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Moyes's love of buses had been enhanced by summers spent as a bus conductor while a student (Paul Vicente)

Chris Moyes

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Go-Ahead chief executive who, having anticipated privatisation, positioned the group for dramatic expansion

CHRIS MOYES combined a lifelong passion for buses and trains with a solid grounding in engineering and an understanding of the needs of modern commuters to become one of Britain's leading transport industry figures of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Moyes foresaw the deregulation and privatisation of buses and railways in the 1980s and 1990s and was part of a team that placed itself in a prime position to take advantage of the changes.

Starting out with a £3 million management buyout of the recently deregulated bus company in his adopted North East home, Moyes and his colleagues launched Go-Ahead, which now has a significant share of the bus and train market in London and the South and is worth about £890 million.

Last year Moyes became chief executive, which he described as the "climax of his ambition". He stood down two months ago after a brain tumour was diagnosed. He owned a small collection of ancient buses and recently a friend saw him driving one slowly up a hill and noted the look of satisfaction on his face.

His calm and determined demeanour was tested to the full in the aftermath of the Ladbrooke Grove train crash of 1999 in which a local train, run by a company owned by Go-Ahead, passed through a badly sited red signal and crashed head-on into an express train, killing 31 people.

Within 24 hours of the accident, Moyes set up a press and public relations team to put across the company's point of view. He played a key part in promoting important safety measures arising from the accident and is also credited by colleagues with ensuring Go-Ahead's survival.

Christopher Moyes was born in 1949 and educated at Birkenhead School and the University of Liverpool. He later attributed his choice of career to being taken by his mother around London buses in his pushchair and watching the steam engine, The Elizabethan, chugging along a track. This interest was enhanced by two summers as a bus conductor while he was a student. He completed his education with an MSc in transport engineering at the University of Salford with a dissertation on the siting of bus stops.

Moyes then joined the National Bus Company, the state transport group, as a graduate trainee in Kent. He moved around the country in various roles in the company's local branches, ending up 12 years later as traffic manager at Northern General Bus in Newcastle.

Partly because they were far from London, Moyes and his colleagues enjoyed a certain amount

of freedom from corporate strictures and started by painting the buses in bright colours, and also renamed the company Go-Ahead, specifically to dissociate it from the idea of being "outdated".

In 1987 Moyes and three others, including the general manager, Martin Ballinger, undertook a management buyout and launched Go-Ahead Northern, with Moyes as commercial director. The company's northeastern division is still the biggest part of its bus operations outside London, accounting for nearly a quarter of the 147 million miles travelled each year by Go-Ahead buses. More than half the firm's operating profits come from its buses, but consist of less than a third of turnover.

In the early 1990s London buses were still regulated, but it was clear this was about to change and Go-Ahead set its sights on the lucrative routes into and around the capital. Its first step was to acquire a Brighton bus company in 1993 followed early the next year by routes in Oxfordshire and express services to London, Heathrow and Gatwick.

However, buying a London bus company would require Go-Ahead to have a much bigger financial structure and so it was floated on the stock market, with the added bonus of giving it greater credibility with those responsible for selling off the regulated buses. Moyes became commercial director of Go-Ahead Group, which in October 1994 bought London Central, and with the acquisition of London General two years later captured about 15 per cent of the capital's bus transport. Other acquisitions and route expansion have now increased this to 20 per cent. Go-Ahead later bought bus services in Dorset, Wiltshire and parts of Hampshire.

Moyes and his colleagues then prepared for the expected privatisation of British Rail, which would allow them to further expand into the commuter market. In 1996 they acquired Thames Trains, which they sold last year, and in 2001 bought Southern, connecting London with parts of Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire and Kent. In April this year Go-Ahead completed its control of the region's rail services by buying Southeastern, which includes Kent.

Go-Ahead also has interests in airport parking at Heathrow and Gatwick and three smaller airports as well as airline passenger processing, information desks, business lounges and baggage and cargo handling.

Shortly after the Ladbrooke Grove accident, Moyes became deputy chief executive, succeeding Ballinger when he retired last year.

In 1992 Moyes became a member of the University of Durham council, serving as chairman from 2002. He was a Chartered Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport and a Companion of the Chartered Management Institute.

Moyes was appointed OBE in the New Year's Honours List this year.

He never lost his youthful love of buses and owned four vintage vehicles, including a 1961 coach in which he took his large extended family on holiday. Moyes also owned an Aston Martin DB7, but did not risk parking it at the station for his journeys from the North East to London and instead, like many commuters, used a modest "station car".

He is survived by his wife, Jan, and their three daughters.

Chris Moyes, OBE, Chief Executive, Go-Ahead Group, 2005-06, was born on July 26, 1949. He died on September 12, 2006, aged 57.