



TRANSIT : TWO YORKSHIRE CITIES WITH COMPLETELY DIFFERENT REQUIREMENTS

Leeds and Bradford, only ten miles apart, appear to have been sadly neglected by our paymasters at Westminster despite earlier enthusiasm by nearby Marsham Street. Both cities have no doubts about their requirements but no progress has so far been achieved and substantial development costs remain without any Government support.

The Government's record is "woeful" (LRTA President - TRAMWAYS AND URBAN TRANSIT - page 9 - January 2008) and if anyone should doubt the feelings behind this statement, the long list of new tramway systems (world-wide since 1978) will demonstrate how we are slowly slipping backwards. Reproduction of this list, too extensive for this Discussion Document to record, tends to dwarf our five new tramway systems and two light metros built over the last 29 years.

Britain's general attitude, bordering on unfairness towards the non-car owning population, could be regarded as biased with the continued fight for decent urban transit systems in both cities bogged down and certainly complicated.

It would not be unreasonable to suggest that the politicians of around 50 years ago, responsible for virtually giving away perfectly good (at that time) transit systems in both cities, would now agree that the actions were somewhat short sighted. Taking Leeds first, the 1959 tramway closure was not the last to go, this was actually Glasgow in 1962. Leeds was probably the best UK example of efficient light rail with its many miles of segregated track and some well advanced rolling stock. Having said that, it would be very difficult to place Glasgow because it operated a large fleet of modern trams.

Public opinion, especially in Leeds, tends now to be somewhat divided between the motoring community, who have no wish to share road space with trams, and transit realists who openly say that Supertram is the only solution. Many shopkeepers also agree with this latter point because of the danger of motorised shoppers going to other nearby towns. What may eventually put Supertram back onto the agenda is the tram-train concept with Leeds and York eventually becoming experimental test-beds.

Bradford, although slightly smaller than Leeds. almost found itself with an early form of the tram-train concept when consultants, following BR's attitude with the Ilkley line, suggested a light rail replacement. It was short lived though when it was decided to electrify to main line standards. Bradford still has hopes of having a "state of the art" trolley bus system but, like Leeds, gained a guided-bus route instead. Both Leeds and Bradford introduced trolleybuses in 1911 but whereas Leeds scrapped them in 1928, Bradford found them as ideal for its hilly terrain and eventually became the last trolleybus operator in the UK. Bradford badly needs a service that will connect its two railway stations and a trolleybus link may well be the answer.

Prepared by F A Andrews. LRTA Assistant Publicity Officer

For LRTA Membership details contact:
LRTA Subscriptions,
38 Wolseley Road,
SALE M33 7AU

Email: membership@lрта.org

For more details about Light Rail please contact
LRTA Development Officer,
7 Crofton Avenue,
Horfield,
Bristol BS7 0BP
Email: development@lрта.org

Visit our Website www.lрта.org