

Project to provide bus users with real-time service updates hit with further delays

A project aiming to provide Edinburgh bus users with real-time service updates has been hit with further delays.

The council has installed 330 new travel tracker screens at bus shelters across the city, however the £2.9m roll-out ran into problems after it emerged the technology was not compatible with GPS installed on Lothian Buses' fleet.

While other local bus companies have been able to communicate live arrival and departure times to the LED displays, updates on services run by the capital's largest operator – which is owned by the council – have been absent for months.

The situation has sparked anger amongst patrons, who have complained about “ghost buses” still shown as being on the way despite having been cancelled.

Last November amid the confusion the council was forced to add a message to the screens alerting people that what was being displayed was timetables and not real-time information.

The new system was originally due to be up and running by early 2021, however the impact of the pandemic and Brexit hindered progress, according to the authority, and a new deadline of March this year was agreed.

After this was not met estimated completion was pushed back to the middle of June, but this has also been missed.

A new report said the roll-out “should be delayed to allow for further testing”.

It said this would “ensure that when the system is live across the network there is a high degree of confidence in displayed information.”

The council has given a new estimate of “early September” for this work to be completed.

The council has had to fork out £1.7m to keep the city’s old bus tracker screens running while issues with the new system have been dealt with.

“While the majority of stop locations displayed accurate departure information, at some sites the departure information was erroneous,” the report added.

Commenting, Edinburgh Bus Users Group said: “It’s very disappointing that there’s another delay to proper real-time information on the street displays.

“It’s prudent to ensure accurate information is displayed, the history of missed deadlines doesn’t instill confidence in the latest projected date.”

Transport and Environment Convener, Councillor Scott Arthur said: “I appreciate the delay on this is frustrating for residents and visitors but we’re working alongside Lothian Buses to make sure this is rolled out properly. We’re hoping that live disruption information will be operational by the end of September 2024.

“Our network of buses is a key component of our city’s transport network and its success remains a key priority going forward.”

By Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter