COMMUNITY TRANSPORT INQUIRY

JOHN ROBIN (individual)

WRITTEN SUBMISSION

I would wish to submit my views on the state of community transport as a transport professional who prior to retirement was heavily involved in the funding of community transport, the operation of door to door transport and other social/health transport matters as Contracts Manager at Strathclyde Partnership for Transport.

Like the committee I believe that the time for action is long past and that there is more than enough evidence of the important role community transport can play in supporting communities and in particular vulnerable and older people. Studies by the JIT and others, pilot schemes and initiatives all show the significant benefits (and efficiencies) from integrating provision of door to door transport and community transport.

My experience suggests that large scale projects across multiple organisations promising large savings will tend to fail for a range of reasons, which I do not propose to detail here but would be happy to do so on another occasion. There are large savings to be made particularly in health service use of taxis and more effective scheduling of patient transport and social work transport but these are best achieved by many small scale changes with commitment for those directly involved in provision.

The JIT and the EU funded Interreg project Improving Connectivity and Mobility Access have shown practical ways in which community transport can effectively work in partnership with public authorities including social care transport and public transport and benefit both, for instance the use of community buses on demand responsive registered local bus services in Manchester. By building on this experience and providing a strategic framework – but please no more studies - many of the issues causing problems in this period of austerity could be addressed.

The relationship between community transport and concessionary travel funding is one fraught with difficulty. Group travel appears costly compared with free public transport but often has similar purposes such as shopping, but often doesn't. In the past I managed the Strathclyde concessionary travel scheme and I believe that community transport should have access to concessionary travel funding but only in respect of individually booked journeys which are on registered local services or some equivalent.

I hope the committee finds this submission of interest and I would be happy to provide more detail if this would be of assistance.

John Robin (individual)
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