

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release**

ALL SYSTEMS GO FOR iBUS

A massive programme of change is under way as London United garages step up their preparations for the introduction of Transport for London's new GPRS-based radio system – iBus.

The new system is a much more sophisticated form of the current AVL and uses a combination of technologies, including satellite tracking, to enhance service control.

It is hailed as an essential aid to Drivers and Controllers and designed to improve reliability, bringing huge benefits to customers. In the long term it is envisaged that because of improved performance more people will choose to travel by bus instead of using a car.

Transdev is the second of London's big operators to undergo full conversion, and pilot training involving TfL and Drivers and Service Controllers from all the major companies began some weeks ago.

Radio rooms at the garages are being prepared for the installation of iBus workstations. In addition, two emergency control centres are being set up for London United at Fulwell and Stamford Brook. London Sovereign's emergency control room will be at Edgware.

It is anticipated that radio rooms will be 'ready to run' up to six weeks before iBus technology is fitted to buses. Conversion to iBus on the buses is due to begin early in the summer with Shepherd's Bush and Stamford Brook going first. These garages will be followed by Fulwell and Tolworth, Hounslow and Hounslow Heath. Edgware and Harrow will undergo conversion in the late summer and early autumn.

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Once installation begins, buses will be converted at the rate of 12 every 24 hours. Virtually all of London United's buses will be converted at Norwood garage while London Sovereign's vehicles will go to Clapton.

Full Driver and Service Controller training will begin soon. Drivers will be trained to use iBus by GDTs at their base garages. Instruction should take about an hour and up to 12 Drivers will be trained at a time.

The training programme for Drivers has been agreed with the trade union and will be completed four weeks prior to putting iBus equipment on board the buses.

Service Controllers will receive training over two days off-site and will involve representatives from iBus supplier Siemens. Controllers who are nominated as 'Key Workers' will receive three days training.

Chief Controllers and Service Quality Managers will receive the two-day training course.

Every garage has a team of at least four people who are tasked with overseeing various parts of the iBus programme. Project Managers for operations and engineering have overall control and they are assisted by a Nominated Key Worker and the Garage Driver Trainers.

The Key Worker's function is to act as 'first port of call' for questions from staff relating to the new equipment.

Project Leader Alex Juniper said: "iBus is a massive undertaking affecting all operational staff and more or less every vehicle in the fleet. Throughout the entire programme we have to ensure that while conversion goes as smoothly as possible, we also maintain our service performance as per contract.

"I appreciate that service control will be difficult while the migration from AVL to iBus is taking place as both radio systems will be in use. This will have to be managed without detriment to our services.

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“Vehicle availability will be an issue during the conversion and I suspect we will have to hire vehicles because there will be no relaxation in our contractual obligations.”

Some 2,000 Drivers and more than 140 Controllers from London United and London Sovereign will be trained to use iBus.

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