

# Provisioning of long distance bus service to Malmö

previously titled An Investigation of the Öresundsterminalen  
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## 1 Introduction

This paper intends to explore the recent developments in the presence and provisioning of long distance buses in Malmö. The study has evolved to this broader context as it has explored two very desperate types of bus traffic: 1) scheduled city to city bus service and 2) charter bus tours. While these types of travel are intended for very different audiences, they share many sustainability concerns. Buses are green house gas(GHG) 'light' alternatives to airplane travel, but they also induce significant local pollution concerns(World Resources Institute 2002). Access to buses and quality of bus service bring to mind concerns of social equity between economic classes. Access and quality also provide opportunities to make bus travel more attractive to those who otherwise might fly or drive solo (Marketing Week 2004). Charter operations can bring windfall tourism and accompanying economic opportunities. Social, environmental, and economic concerns constitute the pillars of sustainability. This study attempts to synthesize the three pillars as they are impacted by long distance buses to and from Malmö.

For the purposes of this study, long distance bus service and express bus service will be synonymous, and in general refer to bus service provided by private entities for scheduled city to city travel, typically over 100km. Examples include Greyhound in the United States, Eurolines in Europe, and Swebuss Express in Sweden. Charter bus service will refer to bus service provided as part of an organized tour package, typically involving multiple destinations and full services: accommodations, travel, food, etc. Examples of charter bus tour organizers in Sweden include Scandorama and Ölvemarks. These two giants of the tourism industry do not directly operate buses, but are heavily involved in their provisioning (Bengtsson 2008).

## 2 Framing the problems

The core argument is that bus service should be made more accessible, dignified, and attractive because bus travel presents a GHG 'light' alternative to short haul flying. Without clear planning and equitable provisioning of bus service, the attractiveness of express bus service diminishes and people may choose less environmentally friendly alternatives, such as driving solo or flying. Additionally, many bus passengers may not have access to or be able to afford alternatives, and are thus forced to find their only option even more inconvenient. It may be said that this impacts the poor disproportionately and thus a social equity question arises. Therefore, bus accessibility, attractiveness, inner city bus pollution, and tourism form the four sides of the frame of analysis.

## 2.1 Greenhouse Gas Benefits

Airline travel in Europe continues to grow at a rate of approximately 5% per year. Current trends in city to city travel have shown an increase in short haul airline travel with an estimated 100 million seats being served by low-cost carriers in 2006 (of 250 million total within Europe). (Association of European Airlines 2008) While short haul airline travel use continues to rise, climate change concerns loom large. Short haul flights (those less than 452 km) are estimated to emit 0.18 *kg CO<sub>2</sub>* per person per km. Express buses are a viable alternative for these distances, providing an almost 4X reduction in emissions at 0.05 *kg CO<sub>2</sub>* per person per km in a standard diesel bus. (World Resources Institute 2002).

## 2.2 Accessibility

While the climate benefits of bus travel appear to be convincing, the planning and policies behind provisioning express bus service in Malmö has been "ad hoc" (Fahl 2008). There is no official bus terminal and purportedly no official bus provisioning plan by the city (Bengtsson 2008, Fahl 2008).

In 2007, a private party completed a large, spacious terminal on the fringe of the city as an alternative bus station (Ek 2007). Initially, the Öresundsterminalen attracted several express bus operators. Less than one year later, the major express bus operators returned to the old Sväverterminalen near the central station, citing passenger confusion and frustration with being dropped off very distant from the city center (Kniivilä 2008).

Meanwhile, the Sväterminalen is a temporary bus station, near the central station, most city buses, and the Inner Stadden of Malmö. The future of this terminal as well as the future of its replacement remain uncertain.

## 2.3 Inner City Bus Pollution

Approximately 450 regularly scheduled buses serve the center of the city each week (Malmö Office of Tourism 2008). These diesel buses contribute to local air quality, which is a general health concern. The number of charter buses which enter Malmö is less certain. During peak periods being the summer and around weekends, there may be 65+ buses per day (Bengtsson 2008). Therefore, a station outside of town which can be a stopping point for these buses has certain operational and local pollution benefits. Unfortunately, for the reasons mentioned above, it is not certain that a station on the periphery meets the needs of the majority of residents of (or tourists to) Malmö.

## 2.4 Tourism

Charter buses have the potential to provide significant tourism revenue to the city of Malmö. Unfortunately, as will be shown in the discussion section, the charter bus volume in Malmö is high not because Malmö is a destination on the tour circuit, but rather that Malmö has played a very central role in the logistics of Swedish tour operators. Dozens of feeder lines bring customers from all over Sweden to Malmö, where they are shuffled over to the actual tour bus which will take them on their tours of mainland Europe. Malmö's role in this logistics became more important after the construction of the Öresundsbridge. (Bengtsson 2008, Fahl 2008)

### 3 Research design

This project aims to be an investigative piece as well as a sustainability assessment. The investigation has attempted to understand what decisions and processes led to the (lack of) provisioning of express bus service in Malmö. It has tried to ferret out the logic and planning thoughts that led to the Öresundsterminalen's enormous size and distant location. In addition, the study has sought to understand the city's plans for buses once the CityTunneln project is completed.

Research was primarily conducted by semi-structured interviews and reviewing articles in Swedish newspapers. One interview was conducted in person with a representative from the Öresundsterminalen. Two interviews have been conducted via telephone: one with a representative of the city of Malmö Streets and Parks Department and the other with the city of Malmö Office of Tourism. Two interviews remain to be full filled: one with the Sjöfärjetrafiken, the other with Swebuss Express. [Swebuss Express has offered a response which may be too late for the deadline of this paper]

## 4 Discussion

The discussion section applies the information garnered in interviews to the frame of analysis outlined above. The analysis is divided into two main sections dealing with charter bus tours and scheduled bus tours. The two are brought together towards the end of the discussions.

### 4.1 Charter Bus Tours

As we have seen, Malmö has played an important role in the logistical operations of Sweden's largest charter bus tour companies. They bring 28,000+ overnight stays to Malmö each summer (Bengtsson 2008). These overnight stays provide tourism revenue for Malmö. Additionally, these tourists may dine or shop in Malmö during their, albeit short, stay. Such a heavy, intermittent, peak volume of bus traffic was difficult for the city streets to handle. Additionally, these operations resulted in significant diesel pollution in the city center.

#### 4.1.1 The Öresundsterminalen

The Öresundsterminalen is a large, spacious bus terminal constructed on the outskirts of Malmö. The terminal was completed in 2007 by a completely private venture, with virtually no involvement by the city of Malmö in its planning. (In fact, the terminal is not actually located in Malmö, but rather in the neighboring Kommun of Burlöv.) The greenfield site of the terminal is located near the highways which serve Göteborg, Stockholm and the Öresunds bridge to Copenhagen. The terminal boasts 80 parking spots for buses, 240 cars, and a 220 seat restaurant. (Ek 2007)

While the terminal does not appear to truly serve the needs of the population of Malmö, it perhaps was never designed to do so. According to the manager Bengtsson (2008), the terminal was built expressly for the charter bus traffic that had no proper facility to serve their passengers and logistical operations. The station was never really targeted at serving express bus service. Express bus service was temporarily lured by the attractive site, luxurious terminal, and simplified operations (Fahl 2008).

How the terminal does serve the people of Malmö has more to do with reduced bus traffic on city streets and reduced diesel pollution. This benefit for residents is matched with an elevated level of service and decency to be associated with bus travel. Its amenities compete with the luxury and



Figure 1: An optimistic sketch for the Öresunds terminal.

feel of airline travel (Bengtsson 2008) thereby making bus travel a more attractive travel option, potentially reducing GHG emissions.



Figure 2: Adding a hotel to the Öresunds terminal.

The site of the terminal is currently planning for a hotel to assist with the operations of the charter tours (Thunell 2007). As currently configured, the hotel would provide 200+ rooms spread over 10+ floors. This hotel could further reduce bus traffic into the city. The downside is that this might reduce tourism revenue for the city. Ekberg (2008) from the City of Malmö's Office of Tourism played down any downside the new hotel might induce. She suggested that many travelers might prefer to stay in the city center, and that is of course for them to decide. She also ventured that many guests, despite being placed in the hotel on the outskirts, might taxi into the city center to dine or entertain. This study also ventures that based on relatively high occupancy rate of city hotels during the summer (Malmö Office of Tourism 2008) that relaxing the pressure from the charter tour operations could free up rooms for tourists who might actually spend more time and

money in Malmö, rather than as a layover.

From an operations perspective, the Öresundsterminalen's level of sustainability is questionable. It is a large facility that is severely underutilized most of the time, but perhaps this is that nature of certain types of transit stations. When asked, the management was not forthcoming about any sustainability efforts. Energy savings measures were implemented as cost saving measures, not for any concern for the environment. The new hotel does not promise to be especially 'green' in any way.

## 4.2 Scheduled Bus Service

The short lived phenomena of express city to city buses serving the Öresundsterminal created much confusion and inconvenience for bus travelers (Kniivilä 2008). The express bus companies were attracted by a slightly simplified route as well as a very nice facility, compared with the Sväverterminal near Centrallen. Within less than a year, the major express bus lines returned to the Sväverterminal, motivated primarily by customer complaints, confusion, and loss of passengers. Both Swebuss Express and Sjöfläbussen, which includes Eurolines, only serve the Sväverterminal. Prior to their switch back to the old location, the manager of the Öresundsterminal was in negotiations with the city to provide a dedicated express City bus route to the terminal, but such a link currently has an uncertain future. (Bengtsson 2008)

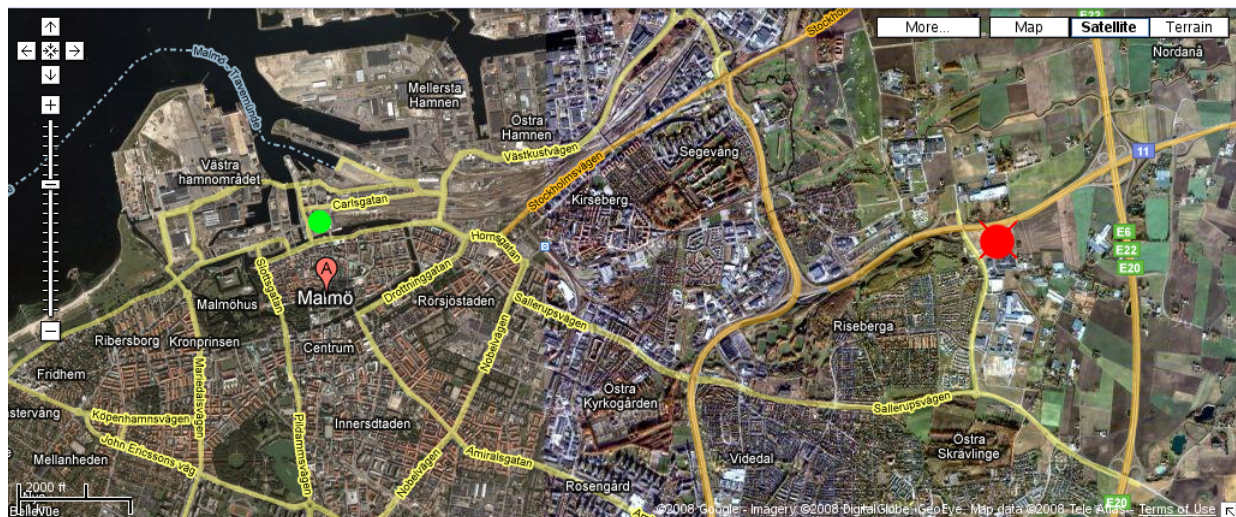


Figure 3: Map showing location of Öresundsterminal at the Red X, with Malmo Central (Green Dot) to the west. (from Google Maps)

The most frequent bus to serve the terminal is a Skanetrafiiken city bus. A single city bus, #35, serves the terminal. It is about a 45 minute ride from central Malmö to the bus terminal (See Figure 3). Travelers arriving in "Malmö" via bus are often surprised to find that the central station and town proper are still a 36 minute bus ride away, plus up to 30 minute wait time (on Sundays) for the city bus. (Skanetrafiiken 2008) The placement of the terminal is often a surprise to even residents of Malmö wishing to travel to northern Sweden, Norway, or mainland Europe. Its unpopularity has been reflected via the pullout of major express bus service providers. (Kniivilä



2008)

The old bus terminal: Sväverterminal has an uncertain future. Ironically, it was never meant to be a bus terminal, but is the old hydrofoil terminal which served Kastrup airport before the Öresunds bridge was built. The area of the old bus terminal is included in plans for redevelopment. Bengtsson (2008)

Historically, providing space for bus services has been "ad hoc" (Fahl 2008). The private operators used to simply stop on the street, as they do in Copenhagen and Lund. Since construction of the Citytunneln project began, the private operators were forced to move, this time to the Sväverterminal which was actually an improvement over the old curbside location. Both provide mediocre service and one can understandably see how the Öresundsterminal would be a significant improvement, despite its poor location.

Since the Sväverterminal location is temporary, the city, private operators, and other stakeholders have begun a discussion into where the future and more permanent bus station should be. A site has been identified. It is owned by Jernhusen, one of the real estate arms of the Swedish railway system. There is currently a warehouse at the location and it would most likely be redeveloped into a multiple-use facility, perhaps including functions such as a bus station, ticketing office, and package handling station. Offices and or residences will most likely be constructed on upper floors. The location is ideal, closer to the central station than even the Sväverterminal (see Figure 4). (Fahl 2008)

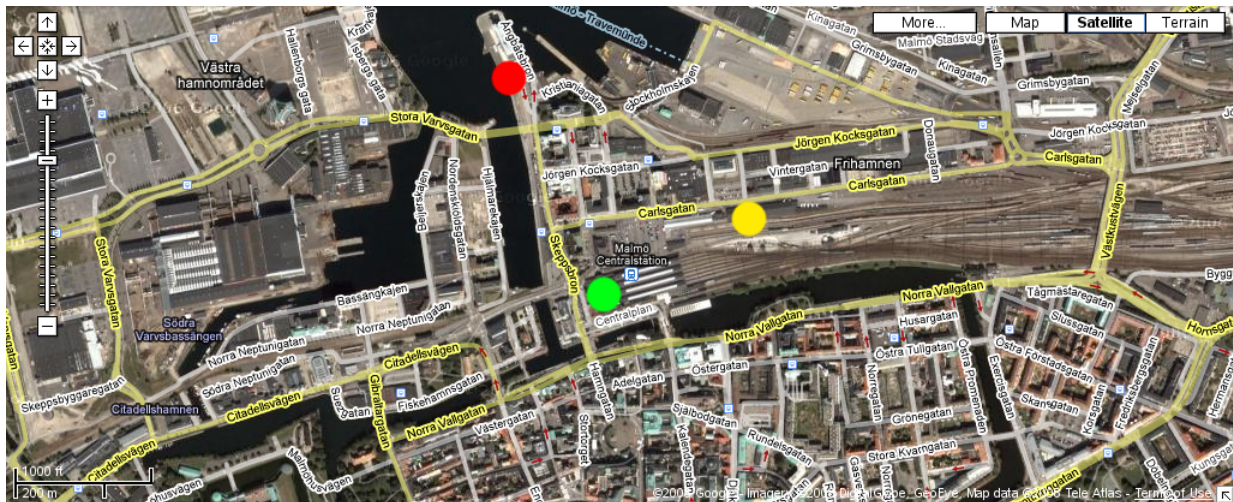


Figure 4: Map showing location of Sväverterminal (Red Dot), Malmö Central (Green Dot), and Jernhusen site (Yellow Dot). (from Google Maps)

The city is only one player in the discussions regarding the location of a future bus terminal. Both the city's Department of Streets and Office of Tourism find the location ideal primarily due to its proximity to Malmö's transit hub. "[The location] should be easy for the customer" Ekberg (2008). The stakeholders in this project include the City's Department of Streets, Office of Tourism, Jernhusen, the buslines, and Travelshop. Although the City does not intend to fund or develop the site itself, it has initiated the stakeholders into dialog. Discussions are in the early phases of idea development and little is clear regarding who will fund the development, what form the

development will take, or when it will be constructed. (Fahl 2008) A response is forthcoming from Swebuss Express regarding the developments at the Central Station and Öresundsterminalen, but was not available in time for delivery of this study.

### 4.3 Why not an express city bus to the Öresundsterminal?

An obvious question arises: Why not provide a city bus with a regular schedule and express route from Centralen to the Öresundsterminal. It makes logistical sense in that the long distance buses traverse a similar route [as an express city bus might take to get the Öresundsterminal] in entering and leaving Malmö. A city bus with a handful of stops would traverse the distance in less than 15 minutes, thus the overall passenger time lost would be minimal. By using the new terminal, all passengers would be able to experience the elevated level of service the new facility offers.

The management of the Öresundsterminal did engage the city in a discussion regarding an express city bus. No city bus was provisioned. (Bengtsson 2008) I believe the city has been reluctant to deal with the question of an express city bus to the Öresundsterminal issue primarily because the terminal is a private project and because it is not located in the municipality of Malmö. There is also the question of ridership and if the passenger volume to the terminal would justify a dedicated express bus.

A cursory analysis of bus traffic, irrelevant of passenger volume, does seem to make the answer a bit more ambiguous. Comparing number of inner city one way trips induced by an express city bus versus regular express bus traffic seems a useful exercise. Let's assume that an express city bus runs at 15 minute intervals, every day, from 6AM to 12PM. This results in an 18 hour run time \* 4 trips per hour \* 2 for service in each direction = 144 daily trips in and out of the city. Current estimates of long distance bus service report 450 buses per week (Malmö Office of Tourism 2008). Therefore, let's assume 65 busses / day \* 2 for service in each direction = 130 daily trips. The City of Malmö uses less GHG intensive CNG buses (World Resources Institute 2002), making the 144 daily city bus trips preferable over the 130 daily diesel bus trips. From a cursory environmental perspective the option of an express city bus appears attractive. Of course, this analysis does not concern itself with passenger preferences, costs, and politics. A useful exercise, not conducted as a part of this study, would be a survey of scheduled bus passengers to determine their preferences regarding service into Malmö, and specifically the question of an express city bus from the Central Station to Öresundsterminal.

## 5 Conclusion

The City of Malmö appears to have no concrete plan for provisioning of long distance bus service. While primarily a private operation, the long distance bus system needs cooperation from the city in order to make more sustainable operations choices, provide easier access, and less ad hoc development.

While initial observations make the Öresundsterminal appear as a serious failure of sustainability, for the charter bus tour segment and the key role that Malmö plays in Swedish tour operations, the terminal appears to be an improvement. This study believes that the Öresundsterminal does provide a higher level of amenities for passengers, thus making bus travel more attractive. It also has benefited the city by reducing local pollution and congestion especially from its high peak demands. While the terminal itself could improve operational sustainability as well as attempt to

introduce greener construction in the proposed hotel, it is not the complete failure of sustainability that it initially appears to be.

This study concludes that the city has several pathways to make scheduled bus travel more sustainable: The first involves guiding development of the Jernhusen site into a fully functioning bus terminal with safe and clean facilities to be on par with facilities offered at the Öresundsterminalen. The second involves provision of a regular and express city bus service from the Central Station to the Öresundsterminal, and folding plans for a bus station near the Central Station. While this might create passenger confusion, such could be alleviated by better information campaigns by bus lines, the Öresundsterminal, and good signage near the Central Station. While the Jernhusen site promises to be a passenger friendly solution, the express city connection might be a gamble, and should be vetted against passenger opinions as suggested above.

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