Dubai, Hyperloop One to study potential for Abu Dhabi line

November 8 2016, by Jon Gambrell

An Emirati takes a photograph of the Hyperloop One logo with his mobile phone in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Tuesday, Nov. 8, 2016. The futuristic city-state of Dubai announced a deal on Tuesday with Los Angeles-based Hyperloop One to study the potential for building a line linking it to the Emirati capital of Abu Dhabi. (AP Photo/Jon Gambrell)

The futuristic city-state of Dubai announced a deal on Tuesday with Los Angeles-based Hyperloop One to study the potential for building a line

linking it to the Emirati capital of Abu Dhabi.

The announcement of the deal took place atop the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, with a panoramic view of the skyline of this futuristic city-state serving as both a backdrop and a sign of Dubai's desire to be the first to rush toward the future.

However, no financial terms were immediately discussed and the technology itself remains under testing, despite the Apple-like product talk given by Hyperloop CEO Rob Lloyd.

"This has become a transportation hub and leader in the world," Lloyd said, mentioning long-haul carrier Emirates and the city's driverless metro, the longest in the world. "In the Emirates, we believe everything is possible."

A hyperloop has levitating pods powered by electricity and magnetism that hurtle through low-friction pipes at a top speed of 1,220 kph (760 mph). Tesla co-founder Elon Musk first proposed the idea in 2013.

Organizers suggest the Dubai-Abu Dhabi travel time by hyperloop would be only 12 minutes—significantly down from the hour-plus journey it now takes by car between the two cities. Later asked about the cost, Hyperloop co-founder Josh Giegel told The Associated Press the cost would be "somewhere between the cost of putting a road in and a high-speed rail." He did not elaborate.

Rob Lloyd, the CEO of Hyperloop One, left, shows a model to Emirati officials including Mattar al-Tayer, the director-general and chairman of Dubai's Roads & Transport Authority, third left, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Tuesday, Nov. 8, 2016. The futuristic city-state of Dubai announced a deal on Tuesday with Los Angeles-based Hyperloop One to study the potential for building a line linking it to the Emirati capital of Abu Dhabi. (AP Photo/Jon Gambrell)

In October, Dubai hosted a competition to design a hyperloop track. In that 48-hour project, designers presented ideas for a possible track between Al Maktoum International Airport at Dubai World Central, Dubai International Airport and Fujairah International Airport. Under their plans, the hyperloop trip of some 145 kilometers (90 miles) over a mountain range would be 10 minutes or less, compared to the current hour and 20 minutes by road.

The deal announced on Tuesday would be far simpler.

There would be several stations throughout Dubai connecting the hyperloop system to Abu Dhabi. The pods would then be able to carry passengers and cargo between the cities. At the event Tuesday, Hyperloop officials showed several circular station models for Dubai, including one at Emirates Towers on Dubai's main artery, Sheikh Zayed Road.

Rob Lloyd, CEO of Hyperloop One, shows a diagram to Emirati officials in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Tuesday, Nov. 8, 2016. The futuristic city-state of Dubai announced a deal on Tuesday with Los Angeles-based Hyperloop One to study the potential for building a line linking it to the Emirati capital of Abu Dhabi. (AP Photo/Jon Gambrell)

Already, government-backed port operator DP World has signed an

agreement with Hyperloop One to explore the feasibility of the using the technology at Dubai's sprawling, man-made Jebel Ali Port. DP World CEO Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem attended Tuesday's event with Mattar al-Tayer, the head of Dubai's Roads & Transportation Agency.

"Dubai is a city that understands global change and seizes the opportunity to pioneer," al-Tayer said.

For now though, Hyperloop One continues its tests in the Nevada desert.

"We do aspire to build the world's first hyperloop here in the United Arab Emirates," Lloyd said. "That is our aspiration. We have a lot of work to do."

A woman takes a photograph of a model of the Hyperloop One project during a news conference in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Tuesday, Nov. 8, 2016. The futuristic city-state of Dubai announced a deal on Tuesday with Los Angeles-based Hyperloop One to study the potential for building a line linking it to the

Emirati capital of Abu Dhabi. (AP Photo/Jon Gambrell)

A general view of Dubai is shown from the Burj Khalifa tower, the world's tallest building, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Tuesday, Nov. 8, 2016. The futuristic city-state of Dubai announced a deal on Tuesday with Los Angeles-based Hyperloop One to study the potential for building a line linking it to the Emirati capital of Abu Dhabi. (AP Photo/Jon Gambrell)

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