

Questions Arising from Recent NGT Drop-In Sessions

Bus services into Leeds along Otley Road are already frequent and effective, but presumably most people would appreciate the kind of improvements promised by the 'New Generation Transport' proposals: reduced journey times, more comfortable vehicles, and reduced exhaust emissions by the vehicles.

However, current proposals will have a damaging impact on the local environment on the Northern route (between the city centre and Lawnswood) even though they may be appropriate for the route south of the city centre. This is because the existing roads are unsuited to large articulated vehicles that need lots of space to manoeuvre.

Comparable improvements to those predicted for NGT could be achieved with less damage and more cheaply by selecting vehicles that suit the route rather than adapting the route to suit the vehicles.

Is NGT Overkill for the Northern Route?

1. In the past Leeds demolished and replaced lots of older housing and buildings. Later this was seen to be a mistake and now conservation and refurbishment are the favoured options. The NGT proposals seem to be in danger of making a comparable mistake.
2. The street environment from Hyde Park to the Ring Road is attractive and pedestrian-friendly and some of it runs through conservation areas. People appreciate the wide pavements, mature buildings, old stone walls, mature trees, and the various groups of low-rental shops.
3. Running the NGT along this route would affect many of those features because, as well as adding unsightly wiring gantries it will require demolition of buildings and appropriation of gardens and pavements. The section of new road behind the Arndale Centre in Headingley will be especially damaging where it interfaces with the existing road.
4. Maybe we need to adopt a more caring approach to our street environment. For example, if on the Northern route we followed the Bath approach and used single or

Bath Uses 'Luxury Diesel-Electric Buses' to Service Large Park and Ride Locations – Why Not Leeds?

"The new, eco-friendly hybrid diesel/electric buses offer a luxurious travel experience with *individual leather seats, free on-board Wi-Fi, next-stop displays, and climate control* on the upper deck.

These high-tech vehicles also help to protect the environment and preserve Bath's ancient buildings – the fuel-efficient engine stores up enough braking power on the journey into Bath to enable the bus to operate on battery power alone in the city centre, which means virtually no emissions!

The engines are also quieter, for a smooth, comfortable ride. These low-floor, fully accessible vehicles offer easy access for wheelchair users and plenty of room for buggies."

[Quoted from Ref 1]



Diesel-electric bus used on Bath's park-and-ride routes

double-decker non-articulated buses [see box] which can manoeuvre on existing roads, the benefits would be:

- a. Less damage to the amenity of residents along the route through demolition of buildings and trees and appropriation of pavements and gardens.
 - b. Big savings in infrastructure costs since no wiring gantries to install and maintain.
 - c. Big savings on vehicles because they would be standard mass production units instead of 'specials' usable only in Leeds.
 - d. Quicker implementation.
 - e. Ability to adapt the vehicles to new engine and fuel technologies when they become available, as seems inevitable. [Ref 2].
 - f. More flexible routing since no infra-structure needed.
5. Overhead wires are not the only way to achieve less polluted roads. Reduced local emissions plus genuine overall CO₂ reductions can be achieved in ways that are already in use or being trialled elsewhere. These include:
- a. Diesel-electric power units with regenerative braking. [Ref 3],
 - b. LPG (liquefied petroleum gas), methane, or hydrogen, as fuel,
 - c. Electric power from storage batteries. [Ref 7].
6. Diesel-electric buses are in wide use elsewhere in Britain and abroad. The ride is comfortable because the engine stops when the bus stops, and the bus accelerates smoothly and quietly. Also emissions are 30% less than with conventional diesel buses.
7. Leeds company Optare and others are already pioneering low emission buses, including battery powered [Ref 7]. A partnership between Leeds and Optare would benefit both parties and probably generate jobs in the area.
8. New vehicle technology will almost certainly be available by the time NGT is in service because technology advancement is accelerating whereas planning procedures take longer and longer.

Questions about the NGT Proposals

The drop-in sessions highlighted the following issues:

1. The advertised reduction in journey time by only 3 minutes for the Northern section of the route is not very significant. Existing bus services could match that if given off-bus ticketing and the NGT 'features' of reduced number of stops, 'exclusive lanes and roads', and 'special equipment to give priority at traffic lights and junctions'. [Ref 4].
2. It's hard to see how the privileges enjoyed by NGT vehicles will not slow down normal bus and car traffic, even though a representative of NGT denied that this would happen.
3. Using overhead wires to feed electricity to vehicles is old technology that has been used and discarded by many cities including Leeds itself. The wires are unsightly

and expensive to erect and maintain. Although the system reduces pollution at the point of use, overall it produces more CO₂ in the environment than diesel engines because of power losses in the electricity supply chain. [Ref 5].

4. NGT literature suggests that large 'park and ride' car parks are a benefit of the NGT, but this is misleading because such car parks work with any public transport. For example, Bath has three well-used park and ride locations serviced by 'luxurious' diesel-electric buses [see box and Ref 1].
5. The words 'comfortable' and 'clean' are used in the NGT literature, but there's no obvious reason why conventional buses should be less comfortable and clean than NGT vehicles.
6. A spokesperson at a drop-in session said that the council favoured a large project because they will regain some of the control over local transport that was lost during the national deregulation of buses, and this is also stated on the NGT website [Ref 5]. However the Council expects to have implemented a 'Quality Bus Contract' scheme in a couple of years [Ref 6] so this argument for the 'large project' will not apply because the Council will be able to specify the level of service that bus companies must provide.

References

1. The Park and Ride scheme in Bath:
http://www.firstgroup.com/ukbus/bristol_bath/journey_planning/bath_park_ride/.
2. "Optare's integrated design is unique and features an easily demountable power pack. This allows our buses to be future proofed, giving operators peace of mind since, with continued rapid advances in low carbon technology, Optare buses can be upgraded to whatever is the best system over the 10 to 15 year life of the bus."
http://www.optare.com/og_introduction.htm.
3. London claims to have 301 diesel-electric hybrid buses and that they "reduce emissions of local pollutants and carbon dioxide by at least 30 per cent compared to conventional diesel buses."
<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/corporate/projectsandschemes/2019.aspx>. They are also in use in Bath, Manchester, Birmingham, among others. See
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hybrid_electric_bus.
4. <http://www.ngtmetro.com/About/NGTHomeCP.pdf>.
5. <http://www.ngtmetro.com/faqs/WhyTrolleybuses.htm>.
6. "Metro wants to improve bus services throughout West Yorkshire, reverse the current decline in passenger numbers and ensure passengers have services that meet their needs and expectations. To do this, Metro plans to introduce a Quality Contract Scheme that would make Metro responsible for setting routes, fares, timetables and quality standards. The bus operating companies would then run services under contract to Metro."
<http://www.wymetro.com/news/releases/qualitycontracts>.
7. "Britain's only full-size viable battery-powered bus model, the Optare Solo EV."
http://www.optare.com/pr_07_12_10.htm.