



**Community
Transport
Association**

Response to the North East of Scotland Transport Partnership

Regional Transport Strategy Issues and Objectives Report

19 July 2006

The Community Transport Association

The CTA is a rapidly growing national charity giving voice and providing leadership, learning and enterprise support to member organisations, which are delivering innovative transport solutions to achieve social change. CTA UK promotes excellence through providing training, publications, advice and information on voluntary, accessible and community transport.

Voluntary and community transport exists to meet the travel and social needs of people to whom these would otherwise be denied, providing accessible and affordable transport to achieve social inclusion.

The CTA is the representative body for third sector passenger transport operators in the UK. CTA Member organisations are involved in the provision of transport, especially accessible services.

The CTA is part-funded by the Department for Transport, the Scottish Executive, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Department for Regional Development (Northern Ireland).

CTA's Response to Consultation

The CTA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the NESTRANS Report. The response to the 6 questions asked in the report is shown on the following pages.

Contact Details

Any queries regarding this response should be directed to:

John MacDonald
Director for Scotland
Community Transport Association
46A Channel Street
Galashiels
TD1 1BA
Telephone: 0870 774 3591
Email: johnm@ctauk.org

CONSULTATION QUESTION 1

Do you agree that the twelve strategic issues identified are the key transport challenges facing the North East over the period of the Strategy? Do you think there are other, higher priority issues which we should take into account and if so, do you think any of the identified issues should be deleted.

Although economic development is stated as the Scottish Executives top objective in transport provision, the CTA feel that social inclusion and equal opportunities are equally important. In general we feel that NESTRANS Issues and Objectives Report is too heavily weighted towards economic development and access to jobs. In the Scottish Executive guidance to RTPs access to public services, health, education and training, shopping, leisure and recreation are also highlighted.

There is also little or no mention throughout the paper of addressing transport inequalities for disabled people (in Scotland approximately 1 in 10 of the population have a disability¹) and those living in isolated areas.

Of the 12 strategic issues identified in the report, the 6th “Ensuring Social Inclusion” seems particularly weak as it refers to “pockets of multiple deprivations and poor health”. The Scottish Executive’s guidance calls for action to meet the needs of older people, disabled people and their carers, children and young people, women and people of minority ethnic communities. These groups of people are scattered throughout both Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire and even in the most affluent areas with high household car ownership there will be individuals and groups encountering problems with transport provision.

There is also no mention of fulfilling the requirement in the Scottish Executive guidance “to facilitate access to hospitals, clinics, surgeries and other places where health services are provided” and to ensure that “transport provision (including voluntary sector provision) is planned and developed alongside healthcare provision”

Aberdeenshire has a large number of community transport projects currently funded by the Rural Community Transport Initiative tackling many of the gaps in transport mentioned in previous paragraphs. There are also schemes running in Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen as

¹ “SCOTLAND’S TRANSPORT FUTURE: GUIDANCE ON LOCAL TRANSPORT STRATEGIES (SE. Feb 2005)”

part of the Scottish Executive's Demand Responsive Pilot Scheme. No mention of these schemes or continued support for this type of transport project is mentioned in the document.

CONSULTATION QUESTION 2

Have we set the right strategic transport objectives to address the issues and achieve the vision of a transport system for the North East of Scotland which enables a more economically competitive, sustainable and socially inclusive society?

As mentioned above the focus is again on making the region economically competitive rather than fulfilling the other two criteria.

For example, Objective (d) to create and sustain a strong regional centre, has already and will continue to result in people living in outlying rural areas having to make longer journeys to the centre to access basic services. Public transport becomes focused towards the central hub with little or no services between adjacent semi-urban and rural communities. The community transport projects mentioned in response to Question 1 have been developed to fill these gaps as the demand for many socially excluded people is to access local basic services that they require on a day to day basis. It is particularly important to emphasise in a 10-15 year strategy that predicted demographic changes across Scotland show an ageing population will require increased provision of transport to health and other local services. Not addressing these issues will cause the ageing population to become progressively more housebound and in need of costly home based intervention initiatives.

CONSULTATION QUESTION 3

Are the operational transport objectives appropriate? Should any others be included? Is there a need to prioritise between these objectives?

The operational transport objectives relate directly to the strategic objectives so, as these are weak and don't specifically address the issues of older people, the disabled, children and young people, women and people of minority ethnic communities they are not appropriate.

Only paragraph v mentions "enhancing journey experiences ...especially for non-car journeys". This should be altered to mention provision of accessible, demand responsive services.

CONSULTATION QUESTION 4

The Regional Transport Strategy will identify (and then test and consult upon) a series of schemes and proposals for addressing the issues. What do you consider to be the most important schemes or proposals, which could contribute towards addressing the issues facing the North East.

The co-ordination issue is an important one. As the population ages the need for demand responsive and accessible transport systems as currently run by community transport groups across the region is bound to increase. These must be included in the Strategy to ensure that all residents of the area have equal access to basic services.

The CTA calls for a forum to be set up in this area and it should continue beyond the Strategy development phase. This approach has been used in the HITRANS area and they have also worked with the CTA to arrange a stakeholders group at Regional level. Local groups nominate 2 members to sit on the stakeholder group that meets every 6 months. This fulfils the Scottish Executive guidance Point 34, “considering the needs of all groups”, involving them in the consultation, taking account of meeting their needs and monitoring the impact on the strategy.

CONSULTATION QUESTION 5

Do you believe that the North East should be seeking to lead the way in transport policy in Scotland, pioneering new approaches or policy targets such as travel planning, reducing carbon emissions or developing demand management solutions?

The CTA have no comments to make on these suggested approaches but feel it is important to state that Aberdeenshire Council has been at the forefront of development and encouragement of community transport schemes in rural Scotland. It is therefore unfortunate that the draft Regional Strategy does not seek to continue this role throughout the region.

CONSULTATION QUESTION 6

Are there particular opportunities available to the North East because of its relative economic strength, technological or energy expertise that could be prioritised to ensure that the region maximises potential to take advantage of changes in transport over the next 15 years?

One of the biggest issues that needs to be addressed is access to services and one of the main barriers for the elderly and disabled is

physical access to public transport where and if it exists. In 1998 Shetland Island Council used some of their economic reserves to ensure that all buses operating on their public transport network were fully accessible. This priority, together with the introduction of demand responsive transport for all residents of the area should be an aim for the North East of Scotland Transport Partnership.