



HIGH QUALITY NETWORK TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN CATALONIA



A significant increase in demand over the past decade has prompted Catalonia to invest in its public transport system. As part of this drive, in 2012 the Spanish region introduced a brand new bus rapid transit system (BRT) – the ‘expres.cat’[1].

Over the last ten years, demand for intercity bus transport in Catalonia has risen by 57%. The regional bus network already comprised more than 700 lines with 53.1 million trips per year (2012). Thanks to its 40 lines, the expres.cat BRT network is expected to cover an impressive 40% of the total demand. How is that possible? Bus networks with high levels of service (BHLS), i.e. BRT, are char-

acterised by high frequency, the use of modern, sustainable and accessible vehicles, high commercial speeds, real-time information at stops, and dedicated bus lanes.

The expres.cat lines have been designed to connect large and medium-sized cities with Catalonia's four main centres – Barcelona (19 lines), Girona (7 lines), Tarragona (7 lines), and Lleida (7 lines). Since deployment of the system began in

October 2012, 10 lines have been implemented: the first 8 now link different cities with Barcelona, and 2 more connect with Tarragona. Some of these lines run on the HOV (High Occupancy Vehicle) bus lane of one of the most congested highways to Barcelona (the C-58). The key characteristics of the service are as follows:

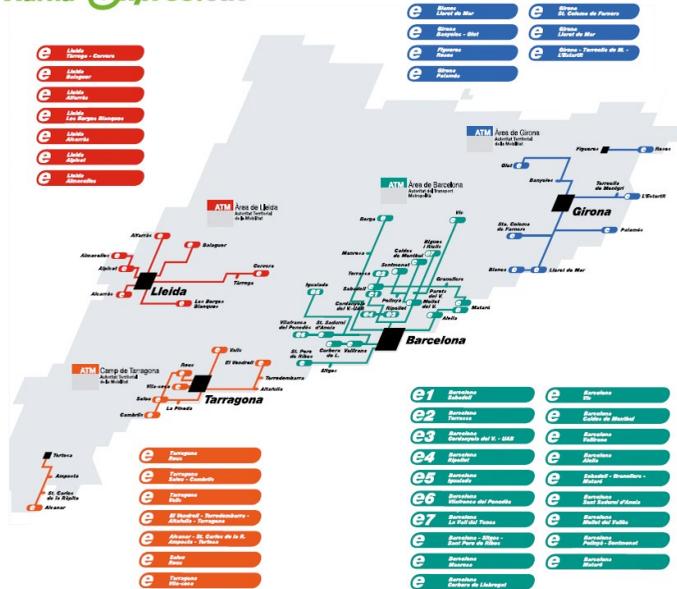
- High frequency during peak hours, and new direct bus services
- High and competitive commercial

speeds: use of HOV bus lanes, priority at traffic intersections, etc.

- Real-time information: bus stops with dynamic information panels updated in real time, as well as information on board
- New lines are part of the integrated fare system
- Better intermodality with other modes of transport
- 100% accessible vehicles
- More sustainable and comfortable vehicles, with the use of biodiesel,



Xarxa **expres.cat**



Cities and regions - networking across Europe

Barcelona and Catalonia actively exchange with other cities and regions in Europe to identify the best solutions for achieving a more sustainable transport system. Therefore, the expres.cat BRT has been presented to and discussed with peers from across Europe at the Annual Polis Conferences. Polis[2] is the network of cities and regions working towards sustainable mobility. By working together, the latter have gained a strong voice *vis-à-vis* European

institutions, and valuable opportunities for networking with peers and strategic players in the transport sector.

The expres.cat initiative confirms the Catalan government's commitment to promoting

intercity buses as an efficient and competitive mode of transport. "Catalonia's approach to a BHLS network is now well acknowledged across Europe," says Ricard Font, Catalonia's secretary of mobility and infrastructures. "But the community has been inspired by other such systems, such as Nantes[3] for example."

Assessment of the network to date has confirmed that quality certainly matters: the number of passengers carried has increased on all the lines already in service, and in satisfaction surveys users awarded them an average score of more than 8 out of 10 points ●

- and added value services such as Wi-Fi and free newspapers
- New image: expres.cat is being promoted via a new corporate image to enhance its visibility to users, and facilitate rapid identification
- The network is being financed through a public-private partner-

ship (PPP). The buses are being funded by operators (66%) and Government (33%); the brand image is being managed by operators, and the real-time information system by the government

Cristina Pou, head of Road Transport, Mobility & Transport Generalitat de Catalunya

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References
 [1]to find out more, go to www.mobilitat.net; www20.gencat.cat; & www.polisnetwork.eu
 [2]www.polis-online.org
 [3]inaugurated in France in 2006, the Nantes Busway (Line 4) is a 7km long BRT line served by 15 stations

