

Translation: *Train 150* p. 24.

Note: "[Train 150](#)" is an exhibition celebrating 150 years of trains in Sweden. It was presented Sept. 7-10, 2006, in Gavle, Sweden. Train 150 is organized by the **Swedish Railway Museum** and **Banverket** (Swedish Railway Administration)

SkyCab has a bright future, says the market

Perhaps George Orwell's futuristic novel 1984 is how we first imagine visions of people traveling comfortably through urban environments – high above ground. Maybe it is in a science fiction film of a later date.

Sweden can become the first in the world to fully realize the vision, but we are not really yet there.

However, in Hofors work is currently developing the world's first test track for PRT tracktaxis.

It is happening in a collaboration between SkyCab and the municipality, and this partnership is already doing new work through about 20 companies in the region that are performing some role in the project. And that will become many.

"SkyCab has something that is the only one I know of. We have asked the market how they'll travel in the future and we are now designing SkyCab in Hofors following land use requirements," says Åke Åredal, the person behind SkyCab.

How he ended up in this creative, provocative and imaginative project is another story. Ask him to tell it and he does so, calm and businesslike without exaggeration. He is careful to put things realistically, despite the project's elevation, in both senses. Operating an innovative project like SkyCab, with driverless vehicles, credibility is more important than anything.

SkyCab in Hofors is backed by government, industry, Banverket [Swedish Railway Administration], Research-Sweden (Gävle University and Dalarna University), environmentalists, disability groups, a couple of county administration boards, and the EU. They have all pooled knowledge, funding and good planning. Banverket sees SkyCab as a future complement to trains. And the key to the future is in Hofors. SkyCab unveiled there in February this year Sweden's first test track for tracktaxis (PRT), and soon a study of building an initial route between the railway station and the community.

Hofors venture

Why Hofors?

"Yes, also Hofors municipality has a future vision, dares to think new, and knows the value of well-functioning transportation," said Åredal.

Moreover is the Hofors climate really representative of northern climates, according to a student from Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute. The varied weather and especially winter conditions needs test activity.

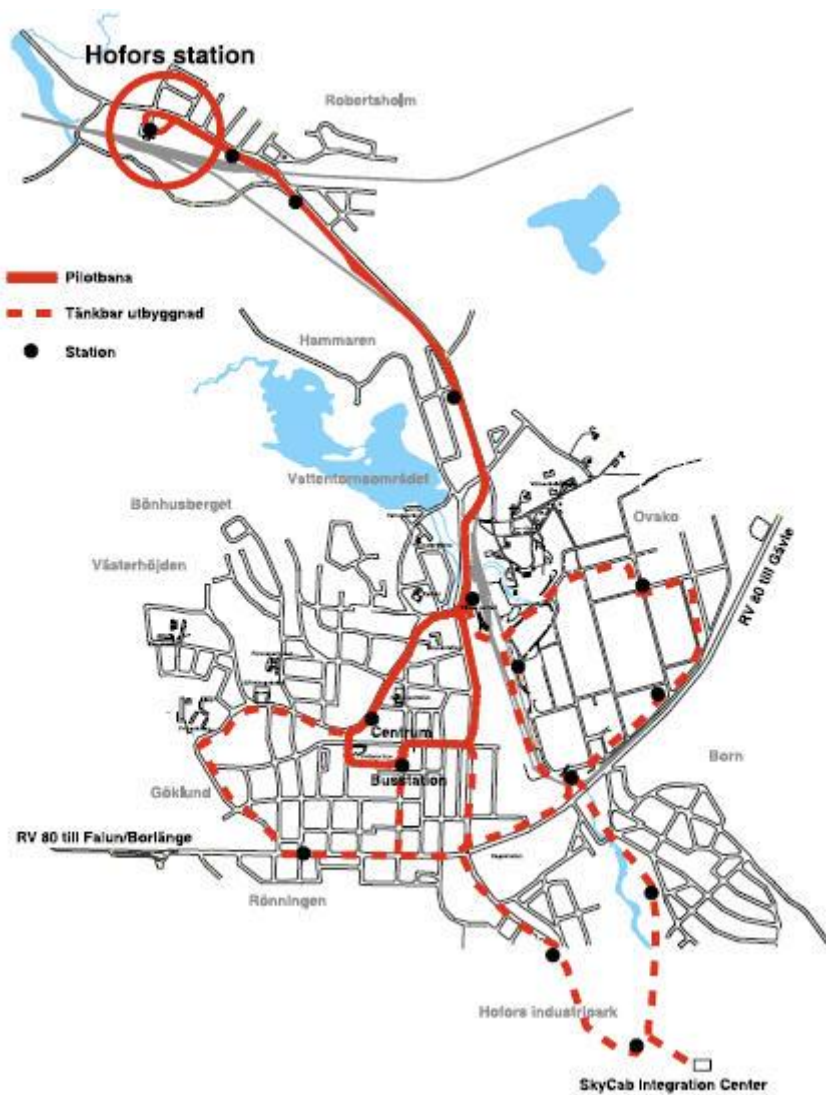
"When we were contacted by Hofors the choice was easy. And choice became still easier when they saw the industrial area in Hofors was the place where we will build the test track.

This, Sweden's first test track for tracktaxi launched in February this year in presence of among Assistant County Executive Christine Eirefelt.

"Our work continues on the SkyCab test track in Hofors," says Åredal. "It is a big investment. Sweden, and above all Hofors, will have a world attraction."

Train 150 is September 7-10, displaying SkyCab in Hofors at the Gävle Railways Maintenance Yard, walking distance from the Sweden Railway Museum.

"It is a giant chance for us to show SkyCab to all who are interested in the railway industry," Åredal said.



This is the planned SkyCab routing in Hofors when the initial route is defined.

Giddy perspective, for little money

Imagine yourself that you have been in Stockholm in one service year only. Your walk to the train at Central Station in Gävle is every bit as ordinary. But instead of also going out to Central Square and attempting to hail a cab, you take an escalator up to SkyCab - boarding different from bus terminals. Waiting are several empty SkyCab vehicles. You walk into a vehicle, punch-in your destination, and the vehicle departs instantly.

Traveling at 40 kilometers per hour four meters above ground, and you are seated comfortably and safely. 40 is no dizzy speed, but if you are sitting with stopwatch in hand you could tell that is really going very quickly, compared to going home in your own car with all the stopping for red lights at intersections. And you are also contributing to a better environment through using a vehicle that doesn't emit carbon dioxide into the air and that is very energy efficient.

Yes, so it will be sometime in the future if the city of Gävle's venture goes forward. How big an investment is the question determining if the guideway network spreads. Åke Åredal of SkyCab says it is a relatively cheap investment.

"\$8.1 million per kilometer, compared to \$16 million for trolleys and \$68 million for motorways."

But only if a full test track and a initial system for SkyCab in Hofors becomes clear. The initial system will, according to a new study, go from Hofors station into the community.

Several other interests gave shown interest in SkyCab, among them large cities Linköping and Malmö. A concept study for Arlanda and Märsta, comprises 400 vehicles and 40 stations with 40 kilometers of guideway.

A system for the Vetenskapssta science campus with Stockholm university, the Royal Institute of Technology, the School of Economics, and the Karolinska Institute has also been studied.

Banverket sees excellent potential calling for further work leading to SkyCab growth, possibly even *upptagning* area for rail stations. Those curious about SkyCab shouldn't miss this chance to see Train 150 during the anniversary days, 7-10 September. There will be an operating model of a vehicle.

