



David Brown, Go-Ahead

Go-Ahead wholeheartedly supports Greener Journey's new report, *A Step Change for Britain's Buses*. The report brings together the views of a range of groups and individuals all with one thing in common – the desire to put the interests of bus passengers first.

The report sets out the role of the bus in supporting the local economy, reducing congestion and carbon emissions, enabling social inclusion and helping to maintain the fabric of our local communities. Go-Ahead's locally-focused approach to running our bus services gives us a clear appreciation of the part bus services can play in the community. Our services support the local economy and encourage social inclusion by helping people get around.

“Our services support the local economy and encourage social inclusion”

At Go-Ahead we aim to make our services as attractive as possible to our passengers. We offer good value fares, smartcard ticketing and services operated by clean, modern and reliable buses. We recently commissioned an independent survey, by Passenger Focus, which showed high levels of passenger satisfaction across our bus companies. Over the past year, passenger numbers have increased by 2.3% on our deregulated services – aided by car drivers switching transport modes as the cost of motoring increases.

This growth is good news for bus operators – but we can't be complacent. It's vital we continue to attract new users and offer good quality services so they keep travelling with us. Using good marketing techniques, more smartcard technology and social media will help us stay ahead of the game. We also need to do as much as we can to reduce our impact on the environment, and be even more active in explaining to passengers how bus use cuts congestion and carbon emissions.

Getting bus services right in difficult economic times is a challenge – but the significant value those services add to the UK's transport network means it is vital we do just that.

David Brown is group chief executive of Go-Ahead



Anthony Smith

When passengers are deciding how to make a journey they base their decision on cost and convenience. When bus and coach are seen as the most cost-effective and convenient form of travel then people will use them. But research also shows that non-users consistently overestimate the cost of public transport and underestimate the quality of the experience.

Passenger Focus's work with non-rail and bus users shows this to be the case. In our work we get folk to use public transport after years of only driving. People are often amazed how much trains and buses have improved since they last used them and sometimes they cost considerably less than they thought – especially when car parking charges are factored in.

Getting potential passengers to try and get into the habit of using public transport is key. So Greener Journeys' emphasis on getting people to try seems spot on. People will then broadly realise they do have a choice!

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Greener buses have another advantage – new investment brings new buses which makes the choice even easier. No one is going to willingly go on an old, grotty, dirty bus. New hybrid buses are quiet, smooth and smart – just the image public transport should be putting over. In addition, you can get a warm glow from clearly knowing that your travel choice is doing less damage to the environment.

So Greener Journeys has certainly helped make public transport look a more attractive choice as higher petrol prices provide an invaluable push in the right direction.

Anthony Smith is chief executive of Passenger Focus



Stephen Glaister

Buses are a vital part of our transport mix. As a form of mass transport they are – in principle – ideal: flexible in route, flexible in size, relatively cheap to procure and easy to operate.

Yet despite all this, overall, our bus services still cost a net amount of public money to provide. And this leaves us with a choice. Are we – as a society – prepared to subsidise a certain amount of unprofitable business to meet wider goals such as social inclusion?

The unpalatable truth for bus companies is that we seem willing to only go so far because first, we do not have the public funds to do otherwise and second, even if the money was available it would not create a sea change in personal behaviour.

“Is society prepared to subsidise a certain amount of unprofitable business?”

The private car is the dominant form of motorised transport in this country and even if buses increased patronage by a quarter, half, double, they would remain a minority method of travel, clearly suitable in many situations but not a universal solution.

If the government is serious about preventing things like social exclusion then it would recognise the benefits brought by using the car and make sure the cost of doing so is not beyond the poorest sections of society, especially those in rural areas where the problems of congestion are less rife and alternative forms of travel will always be rare and rarely satisfactory.

Cars are also meeting the carbon challenge. As the RAC Brighton to London Future Car Run will demonstrate in November there are a whole host of green vehicles either already in the showrooms or about to appear there which can help significantly cut the greenhouse gas emissions in the transport sector.

Whatever happens at the margins, and however important bus services are, the car is and will remain the true form of public transport: used by most of people most of the time.

Professor Stephen Glaister is director of the RAC Foundation

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