

First in Germany: autonomous cars connect rural town Bad Birnbach with train station

Nationwide autonomous pilot project premieres in Bavaria: Driverless shuttles offer link to all rail connections

(Bad Birnbach, October 7, 2019) Autonomous driving on public roads in Germany reaches the next milestone in the Bavarian spa town of Bad Birnbach: driverless shuttle buses now connect the train station with the town centre, which is about two kilometers away, via a country road. The Deutsche Bahn (DB) subsidiary for innovative mobility solutions, ioki, thus overcomes the first-and-last-mile-problem of arriving spa guests. The first autonomous ride was made by Federal Transport Minister Andreas Scheuer and DB Board Member for Passenger Transport Berthold Huber.

Berthold Huber: "The climate-friendly mobility revolution must also become a concern beyond Germany's major cities. Local public transport in rural areas, in particular, needs new concepts to attract more people to environmentally friendly public transport. Therefore, we want to link road and rail even more closely together. After all, individual mobility without a car should also be possible in rural areas. In Bad Birnbach, passengers can now board the autonomous bus directly from the train station for the first time and travel comfortably to their final destination. We are thus setting new standards".

Andreas Scheuer: "The Deutsche Bahn project proves that transport is becoming more and more interconnected, the first self-driving vehicles are already rolling on our roads. This leads us to completely new opportunities for public transport and the connection of rural areas: people remain mobile into old age, while transport is becoming safer, more cost-efficient and climate friendly. I am therefore very pleased that Deutsche Bahn has started a pilot project here in Bad Birnbach to test the technology in everyday life – and to get people excited about autonomous driving."

Intermodal travel chain for spa guests

Two automated EasyMile EZ10 Gen2 electric buses run daily between the market square in the town centre and the Bad Birnbach railway station, thus ensuring autonomous connection to all trains. The autonomous bus covers a distance of around two kilometres. An innovative traffic control system in the form of variable traffic signs is used to ensure the necessary safety and at the same time to disrupt traffic as little as possible. The eco-friendly electric bus has no driver, no steering wheel and no accelerator pedal. There is only one steward on board who can intervene if necessary. Thanks to an extendable ramp, the vehicle is accessible and now offers Wi-Fi and USB charging ports for up to six passengers.

Pioneering work for autonomous driving in Germany

The car is the dominant mode of transport in rural areas. Nevertheless, it is also important to offer people living outside the conurbations an alternative beyond their own car. In addition to concepts developed by ioki for demand-responsive transport, which are currently being tested in various model projects around Europe, autonomous shuttle buses are also a solution for the public transport of the future in rural areas. ioki has been operating the first autonomous bus line on public roads in Germany in Bad Birnbach since October 2017. For their project in Bad Birnbach, ioki works closely together with the regional DB bus company Regionalbus Ostbayer (RBO), the district of Rottal-Inn, the vehicle developer EasyMile, TÜV Süd and of course the market community of Bad Birnbach. Since the start of the project,



more than 40,000 passengers have already been transported and more than 21,000 kilometres have been driven autonomously. With this project, DB has done real pioneering work for autonomous driving and successfully mastered numerous technical, legal and planning complexities.