



Reports for inclusion in Dossier Français, articles relating to France or information to update our fleet records, can be sent to the compiler Brian Rowney at 17 Humber Road, Astley, Tyldesley, Manchester M29 7HL (e-mail bri.rowney@virgin.net).

Items shown V&T (Ville et Transports) were forwarded by John Smith.

AIX-les-BAINS Keolis has won the contract from the Communauté d'Agglomérations du Lac de Bourget (18 communes and 50,000 inhabitants), for the 6 years from beginning 2008 to end 2013. Estimated gross income over the six-year period is EUR 20.2 million, based on an annual 1 million km of bus operation. The network is to be renamed 'Ondéa', and will include the creation and maintenance of a network of bicycles (a similar concept to Velo'v in Lyon, Vélib in Paris and Velomagg in Montpellier). However, the plus here is that these cycles are to have electrically assisted pedals to make them attractive to the more physically challenged. After a first series of adjustments expected in 2008, Keolis forecasts the network will have 47 staff and 27 vehicles in 2009. (Clive D'eath)

ALENÇON The operating contract with Keolis has been renewed for a further eight years. The company says that its proposals include 'lignes cadencées' (such as used by the Swiss), development of demand responsive services (TAD) and the development of school routes to communes not currently served. The unit currently has 18 buses and 35 staff. A turnover of EUR 16 million is expected. (Clive D'eath)

BORDEAUX The number of passengers carried during 2007 was expected to top 80 million, with some 300,000 using the bus and tram network each day. The local authority Communauté Urbaine de Bordeaux (CUB) and Veolia Transport Bordeaux, the operator, are nevertheless looking at improvements to the service, concentrating on bus priority measures for the 17 trunk routes, as well as improving the frequency to at least 10-12 minutes throughout the day. In addition, 90 diesel buses are now running on 'Gecam O #', a new product with 9.3% water emulsion added to low-sulphur diesel (I wonder what that does to the tax bill? - BAR). With another 254 buses running on compressed natural gas, 70% of the fleet is now 'green'. Between them, Veolia Transport Bordeaux and CUB receive 240,000 hits on their websites each month. An enhancement to the 'virtual' service is that Internet users can now select a particular stop and request the times of the next four buses to reach that stop. The information is updated in real time, though at present just seven services are covered. There are 3400 stops in all, so it will take a while for the whole network to be covered. Finally, from 1 January 2008, it will be possible for bus users to purchase and receive their tickets by mobile phone, using a system entitled 'B Pass' being trialled by Orange - presumably the phone then acts as a smart card, so that the driver can confirm that the passengers have actually paid for their ride. (V&T)

BOUCHES-du-RHÔNE The railway between Aix-en-Provence, Gardanne and Marseille will be closed until the end of 2008 for upgrading to double track. In the meantime, a new interurban express service has been launched, between Aix, La Joliette and Marseille's new business quarter, Euroméditerranée. This complements the existing service from Aix to Marseille (Gare de Saint-Charles), which sees departures every five minutes at peak times. The journey takes between 30 and 50 minutes, depending on traffic conditions on the A7 motorway. Six air-conditioned coaches, with reclining seats and seatbelts, are dedicated to the service, although they will soon be replaced by wheelchair-accessible vehicles - the Irisbus Arès, as shown in Ville et Transport, hardly comes into that category. In Aix, free parking is provided for 200 vehicles, while two stops in Marseille facilitate transfers to and from the

RTM bus, tram and metro system. (V&T)

CHALON-sur-SAÔNE Transdev is the incumbent bus operator (réseau "ZOOM"). They have also been selected to run the bicycle hiring network that is being put in place by the 'Grand Chalons' - 38 communes. After Lyon and Paris in particular, as well as Aix-les-Bains (above), the bicycle appears to be flavour of the month. As at 15 December, there are expected to be 50 cycles available from 6 'stations' and by spring 2008 this will rise to 150 cycles and 15 'stations'. (Clive D'eath)

CHÂTEAUROUX In 2001, the municipality was faced with an ageing bus fleet, low receipts (EUR 400,000 per year) and a mere 22 journeys per inhabitant per year. Given that 47% of the clientele travelled free anyway, the centre-right council decided to make bus travel free for all. Since the beginning of 2002, traffic has grown by 81%, and improvements have been made for the mobility-impaired. What is less certain, according to the vice-president of the agglomération, is whether further improvements can be made without reintroducing bus fares. (V&T)

CHER No, not the American singer, but the département in the Centre region of France. In 2006, it was decided that school transport would be provided free of charge, which cost EUR 11.8 million (cher ou non? - sorry!) and was the first stage of a major reorganisation of the interurban network. Studies had shown that the system was unbalanced, and that the rural population was not at all well served. Of the département's 340,000 inhabitants, 60% live in the country, and 18% have no access to a car, yet the number using the bus was, at 68,000 per year (around 200 per day) dismally low. The route network has been revised under the name 'Lignes 18' - 18 being the département number rather than the number of services (17 within its boundaries plus a further two which cross into Allier and Indre, to reach Montluçon and Châteaurox respectively). The intention was to allow each inhabitant the chance to travel to at least the next commune once per day, if necessary by using demand-responsive navettes to reach the closest trunk route. To promote the new arrangements, travel was free throughout September, and thereafter cost EUR 1.00 for the navette alone, or EUR 2.00 for any journey using a 'big' bus. Although these prices undercut those of the SNCF (Bourges to Vierzon costs between EUR 5.20 and EUR 5.90, for instance), the intention was to compete with the private car rather than the train. The new network will cost the département a further EUR 1 million, but they hope for an increase on use of between 25% and 45%. (V&T)

CHERBOURG Keolis has also retained the contract here, for another six years. The total turnover is expected to be EUR 45 million. Here, the company is guaranteeing an increase of passengers of 20% and an increase in fare income of 23%, although there is no indication of what penalties might be applied if these figures are not attained. There is an emphasis on quality - by 2011, 100% of vehicles will be 'accessible' (presumably that means either low floor or with a PMR lift - CRD), and by 2008 will be equipped with a particulate filter and run on GECAM, a fuel which is an emulsion of water and diesel. There will be innovative services named Metronome Domino and Timeo, but no indication as to exactly what these are. Currently, there are 52 vehicles and 130 staff running 2 million km a year for 5.7 million passengers.

FINISTÈRE The département has launched a new intermodal website, www.viaoo29.com, which covers every mode of public transport within Finistère, apart from the cross-channel ferries. As well as the urban and interurban bus routes, and the regional rail services, there are details of ferries to the various islands around the coast and even flights to the Isle of Ouessant worked by - I kid you not - Finist'air. This particular route rejoices in service number 99A, and takes just fifteen minutes, compared with two hours

for the alternative sailing (service 99C) with the Penar-Bed ferry company (ferry services 99B, 99D and 99E link other islands with the port of Brest). Needless to say, the tariffs for both modes are rather higher than those for the mainland bus services (generally EUR 2.00 except on the trunk Quimper - Brest route). Single journeys cost EUR 32.70 on the ferry (higher in summer months) and EUR 64 on the plane, though islanders are entitled to lower rates (EUR 12.80 and EUR 41 respectively), on production of a card proving that they are indeed resident there. (V&T, www.viaoo29.com)

LE HAVRE Apologies from your sub-editor (whose original report it was): the new Citaro artics are 205-12 and the rigids are 507-18, not the other way round as shown in BWVV 151.

LE MANS Just two months before its new tramway opened, Le Mans has scrapped its 'conventional' ticket system in favour of magnetic tickets and contact-free smart cards, the latter being used for ten-trip, weekly or annual season tickets. The new tickets can still be bought on the buses (presumably just the single or ten-trip magnetic versions), but there will be no sales on the trams. Although they are expected to eliminate fraud, this was not the reason for their introduction, as the level of fair evasion is relatively low for a city of 200,000. The purpose was to allow SETRAM to monitor travel patterns in fine detail, particularly exchanges between buses and trams. The tickets also introduce a new colour scheme of orange and violet, which will be applied to the trams and, in due course, the bus fleet as well. (V&T)

LYON The public consultation on stage 2 of tramway route T4 was due to finish on 30 November. Stage 1 of this line is under construction, and the second stage will see its extension from Mendés-France to Gare Part-Dieu, where it will link up with the existing T1. When complete, the line will run from Clinique Feysin to Part-Dieu, and from there via the T1 to Charpennes or (at peak times) IUT Feysine. Assuming that approval is received at the beginning of 2009, the service will be open from the end of 2012 and is expected to carry 60,000 passengers per day. (V&T)

NICE The new tramway entered service in mid-October, with the formal inauguration taking place on Saturday, 24 November. Commercial service started the following Monday. Not surprisingly, it is now route 1, and it has brought about the withdrawal of bus services 5 and 18, as well as a partial withdrawal of bus routes 1 and 2 where they competed with the tram, between place Garibaldi and place Alexandre-Médicin. Services 15 and 22 have been merged (the new number is not known) and other routes will be modified to co-ordinate them with the tramway, once the trams have been running for six months and their effect on the network can be judged. The opening ceremony was marked by the absence of President Sarkozy, even though he had opened the new line in Marseille a few months earlier. Apparently this is because the mayoral election campaign was under way and, with one of the candidates being the minister for overseas départements and territories, M. le Président presumably had to avoid showing favouritism with an official visit ... (V&T)

PARIS Irisbus Citelis-Line saloons continue to arrive, with over two hundred (3001-220) now in service. Also new are Heuliez GX127 buses 451-61. A second Mercedes Citaro to meet a fiery end is 4270: as with 4305, the earlier loss, a fire started in the engine compartment and resulted in the total destruction of the unfortunate vehicle, which was travelling along the A6 autoroute on service 216 when it was flagged down by a police patrol. The passengers were fortunately evacuated safely. (Réseaux Urbains)

RAPIDES CÔTE d'AZUR RCA, which is nowadays a Veolia company, has introduced a variant of its 100 (Nice - Monaco) which uses the A8 autoroute and is designated 100 Express. It is