omninews

See us at Album 2014

Omnibus will be making the trip north of the border for this year's ALBUM Conference, kindly hosted by Lothian Buses. The theme for this year's event is 'Innovate, Integrate, Motivate' which certainly fits with Omnibus's strengths.

Come and find out what innovations our development team have been working on by visiting our stand at the world famous Murrayfield Stadium from 13th to 14th May.

Peter Crichton
Managing Director
Omnibus

▲ *Peter Crichton, Managing Director of Omnibus*

Rumsfeld Update

The inaugural 'Rumsfeld Summit' was held last month at the Omnibus HQ in Hollinwood.

More than a dozen representatives from Local Authority Public Transport Teams from across the country attended a series of presentations and discussions.

Recently enhanced features within existing software products and potential new developments formed the focus for the first half of the event. There was much discussion about options for hosting the software, and OmniNEWS will report more on this topic in a future issue.

In the afternoon, delegates joined smaller groups to look more closely at specific products to ensure that they continued to get the most out of them.

Peter Crichton, Managing Director of Omnibus, commented: "It was a very worthwhile day and certainly one that we will look to repeat. We were especially pleased that so many customers took time out of their busy schedules to make the trip to Hollinwood and we hope to welcome them again soon."

CrewPLAN developments near completion

Software development is an ongoing mission that is never fully 'completed' as there is always something that needs to be changed to keep pace with changing customer requirements.

The Omnibus Development Team has been focussing on CrewPLAN recently and the latest developments are nearly ready for customers to make full use of. Following on from recent improvements within the CrewPLAN product to increase duty types and multi depot working, the team is now looking to increase its capability, fundamentally changing how large problems are solved and producing more cost effective answers.

Initial testing is proving very encouraging and we hope to give more news and a potential release date for this work in a future issue of OmniNEWS.
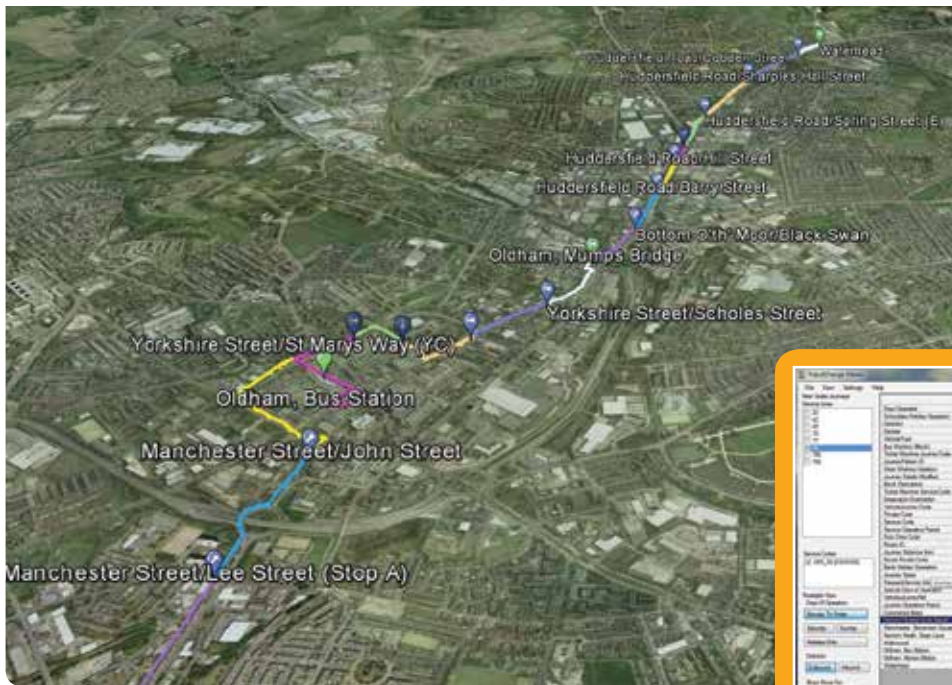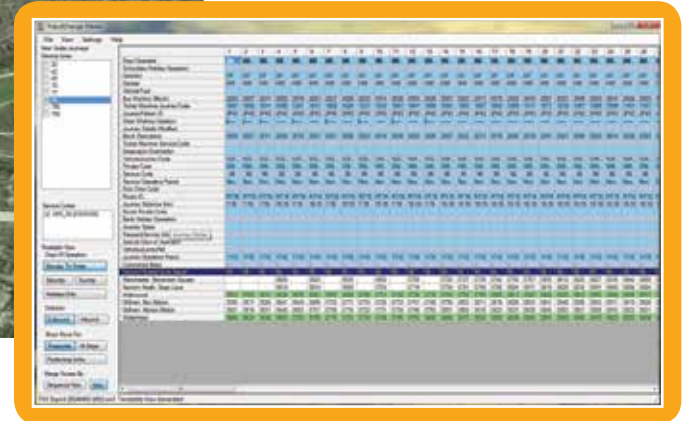
▲ Google Earth displaying a KML file

The TransXChange Viewer module ▼

Focus on TransXChange

As take up of Electronic Bus Service Registration (EBSR) continues to grow, customers are increasingly asking us about TransXChange – the UK nationwide standard for exchanging bus schedules and related data between computer systems.

TransXChange can be used for the electronic registration of local bus services and for the transfer of timetables and routes to journey planners, real-time vehicle tracking systems and ticket machines.

Omnibus has a suite of tools which enable users to easily and quickly export, import, validate and view TransXChange files. Our TransXChange applications are regularly updated and enhanced to respond to and anticipate changing customer requirements.

Our TransXChange Viewer module can instantly open a 'raw' TransXChange file from any source and display it as a timetable while including all the associated attributes such as validity dates, routing and operational details. This is all available without the need to import, publish or convert the file from the original xml format.

A particularly popular feature in this module is the ability to view the route. The TransXChange Viewer creates an OpenGIS® KML file which can automatically launch a KML viewer application to display the route. OpenGIS® KML files can be viewed in many applications including Google Earth, Microsoft Live Maps, NASA WorldWind and ESRI ArcGIS Explorer.

Where have all the schedulers gone?

The UK bus industry, it would appear, is suffering from a shortage of skilled schedulers.

Omnibus is receiving more and more requests from companies seeking assistance, because the traditional schedulers are not being replaced by young people looking for careers within the field.

While scheduling software can take on most of the administrative burden, systems still require a high level of knowledge from back room staff in order for workable schedules to be produced.

At times of staff shortages or to cover peaks in workflow, Omnibus has worked with customers to produce all manner of reports, schedules, timetables, rotas and display material.

Omnibus has a long history of employing people from within the bus industry who have many years' experience in a wide range of roles. This knowledge bank serves the company well when it comes to working closely with customers, as well as in developing new products.

Omnibus customers have the facility to tap into this knowledge for problem solving or when there is too much work for their own in-house teams. It allows customers to plan ahead, although last minute calls for help are also answered.

The consultancy team has also assisted bus operators undertaking network bids. Recently the team has assisted with bids in Scandinavia and the Middle East.

Translink OmniDAS update

As reported in our OmniNEWS issue from last summer, Translink has been in the process of installing OmniDAS for driver allocation.

The roll-out of OmniDAS was completed this month and it is now being used at all 26 Translink depots. Previously all allocation was done manually and with the installation of OmniDAS Translink is expecting to make considerable cost savings across the business.

Translink will be using OmniDAS for all driver and vehicle management, including personnel management, time and attendance records, crew allocation and all driver information.

Martin Lundy, Project Manager for Translink, says that the roll-out has gone extremely well: "Every depot is up and running making it easier to have consistency across the network."

Translink is using OmniDAS to maintain greater control over its 2,000 drivers' working hours in line with legislation and the working time directive. The company is now developing the wages function and is working closely with Omnibus to enhance the software and utilise every function.

Translink will also be using OmniDAS to improve communication with drivers by providing them with detailed and timely information about their shifts.

Martin Lundy comments: "We have worked closely with Omnibus for a number of years and have an excellent relationship with their team. They are extremely helpful and have a good understanding of our business."

Translink has been an Omnibus customer for many years and already uses OmniTIMES, OmniBASE, OmniMAP, OmniSTOP and OmniROTA.

"Every depot is up and running making it easier to have consistency across the network."

A first for trams

Although the name might suggest otherwise, Omnibus software is not exclusively used for buses. Croydon Trams have been using OmniTIMES for creating timetables and OmniBASE for scheduling for more than ten years.

▲ Not just for buses – Andy Gray, Schedules and Performance Analyst for First Tram Operations

Croydon Trams is part of First Group, which is a long-standing Omnibus customer, so it was a natural decision to apply the software used for scheduling buses for the Croydon Tramlink network, although with one major benefit not usually seen with bus routes.

Andy Gray, Schedules and Performance Analyst for First Tram Operations, explains: "Using the Omnibus software for trams was a straightforward process as the principles are the same. However, a number of our tram routes have single track sections so we have to ensure that vehicles are not scheduled to pass each other at those points. The Omnibus software allows us to produce a trip graph of journeys which instantly shows if trams are crossing each other in the wrong place."

Because Omnibus software is widely used within other bus operators in London, Andy finds it very useful when he requires bus replacement services to cover tram engineering works. "Abellio and Metrobus both use Omnibus so we can easily create the journeys we want them to run and they simply upload them straight to their system. We can also very easily connect the replacement service with the tram services that are running, saving everyone a lot of valuable time."

Andy, who is also a licensed tram driver and drives one of his own schedules every month, says that one of the biggest benefits of Omnibus software is the way it has been designed: "The systems have been developed by schedulers rather than computer programmers and you can tell. We also receive excellent support; most queries can be solved with just one phone call. I would particularly like to thank Paul Wreghitt, for all the help he has provided over the years."

A moment in time

Add your records to the Omnibus Society Snapshot log

Capturing a moment in time holds a certain fascination – it is why historic images and records are always popular. Now the UK passenger transport industry has a unique opportunity to capture a moment for posterity.

The Omnibus Society's library and archives contain a treasure trove of timetable and service information stretching back many decades. The Society has launched a national project to create a comprehensive snapshot of bus operations and is asking every UK operator to submit a set of operational documents for their bus services between 7th and 16th June 2014.

It should be relatively simple for operators to get involved, as most use computerised systems for scheduling and operations.

For more details please go to **www.omnibus-society.org/news/project-snapshot/**

OS
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