Article Side

Train or Bus? Thatâ€™s a HY-RAIL by James Blee

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A hy-rail or hi-rail, derived by combining the terms â€˜highwayâ€™ and â€˜railâ€™ is basically a self-prope rubber-tired road vehicle modified by the addition of a set of flanged wheels of steel which helps it to run even on railway tracks. At a time, only a single set of wheels is used and the swapping of wheels is controlled by some hydraulic or pneumatic system.

These vehicles are advantageous as they can play a dual role and run with ease on relatively friction-free tracks than just on roads like other routine road vehicles.

Types of Hy-Rail Vehicles:

Various types of road-rail vehicles can be spotted which include the following:

â€¢ Road Rail Buses: These are a subset of Guided Buses. A road rail bus is a passenger carrying vehicle capable of running both on road as well as tracks.

â€¢ Road Transferable Locomotive (RTL): These are locomotives which can run both on railways as well as roadways and can serve as truck prime movers.

â€¢ Maintenance Road Rail Vehicles: Hy-rail vehicles come in very handy and convenient for track maintenance and for shunting wagons due to their flexibility to swap between the tracks and the roads.

Safety Issues:

hy-rail vehicles have been involved in many-an-accident since its inception in the 1930s. Various factors have lead to hy-rail derailments including wheel failure, damaged tires, improper system for supporting wheels, over-loading, etc.

These mishaps even include fatal ones which have caused loss of lives. Maintenance and safety of hy-rail vehicles has been a matter of ongoing discussion. Load distribution in a road rail vehicle needs to be given a glance in order to maximize safety.

Makers of Road Rail Vehicles:

The pioneer of hy-rail vehicles in the US was Evans Auto-Railer in 1930s but soon after the World War II; the reigns of the hy-rail factory were taken over by Fairmont.

Modern makers of hy-rail in the U.S. include Herzog Contracting Corp., Harsco Rail, Mitchell Rail Gear etc.

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