

# Reading Buses reaps rewards

Reading Buses is reaping the rewards of improved operating efficiencies after switching its depot allocation system to OmniDAS.

OmniDAS was developed and tailored by a team of programmers and project managers from Omnibus working in conjunction with Reading Buses and the operator has already reported improved efficiencies and increased productivity.

The decision to update the old system was made in order to improve efficiencies and support a growing business need. After exploring the market extensively, Reading Buses selected OmniDAS because of its modular aspect and the ability of Omnibus to tailor the system to fit Reading Buses' unique requirements.

OmniDAS is now being used by many aspects of Reading Buses' operation, including schedulers, allocations officers,

on the day controllers, driver performance managers and the personnel department and each user required just one day of training. The software has made such an improvement to operations that the company plans to extend its use into the engineering department.

Jacqui Gavaghan, Performance Director for Reading Buses, comments: "We thought that upgrading our system would be a large undertaking because we have complex terms and conditions for our employees, plus an extensive pay grade system, but OmniDAS was more than capable of managing all the levels of complexity and the switchover was extremely smooth. Our teams worked very well together and the Omnibus developers



▲ Adam Conner, Controller for Reading Buses

really understood our business and were very responsive to our requirements and the whole thing was project managed extremely well. On the day, we got exactly the system we wanted and we have improved our efficiencies as a direct result."

## Come and see us at Euro Bus Expo



▲ Come and see us at Euro Bus Expo at the NEC on 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> November

It has been a busy year for Omnibus with lots of new customers, existing customers taking additional services and enquiries from across the UK and indeed around the world.

**We are looking forward to giving customers and other interested parties a sneak preview of the latest updates to the Omnibus scheduling package at stand 5T/122 in the Technology Zone at Euro Bus Expo.**

We will also be demonstrating the capabilities of OmniMAP and OmniDAS, which are central to our product range.

Visitors to our stand at Euro Bus Expo are also invited to discuss scheduling problems and the exceptional consultancy service that our team provides to customers to maximise resource utilisation, or just have a dip into our tin of chocolates!

**Peter & Carol Crichton**

## OmniGROWS

It has been a busy few months at Omnibus, with four new appointments to strengthen the team at Oldham and around the UK.



In the summer, Omnibus appointed **Paul McNamara** as Business Support Manager based at Head Office in Hollinwood. Paul's role includes developing new business as well as maintaining existing relationships and he is already engaged in overseas projects as well as consultancy work and training for existing clients.

Also based at Hollinwood is **Rajendrababu Ramaswamy**. Raj is a University of Manchester graduate and will be part of the team developing Omnibus' next generation products.

**Simon Storey** joins the Omnibus Commercial Team and he will be based in Reading. Simon joins the company from Stagecoach where he spent six years as Commercial Officer and was recently seconded to Stagecoach UK Bus events where he was involved in transport planning and operation for the Olympics and Paralympic Games.

**Richard Sharples**, who will be based in Northumberland, will also be joining the Omnibus Team. Richard has extensive experience of the public transport sector, having previously been an Implementation and Support Consultant with Trapeze for their revenue analysis and scheduling software.



▲ D&G Buses now makes changes to schedules and timetables in a fraction of the time

## Scheduling for Independent Operators

This year has seen a record number of enquiries from independent bus operators who are looking at scheduling software for the first time.

Some are planning ahead, others are looking to adopt new technology and some, even in a difficult economic climate, are growing and need their systems to keep pace.

The products that are attracting enquiries from this new source include OmniTIMES timetable design and management, the OmniBASE operations database and scheduling system and OmniROTA for crew rostering. They are also looking closely at the Omnibus CrewPLAN crew scheduling module and TransXChange, the interface with the Department for Transport. These systems all link together to allow operators to conceive, plan and schedule complete operations, as well as monitor the efficiency of existing schedules and experiment with route, crew or time changes.

Many new enquiries have come from bus operators who are finding that scheduling is taking up too much time and in order to remain competitive they need to work faster and more efficiently. Often these companies don't employ a full time scheduler but are finding that the work is becoming more and more demanding.

Where in the past timetables and schedules might have been calculated manually, operators are now finding that they need their data in an electronic format to work with other systems and integrate with other areas of the business.

One business that has adopted Omnibus software for the first time is D&G Buses based in Crewe. David Reeves, the company's Managing Director, comments: "We found that our manual system was becoming too cumbersome and we needed something more flexible and efficient. The Omnibus software has enabled us to complete our timetabling and scheduling in a fraction of the time, and if we want to experiment or make changes we can do so in an instant."

GHA Coaches, a Wrexham based company with about 100 coaches and 100 buses, needed an automated system to keep pace with growth. Dan Parry explains: "Up until last year we had been using a manual system. Now we can explore different parameters and variables to see if we can make operational efficiencies, which would have been very time consuming to do manually. The changeover to the Omnibus systems was very straightforward as their excellent customer service means if I have any queries I get a response within the hour."

Impera Bus is a new company which was only set up last year and has a fleet of 40 buses operating on the Wirral Peninsula under contract to Merseytravel. Mark Steens is delighted with the time saving aspect of the software: "We can now add a new route and create a set of duties in a fraction of the time and it gives us extremely useful information instantly about vehicles and drivers in real time."



# CASE STUDY HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

This year will see Hertfordshire County Council using OmniTIMES and OmniSTOP in order to produce timetables for over 250 services which are displayed at over 4,000 bus stops in the county.

OmniSTOP will be used to produce stop-specific printed timetables for display at bus stops and bus shelters across Hertfordshire while OmniTIMES will be used to import data electronically from an existing database.

OmniSTOP was adapted specifically for Hertfordshire County Council by the Omnibus in-house team of software experts to allow the Council to dictate their own look and feel for the timetables produced, including size, layout and the use of graphics. Two distinctive templates have been developed: a "departure list" style for use at locations with a high volume of services and a more traditional "timetable matrix" style for use in rural locations.

Omnibus has also developed a new "destination finder" export function to allow Hertfordshire County Council to produce a list of destinations served, to incorporate



▲ Herts County Council uses OmniSTOP and OmniTIMES

into onward travel information posters displayed at bus and rail stations and other key locations.

Omnibus was selected through an official tender process which measured potential suppliers on product functionality, product appearance, project timescale and cost over three years. Hertfordshire County Council's aim was to produce large volumes of printed timetable publicity quickly and efficiently.

Omnibus experts have been training Hertfordshire County Council officers in the use of the new software.

Stuart Pile, Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport at Hertfordshire County Council said: "We have been impressed with the way the team at Omnibus has worked with us to create a bespoke solution enabling us to provide passengers with new clear and concise stop-specific information for the first time."

## Consulting the experts



▲ Veolia Transdev consulted with Omnibus on new timetables and schedules

While software forms the backbone of Omnibus' product portfolio, the company is increasingly getting involved in consultancy projects, assisting clients in getting the most out of their software and systems.

One such project has just been completed for Veolia Transdev on one of the company's bus networks in the North of England.

Consultants from Omnibus have been working with a team from Veolia Transdev to assist in the compilation of new timetables and vehicle schedules. This has involved testing and assessing the feasibility of a variety of different scenarios aimed at improving bus services, and ascertaining the resources that would be required to operate them.

In the second phase of the project, Omnibus Consultants will be providing assistance with crew schedules and rotas.

Omnibus was asked to provide assistance in order to test a series of scenarios, using Omnibus software, very quickly. More than three-quarters of the project was conducted remotely at Omnibus' head office in Oldham.

Nigel Eggleton, Marketing Director for Veolia Transdev, commented: "We have worked with Omnibus for a number of years now, and it made sense to ask them to bring a different perspective to our research. They are extremely proactive and their experience often brings new ideas to the table."

# OmniMAP takes off

▼ More bus operators than ever are now using OmniMAP

It has been a phenomenal year for OmniMAP, Omnibus' street level mapping system for planning, displaying and editing bus services and stop networks.

More bus operators than ever are now using the system, particularly for feeding into Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) systems.

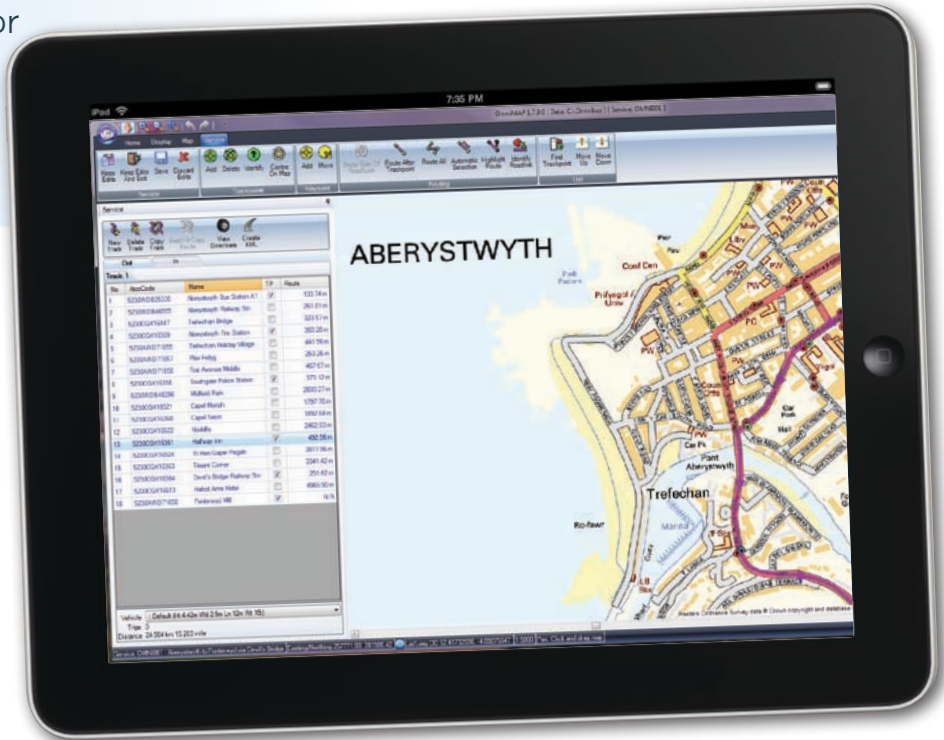
One company that is using OmniMAP to link to RTPI systems is Uno (originally the University of Hertfordshire's student bus service and now operating public bus services in the county).

Operators using OmniMAP are also using the system for accurate distance measurement of bus routes and as a quick method of enhancing timepoint only bus timetables to include all en-route bus stops.

OmniMAP will also complete timetables with GIS data, ready for TransXChange exports into Electronic Ticket Machines and Journey Planner systems. For example, Translink in Northern Ireland is using OmniMAP to enhance existing timetables with GIS information with a view to using the data for exports to third party systems.

National Express Buses has adopted OmniMAP to help provide stop level timetables for all services as the company prepares to install RTPI systems across their entire fleet.

The company is also using the system to enable them to take full advantage of moving to Electronic Bus Service Registrations and the savings that can generate.



## FirstGroup installs OmniMAP



▲ FirstGroup has almost completed the roll-out of OmniMAP

OmniMAP's latest customer, FirstGroup, has almost completed the rollout of the advanced GIS module.

Omnibus developers have built in extra functionality in response to user feedback and they are working closely with FirstGroup to develop the software further.

FirstGroup chose OmniMAP to fulfil several objectives, including supporting its smart card and e-ticket machine project. The bus company is also using OmniMAP to provide data for Real Time Passenger Information systems.

David Houston, Scheduling Systems Analyst for FirstGroup, comments: "Around 90% of our UK operations are now using OmniMAP and it has been extremely well received. It was designed specifically for bus

schedulers but remains intuitive and very easy to use. Omnibus is unique in its customer/supplier relationships; they have a very different approach meaning that the software has been developed specifically for us. The Omnibus team respond quickly to our feedback and make their products work the way we want them to."

Because the OmniMAP system is so intuitive in use, all FirstGroup users were fully trained in using the software after just one day. Omnibus is providing ongoing product support and training as required by FirstGroup.