



"VALUE FOR MONEY" can mean different things to different people and if the criteria is to assess LRT V BRT costs, then the ORANGE and LEMON approach with its variable values will need some adjustment. Before any calculations can begin, the economic life of the two vastly different parameters, if not adjusted, can affect the result. Comparing Supertrams with trolleybuses could easily fall into this category.

Urban transit passengers in Britain must watch for cheque economy moves which, by this very definition, could equate to lower quality services compared with those originally intended. In general, we appear to be faced with two basic choices, a congestion charge or a second class transit ride. Could the French policy of trams working with feeder buses come to the rescue? There are already many new tramway projects in operation with many more either "in build" or on the drawing board. Information coming to UK is that all have been highly successful.

Could the present roads policy in Britain be regarded as a knee-jerk reaction coming from a somewhat confused DfT? Even Sheffield, with a successful Supertram system, has been instructed to convert its tramway extension to Rotherham into a guided bus route. Even more puzzling is the alleged advice to Leeds, the Supertram plan may be funded providing it does not require a two-rail track to operate on. Could this be a preparation for a trolleybus system or something similar?

A team of engineers are currently looking at tram-train applications in Germany which, if copied, will require a two-rail track. This has all the "hall-marks" of a future local impasse. Passenger gains would be railway services accessing shopping streets without a need to change vehicles.

A well known newspaper in Yorkshire has stated that when the name Supertram is mentioned in Whitehall, a deadly quiet and a vagueness bordering on amnesia descends on the meeting. The assumption made by the press was that the real reason is incompetence. (YORKSHIRE EVENING POST - Comment column - 11th July 2007).

A "cloudy" explanation given to West Yorkshire Metro for forcing bus-type systems onto Leeds was its strong initial cost/benefit calculations in favour of Supertram. As many benefits were disregarded, the cost/benefit ratio altered somewhat but still remained positive. A few people have noted that the bus system currently in favour does not appear to have gone through the rigours of a public inquiry.

FOOTNOTE

The following press items have tended to display more support for light rail against a METRO or a trolleybus network. The writers of items one and two are well qualified to offer an opinion. Item three is about proposed trolleybus abandonments in Switzerland and certainly not supporting the Leeds policy. As these items deal with costs, false economy and scrapping trolleybus systems, they have been included below:

- 1) "The whole idea of building very expensive METRO's in cities is wrong. Instead modern tram or light rail systems should have been developed at a much lower cost". "Several cost effective tram networks have been destroyed to give-way to ineffective metro lines which are very expensive to build". (Kuri Popo PhD - University of California - RAILWAY GAZETTE INTERNATIONAL - page 476 - August 2007)
- 2) Guided bus legislation is deplorable. (Geoffrey Claydon -TRAMWAYS & URBAN TRANSIT - page 360 - September 2007).
- 3) A referendum on 17th June 2007 supported the proposal to abandon trolleybus operation in Basel. The City Council in Schaffhausen will also abandon its trolleybus system by 2010. (TRAMWAYS & URBAN TRANSIT - page 355 - September 2007)

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