

# NASA News

National Aeronautics and  
Space Administration

**Ames Research Center**  
Moffett Field, California 94035-1000



Ruth Dasso Marlaire  
Ames Research Center, Moffett Field, Calif.  
650.604.4709  
ruth.marlaire@nasa.gov

Sep. 2, 2009

**RELEASE: 09-112AR**

## **NASA PARTNERS TO REVOLUTIONIZE PERSONAL TRANSPORTATION**

MOFFETT FIELD, Calif. -- The morning commute may never be the same.

NASA officials have signed an agreement with Unimodal Systems, LLC to collaborate on the use of NASA-developed control software and human factors techniques to evaluate acceleration, jerk and vibration of an advanced transportation vehicle system. The control software was originally designed to control robots and other applications. The collaboration will help NASA better understand the softwares usefulness, human performance and safety.

This collaborative effort is anticipated to help NASA with its aeronautics and space activities, while Unimodal gets to develop the next generation high-speed transportation system, said Jeffery Smith, deputy chief of the Entrepreneurial Initiatives Division at NASA Ames Research Center, Moffett Field, Calif. NASA will receive valuable feedback from our systems software usage.

Per the agreement, Unimodal will contribute its SkyTran vehicle, currently located at NASA Research Park, and its advanced transportation technology; NASA will provide its Plan Execution Interchange Language (PLEXIL) and Universal Executive (UE) software to control the vehicle.

In the future, SkyTran will use small vehicles running on elevated, magnetically levitated (maglev) guideways, which distinguishes it from other railed systems. The vehicles are lightweight, personal compartments that can transport up to three passengers. Travelers board the pod-like vehicles and type their destinations into a small computer. Using intelligent control system software, SkyTran will run non-stop point-to-point service without interrupting the flow of traffic.

These vehicles will eventually travel up to 150 mph and move 14,000 people per hour, both locally and regionally. SkyTran will serve as a feeder system to other transit systems, such as BART and high-speed rail.

- more -

"SkyTrans personal rapid transit has generated serious interest with local, regional and state transportation leaders who are considering funding the building of the Unimodal maglev PRT system in the NASA Research Park, said Michael Marlaire, director of NASA Research Park at Ames. This construction and new R&D partnership may usher a new green technology maglev PRT system into Silicon Valley."

Were working with NASA and aerospace engineers to ensure aerospace-level standards that exceed the safety records of current transportation systems, explained Christopher Perkins, chief executive officer of Unimodal Systems, LLC, based in NASA Research Park.

Both organizations will mutually benefit. NASA will receive feedback on its softwares usefulness in ground-based propulsion systems, while Unimodal will develop a transportation system designed to eliminate traffic congestion, mitigate greenhouse gases and reduce dependence on foreign oil.

For cities across the nation, SkyTran will create greentech jobs and launch a new era of public-private partnerships that will make public transit affordable to install, and profitable to operate," said Perkins.

For more information about Unimodal SkyTran, visit:

<http://www.unimodal.com/>

For more information about NASA's Innovative Partnerships Program, and NASA technology infusion activities, visit:

<http://ipp.nasa.gov>

-end-

To receive Ames news releases, send an e-mail with the word "subscribe" in the subject line to: [ames-releases-request@lists.arc.nasa.gov](mailto:ames-releases-request@lists.arc.nasa.gov). To unsubscribe, send an e-mail to the same address with "unsubscribe" in the subject line. Also, the NASA Ames News homepage at URL, <http://www.nasa.gov/centers/ames/news/index.html> includes news releases and JPEG images in AP Leaf Desk format minus embedded captions.