



Driving into the future: what it takes to electrify fleets

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Electric drive units play a central role in the transition to emissions-free mobility; however, converting a fleet to eBuses presents transportation companies with a number of challenges. The consultancy services offered by MAN Transport Solutions provide information in this regard.

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- **The switch to eMobility brings with it stringent requirements in terms of depot management, power supply, maintenance and the qualifications held by employees**
- **Potential savings through the optimisation of charging strategies and power management**
- **MAN Transport Solutions provides transportation companies with advice regarding route optimisation, vehicle configuration and charging strategies**

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Although electric cars are still the absolute minority on the roads, commercial vehicles powered by alternative fuels are already well-established in many areas. The ever-increasing demand for reduced emissions in inner city areas has resulted in a spike in interest amongst transportation companies in vehicles with drive systems that are especially environmentally friendly.

However, converting their fleet to battery-powered electric vehicles often presents operators with unforeseen challenges. "Those who prepare meticulously for the introduction of eBuses in advance and who plan extensively for this will be able to overcome those challenges," asserted Stefan Sahlmann, Head of Transport Solutions at MAN Truck & Bus. The new MAN Transport Solutions consultation service provides support to

MAN Truck & Bus is one of Europe's leading commercial vehicle manufacturers and transport solution providers, with an annual revenue of some 9 billion euros (2016). The company's product portfolio includes vans, trucks, buses/coaches and diesel and gas engines along with services related to passenger and cargo transport. MAN Truck & Bus is a company of Volkswagen Truck & Bus GmbH and employs more than 35,000 people worldwide.



transportation companies and fleet operators during their transition to alternative drive systems, addressing all issues concerning drive technology, route network planning, route optimisation and battery management. “In addition, we draw up bespoke concepts detailing how the alternative fleet would ideally be operated, charged and maintained in specific cases,” explained Sahlmann. After all, these factors have a significant impact on both route planning and internal processes and schedules.

Anyone switching to eBuses should take particular care to ensure that the correct conditions are present in terms of depot management, power supply, maintenance and staff qualifications. “Alongside the charging station infrastructure, other factors at the depot, such as its size, security and parking situation, play an important role,” said Sahlmann. It is also important that its power requirements are determined. This will depend on the number of eBuses and the charging strategy that is to be used. “Consideration should also be given to storing energy locally. Through the use of additional generators or energy storage units, significant reductions can often be made with regard to energy costs, as energy requirements can be fulfilled during times at which the network is not being used to capacity and when the cost of electricity is therefore cheaper,” explained Sahlmann. Charging and energy management are therefore of significant importance to eFleets.

Another essential point is the qualifications held by employees. Only those workshop employees who have completed special high-voltage technology training are able to perform maintenance and repair work on eBuses, as was explained by Hardy Hiller, Head of After Sales Bus at MAN Truck & Bus. “We are already providing this workshop training, and we are also providing training to drivers. The driver training focuses on safety and efficient driving,” explained the expert.

MAN Truck & Bus has been actively involved in placing alternative drive systems in city buses for a number of years now and aims to reduce the emissions produced by the public transportation system to a minimum. Its portfolio has included city buses with natural gas engines for many years; thanks to their use of natural or synthetic gas, these are practically

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emissions-free. In addition, since 2010, the MAN Lion's City Hybrid has been offering an alternative that is interesting from both an economical and an ecological point of view. It will be joined by fully electric buses in the near future. During the next year, a pre-production model of a battery-powered bus (BEV) will undergo practical testing in a number of European cities. Series production is expected to commence before 2020.