COMMUNITY TRANSPORT INQUIRY

EDINBURGH COMMUNITY TRANSPORT OPERATORS GROUP (ECTOG)

WRITTEN SUBMISSION

Executive Summary

Key Points

- The value of CT should not be underestimated. Although quantitative data is often prized in the process of valuing transport services, it is difficult to capture all the benefits and value of CT purely in numbers and figures.
- CT provides a vital link to health and social care services, in addition to leisure activities and other valuable life opportunities in Edinburgh. ECTOG therefore provides a lifeline for hundreds of voluntary groups and thousands of individuals within the city.
- CT is not just a reactionary measure which contributes towards social inclusion of the most vulnerable members of communities. It is also a preventative measure with wide-ranging health and economic benefits for a vast range of stakeholders.
- Although ECTOG has benefitted from a good working relationship with the local authority, in the last few years, the wider economic environment has changed in such a way that there is less funding available for ECTOG operators, presenting challenges to its important work.
- The wider political environment has also altered to involve more open tendering situations, for which there exist a number of barriers to the participation of ECTOG operators.
- ECTOG provides bottom-up community-based services, in line with the changing demographic needs of the city and Scottish Government guidelines. Its value should not be underestimated.

Recommendations

- The City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) departments which fund ECTOG operators (Health and Social Care, Services for Community) would benefit from increased cooperation and discussion on the subject of CT (in partnership with NHS Lothian) in order to develop a joined-up Community and Accessible Transport strategy.
- Dialogue between ECTOG and the CEC on the subject of long-term funding agreements (including vehicle replacement programmes), procurement and how CEC would view joint bids from the ECTOG partnership is necessary.
- ECTOG operators do not recover all journey costs from passenger fares. Therefore, there is still a need for grant funding as part of sustainable funding solutions for CT.
ECTOG requires an urgent influx of capital funding in order to replace ageing fleets. Without this, ECTOG operators may struggle to survive in the future when their vehicles fail to meet operating standards.

As the demographic needs of the city change, ECTOG will become even more valuable as a provider of accessible transport and therefore requires the continued support of the local authority to meet the future needs of the city.

Introduction

This report has been written on behalf of Edinburgh Community Transport Operators Group (ECTOG). It aims to highlight the value of Community Transport (CT) in Edinburgh and will present some of the main issues that operators are currently facing in the city.

- In 2010-2011 ECTOG provided 196,452 passenger trips.
- SEAG, LCTS, PEP and Dove provide transport for over 450 registered groups in Edinburgh.
- ECTOG benefits from over 2150 volunteer hours per year.
- HcL's Dial-a-Bus and Dial-A-Ride provide services for 4000 registered users each.

This report comes at a time when the economic climate and reduced public spending budget has resulted in a need for self-examination of all CT service-providers. It also requires an assessment of challenges and issues facing the CT sector, in order that they may plan for sustainable future solutions to enable them to carry out the vital work that they are currently doing.

The purpose of the report is to make external stakeholders aware of the challenges and issues that the CT sector is facing in Edinburgh. It will also show the value of CT in Edinburgh and the extent to which ECTOG provides additionality and quality for service users, making it an invaluable partnership.

Methodology

This work was approached in a number of stages. Firstly, a research matrix was designed by the ECTOG research sub-group to guide the research and define the principal areas of focus. Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with numerous stakeholders, alongside desk-based research, visits to projects and follow-up correspondence.

By visiting ECTOG projects and experiencing a passenger journey, the researcher was able to better appreciate the user perspective, gain an insight
into the value of the services and a better understanding of the unintended consequences of threats and challenges that are faced by the CT sector.

- Interviews with stakeholders:
  - City of Edinburgh Council (CEC)
  - Community Transport Association (CTA)
  - ECTOG Operators
  - MacRoberts LLP
  - Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS)
  - Transport Research Institute (TRI)
  - Transport Scotland

- Project Visits and Meetings
  - ECTOG Operators
  - Equalities Transport Advisory Group (ETAG)

- Desk-based research
  - A review of academic literature on Community and Demand Responsive Transport (DRT)
  - Annual Reports and ECTOG meeting minutes; general reports on the CT sector
  - Policy briefings
  - Consultations

**Background**

Community Transport is difficult to define accurately, as it covers a diverse range of transport solutions which are developed to cover certain transport needs. CT groups are often considered to be amongst the largest providers of **Demand Responsive Transport (DRT)** services. DRT is ‘any form of transport where the day to day service provision is influenced by the demands of its users.’

Over the last two decades DRT services have grown in popularity due to gaps within regular bus and taxi services; failings of special transport services; new developments within CT and a desire to combat social exclusion and isolation.

There are four main markets for DRT delivery:

- Premium Value Services
- High Value to Agency
- **High Care Needs**
- Best Value Public Transport
High Care Needs services make up over 70% of DRT services in Scotland and ECTOG members conduct invaluable work in this area by filling gaps where public transport services are not possible or appropriate for users. The Scottish Government recommends that DRT should form part of an overall transport and accessibility plan and ECTOG plays a valuable and integral role within this plan in Edinburgh.

CT within Edinburgh has developed to provide ‘flexible and responsive solutions to unmet local transport needs.’ ECTOG is a manifestation of the latest evolution of progress towards identifying and providing for transport needs, contributing towards social inclusion of the most vulnerable members of communities and the creation of a sustainable transport framework.

Because CT is embedded in the communities in which it operates, it is well placed to focus on very local needs and on one-to-one help, providing both choice and quality services.'

CTA UK 2010

Edinburgh Community Transport Operators Group (ECTOG)

ECTOG is made up of 5 operators:

- Dove Transport (DOVE)
- Pilton Equalities Project (PEP)
- Lothian Community Transport Services (LCTS)
- South Edinburgh Amenities Group (SEAG)
- HcL (Handicabs)

ECTOG was formed in 2000 as an informal group of Edinburgh’s main CT operators and provides a city-wide representative for CT. In 2004, ECTOG operators signed a Working in Partnership Statement to develop the services of individual members and coordinate them efficiently. It is chaired by Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations’ Council (EVOC).

Each ECTOG operator has a unique history, different funding arrangements, prices, clients, remits and services. ECTOG aims to bring together the work of the individual organisations to deliver the most effective transport solutions for the community and voluntary sector throughout the city.

ECTOG members operate within designated quadrants of the city, with the exception of HcL, which has a city-wide remit. The boundaries between these quadrants are flexible, in order to take into account the needs of users.

- Dove - West
- PEP - North
- LCTS - East
SEAG - South

ECTOG members have worked together since 2000 to establish robust common operating procedures, including training, vehicle maintenance and operational standards. This has provided a measure of consistency to CT in Edinburgh from which users and funders benefit.

It allows a community group or individual in one area of the city to book CT from their local provider with confidence that the standard will be the same as CT in other areas of the city. It also ensures quality control, as service delivery meets a minimum quality standard.

The ECTOG structure is recognised by the CEC at both the operational and strategic planning level and has received praise from numerous sources for being a good working model for a CT partnership in an urban setting. ECTOG has received invaluable support from CEC and this relationship has contributed to the fact that Edinburgh is better served for CT than many other parts of the UK.

The Value of Community Transport

CT is difficult to value because many of the benefits are not easily quantifiable. From the users’ perspective, how pleasant their journey is, how many friends and social relationship are made and strengthened through CT, how valuable the social experience is in itself, the long-term benefits to well-being and health is difficult to quantify using figures or scales. This should not make CT any less valuable.

Certain aspects of CT in Scotland that can be quantified are included in the Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. CT in Scotland : The Figures</th>
<th>Source CTA Scotland (2012)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual income of CT</td>
<td>£10 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of volunteers</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer hours</td>
<td>278,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial worth of volunteer time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(based on minimum wage)</td>
<td>£1.7 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passenger journeys per year</td>
<td>3.5 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of vehicles used by CT</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals that benefit from CT</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In many cases, CT is the vital link between a user and a health or social care service. CT does not receive a high political profile because it is these latter services which are prioritised, even though many users would not be able to participate or use them without the link that CT provides. Indeed, local
authorities are often compelled by private companies or public sector agencies with influence over local decisions to focus their efforts on alternative priorities, such as health and social services, private profit, job creation, or value for money.\textsuperscript{vi}

Without affordable, accessible and good quality transportation, individual users would lose out on both benefits provided by the health and social services and on the social experience of accessing those services. CT should therefore be integrated into the planning and delivery within the service sector, transport sector and land-use sector.

CT contributes directly or indirectly to various \textbf{Scottish Government policy objectives:}\textsuperscript{vii}

- Increase the proportion of adults making one or more trips to the outdoors per week
- Increase physical activity
- Improve people’s perceptions of their neighbourhood
- Improve end of life care
- Improve self-assessed general health
- Improve mental well-being
- Improve support for people with care needs
- Decrease the proportion of individuals living in poverty
- Reduce emergency admissions to hospital
- Reduce premature mortality

ECTOG provides services that are already in line with the changing \textbf{demographic needs} of Edinburgh. The changing demographics of the UK in general and of Edinburgh in particular have been outlined in numerous studies.\textsuperscript{viii}

The population of people aged 60 and over in Scotland is likely to rise by 50% and the population of people aged 70 and over by 84% between 2008 and 2033.\textsuperscript{ix} Within Edinburgh the demand for CT may consequently rise by 38% over the next 20 years. This evidence has resulted in calls for long-term plans and solutions.

With an ageing population comes more health challenges and considerations as this sector of society suffers more from mobility issues and long-term illness. Furthermore, an increasing number of older people who are unable to drive or access local transport services easily will struggle to find alternative sources of affordable transport and run the risk of becoming socially excluded and isolated.\textsuperscript{x}
ECTOG members and the groups that use their services have reported an increasing number of service users who use wheelchairs or walking aids or who have other serious needs. For one ECTOG member, the number of passengers in wheelchairs increased by 133.5% over the last year. There are also a rising number of passengers with dementia and other similar clinical health challenges. These passengers may struggle to use public transport and CT provides them with a lifeline to vital services. Without access to CT services, voluntary groups would also be unable to provide transport to their vulnerable members.

One of the criticisms of modern society is that a large number of people are excluded from participating within their communities. Social exclusion and isolation runs the risk of reviving prejudicial notions about certain groups, such as the elderly and disabled.xi

Social exclusion results from a lack of access to social opportunities. The links between social exclusion and lack of transport are widely recognised but not fully appreciated.xii Barriers may include socioeconomic circumstances, local environment, psychological issues and physical ability. A study by the Social Exclusion Unit in 2003 found that UK government transport and land-use policies have interactively ‘worked to systematically create and reinforce social exclusion.’

Social exclusion is a constraints-based process which cases individuals or groups not to participate in the normal activities of the society in which they are resident.’

What is Community Transport?

‘Community Transport is safe, accessible, cost-effective, flexible transport run by the community for the community.’ CTA Scotland 2012

Preston and Rajé (2007)xiii

CT allows for the social inclusion of the most vulnerable members of society where distance is a factor in individuals accessing social opportunities. CT allows for people to get out of their own homes for social outings and trips and access services such as day centres, supermarkets, health appointments and leisure activities which they might find difficult to do using public transport. It provides an arena for social interaction in itself, as the journeys on transport themselves are valued for the relationships that are created and strengthened as a result.

CT can have benefits for the health of individuals and the health system. By providing door-to-door transport from a patient’s home to their hospital appointment and home again at designated times, reduces waiting times in hospitals and health centres.
Furthermore, when CT passengers are attending a day centre, a positive transport experience means that they are in a positive mood when they arrive at the centre, and therefore are more likely to get the most out of their time there.

By providing the enabling technology that allows vulnerable individuals to get out of their houses and participate in social activities or access much-needed services, CT improves the quality of life of thousands of individuals who become happier and healthier as a result.

CT provides **value for money** because CT organisations can access funding from private trusts and grants in addition to Local Authority funding, attract and use volunteers who provide extra services and can act as a preventative measure by keeping service users happier and healthier for longer.\(^{xiv}\)

CT in many cases can be cheaper than fixed route transport because of the element of planning which can combine the journeys of individuals and groups most effectively; it only pays for what is running (buses do not run when there are no passengers booked for journeys) and vehicles tend to be smaller and more economically efficient than larger commercial vehicles.

By improving the access of vulnerable individuals to vital health and social services and encouraging social inclusion, the result is that those users maintain or build their confidence, stay healthier for longer and in some cases are able to remain supported in their own homes for longer with a good quality of life. This has a long-term cost benefit as well as contributing to SG policy objectives as there is less pressure on health and social services, including residential care and front-line services.

It is access to transport – or in many cases the lack of it – that shapes lives and confines certain groups in certain locations to particular ...opportunities.’

Hine (2003)

**Policy Environment**

**Funding**

The current UK-wide **funding environment** of public sector cuts and reduced budgets has been well documented. It is necessary for those working within the CT sector to consider what the current economic situation may entail and how best to provide for the future in order to maintain the vital services that CT operators provide.

Unfortunately many CTs remain wholly dependent on funding obtained from a series of one-off or temporary sources. The goal, then, is to replace this grant aid treadmill with funding processes that provide long-term financial stability for CT organisations.’ CTA UK 2010, p25
CT has never received any mandatory or statutory funding. It is not funded centrally but is funded through Local Authorities, grants from voluntary trusts and other organisations, and charitable donations.

Unfortunately, CT does not often feature highly on the political agenda, as other services, such as health and social care are more of a priority for decision-makers. This means that it may not get all the funding that it deserves...

The wider funding environment and public spending cuts may be affecting individual groups and users that are registered with ECTOG members. Individual users have been affected by the recession and some have experienced cuts to their welfare and benefits which may have resulted in fewer trips being booked. Groups using CT operators are also experiencing cuts and restrictions in local authority or government funding and are struggling to gain funding from trusts and through fundraising efforts.

Several ECTOG operators reported that in some cases, this has resulted in these user groups being unable to use CT for trips and journeys as frequently as they have done in the past. Some groups have had to cancel their standing hires with ECTOG operators altogether. For many groups that used ECTOG, without it, they have been unable to provide trips and outings which they had done in the past, which has resulted in their clients losing out on social experiences. In some cases this has resulted in these groups being unable to survive because transport was so vital to their service.

Now, more than ever it is essential for funding to support ECTOG as an affordable provider of transport solutions.

For some time funding for capital expenditure has largely been received by ECTOG members from voluntary trusts and foundations rather than local authorities or centrally from the Scottish Government. This environment has become increasingly competitive as there are fewer funds available and ECTOG members are struggling to gain capital funding.

The CT sector raises substantial funds through the use of its transport services. This fact has been misinterpreted by funders as meaning that all costs can be recovered through passenger charges. This is not the case as the full cost per passenger per journey will always be well beyond the means of the client group, which includes many individuals with low-incomes and voluntary groups struggling for funding. In order for CT to remain affordable to users who are often the least able to pay the full costs of a fare, passenger fares are subsidised up to 60% of the cost of a fare. Full costs for transport services are therefore not recovered on the basis of user fares and hires, and CT requires a substantial amount of additional funding to operate and to remain affordable to those who need it the most.
CT in Edinburgh is reliant on council funding. **Local Authority funding has been stuck for the last 5 years.** CEC has expressed the view that ECTOG members may struggle to operate on current levels of funding.\textsuperscript{xv} Taking into account the rate of inflation and the increased costs required to maintain the transport fleets, this freeze in funding has resulted in a reduction in the money available to ECTOG operators. This has a knock-on effect on hire charges and ECTOG operators are struggling to keep their prices at the same low rates.

The fact that funding runs on a **year-to-year** basis may also hinder CT operators because it means that in the event they cannot replace vehicles, they are also unable to apply to leasing companies for vehicles because these tend to require a guarantee of more than one year's funding. 70\% of CT operators in Scotland cannot plan their business for more than one year ahead due to the short-term commitment from key funders.\textsuperscript{xvi} It is difficult for ECTOG members to plan long-term development strategies with a one-year contract.

ECTOG members obtain Local Authority funding in different ways. PEP and Dove obtain funding from the **Health and Social Care (HSC) Department**, as their services include ones other than transport, as well as funding from **Services for Communities (SfC)** which is a historical remnant of the DRT grant. LCTS, SEAG and HcL gain Local Authority funding from the **Services for Communities** Department.\textsuperscript{1}

HSC often cites transport as an important issue in the delivery of care. However, as it is not the principle funder of CT, there is insufficient linkage between HSC and SfC departments and uncertainty about what the CEC approach should be on meeting transport needs of individuals and third sector groups through CT. Increased **discussion and cooperation** between CEC departments about the role of CT and CT operators and their importance as a link to health and social services would be beneficial.

This lack of communication between HSC and SfC is even more salient when considering that 2 ECTOG members, Dove and PEP, receive funding from both HSC and SfC for the other services that they provide.

During the year 2010-2011, the CEC funding for some ECTOG members changed from grants or Service Level Agreements to a **contractual arrangement**. While this has not altered the provision of services by CT operators, it reduces flexibility and removes the possibility of grant funding, which is essential for CT.\textsuperscript{xvii} A contract is a binding legal agreement, and if CT operators default (for reasons such as poor weather, which affected transport

\textsuperscript{1} Transport, including CT and Fleet/Corporate Transport, within City of Edinburgh Council has been re-aligned from the management of City Development to Services for Communities.
services in November 2010-January 2011), they may face legal action which small voluntary organisations may struggle to withstand.

Furthermore, the future of contracts for ECTOG members is not known and cannot be guaranteed within the current system. As mentioned in 4.4, the **year-to-year basis** on which contracts are issued makes it difficult for ECTOG members to develop long-term business plans and strategies and eliminates the option of leasing vehicles.

**Procurement**

In the event that more funding was made available to the CEC for the provision of CT in Edinburgh, it has expressed that it may be obliged to **test the market** in order to show best value.xviii

However, there exist a number of **social benefit clauses** that in some circumstances may exempt CT operators, as voluntary organisations which are providing a socially valuable service, from having to compete. Furthermore, there is an amount of flexibility about how funders structure procurement. The way that tendering is currently configured in some instances makes it a very complex process and this may act as a barrier to many smaller CT operators, should they be required to compete. In addition, the tendering process values cost-effectiveness rather than quality and passenger-focussed services, which CT provides, thus acting as a further barrier to entry for CT providers.xix

**Dialogue** on procurement between the CEC and CT operators would be beneficial in helping to clarify information (including positions on social benefit clauses) and all other aspects concerning procurement, in order to even the playing field for ECTOG operators should they be obliged to compete for contracts.

There is a danger that if contracts for CT services are put out to tender, commercial providers who may not be local to the area, may be successful in their bids. In such a scenario, ECTOG members may struggle to maintain their services without funding from the Local Authority and some may not survive. There is evidence from other areas, both in the UK and internationally, that the process of tendering eliminates small operators from the market.xx

Without the choice and diversity of CT providers in Edinburgh that exists today, the market may become dominated by a small number of commercial or non-local providers, which will not provide the most appropriate service, or the best quality service, for CT users. That the quality of service to local communities and vulnerable individuals might drop from such a situation should be considered carefully.
Outgoings

The main outgoings for ECTOG members are:

- Purchase of vehicles
- Maintenance of vehicles
- Fuel
- Staff Costs

The purchasing and maintenance of vehicles, of central importance to ECTOG operators, requires high levels of capital funding. ECTOG members do not currently receive sufficient levels of capital funding to cover these costs.

Vehicles are therefore being kept on the road for longer than operators would like. These vehicles are often out on the roads 7 days a week and do a large number of hours each day. This leads to further costs, as an older and more heavily used fleet costs more to maintain and requires more repair work.

Opportunities for the funding of replacement vehicles are lacking and this is an issue for all ECTOG operators which lack access to capital funding. This is also a UK-wide challenge for CT operators, which has the potential to eliminate certain aspects of CT and CT groups within the sector.

Vehicles are the enabling technology which allows the most vulnerable members of the community to become more active and involved, and which provides access to health and social care services. Vehicles are thus an essential part of the social welfare infrastructure within Edinburgh and without them CT, and all the benefits that it provides, would not exist. Therefore capital funding for the replacement of vehicles is a high priority.

The cost of fuel continues to rise. The Retail Price Index (RPI) of oil and other fuels increased by 124.2% from 2003 to 2008 and the cost of diesel increased by 54.5% over the same period. The price at the pumps of unleaded fuel in the UK is the 8th highest in the EU and price of diesel is the second highest in the EU. Currently, the average RPI of unleaded fuel is 138.5 pence per litre and diesel is 145.5 pence per litre, with these figures set to rise further in the near future.

Fuel prices are subject to fluctuations due to fears over supply, in particular when there is instability in many fuel-producing countries. Stock market speculation and a weaker currency in the UK also play its part in fluctuating fuel prices. Fuel is a major outgoing of CT and it is out with the control of CT operators themselves. This is an area which should be acknowledged by funders in order for them to appreciate some of the demands and challenges unique to organisations for which transport is either the only service or one of...
the main services provided and on which so many vulnerable users rely on a day-to-day basis.

Operational Environment

Mapping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operator</th>
<th>Percentage of journeys carried out within operators’ designated quadrants.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dove</td>
<td>89.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCTS</td>
<td>92.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEP</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEAG</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HcL</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows that for all four operators for whom quadrants are relevant, there is a difference of **37.7%** between the highest and lowest percentage of journeys carried out within operators own quadrants.

These figures vary due to **historical** reasons and because user groups have built up a strong **relationship** with one particular provider and are less willing to change to a more ‘local’ one. It also reflects the diversity between operators’ **resources** in terms of vehicles, funding and the different services that they provide. For example, SEAG provides a with-driver service only (as opposed to other members which allow for buses to be hired out) and has the largest fleet among the group-hire ECTOG members. This combination of factors is reflected in the fact that it carried out the most journeys out with its designated quadrant.

The boundaries between the quadrants are flexible in order to meet **user demands** and were established with the idea that clients should have choice between operators. The ECTOG partnership demonstrates its efficiency when frequently ECTOG members refer potential user groups or individuals who contact them, to the respective ECTOG member for the users’ local area. This enables the resources of all members to be used most efficiently, keeps fuel emissions down as vehicles are travelling shorter distances before picking up a client group or individual service users, and avoids duplication of services.
Regulatory Framework

ECTOG members operate under Section 19 (S19) permits. S19 is a not-for-profit license which is for the use of vehicles by bodies concerned with education, religion, social welfare, recreation or other activities of benefit to the community. It cannot be used to carry members of the general public. It is a ‘closed scheme’ and at present, passengers using S19 services are not able to use their concessionary pass. There have been calls from a number of agencies and stakeholders to widen the concessionary travel scheme to S19 services, but a representative from Transport Scotland indicated that there are no plans for this at present.

An alternative not-for-profit permit is a Section 22 (S22). S22 permits are for community buses and must be open to carrying the general public. They should fulfil unmet need; vehicles should run to a timetable and cover specific bus stops on a fixed route.

Some CT operators throughout the country have changed from an S19 to an S22 permit. This has allowed service users to use their concessionary bus pass. They can also bid for more contracts using this permit. However, S22 permits may not be suitable for CT operators in Edinburgh because the existing bus service is extensive. Furthermore, buses would not be able to pick people up from their homes in the type of door-to-door service that is one of the principal benefits of CT services and one of the necessary requirements for many service users.

The permit system for vehicles that are used for not-for-profit purposes is indicative of the ‘red tape’ which is common within the sector. There is a lack of flexibility within the S19 permits, which if reviewed in consultation with CT operators, may benefit all stakeholders within the sector.

Competition Law is another area of regulatory framework which ECTOG members must be aware of. If organisations are to work more closely with one another, or even consider providing shared services, they must be aware of cartel legislation, which applies to the voluntary sector as it does to the private sector.

However, there are exemptions for which ECTOG members may be eligible, should they consider closer working. Where processes of operators are set with a view to making efficiency savings in order to benefit the communities which they serve and maintain prices at the same rate or even reduce prices, rather than with a view to making profit, it is less likely that cartel legislation will constitute a barrier to closer working.
CT in Scotland is affected by wider UK transport legislation. For example, a recent regulation has increased the space that must be given around wheelchair passengers in minibuses. This affects all new buses from October 2011 and may reduce the number of passengers that ECTOG operators are permitted to carry on their minibuses. This may result in some service users being unable to make as many trips as they would like to on CT services, thereby losing out on valuable social experience or access to services. Such unintended consequences of UK-wide legislation can have adverse effects on CT operators and their service users.

**Charity Trustees and Governance**

In recent years it has become increasingly difficult for ECTOG operators to attract charity trustees. This is an issue for CT operators throughout the country. This may be due to potential charity trustees being put off by the responsibility and potential liability that the position entails.

ECTOG members have indicated that it is becoming harder to find charity trustees with specific expertise. There is concern among members about losing long-term charity trustees with certain skills and the expertise that they bring to the boards of ECTOG members.

A consequence of such a loss may be increased costs for ECTOG operators, as they may have to buy in services, which might otherwise have been provided by charity trustees. For example, accountancy or legal expertise of charity trustees provides is particularly valued.

Governing documents of CT operators may be required to be reviewed in light of future developments which might include closer partnership working and joint bids for contracts. Memorandums and Articles of Associations of respective ECTOG operators must be taken into account. Each organisation is required to stick to its own governing documents and any joint projects should reflect the projects of all participating members. According to the National Council of Voluntary Organisations, ‘if joint service delivery means developing activities outside your mission, this may indicate that you would be diverting resources away from your core activities’ which is an issue that must be carefully managed.xxv

Often, contracts that are put out to tender are often too big for individual CT operators to bid for, so joint bidding and working more closely together is sometimes the only way for smaller CT organisations to get involved. This requires contact with the commissioning body and also requires CT operators to create and subscribe to agreements with their partners. This adds complexity to the bidding process for small voluntary CT operators, such as ECTOG members and this issue should be considered in conjunction with 4.8.
**Edinburgh Community Transport Operators Group**

ECTOG is a valuable partnership which achieves concrete results within Edinburgh. Without the good quality, affordable, accessible CT that ECTOG provides, many user groups would be unable to continue functioning.\(^2\) This is because for many of the 450 groups that use the services of ECTOG, transport is a key link in the chain to the services that they provide and for many groups, transport is also a key part of their activity or service programmes.

If voluntary groups that use the services of ECTOG were unable to access the transport it provides, individual clients would therefore lose out on the valuable social experience, quality of life and opportunities for which CT provides access. Without the support of voluntary groups, and CT to get people out of their homes, some individuals may even become housebound. ECTOG allows for vulnerable individuals to have access to services and destinations through an affordable, accessible and acceptable transport service.

ECTOG provides a vital forum for mutual support of CT operators within Edinburgh, which has been built up over the years. It acts as an environment for information-sharing where members can communicate ideas and discuss solutions to challenges that affect the sector. It also provides a unified structure with which the Local Authority can communicate.

ECTOG provides additional value for CT within Edinburgh. ECTOG operators benefit from over **2100 volunteer hours of service** each year. With limited financial resources, ECTOG relies on the contribution of its volunteers to enable individual operators to provide the level and quality of service that they currently do. Volunteers help in areas of driving, administration and management and are an important resource for ECTOG members. Furthermore, the financial benefit of volunteers is a testament to the additional value provided by ECTOG. If ECTOG volunteers had been paid employees, their work would have cost over £13,000, based on the minimum wage.

As voluntary and charitable organisations, ECTOG operators can access the wealth of charitable grants and trusts. Although it has been harder to secure funding from such avenues in recent years, there are still opportunities for ECTOG operators to apply by virtue of their status as charities. Therefore the local authority, or main funder, can benefit from the additional resources provided by volunteers and charitable donations to which ECTOG has access.

**Diversity**

ECTOG members vary in the services that they provide, their histories and their areas of operation. This diversity avoids duplication of services and ensures that CT remains in touch with the needs of the various communities and individuals within Edinburgh.

Individual operators contribute different outlooks and experiences to ECTOG. From the purely transport-oriented groups of LCTS, SEAG and HcL, to Dove and PEP which also provide health and social care services, the varied

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\(^2\) Drylaw Rainbow Club use PEP’s transport service and stated that they would not be able to provide their own services without the accessible transport that PEP provides.
perspectives are an asset to the partnership, providing a complete picture of the needs of users and user groups.

LCTS uniquely provides support and development services to other transport providers. It works to help design and implement training standards for CT operators in Edinburgh, from driver training, to legal regulations on minibuses. It has traditionally met with the relevant CEC departments to discuss CT services in Edinburgh and has previously acted on behalf of ECTOG to negotiate for funding from government transport initiatives. LCTS has a total fleet of 8 vehicles. 3 of its vehicles are owned by CEC for historic reasons that pre-date the formation of ECTOG. LCTS has a contract with Services for Communities for the bulk of its funding.

SEAG primarily promotes the welfare of the aged, disabled and those in necessitous circumstances and therefore generally does not provide hires to youth groups or community groups out with this remit, unlike some of the other operators. It provides a with-driver service only and has a fleet of 17 vehicles. SEAG has a contract with Services for Communities for funding.

PEP has a fleet of 7 vehicles but provides services other than CT. For example, its runs services for vulnerable adults ranging from Lifelong Learning Services, a Literacy Service, Weekend Resource, Daycare Clubs, a Neighbourhood Group, Home Care, and a Gardening and Decorating Service. For PEP, CT is a crucial link for its other services.

PEP has a contract for funding with Health and Social Care but also retains historic funding from the Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) Grant.

Dove’s services are not limited to transport. The Dove Centre provides support and services for over 50s in the West of Edinburgh through a variety of socially inclusive transport (it has a fleet of 3 vehicles), learning, social welfare activities, healthy eating and volunteering opportunities.

Dove is funded through Health and Inequalities, which supports some core costs and some salary costs. It also receives funding from Health and Social Care and the DRT grant.

HcL provides transport for individuals with mobility challenges. It runs Dial-a-Ride, Dial-a-Bus and Ambulance services which are door-through-door.

Its Ambulance services have been a growing area of need due to changing demographics within Edinburgh and also due to changes within the remit of the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS). HcL, however, cannot rely on health work to bring in much needed income as it is not consistent or reliable.

The SAS has indicated that it is focussing its non-emergency patient transport on passengers which meet its criteria for clinical need. This will result in a number of patients who had previously used the services of the SAS becoming unable to do so, and they will need to look elsewhere for transport to health appointments. In time, SAS may be able to direct non-clinical need patients towards alternative modes of transport, including CT. Therefore the work of HcL in filling these gaps is all the more valuable. However, carrying
more patients to their appointments reduces the availability of services for social reasons, which is a vital part of the HcL service.

**Consistency and Collaboration**

ECTOG members adhere to **shared standards** on the quality of vehicles, driver training and other operating arrangements. This ensures a measure of consistency that can be relied upon by user groups and individuals accessing the services. A passenger in one area of Edinburgh can be confident that the service they receive will be of the same standard as that provided in the other parts of the city. Shared standards and operating procedures also provide quality assurance for funders.

ECTOG operators share a number of **values** as they all exist to provide services for the most vulnerable members of society and are defined by a strong social ethos. They are therefore driven, not by the desire to make a profit, but to create healthier, happier communities and provide opportunities and social justice for those individuals who need it most. This provides a valuable consistency to the core of the partnership.

The current financial environment and potential increase in open tendering may result in ECTOG members working more closely together and collaborating in order to put in **joint bids** for contracts. ECTOG is in a good position to represent the interests of the communities it serves, as none of its members seek profit or are willing to compromise on the high quality standards that they provide.

ECTOG members have, when occasion has called for it, **shared resources**. If vehicles belonging to one ECTOG member are out of action, it has been possible to borrow a bus from another member in order to ensure that their hires are carried out. This is testament to partners working within the spirit of ECTOG and demonstrates the usefulness of the partnership and the joint determination of all members to provide quality reliable services for individuals within Edinburgh.

ECTOG is a valuable partnership which provides high-quality transport services that act as a lifeline for thousands of individuals within the city, many of whom would remain socially isolated without the vital assistance that ECTOG provides.

The CT sector faces a number of challenges which include a lack of capital funding, a shifting environment of tendering and contracts and uncertain futures. However, with adequate support, ECTOG can remain the foremost CT provider in Edinburgh and can continue to provide its valuable services.

**Appendix A. Sample of ECTOG’s Registered Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10th Leith Boys Brigade</th>
<th>Artlink Edinburgh &amp; The Lothians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>123 Club</td>
<td>Balfour Court Social Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alba Thistle</td>
<td>Barnardo’s Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almond Mains Initiative</td>
<td>Barony Housing Contact Point</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Murrayfield Club
Murrayfield Dementia Project
Murraypark Nursing Home (NHS Lothian)
Neighbourhood Group
Newhaven Church
Niddrie Community Youth Group
North Edinburgh Arts
North Edinburgh Dementia
North Merchiston Club
North West Carers Centre
Norwood Community Learning
Norwood Community Wing
Old Kirk Service
Open Forum
Oxgangs Care
Pearl Trust
Pennywell District Girl Guiding
Pentland Club for the Visually Impaired
Pentland Young at Heart Group
Pentlandhill Nursing Home
PEP Lifelong Learning
PEP Weekend Resource
Pilmeny Development Project
Pilton Community Health Project
Pilton Video
Pilton Youth & Childrens Project
Pirniehall Primary School
Polwarth Parish Church
Portobello Monday Centre
Prestonfield & District Neighbourhood Project
Queens Nursing Institute Scotland
Queensberry Bowling Club
Queensferry Care in the Community
Ravenscroft Residents Association
RNIB Scotland
Rotary Club of Penicuik
Rotary Club of South Queensferry
Royston Wardieburn Community Centre
Saheliya
Salvation Army - Davidson House
Salvation Army Eagle Lodge
SCOREscotland
Scotland Yard Adventure Centre
Scottish Bible Society
Scottish Huntington's Association
Scottish Social Enterprise Coalition
Scottish Sports Futures
Scottish Storytelling Centre
Shakti Womens Aid
Smarties Club
Social Enterprise Academy
Society of High Constables
South Central Neighbourhood Partnership
South Edinburgh CLD
South Side Community Centre
Southhouse Sheltered Housing
Southhouse/Burdiehouse Day Centre
Spartans Community Football Academy
St Catherine's 50+ Club
St Davids Episcopal Church
St Davids Primary
St Gregory's SVDP
St Hilda's Day Care Service
Nicholas Court
St Pauls Senior Citizens
St Teresa's Youth Group
Stepping Stones
Stockaree Tennants Organisation
Stockbridge Parish Church
Summerside Kindergarten
Sunshine Club
The Base Gracemount
The Open Door Edinburgh
Tor Christian Nursing Home Ltd
Tressilian Gardens Social Club
Trossachs Lodge Residents Association
Tron Kirk
Valleypark Community Centre
Valleypark Community Centre Youth Group
Viewpoint Housing Association - Balfour House
Viewpoint Housing Association - Lennox House
Viewpoint Housing Association - St Raphaels
Viewpoint Housing Association - St.Albans Road
Viewpoint Housing Association - Woodthorpe
Viewpoint Housing Marian House
VIGIL Group
Wardie Bowling Club
Wesley Court Tea Club
West Edinburgh Causeway Group
West Pilton Christian Centre
Winners Chapel International
YMCA Edinburgh
Young at Heart (Balerno)
Appendix B. ECTOG Case Studies

**Pilton Equalities Project (PEP)** exists to enhance the quality of life for older and other vulnerable adults in North Edinburgh through services that enable active community participation, encourage independence and reduce isolation. PEP’s vehicles support local groups and individuals on a weekly basis. PEP runs a number of services including shopping trips, a visiting and information service, weekend resource, a neighbourhood group for adults with mental health issues or learning difficulties, volunteer training, lifelong learning opportunities, day care clubs, gardening services and homecare.

**Queensferry Churches’ Care in the Community (QCCC)** uses PEP’s transport service on a weekly basis. Before using PEP’s services, QCCC had its own minibus but due to costs of maintenance and staffing, decided that it would be financially favourable to use PEP.

The Manager, Linda Wright, had this to say about SEAG:

> ‘At Prestonfield we believe the client’s day starts when our Carer arrives at the door to bring them in to the Day Service. The bus journey gives a chance to chat on the way in and meet and catch up with friends even before they arrive at the Neighbourhood Centre. It is the start of what may be the only social interaction in that Older Person’s week.

> From our beginnings in 1990, we acknowledged that suitable transport would be a significant part of delivering a service in the Centre to our client group. From that day SEAG has been in a partnership with Prestonfield and crucial to the level of service we could offer. SEAG has provided us, without fail, a flexible, friendly, specialist transport service on 5 days each week. Its specialist transport service is vital to the continuation of Day Services in the Community.’

**LCTS** is an independent charity established to provide high-quality, accessible and affordable passenger transport services to not-for-profit organisations in Edinburgh, Midlothian & West Lothian including accessible transport to member organisations, high quality training for transport operators and support services for transport providers.
One of its members is the **Ripple Project**. The Ripple Project, based in Restalrig Road, South Edinburgh is a community organisation providing a range of services to residents of Lochend, Restalrig, Craigentinny and surrounding areas. Activities include lunch club and social clubs for older people, drop in youth cafe and range of other youth activities and support, listening support for individuals in crisis and a creative writing group for adults. The Ripple Project uses the services of LCTS on a regular basis.

![Images of people using LCTS services]

The Manager, Liz Ferguson, had this to say about LCTS:

‘The door to door pick up service that LCTS supply to us is invaluable. It allows frail and isolated older people with poor mobility living in an area of multiple deprivation to our daily lunch club where they have access to a hot cooked meal and the companionship and support of fellow club members and our volunteers and to our Friday social club for older people. For many it is the focus of their day and the reason they get up and dressed and participation in these projects is very important to these clients. Without the affordable transport and driver that LCTS provides, this vulnerable client group living in an area of Edinburgh with one of the highest concentration of older people simply would not be able to access our projects. As a small community organisation the Ripple Project would be unable to provide this transport ourselves so the LCTS provision is essential to us.’

Chris Jones

“We recently registered with you and used the service for the first time last Friday on a trip – my wife’s first outing in 4 weeks – to Swanston. It was superb, the service by telephone, prompt timing and wonderful drivers... It has made her week/month!”

Margaret Anderson

“Excellent service enabling people to access their community”
HcL (formerly Handicabs) was set up in 1982 to provide accessible transport for people in Edinburgh and the Lothians. It provides two main services: Dial-A-Ride and Dial-A-Bus. Dial-A-Ride provides a door-to-door transport service for people with limited mobility. Dial-A-Bus provides transport from home to local shopping centres for people who cannot manage by ordinary bus.

Robert MacPherson has used HcL’s Dial-A-Ride service for 10 years. Robert has MS and uses a large power chair to get around. He uses Dial-A-Ride for visits to the hospital, for social trips and for business trips, as a board member of a housing association.

\[\text{Dial-A-Ride makes these journeys hassle-free and the fact that they are door-to-door is of great benefit to Robert who is impressed by the level of service supplied by HCL: ‘It’s a great service and good value for money. In all the years I’ve used them, they’ve never let me down. They will bend over backwards for you.’}\]

South Edinburgh Amenities Group (SEAG) exists to provide accessible, affordable and specially adapted with-driver transport to groups of the frail elderly, the disabled and the mentally ill, including those suffering from dementia. It has been doing this since 1980 and, with 16 mobility adapted vehicles, it now services over well over a hundred registered groups including lunch clubs, independent day centres, the city’s accessible library service, youth groups and residents’ groups.

One regular user is Prestonfield Neighbourhood Project which is a community organisation providing a range of services to local residents throughout south and south central Edinburgh. Activities include lunch clubs and social activity clubs for older people including those suffering from dementia and other disabilities. It also provides outreach to those unable to leave their own home and advice on a range of vital quality of life issues.

The Manager, Linda Wright, had this to say about SEAG:

\[\text{‘At Prestonfield we believe the client’s day starts when our Carer arrives at the door to bring them in to the Day Service. The bus journey gives a chance to chat on the way in and meet and catch up with friends even before they arrive}\]
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From our beginnings in 1990, we acknowledged that suitable transport would be a significant part of delivering a service in the Centre to our client group. From that day SEAG has been in a partnership with Prestonfield and crucial to the level of service we could offer. SEAG has provided us, without fail, a flexible, friendly, specialist transport service on 5 days each week. Its specialist transport service is vital to the continuation of Day Services in the Community.’

Dove Transport was established in 2003 as part of the Urban Community Transport Initiative pilot scheme. Dove Transport is just one aspect of the services provided by the Dove Centre.

The Dove centre is the only dedicated centre for the over 50s in the Wester Hailes area of Edinburgh, seeking to support older people to remain as independent as they can be through a variety of socially inclusive transport, learning, social welfare, activities, health and volunteering opportunities. The primary goal of The Dove Centre is to help maintain the well-being of people in this age group and the accessible transport provided by Dove Transport’s door-to-door service is critical for many Dove Centre members in getting to the centre and having all the opportunities that the Dove Centre provides.

‘Service is excellent. Always pleasant and helpful on the phone. The driver is wonderful, very helpful and accommodating.’
Leanne, Lochend Neighbourhood Centre

The transport is really good – if it wasn’t for that I wouldn’t be able to come, especially in the winter.’
Margaret, Dove Centre Member

‘I think its great, I wish there were more places like this! The prices are fantastic, great value for money. There’s a lot going on for people to get them out of the house, all the classes give a great variety of things to do – fun days and fantastic trips. I also think you do a great job picking up people every day. The staff are great too, always bend over backwards to help.’
Alfie, Dove Centre Member

Acknowledgments

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Endnotes


v Meeting with John MacDonald, CTA Scotland 15/12/2011


x Lucas (2006) p802


xiii Lucas (2006) p802


xv Meeting with Stuart Lowrie, City of Edinburgh Council 26/01/2012


xvii CTA UK (2010)

xviii Meeting with Stuart Lowrie, City of Edinburgh Council 26/01/2012

xix CTA Scotland (2012)

xx Independent school bus operators in Canada became unable to sustain themselves when school bus contracts were given to a large commercial company; a large commercial company’s management of Dumfries Taxi Bus (Meeting with Dr James Cooper, Transport Research Institute, Napier University 26/03/2012).

xvi Nicol, S., and Cook, G., ‘Energy Prices,’ SPICe Briefing 5th December 2008,
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ECTOG
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