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Cover photo:
The Alexander Dennis
Virtual Electric bus,
about to go into service
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UK Bus Supplement 2016

“The UK Bus Summit is the ideal forum to discuss how best we can achieve growth”



Great opportunities ahead for the industry

Andrew Jones, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport

The *Transport Times* UK Bus Summit may only be in its second year, but it is already established as a key event in the transport calendar – and one the Department for Transport is delighted to support.

The bus industry today is experiencing sustained growth. 87 million more passenger journeys were taken on buses in England during the 12 months to September 2014 than the previous year. And that trend was seen around the country, not just in London.

What was the reason for the upturn? Well, certainly a rapidly improving UK economy and record numbers of people in employment played a big part. But the industry itself should be congratulated for improving services – particularly in areas where operators and

local authorities are working together to attract passengers.

In Sheffield, for example, where a strong partnership has introduced co-ordinated timetables, a simpler network, and improved ticketing. Or in York, which has seen an 11% growth in patronage, and where passenger satisfaction is higher than any other surveyed authority in England.

The government will continue to support the industry through schemes like BSOG and Better Bus Areas. And soon we will be introducing the Buses Bill, which will provide powers for local transport authorities to franchise their local bus services subject to agreement from Government, and provide access to new partnership powers.

The future success of bus services in each area will depend

on how well authorities, local enterprise partnerships and operators adapt to local conditions. Not every place will adopt the same strategy. It is more about what works best for each market, whether that's partnerships, a franchising approach, or – where bus services are already working well – the status quo.

I see this as a great opportunity for the bus industry. You already provide a vitally important service for millions of passengers a day. But we want you to grow further, as our economy recovers, as demand for travel increases, and as we seek more sustainable travel solutions, particularly in our cities.

The UK Bus Summit on 11 February is the ideal forum to discuss how best we can achieve this growth. So I look forward to seeing you there.



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The UK Bus Summit 2016

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With high expectations surrounding the Buses Bill, the session on the future of the UK bus market promises to be a forum for a wide range of views, with speakers both from operators and transport authorities. By David Fowler



Driving buses forward

At Arriva we're totally committed to innovating and investing to deliver the best possible service for our customers. The Arriva Bus app, for instance, has been downloaded by over 800,000 passengers, putting real time bus locations and status right in their hands. Our premium Sapphire service has driven passenger growth, as well as offering enhanced comfort and technology.

We're also working closely with local authorities and PTEs to gain additional growth via first class infrastructure, investment in new vehicles and providing a better journey experience. To reduce congestion and meet real environmental challenges, society needs buses to be a genuinely attractive alternative. We're committed to making that happen.

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The UK Bus Summit 2016

This supplement is published to coincide with the UK Bus Summit 2016, which is being held on 11 February at the QEII Conference Centre, Broad Sanctuary, Westminster, London SW1P 3EE

The second annual Bus Summit is once again supported by the Department for Transport. It aims to bring together operators, local authorities and bus manufacturers, to encourage the industry to work together to stimulate patronage growth and to raise awareness of the role the bus can play in stimulating the economy, getting people to work, reducing emissions, providing access for the elderly and tackling inequality.

The conference agenda is led by the keynote speaker, transport minister Andrew Jones, and is divided into four sessions: Learning Lessons from Across the UK; Maximising the Potential of the Bus; the Bus of the Future; and the Future of the Bus Market.

Profiles of the conference speakers appear on the next three pages.

Conference Agenda

08:00 **Registration & Exhibition opens**

09:00 – 09:30 **Keynote Address**

- Andrew Jones MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport

09:30 – 10:45 **Session 1: Learning lessons from across the UK**

- Michelle McIlveen MLA, Minister for Regional Development, Northern Ireland
- George Ferguson CBE, Mayor of Bristol
- David Brown, Chief Executive, Transport for the North
- Leon Daniels, Managing Director, Surface Transport, Transport for London

10:45 – 11:15 *Refreshment break*

11:15 – 12:30 **Session 2: Maximising the potential of the bus**

- Anthony Smith, Chief Executive, Transport Focus
- Hilary Chipping, Acting Chief Executive, South East Midlands LEP
- Kevin O'Connor, Managing Director - UK Buses, Arriva
- Claire Haigh, Chief Executive, Greener Journeys

12:30 – 13:30 *Lunch*

13:30 – 14:45 **Session 3: The bus of the future – from workhorse to thoroughbred**

- Andy Eastlake, Managing Director, LowCVP
- Giles Fearnley, Managing Director, First Bus
- Ken Scott, Group Engineering Director, Alexander Dennis
- Alastair Munro, Engineering Director, Optare

14:45 – 15:15 *Refreshment break*

15:15 – 16:45 **Session 4: The future of the bus market**

- Martin Griffiths, Chief Executive, Stagecoach
- Dr Jon Lamonte, Chief Executive, Transport for Greater Manchester
- David Brown, Chief Executive, Go-Ahead
- Toby Hughes, Managing Director, Transport Operations, North East Combined Authority
- Neill Birch, Director – Public Transport Operations, Systra
- Jeff Counsell, Managing Director, Trentbarton

Speakers



Keynote speaker

Andrew Jones MP

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport

Andrew Jones was appointed parliamentary under-secretary of state at the Department for Transport in May 2015. He was elected MP for Harrogate and Knaresborough in May 2010. Mr Jones is from Ilkley and attended Bradford Grammar School and Leeds University. From May 2003 to May 2011 he was a councillor on Harrogate Borough Council, and cabinet member for resources from May 2003 to May 2010. Since being elected in 2010, Mr Jones has been a parliamentary private secretary on the health, business and transport teams. He chaired the Northern Electrification Taskforce which advised the Transport Secretary on the next steps for electrification of railways in the North of England. His ministerial responsibilities include bus policy; the Northern Powerhouse; devolution in England; local transport; city growth deals; smart ticketing and road safety.



The Rt Hon Norman Baker,
Transport Minister from 2010
to 2013, became chair of Bus
Users in October 2015.

A committed campaigner on public transport issues, Mr Baker was Liberal Democrat MP for Lewes from 1997 to 2015. In opposition he served as shadow DEFRA secretary then shadow Transport Secretary between 2005 and 2010.

During his time with the Department for Transport, Mr Baker's achievements included the £600m Local Sustainable Transport Fund, the creation of Better Bus Areas, and several iterations of the Green Bus Fund. Aside from his consultancy work, he is a published author, most recently of his memoirs *Against The Grain*, and lead singer in the pop/rock band The Reform Club, whose second album has just been released. Mr Baker will chair session two of the Bus Summit.



Professor David Begg
Chief Executive
Transport Times

Professor David Begg is chief executive of Portobello Partnership which specialises in strategic advice to clients in the transport sector; publishes *Transport Times* magazine; and runs a series of transport best practice awards in conjunction with the Department for Transport, Transport Scotland and Transport for London.

He is a non-executive board member of Heathrow Airport Holdings and is a member of Cubic Transportation Systems' advisory board. From 1999 to 2005 he chaired the Commission for Integrated Transport which was set up to advise the Government on transport policy and to monitor performance.

Before moving to London he was professor of transport policy at Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen. He is a visiting professor in transport at Plymouth University.



Neill Birch
Director, Public Transport
Operations, Systra

Neill Birch is Systra's director of public transport operations. He joined Systra in 2005 after 17 years with two of the UK's largest public transport groups (Arriva and Go-Ahead). At Systra he has led transport planning and network optimisation projects around the world. His experience spans not only the UK but also Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Spain and Portugal, where he was part of Arriva's early expansion into Europe. He has led strategic reviews of public transport in the Republic of Ireland, and contributed to network reviews in Sheffield, Bristol and Dublin.



David Brown
Chief Executive
Go-Ahead

David Brown is chief executive of The Go-Ahead Group, one of the UK's leading public transport operators, employing over 23,500 people and carrying more than a billion passengers each year on its trains and buses. Go-Ahead operates bus companies across the UK from as far afield as Newcastle to Plymouth and is the largest bus operator in London.

Mr Brown has held a number of senior positions in the transport industry including managing director of Berks Bucks Bus Co, chief executive of Go-Ahead's London Bus division and managing director for Surface Transport at Transport for London. In this role, he was responsible for one of the world's largest urban bus networks, as well as for London's Red Route network and congestion charging.

Speaker profiles



David Brown
Chief Executive
Transport for the North

David Brown was appointed chief executive of Transport for the North in November last year, as the organisation works towards the publication in March of its updated strategy for transforming the Northern economy. Previously, Mr Brown was chief executive and director general of Merseytravel, the Merseyside passenger transport executive, for two and a half years. While at Merseytravel he led the devolution of rail franchising of the Northern and TransPennine Express franchises through Rail North.

Before Merseytravel, he was director general of South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive.



Hilary Chipping
Acting Chief Executive
SEMLEP

Hilary Chipping is acting chief executive of the south-east Midlands local enterprise partnership SEMLEP, and also continues with her role as head of infrastructure, leading on large scale infrastructure strategies and co-ordinating projects which underpin the growth and future success of the south-east Midlands economy.

She previously worked as a senior civil servant in both the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Department for Transport.



Jeff Counsell
Managing Director
Trentbarton

Jeff Counsell entered the transport industry as an engineering apprentice in 1974.

He became chief engineer in Manchester in the early 1990s, and gained an MBA in 1995. In 1996 he was appointed engineering director of North East Bus (now Arriva North East), before moving to Trentbarton as engineering director in 1999.

In 2001, he also took up responsibility for the Kinchbus business in Loughborough. Two years later he became director of service delivery for Trentbarton and Kinchbus, becoming managing director of both companies in March 2009.



Leon Daniels
Managing Director,
Surface Transport
Transport for London

Leon Daniels joined Transport for London in April 2011 from FirstGroup, where he had been a director of the UK Bus Board since 2000. For several years he owned and ran his own bus company, which grew to be the largest private sector bus company in London prior to the privatisation of London Buses. He sold the company to FirstGroup in 1998.

He oversees TfL's responsibilities for the safe and efficient running of London's buses, taxis, river services, the road network, congestion charging and the Santander Cycle Hire scheme.



Andy Eastlake
Managing Director
LowCVP

Andy Eastlake was appointed as the LowCVP's managing director in April 2012, after serving as chair of the members' council for many years. He has a strong background in vehicle engineering, specialising in powertrain developments, fuel economy and emissions. He was formerly group head of commercial and projects at Millbrook Proving Ground where he led work on powertrain test and development programmes and alternative fuels.

He is a board member of low carbon technology centre Cenex.



Giles Fearnley
Managing Director,
First Bus

In 1991 Giles Fearnley led the management buyout of Blazefield Holdings, which operated bus networks principally in Yorkshire and Lancashire. He remained as chief executive for two years following the group's sale to Transdev in 2006. He joined FirstGroup in February 2011 as managing director responsible for its UK Bus division.

He chairs Greener Journeys, the UK bus and coach industry's campaign to promote modal shift from cars to buses and coaches.



George Ferguson
Mayor
Bristol

George Ferguson was elected mayor of Bristol in November 2012 and is the first independent mayor to lead a major city in Britain, following a career as an architect, environmental campaigner and social entrepreneur.

During his first term he led the team that secured Bristol the title of European Green Capital 2015 and is raising the profile of Bristol across the world as one of Europe's most livable and creative cities.

He is a past president of the Royal Institute of British Architects.



Tobyn Hughes
Managing Director,
Transport Operations
North East Combined Authority

Tobyn Hughes became the North East Combined Authority's first managing director for transport operations in January 2015. In this role he leads Nexus, the body responsible for providing integrated public transport services. He is also responsible for bringing together transport services in Tyne and Wear, Durham and Northumberland. He recently developed a controversial proposal to franchise bus services in the areas, and has launched 'Pop Pay As You Go', a smartcard that can be used on the Metro and a growing number of bus services.



Martin Griffiths
Chief Executive
Stagecoach Group

Martin Griffiths is chief executive of Stagecoach Group, which has operations in the UK, United States and Canada. He is responsible for all aspects of the management of the group's operations, new business development and implementation of the group's growth strategy. He joined Stagecoach in 1998 as business development director and was appointed finance director in 2000.

Mr Griffiths is co-chairman of Virgin Rail Group and a director of the Rail Delivery Group.



Claire Haigh
Chief Executive
Greener Journeys

Claire Haigh is chief executive of Greener Journeys, a coalition of the UK's major public transport groups and other supporters committed to encouraging people to make more sustainable travel choices. She is a director of the Low Carbon Vehicle Partnership and a columnist for *Transport Times*. She has also been an adviser and board member of Transport for Greater Manchester. Previously she was project director for Journey Solutions, where she was responsible for Plusbus.



Dr Jon Lamonte
Chief Executive
Transport for Greater Manchester

Jon Lamonte joined Transport for Greater Manchester as chief executive in 2013. His portfolio covers rail, bus, tram, highways, cycling and other forms of active transport. Dr Lamonte was chief executive of Tube Lines from 2011-12, including the critical period of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Tube Lines, as part of Transport for London, was responsible for the maintenance, renewal and upgrade of the Underground infrastructure on the Jubilee, Northern and Piccadilly lines. He joined from the Royal Air Force where he fulfilled a number of senior operational roles and led major projects.



Alastair Munro
Engineering Director
Optare

Alastair Munro joined Optare in May 2015 bringing with him over 30 years' experience in the management of engineering design and product development in the bus, coach and commercial vehicle industry. This includes 15 years at Volvo Truck and Bus where he was responsible for product introduction, launch and market adaptation, and five years in the Plaxton/Blue Bird organisation in Georgia, US, responsible for commercial, school, coach, and RV-based products. His experience also includes bespoke engineering, manufacturing and process rationalisation roles in the bus, marine, emergency services and specialist vehicle sectors.



Kevin O'Connor
Managing Director, UK Bus
Arriva

Kevin O'Connor joined Arriva in March 2015 and as managing director for UK Bus is responsible for the growth, development and overall operational performance of Arriva's regional bus services. He is also a member of the group executive committee.

Prior to his appointment at Arriva, he held a number of senior operational and management roles at G4S, most recently regional managing director of G4S Cash Solutions UK and Ireland, and a member of the Regional Executive Committee.



Ken Scott
Group Engineering Director
Alexander Dennis

Ken Scott is group engineering director at Alexander Dennis. He is a fellow of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers and has 28 years' experience in the automotive industry. He held senior management positions with Land Rover and Bentley Motors before joining ADL in September 2013. He has been responsible for a number of key product introductions, including the all-new Enviro400, the Enviro200 major model change and ADL's latest hybrid and electric offerings – the Enviro400H City and the Enviro400 Virtual Electric.



Anthony Smith
Chief Executive
Transport Focus

Anthony Smith is chief executive of Transport Focus, the independent consumer watchdog for Britain's passengers. Having qualified as a solicitor, Anthony worked for five years as principal consumer lawyer for the Consumers' Association, publishers of *Which?*. This was followed by a year as the legal consultant for Consumers International, a worldwide federation of consumer groups. Prior to joining Transport Focus, Mr Smith was deputy and acting director of ICSTIS, the regulator of premium rate telephone services.

The UK Bus Summit 2016

11 February

**QEII
Conference
Centre,
Westminster,
London SW1**

Meeting the challenge together



Partnership working, a stable regulatory and financial environment, and wider use of new technology are part of the Scottish government's strategy for a successful bus sector, says **Derek Mackay**

In Scotland as elsewhere, bus is the most widely available and most-used public transport mode with generally the lowest fares.

In the last year, 420 million bus journeys were made in Scotland, representing nearly 80% of all journeys by public transport. About a third of these were made by the 1.3 million older and disabled people holding concessionary travel cards.

Two of the UK's largest bus operators are based in Scotland – Stagecoach and FirstGroup. So is one of our largest bus manufacturers, Alexander Dennis. In Lothian Buses, First Glasgow and Xplore Dundee (part of the National Express group), we have major city operators achieving excellent user satisfaction scores. And we have a diverse band of small and not so small local and regional operators to keep them up to the mark, not to mention an important and vibrant community transport sector, helping to provide excellent services particularly for the hard to reach in our cities, towns and rural areas.

Bus services enable people to reach work, education and training, health and social care services, and shopping and leisure destinations. They help achieve the Scottish government's aims by supporting social

**Derek Mackay
MSP is Minister
for Transport
and Islands in
the Scottish
Government**



cohesion, employment and the economy. They are well liked by their users, with impressive levels of satisfaction, according to surveys.

So far, so good. But we do face challenges, particularly at a time when central and local government budgets are hard pressed, in seeking to reverse declines in patronage and the extent of the network.

We also need to find better ways to support the greening of the fleet in order to tackle climate change and poor air quality, to speed up the introduction of truly multi-modal, multi-operator smart ticketing on a Scotland-wide basis and to address some of the challenges of scarce transport services which face our more remote rural communities.

I am keen to see more effective partnership working between local transport authorities and bus operators, and better engagement between operators, authorities and communities in the design and provision of services.

I want to see a stable regulatory and financial environment which encourages bus operators to invest in improved services and greener, cleaner buses.

Our draft budget for 2016-17, despite the fiscal challenges,

continues to sustain the bus service operators grant at 2012 levels in cash terms. We will continue to find ways to promote the take up of low-carbon buses, building on the past successes of our Green Bus Fund and BSOG incentives, which have helped buy 270 new green buses over the last five years.

The current Scottish Government has no plans to re-regulate the bus industry. But a stable environment is not a static or stagnant one. We are working with operators, authorities and user groups to see how we can improve our regulatory and funding frameworks consistently with our overall approach.

One early change we are making is to the bus service registration process. From the end of January, operators will be required to give local transport authorities notice of proposed registrations 28 days before they are sent to the traffic commissioner. This is to allow time for the impact of any changes on local bus plans and communities to be assessed, and to enable constructive engagement between operators and authorities with a view to minimising any adverse consequences for users or maximising opportunities to improve services.

Another change relates to how we use new technology to improve ticketing and journey planning. There are clear benefits for users in smarter and better-integrated ticketing, better journey planning and more reliable, more widely available real-time information on services.

For smart ticketing, we have agreed an ambitious but achievable programme of work with our main operators, to progress in parallel with the commitments in our Scotrail franchise.

All this requires effective joint working between operators, local authorities and central government, and effective engagement with communities over how to secure the services they need. This partnership approach reaped benefits during the Commonwealth Games and Ryder Cup in 2014, and it has helped provide resilience during unforeseen events like the recent closure of the Forth Road Bridge, when buses formed an integral part of our travel plan.

Our updated national transport strategy sets out more clearly than ever the roles we all have to play in making this work, and we will feed this through as we develop specific plans and initiatives.

It's a challenging but exciting time to be a bus operator in Scotland.

And to be a transport minister.

High ambition – low emission

When I was elected as the first mayor of Bristol just over three years ago, it was crystal clear that transport was the biggest challenge facing me. Bristol had suffered from a lack of consistent governance and had missed out on the long-term investment in public transport seen in some other UK cities, resulting in unacceptable levels of congestion in this wonderful but complex historic city.

My ambition is for a city where public transport provides an affordable, high quality alternative, with safer streets no longer clogged with cars, where our air is cleaner and it is increasingly attractive to walk and cycle – in short, a healthy, liveable city. I have looked enviously at great tram and subway systems in cities across the world, but believe that buses, with their innate flexibility and reach, are for the foreseeable future going to remain the principal form of public transport in Bristol and across the UK.

In 2015, Bristol, as the UK's first European Green Capital, led the way in pioneering sustainable technologies, with the intention of finding affordable solutions to our transport and energy challenges.

Our principal bus operator, First Group, was a lead partner in our great Green Capital project, helping to raise the profile of sustainable transport across the city-region. This has resulted in serious investment in the city, with the latest and cleanest low emission buses being introduced into the network. We marked the start of 2016 by jointly launching two new hybrid electric buses using the latest geo-fence technology, enabling them to be auto-switched to zero emission mode when entering the more central air quality management areas.

We have undoubtedly suffered by not having an integrated transport authority to provide a focus for such investment and coordination. This must change, and we are working closely with our neighbouring unitary authorities to take full advantage of the powers and flexibility that might be on offer from a Bristol city region devolution deal and the Buses Bill.

Not only is congestion a huge cost to our local and national economies, it results in serious health problems. Poor air quality causes many more premature deaths than road casualties, but this is only the tip of the iceberg, and I am determined to make Bristol a healthy city for all. It is for this reason that I have been prepared to take tough action in the form of extensive



In the past three years Bristol has made great progress in adopting sustainable technology and attracting new passengers to buses, says George Ferguson

commuter parking restrictions and extension of the 20mph zone, in the face of concerted local opposition.

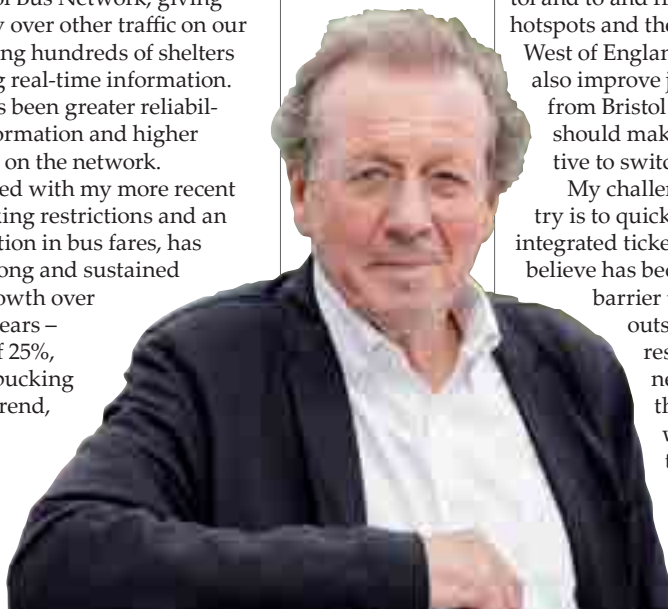
Up until recently the shift has been slow in Bristol, with car use continuing to grow during the 1990s and 2000s. Between 2008 and 2012, the city-region invested £78m through the Greater Bristol Bus Network, giving buses priority over other traffic on our roads, replacing hundreds of shelters and installing real-time information. The result has been greater reliability, better information and higher quality buses on the network.

This, coupled with my more recent focus on parking restrictions and an agreed reduction in bus fares, has generated strong and sustained passenger growth over the last two years – an increase of 25%, successfully bucking the national trend, and hailing a bright future for bus travel in Bristol.

However, the battle is only half

Buses with geo-fence technology automatically switch to electric mode in air quality management areas

George Ferguson is mayor of Bristol



won, with the need for major investment in our £200m MetroBus (BRT) network of high quality, high frequency services. This programme, involving major infrastructure investment (and consequent temporary disruption) will bring priority bus corridors into the heart of Bristol from south Bristol and to and from the employment hotspots and the University of the West of England to the north. It will also improve journey times to and from Bristol Airport, all of which should make it much more attractive to switch from car to bus.

My challenge to the bus industry is to quickly deliver on smart integrated ticketing, which I strongly believe has become the greatest

barrier to modal shift in areas outside London, but also to respond positively to the new agenda brought by the Buses Bill, working with cities like Bristol to help drive this much needed change. We are the perfect European test bed, for if it can work in Bristol it can work anywhere!

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greener smarter travel

Passengers must be at the heart of decision-making

Anthony Smith outlines some of the lessons Transport Focus has gleaned from extensive survey work

“The bus can basically arrive at any point: the timetable is irrelevant in the mornings. So I have to get up and get down there about 20 minutes before I really need to as I can’t be late for work.”

“You just get there and immediately you see a massive queue at the bus stop and no indication of when the next bus is. I really don’t enjoy that bit.”

These comments from regular bus commuters capture one of the biggest concerns people have about public transport, especially buses.

Transport Focus is currently looking at the issue of trust in the industry and why buses sometimes seem to have a bad reputation. After all, if you want to drive economic growth in an area, you have to be able to get the people to the shops and businesses they need.

Over half the population are bus users, and our most recent Bus Passenger Survey of more than 40,000 passengers showed that around nine in 10 were very or fairly satisfied with their service. However, scores varied quite widely across the UK, especially when we asked about value for money.

What drives satisfaction? Journey time on the bus and punctuality stand out. This mirrors what we have found in other research.

Safety and smoothness of driving and value for money are also factors underpinning satisfaction.

For our recent work we have been talking both to existing bus passengers and non-users of bus services. We wanted to know why some people choose the bus – and why some don’t.

As well as looking at what improvements passengers would like to see, we’ve asked passengers and non-users whether they trust or have any affinity with bus services, and why. The research is sure to provide food for thought for local councils and operators who make the decisions that affect the daily journeys of bus passengers.

We looked at the practical and emotional factors that lie behind public attitudes to buses. These ranged from the basic – a bus that runs to a timetable you can rely on – to the less tangible.

When bus companies act on the findings of the survey, it has a direct result for passengers. Value for money has risen in the Greater Manchester area. Driver standards have gone up the West Midlands after Centro and Travel West Midlands acted on our last set of results. Digital bus stop displays and automatic vehicle location has driven up passenger satisfaction with bus stops in Not-



tinghamshire by 9 percentage points from 2012. Tackling the barriers to getting people on board can only be good news for regional economies.

Without revealing the results of our latest survey, I doubt that anyone will be surprised to hear Transport Focus calling for the industry to keep passengers at the heart of decision-making.

With local authorities’ budgets under pressure, difficult choices about where they spend their money remain on the horizon. We know from earlier work that passengers are realistic and understand that services are under pressure. However, keeping the focus on passengers will help to ensure the bus industry continues to attract customers.

Passengers tell us that the most important thing for them is getting a seat on a value for money bus service that turns up on time. Our report *What’s the hold up? Exploring bus service punctuality* includes case studies of operators that have focused on this crucial area. Our report *Bus Driver Training - What works? What next?* highlighted that providing good customer service is the job of everyone at the bus company, not just the drivers.

We continue to talk to the Department for Transport as the Buses Bill goes through Parliament. We’ll also be taking our work on trust out to the industry to help operators and authorities work through what it could mean for them. We’ll continue to update you on our work – but do get in touch as we are always keen to help if we can.

Anthony Smith is chief executive of Transport Focus and a regular columnist for *Transport Times*

Optare’s Metrodecker makes passenger comfort a feature with air springs and self-levelling suspension



Investment, innovation and initiative



Arriva's **Kevin O'Connor** gives his views on local and regional growth, success stories, and why an obsession with meeting customers' expectations should be the industry's top priority

The past 12 months has been full of important decisions, milestones and challenges for the bus industry, as every operator and local authority strives to increase patronage and improve infrastructure.

One of the ever-present issues within the industry continues to be growth – looking at the best way to achieve sustainable fare-paying growth – and how to ensure buses play an important part in society's future by unlocking congested streets.

But it's a goal that requires focus, investment and flexibility not just from operators, but our partners too.

Congestion is increasing at a rapid rate, which in turn means that buses are under-used in the struggle against gridlock. This provides more proof that we must work together to strengthen the benefits we can offer over and above the car, and then promote these more aggressively.

Congestion isn't the only issue for the bus industry. Technology is changing fast too. Smartphones and people's use of technology offer us great opportunities, but they will become threats unless we embrace technology to adapt and evolve to meet the changing expectations of current and future customers.

That is why at Arriva we are investing in research among occasional and current non-users about their future needs, so we

The Sapphire sub-brand has consistently achieved 10% growth through attention to detail in providing what passengers want

Kevin O'Connor is Arriva UK Bus managing director



can better understand what they see as barriers to buses, and develop a rapid and effective process for piloting and introducing new products and services.

At Arriva, we have a strong track record of investment and innovation. The development of tools such as our m-ticket and national travel app with GPS tracking has been an important step in modernising our offering in line with customers' expectations. This has to be complemented by using the correct buses, routes and a reliable service.

One of the most successful initiatives Arriva has undertaken in recent years on both local and inter-urban bus routes is Sapphire – a premium sub-brand with attention to detail in operational delivery, passenger comfort and technology. Sapphire has been a significant step in providing what customers tell us they want. Consistently providing 10% passenger growth on over 24 different routes, it has shown us what can be done through clearly understanding non-users' requirements and making significant investments as a result.

We have won accolades in Darlington for our work with the local authority on providing better services as part of a bus improvement scheme. We have ploughed £7m into new and refurbished buses which include the MAX brand. The result is passenger growth of up to 5%, founded on a partnership which is effective in making good its promises.

The newly-formed Merseyside Bus Alliance will be the perfect type of partnership. It commits operators and the PTE to strict targets which are all geared towards modal shift and encouraging more passengers to use buses. It is focused on innovation, first-class infrastructure, investment in new buses, and ultimately providing better journeys. It is the type of partnership we welcome, in an area where we are already achieving growth of over 10%. It is an alliance which gives a clear direction for the future and allows us to make long-term investment plans alongside active partners such as Merseytravel.

The North East and Yorkshire is another area of growth and where we have invested heavily – but with further investment and partnership working, even more can be achieved. We have seen an upturn in student patronage, worked closely with the Department for Work and Pensions to make travelling by bus simpler for jobseekers, and are working closely with retail outlets and hospitals whose car parks are bursting at the seams.


In Leicester, our special ticket for scholars has led to a 4% increase in sales, while in Milton Keynes we are set to launch Arriva's first truly commercial smartcard – part of a technology drive which we will step up across the company this year, alongside changes to our successful app, which over 800,000 people have downloaded.

This sort of best practice surrounds us and it is not exclusive to Arriva. There are pockets of innovation around the UK and in mainland Europe.

Local bus networks have had a torrid time in the past 20 years. Council cutbacks and lack of investment in infrastructure have played a role in the downturn – but we need to be bold enough to try new ideas, take risks, or make quick changes when the growth hasn't been realised.

We are committed to continuing to try new and innovative approaches, from Live Chat on our app to offering flexible and demand responsive solutions. With this kind of activity, plus meaningful partnerships and infrastructure investment, we know that buses can be an attractive alternative.

But all investment needs certainly. Uncertainty creates challenges, which is why as an industry we need to unite and focus on what matters most: saving the country's infrastructure from the nightmare of congestion by providing networks and services that will attract people for the long-term, with the shared goal of generating sustainable passenger growth.

KPMG


UK Transport Infrastructure Summit

12–13th
April 2016
London

Keynote Speaker: Lord Adonis, Chair, National Infrastructure Commission

A new independent National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) has been created, with the task of offering unbiased analysis of the UK's long term infrastructure needs.

Former cabinet minister and transport secretary Lord Adonis will lead the commission as its first chairman.

The NIC has already started work. It will recommend to the government before next year's Budget what should be done in economic and transportation terms to transform east-west connectivity between the northern cities by road and rail as well as advising on priorities for future large-scale investment in London's public transport infrastructure such as Crossrail 2.

The NIC will provide an assessment of the UK's infrastructure needs every five years, looking 30 years ahead and examining the evidence across all key sectors of economic infrastructure - including roads, rail transport, ports and airports.

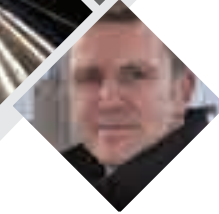
We are delighted to announce that Lord Adonis will deliver the keynote address at this Summit and update us on his first report to government.

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Green buses are go

The UK is in the vanguard of the manufacture and adoption of green buses, says **Andy Eastlake**

In the past decade there has been a green revolution in the UK bus market. Lower carbon, low emission Euro VI buses are running in most of our cities and larger urban areas, their introduction encouraged by technical developments and a supportive policy environment.

The Green Bus Fund – which ran over four rounds from 2009 – has contributed to the introduction of 1,263 buses over five years. A similar mechanism operated in Scotland, where there have so far been six rounds, funding around 270 buses.

From its inception in 2003, the Low Carbon Vehicle Partnership (LowCVP) has supported the Department for Transport in the development of the definition of a low carbon emission bus (LCEB) and in the design and introduction of incentives such as the Green Bus Fund.

A range of technologies from a variety of manufacturers have been introduced to meet the LCEB criteria (now superseded by the Low Emission Bus scheme). These include the popular diesel-electric hybrids produced by companies including Wrightbus, Alexander Dennis, Volvo and Optare; biomethane/compressed natural gas options by Scania and MAN; battery electric models from Optare, BYD, Wrightbus and Alex-

Above: around 30% of buses produced in the UK last year were low emission types such as ADL's Virtual Electric

For further information, see the LowCVP Low Emission Buses web pages: <http://tinyurl.com/jkg2pnc>

Andy Eastlake is managing director of the Low Carbon Vehicle Partnership



ander Dennis; and plug-in, range-extended hybrids from Alexander Dennis and Volvo. There's also a hydrogen bus model produced by Van Hool.

The UK has become one of the leading manufacturers and adopters of low carbon and low emission buses. In 2015 around 30% of buses produced in the UK were low emission according to the LowCVP definition. About 50% of the buses operating on UK roads were British-built.

With concern growing again about the health impact of poor urban air quality (stoked by the Client Earth legal victory and the recent VW scandal), it's clear that greener buses have an important role to play in cutting local pollution and contributing to meeting climate change targets as well as saving on operating costs.

The good news on urban pollution (and for British manufacturing) is that rapid progress in technical development and innovation in the sector means that there are now low emission bus options suitable for every type of operation.

A 2013 study by Ricardo for the LowCVP resulted in the publication of *A Low Carbon Technology Roadmap for Buses* which provided a basis for the development of later bus sector policy. A further report looked at the air pollution

impact of a variety of low carbon bus technologies, showing that in almost all types of operation the latest technology can help to meet both air quality and climate change objectives.

The LowCVP has been leading in discussions about bus service operators grant, to help make sure that the revision of the subsidy scheme does not discourage the uptake of low emission buses.

Recently, the Office of Low Emission Vehicles introduced a £30m Low Emission Bus Scheme to further support the purchase of low and ultra low emission buses by local authorities and transport operators.

The *Transport Times* 2016 UK Bus Summit will provide an excellent opportunity for local authorities and bus operators to learn more about the availability of low emission bus technology and fuels and to meet suppliers who can advise on how to achieve their operational requirements.

With the focus of the conference this year on devolution and proposals in the Buses Bill (giving combined authorities with an elected mayor powers to franchise bus services) the agenda should be of even more relevance to all those with a role in improving local air quality as well as contributing to CO₂ reduction plans, recently reaffirmed at the Paris climate summit.

A thoroughbred we take for granted

In the past decade the UK bus sector has undergone remarkable change and arguably no manufacturer has had a bigger influence on the transition of buses from workhorse to thoroughbred than Alexander Dennis (ADL), a business that has risen Phoenix-like to establish itself as Britain's leading bus and coach provider.

In a resurgent home market last year new registrations soared and ADL – for the eighth consecutive year – emerged as market leader, securing almost 50% of all bus sales, while simultaneously reinforcing itself as Britain's foremost coach body builder with a 25% sector share, courtesy of its Plaxton brand.

In parallel with this ADL was expanding globally in mainland Europe, Hong Kong, China, Malaysia, New Zealand, the US, Canada and Mexico, all of which contributed to 20% growth in turnover to £600m. This means ADL is now twice as big, measured by turnover, as its nearest UK-based competitor.

What lies behind this story, and where now for the ADL buses of the future?

One man who has played a key role in ADL's renaissance is group engineering director Ken Scott, who has overseen the introduction of new midibuses, two-axle and three-axle double decks, and luxury and midi-sized coaches, all of which have underpinned ADL's position in the UK and provided the platform for its international growth.

Mr Scott has been in the automotive business 30 years and has a career track record that includes spells with Land-Rover and Bentley Motors, so he is well qualified to differentiate between the workhorse and the thoroughbred. How does he rate current UK buses?

"Today's buses are true thoroughbreds with a pedigree that is second to none," he says. "No other country in the world has worked so consistently to transform its public transport sector. Hence we today have some of the most innovative, passenger-friendly vehicles in the world – but like all good things we tend to take them for granted, particularly the advantages of double-deck buses.

"I never cease to be amazed at the reaction from passengers when we introduce double-deckers to places like Las Vegas, Seattle, Toronto, Ottawa – or

Ken Scott of Alexander Dennis says that great progress has been made in all aspects of bus design and technology in recent years, but a big effort is still needed by operators, transport authorities and manufacturers to increase passenger appeal

similarly, when we undertook trials more recently in Switzerland, Germany, South Korea and Mexico. Double-decks simply blow people away."

Research in export markets shows the public flock to ride on double-decks. "They like the views from the upper deck, they like the wide entry points and aisles, they like the comfort and climate control systems. In virgin territories, ADL double-decks invariably increase patronage by around 30% and often by as much as 50% – but in the UK we are so used to double-decks and sophisticated, integrated transport systems that we simply take them for granted."

London buses, he points out, carry 6.5m passengers daily. "That's almost equivalent to the population of Scotland and Wales combined. In England there were 4.65 billion bus journeys last year on 36,000 buses, covering 1.29 billion miles." Although the latest buses are stylish and bristling with technology, "we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that they are still brilliant

'shire horses', working 18-hour

days, being driven by numerous people every day of the week, and operating constantly at low speeds on a never-ending stop-start basis."

The doors on a busy inner-city bus will open and shut around 700,000 times annually, Mr Scott adds, "so when you put all that together,

plus a 14-year lifespan, it's fairly obvious that there is a big connection between workhorse and thoroughbred. Maybe we just need to find

a way to make buses sexier and to stop taking them for granted."

What is the next step in technology? "The ultimate aim," he says, "is emission-free buses, and we have started that journey." ADL's first all-electric buses will be introduced to London shortly and the first fleets of Virtual Electric double-decks are already in trials in London and Bristol. The Virtual Electrics combine hybrid and battery technology and run 80% of the time emission-free.

Mr Scott adds a cautionary note: "This is a journey and the world will not move to pure electric overnight. There is a lot of life left in low-emission diesels, some of which, thanks to features like stop-start capability and SMART accessories, are improving fuel efficiency by leaps and bounds."

With cities facing increasing congestion and clean air issues every day, how do we encourage more people out of cars and on to buses? "That's one of the fundamental issues that I believe operators, transport authorities, politicians, passengers and manufacturers now need to address jointly. Out of the 4.65 billion bus journeys last year, 34% were concessionary journeys – the elderly, disabled and youth. We certainly need more input from the travelling public. We need to engage with them and understand their wants and needs. Capacity, safety, ride quality, access, temperature control, convenience, usability, comfort, infotainment, connectivity, fuel efficiency, reliability and maintainability are just some of the issues where we have made huge inroads in recent years – but many of these aspects are operator-centric.

"We now need to raise our game with passengers. For instance, we need to make people see the common sense in using park-and-ride and similar initiatives. It's our job to create the desire in people to take the bus instead of the car because all-round it's a better experience, more convenient, more cost-effective and less harmful to the local and global environment. It's up to us all, collectively, to make buses sexy."

Ken Scott: "We need to make buses sexy"



Learning lessons from electric railways

Alstom's ground-level recharging system for trams has been adapted to make it available for buses and other road vehicles



The benefits of electric trains are well-known, but historically it's been more difficult to realise those benefits on the road. However, with Alstom's announcement of a new ground-based power charging solution for tramways and electric buses at the UITP World Congress in June 2015 in Milan, and the extension of the technology to hybrid trucks, all that could be about to change.

Alstom's history is one of innovation, commitment to eco-friendly design, sustainability and energy efficiency, together with its well-known train manufacturing activity. Through its global presence, Alstom has gained extensive experience in electric vehicles in heavy as well as in light rail. Recently it developed a particular focus on urban mobility, illustrated in the UK by Nottingham

Express Transit phase two and London Underground's regenerative braking system (Hesop) on the Victoria Line.

Demand is increasing for alternatives to gas-emitting transport systems to help meet London's challenge on emissions and to improve services for local transport authorities across the country, and so, after 12 years' experience on the APS ground level power supply system for trams, Alstom has made the technology available for electric road vehicles.

Whereas APS supplies power to a tram while it is still running, SRS, the innovative ground-based static charging system designed by Alstom, recharges electric vehicles when they are at stops during normal dwell times, or at the end of a bus route. Electrical power is supplied from compact power supply cabinets that can be integrated into stations or shelters.

While the vehicle is stationary, collector shoes fitted underneath make contact with the conductor rail or pad, providing the power. On the vehicle supercapacitors, batteries, or a mix of both store the energy to move between stops.

SRS allows for charging at the end of routes and maximises use of otherwise unproductive turn-around time. It also allows maximum flexibility of services to adapt to route changes and traffic fluctuations.

Alstom's SRS is compatible with three voltage levels: 400V AC up to 200kW; 11-24kV AC from 200kW; 500-900V DC from 200kW. Output voltage is adjustable between 400V and 800V.

Alstom is also extending the use of APS to electrically powered road vehicles as they move. This was developed as a collaborative project between Alstom and Volvo. The research conducted by the two companies used a method based on two power lines built into the surface of the road. This allows electricity to be supplied to trucks via a current collector on the vehicle as it drives along the road. The technology has been undergoing tests since 2012 and could be a solution to create future electric highways.

In another demonstration of how technology can move from rail to road, Alstom has started discussions with electric vehicle manufacturers on introducing its permanent magnet motor technology. Proven in Alstom's trams and trains, these motors are key to improving the efficiency of electric vehicles.

In the words of Alex Burrows, Alstom UK and Ireland marketing and strategy director: "Alstom has long been a pioneer in electric trains and trams. Now by learning from our successes on the rails and applying them to the road we believe we can make a significant contribution to the electric vehicle revolution that is just getting started."

"We're hugely excited by what we could achieve with our partners in the road-based transport industry."

APS was installed along the entire length of the Dubai tramway

APS – Ground-Level Power Supply

APS is Alstom's catenary-free technology developed for tramways which supplies electricity at ground level. APS thereby preserves the aesthetics of city centres and reduces the system's footprint by eliminating intrusive overhead wires and poles.

Since the first implementation of APS in Bordeaux in south-west France in 2003, over 20 million km have been run in 12 years on more than 350 tramways. Moreover, APS benefits from comprehensive safety certification for passengers, pedestrians and road traffic.

APS was installed on the entire length of the six-mile Dubai tramway. The distance between stops is longer than is typical in Europe and the trams are air-conditioned, thus requiring continuous power supply.



Partnership shows the way ahead

First's experience in Bristol shows how closely working with local authorities can help address congestion, air quality and improve services generally, says **Giles Fearnley**

With congestion estimated to cost the UK £33bn a year by 2030, sustainable public transport will become even more important to local communities and economies. At First Bus, our aim is to be the provider of choice for our customers and communities, creating solutions for an increasingly congested world.

I'm proud of the progress we've made, and the increase in passenger numbers throughout our operations over the last year or two demonstrates

that our customer-focused plan is working. In our pursuit of passenger growth we're providing ever more punctual and reliable services; we've invested more than £380m in around 2,200 new buses in just five years; we've introduced highly successful mobile tickets; fitted free wi-fi to around half our fleet; and made major improvements such as a new mobile website and the First Bus app.

Innovation, customer service and disciplined operations will remain central to our strategy.

However, the key to unlocking the full potential of bus services lies in close partnerships with local authorities, ever more so given the evolving political landscape. Across the UK we're operating bus services that are increasingly complementing local authority plans. For example, in May we announced the largest UK order for Euro VI buses, which has helped position us at the forefront of the industry, setting new standards of emissions and supporting local authorities in improving air quality.

First was a partner in Bristol European Green Capital 2015 and introduced 58 low carbon double-deckers during the year

turn to page 20

Workhorse to thoroughbred

We have a number of really strong partnerships across the UK which are proving highly effective. Perhaps the most successful is the one in Bristol.

It's not so long ago that our services in Bristol were much maligned by customers and local authorities. The turnaround has been exceptional. We have very strong partnerships with the mayor, the local authorities in the west of England and a range of other stakeholders. Bristol's mayor, George Ferguson, is a key ally and a strong supporter of public transport. We have demonstrated startling passenger growth and increasing passenger satisfaction.

The transformation in Bristol began several years ago through our partnership with four local authorities to invest in the Greater Bristol Bus Network. Through the partnership bus priority and infrastructure were upgraded, information was improved and we invested in buses on ten main corridors. This helped generate growth in bus use that prepared the way for our ground-breaking "Fairer Fares" scheme, introduced two years ago, which resulted in a 25% increase in passenger numbers. At present 70,000 additional passengers are travelling on our services each week.

As the main public transport operator in Bristol, FirstGroup was proud to be involved in Bristol European Green Capital 2015 as an official partner. Bristol has always had a reputation for setting the public transport agenda, and we were delighted to continue that tradition. We worked hard to make Bristol a testbed for sustainable transport innovation that



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Giles Fearnley,
Managing
Director, First Bus

brings together FirstGroup's global expertise and local knowledge with the city's commitment to finding sustainable solutions to the challenges of the increasingly congested world in which we live. Here are two of the projects we were involved in.

Trial of a gas-powered bus, running on biomethane created using human and food waste, was so successful that we've submitted a joint bid alongside four local authorities for 110 biomethane double deckers for Bristol. Should our plans come to fruition, the buses will be used on routes crossing designated air quality management areas

and our Bristol fleet will be the most environmentally friendly in the UK.

We continue to experiment with electric power. The introduction of GPS geo-fence technology enables Alexander Dennis Virtual Electric buses to recognise when they enter areas of the city with poor air quality and switch to all-electric mode. Two of these buses, funded in part by the DfT, were expected to enter service in January.

These are hugely exciting initiatives leaving an impressive legacy. They are supported by huge investment in our fleet generally. In addition to the electric buses, 58 low carbon certified double deckers fitted with Euro VI engines entered the Bristol fleet last year, replacing single-deckers and providing more capacity. That includes 34 Wrightbus Street-Deck micro hybrid buses, which are among the most fuel-efficient buses available. FirstGroup helped develop and bring the bus to market.

In a move which further strengthened our partnerships locally, in September 2015 we signed a punctuality improvement partnership with Bristol City Council. Both parties are now working more closely together to help buses better negotiate congestion, road works or special events.

At First Bus we highlight Bristol as a fantastic example of what can be achieved through partnership. We have many common goals with local authorities – reducing congestion, improving air quality, encouraging public transport and reducing car use.

By working with local authorities we can better achieve those goals, help improve local communities and create strong, vibrant and sustainable economies.



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Time for a shake-up



Systra's Neill Birch argues that a radical reappraisal of how bus networks operate is needed to reverse long-term decline

Britain's rural bus network is sliding into crisis. With the squeeze on government spending showing no sign of easing and passenger numbers down, a slow death of a thousand cuts seems almost inevitable. Already, in many parts of the country, services to isolated communities have been cut to the bone, even to extinction, and the social cost is potentially beyond measure.

But it doesn't have to be this way. It is worth remembering that in the not too distant past the nation's trains were where the bus network is now: under-planned, overstretched and under-used. It was Dr Richard Beeching who turned things around with a strategic review of rail provision that was tough-minded and clear-eyed, if not popular. Beeching was prepared to ask fundamental questions: what was rail really good for? where could it be replaced with a more efficient alternative?

A strategic review of the bus network could do for buses what the Beeching report did for trains, although not, of course, in quite the same way. Inefficient train routes in the 1960s could be replaced with buses as part of a rationalisation plan, but bus planners don't have a similar option.

What they do have, though, is a range of local bus transport services

that are invisible to the average traveller because they are excluded from using them. Education authorities, social services and, increasingly, public health services all manage their own transport provision, each separate from the other, running alongside but rarely in coordination. What if these services could be fully co-ordinated in the service of every bus user in a local area? What if, as pilot projects by Systra in Northern Ireland and elsewhere seem to show, a huge increase in bus provision could be found with no increase in cost, simply by getting more clever at using what we already have (without always knowing it)?

If that sounds like a free meal – the kind the economists are always warning us about – it is because we are locked into an old-fashioned way of thinking, whereby traditional buses run to timetable along a route with a series of pre-designated stops, collecting and dropping off, not always reliable, but more or less predictable. But the technological revolution of the 21st century will not let us continue unchallenged down that road. Consumer expectations have changed, adapted to disruptive innovations such as the Uber taxi hailing app that brings the cab to you.

To survive in the 21st century, the bus service is going to need to

become similarly user responsive. Instead of standing at a stop with their arm out, future travellers may pre-book for a bus to add them to its route, arriving at a specific location to pick them up in a smaller vehicle than they are used to, one that doubles at other times in the day as social service transport or school bus.

A rural bus network that operated on such principles would have the ability to respond to specific local circumstances and needs, and would have the potential to attract back passengers driven away by the thinness and inflexibility of current provision. It could reach isolated communities because it would be highly efficient, responding only when there was demand, and crucially it would require little or no extra revenue. It might even save money.

Unless such radical steps are taken it is hard to feel optimistic about the prospects for buses.

But although the network is in trouble, it may be more resilient than we think – if we can look at it clearly as a whole, ask the right questions and make some tough decisions; if we can find the imagination – and determination – to become modern-day Beechings.

Neill Birch is a Director at Systra who has worked in the transport sector for 30 years. He has led Systra's work in the bus sector for the past 10 years.



Will fixed bus routes give way to demand responsive services in the future?

Devolved approach

Local devolution, integration with rail, close working with supply chain partners and a focus on customers are behind Go-Ahead's approach to how it runs its services, says **Martin Dean**

The Go-Ahead Group operates within a devolved management structure. We feel this is a real strength for the group and expect this to remain the case for years to come. We believe in empowering the management teams at our bus and rail operating companies to make local decisions and respond quickly to the changing needs of the passengers and communities they serve. We trust our experienced management teams to run our companies effectively, while also having robust processes to provide accountability back to group HQ.

Our devolved structure ensures we have strong localised expertise and a focus on the needs of local customers. So we are familiar with the Government's aim of greater devolution to local regions as we have always operated a devolved business approach. We believe that collaboration and working in partnership bring the best results both for passengers and taxpayers, and our operating companies continue to work closely with the local authorities in the areas where they operate.

This collaborative approach can be demonstrated by Go-Ahead bus and rail companies serving Gatwick, working together with the airport to assist its employees, as well as airline passengers, to travel there from the south coast in the early hours of the morning before train services begin.

Metrobus and rail company Govia Thameslink Railway offer a joint ticket allowing travel out by bus and return by train. "Early bird" bus services were introduced in time for the busy summer period. The service has been promoted by Metrobus as well as the train operators GTR and Southeastern, and Gatwick has provided Metrobus with retail space in the main terminal to promote and sell both bus and rail tickets. The joint project helped Gatwick Airport in its allocation of shift rota times, reducing staff numbers required.

Our ethical procurement approach is embedded in our supply chain procurement and management processes. As a buyer of goods and services we have a responsibility for the supply chains from which these goods and services come into our organisation. We will take into account ethical as well as commercial and technical factors when considering which suppliers to work with. We encourage our suppliers to adhere to similar standards of corporate responsibility to our own businesses and to adopt appropriate safeguards against bribery, corruption and facilitation payments. In particular, we expect our suppliers to be committed to high standards of health and safety and to demonstrate a respect for the environment.

Our focus on providing a good service for customers is at the centre

of everything we do. We take care to garner feedback and listen to customers' comments and concerns through a variety of channels, including surveys, public meetings, social media, conversations and direct correspondence, and we respond positively whenever we are able to do so. Our people's unstinting work in this area has borne fruit this year, as we have achieved the highest customer satisfaction level among large transport groups of 90% in our regional bus operations.

A devolved structure brings local expertise and an understanding of local customers

Martin Dean is Go-Ahead's Managing Director for Bus Development



It's time to tackle congestion



**Martin Griffiths is
Chief Executive of
Stagecoach Group**

Bus travel is being transformed, but the government must get behind bus priority, better interchanges and an expansion of park and ride, says **Martin Griffiths**

Bus travel is undergoing a transformation. In the last few weeks, Britain's major transport groups announced ambitious plans to introduce contactless travel on every bus in Britain by 2022. Stagecoach, First Bus, Go-Ahead, Arriva and National Express are already working together to produce a business case for what would be a huge step forward for passengers.

Covering around 1,200 operators and more than 32,000 buses in England, Scotland and Wales, the ambitious initiative would offer cashless travel for those who want it and capped pay-as-you-go-fares in all urban areas.

It is set to be the biggest smart ticketing project ever undertaken in Britain – a major milestone in providing simpler travel for the millions of people who rely on buses. Crucially, the multi-million-pound project will be funded predominantly by the private sector, working collaboratively with the UK Cards Association, and central and local government.

The development comes only weeks after the major operators, with support from local transport authorities, completed the introduction of

smart multi-operator bus ticketing in Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Tyne and Wear, West Midlands, and South and West Yorkshire, as well as Nottingham, Leicester and Bristol.

Work is also under way in Scotland to provide the same benefits to Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen.

Later this year, Stagecoach will launch a new mobile app for customers, part of a suite of digital tools that already allow customers to check live running times for their bus services and buy travel straight from their smartphone. We offer the UK's first nationwide online bus planning service to provide personalised journey and ticketing information to our two million daily customers.

That is on top of providing passengers with the best value fares in Britain and the most extensive bus smart ticketing platform outside London.

Make no mistake, the foot is firmly on the accelerator pedal. Bus operators and our partners are serious about transforming travel, and providing travel solutions that match the lifestyles of consumers today and in the future.

There are some important lessons here. It shows how central the private

sector is in providing the vital investment needed to improve bus services. It highlights the scale of our ambition to meet the social and economic aspirations of communities across the country. And it provides further evidence of the practical benefits of joint working by all partners whose decisions affect the journeys bus passengers make.

But there is a major and increasing threat to the future of our bus networks: road congestion. Growing gridlock – particularly at peak commuter times – is strangling our towns and cities. Recent government figures show that journey times on Greater Manchester roads, for example, are now up to 40% slower than a year ago. The cost to the UK economy from congestion is estimated to be £11bn every year. At current rates, between now and March 2020 congestion will have wasted around £50bn – enough to fund the entire cost of the HS2 high speed rail project that is seen as a crucial part of the drive for the Northern Powerhouse.

Bus users are suffering, with congestion having a damaging impact on journey times and punctuality, both critical factors in maintaining long-term consumer confidence in buses. Congestion also pushes up the cost of travel, adding nearly £7m to the annual bill of running Stagecoach services in Greater Manchester alone. In London, worsening congestion and mushrooming roadworks have partly resulted in a 1.1% year-on-year fall in bus passenger journeys. The position is mirrored elsewhere in regions across Britain.

For too long there has been a lack of political will to tackle the thorny issue of congestion. Continuing failure to face up to that responsibility risks irreparable damage to vital public transport networks in our towns and cities. That must change. There must be clear policy direction from the Government to the country's agencies and authorities with responsibility for transport and our roads. We need a package of targeted bus priority measures, better bus interchanges and a significant expansion of bus park and ride.

Most importantly, as we anticipate the forthcoming Buses Bill, we need a focus on customers and enhanced partnerships. At this year's UK Bus Summit, my hope is that we can finally move the debate about the future of buses away from a pointless focus on structure; instead, collectively, we must take decisions that will make a practical and lasting difference to bus use in Britain and the quality and sustainability of the most important mode of public transport in this country.



A new twist in the franchising debate

With high expectations surrounding the Buses Bill, the session on the future of the UK bus market promises to be a forum for a wide range of views, with speakers both from operators and transport authorities. **By David Fowler**

The imminent Buses Bill and the findings of the board set up to consider the Nexus proposal for a quality contract scheme have given new impetus to the long-standing debate on how bus services should be organised.

The Quality Contract Scheme board, in its findings published in November, criticised the proposals to introduce franchising in the North East, and found that they failed to meet three of the public interest criteria specified under the 2008 Transport Act. Nexus and the North East Combined Authority sharply disagreed with the board's findings.

The authority is considering its options, which include continuing with the proposals as they stand, modifying them to take account of the board's criticisms, adopting a voluntary partnership as proposed by bus operators, or waiting to see what is contained in the Buses Bill with the aim of taking the proposals forward under the new

regime. With powers over bus services a central plank of the devolution deals struck between six of the UK's major cities and the Government, the expectation is that the bill (likely to be published in February) must make the process of franchising much simpler or risk undermining a key tenet of the Northern Powerhouse proposals.

Operators continue to favour partnerships, and a recent agreement with the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive pushed the boundaries of what had been achieved by this means.

Last September SYPTE announced a large-scale rationalisation of its bus network through a revamp of its existing bus quality partnership, which it believed would achieve many of the benefits of franchising. SYPTE interim director general David Young told *TT* at the time that the devolution deal agreed between the city-region and the Government in December 2014 meant the PTE had

the Government's active backing. "We sat down with the operators and the DfT to talk to the Competition and Markets Authority to make sure they could see no problems," he said.

The Quality Contracts Scheme board which examined the Nexus proposal considered that the scheme met two of the five public interest criteria: that it would lead to an improvement in service quality and that it would contribute to the implementation of local policies. The board considered it failed on increasing the use of bus services; value for money; and proportionality.

It concluded that the scheme would not lead to an increase in the use of bus services. Although patronage under the quality contract scheme would be above that of the "do minimum" scenario, the board considered that the scheme risked running out of money and was not affordable, "and on that basis we cannot conclude that it will lead to an increase in the use of bus services".

Sheffield believes its bus partnership will achieve most of the benefits of franchising

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The board argued that Nexus should have applied optimism bias of 41% to its assessment of costs. Nexus counters that optimism bias is intended by the DfT to be applied to economic appraisals where there is uncertainty over costs. "In this case, Nexus has a high degree of certainty over the costs of operating the existing network, and this is not a matter of material dispute with the bus operators," says an update report submitted to the North East Combined Authority leadership board.

The QCS board also concluded the scheme would not represent value for money. It believed that the benefits of quality contracts were "significantly overstated due to errors within the modelling", a point disputed by the transport authority and consultant Steer Davies Gleave, which did the modelling. The QCS board then reduced the net present value of the scheme as modelled to adjust for the perceived errors. This made the NPV less than that of the voluntary partnership agreement put forward by the operators. The board said it had "significant sympathy" with the view of Nexus that some of the intended benefits of the partnership might not materialise, but made no adjustment to the figures in the economic appraisal of the partnership.

Nexus also points out that even according to the QCS board's figures the proposed scheme provides economic benefits with a net present value of £130m, which it argues does represent "significant value for money".

Regarding proportionality, the board accepted that the quality

contract scheme could "contribute significantly to the well-being of those who live and work within the area". But it argued that the economic benefits of the scheme were intangible and subject to uncertainty, whereas operators would be affected by "hard cash impacts".

The NECA update report counters that "this analysis appears to overlook the point that the vast bulk of financial impact on bus operators arises from lost or reduced future profits, rather than from losses in the here and now". It argues that "lost or reduced future profits themselves are highly intangible, given that they have yet to be earned and rely on a number of factors that could be disrupted for numerous reasons – for example the arrival of new competition in the market, unexpected increases in the cost of fuel or wages, the loss of public sector subsidies, or the commercial strategies of the companies involved." Nexus rejects the QCS board's analogy between the estimated lost profits, estimated at between £85m and £226m, and the fine imposed by the Financial Conduct Authority on Barclays bank for interfering with foreign exchange markets.

Nexus concludes that the QCS board's opinion raises "a fundamental point of principle as to whether weighing the public benefit against the private loss of existing operators is an appropriate test of the costs and benefits of a new regulatory regime. For this reason, and because of the complexity, cost and adversarial nature of the existing process, Nexus believes that the case for new legislation is now compelling."

By pointing up the difficulty of making the existing legislation work, the board's decision has hardened expectations among proponents of franchising that the forthcoming Buses Bill will introduce sweeping changes to the regime.

Nick Forbes, leader of Newcastle City Council and transport lead for the North East Combined Authority, said: "Every devolution deal signed by government has built into it some aspect of bus regulation, a situation that risks being undermined as a result of this decision. The Government must urgently set out how its Buses Bill will address this threat to devolution, or see one of the most important parts of George Osborne's Northern Powerhouse kicked out before it even gets started."

The Department for Transport stressed that the board's assessment had been made under existing legislation. It said the Buses Bill would aim to provide powers to local authorities, particularly in areas with devolution deals, so they can franchise bus services subject to agreement with the Government.

"The Government is determined that local transport authorities with ambitious plans to grow and develop should be given the powers they need."

The operators' view was summed up by Stagecoach chief executive Martin Griffiths, who said: "We welcome the board's confirmation that the core franchising proposal was unaffordable, inflexible, high risk and not in the public interest."

It appears that the Buses Bill will generate controversy whatever it says.

The Nexus quality contract scheme was opposed by operators Go-Ahead and Stagecoach. Top right, Stagecoach chief executive Martin Griffiths; below, NECA transport lead Nick Forbes





THE GO-AHEAD GROUP: SERVING CUSTOMERS SINCE 1987

90% customer satisfaction
2 million passenger journeys daily
700,000 smartcards
2 million m-tickets



WE *believe* **IN** *working* **TOGETHER** **FOR** *better* **BUS TRAVEL**

Strong partnerships with local authorities are key to the future success of bus services.

Partnerships enable operators to provide better services for customers improving access to work, education and leisure while also helping local authorities achieve their goals such as reducing congestion and improving air quality.

With our partners we are helping communities prosper and creating stronger local economies.



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