



**Community
Transport
Association**

**Response to
Consultation on
HITRANS Draft Strategy**

26 January 2007

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 HITRANS Draft Regional Strategy. Our comments on the draft Strategy are shown on the following pages.

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Overall, the Community Transport Association supports the strategy. We feel that the consultation process leading up to the production of the strategy has worked well and we applaud HITRANS for running stakeholder forums and for taking the outcomes of these forums on board in compiling the strategy. By virtue of the region's physical size, topography and sparse population HITRANS has unique transport challenges. Services are reliant upon subsidy as the potential to achieve economies of scale via large populations generally does not exist. However, transport is absolutely critical towards the economic and social well being of the HITRANS area and this is clearly highlighted in the strategy.

CTA is primarily interested in measures which address social inclusion where everyone has mobility and access to the services they require. We feel that the importance of transport towards social inclusion comes across strongly in the strategy's baseline and scoping of issues.

We are also pleased that community and health passenger transport is included as one of the 8 horizontal themes in the strategy. However, we would make clear that there is a distinction between community transport and health transport. There are some community transport operators who provide access to healthcare but community transport has a wider role and it could be argued is a form of public transport, particularly in remote rural areas. The strategy rightly highlights that access to health services is a key issue for the HITRANS area. This is a growing problem and there is increasing demand on the community transport network to help solve it, not just in the HITRANS area but across Scotland. One of the stumbling blocks in tackling this issue is that wholly inadequate funding is provided to community transport operators for providing access to health. For example, health boards do not reimburse expenses for patients who use community transport. Also, the mileage rates offered by some public bodies towards community transport providers for taking patients to health services is but a fraction of the true cost. In tackling health transport CTA would encourage more dialogue between public bodies and community and voluntary organisations, in order that realistic funding and more stable services can be achieved. Community transport can offer the flexibility which access to health usually requires in an economic way.

Whilst the provision of rural transport is a major part of the HITRANS strategy and the draft acknowledges that community transport has a significant role to play in this regard, CTA would highlight that its members have an equally useful role to play in urban and peri-urban areas. Some people in our towns cannot use mainstream services due to disability and for other reasons. Instead they often rely on community and voluntary

transport to participate in everyday life. Enabling people to participate in everyday life is an element of the strategy's vision and objectives, and CTA welcomes this, but we would have liked to see some more detail in the strategy on specific measures for people with disabilities and who have difficulty in accessing services. For example, with regard to improvements to transport terminals, measures such as accessibility to and on to services could be included.

Community transport plugs the gaps which are not being met by private and public sector providers, and the driver for the creation of such services is usually local communities. The difficulty facing such groups is short termism amongst funders and inadequate levels of financial support. CTA would urge HITRANS to foster longer term support for the community and voluntary transport sector and a commitment towards full cost recovery for such bodies. This would give community and voluntary sector transport providers greater stability and enable them to deliver excellent services to those within the HITRANS regions who are most marginalised.

Many of the most successful community transport providers now see themselves as social enterprises. In other words their stability and independence is founded upon a mixed funding base rather than being over-reliant upon one grant or income source. CTA would urge HITRANS to consider how they can help community transport organisations to develop as social enterprises and deliver their services with greater independence.

It is important that the progress which community transport has provided in the HITRANS area in recent years is maintained and built upon. CTA has worked very successfully with the Scottish Executive in nurturing this growth. We hope that HITRANS will consider using the skills and knowledge which the CTA has accumulated over many years to help develop your strategy for community transport for the years to come.