

Transport

HIGHLY COMMENDED

University of Gloucestershire - Unimotion more than doubles bus usage

When the University opened its new Oxstalls campus in Gloucester in 2002 it had to deal with the problem of limited parking space. At the same time, the ageing buses which served its three existing campuses were increasingly unreliable and polluting, with adverse effects on the numbers of passengers, and the University's image. The University therefore worked with a new bus operator, Stagecoach, to set up Unimotion, a relaunched service with newer buses linking the four campuses, via Cheltenham centre and its bus and rail stations. The service was free to many staff and students, who were also allowed free travel on some local Stagecoach routes. The service has been very successful with numbers more than doubling, and average fares per journey halving, between 2002 and 2005.

Unimotion was financed by a tripling in the price of parking permits - to £30 in 2005, which caused a 20% fall in the number issued - and a slight reduction in frequency, from every 20 to every 30 minutes during the day. Payment of travel expenses for inter-campus travel was also ended during term-time. Some of the scheme's costs were offset by using the buses for the town's Park and Ride scheme at weekends. Cheltenham Council also backed the scheme by investing in lay-bys to allow buses to stop without blocking traffic, high kerbs to help disabled access, and bus shelters.

The University's Operations Manager, Andrew Simpson, believes that two important factors in the scheme's success have been "flexibility and partnership. We have monthly meetings between the University, the Students' Union and Stagecoach to review bus use, and look at additional service requirements for events such as open days and student balls." Two recent innovations arising from this have been an extension of free travel to reach as far afield as Hereford, Oxford or Swindon, and a late night bus on Wednesday evenings - initially underwritten by one of the nightclubs - to safely get the students home following socialising in town. "It's another example", says Andrew Simpson, "of an initiative which has changed a service which was embarrassing to the University to one which is making a real contribution to the town, and one which the University is very proud of."



Andrew Simpson

Judges' Comments on Transport

The University of Gloucestershire has also seen a great rise in the use of public transport as a result of its partnership with bus operator, Stagecoach, and the local authority, and strong involvement by students. The 'carrot' for the changes have been an improved and low cost service between the campuses, and cheap fares on other Stagecoach routes. The very effective 'sticks' have been restricting and raising the cost of parking, and stopping travelling expenses between sites for staff.