

'Hyperloop' rail study for Slovakia-Czech connection

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A US startup pursuing Elon Musk's vision for near-supersonic rail transport announced Tuesday an agreement on a feasibility study for a "hyperloop" system connecting two European cities.

Hyperloop Transit Technologies (HTT) said that it had reached an "exploratory agreement" with the Czech city of Brno on a super-fast rail connection with Bratislava, Slovakia.

The bigger vision was to connect to the Czech capital of Prague, according to a statement by the company and local officials.

"Connecting Brno with Prague, and the existing efforts in Bratislava along with other cities in the region with the next generation of transportation will set the stage for a new era," Brno mayor Petr Vokráll said.

HTT said that it was working with officials in Slovakia, Abu Dhabi and elsewhere in the hope of establishing uniform regulations for hyperloop systems.

"Since we have solved all the technical issues, it is now crucial for us to collaborate with governments around the world," said HTT chief executive Dirk Ahlborn.

"New rules and frameworks will need to be written as we begin building out systems in Slovakia, the Emirates and several other to come."

HTT was born out of crowd-funding platform JumpStartFund in late 2013. Its list of collaborators includes engineering management giant Atkins and Europe railway operator Deutsche Bahn.

Rival US startup Hyperloop One earlier this month disclosed a list of locations around the world vying to put the futuristic rail transit system to the test.

The startup company keen to revolutionize the way people and cargo travel said that 35 contenders remained from a field of 2,600 teams in a Hyperloop One Grand Challenge launched in May 2015.

Hyperloop One wants to get three systems underway, according to chief executive Rob Lloyd.

Dubai late last year agreed to a deal to evaluate construction of a hyperloop link that could slash travel times to Emirati capital Abu Dhabi to minutes.

Both hyperloop startups, each of which boasted investments valued at more than \$100 million, are building on an idea laid out by billionaire Musk, the entrepreneur behind electric car company Tesla and private space exploration endeavor SpaceX.

Pods would rocket along rails through reduced-pressure tubes at speeds of 1,200 kilometers (750 miles) per hour.

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