

Italian Research Center to Test Boeing Network Systems Technology for Possible Automotive Applications

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Boeing [NYSE: BA] and Centro Ricerche Fiat (CRF), the Italian research-and-development center, today announced an agreement to evaluate Boeing's patented IntelliBus Network Systems technology for possible automotive applications.

The sophisticated IntelliBus technology, originally developed by Boeing for advanced military aircraft, has potential for greatly reducing electronic wiring, connectors and control units within automobiles, while simultaneously increasing functionality, reliability and performance.

CRF plans to design, install and evaluate a prototype IntelliBus network on a Fiat automobile by mid-2004. Enhanced IntelliBus-based systems, which enable efficient in-vehicle networking of multi-media and telematic electronic devices, could possibly be installed on some Fiat automobiles by 2008.

"We're very excited to be able to work so closely with CRF, which is known for enhancing the competitiveness of its customers through the transfer of innovative technologies at competitive prices," said Rob Fosheim, Boeing IntelliBus Network Systems program manager.

"IntelliBus technology has the potential for becoming a standard across multiple industries," Fosheim said. "We're particularly intrigued by the potential of IntelliBus in the automotive industry where about 30 percent of the cost of a typical car is tied up in electronics."

IntelliBus involves a high bandwidth "bus" architecture that enables in-vehicle networking of automotive electronic devices including multi-media devices such as AM/FM radios, DVD and CD changers/players, audio amplifiers, and LCD displays, and telematic devices such as navigation systems and cellular phones. The common bus provides significant reductions in wiring, weight, system complexity and cost. In addition, the simplicity of the bus architecture reduces system design and installation time, and simplifies maintenance.

Centro Ricerche Fiat, located in Orbassano, near Turin in northwest Italy, was founded in 1976 as an engineering center devoted to providing R&D services to the Fiat group of companies. Today, it is an established center-of-excellence for vehicle-related technologies with a high profile in Europe for promoting and performing collaborative research and innovation.

Established and nurtured through Boeing's Chairman's Innovation Initiative (CII), which provides Boeing employees an opportunity to develop new business ideas from company developed technologies and processes, IntelliBus Network Systems has application within the aerospace/defense, industrial automation, marine transportation, and medical industries, as well as the automotive industry.

Through CII and other avenues, Boeing Ventures, headquartered in Seattle, Wash., encourages innovators inside Boeing to develop new business-building ideas and provides the support structure to help take them from concept to reality. The ideas typically reflect "next-square" opportunities, such as applying existing technologies to new markets or new technologies to existing markets. If promising, as in the case of IntelliBus Network Systems, the internal ventures are given seed funding, with the possibility of creating new companies and partnerships in conjunction with venture capitalists and industry partners.

Since CII's inception in September 2000, it has received more than 800 concepts from Boeing employees. Several of these concepts are positioned to be "spun-out" as separate business ventures. Others have been "spun-in" to Boeing business units, where they are creating value for their customers. Several more are providing additional value through successful licensing transactions.

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