

## Good Practice Case Study

# Nottingham City: Officially the best public transport in the country ▼



## Public satisfaction figures get the flag of approval ▼

An independent MORI survey reported user satisfaction figures of 76.9% (over 90% for trams) for public transport in Nottingham making it the joint highest in the country. This, combined with the sustained increase in use of public transport in the city, 7% since 2004 excluding concessions, has earned Nottingham City Council a Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) Green Flag.

Many factors have contributed to this success; from the strategic town planning and partnership working resulting in the introduction of quick and direct services for people to get where they want to go, through to the quality of the transport itself including bus and tram stops around the city. The Council's commitment to public transport has seen £20

million invested in buses since the year 2000.

*"Nottingham is a vibrant, cosmopolitan city; more people are coming to live and work here, tourists enjoy visiting and developers are also attracted to the city. Our public transport is pivotal to this success; people need to be able to move around the city quickly, easily, safely and cost-effectively to make them want to spend time here and importantly, to come back. So, by making users happy with our services, we are indirectly ensuring the continued growth of the city and its economy as well as meeting our residents' needs."*

Councillor Jane Urquhart  
Portfolio Holder for Transport and Area Working  
Nottingham City Council

## Nottingham's public transport: The facts and figures ▾

Nottingham is an expanding major regional city, with both key out-of-town employers and important health and university centres.

Greater Nottingham, the principle urban area, has an official population of 650,000 with 750,000 people living within the travel-to-work area. In total 75 million passenger journeys are made each year across the public transport network. As well as three main bus operators, the city boasts an expanding tram system, introduced in 2004 and now used by ten million passengers each year.

In line with the Government's 'Shared Priority for Transport' strategy, Nottingham City Council's objectives for local transport between 2006 and 2011 centre around; improving access to jobs and services, tackling congestion, reducing air pollution and improving road safety. In addition, three more local objectives include:

- Supporting regeneration
- Improving quality of life
- Efficient maintenance

The following 'headline' facts can be used to highlight some of the Council's successes to date against these objectives:

**1.** 85% of households have access to regular, daytime services to the city centre, employment sites, hospitals and universities; this is the highest accessibility level outside

London. Almost 800 buses leave city centre bus stops every hour.

**2.** Buses and trams now account for 34% of all traffic into the city, up from 31% in 2001.

**3.** In quarterly monitoring carried out by the Council, 94% of public transport journeys start on time, one of the best records in the country. In the same monitoring, Nottingham's public transport users recorded satisfaction rates of over 90%.

**4.** Greater Nottingham has 25 kilometres of bus lanes as well as an extensive bus priority system.

**5.** 35 main routes have a service every 10 to 15 minutes; 20 main routes run services through to midnight.

**6.** Access to unlimited conurbation, multi-operator travel for around £2 per day making public transport excellent value as well as convenient.

**7.** 95% of buses and all trams have low floors, making them accessible and easy-to-use for families with young children in pushchairs and the physically impaired. Buses on the 15 main bus 'corridors' in the city are all under five years old and have at least Euro 3 emission standards.

**8.** More than 1,000 bus stops have brand new waiting facilities, with shelters, CCTV and lighting. In addition 400 stops now have displays with real time information.

## Planning for better public transport ▾



Nottingham City Council believes that being a unitary council with planning and transport functions held together has been fundamental to its success.

Nottingham has seen significant development and rejuvenation in the past decade, with external investment from developers and other agencies such as East Midlands Development Agency (emda). The support of the Greater Nottingham Transport Partnership has also helped bring the public, private and voluntary sectors to agree a strategy and draw in investment from the Regional Development Agency for Transport.

These developments have proved the catalyst for change in public transport; they have focused attention on how people will want to move around the city once the development is complete.

The transport team works under the umbrella of the Development department to understand how the different public transport services can co-ordinate to best facilitate that. In addition, the interest and investment from private developers has helped unlock the possibility of funding for these initiatives.

For example:

**Re-development of Trinity Square (2007):** This allowed the 'Turning Point' transport initiative to be introduced, developing a bus and taxi priority route which has fundamentally changed the traffic flow on Parliament Street, a major traffic route in the city and one prone to congestion

**Clear Zone (2004):** A transport initiative that transformed the Market Square at the same time as clearing roads surrounding the square to give priority to the new tram system

## Six routes to success ▾

Over and above the close working between Planning and Transport, the Council believes that there are six other main factors that have contributed to its continued success with public transport in the city:

**1. Strong leadership and striving for improvement:** Without this, such significant customer-led change would not have occurred. In addition, it is believed that the ‘little and often’ approach has been fundamental to keeping momentum going over the past decade; service users through to Council members have seen results quickly and therefore have been more accepting of future initiatives.

**2. Good partnerships with independent operators:** 90% of Nottingham’s bus routes are delivered commercially by ten operators, three of which are the main providers. These companies are locally based and have re-invested heavily in the city, rather than diversifying into other geographic areas. An example of how the great relationship between these operators and the Council has benefited the city is the Voluntary Bus Quality Partnership (VBQP). This is a partnership between the main operators and Council that has helped formulate and co-ordinate a public transport system that has grown logically with the expansion and regeneration of the city. This has facilitated the implementation of

many initiatives, such as bus priority routes, enforcement of bus lanes, improved waiting facilities and the Smartcard joint ticketing system.

**3. Political support:** Nottingham City Council has been fortunate to have strong support for its public and transport plans from members, particularly the Transport Portfolio Holders; this has been very useful in facilitating change and achieving objectives. Public Transport Officer Andy Gibbons, believes that this support is self-fulfilling, saying: *“Once the team demonstrated the success of projects, members feel more confident in agreeing to further initiatives and want to get involved. This has then resulted in a fabulous calibre of forward-thinking, influential Portfolio Holders for Transport over the years, which only serves to help more projects get the green light.”*

**4. Funding:** It is imperative to work in partnership with other agencies to secure funding, for example, the Department of Transport and emda. In addition, Nottingham City Council has:

- a.** Worked with other organisations where the service will be of direct benefit to them such as the universities and health trust for the Link bus services (see below.)
- b.** For future transport initiatives from 2011, Nottingham City Council has demonstrated an innovative, and perhaps brave,

approach to funding with the introduction of the Workplace Parking Levy, an annual charge for employers within the city with more than eleven parking spaces. This is estimated to raise £14 million pounds a year for 23 years, to invest in future transport plans such as Phase Two of the tram.

**5. Geography:** Nottingham is a vibrant city, and whilst growing, is still relatively small and compact, which enables planning for public transport to be focused. In addition, the high level of interest the city in

from developers has really provided a catalyst for change.

**6. Stability:** There are many long-standing members within the Transport team; for example, Transport Strategy Manager Chris Carter and Public Transport Officer Andy Gibbons have both been in the team for a decade. This allows solid, long-term relationships to be established with other internal and external teams, a consistency which inspires confidence alongside detailed understanding of the long-term strategic vision.

## Linking people with places ▾

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The public satisfaction and usage rates of Nottingham's public transport speak volumes; the list of services to provoke such a positive reaction is too numerous to detail, but here are just two examples of the most successful customer-led projects:

**Objective:** Improving access to jobs and services

**Solution:** Link bus network

Nottingham is a key regional university city, with almost 60,000 students across its two universities. The city also boasts two important hospitals, attracts shoppers from around the region, and is the nearest large city to East Midlands Airport. It was identified that it was important to ensure people could travel to these key sites directly. The Council and the three main operators worked in partnership with the Primary

Healthcare Trust and the city's universities, as well as other agencies such as the Department of Transport and emda to secure funding to introduce direct services.

The result is the Link buses network:

- Includes SkyLink (the first to be introduced), MediLink and UniLink, plus CentreLink, which runs between the two main shopping centres
  - MediLink alone undertakes 1.2 million trips per year and is also linked to the tram and park-and-ride network
- Approximately six million trips take place across 55 routes, using 60 vehicles bought specifically for these services
- Importantly, each of these services is subsidised by less than £1 per trip

**Objective:** Improving quality of life  
**Solution:** Smart Ticketing

Smart Ticketing provides users with discount on public transport, both trams and buses across all operators within the VQBP, to encourage regular usage. It is a flexible system, with more than 200,000 people in the city subscribing to the system and more than 50% of them using it regularly.

It allows people to purchase tickets

to suit them. For example, by timeframe e.g. a 30-day pass for people who use it for their daily journey to work, or by monetary amount, which allows people to use it as and when required. It was recently re-launched to provide users with a multiple-use card with added value benefits. It can now act as a leisure and library membership card as well as a travel pass, and offers subscribers discounts from local retailers and restaurants.

### Around the corner ▾

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Nottingham's long-term vision for 2020 involves introducing greater equality into the city, including regenerating some of the more deprived areas, making every neighbourhood a great place to live, and connecting more local people to jobs. Public transport will have its role to play in these ambitious plans, and already exciting initiatives have been agreed, with work poised to commence:

#### 1. Phase Two extension of the tram network:

In its six years, the Nottingham Express Transit (NET) has a 92% satisfaction rate, is used by more than ten million passengers per year and has contributed to a 20% uplift in public transport use at peak times from the northwest corridor into the city.

Phase Two of the tram network has recently been approved by

Government, which will service the South side of the city, including links with the Queen's Medical Centre, with the aim of reducing the number of annual car journeys by three million.

The importance of these plans has been recognised at the highest level. Sadiq Khan MP, Labour's Transport Minister said: *"The Nottingham tram continues to be a great success in encouraging people onto public transport. These extensions provide the opportunity to improve on this success and give people in the south of Nottingham, and longer distance commuters, quicker, more convenient access to the city centre. And of course the extensions will also boost economic growth and regeneration in the city by improving access to a number of key employment sites."*

**2. 'The Hub':**

A multi-million pound project to modernise and transform Nottingham's railway station, integrating the rail service with the tram and bus service. Work is due to commence at the end of 2010 and will be the catalyst for a regeneration programme for the immediate surrounding area.

**3. Statutory Bus Quality Partnership:**

With the continued regeneration planned and resulting public

transport improvements, it has been recognised that a system is needed to ensure the smooth-running of public transport in the city centre. Therefore the Statutory Bus Quality Partnership is being introduced in May 2010, covering 300 buses and 100 bus stops in the centre to look at a wide-range of issues and opportunities to improve including; information, ticketing, enforcement, monitoring of services and operations.

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### East Midlands Improvement and Efficiency Partnership Case Studies

The East Midlands Improvement & Efficiency Partnership (EM IEP) is committed to celebrating the successful, innovative and imaginative project work that exists in the East Midlands region.

The EM IEP Support Team publish case studies showing how East Midlands councils are improving services, and delivering significant improvements and efficiencies.

The case studies are intended to inspire councils in the region, and indeed nationally, to transform services and benefit from the processes developed by those councils that have pioneered the way forward.

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