

## Welcome to Oxontime

### Oxfordshire's Real-Time Information system for bus users

'Oxontime' is a partnership between independent bus operators and Oxfordshire County Council and was created in 2004 to provide Real Time Information (RTI) for bus users.

Buses equipped with Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) equipment use Global Positioning System (GPS) satellite technology to track their location to within a few metres. By comparing this location data with the scheduled timetables, it is possible for the system to calculate when buses should arrive at each stop along specified routes. This data is communicated through mobile radio communications infrastructure.

Note – Only RTI enabled services can be predicted. Generally this means all Oxford Bus Company and Stagecoach services, and most of Thames Travel services. See <http://www.oxontime.com/coverage.aspx> for full list of RTI enabled services.

Please note that, with a very few exceptions, **only Real Time Information is supplied to users of Oxontime** – in the format '3 mins', 'DUE' etc rather than scheduled timetable departure times, displayed in the format '13:00' (HH:MM).

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Bus users can access Real Time Information using 4 methods

#### 1) RTI signs at the bus stop

At some bus stops electronic signs are provided which show predicted departure times. See example below.



No prediction will be shown for a bus until it is within 30 minutes of the stop.

Predictions will count down, reflecting the position of the buses on the network. When a sign prediction changes to 'DUE', this indicates that a bus should arrive within a short period of time, subject to local road conditions.

Note. Where a bus is RTI enabled, but for whatever reason it cannot be predicted via satellite tracking, it will not be shown on the sign and a 'please refer to timetables' message will be displayed.

## 2) Oxontime Website

The Oxontime website <http://www.oxontime.com/home.aspx> allows selection of a bus stop by SMS number as shown below, but also provides additional sophisticated search options, so that stops can be selected by any combination of stop name, road, town/village, postcode and service number.

Full instructions on how to use these various features can be found from the Oxontime home page link above.

## 3) Text messaging to mobile telephones (Mobile Oxontime)

RTI information can also be obtained via a simple text message request using Mobile Oxontime.

Each bus stop has a unique reference number, known as the **SMS number**. Where the stop is used by RTI equipped buses, a special plate will be attached to the bus stop pole containing its number. See example below.



To find out when the next buses are due, simply create an SMS text message containing the SMS number (which always starts with 693) and send it to 84637

Within seconds you will receive a text message listing the next few RTI service bus departures from that stop.

It you know the number of the service you wish to use, leave a space after the SMS number and add the service you want, e.g.: 69345486 4A. This will exclude all services except the 4A.

Note. Some buses, particularly on rural services, are not fitted with RTI equipment and cannot be shown. See website link above for full list of included services.

Both the outgoing and incoming text messages will be charged at your network provider's usual text message rate.

See the separate Mobile Oxontime leaflet for further details.

#### **4) Mobile Phone Applications**

A Mobile Internet version of the Oxontime website is available for users of Smartphones and a specific Oxontime application with enhanced functionality can be downloaded for use on Microsoft Windows Mobile, Google (Android) and Apple (iPhones) operating systems.

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### **FAQs**

#### **1) How are the costs of providing and maintaining the RTI system met?**

The system is jointly funded, with OCC responsible for the central communications infrastructure software, on-street displays and web-based services, and the bus operators the on-bus (AVL) tracking equipment.

#### **2) Why are some bus departures not shown on displays?**

Typically, a bus may not appear on a sign if:

- a) The bus is not AVL equipped – see:  
<http://www.oxontime.com/coverage.aspx> for full list of RTI enabled services
- b) The bus has a hardware fault – e.g. ticket machine, broken GPS antenna or cable. Likewise, if the AVL unit has a fault, the bus may not be tracked;
- c) Human error – the driver enters an incorrect journey number or system timetable data has become outdated or inaccurate;
- d) There is a problem with the system central software, which processes all bus location data (this may also cause website downtime etc);
- e) The sign itself has lost communication with the central system and therefore cannot receive bus location updates sent every 20-30 seconds;
- f) The bus is ready to leave but has passed its scheduled departure time, in which case the prediction has already 'cleared' off the sign.

#### **3) Why does the system only shown Real Time (predictions) and not scheduled timetable information?**

Static timetables should always being provided with Real Time Information displays supplying additional benefits over and above this standard. This position is under always kept under review for given operators/routes, but our aim is always to maximise the amount of RTI available to the public.

**4) How can I access other bus information?**

For a comprehensive mix of RTI and schedule bus information, visit:

<http://voyager.oxfordshire.gov.uk/naptan.aspx>

For a full journey planning service, visit:

[http://www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk/se/XSLT\\_TRIP\\_REQUEST2?language=en&timeOffset=15](http://www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk/se/XSLT_TRIP_REQUEST2?language=en&timeOffset=15)

**5) What other improvements are planned?**

The Council is working with its supplier to offer third parties (e.g. educational establishments, businesses, private developers) open access to its RTI (live) dataset. We also continue to utilise available budgets (including developer contributions) to provide additional signs – e.g. within new retail developments, and to link with neighbouring local authority RTI systems.

**6) How do I report a problem with any aspect of the Oxontime service?**

Please e-mail details to [ontime@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:ontime@oxfordshire.gov.uk) so that a member of the OCC Public Transport Information & Infrastructure Team can investigate and provide a full response. Similarly, we value feedback on any or all aspects of the Oxontime RTI services. If you have any ideas as to how we could improve the system in general, please do let us know.

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