

# Gas bus for Reading?

*Reading Transport says gas bus is 'perfectly feasible' proposition*

By Mel Holley

Four weeks into a five week trial, Reading Transport has said its CNG-powered MAN EcoCity demonstrator makes for a "perfectly feasible" proposition on its urban-intensive Reading Buses operation. The MAN EcoCity is also to be tested with other high-profile bus operators over the coming months.

"Does it work? So far, yes it does," says Chief Executive Officer, James Freeman. "The gas bus goes out every morning, and we don't see or hear of it until it returns 12 hours later – and that's exactly how it should be. MAN really does seem to have cracked it with MAN EcoCity."

Reading Transport has a 25 year history of testing new engine technology, not all of it successfully, but, indications

suggest MAN EcoCity is a viable system for a fleet acquisition.

"Emissions are very low indeed," continues Mr Freeman "and that's in tune with the philosophy of our local authority owners, Reading Borough Council. We are due to replace our single-deck fleet in 2013, and the MAN EcoCity proposition appears to be perfectly feasible.

"We've tried everything," says Mr Freeman, "ethanol, LPG, electric-hybrid, even cooking oil. The difference with MAN EcoCity, is that gas bus technology has come of age. It's a proven power system."

At this stage, figures have not been released. Mr Freeman told **route one**: "We have concentrated on the practical trial so far and will study the comparative figures once the five weeks deployment on our Premier Route 9 is completed at the end of next week."

Asked whether he would buy MAN CNG buses, Mr Freeman responded: "At the moment, this is of academic interest to us as, with one of the most modern bus fleets in UK, we are not looking for any fleet replacements (double or single-deck) this year. If the figures look



Only four weeks into the trial, Reading is impressed by CNG MAN

interesting, as we think they may well do, then the Gas Bus will be a serious contender in our future procurement programme."

The MAN EcoCity has been exclusively designed and constructed for the UK market. With operating cost savings of 30% envisaged by MAN, and the ability to run on the UK's fast-building supplies of bio-gas – thus reducing emissions to zero – a full demonstration programme is building rapidly with UK operators.

A key part of the success

of the gas bus programme's development to date has been MAN's partnership with the Gas Bus Alliance.

The Alliance is a specialist organisation that can set up the hitherto 'difficult' gas infrastructure required for successful operation of the vehicles, offering operators a free initial set-up with the costs simply built in to ongoing gas prices. With these prices so much lower than conventional fossil fuels, the savings in operation can still be considerable.

## EYMS eyes diesel fuel savings with Envirox

East Yorkshire Motor Services (EYMS) will continue using the fuel additive Envirox as it looks to cut fuel consumption.

The operator has completed a 12-month trial with supplier Energenics at its Driffield depot and Chairman Peter Shipp believes rolling out the cerium dioxide-based additive across all its garages will help mitigate the 20% BSOG cut.

He says: "In the present very difficult financial climate, we need to save money wherever we can and fuel is now such a big proportion of our total costs that this is a high priority area for us. Based on the successful trial we are confident Envirox will deliver a considerable fuel saving."

The diesel fuel storage tank in



Envirox to be used at all depots

each of the company's depots will now be fitted with dosing equipment, which injects Envirox into the diesel fuel flow on delivery from the road tanker.

EYMS joins Stagecoach in using the additive, with the Group claiming it saves around £3.8m in fuel costs each year.

## 'Disabled' driver claimed thousands in benefits

A man who claimed £12,000 in benefit because he was unable to walk more than 10 yards, but was actually working as a PCV driver, has been given a six-month prison sentence, suspended for two years, and a 1800-0600hrs curfew from Monday to Thursday.

Warwick Crown Court heard that two employers of Ragbinder Deed, 65, of St Nicholas Road, Nuneaton were unaware of any disability.

Mr Deed legitimately began claiming benefit in 2000 on the basis he was unable to work because of diabetes and other medical conditions, needing help with washing, dressing, to carry oxygen with him and could only walk 10 yards or would black out and his legs fail.

But his condition improved and

in 2003 Mr Deed began to work as a coach and bus driver, but didn't tell the Department of Work and Pensions of the change in his circumstances.

Mr Deed later said he had been able to do the job because he did not have to walk far from where he parked his car at work.

But the court heard that Coventry-based Travel de Courcey, for which he worked in 2006, was unaware of any disability and never saw Mr Deed, who took no sick leave, using a stick.

And at A-Line Coaches, for which Mr Deed also worked, he had to walk 100-plus metres to and from his car.

Recorder Sam Mains told Mr Deed: "I am not impressed by you or your illness. You really ought to go to prison immediately."