

Edinburgh Bus Users Group

INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF 'ENVIRO400' TWO-DOOR BUSES

Edinburgh Bus Users Group (EBUG) welcomes Lothian Buses' introduction of 'Enviro400' two-door buses on the 11 and 16 services.

We see important journey-time benefits from separating the flows of leaving and joining passengers, and the increased quantity of seating on these buses is also very welcome.

Advance information on forthcoming stops – both audio and visual – is of very high quality.

There are a number of aspects of detailed design (and the relationship to existing bus stops) which we feel require attention however:

Exit doors – and the relationship to existing bus stops:

The points in this section relate particularly, but not exclusively, to wheelchair users and the significant number of people who have 'hidden' disabilities (eg arthritic hips/knees and visual difficulties). We recognise that problems with bus stop configuration and street clutter are issues for the City of Edinburgh Council (in co-operation with Lothian Buses).

- the exit door can be problematic where the bus cannot pull in parallel to the kerb (due to limited length of build-out or other vehicles having been parked too close to the bus stop, resulting in a gap between bus and footway which some passengers cannot confidently and safely step off/ across
- because wheelchair users are forced to exit via the front door (and there is no signage to give advance warning), confusion / delay can result
- as the middle of the bus does not 'kneel' like the front corner does, the exit step can be too high for some bus users with restricted mobility - but if, as a result, a passenger needs to exit from the front door, this can lead to resistance from drivers
- in the case of some shorter 'build-out' bus stops, it is difficult to get both front and middle (exit) doors aligned with the build-out (this can also lead to queuing confusion when the bus proceeds beyond the near end of the shelter – and associated bus stop sign – before stopping)
- on some build-outs there is also 'street clutter' which can obstruct passenger flow from the exit door.

Internal space:

- there is just one wheelchair / buggy space, and for wheelchair users manoeuvrability past the driver's cab and into the space can be problematic due to the limited room provided

- in the case of people with buggies, this limited space can lead to significantly extended door-to-door journey times when refused access to the first (or second) bus
- the luggage space is now very constrained
- the seats reserved for 'vulnerable people' are in the coldest, draughtiest area of the bus.

Head room:

- on the lower deck, there is a big step up from the aisle to the rear eight seats, and no warning sign to avoid taller passengers banging their heads on the ceiling
- overall, the ceiling appears to be lower than in previous models – combined with a dark colour scheme and red lighting, this creates a somewhat cramped feel to the accommodation.

Noise levels:

- while the bus engines are noticeably quieter, there are very high noise levels at the lower-deck rear seats (and intermittently at the seats immediately to the rear of the middle doors) due to an 'air conditioning' (?) unit – as windows can still be opened, it is not clear what functions these units perform
- the upper-deck broadcast of 'warning, exit door closing' appears to be superfluous and could be eliminated in order to reduce noise intrusion
- the hopper windows are very stiff to open and shut – the latter causing a noticeably loud crack.

Other issues:

- the bell sound for stopping is very soft and may not register with those hard of hearing
- the sign indicating that the bus will stop is relatively obscure from the back of the bus.