



Robert, Stakeholder Management Officer, First Bus in Scotland

In the second part of this interview, Robert shares more about his passion for bus and we ask him, if he was to do another job - what would it be?!

"If I could do another job and I suppose it's an aspiration that's now more 'work in progress'.. I am a total network geek, I love route maps and all that sort of thing and seeing shapes of the network and things like that and ultimately my dream job within First would be a Network Planner!

So effectively looking at the passenger numbers, looking at areas, and seeing if we can maybe tap into new markets and develop the network. I've literally just received my certificate through for completing my network planning course. It's an interest I've always had since I was kid. I was maybe five (years old) and where most have kids would collect football stickers and things I collected bus timetables and still do - so that's since the 1980s! I've got hundreds of them!

So in my own time I like to look at all the timetables and study the routes that have operated in Glasgow and then over the years how those service routes have changed, looking at how frequent they were and in some cases where the service has fallen away and all that sort of thing.

It's a work in progress that I enjoy. I've studied things like the depopulation in the city and Glasgow in particular and we had one bus route up in the late 1980s that ran every 10 minutes down past the Royal Infirmary. Over the years, Red Road, Sighthill, Roystonhill, the Gorbals and the top end of Castlemilk, they all had tower blocks and this one route served them all and you can see it as the years go by - it falls in frequency then another bit of the route disappears and now it doesn't exist, it's gone! And it had been running for decades, but its literally because the supporting population has gone and has dispersed elsewhere throughout the city.

If I'd taken a completely different career there would have been two possible paths, I would either have been a TV Weatherman or a Superstar DJ!!

I like my weather forecasting and when I was a tiny kid I had my little weather station in my gran's back garden, I was really into all of that. But I do also like my dance music as well, so before I joined First I used to do a bit of mobile DJ-ing! I still have my kit!

We've run lots of events over the years. One I remember a few years ago on International Woman's Day, we were doing an alternate Open Day at the Livingston Depot. We invited local women through the job centres and local community to come and have a coffee and a chat with some of the drivers and training team. We offered to take them on a circuit of a training bus and drive the bus round the perimeter of the depot and if they liked it we could take them into the training centre and put in an application.

Normally you would apply first and get an interview, then see if you liked driving a bus! But this time we flipped it on its head. As part of the day we got the local female MSP along and we talked her into being a good sport and having a go at driving the bus too. It was great fun but the best bit was despite having worked in transport all these years I'd never driven a bus so I got to have a go too!! I thoroughly enjoyed it.

We've recently been engaging with a youth group and they're welcoming the introduction of the free bus pass. The under 22s pass will be a great opportunity to capture the attention of young people.

It means we'll have them before they have adopted any habits and we could make the bus their habit of choice before the clutches of a car takes hold! With the under 19s pass there was the risk that by 20 they might fall into buying a car etc but keeping them on bus for free until they turn 22 means we have more time with them to really harness and integrate bus as their mode of choice.

We're really keen to listen to the voice of young people to hear what they have to say about the routes and services that impact them. They probably have the keys to unlock some ideas that we've never thought of before! They could help the future of network development!"