

No Power, No Info? Portuguese City Brings Public Transport Info to Areas Without Power Grid

Written by Dylan Card
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Coimbra is one of the first cities in Portugal to install public transport digital displays in locations without power from the grid.

Known as "the city of students," Coimbra's culture revolves around students, explains Luis Antunes, CEO of POWERQUBIT, local fleet management powerhouse.

The Coimbra Municipality Urban Transport Services or the SMTUC connects the fourth-largest urban centre in Portugal via an extensive bus (and trolleybus) network. Its 120 public transport lines cover more than 2000 km, with 150 buses ferrying passengers to and from, including most of the student body. More than 21,000 students call Coimbra, the location of Portugal's oldest university, their temporary home.

There are 1350 bus stops: on an average day a student (or commuter) could spend anywhere from 35 to 120+ minutes using public transit, waiting at a stop or station from 12 to more than 20 minutes.



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Now a smart digitalization of remote public transport stops in Coimbra was made possible with Visionect technology, the vision of SMTUC and the CMS of POWERQUBIT (in charge of all operational aspects of the transport signs).

The first fully autonomous solar-powered electronic paper displays from Visionect were introduced three years ago.

Now “the city of the students” boasts 25 completely self-sustainable bus stops (15 installed in 2017, 10 in 2020 and more underway)-- all available in a display XXL format (32-inches in diagonal).

And all powered by solar energy, a natural resource for a city which basks in sunlight for close to 1900 hours each year. That’s up to 10 hours of sunshine every day.

Using 99 % less power than LCD, the **Visonect ePaper screens** can be rolled out with just a few bolts, powered by a solar cell and connecting via the cellular network.

Live-content plugs in easily with POWERQUBIT’s transport CMS connecting to Visionect’s Software Suite.

Live passenger information across the whole of Coimbra’s public transport network brings higher passenger satisfaction, a better customer experience, fewer complaints, improved accuracy of bus arrival predictions and an increase in service uses.

And it does so, says Antunes, with reduced operating costs for the public transport provider and a future-proof, sustainable platform.

That's probably a lesson other cities can learn--even if they don't have a famous university.

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