

Bus Tales: The use of travel-time by bus passengers in Bristol, UK

Billy Clayton

Centre for Transport and Society (CTS), University of the West of England, Bristol, UK, BS16 1QY

Phone: +44 (0) 117 32 83129

Fax: XXXXXXXXXXXXX

Email: william2.clayton@uwe.ac.uk

Website: www.transport.uwe.ac.uk

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Abstract: Recently there has been a growing interest in the ways in which people use their time during travel, and what different types of value (economic or personal) such ‘travel-time activity’ provides. The activities of public transport passengers have been explored from a number of perspectives, and several of these have been reported to have a positive influence on the experience of the journey. However, within existing studies the bus has received almost no specific attention, with most focusing on the train or ‘public transport’ more generally. This paper reports on the quantitative element of a recent mixed-methods study which goes some way to address this deficit.

A large-scale on-board survey of 840 bus passengers was conducted on five routes across the city of Bristol, UK. This paper explains the level and types of activity that are occurring during the bus journey, and how these are associated to passengers’ experiences and perceptions of the mode. Particular attention is paid to the influence of mobile technologies and ICTs, explaining that these represent a distinct change in the ways in which travel-time can be facilitated, structured, and used. At its close this paper considers the implications of this research in terms of increasing the attractiveness of bus travel, and discusses the potential of travel-time activity in capturing the uniqueness of the bus journey experience and re-conceptualising perceptions of this mode to increase its attractiveness to the public.

¹ The Technology Strategy Board’s role is to promote and support research into, and development and exploitation of, technology and innovation for the benefit of UK business in order to increase economic growth and improve the quality of life: www.innovateuk.org.