

RICHARD EDWARDS RESPONSE (VIA E-MAIL)

I have recently completed a dissertation for an M.Sc in Geographic Information Systems and I was looking at creating a smartphone application to improve real-time information for bus passengers. It started with the premise: “Why, in 2011, is it not possible to use a smartphone to find out how long it will be until the next bus arrives?” This simple thing would really improve the experience of using public transport in rural areas. (Actually, in some areas of the country, it is possible to do this, but not in Dorset where I live).

Traveline has a NextBuses API which brings together all the real-time feeds into a single service and this is a great facility. What is needed is for **all** bus operators to make their data available and this needs to be stipulated in the contracts awarded to bus operators. They may feel that they will be judged harshly if their buses appear not to be on time, but the public would just prefer the information.

The Real-Time Information Group <http://www.rtig.org.uk/web/portals/0/CC-PR279-D001-0.3%20Open%20data%20position%20paper.pdf> has done some work towards this.

It will be much more economically beneficial to the operators to attract a few more customers by having good information, than to try and hang on to the data to try and make some money themselves using an application - leave that to the developers! Everyone wins by making data available - the operators will attract or keep customers, software developers will make some money, mobile phones become more useful, and the public get the information they need.

At the moment the NextBuses API offers only expected departure times, but actual location would be even better so people can see for themselves where their bus is in real-time.

I welcome the comments by Francis Maude in his foreword to the consultation (page 3) and hope that these sentiments can be put into practice.

Richard Edwards