

City's traffic jams turn buses into slow coaches

By MIKE DWANE

CHRONIC congestion means Limerick buses are trundling along at a leisurely 10.4 kmph, or about half the European average, it was revealed at a transport seminar this week by Bus Eireann regional manager Miriam Flynn.

The city fleet carries over three million passengers a year, but traffic jams and a lack of bus lanes in the city centre are costing the company in excess of €1 mil-

lion per annum.

Also counting the cost is the travelling public as Ms Flynn revealed that, in the last seven weeks alone, Bus Eireann have lost out on 978 runs in the city.

"We welcome Limerick County Council's work on green routes where the route from Raheen to the Crescent Shopping Centre is in place, the route from Coonagh to Ivan's will be done in May and the Dublin Road route following," Ms Flynn said, at the Transport 21 seminar in

the Castletroy Park Hotel.

"However, it is vital in order to achieve maximum benefit that these green routes are extended into the city centre and we continue to work with the local authorities in that regard."

The County Council's bus lanes come to an abrupt halt at the city limits, however, as city officials try to introduce bus and cycle lanes in the teeth of opposition from councillors seeking to protect votes in residential areas.

Under the City Develop-

ment Plan the Ennis Road; Ballinacurra Road/O'Connell Avenue and Dublin Road/Childers Road/Mulgrave Street have been designated as the respective western, southern and eastern green routes.

Pat Dromey, director of transport services at Limerick City Council, conceded "we have been slow in getting our act together and it is proving more difficult than anticipated."

Nevertheless, he pointed out that green routes were "enshrined in the City

Development Plan" and "we are at the final design stage on one of the routes and will be meeting Bus Eireann on the matter this week. Quality bus corridors are a major element of our congestion strategy."

Ms Flynn pointed out that the population of the Greater Limerick area has increased by 5.4 per cent since the last census and the full-time student population in the city now stood at 16,000. Bus Eireann, she added, expect a 46 per cent increase in capacity in

their city routes over the 10-year lifespan of Transport 21 and 24 new buses would be needed over the next three years. The company are also expected to announce three new routes in the city and three routes to rural towns in the coming weeks. It was revealed at the seminar that one of these routes (from Annacotty to the city centre via the Eastway Business park and Ballysimon) would serve parts of Monaleen/Ballysimon that currently have no service

Thomond Park link to sports museum is urged

By ANNE SHERIDAN

THE Mid-West's first collection of sporting artefacts, which will be based at the University of Limerick Arena from this May, must form links with Thomond Park to attract visitors into the city centre, according to Cllr Diarmuid Scully.

Limerick's leading physiotherapist Gerard Hartmann, who this week announced the opening date of the Hartmann Collection, welcomed Cllr Scully's suggestion.

"I'd be in favour of anything that will promote Limerick. Everything will be stronger if we work together," said Mr Hartmann.

Cllr Scully, who has pushed the possibility of a sports museum in the city centre for a number of years, congratulated the University of Limerick and Mr Hartmann in "taking the ball and running with it".

"Everybody needs to come on board and push this. Ideally, to attract more visitors we would

need to tie the museum and Thomond Park together in some way," said Cllr Scully.

The Hartmann Collection of sporting memorabilia will be open to the public, free of charge, from May 14, and contains over 600 pieces, including 400 posters. But Mr Hartmann said he felt that describing his collection "as a museum, is a little too grand".

"The size of the collection has grown beyond that which I anticipated back in 1991. But it's not like the Hunt Museum, for example. The word museum is a little too strong, even though it is a very impressive collection. This is not just a brainchild of mine. It has been developing for quite some time," he said.

The collection, which includes the jockey Kieran Fallon's riding boots, will be on the second floor of the University Arena, the same floor as the Hartmann International Sports Injury Clinic, which opens this April.

"There are very personal connotations to each item. They are quite valuable, and, because of that, I wanted to share them with the public," he said.

While the collection

will be open to the public, the sports injury is a private practice. Mr Hartmann said he stopped taking physiotherapy bookings from the public three years ago, and now concentrates on working with world class athletes, including Paula Radcliffe, Lance Armstrong, Colin Jackson and Linford Christie.

Mr Hartmann believes that Limerick will now become a prime destination for sports fans, especially as the 2012 Olympics will be held in London.

He said the museum "really could be something big". "The Olympics are only four years away, and a lot of athletes tend to stay in a satellite country, as the novelty is gone if you go to the host country too soon. I could see segments of lots of teams staying at the University of Limerick."

Nearly 2,000 people are expected to attend the opening event, including Sonia O'Sullivan, Kerry GAA star Seamus Moynihan, who will bring the Sam Maguire Cup, and Ron Delaney, winner of the gold medal for the 1,500 metres at the Melbourne Olympics in 1956.



Service with a smile: Pat English, who has retired after three decades serving Limerick customers in the dining

After 30 years, 13,000 train journey customers and endless cups of tea,

By CLODAGH O'LEARY

GOULDAVOHER native Pat English knows the train journey from Limerick to Dublin like the back of his hand. Having spent 30 years serving the customers of the first class service five days a week on the 7.50am train, he has travelled to and from the capital a staggering 13,000 times.

Serving hundreds of thousands of passengers throughout those years, many customers remembered Pat's friendly face and polite demeanour. "My job was to help the customer in any way I could. Hospitality was very important."

Over the course of each two-and-a-half hour journey from

Monday to Friday, Pat's role was to ensure that every need of the customer was catered for, no matter what.

"Sometimes we might have someone who was sick on the train, or got a nosebleed. And while we weren't medically trained professionals, we always did our best. Another time, a woman had brought her friend onto the train to get her seated, but the train pulled off before she had a chance to leave the train. We had to wait for the next stop and get someone to drive the woman back to Limerick," the 54-year-old recalled, with a smile.

Pat's approach definitely struck a chord with passengers. "A lady came up to me and told me she remembered me from 25 years ago when she was frequently on the train up and down to Crumlin with her daughter, who was ill at the time. I didn't remember her I have to admit, but I was very

touched," the modest Gouldavoher resident said.

The most hectic part of Pat's day was breakfast. While most of the population were just waking up, Pat was "up to 90" taking breakfast orders and keeping mental notes of their preferences.

Staggeringly he could remember a whole carriage full of people's breakfasts from memory.

"More often than not, I'd know a person's order the minute I saw their face. A lot of people took the train regularly, so they would not even have to ask me what they wanted. It is just something that came naturally to me," he said modestly.

During his years as part of the catering team on the 7.50 Limerick to Dublin service, Pat often served politicians such as Jim Kemmy, Michael Lowry and Michael Noonan.

"I would see them regularly, and we would have a chat. Jim Kemmy in particular was a reg-

ular user of the 7.50

was a lovely man." Another well-known encountered was actor Oliver Reed, but he was in hellraiser that particular day, not disclose.

"He was in good sp

day," is all he will say.

Once the train Heuston Station, Pat's workers began work on the catering rest room, providing food for 100 workers. After a long kitchen, Pat would go to Limerick, always home at 7.30pm.

Married to Anne, he has two children, E with Dell in Dublin. He works with Sherry "Anne jokes that she me for the last 30 years were long hours, but immensely," he said.

Pat made his last March 4 last. "It's f

Laurel Hill students recycle fashion



THE fashion of the future was on display at Laurel Hill Colaiste this Thursday morning, where over 100 students took part in the school's annual Environmental Fashion show, writes Anne Sheridan.

But student models, dressed in tinfoil, plastic wrappers, newspapers and CDs, were enforcing much more than an alternative attitude to style.

"Basically it's to promote saving energy. All the girls are wearing recycleable goods

and year running, the school has been awarded the Green Flag, a recognition that the school actively promotes environmentally-friendly measures.

You're-A-Star finalist and Laurel Hill Colaiste student Maeve O'Donovan, raised the flag after the event, and performed one of her favourite songs, Fake, by The Frames, for the audience.

Ms O'Donovan said she was delighted with the honour,

