

Partnership working

Partnership working at both strategic and local levels is vital to achieving our business objectives.

We are active members of the UK Sustainable Rail Programme through which we engage with Government, other operators and rail stakeholders on the future of the rail industry. We are the only operator working closely with the Department for Transport on its 30 year Railway Technical Strategy.

During the year we have been instrumental in setting up the Bus and Coach Industry Climate Change Group with the four other major bus and coach operators in the UK. This group will seek to provide a focal point for the UK Government and other stakeholders to engage with the industry on climate change and promote the role that buses and coaches can play in reducing the impacts of climate change.

We have invested in the establishment of the Centre for Transport Research at Aberdeen University and have partnered in a number of research programmes. We are also involved in the Sustainable Transport Group in Scotland.

In North America our partnerships are currently locally focused. Through our North American CSR Working Group we track US and Canadian policy developments. Based on this information we will determine the necessity for further strategic partnerships.

Local partnerships

To enable us to deliver our services on time we need to work closely with local authorities and with Network Rail, the UK rail infrastructure provider. Through these partnerships we work jointly to manage issues that cause delays and offer better, more stable services. In North America we regard every contract as a partnership. We are in regular contact with all our customers – partnerships which help us to deliver more than transport services alone. In First Student we work with many schools on managing truancy, child behaviour and bullying. In our maintenance workshops we work with our customers to improve the efficiency and performance of the vehicle fleet.

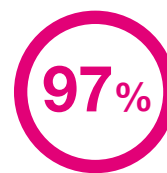
Examples of partnership working

Attracting more people to use buses

In partnership with Leeds City Council and West Yorkshire PTE we have been improving the quality, punctuality and reliability of local transport services and over the last six years passenger numbers have grown by around 10%. We have introduced the UK's first full scale guided busway. We have also introduced the **ft**r vehicle, our premium urban travel concept (**ft**rs are vehicles that look like trams but have the flexibility of a bus). In its first year the **ft**r supported 15% passenger growth. Customer satisfaction levels on the **ft**r have reached 97%. The introduction of industry leading **YourNextBus** real-time information systems allow passengers to access bus times via their mobile phones and at selected stops en route.



Passenger growth over the last six years in Leeds and West Yorkshire.



ftr customer satisfaction levels have reached 97%.

Developing more integrated travel

In partnership with other operators and local authorities we have developed multi-modal ticketing initiatives designed for those people with complex journeys. In Manchester for example, the System 1 brand enables travel on all bus services, the Metrolink tram service and certain rail services within the Greater Manchester area. We participate in the One Ticket initiative in the Edinburgh area which covers buses and trains and other initiatives run for example in Leicester, West Yorkshire, Merseyside and Glasgow.

Meeting the needs of all our passengers

In North America we work in close partnership with our customers to provide services that directly meet their needs. In First Student we work closely with the Regional Education Services Agency in Berrien, southwest Michigan to develop transport services that meet the requirements of children with a range of special needs. We provide specially equipped vehicles, fully trained staff and attendant nurses to monitor students' medical needs.

Improving performance in First Great Western

12 months ago First Great Western had the worst punctuality record in the UK. In March 2008 we agreed a joint performance partnership with Network Rail to address this issue with a target to achieve over 86% of trains on time in 2008/09. We have worked in close partnership with Network Rail on a day-to-day basis to achieve this. Outcomes include timetable adjustments, a new integrated control centre and £6 million worth of investment by First Great Western in line speed improvements. End-of-year performance lies at 90.5%, which exceeds our target by 4.5%. The Autumn 2008 National Passenger Survey suggests higher customer satisfaction with our First Great Western services, with particular improvements in our scores for reliability, punctuality and dealing with delays.



First Great Western end of year PPM Performance expressed as a moving annual average.