Opening up to open data
UITP Events Calendar

World Events
Training Programme: ‘Contracting for public transport’
Munich, Germany, 9-11 April 2014
Training Programme for public transport managers (3rd module)
New York, USA, 19-21 May 2014
8th UITP International Bus Conference
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 5-7 November 2014
61st UITP World Congress and Exhibition
Milan, Italy, 8-10 June 2015

Local Events
Seminar: Financing and modernising light rail in Central and Eastern Europe
Oradea, Romania, 26 March 2014
3rd Annual Performance Conference
Brisbane, Australia, 26 March 2014
Workshop: How to become an employer of choice?
Hannover, Germany, 27 March 2014
Seminar: Young transport professionals
Brisbane, Australia, 3 April 2014
13th UITP Asia-Pacific Assembly
Tokyo, Japan, 14-17 April 2014
MENA Transport Congress & Exhibition:
‘Grow your city with public transport’
Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 27-30 April 2014
Workshop: New intercity bus lines: market for the bus, competition for rail?
Brussels, Belgium, 5 May 2014
European Mobility Conference: Moving Together
Organised by UITP and GIE Objectif transport public
In conjunction with Transports Publics 2014, the European Mobility Exhibition
Paris, France, 11-12 June 2014
Metro Seminar: Refurbishing ageing infrastructure assets
Berlin, Germany, 17-18 June 2014

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Opening up to open data

Since 2012, the STM’s (Montreal, Canada) public transport data has been made available in GTFS format on its website. This decision is the result of a dialogue with developers who had long been asking for access to the data sets so that they could freely develop transit-related applications.

It was decided that the GTFS format would be used for basic data, knowing that some information relevant to transportation would be missing, like messages related to certain schedules and information about bus accessibility. The STM was already providing its data to Google, which was using it to build its trip planner. The information technologies (IT) team nevertheless worked to adapt the GTFS data to the needs of application developers. In fact, some superfluous and redundant information was in the file, which had the potential to make it difficult to use.

The decision was made not to enter into contractual agreements with developers for now, but instead to make the data freely accessible on our website. The data is accompanied by a document explaining the contents of files and outlining the terms of use.

It should be noted that applications created by developers cannot feature the STM logo or give the impression they are a product provided by the company.

The STM has noticed a marked interest from developers since making its data available, as numerous possibilities are now open to them. For example, developers will be able to combine data from Montréal, Laval and the South Shore to create regional trip planners.

The STM has used GTFS data sets from partner transit agencies in the metropolitan area to develop a trip planner for its mobile applications. In fact, the STM has chosen to maintain its own applications, for the time being, and not let the market take over this aspect of customer information.

So far, over 20 applications have been developed by third parties.
Hackathons to establish relationships with developers
On several occasions, the STM has taken part in intensive software creation events, known as Hackathons, where hundreds of developers gather to create applications using various municipal data sets. A jury then decides which applications are the most promising and can award prizes to their developers.

Held in a single day, such events help uncover original ideas that are worth developing, but mostly help establish closer relationships with the app-development community. Indeed, it is important to understand the needs of those who relay information and develop content.

Evolving data
For now, STM data are considered satisfactory, but many want access to other types of data, such as ridership for a given metro station or bus stop. The challenge is to make the considerable volume of data produced by the STM usable by the developer community. Furthermore, the data is often complex, making documenting crucial, so that the data can be used by developers.

Beyond such fundamental issues, the STM is aware that its open data must evolve. We are working to make accessible timetables available to wheelchair users, as well as a number of messages published with timetables. What will the next available data set be? The list could include several areas of activity. From the STM’s point of view, in the end, the information must directly serve the interests of public transit users and, as such, must be related to their transit use or improve the client experience.

In order to work more closely with the community of developers, one aspect needing improvement is the way in which information is exchanged with this community. For example, a newsletter or an email alert would make it possible to communicate information quickly to these external suppliers. It would also help to improve the overall level of data available on these applications.

The STM has chosen to leave a share of the market for passenger information to outside players, as long as customers can benefit from this and can choose the application that best meets their needs. Whether that application is developed by the STM or a third party is of little importance. Furthermore, outside developers often work for companies that can better deal with fast-evolving technology and provide solutions that are up to date with consumer demand.

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Travelhack: helping to improve the travel experience

Last year, the Travelhack hackathon was held in Sweden. The aim of this innovation contest was to inspire and produce new digital services and apps designed to make travelling by public transport a better experience. The organisations behind the 2013 edition of Travelhack were Samtrafiken, public transport operator in Stockholm AB Storstockholms Lokaltrafik (SL), as well as the industrial research institute Viktoria Swedish ICT. Travelhack 2013 built on the developer platform www.trafiklab.se and targeted the developer community to encourage them to take part in creating real-time services for public transport.

Why a hackathon?
There is major demand from the travelling community for real-time information as well as mobile ticketing solutions. Using an open innovation approach makes it more likely that the ideas from the developer community will work as catalysts for both public transport operators and politicians to move real-time information demand higher up the agenda.

The aim of the contest was to produce sustainable go-to-market real-time services for the public transportation industry, ultimately benefitting the travelling community.

How it worked
The Travelhack contest was divided into two phases. Phase one was a qualifying round where the contestants submitted their contribution giving an extensive pitch description of their idea. The second phase was a 24-hour hackathon where the 25 best ideas competed for the grand prize, a trip to the Disrupt Developer meet-up in San Francisco. Travelhack was open to anyone, but was mostly aimed at software developers, since teams were expected to produce a prototype during the final event.

Initially, social media was used to spread the word and recruit contestants. The full-scale website was launched at the beginning of January last year. The website featured a presentation of a high-profile jury, application programming interfaces (APIs) and other relevant information for the contestants. On 1 February the qualification round ended with an astonishing result: over the course of just a few weeks, the website had 7,731 unique visitors, 202 people registered interest
in competing, with 51 qualifying contributions registered on the closing day.

Out of these 51 teams, 25 were chosen to compete in the final hackathon event, where they battled it out over 24 hours to create mobile apps and web services designed to improve public transport. An open market place with industry stakeholders, investors and university representatives was held in conjunction with the final hackathon event. During the hackathon, developers had APIs from the developer platform Trafiklab.se at their disposal, along with any open data source they could get their hands on.

The contest had three thematic categories.

- **So Much Better**: How do we make travel with public transportation easier, faster and better? How can we take advantage of crowdsourcing, social media and new technologies for better real-time information?
- **More Fun Mobility**: How can we link entertainment services to travel?
- **Public Transportation for Everyone**: How can we make public transport more accessible for travellers with disabilities?

**The winners**

A number of the contributions to Travelhack 2013 have the potential to be developed into sustainable apps and/or online solutions improving travellers’ public transportation experiences.

The overall winner, and winner of the Public Transportation for Everyone category, was the Resledaren mobile app. This public transport journey planner for Stockholm was designed for people with cognitive disabilities, such as Autism Spectrum Disorders or ADHD. People with cognitive disabilities such as autism and ADHD will often not leave on time, forget things they need to bring and may have difficulty if their trip is disrupted (for example if a bus is delayed or cancelled). The app contains features such as reminders, a to-do list and information about changes to help make their journey easier.

The winner of the So Much Better category was Biljettapp, a personal, interactive ticket providing the passenger with relevant information about their journey in real time. Biljettapp collects data from different channels and highlights the information that the passenger needs before, during and after their journey.

In the More Fun Mobility category, the Travel Music Mashup app came out on top. This app plays music with lyrics based on your location, taking inspiration from a passenger’s surroundings. The player will change the music as the passenger travels through the city, mixing songs together based on journey length, stops and the environment. The player also collects data that can help transport planners identify public transport bottlenecks.

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