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eTaxi Austria, project based on automated charging of EVs goes into operation

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The operational start of the new electric taxi stands lays the cornerstone for the roll-out of the eTaxi Austria project, which will point the way for the entire taxi industry. The first taxi stands in Austria equipped with Matrix Charging went into operation on Vorgartenstrasse in Vienna and are in the process of implementation at Schillerplatz in Graz.

To lower emissions and further improve quality of life in the city, Vienna and Graz will be increasingly shifting to electric taxis. A total of eight taxi stands and 56 vehicles in Vienna as well as two stands and ten vehicles in Graz are being upgraded by car service stations from Volkswagen and Hyundai with the Matrix Charging technology, developed by the Austrian technology company Easelink.

Instead of plugging an electric car into the charging station with a cable, these vehicles equipped with a connector on the underbody that can be connected to a charging pad at the taxi stand with the push of a button. Thanks to automated charging directly at the taxi stands, the electric taxis are charged automatically, without the need to leave the vehicle or visit a dedicated charging station – an essential factor for ensuring smooth electric taxi operations.

The first taxi stands have now been equipped with the technology, laying the cornerstone for roll-out of the project. The electric taxi drivers can make use of this infrastructure with two of the most modern electric vehicle models, the VW ID.4 and the Hyundai IONIQ 5. The eTaxi Austria project will run until the start of 2025.

Efficiency, robustness, and the cost factor were the decisive factors by the cities of Vienna and Graz in the technology decision for Matrix Charging. The conductive energy transfer has an efficiency of 99 % and the technology has significantly lower manufacturing costs than inductive charging systems.

General Secretary Herbert Kasser of the Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology (BMK), said: "We are very pleased to have worked alongside Vienna and Graz over the course of many years on converting the taxi fleets. Since 2013, the BMK has provided funding by means of various programs that has helped lay important groundwork in Vienna and Graz. This makes it all the more gratifying to witness this project based on innovative charging technology developed in Austria successfully positioning climate protection as an opportunity for the local economy."

Hermann Stockinger, Founder & General Manager of Easelink, said: "The eTaxi Austria project utilising Matrix Charging technology in the cities of Vienna and Graz is the world's largest e-mobility project focused on automated charging. Together with over 30 partners, we are not only overcoming the central hurdle to barrier-free charging infrastructure in the urban environment, we are also demonstrating international technology leadership with this pioneering project."

Peter Hanke, Vienna City Councilor for Finance and the Economy, said: "Taxis are an important element of the transportation landscape in Vienna. With eTaxi Austria, we are playing a part in the transition to an electric taxi fleet in Vienna, which will benefit the entire city and its residents. The unobtrusive charging pads embedded in the ground pose no barriers to movement and simultaneously point the way towards the electrification of Vienna's taxi fleets."

As of 2025, only emission-free vehicles will be authorised for taxi operations in Austria. The Austrian Chamber of Commerce and Industry wishes to support the taxi operators in managing this transition and sees potential for other industries as well. "The taxi industry in Vienna actively engages in innovative projects and is aware of its responsibility in connection with climate protection. Automated charging directly at the taxi stand will allow taxi drivers to conveniently charge their electric vehicles while waiting. In this way, the business sector once again demonstrates that innovation is the right path to greater climate protection," said Walter Ruck, President of the Vienna Economic Chamber.

In the respective cities, Wien Energie & Energie Graz are the installer and operator of the charging infrastructure and will be supplying 100% green electricity for charging the electric taxis. The green electricity can be distributed among the vehicles based on actual demand by means of the intelligent load management system. A single taxi can be charged with up to 11 kW of alternating current (AC).

In addition to increasing the robustness of the charging pads for use in public spaces, electronic switch cabinet components have been integrated into the new pad generation. This means that the taxi stands get by entirely without above-ground switch cabinets or columns. The eTaxi Austria project makes use of the newest generation of the Matrix Charging technology, which was developed in cooperation with Austrian partners and with a high level of value creation in Austria.

In addition to the project consortium, consisting of the Economic Chambers of Vienna and Styria, Wien Energie and Energie Graz, Easelink, Grazer Energieagentur, Taxi 40100 and Taxi 31300 as well as vibe moves you, Quintessenz and tbw research as research director, many other Austrian partners contributed to making this project a reality. The cities of Vienna and Graz, Taxi 878, the ÖAMTC as well as Hyundai and Porsche Inter Auto are supporting the project. The implementation partners for the Matrix Charging technology also include Bossard Austria, Becom, Hug Technik & Sicherheit, Faigle Industrieplast, Löscher Elektronik, Iskra, Polytec Holding, Zern and Zettler electronics.

The project is being funded by the Climate and Energy Fund as part of the "Zero Emission Mobility Implementation" programme. It will last until the start of 2025 and should serve as the basis for further mobility transformations. The city of Graz is additionally supporting the project implementation in Graz.

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