FALSE INFORMATION USED TO DESCRIBE A TRANSIT SCHEME

Introduction

This document is partly designed to correct a practice of using false information regarding transit modes. A striking example is the continued reference to Leeds Supertram as a failed project. The government had already labelled it as "not value for money" but did not provide any explanation to justify this statement. Going back to basic descriptions appears to be the best way forward.

Buses:

The British public have already demonstrated that where buses are used as the principle transit mode in a transport system, they (the public) will look around for a suitable alternative, unhelpful to city centre shopkeepers (less customers). The bus though is a vital component in an integrated transit system by providing feeder services to either a tram route or a suburban railway station and also on routes with low patronage.

Trolleybuses:

In some places (such as Bradford) hilly routes are better served by trolleybuses because they can improve on the limited performance of the diesel buses. No trolleybus routes exist in the UK at present. This is probably because they are vulnerable to snowy conditions.

Supertrams

Most places in western Europe operate trams as a vital component in an integrated transit system. On very busy routes they can operate as a coupled pair with a loaded passenger capacity equating to about seven buses. A bonus for the operator is that the two trams only require one driver. Metrolink in Manchester couples its trams in peak periods.

Suburban Railways

Although the cost of providing a local railway service is mostly cushioned by sharing tracks with Inter City services, the tracks are often distant from populated areas. Also, a city terminal often involves a walk to a shopping centre.

Tram-Trains

These can connect rural areas to CBD without a change of vehicle, a service with considerable advantages. The passenger is often unaware of any change in the mode taking place and the infrastructure costs are relatively small. Saarbrucken (Germany) could be useful as a role model. In most cases, the vehicle has an outward appearance resembling a tram but hidden equipment facilitates the actual changeover.

Transport consultants have recommended a connecting tram service between Leeds and Harrogate via Horsforth. This was rejected by the Government which decided on a two year trial period between Huddersfield and Sheffield, completely on railway tracks.

Summary - Supertram advantages

1 Can quickly swallow a large crowd.

2 A large standing load saves some being left behind (as on a bus route) having to wait for the next bus.

3 Many doors permit a quick entrance and exit.

4 Gives a quality ride.

5 Permanence attracts passengers.

6 One tram stop can accept many routes. No walk required when changing route.

7 Can operate at high speed on segregated tracks.

8 Clean operation at point of use.

9 Can feed the braking energy back into the overhead line.

10 Some systems operate completely from renewable energy sources.

11 Can safely mix with pedestrians in precincts.

Footnote

Many citizens supporting mixed bus and tram systems will already know ~~well~~ the trams' good points. This document is aimed at people who may have never experienced a modern tram ride and may not support the tramway concept.

The above eleven points could help them to appreciate the importance to Leeds (and elsewhere) of an integrated transport system

Examples of Supertram type operation can be seen and experienced in five British cities: Manchester; Sheffield; Birmingham to Wolverhampton; London (Croydon) and Nottingham. In effect only five cities offer the choice of good quality transit to the car.

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