

Canadian start-up seeks French testing ground for hyperloop train

August 8 2018

A Canadian company hoping to build what it bills as the future of public transportation will seek permits this week to set up a testing centre in central France for developing super-fast "hyperloop" trains.

Transpod co-founder Sebastien Gendron told AFP that his company would file its application Friday with officials in the Haute-Vienne region for a three-kilometre (1.9-mile) track, which it claims would be the longest in the world.

It is one of several groups developing the technology, which aims to transport people in train-like "pods" through low-pressure tubes that would reduce atmospheric friction, allowing travel at nearly the speed of sound.

High-profile investors including Elon Musk, the head of electric car pioneer Tesla, and Virgin's Richard Branson have also put their financial muscle behind [hyperloop](#) projects.

Transpod, which has raised nearly 50 million euros (\$58 million) from North American and Italian investors, aims to build its first commercial line running at 1,000 km/h (620 mph) by 2030, Gendron said.

The technology "will make humans and freight travel on earth as fast as a plane, while feeling like you're in the metro," Gendron said.

It chose the town of Droux—population 400—north of the central city

of Limoges for the 21-million-euro project after intense lobbying by enthusiastic local officials.

"The state needs to act as a facilitator in this case because, whether or not it's the future of transportation, the possibility of a research facility on this scale can only benefit the region's reputation and its university," said Raphael Le Mehaute, the government's representative in the Haute-Vienne department.

Transpod said it would unveil French and international partners for the project this autumn—the national train operator SNCF has already invested in Virgin Hyperloop One, which announced this week plans to build a \$500-million research site in Spain.

France is already home to a research site for Hyperloop Transportation Technologies, an American company which is operating in Toulouse, southwest France.

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Citation: Canadian start-up seeks French testing ground for hyperloop train (2018, August 8) retrieved 16 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-08-canadian-start-up-french-ground-hyperloop.html>

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