



Fiat's local general manager. "At the same time it meets the demand for a gearbox that looks after the gear changing, reducing stress, boosting safety and lifting comfort and convenience.

The six-speed MTA gearbox has been designed from the ground up to be an automated or robotized manual gearbox with all its systems fully integrated into a gearbox that has been designed to maximize the advantages of robotization.

While it is primarily conceived to be used as an automatic transmission it can also be used as a manual gearbox if the driver so desires.

In manual mode the driver can choose the ratio using the gear lever on the dash, but without having to use a clutch pedal or worrying about stalling or being in the wrong gear.

But in automatic it can be driven like any automatic transmission simply by selecting 'drive' and leaving it there. The engine and



transmission will work together to determine the best gear for any driving situation.

Compared to a traditional automatic gearbox, Fiat claims the MTA gearbox is lighter, more economical, cleaner, and requires less maintenance.

Prices and specifications for the new MTA gearbox versions of the Fiat Ducato will be announced in the first quarter of 2008.

Automatic Upgrade For Ducato

Fiat will add an automatic choice to its Ducato range in 2008 when it will offer buyers an automated manual shift gearbox in addition to a manual 'box' for the first time.

The Italian brand has been left in the wake of its rivals who have all had self-shifting transmissions of one sort or another for at least a couple of years.

Some have preferred traditional automatic transmissions, but a growing number have opted for automated manual shift gearboxes, as Fiat is now doing.

They're particularly attractive in vans and light trucks that are often driven by inexperienced or unskilled drivers, some of whom have never driven a vehicle with a manual gearbox.

The automated manual gearbox is, in effect, a normal manual gearbox with additional hardware to operate the clutch and make the shift without the driver playing any part in the process.

With some clever electronics the transmission operation can be linked to the engine to achieve optimum performance and fuel economy.

And without the abuse an unskilled driver can give a manual gearbox and clutch, the life of the driveline can be significantly lengthened.

While the problem of unskilled drivers can be a concern for local councils and small businesses it's a particular problem for rental companies who rent out light trucks, and in some cases motorhome to holiday makers.

Fiat's Ducato is one of the favoured models for motorhome makers, both here and in Europe, which has made the lack of an automated shift gearbox a glaring omission.

That's now been addressed with the announcement that Fiat will have an automated manual shift gearbox available locally in the first quarter of 2008.

The MTA gearbox was recently unveiled in Europe at the Dusseldorf Caravan Show, underlining the importance of the motorhome market to the company.

"With the MTA gearbox Fiat recognizes the requirement for manual gearbox levels of performance and economy to be maintained, either because the vehicle is being used as part of a business or driven over long distances as a motor home," says Chris Swann,



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