



Dec 10, 2015 | DEARBORN, Mich.

Ford Dynamic Shuttle Service Moves from Experiment to Pilot, Providing Point-to-Point Shuttle Rides for Employees

- Ford is piloting a Dynamic Shuttle service as part of the Ford Smart Mobility plan – offering employees on-demand ride sharing around its Dearborn, Michigan, campus, applying insights from the initial phase of experimentation and consumer research
- Ford applied customer insights from different-sized cities around the world, developing software to map the quickest routes and customized Ford Transits featuring complimentary Wi-Fi, USB charging capability and ample personal storage space
- Ford's technology team created Dynamic Shuttle in-house, including the algorithm that makes the technical platform possible; lessons could help diminish traffic congestion while making public transit more convenient and accessible

DEARBORN, Mich., Dec. 10, 2015 – Ford is piloting an on-demand Dynamic Shuttle service for its Dearborn, Michigan, employees this month, providing a new mobility solution featuring smart ride-hailing technology with premium customized shuttles, applying insights from earlier experiments and research with global urban commuters.

Dynamic Shuttle – a Ford Smart Mobility experiment announced in January – supports the company's broader effort to change the way the world moves. Ford Smart Mobility is the company's plan to take connectivity, mobility, autonomous vehicles, the customer experience, and data and analytics to the next level.

Providing a platform to test new ideas, the pilot ultimately could help Ford develop mobility solutions to improve the lives of people in cities struggling with traffic gridlock and few public transit options.

“Dynamic Shuttle is a major step forward on Ford’s mobility journey, which is designed to lead the company to develop truly innovative and disruptive ideas for diminishing traffic congestion and making public transit more convenient and accessible,” said Ken Washington, vice president, Ford Research and Advanced Engineering.

The company is piloting Dynamic Shuttle with four Ford Transit vehicles. The program is expected to expand to more shuttle vehicles in Dearborn – potentially increasing ridership as Ford tests the performance of the software and gathers fleet data.

To see the Dynamic Shuttle in action [click here](#).

Convenient, efficient shuttling

The Ford shuttle service will begin processing customer ride requests on the new platform as it gradually migrates from its dispatch-based platform. A mobile-friendly Web portal and smartphone application will be available to riders next quarter.

The convenience of Ford’s Dynamic Shuttle will allow people to summon point-to-point rides on-demand.

Once a mobile-based ride request is made, the Ford-developed software – including the algorithm that drives the platform’s technical capabilities – immediately determines the shuttle best suited to address the request without extending the travel time of riders already aboard.

It then sends the rider an offer detailing proposed pick-up time and maximum duration of the trip, which the requester can accept or decline. If accepted, the request is dispatched to the shuttle driver’s navigation interface, along with the most efficient route to complete the requests of all riders in the timeliest manner.

Making a premium shuttle

In developing the software, Ford’s technology team also crafted the ideal shuttle vehicle.

Each Ford Transit shuttle has been adapted to carry six to eight passengers. Customer findings shaped the best vehicle height for easy on-boarding and off-boarding, as well as rider-requested amenities including complimentary Wi-Fi, USB charging ports for each seat and personal storage space.

“The Dynamic Shuttle solution could fill the gap between a taxi service and public busing in cities around the globe,” said Erica Klampfl, global mobility solutions manager, Ford Research and Advanced Engineering. “It also could offer a valuable service in emerging economies, where growth is outstripping development of the public transport infrastructure.”

Research teams surveyed people in various cities around the world to understand how consumer attitudes and needs vary from region to region. In the United States and United Kingdom, this included conducting research in different-sized cities – Atlanta, New York, Edinburgh and London. They also took into account growing national economies, studying Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo in Brazil, along with Chennai and Mumbai in India.

“This effort is really about creating a service that makes people feel comfortable sharing space with a small number of strangers,” said John Abernethy, Dynamic Shuttle project lead for advanced product at Ford’s London location. “One of the important things we learned is about getting the right amount of personal space. What people feel comfortable with varies from city to city – and this has to be balanced with the impact on the cost of the service.”

Researchers found that many people requesting pick-up at their residence were willing to walk a short distance to a neutral location – both to make the service more efficient for others and to afford greater privacy for themselves.

The right mix of people and expertise

The concept sounds simple enough. But to operate seamlessly, Dynamic Shuttle requires global collaboration among Ford teams – groups studying people’s commuting behaviors, developing software and designing vehicles to craft the ultimate ride-sharing experience.

“This shows how Ford is using its product knowledge and adding to the mobility service experience through software,” said Thomas Miller, mobility experiment lead on the Dynamic Shuttle in Dearborn. “With all pieces working together, Dynamic Shuttle delivers a unique experience for the customer and offers a new alternative in convenient commuting.”

Initially available exclusively for Ford’s Dearborn campus, Dynamic Shuttle benefits could one day extend to other locations and to more applications, including delivery services, emergency medical transportation and beyond.

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