so that we can put the new train into service on the network.

"The Stadler trains have all the latest modern technology. They're a world away from our current fleet, and they promise to be transformative for customers and for our workforce.

"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.

"This is the first of 46 new trains we have ordered from Stadler. The new trains will be arriving over the next couple of years, and they will be phased into service on the network."

Chair of the North East Joint Transport Committee, Cllr Martin Gannon, said: "I'm delighted to see the first train of our new modern Metro fleet arrive in the region – this is a monumental achievement and great news for public transport in the North East.

"The arrival of the first new train will be welcome news for passengers, many of whom played a key role in the consultation process, helping to design the very trains that will take the Metro forward into the future.

"In line with our region's Transport Plan, the new trains will encourage even more people to make use of our Metro network for all types of journeys, including travel to work and education or for leisure purposes. I'm pleased to say this investment will hugely boost the accessibility of the network, with a sliding step at every door on the new trains which will help to make everyday travel so much easier for thousands of people with enhanced mobility needs and young families.

"Nexus is a public body working on behalf of local councils, and this project is another great example of how we successfully deliver major transport investment programmes in our region, to grow our economy and deliver on our carbon reduction targets. The North East can achieve great things when we work together.

"This is just the start of this exciting programme and I look forward to seeing further trains rolling into the North East in the coming months."

Adrian Wetter, project manager at Stadler, added: "The arrival of the first train in Newcastle is a massive milestone, bringing the project to manufacture and supply 46 new trains one step closer to fruition. These trains are technologically sophisticated, designed for passenger comfort and will dramatically improve the travel experience. "We are pleased to continue working with Nexus on the next stage, which is a comprehensive programme of testing to ensure that the trains meet industry safety standards before they are entered into commercial service."

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: Tyne and Wear Metro