COMMUNITY TRANSPORT INQUIRY
INTERLOCH TRANSPORT
WRITTEN SUBMISSION

ARE YOU SEEING A GROWING DEMAND FOR COMMUNITY TRANSPORT?

Yes, for the following reasons.

- An aging population
  - As the population ages dependency increases and mobility decreases. We see residents who cannot drive, who may need escorting, who may have dementia, who may be wheelchair bound or have other more severe mobility issues.
  - As the population becomes more dependant residents require (as they age and their mobility decreases over time)
    - Door to door Transport, rather than from a bus stop.
    - Door to door Transport with an escort to support them to appointments, round the shops or to services and social clubs.
    - Housebound services, as residents age they may become housebound so they then need shopping and prescriptions delivered at the very basic end of support.
  - More and more young people are moving away from rural areas cutting off traditional support networks, the same goes as people retire into a rural areas. Even in more urban areas younger generations move away to find work or to study.

- Changes in policy
  - Care in the Community
    - More and more people are living and being cared for in their homes, the vital link in the chain is missing at present. There are obvious problems whereby people are being encouraged to stay in their own homes but have no way of getting out to their doctors appointments or even to just get their shopping in.
  - The Ambulance Service
    - The Ambulance service is now enforcing its criteria based on medical need rather than a mixture of medical need and location.

HOW DO YOU ACCESS NON EMERGENCY PATIENT TRANSPORT

As a transport provider, we supply non emergency patient transport alongside transport to doctor’s surgeries and other health services.
DO YOU THINK THAT COMMUNITY TRANSPORT SHOULD FALL WITHIN CONCESSIONARY SCHEMES

Yes.

- A vast proportion of our clients are entitled to concessionary scheme passes but are unable to use them as their mobility is so limited that they need door to door transport.
- We now charge fares for our journeys, there is a lingering resentment however that our services are not seen as being free as normal transport is.
- Any funding stream that could help stabilise our sector is welcome but.
  - Retrospective claims would cause havoc with a small organisations cash flow and budget – especially at the start of such a scheme.
  - The cost of supported door to door transport is higher per person than the current concessionary fair would account for.
  - Community Transport is more than just transport, would shopping delivery be counted in such a scheme or prescription delivery not to mention escorting costs.

DO WE NEED A MORE STRATEGIC APPROACH

We most definitely do.

- Residents need door to door transport, local economies need the income from employment and client spending.
- Door to door transport is needed to facilitate changes in government policy
- Door to door transport is needed to link with the needs of social services and patient transport.
- To make this happen in a cost effective way we need direction and stable funding.
- The community Transport sector is made up of many small, inefficient groups with no strategy, security or economies of scale.
- There is no centralised Administration service so we can’t bulk buy for example (this is a role the CTA could take on). Every small group is negotiating its own insurance or paying a high price for individual vehicles. We cannot negotiate lower maintenance costs or get much reduction in fuel prices. If you come within the jurisdiction of the SPT for example you may be lucky to have some support if you plan on going down the my bus route but if not and you need smaller vehicles for door to door transport then you have a problem.
- Centralised booking and scheduling services that can link up with the ambulance service and NHS booking departments.
- Stable funding. CT funding is not ring fenced and is presently often decided on a year on year basis. Funding streams are complicated and inefficient. CT groups are hanging on a thread at the moment.
DO YOUR LOCAL NHS BODIES WORK CLOSELY WITH COMMUNITY TRANSPORT PROVIDERS?

We work closely with our local social services departments and doctor’s surgeries. Both groups use our service to facilitate their own.

HAS YOUR COMMUNITY TRANSPORT GROUP EXPERIENCED FUNDING DIFFICULTIES

Yes due to:

- Rising cost of fuel and insurance
- Rising frailty of clients and resultant costs
- Reduced council core funding (CT funds are not ring fenced)
- Reduced grant income due to increased competition
- Rising costs of vehicle maintenance – replacing vehicles has become incredibly difficult so as they get older the costs increase.

POINTS TO NOTE
- Community transport is cheap, flexible and demand led
- The sector is the solution to many of our current and upcoming elderly transport issues
- Emphasis should be put on door to door transport or we will end up with a network that most cannot use.
- The sector needs long term simplified funding streams. Council funds must be ring fenced.
- The sector would benefit from economies of scale (umbrella purchasing, merging of smaller groups, standardised scheduling software, vehicle advertising, insurance, maintenance.

If the concessionary scheme is to be extended:

- Thought must be given to the practicalities, backdated claims will result in cash flow issues for example
- The scheme must either cover full cost or be used alongside small fares. Transporting wheelchair bound clients door to door will cost more than a mobile person stepping onto a bus.
- Community Transport is not just transport, what about escort services, shopping delivery and prescription deliveries, thought must be given to what services will be covered.

Interloch Transport
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