omninews

Omnibus spans the globe

Whether they operate on busy urban networks or remote rural roads, whether they drive on the right or the left, and whatever language the passengers and drivers converse in, the challenges relating to efficient bus operations are universal.

Omnibus is well established as the market leader in the provision of bus scheduling software in the UK. Over the years, directors and managers have moved from bus company to bus company and popped up in all four corners of the globe.

When they have been faced with scheduling problems they have turned to Omnibus for assistance and the company's reputation has grown. The company now regularly sends staff overseas to work on projects and in this special issue of OmniNEWS we thought we would share some of the case studies with you.

Wellington Ferries, Trolleybuses and Cable cars

In OmniNEWS we usually report on how bus operators use the Omnibus software to improve efficiencies. Occasionally we have mentioned trams, but in this issue we are really branching out, as one Omnibus customer in New Zealand is using the software for buses, school buses, trains, ferries and, uniquely amongst our users, trolleybuses and cable cars.

Metlink in Wellington, New Zealand, is the only Omnibus customer to use the software for a trolleybus operation ▲

Greater Wellington Regional Council operates the Metlink network across the region, a system that last year was used by 90% of residents, more than any other city in New Zealand. The Metlink network has 4 rail lines, over 100 bus and trolleybus routes, more than 200 school bus services, 4 harbour ferry stops and a cable car route.

The Council has used Omnibus software for over 12 years, ever since an on-line article from a UK trade magazine prompted a call to Omnibus.

OmniTIMES is used by Keri Howlett-Hewitt and his team of three systems analysts to create timetables, which feed into OmniSTOP to automatically produce the on-street bus stop displays.

The data created in OmniTIMES also feeds the on-line timetables on the Metlink website, as well as supplying Real Time Information by integrating with Trapeze software. Keri

says that Greater Wellington Regional Council has a highly productive way of working with Omnibus. He explains: "Far from being a hindrance to a working relationship, the time difference between New Zealand and the UK actually works in everyone's favour. We send through any requests for assistance, or changes to the software, via email.

Then, as we leave the office for the day the Omnibus team is just starting work, and 'overnight' they act on our requests and everything is usually fixed and ready for us on the next working day."

Obituary: David Price

It is with great sadness that we record the death of one of our staff, David Price. Joining Omnibus in 1998 after a career in bus industry management, David will be known to many clients as the principal developer of our OmniSTOP program, often having been involved in the training as much as development. He had a keen sense of humour and his anecdotes will be greatly missed by his colleagues.

Who is Omnibus?

For bus operators in the UK, 'Omnibus' is synonymous with public transport scheduling software, whilst for Local Authorities it is – planning and publicity. As this issue of OmniNEWS has focussed on users outside of the UK, we thought that it would be appropriate to introduce the company properly.

Omnibus's market leading range of passenger transport software is designed by bus people, for bus people, and this defines the company's unique approach.

The company has a range of products used around the world to create timetables, vehicle and driver duties, publicity and manage all aspects of depot allocation, all of which are designed to save customers time and money. Omnibus software is employed by some of the world's largest passenger transport organisations and some of the smallest too, covering bus, light rail and ferries.

The core products available are robust and proven in use all over the world, with 25 or more years' worth of evolution and development, augmented by more specialised modules which enable users to meet specific needs and get the most value from the Omnibus solutions. **www.omnibus.uk.com**

SOME OF OMNIBUS'S CUSTOMERS, LARGE AND SMALL, AND WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT OMNIBUS:

FirstGroup – Omnibus is unique in its customer/supplier relationships; they have a very different approach meaning that the software has been developed specifically for us.

Blackpool Transport – We have confidence in the support and assistance we will receive from Omnibus both in implementing the changes and also on an ongoing basis.

Croydon Tramlink – The systems have been developed by schedulers not computer programmers and you can tell.

Reading Buses – Omnibus developers really understood our business and were very responsive to our requirements… and we have improved our efficiencies as a direct result.

Abellio – The software is easy to use and has enabled us to accurately create and amend detailed schedules as well as helping us to improve efficiency.

Hertfordshire County Council – 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. **Read more at: www.omnibus.uk.com/clients.html**

OMNIBUS PRODUCTS AT-A-GLANCE

OmniDAS – driver and vehicle allocation system

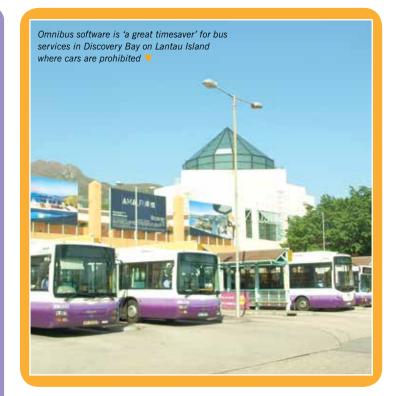**OmniTIMES** – rapid timetable creation software system

OmniMAP – a powerful tool for planning, displaying and editing bus services and stops

OmniSTOP – for creating instant and eye-catching bus stop displays

CrewPLAN – to automatically produce efficient crew schedules

OmniBASE – vehicle and driver scheduling package

OmniFLAG – the asset management tool for bus stops, shelters and other roadside assets

Omnibus software is 'a great timesaver' for bus services in Discovery Bay on Lantau Island where cars are prohibited ▼

Omnibus in Discovery Bay – Hong Kong

A prime example of someone moving to a new job after having used Omnibus software before is the installation with a new Hong Kong customer, Discovery Bay Transit Services Limited.

Discovery Bay is a private residential development on Lantau Island where private motor vehicles are prohibited. Accordingly, DBTSL provides local services with 54 buses and around 100 drivers carrying residents to the Ferry Pier, MTR stations and even the Airport for onward travel.

DBTSL has taken OmniTIMES, OmniBASE, OmniROTA and Crewplan. Benson Yau, Assistant Manager – Transit, had used Omnibus software in his previous position with NWS Transport Services Ltd. (Citybus Ltd. and New World First Bus Services Ltd.) and was happy to link up with the software again.

Benson explains: "I used the software at NWST and changed to a manual system when I joined DBTSL so was keen to get back to using a tried and tested product. Not only is it a great timesaver, using Crewplan has already resulted in a reduction in the daily driver requirement."

Peter Tsang, Senior Manager - Transportation, added "We went out into the market to see what was available and Omnibus not only have a flexible range of products that met our requirements, they were also highly competitive on price. We had no hesitation in signing with Omnibus."

From Birmingham to Bahrain

▲ *Omnibus is working on a new venture for National Express in Bahrain*

National Express Bus uses OmniBASE, OmniTIMES, OmniMAP, Crewplan and OmniROTA in the UK. February 2015 will see a new venture for National Express in Bahrain, and the operation will be adding OmniDAS and OmniSTOP to manage the entire operation.

The contract for National Express' joint venture, Bahrain Public Transport Company, was awarded by the Bahraini Ministry of Transportation, and will initially see 141 new vehicles serve the capital Manama and inter-urban routes across the entire Kingdom of Bahrain.

National Express currently uses Omnibus software to plan the commercial bus network across the West Midlands, consisting of 1,600 buses and over a million passenger trips per day. Tim Reynolds, Operations and Network Planning Manager for National Express Bus International Division, explains: "The Omnibus planning tools and systems allow us to plan, test, schedule, monitor and operate our wide ranging network efficiently and accurately every day, ensuring we provide the best possible service to our customers."

The Bahrain Public Transport Company joint venture will be the first time that National Express has used the OmniSTOP and OmniDAS modules. OmniDAS will link with the BPTC staff identity card system, ensuring an integrated approach to staff management and personnel record keeping.

National Express uses the Omnibus planning and scheduling tools to develop and test operational scenarios, with the wide range of reports being used to check the efficiency and effectiveness of the solutions developed. Tim explains: "We can compare present, planned and potential scenarios and we use each part of the system in a different way across our business from partnership working, network planning, crew and vehicle scheduling to developing working rules and rotas that are in line with our staff expectations for well-being and safety excellence."

The Omnibus software is also used in the National Express International Division to develop operational solutions for a mix of tender opportunities. "We are able to test the robustness of proposed overseas networks, comment on operational viability and conduct bid stage network reviews that highlight efficiency savings and directly input to our financial submissions" says Tim.

Omnibus provides National Express Bus with immediate and ongoing support in a variety of ways, including fault rectification, consultancy services and training, both in the UK and overseas. This ongoing support is well received by National Express, as Tim explains: "The company is excellent to work with. Training is well delivered, informative and well structured. The support line is extremely helpful and quick to respond. The consultancy services have been invaluable in our present activities and have played an important role in recent bid successes."

Tim concludes: "It is the best system currently on the UK market to manage our large and demanding operation. We will be evaluating the performance of the new modules in the Bahrain environment and as new business opportunities emerge we will work closely with Omnibus to explore mutually beneficial opportunities and where appropriate expansion of the use of their systems."

KENYAN SCHOOL BUS PROJECT UPDATE

In our Euro Bus Expo issue of OmniNEWS, we reported that Omnibus was supporting the Harambee Schools Kenya charity. As this issue of OmniNEWS went to press we received some exciting news from HSK Trustee Amie Willenberg.

Amie told us that they have raised enough money to buy their first bus and even have some funds left over to go towards building a secure shed for it.

For more information, visit **www.hsk.org.uk**

A Google Transit first for Kuwait

With over 40 million passenger journeys a year, Citybus is a busy operator using several Omnibus applications to improve efficiencies.

▲ *Citybus in Kuwait has been an Omnibus user for seven years*

Citybus has been an Omnibus user for seven years, using OmniBASE for scheduling, OmniTIMES to create instant timetables, OmniROTA to produce cost effective rotas and OmniDAS for driver and vehicle allocation. Omnibus was recommended by the CEO of Citybus, Richard Woods, who had experienced the efficiencies achieved as a result of using the application in his previous roles with operators in the UK.

Kuwait being a different environment for public transport compared to UK, one of the first projects for Omnibus was to customise their application to a monthly pay cycle rather than the usual weekly format. Scheduling efficiencies and subsequent cost savings on drivers' pay and overtime were seen immediately, with a reduction in processing time whilst increasing revenue.

Alvin Lewis, Manager – Systems & Service Delivery for Citybus, was particularly pleased with the automation of driver attendance records: "Previously we had been using Excel spreadsheets. When we switched to Omnibus and automated our processes, the accuracy of payments improved substantially which was of huge significance to the business."

The ability to make instant changes to schedules was also an important feature, "This is something we had struggled with prior to the introduction of Omnibus" says Alvin, "We can now adapt more quickly to changing business needs considering the environment we operate in and this helps us to achieve significant cost efficiencies."

As well as the adaptation to monthly pay cycles, Omnibus also customised the application to comply with the local labour law in terms of overtime payments.

In conjunction with Omnibus, Citybus aims to be the first passenger transport operator in Kuwait to upload schedules to Google Transit, the public transport route planner.

The relationship between Citybus and Omnibus has been a strong one for many years, as Richard Woods explains: "We are delighted to be associated with Omnibus and appreciate their prompt responses to our service requests. I would strongly recommend other operators to use the application and experience the efficiencies themselves."

Citybus plans on adding two new applications provided by Omnibus to address passenger information needs (OmniSTOP to display bus timetables) and improve service delivery (OmniFLAG to manage roadside assets such as bus stops and shelters).