COMMUNITY TRANSPORT INQUIRY
THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS TRANSPORT PARTNERSHIP (HITRANS)
WRITTEN SUBMISSION

Introduction

The Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS) welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Scottish Parliament’s Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee’s Inquiry to consider the provision of Community Transport Services.

‘Improving the community transport and demand responsive transport on offer in the region for those who have poor access to mainstream public transport’ is one of the ten key horizontal themes set out in the HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy.

The Strategy sets out the following objectives for Community and Health Transport:

**Community and Health Transport:**
- Increase the sustainability of the sector.
- Achieve consistency of standards across the sector.
- Improve communications internal to the sector and between the sector and other bodies.
- Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the sector.

HITRANS has significant experience in both understanding the key issues and developing innovative solutions for the provision of Community Transport. This includes the following;

**Research**

- June 2008 - Highland & Islands Road Based Passenger Transport; MVA
  [http://www.hitrans.org.uk/Documents/Road_Based_Passenger_Transport_Study.pdf](http://www.hitrans.org.uk/Documents/Road_Based_Passenger_Transport_Study.pdf)

- August 2011 - Value of Community Transport Economic Analysis. DHC and TAS Partnership

The Value of Community Transport Economic Analysis was undertaken by DHC and TAS Partnership and a copy of the Executive Summary can also be found in Appendix A of this response. This report demonstrates how to appraise the value of community transport (CT) to the economy, society and the environment.
The project uses case study evidence to illustrate how a range of benefits in different sectors can be analysed. The work was approached in four stages: inception and project selection, definition of evaluation framework, assembly of data and undertaking surveys, and analysis, reporting and presentation. A valuation approach has been developed that identifies discrete components of value for policy, market appraisal and user/non user benefits. One case study scheme was selected from each of the five council areas within HITRANS showing a range of types of CT projects in different settings. Across the five case studies, the cost of replacing the CT provision with commercially managed transport services would be in excess of £500k, which is an order of magnitude greater than the level of current council spending on CT. The CT projects also deliver much more than a transport service. Added value derives not just from volunteer time, but an ability to connect with benefits across a wider range of policy areas than is possible with other transport delivery approaches.

**Current Projects**

HITRANS are currently part funding two projects that are designed to improve access to transport including community transport and we are represented on the project board of the first of these projects.

1. **Lochaber Integrated Transport Provision Project**

   An extract from the project brief for the above project is attached in Appendix B. Subject to a funding agreement being secured the intention is to run a pilot project from this summer. An expression of interest to run the pilot has already been made by a local voluntary organisation.

   The purpose of the project is to stimulate the enhanced and more efficient use of current transport resources within the pilot project area of Lochaber with a view to creating and implementing an integrated and sustainable transport model that delivers best value for the project area.

   The central initiative proposed by the Project Partners is the introduction of the Lochaber Transport Advice and Bookings Service or Hub. This initiative fits well with particular recommendations from the Audit Scotland report which urges the responsible organisations to:

   - Ensure that up-to-date information about all transport options in the pilot area is available to staff to enable better information provision to the public about available transport options, eligibility criteria and charges.
   - Integrate or share services where this represents more efficient use of resources and better services for users, including considering an integrated scheduling system.
2. North East Transport to Healthcare Information Centre Pilot

Commencing at the start of this 2013 the Transport to Healthcare Information Centre (THInC) operates from Elgin and acts as a dedicated helpline offering advice on accessing suitable transport for the public to get to and from their appointments where they may have no personal means of transport.

A simple phone call to the information centre enables staff to advise the caller about transport availability and how best to access it. It includes details of suitable bus or train times as well as contact telephone numbers and other information for services such as local dial-a-bus or care-share groups.

Eventually it is hoped that a system can be developed so that patients are given appointments which fit in with the transport available to them.

During the period of the trial, THInC will only be available to patients attending the Outpatient Eye Clinic and the Dental School, both at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary. It will also be open to all residents living within the Moray area attending appointments at any clinic run by NHS Grampian.

Responses to Inquiry Questions

1. Community Transport, do we need a more strategic approach?

Yes. The examples included within this response provide evidence of where HITRANS has worked with other partners to adopt both a strategic approach to understanding the economic issues involved in proving community transport but also in practice where the Lochaber Integrated Transport Project and North East Transport to Healthcare provide good examples of Community Planning partners working together to improve the delivery and efficiency of transport services.

The HITRANS commissioned study into 'Value of Community Transport' (See above) highlights how CT projects deliver much more than a transport service to the passengers and areas they serve and any assessment of CT needs to properly consider the benefits it provides across a wider range of policy areas.

A large number of community organisations exist and operate within the HITRANS area. However, the reliance in most instances on grant funding means that it is difficult for these organisations develop any long term strategic approach. In addition, the fact that the majority of demand for community transport involves catering for those who already have an
entitlement to free bus travel highlights the need for a more strategic approach and is also reflected in the answer to question 6 below.

Nevertheless, it should also be recognised that an essential element of community transport is that it is led by the local community and care should be taken to help enable its development rather than impose a one size fits all structure.

2. Are you seeing a growing demand for community transport provision?

Within the HITRANS area issues such as the rapidly ageing population, pressure on resources for existing public transport provision and changes in the eligibility criteria for patient transport have all helped contribute to a growing demand for Community Transport provision.

At the same time the cost of providing community transport services is increasing as a result of the cost of fuel. In addition, there is evidence that as the age profile of the volunteers who currently provide Community Transport is increasing there is not sufficient younger volunteers available to fill the gaps.

3. Do your NHS bodies work closely with community transport providers?

The work HITRANS is involved in particularly the Lochaber Integrated Transport Project has improved the relationships and linkages between the NHS and community transport. There is still a great deal of work to be done in this area though and while the Health Boards have established Health and Transport Action Plans these need to have outputs that improve access to healthcare facilities. Community transport is already a key facilitator for patients and visitors accessing health sites. Where there are pressures on funding of transport services there could be value in finding a consensus whereby all those bodies that rely on the services contribute to the running costs.

4. How do we access non-emergency patient transport?

The two pilot projects described in this response and which HITRANS are currently part funding provide examples of how issues relating to accessing non-emergency transport are currently being addressed. It is hoped that lessons can learned from these pilots with our Community Planning Partners with the intention of rolling out successful models across the Highland and Islands.

5. Has your community transport group experienced funding difficulties?

N/A
6. Do you think that Community Transport should fall within the concessionary fares schemes?

HITRANS support the inclusion of Community Transport within the concessionary fares scheme.

Extending the concessionary fares scheme to include Community Transport would remove an inequality as the existing bus focussed scheme benefits urban areas disproportionately. In many parts of the Highlands and Islands community transport is often the only motorised sustainable travel option in rural areas. It provides an invaluable travel option where there simply is no alternative public transport option. Including those CT services that operate under Section 19 permit within the Concessionary Fares scheme would allow the majority of existing users who carry a concessionary travel card to use this on their primary passenger transport service. It should be recognised that the cost of extending the concessionary travel scheme would need to be achieved within limited resources. We believe this could be achieved by revisiting some of the eligibility criteria.
Appendix A

Value of Community Transport: Economic Analysis (August 2011)

Executive Summary

The valuation approach

This report demonstrates how to appraise the value of community transport (CT) to the economy, society and the environment. The project uses case study evidence to illustrate how a range of benefits in different sectors can be analysed. The work was approached in four stages: inception and project selection, definition of evaluation framework, assembly of data and undertaking surveys, and analysis, reporting and presentation. The work was undertaken between February and May 2011.

The prevalence of secondary and cross sector benefits makes community transport particularly complex to value and fund. Budgets allocated to one programme, such as to provide transport, cannot easily be spent on other public policy programmes, such as to improve health. Community planning mechanisms have been set up to manage cross sector working and CT appraisal needs to be linked into partnership decisions at this level.

The general principles of valuation in this study follow the national standards set out in the UK Treasury ‘Green Book’. Also the frameworks follow evolving best practice in transport appraisal with clearer market, business, policy and social appraisals to complement traditional economic appraisal techniques. Community transport is a small element of the transport economy, but a big player in linking transport with wider policy objectives. Within CT, the core elements of value are derived from facilitating better health, social inclusion, employability, education, training, and in building communities. Most current transport appraisals are narrower than this with the dominant components of value being travel time and cost. Growth in transport markets leads to more travel time and more money being spent on transport, but these goals can sometimes conflict with wider policy goals emphasising the role of the policy appraisal.

The value of CT in the case studies

A valuation approach has been developed that identifies discrete components of value for policy, market appraisal and user/non user benefits. One case study scheme was selected from each of the five council areas within HITRANS showing a range of types of CT projects in different settings.

Across the five case studies, the cost of replacing the CT provision with commercially managed transport services would be in excess of £500k, which is...
an order of magnitude greater than the level of current council spending on CT. The CT projects also deliver much more than a transport service. Added value derives not just from volunteer time, but an ability to connect with benefits across a wider range of policy areas than is possible with other transport delivery approaches.

Making the case for CT

Lack of clarity in community plans about who is accountable for CT funding is limiting the funds available for the sector. Where CT closes gaps in public transport network coverage the case for CT depends on comparisons with the costs of funding alternative bus or taxi options to enable non car owners to travel. However particular lack of clarity affects high care transport markets, and these include many of the more costly longer distance CT trips.

CT adds value to local economies, and the role of CT in building community capacity is substantial in all of the case studies.

This project has shown that, despite the complexity of CT, readily available data could be used to demonstrate the value of the sector compared with competing spending priorities in transport, health, education, social work, employability, community development and environmental enhancement. The indications from the case studies are that CT is providing very good value and to make the case for CT investment it should be fairly straightforward to scale up the analysis in this report to cover the benefits of all CT schemes in the HITRANS area.

Key data required in the case studies appraisals included: number of trips made by users, vehicle mileage travelled by types of vehicle, destination and trip purpose for each trip, number of staff and volunteers involved with the CT scheme, user surveys to identify what people would do if CT was not available, and information about the administrative functions undertaken by the CT such as co-ordinating trips or providing personalised support for users. Well managed CT projects will already hold much of this data and should not find these data collection requirements onerous.

The analysis in this report suggests that a strong case could be made for CT investment as a best value transport delivery solution with the flexibility to close gaps in provision, and to join up the many societies and communities that create an economy.
Appendix B

Integrated Transport Provision Project – Brief for Service Operator to Deliver, Manage and Operate the Lochaber Transport Advice and Bookings Service

A. Background to Integrated Transport Provision Project

The Integrated Transport Provision Project involves a range of Project Partners: The Highland Council; Scottish Ambulance Service; NHS Highland; and Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership. The Project Board are seeking to stimulate the enhanced and more efficient use of current transport resources within the pilot project area of Lochaber with a view to creating and implementing an integrated and sustainable transport model that delivers best value for the project area.

A key stimulant which led to the formation of the Project Board and subsequently the project’s definition was Audit Scotland’s report ‘Transport for Health and Social Care’ published in August 2011 which stated:

“Transport services for health and social care are fragmented and there is a lack of leadership, ownership and monitoring of the service provided. The Scottish Government, Regional Transport Partnerships, councils, NHS Boards and the ambulance service are not working together effectively to deliver transport for health and social care or making the best use of resources.”

Through a programme of workshops and discussion the Project Partners developed the scope of the project to incorporate not just the health and social care concerns but also the requirement to support social inclusion and to consider aspects of the home-to-school transport delivery. The project’s focus for the development of a transport target operating model is the delivery of services in Lochaber to:

- Provide a community transport resource for the development of social benefit, encouraging social inclusion, maintaining rural communities and increasing the sustainability of Highland communities.
- Ensure patients can get to and from healthcare appointments.
- Convey adults and children being supported by Social Care Services to and from their destinations.
- Transport children to and from school.
- Develop access for eligible community groups in Lochaber to use Project Partner minibuses (situated at schools and at care homes) in the evenings, at weekends and during school holidays (in the case of the vehicles located at schools).
Potentially, key outcomes for the project will be increasing the effective use of vehicles and increasing customer satisfaction levels, sustaining communities, reducing the number of missed hospital appointments, and producing a model of transport provision that can be adapted and applied across Highland Council’s area.

The project is scheduled to conclude at the end of May 2014 and may or may not be continued based upon its impact and its usefulness in delivering insights into and making progress towards improvements to the transport issues within Lochaber.

B. Central Project Initiative

The central initiative proposed by the Project Partners is the introduction of the Lochaber Transport Advice and Bookings Service (previously referred to as the Hub). This initiative fits well with particular recommendations from the Audit Scotland report which urges the responsible organisations to:

- Ensure that up-to-date information about all transport options in the pilot area is available to staff to enable better information provision to the public about available transport options, eligibility criteria and charges.
- Integrate or share services where this represents more efficient use of resources and better services for users, including considering an integrated scheduling system.

The initiative is also expected to contribute considerably towards achieving the range of overall project benefits identified for the Integrated Transport Provision Project. These are discussed further in the Governance and Reporting section of this project brief.

The Project Partners are seeking an operator to set-up and run this Service in co-operation with them. This Service will be required to perform a range of functions:

1. Provide an information service to advise enquirers on travel options and to offer to make the necessary transport arrangements for callers.

2. Request alternative appointment times or dates from the NHS Highland Patient Booking Office on occasions where no locally accessible transport is available to allow the patient to attend their healthcare appointment.

3. As a last resort, and only where it has been clearly demonstrated that no alternative transport is available, contact the Scottish
Ambulance Service (SAS) to discuss the possibility of SAS providing transport for healthcare under its “social/geographic” category.

4. Receive/record daily capacity usage of the Scottish Ambulance Service’s Lochaber-based Patient Transport Service (PTS) vehicles and to place patients on to PTS vehicles when the option is offered by Scottish Ambulance Service.

5. Develop a client database and record the details of each call to the Lochaber Information Hub.

6. Develop and maintain a transport provider database.

7. For the duration of the Action Learning Project (the pilot project) the Service should operate as the central booking point for all Highland Council and NHS Highland minibuses operating in Lochaber (minibuses will remain in situ at the various schools and care centres). Schools, care centres and all other potential users to contact the Lochaber Transport Advice and Bookings Service to book their evening and weekend requirement for transport. Develop and maintain the booking system for making use of these minibuses.

8. Offer advice and training to drivers who wish to secure entitlement to drive a Highland Council and/or an NHS Highland minibus.

9. Develop and maintain a volunteer driver eligibility and availability database. Confirm entitlement of voluntary drivers wishing to drive a Highland Council and/or and NHS Highland minibus

10. Advise voluntary groups wishing to use Highland Council and/or NHS Highland vehicles how to acquire a Section 19 Permit.

11. Produce management information reports for the ITP Project Board: where are callers wishing to go; when do they wish to travel; how compatible the existing transport services are with these needs; where the deficiencies lie; etc.

The Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership
19 April 2013