

"Innovations and mountain transport": what challenges face stakeholders in the Alpine region and what expertise is required?

The aims of the "Innovations and mountain transport" day, organised by the Transdev Group in Chamonix, were to identify specific challenges and future progress for passenger transport in the mountains. This conference, which involved more than one hundred participants from across Europe, was an opportunity to share "good practices" and the innovative solutions developed in France, as well as in Italy, Switzerland and Austria.

⇒ **A standard-bearer in the Alps for over fifteen years**

Joël Lebreton, CEO of Transdev, opened the forum by reminding those present of the unique nature of Transdev, of its **European standing** and its ability to **adapt to different regions**, especially in mountainous areas.

Transdev, established in **seven countries** and realising nearly **50%** of its turnover outside France, has two clear strategies to differentiate it from others. On one hand, it has created a unique **quality labelling** process (to supplement the normal certifications) with a target of **100%** of networks to be labelled by the end of 2008. On the other hand, the Group has an **expertise in relationships with local authorities**, thanks to public-private partnerships and its ability to supply a wide range of contracts (PFI, franchise, SEM, mandate, operation only, mandate without operation) in different contexts and countries.

Transdev has had a presence in the Alps for more than fifteen years with Autocars Martin and continues to evolve: the new Albertville urban network began on 2 January and it already promises to be a great development, thanks to the transfer of responsibility for transport to the *Communauté de la Région d'Albertville* (CoRAI, Albertville local authority) for the Albertville-Ugine area. Elsewhere, several projects are in progress in Italy.

⇒ **Innovative services and a wealth of expertise to increase the appeal of the mountain resorts**

Mountain urban networks: unique expertise

The concept of the **ski bus** has been developed to provide a seasonal service, throughout the year in some resorts, with adaptable routes and a high standard of service. There are **122** vehicles serving **20** resorts, such as those in the Aravis and Tarentaise valleys.

In Chamonix, the "**mules**" provide a free service, in both summer and winter.

Innovations for the best possible quality of service

- By creating **Altibus** in 2000, Transdev anticipated the emerging tourist demand, by providing internet users a quick and easy reservation system, useful information and partner services such as buying lift passes or reserving accommodation. Today, the website receives **4,000** visitors per day, with a target of **80,000 journeys in 2006/07**.
- In 2006, the Group launched **Mouv'Aravis**, a tool designed to help both tourists and the local population with transport. Mouv'Aravis aims to become the leading tool for transport in the Alps, after a trial period during the current season.
- Finally, with **Ynfobus**, Transdev has optimised information for passengers onboard its vehicles. For two years, customers have had access to targeted information that is updated in real-time (time of arrival, ski lifts open nearby, weather, etc.).

To meet the transport requirements in the mountains and an ever-growing tourist demand in the Alps, Transdev has developed its expertise in terms of urban and inter-urban networks, connections with *TGV* railway stations and airports, management of bus stations, customer information services and ticketing.

Therefore, the Group serves three airports and the main *TGV* railway stations thanks to thirty scheduled routes and is involved in the economic, financial and commercial management of 8 bus stations in the Savoie region.

Improving the appeal of the mountain resorts, especially in environmental terms

For more than 10 years, Transdev has invested in its role as an "environmental partner" of the transport planning authorities. The first stage was to encourage the use of public transport by providing a free service, the ski bus. In the same way, half of the vehicles operating on the mountain networks have been modified to limit their emissions (Euro 3 standard, particle filters). The Group also work to modernise its fleet with new vehicles having to meet Euro 4 standard. Finally, a consultation was launched in Chamonix for the purchase of electric vehicles for an eventual trial in the town centre.

The day finished with a round-table discussion on future developments, particularly in terms of financing mountain transport: Has the current economic system of "at your own risk" reached its limits? Who will accept the financial burden of the required modernisation of the urban networks?

More generally, how to provide a transport service that integrates the developments in travel requirements? How to overcome the accommodation problems encountered by seasonal workers or how to further improve the appeal of the job of bus driver?

There are many ways forward available to all industry stakeholders.