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Shortline company Watco (Texas, USA) is set to join the ranks of those exploring battery-electric locomotive technology. In a significant move towards sustainable rail transport, Watco has partnered with Medha, an India-based manufacturer of locomotives and rail-related electronics, to convert two end-cab switchers into battery-electric units.

The locomotives, models SW1200 and SW1500, had been out of service for repairs. This conversion project is funded by a Texas Emissions Reductions Plan grant, with Medha supplying key components and Watco personnel handling the assembly. Keith Testerman, Watco's vice president and chief mechanical officer, highlighted the anticipated benefits: a 30% reduction in annual maintenance expenses, a 60% decrease in fuel costs, and a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 19 metric tons annually.

The battery-electric locomotives are expected to operate for up to 12 hours before requiring an 8 to 10-hour recharge. Once completed later this year, these units will be deployed at Watco's Greens Port facility on the Houston Ship Canal.

Watco's collaboration with Medha began with a control-systems upgrade for some of its GP35 locomotives. Following a successful trial, the program has now upgraded 25 locomotives, paving the way for this new venture into battery-electric technology.

This partnership marks a significant step towards sustainable rail transport, showcasing the potential of battery-electric technology in reducing operational costs and environmental impact. Medha is proud to contribute to this innovative project, reinforcing its commitment to advancing green technology in the rail industry.



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