

D-Train to target US transit market

20 Mar 2018

USA: Next year could see the deployment of Vivarail D-Train diesel multiple-units in North America, under proposals being developed by Railroad Development Corp.

RDC Chairman Henry Posner III told *Railway Gazette* that the remanufactured London Underground trainsets offered a unique opportunity to test the market for urban rail services in North America for around the same cost as a feasibility study.

‘We believe that there are a lot of areas with potential for rail transit applications’, he said. Suggesting that a lack of market experience made it difficult for studies to assess accurately the potential demand, Posner felt that ‘having a demonstrator available would enable us to test the validity of a proposed transit project in the market’.

RDC is a shareholder in Vivarail, which acquired the former London Underground D78 metro trainsets for potential conversion to diesel or battery traction for use on regional and suburban routes. Vivarail recently concluded an agreement to supply three two-car Class 230 D-Trains to UK franchisee West Midlands Trains for the east-west Bletchley – Bedford line.

The D-Train would not meet all aspects of US main line safety regulation, particularly the crashworthiness requirements, and many railroads remain concerned about the potential insurance liability of passenger operations. However, Posner said the regulatory risk was ‘relatively low’, thanks to an ‘established pattern of diesel light rail’ using temporal separation between freight and passenger operations. This would allow the launch of a ‘pop-up’ transit service on existing low-density freight infrastructure at short notice and relatively low cost.

Citing production lead times at Vivarail’s Long Marston facility, Posner said it would be about a year until two D-Train demonstrators were ready for the US market, by which time the company hoped to have identified one or more locations for the initial trials. He reported that a number of communities had responded positively to the proposal, although none had yet been firmed up.

‘We have always regarded our activities in Europe as a two-way street’, said Posner. ‘As well as taking our freight experience into Europe, we can import fresh ideas into North America.’



<http://www.railwaygazette.com/news/traction-rolling-stock/single-view/view/d-train-to-target-us-transit-market.html>