

Excellence in Travel Information and Marketing

Aberdeenshire Real Time Passenger Information

Background

Aberdeenshire Council are using technology innovatively to disseminate public transport information, with the aim being to encourage greater use of bus services whilst also ensuring that those customers wholly reliant on public transport can easily access information.

Aberdeenshire introduced a Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) system in August 2015 with the aim of providing customers with higher quality and more relevant information to allow them to make more informed choices regarding their travel.

Speaking at the formal launch of the system, Aberdeenshire's Provost Vernal described the

system as a "quantum leap" forward in providing information to bus passengers in Aberdeenshire. The RTPI system brings Aberdeenshire's bus services into line with many services across Scotland with regard to the provision of real time, however the way the system was delivered and operates differs from most that have come before.

The screenshot shows the Aberdeenshire Council website interface for Real Time Passenger Information. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links: Home, Sitemap, Help, Contact Us, Legal Notices, Accessibility, Site Information & Our Cookies, and Switch to Mobile. Below this is the slogan "Serving Aberdeenshire from mountain to sea the very best of Scotland" and the Aberdeenshire Council logo. A search bar is present with a "Go" button. Below the search bar, there is a "search by route number, bus stop ID or location e.g. Town" input field. The main content area displays a map of Westhill, Aberdeenshire, with a bus stop icon at Kinmundy Avenue. To the left of the map is a table of bus services:

Service	Destination	Time
X17	Aberdeen Union Sq	11 mins
X17	Aberdeen Union Sq	19 mins
X17	Aberdeen Union Sq	37 mins
X17	Aberdeen Union Sq	41 mins
X17	Aberdeen Union Sq	49 mins
16	Arnhall Park	12:15
X17	Aberdeen Union Sq	59 mins

At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with the text "Part funded by" and logos for the European Union and the Scottish Government, along with the text "EUROPE & SCOTLAND European Regional Development Fund Investing in your Future". There is also a copyright notice for Aberdeenshire Council 2013 and a "Go to the top of this page" link. The footer also includes navigation links: Home, Sitemap, Help, Contact Us, Legal Notices, Accessibility, and Site Information.

More Informed Choices

One of the challenges of providing real time in rural locations is determining the most efficient and customer friendly method of disseminating the information. Traditionally RTPI information has been displayed on electronic screens at bus stops, however given the rural nature of the Authority, this is not a cost effective way to provide the service in the long term.

Aberdeenshire's RTPI system provides customers with the flexibility of how they access the information and allows for different levels of decision making to be made at different stages of the journey.

At stop screens

Aberdeenshire has installed around 60 electronic screens at principal stops in larger towns across the area. These screens vary from modern, LCD screens in shelters to free standing Totem style departure boards.

By providing high quality information screens at bus stops, customers can see when buses are due to

depart and gain confidence in the service provided while they are making their journey. In addition, these screens are high profile and raise awareness of the public transport network.

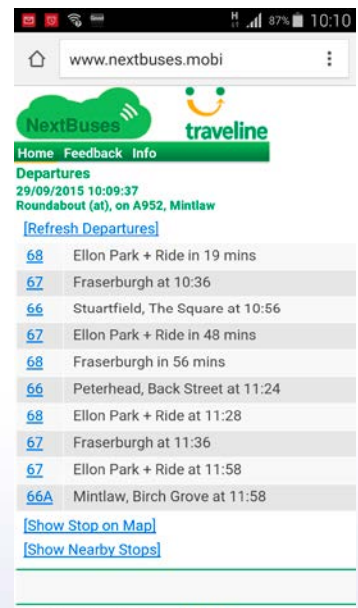
QR codes at stop and mobile app

Aberdeenshire have noted the increase in the ownership of smart phones and how these devices are being used by customers. Ofcom's publication "The Communications Market 2015" (August 2015) shows that 66% of UK Adults own a smartphone, up from 39% when compared to the results in the 2012 report.

With the growth in the ownership of smartphones, this is an extremely efficient way of providing RTPI to our customers in a relevant manner.

Almost all (83%) of Aberdeenshire's bus stops include a QR code that can be scanned by a customer with a smartphone to obtain a virtual departure board. This allows for RTPI to be provided at the majority of bus stops in a cost effective manner. Customers can store this virtual departure board on their phone to be accessed at any time.

QR codes



In addition to being able to scan a QR code at their bus stop, customers can access RTPI data for Aberdeenshire through the Traveline Scotland app. Aberdeenshire have taken an Open Data approach to the real time information which allows third parties to use the data within existing applications such as Traveline and Google.

Accessing information on the go allows customers to check for any disruption to bus services and amend their travel plans if required.

Web

In addition to the mobile applications, Aberdeenshire's RTPI can be accessed through the internet via Traveline Scotland and Aberdeenshire Council websites. The information provided is for all bus stops across the area, including a number of unmarked bus stops.

Accessing the information in this way allows customers to determine when they need to leave to go to the bus stop and therefore allows for more informed decisions to be made prior to the journey commencing. This is of particular importance to customers in the more rural areas of Aberdeenshire.

Innovative Delivery

Although the provision of real time departure for bus services has been available on many services throughout Scotland for some time, the way in which the Aberdeenshire RTPI system was developed and implemented is innovative.

What makes the Aberdeenshire system different from most is that it takes data feeds from multiple sources rather than installing dedicated tracking equipment on buses in the area. For example, only a small number of vehicles have been fitted with Aberdeenshire tracking equipment (around 30 vehicles) while the majority of vehicle data is taken direct from operators own sources. In this way, the vast majority of local bus services are tracked regardless of who the operator is.

This has allowed Aberdeenshire to focus resources on implementing the customer facing aspect of the system to a far greater degree than would have been possible had a more traditional approach to developing a RTPI system been taken.

In addition, by developing the system in this manner the bus operators are far more involved in the project and were active partners throughout the implementation phase and this level of cooperation has continued when the system became active. This level of involvement is essential when providing customers with disruption information



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as operators are best suited to processing this information in the system.

Developing the system in this way has seen high levels of journey matching from the date of the launch. Most services are already journey matching in excess of 70%, with many over 85%. The partners are committed to increasing the journey matching performance and meet regularly to discuss the operation of the system.

Although principally developed to improve customer information, the partners can utilise the information being recorded in the system to monitor and improve the delivery of bus services and in particular has improved the monitoring of bus services involved as part of the Bus Punctuality Improvement Partnership.

Conclusion

By taking a fresh approach to developing and implementing a RTPI system, Aberdeenshire have delivered a customer focused service that has provided a high rate of journey matching from the date of the system launch and, working with partners, will help to improve the quality of service provided.