



Zenzic CAM Scale-Up winner Dromos says UK is currently best placed to become world leader in safe self-driving.

Share this article

World leader in self-driving: why Dromos is a UK success story

In this Cars of the Future exclusive, we talk self-driving, Zenzic and the Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro with Dr. Martin Dürr, co-founder of Dromos GmbH.

We first covered the innovative German autonomous network transit (ANT) specialist in November 2020, in our [interview with award-winning designer, Paul Priestman](#), co-founder of Dromos partner, PriestmanGoode.

“The system is important, not just the vehicle,” said Priestman back then. “The car we designed is half the width of a normal car, with space for two or three people. It is elegant public transport designed around the passenger – the first autonomous system to deliver mass transit, and the infrastructure belongs to the city.”

Dromos 2022

Fast forward two years and this exciting concept is well on the way to becoming reality, excitingly, first, right here in the UK. As Dr. Dürr explains...



Dr. Martin Dürr, self-driving expert and co-founder of Dromos GmbH

MD: "Dromos was founded by myself and Dr. Antje Völker. We worked together 25 years ago at McKinsey and have both been in the transportation space ever since. We always wondered why no one seems to tackle the 400-pound gorilla in the corner of the room: that classical mass transit systems are extremely expensive, outdated and widely disliked.

"Transport for London came close to being bankrupt recently, contemplated shutting down lines due to operating costs. Paris subsidises its system by around €8bn annually. Many cities around the world don't have that kind of money, so there is no public transport.

"Antje and I decided we had to do something. We agreed that any solution had to meet the needs of two key audiences. The first is, of course, the user. They want a quality of ride comparable to that of a taxi, but at the price of a bus ticket. Within quality of ride, privacy is an important topic, along with convenience and cleanliness.

The second key audience is the legal entity that contracts the building and running of the system – a city or national authority. Their current options, like railway or bus networks, have hardly changed in 150 years. The user experience often isn't great, and the costs are astronomical.

"Our challenge was to devise a transportation service suitable for the 21st century: on-demand, with privacy, CO2 neutral and deliverable without the need for subsidies. That's Dromos. We provide capacity at a much better cost per mile, with 50% lower construction costs, construction time and space consumption."

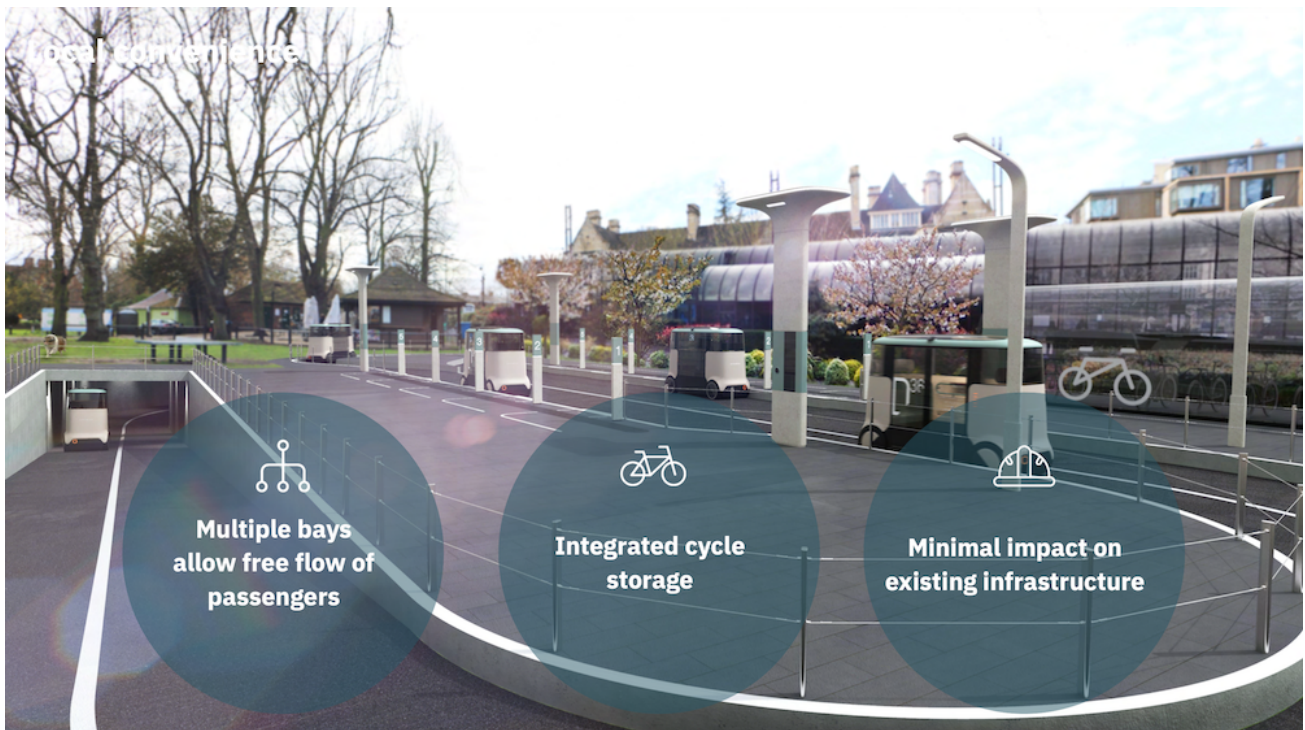


Dromos self-driving vehicle

NK: These megatrends often get conflated – are you saying that ridesharing is incompatible with self-driving?

MD: “Pretty much, yes. Autonomous ridesharing pilots have shown that passengers have very little – if any – desire to share a driverless vehicle with a stranger.

“We talked to people in Brazil about a system for Sao Paulo and they said rideshare was an absolute non-starter because of safety fears. Having cameras on board doesn’t really help, because the police will only be able to step in after a crime has been committed. Actually, people are willing to pay a premium not to share.”



Dromos Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro (CAM) proposal

NK: Tell us about your plans for the Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro

MD: “Okay, so we refined our proposal and began talking to cities around the world about tendering, including Auckland, Hong Kong and Cambridge in the UK. To be precise, the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority. They issued a tender a year ago for a comprehensive 160km-long system.

“We proposed a solution that’s better for the customer in terms of the user experience, and better for the city in terms of value – connecting villages to the centres, on-demand, at low cost, with no intermittent stopping. Passengers travel directly to their destination.

“Along with our UK partners – PriestmanGoode, Buro Happold and Rider Levett Bucknall – we’ve been selected to provide a more detailed submission. It’s a huge opportunity to embrace a new transport paradigm.”

Indeed, the Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, James Palmer, said: “The CAM will bring the world-leading, innovative and transformational public transport network that this region needs to continue to thrive.

“This challenge is a test to the very best brains in the market to help pioneer what the CAM will look like and how it can best be delivered. I’m clear that we want the CAM to

offer our region the kind of high-quality public transport normally reserved for the biggest cities.”



ZENZIC™

Zenzic CAM Scale-Up winners

NK: Then, earlier this month, you were chosen for the Zenzic CAM Scale-Up Programme

MD: “Yes, another great achievement. As a German, it is incredibly encouraging that the UK is currently best placed to become a world leader in the safe adoption of autonomous travel.

“Britain is more willing to experiment and has a clear vision of what needs to be done – The Zenzic Roadmap to 2030. You’ve got a world class testing environment – including the Smart Mobility Living Lab in London – the legal infrastructure is coming, and there’s support from government via the Centre for Connected and Autonomous Vehicles (CCAV). The package is complete, and ready to go; more so than the German government can offer today.

“As a result, following excellent discussions with the CCAV, we have shared data with them and moved a lot of our attention and our value chain to the UK. The environment here is best suited to us from a homologation point of view. It will enable us to build up to our first live installation right here in the UK.

“We were also able to invite several of our suppliers to do their testing in the UK, so that process is also on track now. We are in discussion with other authorities here – Manchester, the Ministry for Transport in Scotland and others. With a dedicated infrastructure, delivering safe and reliable transport is easy for us.”

For further info, visit the [Dromos website](#).

Share this article



Author: Neil Kennett

Neil is MD of Featurebank Ltd. He launched Carsofthefuture.co.uk in 2019.

[View all posts by Neil Kennett](#)



Neil Kennett / November 2, 2022 / #mobility, #Self-driving
