الهيئة الملكية لمحافظة العلا
Royal Commission for AlUla

RCU launches autonomous pod vehicle service in AlUla offering seamless and sustainable transport for residents and visitors

- *Pilot scheme for fully automated electric passenger pod will ferry people between the south entrance to AlUla's Old Town and south car park before being extended to new locations*
- *Smart pod vehicle can transport maximum of 22 people and has already achieved 280 passenger journeys in a single day of the pilot*
- *Sustainable mobility solution is fully aligned with RCU's Journey Through Time masterplan to develop AlUla into a vibrant and smart destination with a network of safe, clean and easy to access public transport*

AlUla, Saudi Arabia, 01 February 2022: Residents and visitors to AlUla can now experience the future of sustainable, zero emission mobility on their doorstep with the launch of a new, fully autonomous pod vehicle service.

The innovative pilot scheme provides passengers with a quick and easy link to AlUla's Old Town from the south car park. The service is part of the Royal Commission for AlUla's (RCU) comprehensive Journey Through Time (JTT) masterplan to develop a range of fully integrated, accessible and environmentally friendly public transport options.

Serving the local community, business travellers to AlUla as well as visitors exploring the area's stunning natural scenery and attending AlUla Moments, which includes Winter at Tantora, AlUla Arts, AlUla Skies and AlUla Wellness Festival, the smart pod operates from 4pm to midnight each day. Electric powered, the pod can carry up to 22 people (8 seated and 14 standing) although capacity will be limited to eight during the pilot scheme.

Passengers can ride the pod free of charge along a circular route. Each leg takes just three minutes to cover 1km. As the pilot continues, the pod service will be expanded to other areas of AlUla including Dadan, Hegra and AlJadidah later in the year.

Safe, environmentally friendly and comfortable, the autonomous pod offers residents and visitors a glimpse of how RCU's long-term development of convenient and sustainable mobility will enhance their daily lives and shape the future of transport and AlUla itself.

Passengers seated or standing onboard can enjoy the journey while an informative instructional video is played. Utilising the latest in electric vehicle battery technology, the pod can be fully charged in just 15 minutes, giving enough power to travel 50km.

Smart sustainability is a key component of the JTT masterplan, which is being strategically implemented by RCU over several phases up until 2035 to redevelop AlUla into a global destination for heritage, culture and nature as well as innovation, business and tourism.

The pilot allows RCU and engineers from the pod's manufacturer, ZF 2Getthere, to carefully monitor energy consumption, connectivity and practicality before rolling out the autonomous service across specially chosen sites in AlUla. The position, progress and performance of the pod is monitored by teams based at RCU's Smart County Control Platform, while cameras can be added to enhance passenger safety and capacity planning.

RCU worked closely with esteemed public transport company and technology specialists RATP Dev, a wholly owned subsidiary of the RATP Group, to source the pod. With more than 120 years of experience, the French company has proven to be an ideal partner with the expertise needed to match RCU's ambitions. The first pod has been provided by ZF 2Getthere and another will be made available from manufacturer EasyMile.

Amr AlMadani, the CEO of RCU, said: "The launch of this pilot scheme for the autonomous pod public transport service is the first step towards RCU's goal of providing the AlUla community with access to the very latest in clean, safe and energy efficient mobility solutions. As outlined in our JTT masterplan, sustainability is the driving force behind our ambitions for the future of AlUla and our goal to establish the wider northwest Arabia region as a hub for innovation, business and tourism.

"The pod will give visitors and members of the community a viable and attractive alternative to using personal cars and SUVs to travel around the town and, as the service expands and grows, to surrounding areas. Seamlessly connecting AlUla's people and places, the pod service, which is being offered alongside a variety of alternative transport options, will enhance the area's bourgeoning appeal to an international audience while enhancing both its smart and environmental credentials among residents. When fully operational, the network will deliver a convenient, quick, fun and enjoyable mode of transport linking AlUla's main heritage and urban sites with its existing and expanding infrastructure plans."

Denis Guillois, CEO of RATP Dev Saudi Arabia, said: "RATP Dev Saudi Arabia is thrilled to be supporting the Royal Commission for AlUla as it puts smart mobility solutions in place for the benefit of all visitors and residents. We are proud to contribute to the long-term preservation and development of AlUla and Hegra, Saudi's first UNESCO World Heritage Site, through the design and operation of this innovative autonomous pod project."

Sander Peeters, CEO of 2 Getthere, said his organisation is excited to work alongside RCU and RATP Dev. "With our pod being part of a complete Autonomous Transit System (ATS) at AlUla, we will deliver a turn-key ultramodern mobility solution that will enhance the future of sustainable transport. It will reduce the use of personal cars and solve congestion, including parking issues. At the same time, it's fun and very comfortable to ride in our pod, with four times more conditioned and filtered airflow than in a normal diesel or e-bus."

Quiet and with no impact on the environment, the smart pod pilot scheme highlights RCU's commitment to preserving the natural beauty and heritage of AlUla while also providing the local community and visitors with a range of mobility choices, alongside e-scooters, cycle paths and electric public buses.

RCU's long-term plans include making autonomous pods available to residents and visitors to AlUla via an 'Uber' style service, with bookings made on a smartphone application fully connected

to RCU and AUla's smart cities ambitions. As a further innovation, RCU is co-developing digital paper touchscreens to be placed in each pod station that can call pods on demand.

There will be a two-week break in the pilot scheme to allow the pod to be shipped to Dubai where it will be maintained and displayed to industry leaders at the Transport Congress Exhibition (TCE) from 6-8 February.

ENDS

Note to editors:

It is always AlUla / not Al-Ula

About the Royal Commission for AlUla

The Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU) was established by royal decree in July 2017 to preserve and develop AlUla, a region of outstanding natural and cultural significance in north-west Saudi Arabia. RCU's long-term plan outlines a responsible, sustainable, and sensitive approach to urban and economic development, that preserves the area's natural and historic heritage, while establishing AlUla as a desirable location to live, work, and visit. This encompasses a broad range of initiatives across archaeology, tourism, culture, education, and the arts, reflecting a commitment to meeting the economic diversification, local community empowerment, and heritage preservation priorities of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 programme.

About RATP Dev

Founded in 2002, RATP Dev operates and maintains urban transportation systems in 14 countries on four continents (Saudi Arabia, France, Italy, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Belgium, the United States of America, Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, South Africa, Qatar, China and the Philippines). With more than 1.5 billion passengers traveling on its networks every year, RATP Dev demonstrates every day its extensive and renowned expertise in a wide range of mobility services, ranging from rail, regional express rail, streetcar, to bus, cable car and sightseeing activities. RATP Dev leverages in France, outside of Paris, and across international markets the technical expertise and experience of RATP Group, the leader in driverless metro and tramway operations and operator of the Paris network, one of the largest public transportation networks in the world.
In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, RATP Dev has a long-term strategic partnership with SAPTCO (Saudi Public Transport Company) on public transport projects in the Kingdom:

- the Riyadh Bus network awarded to their joint venture (Public Transportation Company (PTC) in 2014;
- flagship Riyadh Metro operations and maintenance contract for Lines 1 and 2 awarded to their joint venture Capital Metro Company (CAMCO).

By 2023, the RATP Dev will employ a total of 6,000 people in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

About ZF 2Getthere

2Getthere, a wholly owned subsidiary of ZF, provides complete Autonomous Systems (ATS), a turn-key ultramodern Mobility Solution with its 22-passenger electric autonomous shuttle that will enhance future sustainable transport.
ZF is a global technology company supplying systems for passenger cars, commercial vehicles and industrial technology, enabling the next generation of mobility. ZF allows vehicles to see, think and act. In the four technology domains of Vehicle Motion Control, Integrated Safety, Automated Driving, and Electric Mobility, ZF offers comprehensive product and software solutions for established vehicle manufacturers

and newly emerging transport and mobility service providers. ZF electrifies a wide range of vehicle types. With its products, the company contributes to reducing emissions, protecting the climate and enhancing safe mobility.