

25 April 2006

Dr John Patterson
Clerk of the Committee
Transport Committee
House of Commons
7 Millbank
London
SW1P 3JA

Committee Enquiry into Transport Planning and Funding

I am responding on behalf of the Community Transport Association to the recent press notice that requested written memoranda on the above subject.

As a national representative body for smaller transport projects and operators across the UK, the CTA is not explicitly concerned with some of the detailed technical questions raised in the consultation memorandum. However, it works extensively with the operators of services for socially excluded groups of people who rely very heavily on local authority and central government funding. Many of these groups exist because insufficient account is taken of their members/users needs in the local and/or national transport planning process. Local Transport Plans (LTPs) are vital documents which have the power to ensure social inclusion is addressed in a meaningful way. We at CTA strongly believe that local authorities should be required to ensure that all forms of passenger transport provision (ie statutory, commercial **and voluntary**) are addressed in LTPs.

CTA is greatly concerned about the lack of engagement by some local authorities with non-profit and community based transport operations and the extent to which they are included as an integral part of the local transport planning process. These concerns have been reinforced following the extension of concessionary travel schemes, as the decision as to whether community based operations can be reimbursed for concessionary travel offered to users is at the discretion of the local scheme administrator.

The extent to which smaller community transport schemes are successful in securing funding is inconsistent and patchy. This problem is exacerbated because some central government funding streams (particularly some of those run by the ODPM) are difficult to access. As such, these programmes have failed to effectively support local transport projects.

Local authorities must exercise local democratic control, but they must also be required to maintain agreed minimum national standards. An effective and consistent mechanism for ensuring that minimum levels of local transport provision are available to socially excluded groups should be devised. This could operate via agreed minimum standards to be met in every local authority area (and which would need to be explicitly addressed in LTPs) or by instituting more responsive DfT/ODPM funding streams. Such improvements would result in better utilisation and ensure that appropriate accessible and affordable transport services were available to users in those areas which were hitherto inadequately funded or served.

If you require any further information, then do please contact me at keith@ctauk.org.

Keith Halstead
Chief Executive