

SPECIAL
EDITION



The Bus Services Bill Are you ready?

This may seem a rather premature question with the Bus Services Bill still going through Parliament and the final form on many aspects still being unclear. One thing that has been welcomed by all sides and appears to have no objectors is the release of open data on routes, timetables, punctuality and fares, with all operators of local services being required to release the specified information.

The Department of Transport has said: "The intention is to ensure all bus registration data is submitted digitally – this is in keeping with the Government's digital strategy, which aims to improve processes through the use of digital tools, making interactions digital by default."

The timetable and route data information is scheduled to be required by Autumn 2017 with fares and punctuality to follow by 2020.

"Meeting the Autumn 2017 deadline for data should not be an issue for Omnibus customers who use OmniTIMES and OmniMAP" explained Omnibus Special Projects Manager Michael Meilton. "We have an established module for providing Electronic Bus Service Registrations (EBSR) that is already used by a number of clients and it is a small step for others to join that number. EBSR has been around for quite a while but there remains a certain reluctance by many operators

to move from the tried and tested paper format. Companies that have embraced EBSR can't speak highly enough of the benefits, as our case studies show."

Meilton continues, "although the Bill may change on its passage to legislation, the certainty is that Open Data and Digital Registrations will be part of it, **so we would encourage operators to talk to us now about taking the step before the deadline looms.** The process is painless and is one you will look back on and wonder why you didn't do it earlier."

Giles Fearnley, chairman of the Confederation of Passenger Transport's policy committee:

"The industry warmly welcomes the provisions on open data. It is so important to our customers that they have access to information about services, and increasingly in real time."

To the House of Commons Transport Committee

The move to include fares data in 2020 will require some definition of a data format as a standard to use for this process. Omnibus has been involved in a development project with Traveline Cymru (see our November issue of OmniNEWS) to enable fares data to be passed for inclusion on their Journey Planning website and we will follow the fares requirement within the Bus Services Bill regarding data obligations with interest.

"Currently only around 30% of bus service registrations are electronic. When the remaining Omnibus clients that haven't yet switched do so, that number will be well in excess of 80%. The potential benefits once the industry makes the move to digital are enormous. There is a lot to do before the 2017 deadline, but by removing the need to re-enter data for downstream systems, the data that operators supply will be consistent

wherever it is seen" concludes Meilton, "so - don't delay – jump on board today!"

PSV358 (revised September 2012)

Office of the Traffic Commissioner

www.gov.uk

APPLICATION TO REGISTER FOR A STANDARD BUS SERVICE

This form is to register a standard local bus service. Do not use this form if you wish to register a flexible service. Applications for flexible services must be made using form VOSA 529.

Please refer to the notes attached to the form before completing this form. The Guide to local bus service registration (PSV358A) will also help you fill in this form. If you have any further problems, telephone the Customer Service Centre on 0300 123 9000.

You must send the correct fee with this form (for details or telephone the Customer Service Centre on 0300 123 9000).

YOU MUST NOT START OPERATING THIS SERVICE UNTIL YOU HAVE RECEIVED NOTICE OF CONFIRMATION OF THE START DATE.

Your Details ✓ the boxes in CAPITAL LETTERS

Omnibus software makes EBSR so easy

East Yorkshire Motor Services (EYMS) has been providing fully electronic registrations (EBSR) for almost three years and it has certainly made life a lot simpler for the company.

Bob Rackley, Commercial Manager for EYMS, explains:

“It is far quicker, much more efficient and dramatically reduces the paperwork.”

EYMS invested in the whole package from Omnibus, using OmniMAP, TransXChange and the EBSR module. The company is also using the software to link the registration files to the corresponding set of schedules in OmniTIMES and OmniBASE.

Previously, all registrations were prepared manually, creating a huge amount of paperwork. Routes were traditionally hand-drawn and mechanical mapping wheels were used to measure routes manually on paper maps. Now, using OmniMAP, the data is accurate down to the nearest metre and uses updated maps cross-referenced to timetables in OmniTIMES so that every stop is recorded.

EBSR has given EYMS much more control over its data. Because all the EBSR documents are saved to the company's server, everything is now in one place and easily accessible. Bob explains: “as a manager I can access everything I need. I know that everything is there and that the data is up to date.”

Whereas in the past files had to be faxed page by page to the Commissioner's office, they are now sent electronically, with an instant reply acknowledging receipt confirming that the data has been accepted, giving operators a full audit trail. Copies of that single set of documents are also automatically sent electronically to local authorities, removing the need for multiple copies to be made.

Bob believes that, as time goes on, more and more operators will switch to EBSR. “For smaller operators, the investment in this technology may seem daunting, but the benefits more than justify the initial cost” he says, “plus, it really helps earn you respect as a professional operator. However, to really maximise the benefits of EBSR, it is essential that local authorities also invest in the software.”



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