

BREAKING NEWS! GO-AHEAD DUBLIN

Go-Ahead has taken four of the most popular Omnibus software applications (OmniTIMES, OmniBASE, OmniROTA and OmniMAP) for its new Dublin operation. The company will be running 24 routes in the Outer Dublin Metropolitan Area later this year, out of a brand-new depot.

Omnibus software has been used extensively within other parts of Go-Ahead for many years and this tried and tested track record played a big part in the company's selection of the software. Ed Wills, Managing Director for Go-Ahead Dublin explains:

"We have very much enjoyed using Omnibus software, so we knew that it was the best fit for our new Dublin operations."

He continues:

"We are really looking forward to working with Omnibus on this exciting new venture."

Installation of the new software will begin next month.

THE LIFESAVING SHOEBOXES



▲ The Omnibus elves hard at work

It was less than a year ago that we ran a moving story about Director Carol Crichton's Charitable Trust – the Anam Cara Trust. In the weeks and months since then, Carol has been working hard liaising with planners and architects to build a purpose-built drop-in centre for Kenyan street children. Work is on schedule to open the clinic later this year.

In the meantime, Carol continues to fundraise, and her colleagues at Omnibus lent their support by packing Christmas gift boxes for the children. The shoe boxes are full of simple gifts including toys and also

practical items such as a new toothbrush. Clean toothbrushes can save a child's life, as it means that they don't have to share them with the rest of the family, protecting them from infections such as HIV.

Carol comments: "It is amazing how something as small and inexpensive as a toothbrush can make such a difference. The boxes brought so much joy to the children, and that is its own reward."

The Trust isn't just focussing its efforts in Kenya, it has also recently sent 160 mosquito nets to protect families in Uganda.

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Keeping pace with growth

HCT Group is the world's leading social transport enterprise; putting people and the planet first. Hackney Community Transport has grown from providing low cost minibuses for local community groups in 1982 to a multi-million pound organisation, running commercial contracts in order to continue to provide community transport.

HCT's rapid growth has meant that it very quickly needed to move away from schedules created in self-generated Excel spreadsheets to an industry-specific software package. Omnibus was the provider of that solution 17 years ago and continues to work with the Group to maintain cost-efficient and TfL-compliant duties and schedules for 125 buses on 13 London routes.

Performance Director Jon McColl explains that the Omnibus software assists in many areas of bus operations: "We began by renting the scheduling package of OmniTIMES, OmniBASE and CrewPLAN for our London bus operations. It enabled us to quickly and efficiently create duties and schedules to TfL-compliant specifications."

He continues: "The software also helps enormously in the bidding process. Typically, driver costs are fifty percent of a TfL bid and so, particularly when we opened our second



▲ Omnibus specialist software enables HCT Group to run and continually expand a highly efficient social enterprise transport operation

depot in Chingford, we were able to implement a successful bidding strategy and increase the volume of work."

The Omnibus software also comes into its own on a day-to-day basis for analysing and revising schedules. As Jon explains: "we constantly monitor changing traffic conditions and OmniTIMES and OmniBASE enable us to adapt to those changes, whether it is a short-term change in running speeds due to temporary roadworks or longer-term traffic trends."

TfL conducts regular capacity reviews and may issue revised specifications part way through a contract. HCT uses the Omnibus scheduling package to respond to these reviews. Many of the new bus routes that HCT bids for involve TUPE regulations and the operator is able to use the function in CrewPLAN to analyse and cost out various options to construct the optimum duties.

In managing the 425 drivers, HCT uses OmniROTA to create mutually acceptable rotas for consultation with unions such as Unite. The system also quickly flags up imbalances in terms of weekly driver pay hours.

"We have used nothing but Omnibus specialist software from the very beginning" says Jon, "and it has enabled us to run and continually expand a highly efficient social enterprise transport operation that has grown on average 20% per year for the past ten years."

Read about how CT Plus uses OmniDAS in London in our October 2017 issue, and how CT Plus Guernsey is using OmniSTOPdesign in our ALBUM 2017 issue, both available as a download from our website www.omnibus.uk.com

THINK YOU KNOW CREWPLAN?

Spotlight on the latest enhancements

For all operators, driver wages make up a significant proportion of operating costs, so it is essential to have the most efficient and robust schedules in place to operate services. To achieve this using traditional manual scheduling methods is a very time-consuming process, so many Omnibus customers use CrewPLAN, the automatic crew scheduling module that works in conjunction with OmniBASE.

As a core component of the Omnibus scheduling suite, CrewPLAN is able to compile a cost-effective duty schedule solution using its comprehensive set of Labour Agreement rules along with the extensive Network requirements of a typical operation. All operators have their own unique requirements regarding maximum and minimum duty lengths, mealbreak times, travel allowances, payment rules and much

more; CrewPLAN takes all of these into account and is able to produce a robust and compliant solution in a fraction of the time taken to do the job manually. Experimenting with rule changes or evaluating different options is a simple task, allowing the user to choose the most appropriate solution for their needs.

CrewPLAN uses a proven algorithm, with an excellent pedigree, but the Omnibus developers are always looking for ways to improve the results. Users have already seen benefits from enhancements introduced in recent times, including:

- more duty types and more flexible type configuration;
- more route group definitions and extended route coverage constraints;
- a greater number of mealbreak locations and associated travel movements.

The ability to handle various types of Crew Relief arrangements, including ferry bus movements

and 'running on and off', has also been enhanced. All of these changes, along with increased data size limits and improvements in the use of the scheduling algorithm have resulted in more efficient solutions being possible in many real-world situations.

The Omnibus Support Team includes a number of experienced schedulers, who are always available to help users achieve the maximum benefit from using the software. In the case of CrewPLAN, they are able to give advice on setting up the rules in the most appropriate way for specific user requirements, and also guide the user through the CrewPLAN process from start to finish, providing a greater understanding of how the software works and how to get the best from it. As always, this help and advice is available as part of maintenance and support to existing users trying to improve on their results as well as new users, who may have an understanding of scheduling principles but have never made use of automatic duty compilation.

As we move into 2018, development on CrewPLAN is continuing, and there will be more news about our latest innovations in future editions of OmniNEWS...

BUILDING A STRONG BRAND IDENTITY

OmniSTOPdesign is helping Transdev Blazefield to push its marketing messages and create genuine brand loyalty.

Brand identity is very important to Transdev Blazefield. The company's buses are instantly recognisable to passengers on routes across Lancashire and North and West Yorkshire.

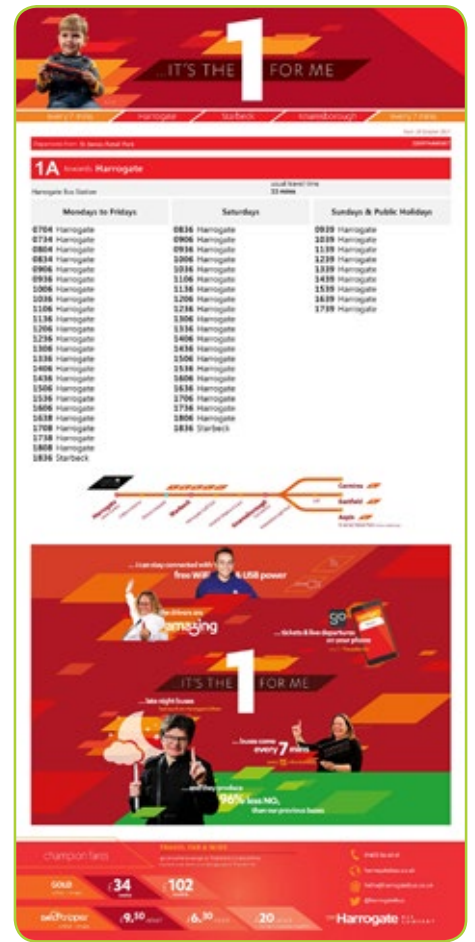
Each route has its own branding, so customers instantly recognise their bus as it approaches their stop. The colours are replicated on all bus stop displays, to help everyone to quickly identify which bus they need.

This colour coding of routes gives Transdev Blazefield's designer a headache though, as Marketing and Communications Manager Ben Mansfield explains: "We have thousands of bus stops that all need their own unique displays. Our designer used to use spreadsheets and manually input the data, which was extremely time consuming and of course open to human error."

The operator, which already uses the Omnibus timetable and scheduling modules along with OmniDAS, has now installed OmniSTOPdesign, which has made an enormous difference to the marketing department.

"Not only can we now import all the data automatically, but we can add individual branding for each route. We can also add specific marketing messages, and even tailor our branding to routes that cross ticket boundaries. Everything now takes seconds rather than days, and our designer is free to apply his talent to designing our branding infrastructure of liveries and posters" says Ben.

Transdev Blazefield's marketing team has found Omnibus to be excellent to work with. "We are a challenging customer for Omnibus, but they understand what we are trying to do and are very responsive" says Ben, "my colleagues and I hold them in high esteem."



▲ Bus stop branding is important for Transdev Blazefield

Putting D&G Bus on the map

When D&G Bus, an independent bus operator based in Stoke-on-Trent, upgraded their ticket machines to Ticketer, they needed a specialist mapping system in order to utilise the Ticketer schedule adherence feature. As D&G were already using OmniTIMES and OmniBASE, it was an easy decision to take OmniMAP.

Chris Almond, Bus Network Manager for D&G Bus Limited, explains: "The first of our new Ticketer machines were installed just a few weeks ago on a third of our fleet of 100 vehicles. One of the key features for us was schedule adherence, but for that we needed accurate stop level positions and timings. Our existing mapping software was not a specialist industry one and was no longer supported, and online maps just don't give you the same control."

Using OmniMAP, D&G Bus can monitor the time of every journey at every stop, every day, with full control over the network. They can now react to changes, either due to traffic patterns or longer-term issues.

Chris has found that using a specialist software provider saves him and his team a lot of time. He explains:

"The Omnibus software is so unbelievably straightforward to put data into and get effective results out. It provides very detailed data that we can use for a number of purposes."



▲ OmniMAP enables D&G Bus to monitor the time of every journey at every stop.

D&G Bus will also use the OmniMAP data for BSOG reporting and, in the longer term, plans to convert to EBSR. TransXChange Exporter has also recently been purchased for the efficiency and flexibility that the UK standard for exchanging public transport timetables and related data provides.

APPY DRIVERS

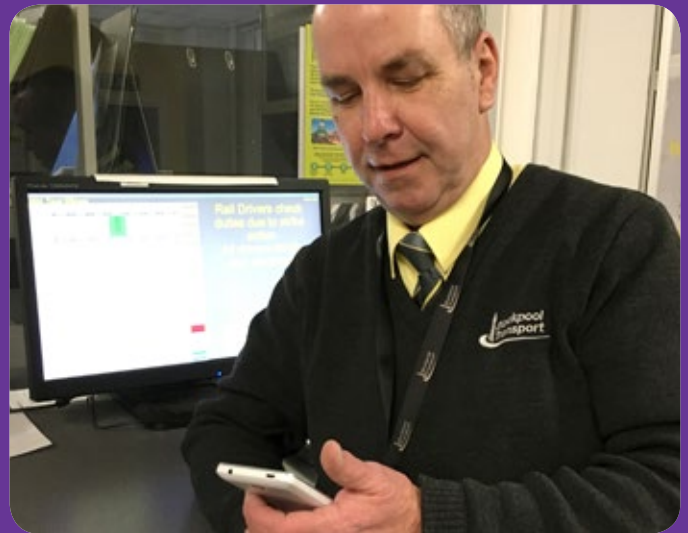
We have written about Blackpool Transport previously in OmniNEWS, and in the Album issue last year we announced that they had taken the new myDAS Touch app. Now, just over six months on, we can report that the drivers love it.

Mandy Davies, Head of Operations for Blackpool Transport, tells us that the drivers have really taken ownership of it. "They immediately saw the benefits, particularly when it means that they can access their information and make plans at their convenience, such as when they are at home with the family" she says.

The first to use the app were the company's union reps, who immediately gave extremely positive feedback and one went as far as saying that it was 'the best tool the company had ever given to drivers'. It was instantly recommended to drivers. As a result, over 200 drivers had downloaded the app within four weeks of it launching.

Mandy says that it has made a huge difference to how they communicate with drivers. She explains: "We used to have a constant stream of people at the depot office window asking questions about shifts and holidays. Now everyone can access all their information remotely and take control of holidays, shift swaps and overtime. They can view their roster weeks in advance and put in requests for holidays".

She continues: "The system is linked to the depot allocation system, OmniDAS, and automatically updates drivers' details when shifts are changed and holidays booked."



▲ Blackpool Transport drivers have really taken ownership of myDAS Touch

The company is also about to roll out DAS messaging, whereby supervisors can send out messages to drivers through the app. These can be general, such as details of new diversions, or tailored text messages for individual drivers. They can also send out yes/no messages for instant responses to, for example, offers of additional shifts.

Mandy concludes: "While the queue at the depot window has all but vanished, we are sharing more information with our drivers than ever. Our drivers can now make decisions about their shifts and holidays while they are at home with their families."

Bus Services Act – Open Data Update

With the Bus Services Bill passing through Parliament and becoming an Act in the summer of 2017, a requirement was placed on operators to release details of routes, timetables, real-time information and fares as open data, in a specified format.

Omnibus, like many others, awaited details of the formats that would be required, knowing that quite a bit of the preparatory work had been undertaken in the lead up to the Bill becoming an Act.

The passing of the Bus Services Act was one of the last acts of Parliament before the election of last summer and the implementation of the Act was put on hold. Autumn arrived and as the dust settled it became clear that a new team had been assembled within the Department for Transport to take the implementation forward.

To enable them to come up to speed and move forward, their first step was to launch a Bus Open Data Discovery Project to understand the potential technical solutions and options to open up bus data. A key element of this Discovery Project has been to engage with bus open data users to understand their needs and with operators and suppliers about how those needs can be met. Omnibus has been consulted and is participating in this Discovery Phase as a key supplier of data creation and manipulation tools.

The aims of the Act have not changed, although the timescales have slipped from those previously envisaged. Currently it is planned, subject to Parliamentary timetabling, to lay regulations in Parliament by Spring 2019 with Bus Open Data phasing in completed by the end of 2020.

"Enquiries and discussions with clients on their ability to provide Electronic Bus Service Registrations has certainly increased" commented Michael Meilton, Omnibus Special Projects Manager, "as companies are planning to get ahead of the rush when the deadline is set. Many are now supplying data in an electronic format for ticket machines and real time and this is very much the next small step."

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