

FOTO - Newsletter - Ibus

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FOTO bids for loss making routes of Bus Éireann!

We might be accused of taking advantage of BE's woes if this were our headline today, but no, this is the headline from our News Update of 1996- 21 years ago!

The difficulties being faced by Bus Éireann on its commercial operations are everyday challenges for any business –costs versus incomes, profit or loss! The arguments and justifications being aired across the media, whereas understandable from the perspective of maintaining too many, too highly paid, all bells and whistles secure jobs, just do not face that stark reality. Blaming competition does not stand up, this was not the problem 21 years ago as evidenced from our headline above in 1996, competition is here and here to stay, profit and loss the commercial reality. Bus Éireann knows this and it is trying to compete. It realises that it can only compete on a level playing field. Now where did I hear this before- oh yes-private bus and coach operators have been seeking a level playing field for the last 85 years! The 1932 Transport Act gave protections and rights over passenger transport in Ireland to the state company, CIE. It also gave it free buses, exclusivity on the best routes AND the largest contract in the state, the Schools Transport Scheme contract. All new news? Ah

no, FOTO lodged submission after submission to Government on precisely these issues for the last 21 years and more-the latest in 2008 for a National Network of Services that will provide a comprehensive rural transport service AND relieve the major congestion on the approaches to our major cities.

"One can only hope they do not hide the problems at Bus Éireann with PSO or Free travel smoke screens!

Let the paying public choose, they now have choice."

*It would be remiss of me not to mention and congratulate the National Transport Authority and particularly it's CEO Ms Anne Graham and Mr Tim Gaston, Director of Public Transport Services for their strident defense of the introduction of competition between our major cities in answers to the Dáil Transport Committee recently. The further pointing out that rural Ireland will not suffer as a result of any one operator's inability to perform shows a new confidence in the private sectors ability to deliver! Perhaps the proposals for a New National Network of Services through 3 major **IBUS Hubs** in the GDA put forward by FOTO/ibus helped!*

John Dunne Director FOTO/ibus

Celebrating



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National Network of Services

“private bus operators know rural Ireland better than anyone else and probably everyone in it”

The FOTO/ibus proposals to Government for a National Network of Private Hire Services through 3 Hubs in the GDA at the convergence of our motorways provides access from every corner of Ireland AND offers the solution to the growing traffic problems into and around our capital city!

Ibus Hubs

As a part of the National Network of Services proposed to Government and the National Transport Authority, FOTO/ibus has offered to share ownership of the ibus Hubs©. Heads of agreement are already in place with a commercial entity to develop the ibus Hubs© at Naas (convergence of M7/8/9 motorways) and Maynooth (convergence of M4/6 motorways) the Northern/North West ibus Hub© is yet to be decided upon.

ibus plc shareholder options will be issued to all recipients of this News Update on the completion of these negotiations.

Legal Fund



FOTO has issued letters to over 1,500 bus/coach operators nationally on two occasions now in an effort to raise €100,000, the estimated cost for a legal challenge to the imposition of a retirement age on drivers of school buses. The response so far is very slow and I would urge you to send in your subscription as soon as possible please to allow me issue instructions to the legal team.

Some Questions being asked which may explain the slow pace of subscriptions:-

Q. How many operators have subscribed as of 7th March 2017?

A. 68

Q. Can FOTO guarantee that it will succeed in this action!

A. FOTO cannot give any such guarantee of course, however, from discussions with the legal team, including our Senior Counsel, we do feel that we have a good fighting chance.

Q. Why does FOTO not hold meetings with operators?

A. We have held numerous meetings with operators for over the last 30 years with very varying attendance numbers, usually low numbers and sometimes 2 or 3! The main reason we do not now hold meetings is that most of you do not wish to be in the same room as your fellow operator. This is understandable where a vicious competition orchestrated under the Schools Transport Scheme contracts has left deep rifts and ill feeling within the private operator community-we are hoping that this call for subscriptions may be the catalyst for working together for a common cause without having to “sup” together! Added to this, the costs of room hire, provision of refreshments, travelling and

Legal Fund

accommodation are difficult to meet and justify in the absence of a membership fee funded FOTO-perhaps more questions would arise if membership funds were used for such meetings. A greater use of email by operators would be the ideal method of communication. Unfortunately we have found that very few operators use this medium on a regular basis. Our website, www.ibus.ie is also a really good method of communication but again it is not used by operators on a regular basis.

Q. Would you wait until FOTO/ibus has achieved something and then maybe they would pay!

A. I have detailed quite a number of achievements of FOTO/ibus over the years and I detail briefly the main ones here with some dates to show

- Reduction in Excise Duty for Tour Coaches-1992
- Access to Bus Lanes-these were initially only for Bus Éireann and Dublin Bus. We had to assure the Minister that private buses wouldn't break down and clog up the city-1998
- Fuel rebate for school transport contractors back dated 7 years-160 operators contributed £100 towards our legal challenge back then, some operators got in excess of £100,000 in refunds. FOTO got no other contributions. The legal and research costs were in excess of £55,000!
- Grant aid for pull testing and for the retro- fitting of seat belts in school buses.
- Major submission on a national network of services and a unique 3 Hubs concepts in the GDA
- Over 20 major submissions over the last 20 years

- Over 20,000 newsletters over the last 10 years
- Over 50,000 text messages over the last 10 years
- Over 100,000 emails to Oireachtas Members, Government Departments and agencies.
- Go to www.ibus.ie for extensive archives on work done.

Q. Would you ring them and explain and they might pay the subscription then?

A. I most certainly would but I honestly cannot afford the time or cost-each telephone call lasts a minimum of 15 minutes! The present costs are mounting too-each mailing costs €1,750. We have collected €9,250 from 2 mailings-a net €7,500. On these numbers I will have to mail another 14 times or €26,250 in postal costs-I have not included costs for acknowledging the subscription!

Q. If we do not succeed is our money lost?

A. To some extent only I would argue-the other aspect of this is that if we can get 1,500 operators subscribing to FOTO, be it once off and only again if a further national cause or injustice is needed to be challenged, we show serious intent! The publicity from this challenge will also place private operators high in the minds of decision makers hopefully resulting in proper inclusion and consideration.

Don't forget the other services being offered by the legal team as an incentive to subscribe would more than pay your subscription.

PSV Daily Vehicle Check Smartphone App

The J.F.Dunne Insurances Ltd mobile application is designed to provide you with a mobile product that allows you to record your daily inspection of the condition of your vehicle(s) in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Health & Safety Authority, Road Safety Authority and An Garda Síochána under their Vehicle Safety Checks.

Vehicle pre-use daily checks are a simple and effective way to spot potentially dangerous issues before vehicles are used. Owners and Employers should have a system of routine daily checks in place to ensure that vehicles are in good working order before the start of a journey.

The Application uses the questions suggested by the HSA, RSA and an Garda Síochána in a format that allows you to take photos of potential issues, make notes of items that might need to be checked later and once you have progressed through all of the questions and signed it off, it is all emailed back to your office/home pc. Archive these emails then for a comprehensive record of checks made on all of your operational vehicles.

The Application is available only to clients of the J.F.Dunne Insurances PSV Bus & Coach Programme and has to be activated by J.F.Dunne Insurances Ltd. If you want to start using this app you can find the links on our website (www.jfd.ie) under the JFDunne Daily Vehicle Check App detail, or if you go into the App/Android Store, search for the JFDunne Daily Vehicle Check App and install to your phone. Email us on insure@jfd.ie advising DOB, licence type, email and mobile number for yourself and any drivers that you need to use the App and we will issue you with your user id and password.



3 RECENT HIGH PROFILE INCIDENTS INVOLVING BUSES

- **Cyclist awarded €15,000 who fell and fractured a bone in her wrist trying to avoid a passenger alighting a bus.**
- **Bus in collision with Luas:**
- **Baggage door swings open seriously injuring a pedestrian who is in critical condition.**

In the first incident the driver of the bus was found to be negligent in that he did not check his rear view mirrors and stop the passenger from alighting.

These incidents when reported in the press and media also gain the attention of underwriters globally and raise concerns for those of us involved in the placing and management of bus and coach risk. Fear as you know is the greatest threat to stability in the financial markets and if the perception is that we are open to such varied and unpredictable risk we must take action before it is forced on us with the, usual answer to these problems, premium hikes or worse, withdrawal from the market altogether! At J.F.Dunne Insurances our Risk Management and selection of risk has been key to the stability of over 40 years for our bus and coach insurance product. We are confident that our professional bus and coach clients who heed

and use our Risk Management protocols will help us maintain this stability. For now this risk management approach is selective and is used to help our clients overcome issues post incident and large losses-we may need to apply this risk management process more globally and before rather than after the event-if one could predict!

For now please attend to the obvious :-

- Ensure that your drivers are professionally qualified, check their driving record. Check all references.
- Check that all of your drivers are fully au-fait with YOUR vehicle.
- Check that they are fully au-fait with their route.
- Continually check that they are fully within their driver hours.
- Carry out random pre-journey checks yourself

OTHER NEWS

NTA:

FOTO/ibus met with the NTA on two occasions recently to promote and detail further the National Network of Services concepts and of course the 3 ibus Hubs in the GDA. FOTO/ibus is only interested in pursuing these concepts if small to medium bus and coach operators are an equal partner. There will be no comprehensive joined up network of rural service unless you can be a part of this National Service linking into these 3 Hubs and with you sharing in the overall incomes and profits!

RSA:

FOTO also met with the RSA recently around the issues of buses failing FTA tests only hours

after being tested under the RSA nominated Test Centres. They will say, rightly, that the DOE is but a window in time and the legal responsibility is yours to ensure your bus is roadworthy at all other times. The main issue for operators is that these FTA tests are showing up faults that the test centres are not. If you have had your bus failed by the FTA within hours of passing a test by an RSA approved Test Centre please contact me on email info@ibus.ie We have received a number of phone calls on this issue but now need your actual written accounts of these incidents to take the matter further.