

# Łódź changes – also in terms of transport

## Evolution – not revolution

Text **SEBASTIAN GROCHALA**

Persons, who had an opportunity to visit Łódź in the past and to visit it recently, draw attention to changes occurring in this city. A large number of areas subject to revitalisation, the splendour restored to historical tenement houses and places so unique as Manufaktura, EC-1, or the surrounding of Łódź Fabryczna railway station commissioned in December last year perfectly show the potential lying dormant in the city once famous as the Promised Land.

### ► Streszczenie

Komunikacja tramwajowa w Łodzi już w przyszłym roku obchodzić będzie jubileusz swojego 120-lecia, a autobusy w tym mieście kursują regularnie już od siedemdziesięciu lat. Obecnie w taborze Miejskiego Przedsiębiorstwa Komunikacyjnego znajduje się blisko 500 wagonów tramwajowych oraz 400 autobusów, które każdego dnia pokonują blisko 150 tys. kilometrów. Tramwaje obsługują 22, a autobusy 80 linii. W tekście autor omówił zakres działalności i funkcjonowanie Miejskiego Przedsiębiorstwa Komunikacyjnego w Łodzi wraz z prowadzonymi i planowanymi inwestycjami.

### ► Summary

#### Łódź changes - also in terms of transport

Next year the tram transport in Łódź will celebrate its already 120th anniversary, and buses in this city have been travelling regularly for seventy years. The fleet of Miejskie Przedsiębiorstwo Komunikacyjne (Municipal Transport Enterprise) comprises now nearly 500 tram wagons and 400 buses, which every day travel almost 150,000 kilometres. Trams service 22, and buses 80 lines. The author discusses in the text the scope of operations and the functioning of Miejskie Przedsiębiorstwo Komunikacyjne in Łódź, including the carried out and planned investments.

► **Słowa kluczowe:** MPK Łódź, MIGAWKA, Open Payment System ► **Keywords:** MPK Łódź, MIGAWKA, Open Payment System



It is difficult to imagine Łódź without trams and buses passing its streets. The tram transport, which in 2018 will celebrate its 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of operations in the city, is the backbone of the public transport in Łódź. It is supplemented by the bus transport, which next year will celebrate its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The fleet of Miejskie Przedsiębiorstwo Komunikacyjne (MPK, Municipal Transport Enterprise) comprises nearly 500 tram wagons and 400 buses, which every day travel almost 150,000 kilometres. The trams service 22, and buses 80 lines, which routes are altogether approx. 1300 kilometres long, while nearly 50 km of tram tracks are situated outside Łódź.

Such a large number of vehicles and lines serviced by them, together with the number of travelled kilometres, show best how important is the public transport for Łódź and the neighbouring towns. The performance of any changes on such an organism, as the functioning transport system, is an extremely difficult task. Therefore Łódź for many years counts on evolution, and not revolution.

This process continues and comprises a number of diverse actions, aimed at adapting the city transport system to current needs of its residents. It comprises both the infrastructure repairs, purchases of new vehicles, as well as modernisation of the possessed ones. In those actions MPK is supported by specialised plants owned by the enterprise – the Engineering Plant and the Tracks and Networks Plant. Because of their highly qualified and experienced staff and possessed equipment MPK can take care both of the infrastructure and of vehicles. Financial limitations are a real problem, faced by the enterprise every day, which unfortunately do not allow to perform so dynamic changes as they would like.

The improvement to the quality of vehicles available to MPK Łódź was recently the most important. Within a few years they have led to the situation that now all buses are low-floor vehicles, and their average age is 6-7 years. Repairs and modernisations of the track-network infrastructure was carried out parallel, which resulted in a possibility to replace the tram rolling stock. Those investment projects have been carried out already for a few years. The enterprise makes efforts to purchase

*Bus and tram depots perform a crucial operational role. In the nearest future as many as three out of four depots in Łódź will be reconstructed.*

#### **On the left**

*Modern, low-floor and ecological buses ensure transport to Łódź centre residents both in the daytime and at nighttime. 8 lines service the city during the night hours*

new vehicles, the possessed wagons are modernised, also second-hand trams are purchased. Also the vehicles servicing disabled persons have been modernised – MPK Łódź owns a specialised Disabled Persons Transport Plant.

Unfortunately, efforts to raise funds to buy electric buses and to adapt technical facilities to their needs failed recently, but the enterprise keeps the finger on the pulse and persistently have been looking for money, due to which this technology could be introduced to Łódź successfully.

Apart from the vehicles replacement and repairs of the track-network infrastructure major focus is on the contact and relationships with the passenger as well as on the availability of urban transport tickets. It is possible to notice without difficulties that in recent years a lot of things changed and improved in that respect. Passengers can use not only a quite developed website and travel planners, but also social media due to which they can be in permanent contact with the MPK employees, and they can buy urban transport tickets without going out. Everything because a few years ago a decision was made to introduce an electronic system MIGAWKA servicing season tickets, which could be purchased in an Internet shop. In addition, buses and trams became points of sales for urban transport tickets – all vehicles of urban transport in Łódź are equipped with ticket vending machines. Passengers have available also 21 stationary ticket vending machines and 5 – and shortly probably 6 – operators enabling to buy tickets by means of mobile phones. Additionally in September 2017, in cooperation with Mastercard and Mennica Polska (Polish Mint) the Open Payment System project started – at the moment as a pilot – due to which for the first time in Poland a solution will be implemented, enabling to pay by a payment card for the travelled stops. Travels by the urban transport will become even simpler – and this is the direction, in which all actions taken by MPK Łódź are aimed.



## Ambitious plans – we face many challenges

Changes occurring in Łódź recently applied also to the transport lines system. That was a huge project, which should have resulted in adapting the connections network to contemporary requirements of Łódź residents. At the moment it is difficult to assess the effects, because surveys, based on which the changes will be evaluated, will be carried out only in autumn 2017. Apart from that the Roads and Transport Board anticipate a possibility to introduce corrections taking into account passenger comments, so we will have to wait still some time for the final outcome of that change aspect. Nevertheless – the process has started and continues.

The most important plans and events to be performed in the nearest future are related to the investments comprising the company technical facilities. Those investments are to increase the comfort of work for MPK employees, which will translate also to the quality of provided services. Those projects will comprise the construction of a new hall for low-floor trams in the Telefoniczna Tram Depot, the modernisation of the Chocianowice Tram Depot, the reconstruction of the Limanowskiego Bus Depot, the transfer of the Engineering Plant, and the reconstruction of the Helenówek Tram Depot. So the works will comprise practically all Operational Plants, hence the scope of actions is quite great.

Plans related to the Depots reconstruction and to transfers obviously do not comprise everything. The enterprise has been waiting now for the delivery of 12 modern trams (contract was awarded to Pesa) and prepares itself to the procurement of another 30 trams (we will know the value at the stage of contract awarding). New trams (if the owner agrees for the purchase) will be supplemented with the purchase of more than 30 second-hand NF6D trams from Bochum, which will increase the number of low-floor trams moving on the Łódź tracks. Parallel to that the Engineering Plant has been carrying out modernisation of M8C and 805 wagons.

Purchases of trams will be supplemented also by repairs of the track-network infrastructure, which according to plans of the Roads and Transport Board should cover at least 11 km of tracks by 2022. The reconstructions will comprise the most crucial points on the transport map of Łódź and will allow us to direct modern low-floor vehicles to the new routes.

Apart from investments in tram vehicles and infrastructure in the nearest time also purchases of new buses are planned, which will replace the most used vehicles. At the moment the work is ongoing on a plan, which will probably comprise the procurement of articulated, single, and mini buses, necessary to service the routes of a new connections network.

## We must continuously evolve

Majority of aforementioned projects have already been started and their implementation continues. Whether and to what extent we would be capable of implementing them? We do hope, that to as broad as possible, because we are aware that if the urban transport



Photo Agnieszka Kuraszewska



*Employees of MPK Łódź Engineering Plant have knowledge and skills enabling them to carry out current repairs and general overhauls of the tram rolling stock*

is to be an alternative for residents, looking for the best means of transport, it must be efficient, punctual and available. It is difficult to achieve that without significant investments in its development and without continuous evolution. We have been doing that in Łódź for nearly 120 years and as one can see there is still a lot of tasks to do. However, we cannot count on the lack of challenges and work in such sector, as ours. ■



**Sebastian Grochala** | MPK Łódź Press Spokesman  
e-mail: rzecznik@mpk.lodz.pl

how do they do that?