

Former Dutch astronaut leads development of Superbus (w/ video)

April 12 2011, by Bob Yirka



(PhysOrg.com) -- Former Dutch astronaut Wubbo Ockels, once a mission specialist on the Challenger, has of late been working with a design team from TU Delft University, in Delft, to come up with a new kind of vehicle for public transportation. What they've come up with might just change how people view the lowly bus. Instead of a tall box-

like cabin with an aisle and hard wide seats, the Superbus is aerodynamic, low and sleek, with eight gull-wing side doors and luxurious cushioned seats and can travel at speeds of up to 155 mph.

Though it does look good, the Superbus, as it's called, has been named more for its speed, than for its beauty and mobility, and is set to go for a test run in the UAE and might just wind up as a means to travel from Abu Dhabi to Dubai in a just 30 minutes, rather than the usual hour and a half.



The designers hope that the Superbus might be the answer to urban congestion. It's as long as a normal public transportation bus, but it's far more mobile thanks to two pairs of rear wheels that can turn independently, thus reducing the turning radius. The idea is that the Superbus would come to your house when you call, and pick you up, rather than you going to a bus stop. It would maneuver almost like a limousine through normal traffic, then go into high-speed mode on a dedicated concrete road, then maneuver normally near your destination.



The Superbus holds 23 passengers is made with super light carbon fiber materials, and is powered by an electric motor backed up by lithium polymer batteries. The chief design engineer on the team is Antonia Terzi, formerly of BMW-Williams Formula 1, hence the aerodynamic design that cuts down on energy needs and allows the vehicle to travel safely at high speeds. Inside, it's all about comfort and luxury, with seats that look like something off a roller-coaster, television, internet access and air bags for the passengers; up front, there's space age technology for the driver; obstacle detection, navigational aids and state of the art communications and fail-safe backup systems.

If the Superbus passes the government inspections in the UAE, it's likely

to go into service there, and if that happens, other urban planners are likely to take notice and begin considering orders themselves.

More information: www.superbusproject.com/

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Citation: Former Dutch astronaut leads development of Superbus (w/ video) (2011, April 12)
retrieved 24 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2011-04-dutch-astronaut-superbus-video.html>

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