

Driverless buses to start running next week

In a UK first, Stagecoach will begin using driverless buses on services across the Forth Road Bridge from 15 May.

The route will be 14 miles long in total from the Ferrytoll Park and Ride in Fife across the bridge and into Edinburgh Park, and Stagecoach expect around 10,000 passengers to use the new service which will operate to a frequent timetable. On the way the bus will encounter roundabouts with other traffic, motorway and dedicated bus lanes.



The CAVForth buses which will be used on the Fife to Edinburgh Park route

The fleet of five Alexander Dennis Enviro200AV vehicles will travel at up to 50mph, with a Safety Driver in the driver's seat to keep an eye on everything and a Captain on board to take tickets and deal with passenger queries. Drivers are however not expected to touch the controls while the vehicle is in the autonomous mode. The system used on board will detect other road users and will track them to avoid any collisions, and optical cameras and radar scan each side of the road to check for pedestrians. The control system includes an Artificial Intelligence engine which receives information from all over the bus to know its exact position and calculate the safest path to its destination.

One of the main reasons to use this type of bus is that it is estimated it will save up to 20% of fuel used by a manually driven vehicle.

The project which is providing the service involves Stagecoach, Edinburgh Napier University and Alexander Dennis Ltd, Bristol Robotics Lab and Fusion Processing Ltd.

Scottish Minister for Transport Kevin Stewart said: "This is an exciting milestone for this innovative and ambitious project, and I very much look forward to seeing Project CAVForth take to the roads next month.

"Our trunk road network can provide a wide range of environments as a diverse testing ground, and the ground-breaking and globally significant Project CAVForth will really help Scotland establish its credentials on the world stage."

Carla Stockton-Jones, UK Managing Director for Stagecoach said: "We are excited to introduce the UK's first autonomous bus fleet in East Scotland which is also home to our headquarters and where it all began over 40 years ago.

"We are proud to be at the forefront of transport innovation with this project that marks a significant milestone for public transport and we look forward to welcoming our customers on board in the coming months."

Press and media will have the opportunity to get on board a CAVForth bus on Thursday morning.

