



**Community
Transport
Association**

Response to the

National Infrastructure Commission Call for Evidence

Closing Date: 08/01/2016

The Community Transport Association

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The Community Transport Association is the national body working with the providers of community transport helping them to remain relevant and responsive to key areas of public policy and make a big difference for people and families in the communities they work in. These are typically charities and voluntary groups rooted in their own local community.

The CTA is the UK's leading authority on the practice and performance of the UK's community transport sector and uses its research to gather insights and intelligence from local communities to inform the development of public policy.

We are for, and about, accessible and inclusive transport.

We work with people who all want the very best for their communities and see accessible and inclusive transport as part of the answer to the big questions about how we are all to live, learn, work, participate and belong.

We work for a better world where individuals are able to design their own ground-up transport solutions, placing accessibility and inclusivity centre-stage in a way that nobody else ever has.

Community transport

In all parts of the UK, on every day of the year - including Christmas Day – thousands of community transport staff and volunteers are helping people to stay independent, participate in their communities and to access vital services and employment.

Community transport is about providing flexible and accessible community-led solutions in response to unmet local transport needs, and often represents the only means of transport for many vulnerable and isolated people. Significant user groups are older people and disabled people.

Using everything from mopeds to minibuses, typical services include voluntary car schemes, community bus services, school transport, hospital transport, dial-a-ride, wheels to work and group hire services. Most services are demand-responsive, taking people from door to door, but a growing number are offering scheduled services along fixed routes where conventional bus services are not available, especially in rural areas.

As community transport works to a different business model to commercial passenger transport services - i.e. it is always run for a social purpose and community benefit, but never for a profit - it often a more reliable and resilient way of ensuring a broader range of transport needs can be met.

Whilst the journeys community transport delivers account for a small proportion of the total passenger journeys made every year by the public, their significance in improving the lives of the people who use these services is remarkable.

CTA's Response to the Consultation

The CTA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Infrastructure Commission consultation process.

Community transport in all its forms, has the potential to offer a more reliable and resilient way of addressing a growing number of transport needs and accessibility issues. The possibilities are immense. Services that are needs-led, community-run, not-for profit, highly collaborative with high levels of volunteer involvement are all getting a good hearing in the debates about building better and more sustainable transport which is accessible and inclusive. It makes sense that the Infrastructure Commission should also want to hear about and consider the contribution of this vital, but often low-profile, part of the transport network.

In responding to the Commission we have structured our response around the relevant questions in the consultation document. Where possible footnotes are provided that point to further evidence for consideration. This response refers to the heading "For future investment in the north's transport infrastructure." In addition we have also made some general comments in relation to section 3 on London's Transport Infrastructure which mirror some of our conclusions on the role of community transport in connecting northern cities.

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To what extent are weaknesses in transport connectivity holding back northern city regions (specifically in terms of jobs, enterprise creation and growth, and housing)?

Weaknesses in transport connectivity

- 1 Different stakeholders will view 'weaknesses' through different lenses. At the Community Transport Association we believe transport systems are weaker when:
- 2 The needs of vulnerable and isolated people and communities have not been at the forefront when public services and infrastructure have been designed. This includes older people, disabled people, those with long-term conditions, those living in social isolation and those who cannot access employment, education or training.
- 3 The system focusses solely on private car use and mainstream public transport and does not recognise and include activity from the ground up - community-led transport solutions and the local sharing economy. Not owning a car should not be a barrier to achievement or aspiration.
- 4 The result of these weaknesses is poor integration across and within different modes of transport with a lack of connectivity which, amongst other things, does not reconcile unused capacity with unmet needs.
- 5 The CTA's vision is of a more integrated transport network built from the ground up. The CTA believes the UK Government deserves a good hearing on its ideas for devolving more decisions about local transport and we welcome the moves by transport authorities and public bodies across the north to embrace the opportunities this may present.
- 6 However, we also know that many organisations are finding it hard to listen when faced with the reality of cuts to local government funding. The impact on the number and reach of bus services as a result of reductions in public spending have been well documented by organisations such as the Campaign for Better Transport.
- 7 As good transport links have a demonstrably positive link with employment we are worried that poor bus infrastructure will prevent many communities, particularly those in rural areas, from both supporting, and benefiting from economic growth. It is usually poorer people who are the most dependent on bus travel. Therefore there is a real danger that social isolation could quickly be translated into economic isolation for people who live in northern rural communities. Furthermore, as job seekers are dependent on effective infrastructure we believe that transport connectivity is vital for encouraging economic growth within northern city regions.

Social and economic benefits of community transport

- 8 We believe the social and economic benefits of community transport means that community transport should be considered integral to the debate about on how connectivity can drive economic growth.
- 9 Many community transport operators support local businesses through enabling people to access retail and other services on the high street. New research published in January 2016 estimated that for every pound invested by Devon County Council on community transport; almost £9 is spent in the local economy; with community transport services users spending an estimated £2.2 million in Devon high streets each year.
- 10 Councillor Stuart Hughes, Devon County Council Cabinet Member for Highway Management, in welcoming these figures said “Community transport is extremely important in Devon in helping people to maintain their independence and continue living at home. It provides a lifeline to those who may otherwise be isolated and, as these figures show, it is also important in supporting the local economy. Community transport... helps people who find it hard to get around to access their local shops and other services. The benefits to our local market and coastal towns are clear, and the success of community transport is thanks to the dedicated staff and volunteers.”
- 11 Community transport operators provide direct employment and opportunities for volunteers, which can enhance their chances of entering employment and reducing social security costs. Volunteers within community transport also benefit from social interaction that they may not otherwise get and provide a net economic benefit to society when the value of their time and contribution is monetised.
- 12 Poor access to private and public transport is a common labour market barrier for many young people. Community transport operators help them through initiatives such as Wheels to Work. South Yorkshire Wheels to Work has helped more than 500 people over three years to get to work, training or college through lending them a scooter and safety equipment and providing them with training.
- 13 Another example of a bespoke local service that addresses labour market barriers was set up by Ilfracombe and District Community Transport from Job Centre Plus. Local employers in the hospitality sector were having difficulty recruiting due to the lack of public transport in the evening. The community transport operator set up a late night minibus service running seven nights a week, picking up from several premises in the local area in order to take employees back to their homes in Ilfracombe.
- 14 In addition to investment in community leading to economic growth and job creation it can also lead to savings being made to the public purse by reducing spend in other areas.

- 15 Community transport services are of significant importance in supporting personal independence and tackling isolation. By supporting people to access vital services and social networks they enable them to stay in their own home which reduces the likelihood that they will need more costly publicly-funded care.
- 16 Community transport offers a wide range of benefits to local authorities and other public bodies. They are often less costly than their commercial equivalents and offer alternative solutions when conventional and subsidised bus services are withdrawn or are not viable, especially in rural communities.
- 17 Community transport operators will also often create value for some public services that have not had to make a financial contribution to receive those benefits. An example is in health, where the CTA survey of operators in England in 2014 found that 74 per cent of operators were enabling people to access health services, but only 24 per cent received any funding from the health bodies benefiting from this.

Improving transport connectivity

18. In improving transport connectivity within city regions we believe a number of actions regarding infrastructure are necessary. The first is that we believe local people should be given a greater role in shaping local transport that works for them. It is our belief that local infrastructure can only be improved through giving local authorities the power to develop integrated transport systems that include community transport from the outset. We believe that more has to be done to encourage more collaboration between the private sector and community transport operators, as a lack of collaboration leads to poor connectivity, inefficiencies and underused capacity in the system. We would contend that even though many mainstream public transport services have improved their inclusivity and accessibility in a meaningful and measurable way attention still needs to be given to all parts of the door to door journey. If people cannot get from their front door to the accessible train station because the first part of their journey cannot be made then the high profile measures taken to improve accessibility in public transport will not have fulfilled their promise or potential.
19. Looking at connectivity between northern city regions we know that poor access to private and public transport is a common market barrier for many young people. It has to be a particular concern that local authority cuts may make it impossible to simultaneously build affordable housing, and support effective transport, further decreasing mobility for many people. Community transport operations have a positive economic impact on city regions¹, and we believe that for this benefit to be felt between city regions it is necessary to consider how transport is regulated between city regions. We believe that regulation

¹<http://www.ctauk.org/UserFiles/Documents/In%20Your%20Area/England/State%20of%20the%20Sector%20for%20inhouse%20print.pdf>

needs to be proportionate to better recognise providers who work across town and city borders.

20. Fundamentally, capital infrastructure investment needs to ensure passengers are able to traverse the transport network by a range of different transport modes. Key to achieving this is investment in an intergraded transport system that uses accessible and integrated information technologies. Furthermore, any capital investment in infrastructure needs a revenue commitment to underwrite it, as Local Authorities continue to reduce bus subsidies this is likely to necessitate the need for partnerships with external transport providers.

What cost-effective infrastructure investments in city-to-city connectivity could address these weaknesses? We are interested in all modes of transport.

21. In developing city-to-city connectivity we believe it is right that the commission looks at transport holistically, rather than individual services. It is our belief that it is necessary to significantly invest in public transport solutions that incorporate passenger preferences toward multi-modal, and integrated transport solutions. As transport consultants Frost and Sullivan point out this vision of increased public transport use is:

22. “realised by a convergence of four main mega trends that are being continually tracked by Frost & Sullivan research teams – urbanisation leading to an increasing population density and potential for new mobility business models, social preference changes, rapidly advancing technological developments revolutionising mobility, and smart governance to enable the legislative framework for social innovation in transport to flourish.”²

23. It is our belief that a cost-effective means of ensuring city-to-city connectivity is ensuring travel permits cover a broad geographical area, and a number of services. Clearly, if travel permits include trains, buses, and community transport operators people have a greater opportunity for a lower economic cost to travel between cities. As mentioned above investment in transport shows a generous economic reward to towns and cities and as such would be a cost-effective way to increase city-to-city connectivity.

24. The Chancellor has committed to building around 1,300 miles of additional road surfaces, as highlighted in our blog we believe that developing road infrastructure is important in increasing connections between cities³. It is a concern that the vast majority of transport infrastructure funding is being directed toward London, coupled with local authority cuts there is the possibility that northern cities will not see any improvement in city-to-city connectivity. In this light we believe that investment in better roads between northern cities is an obvious but important starting point. In addition to this we believe that there are benefits to providing financial encouragement for vehicles that carry multiple passengers to travel between cities.

² https://www.hitachi.eu/en/sib/whitepapers/downloads/whitepaper_002.pdf

³ <https://ctauk.wordpress.com/2015/11/30/autumn-statement-transport/>

25. Finally, it is important to consider digital infrastructure as integral to overall infrastructure investment. Personal devices are increasingly being used for planning journeys, buying tickets and providing users with flexible travel information. As these technologies advance it is necessary that digital infrastructure provides reliable, informative, and flexible travel information in order to optimise passenger travel experience.

What form of governance would most effectively deliver transformative infrastructure in the north, how should this be funded and by whom, including appropriate local contributions?

26. We want to use the new impetus for greater integration arising from the Buses Bill to lead to the community having a greater say over what their local transport is like and, where they can, design their own transport solutions with accessibility and inclusivity built into them from the beginning.

27. We believe that governance arrangements should be responsive to the needs of vulnerable and isolated people and communities have not been always been at the forefront when public services and infrastructure have been designed. This includes older people, disabled people, those with long-term conditions, those living in social isolation, those who cannot access employment, education or training. As community transport operators have unrivalled insights into the broad range of needs and issues affecting these groups they would provide an ideal source of intelligence to inform the governance process and should be involved in it in some way.

28. In ensuring this can be achieved we believe that there should be a statutory duty on those charged with developing infrastructure in the north to ensure that community needs are considered from the design stage onwards.

London's Transport Infrastructure

29. Much of the discourse about transforming how transport is run in the north of England has been described as giving those areas "London-style powers". This is a reference to the perceived benefits for the public and passengers of the considerable powers Transport for London (TfL) to shape the transport system in the city region. Indeed, David McNeill, Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement at TfL, spoke at length at our recent Westminster Conference about how London's experience with devolution and how its status as an integrated transport authority has enabled it to provide high quality and accessible transport for Londoners.
30. That said, we know that many people remain vulnerable and isolated with Greater London. Difficulties making the first or very last part of an entire journey might prevent them from ever benefitting from large-scale transport infrastructure improvements. Even if they can access the mainstream transport network over-crowding on some modes of transport makes it a daunting experience for some groups in the community.
31. We also know, however, that there is a vibrant community transport network across the capital filling gaps in mainstream services and meeting unmet needs and we know its work is understood and valued by TfL. Many of the social and economic benefits of ensuring community transport is part of the conversation about transport infrastructure, which we described in relation to the north of England, would also apply in Greater London. Indeed community transport operators in London have led the way in developing a robust methodology for demonstrating the social value of their services which will be published in January 2016.
32. The CTA would therefore wish to see these organisations with their unique insights into the lives and transport needs of vulnerable and isolated people fully included in the debate about economic and social challenges facing London to ensure that transport is as accessible and inclusive as it can be.