



4. Community Transport Supporting Statement

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1. Setting the Scene

- 1.1 Community transport plays an important role in the local transport system and comprises a variety of schemes; these include traditional group hire services, car schemes and demand responsive services which are flexible local transport services tailored to meet passenger needs.
- 1.2 Conventional bus services cannot meet the needs of everyone and there is a need for more individual or specialised services for people i.e. those living in remote rural areas or those who are disabled and who need to access key services. Individual transport authorities currently fund a variety of demand responsive services and it is estimated that at least 100,000 journeys a year are made using this form of transport (including dial-a-ride and shopmobility). In rural areas, voluntary car schemes are important for access to health facilities.

2. Vision

To provide an effectively planned system of community transport that meets the needs of the local community and helps to reduce social exclusion. To ensure that the role of community transport within the overall mix of passenger transport services is clearly recognised and complements the existing network.



3. Community Transport and the Shared Priorities

Congestion

Providing demand responsive and other forms of community transport can help to reduce peoples' dependency on being escorted, usually by private car, and this can be expected to have a benefit in reducing congestion.

Road Safety

Without alternative transport, people with mobility difficulties are often exposed to difficult conditions on the road system. For example, people over 70 represent 10% of all pedestrian casualties in Bristol. Providing safe transport options can be expected to have a positive effect on road safety.

Accessibility

In the JLTP area, 21% of households do not have access to a car and large numbers of people are denied basic access to key facilities and services due to lack of transport provision. Elderly people, disabled people, people with learning difficulties, adults with children and people with temporary injuries and illnesses can have difficulty making the most basic journeys. Community transport plays an important role in linking people to these services. It is an important element within the accessibility strategy.

Air Quality

There are areas where health inequalities overlap with poor air quality. Demand responsive transport can reduce exposure to poor air quality (e.g. by reducing time spent walking alongside busy roads) and help to reduce health inequalities.

Other Quality of Life Issues

Community transport contributes towards community safety objectives, enhancing people's personal security. It assists with the aim of reducing health inequalities by

providing access to medical facilities. Neighbourhood Renewal Areas in Bristol benefit from community transport and it provides wider opportunities for many urban residents to gain access to the countryside.

4. Issues

- 4.1 To date, most community transport schemes have been supported by local authorities' revenue budgets. These budgets are increasingly constrained whilst the operating costs of schemes continue to rise, such that costs per passenger journey can be high. The introduction of the national free travel scheme in April 2006 could also have an adverse impact on income from fares (i.e. elderly people opting to travel instead by public transport), placing greater pressure on Council budgets.
- 4.2 Demand responsive services have grown up independently of each other, to meet slightly different needs in both urban and rural areas, including areas of social deprivation. Particular beneficiaries include the elderly, those with disabilities, and in some cases young families. At present, passengers on these services (with the exception of Bristol City Council's Easyrider) are required to qualify by one form of membership criterion or another. This may change, however, as
- 4.3 new accessible services become more socially inclusive (see Good Practice).
- 4.3 A range of organisations provides transport services e.g. community transport operators, Social Services and Education departments and Health Authorities. There is the opportunity for more effective use of resources through co-ordination, joint working and 'brokerage' schemes. Our joint work with these organisations, in support of the accessibility strategy, demonstrates a willingness to explore this further.
- 4.4 Vehicle replacement has become haphazard and problematic. Appropriate and consistent policies for the JLTP area need to be developed.
- 4.5 Another issue is the relationship between community transport and conventional bus services, especially the bus services that are financially supported by the four Councils. Questions include whether some supported services might be converted to demand responsive operation; and whether there is a need for more interchange facilities and interchangeability of tickets.
- 4.6 The geographical coverage of community transport schemes varies and raises the issue of whether or not there is scope to extend the current range of activities.



5. Delivery Programme in the first Plan Period 2001/02 – 2005/06

- 5.1 In the period of the last LTPs, the Councils and local providers have:
 - Extended funding for dial-a-ride to all wards in Bristol (covered by a service level agreement).
 - Enhanced and extended the Weston Dial-a-Ride service to rural areas adjoining Weston-super-Mare.
 - Enhanced and extended the Nailsea and District Community Transport dial-a-

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ride, with Department for Transport 'Kickstart' funding, to cover whole of the northern part of North Somerset.

- Purchased vehicles for a number of operators such as Bristol Community Transport.
- Launched dial-a-ride services in the Keynsham and Norton-Radstock areas.
- Supported a range of community led schemes e.g. Lawrence Weston CT scheme, in conjunction with Bus Challenge opportunities.
- Supported the Tripscope travel information service for disabled people.
- Investigated and secured various new funding opportunities for community transport, such as Urban and Rural Bus Challenge, developer funding, funding from other bodies such as the Countryside Agency.
- Introduced Fare Car, an innovative taxi bus scheme available to residents living in the rural areas to the north east of Bath including Langridge and St Catherine.
- Assisted in the development of new types of "social enterprise" service (see Good Practice).
- Developed a demand responsive bus service linked with park and ride service 42 in Bath, providing links between areas of deprivation and the Royal United Hospital.

6. Good Practice

During 2004/05 South Gloucestershire Council worked closely with the community transport sector in developing new ways of generating revenue to support their aims of providing long term accessible transport. The Council supported the merger of 4 Towns Transport with Vale Link Community Transport creating a single organisation delivering accessible transport throughout the Severn Vale Area. The merger reduces

the number of duplicated journeys and created a single centre for co-ordinating trips.

Overall patronage rose on these community transport services by 61% in 2004/05.

7. Strategy

- 7.1 The Community Transport Strategy is aimed directly at supporting the overall priorities of the JLTP, and specifically at supporting the accessibility shared priority. Strategic and local accessibility assessments are being taken forward, and these are helping to develop accessibility action plans, which will be likely to include opportunities for enhancement of community transport. The implementation programme for community transport will draw heavily on the details of the accessibility action plans, but will also need to look closely at value for money issues.
- 7.2 As well as the action plans, the strategy identifies the following general opportunities to be investigated and, if appropriate, progressed:
 - We will seek the best balance in financial support between demand responsive services and other supported public transport services, and simultaneously to seek scope for greater integration of provision.
 - A more unified approach to the procurement of services (with the Hospital Trusts/PCTs/ Ambulance service).
 - We will look into entering an agreement with Tripscope, to re-launch the disabled travel advice and information material, inclusive of continuously updated web-based formats.
 - Investigate the scope for capital funding (JLTP or other sources) for purchase of new vehicles to assist community transport operators (replacement or to allow expansion); linked with this, the

possibility of using mainstream leasing organisations will be explored.

- Measures to support and encourage independent travel (e.g. for certain people with learning difficulties) will be piloted and developed (related to Accessibility Action Plans).
- In a series of pilot exercises, some supported scheduled bus services to be converted to demand responsive.
- Interchange facilities between scheduled services on main corridors and demand responsive services, including interchangeability of tickets between them.
- Scope to extend and expand community transport services further.
- Extending Shopmobility services which promotes access and encourages independence of people with disabilities through the provision of mobility equipment such as scooters and wheelchairs.

8. Targets

Targets developed through the Accessibility Strategy:

LTP1a – Education accessibility

LTP1b – Health service and healthy food accessibility

LTP1c – Employment accessibility.

Community transport enhancements will also contribute to other targets particularly concerning congestion and reducing the need to travel by car.