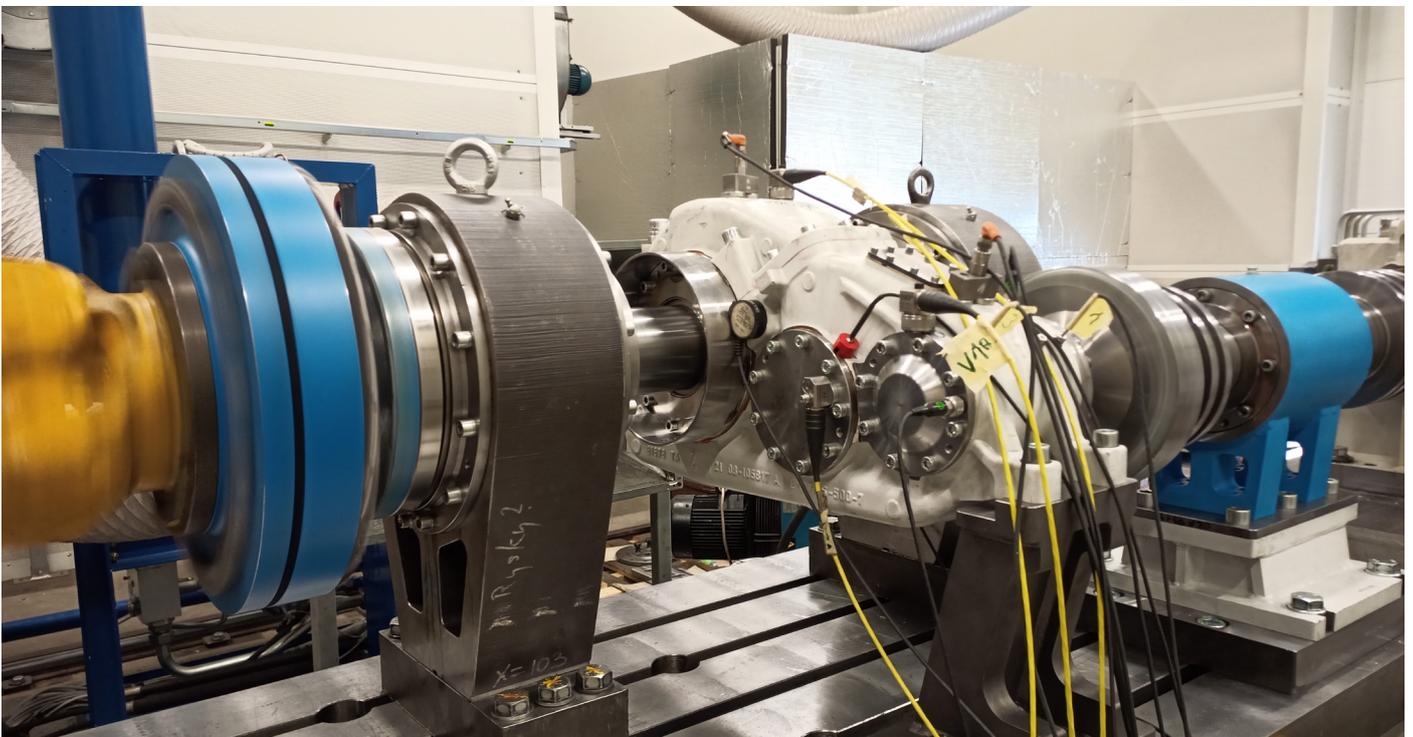


Wikov

American Trams Get Their Heart from the Czech Republic



Although the popularity of trams in the United States is far below the level of their popularity on the old continent, tram lines still enjoy popularity in several American cities.

At present, more than two thirds of gearboxes installed in trams on new lines in the USA were manufactured by the Czech producer Wikov.

PCC as Salvation

“Our role in the renaissance of American tram transport is key. And it is also worth mentioning how much the USA and the Czech Republic are connected in this way,” says Martin Sychrovský, Marketing Director of Wikov, at the beginning of the historical talk. So let’s go back to the period after the First World War, when the rapid development of motoring in the USA began to

seriously threaten tram transport.

“Back then, only small two-axle trams were produced, which did not have a chance to succeed economically compared to cars and buses. It was necessary to come up with a new concept – a modern tram design with a large passenger capacity and user comfort and which wouldn’t be forced out of the streets of big cities easily,” says Sychrovský, illustrating the situation.

The new concept was called the PCC (President's Conference Committee).

The Miracle Did Not Happen, But...

In the autumn of 1936, the first PCC trams rolled out on the streets of New York. They featured rotating, two-axle chassis guaranteeing quieter and smoother operation as well as other innovations. Each axle had its own traction motor, with the axes of the motors being perpendicular to the axles. In addition, the trams' speed was controlled by a multistage resistor, the so-called accelerator.

"However, the miracle didn't happen. In the years 1936–1952, only about 5,000 units of trams of the PCC concept were produced in the USA. But... the Americans started selling licences for the PCC concept," Sychrovský explains.

Licence for Tatra Smíchov

In 1948, the Czechoslovak company Tatra Smíchov signed a licensing agreement on co-operation in the production of PCC-type trams with the Americans. In 1951, the first T1 tram using PCC elements was manufactured. The T2 car was later added to the product line. The most successful was the T3 tram, which came on the market in 1962. Incredibly almost 14,000 units were made, and entry into the Guinness Book of Records soon came in 1988.

While trams were very successful in our country, in the USA the trend was the opposite. It wasn't until 2001 that Portland built a completely new tram network



on the west coast of the USA and equipped it with low-floor Škoda Elektra 10T trams from the Czech Republic!

that we will also play a leading role in other American cities that plan to open new tram lines," Mr Sychrovský concludes.

The Circle Is Closed

Two years later, Tacoma (Inekon Trio 12 trams), Salt Lake City, Tucson, Atlanta, Dallas, Charlotte, Washington D.C., Kansas City, Cincinnati, Detroit, Milwaukee, Oklahoma City and Tempe decided to take the same step. *"Ten of these cities have trams with the Czech footprint concept. This closes the proverbial circle," states the marketing director.* More than 60 percent of trams on newly built lines in the United States use Wikov gearboxes. *"Compared to the world, the North American tram market is still rather marginal, but Wikov doesn't have to care. We believe*

Wikov MGI a.s. – manufacturing facility

Zbečník 356
549 31 Hronov
Czech Republic

+420 491 488 420

mgi@wikov.com





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