

Transport Enterprise Case Study Bristol Free Bus



Background

FreeBus is a non-profit organisation funded by memberships and donations from Bristol residents. Whilst passengers are encouraged to become members or donate, the service is free at the point of use. FreeBus aims to develop a model for communities to take control of their transport systems.

The first regular FreeBus service launched in June and now runs every Saturday. The FreeBus project has more than around 160 supporter members and 800 wider members.

Over £7000 has been raised so far, but this is only the start! FreeBus aims to expand to serve additional routes around Bristol and new routes are currently being planned.

The benefits of offering transport which is free at the point of use include:

- It is the best incentive to get people out of their cars and onto the bus
- Quicker boarding times, faster timetabling, more efficient use of vehicle and man hours
- Less risk of theft and improved driver safety

Finance and Structure

FreeBus is a Company Limited by Guarantee and is funded through a combination of donations, memberships and non-statutory funding. From 2012 the project expects to establish Bristol City Council subsidised services.

Donations are invited both through the project website and at point of use. FreeBus members can pledge an annual fee of £20 or £50 to support the project. The project is confident it can generate further pledges once the service launch is announced, and expects to have recruited a total of 1000 members by the end of 2011.

FreeBus Patrons offer major financial support to the project as individuals, community groups or businesses, and may take an active role in the future development of the project.

FreeBus are trying to encourage businesses on the route to support the project and expects significant interest once the initial service is launched. The project will take an active role in presenting the benefits of the service to businesses and their employees.

As a CLG with a charitable constitution FreeBus benefits from Gift Aid on all its donations.





Temple Meads Station Approach (dep)		10:00	10:30	then	17:00	17:30
Cabot Circus Bond St / Marriott Hotel		10:05	10:35	every	17:05	17:35
Broadmead The Haymarket / Primark		10:10	10:40	30	17:10	17:40
City Centre Colston Av / Eagle House		10:15	10:45	minutes	17:15	17:45
Temple Meads Station Approach (arr)		10:25	10:55	until	17:25	17:55

Identifying a Need

The city of Bristol has an estimated population of 433,100. First Group PLC run 95% of all bus services in the city. Bus fares are amongst the highest in the UK. Just 13% of the population travel to work by public transport and ridership on the city's buses continues to decline year-on-year. Average peak time speeds in Bristol are 16mph, with 23% of journey times spent stationary, costing the local economy £350 million per year. Cars are used for 45% of journeys under 2km.

Bristol Temple Meads Railway Station is used by more than seven million people per year, of whom a significant proportion require onward travel to the City Centre. At present onward travel from Temple Meads is by private car or suburban railway. FreeBus will target primarily those driving to and from the station but will also promote the service to those using public transport and taxis. The financial incentive and express nature of the FreeBus service will be powerful drivers for travel behaviour change.

Cuts in public spending, increases in bus fares and rises in charges relating to private car usage are likely to increase the cost of both public and private transport in the coming months and years. This will present further opportunities to FreeBus to promote and expand their operation. The success of FreeBus demonstrates that it is possible for a group of individuals take control of an issue, like public transport, by pooling time, energy and resources to achieve specific goals.

These case studies show the kinds of enterprises that are forming a new type of local economy, where people and the planet matter as much as profit.

Transition Network: REconomy project

www.reconomyproject.org

Challenges

The over-riding challenge is to make the organisation financially sustainable. So far, it has not been easy to persuade retailers along the existing route to invest, despite hopes that they would value the service as a way of bringing in business.

Donations on the bus itself average around 30p, which does not meet the actual running cost of around 50p per person trip. Many people do ride for free and this hopefully fulfills the aim that those who can afford to pay, do so and those that can't make use of the choice to travel for nothing.

FreeBus is in the process of applying for Charity status but this has not been a totally straightforward process.

Despite some issues with funding, the Directors are confident that the service will be able to expand over time. All the Directors are volunteers. The actual provision and running of the buses is contracted out. This currently means that the buses are not running on "green" fuels.

With Council subsidies for public transport being cut, services run by and for local people are an increasingly appealing option.

For more information contact www.freebus.org.uk

