



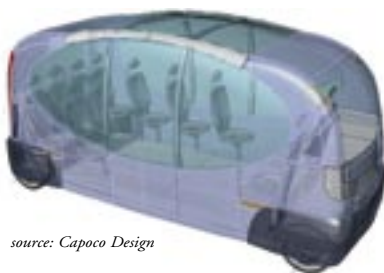
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How design can be used to improve the functionality of buses and make them more attractive to all users

Findings of the 2nd UITP Design Day on Buses and Design

Buses still provide the backbone of most public transport services worldwide and have many unique and cost effective features for operators and authorities. There have been considerable technological improvements bringing higher levels of efficiency and comfort, but buses in general still suffer from a poor image, particularly in the eyes of the user.

UITP presented its findings from the 're?bus' project setting out the characteristics of the 'European Bus of the future'. Following this, the second UITP Design Day, which was organized in Saint Etienne in November 2006 and was dedicated to buses, took the debate one step further. The 're?bus' design competition and the Design Day were intermediate steps which could facilitate a more global approach within UITP to analyse bus systems and prepare future European research in this field, which was presented to the European Commission as an answer to the seventh Framework Programme. The Design Day programme brought together designers, operators, organising authorities and the manufacturing industry to show what progress has been made and identify gaps and areas needing more attention.



source: Capoco Design

Buses should be considered at the same level as light rail as they play a crucial role in towns and can contribute to social inclusion. Moreover it should not be forgotten that 20,000 buses are sold in Western Europe each year compared with approximately 500 LRVs, thus buses and design deserve more attention. The operators strongly support that design has to be part of the industrial process. Indeed it is important that the offer is adapted to the city, to avoid any kind of one-size-fits all approach, and that the customers benefit from innovation. However the diversification of the offer has always been quite difficult to achieve in the past because of cost and time constraints on the side of the industry.

Prepared by the UITP
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Yet it seems that the goal of improving the image of buses to increase passenger satisfaction and use is generally accepted by all stakeholders and more and more industry leaders want to introduce Research & Development actions in terms of design for future vehicle generations. This should lead to major improvement in terms of products available on the market and to better satisfaction of operators and authorities who are not always able to find the buses they want for their cities at an affordable price.

For future bus generations, the industry should bear in mind the example of Nantes Metropole who ordered 13 buses for whose few simple modifications in terms of floor coverings and better seat design combined with a stylish livery brought a fresh, distinctive, and attractive look to a basic product line at an affordable price.

A new issue raised in Saint Etienne was the “image competition” between the objectives of the design. Image competition between the brand of the operator/organizing authority and the brand of the industry sometimes arises. The solution to this debate could be to make the intentions of the stakeholders compatible already in the schedule of conditions dedicated to the vehicle conception (e.g. the vehicle body should allow for the insertion of various logos).

For more information, please contact Sandra Vingerhoets (sandra.vingerhoets@uitp.com)



Source: Créalis Irisbus