

Appendix 3 - COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

Local Government Association Report – Missing the Bus (September 2015)

Is a bus the right solution?

A further important element in framing service cuts was whether alternatives to the traditional bus could meet needs at a lower cost. Where passenger levels do not justify a taxpayer contribution, councils have sought to ensure alternative services are provided but this is easier to attempt than achieve. There is a broad consensus that 'community transport works well where it works but is no universal panacea' while on-demand transport has relatively high per-passenger costs.

In one area, which already had a well established community transport (CT) network, that network was able to expand to fill some of the gaps created by reduced bus services. However CT has suffered from similar difficulties to the mainstream bus industry. In one area two large CT operators went out of business at the same time as cuts were being made and CT did not take much displaced business. New CT schemes take time and effort to develop and are often dependent on key individuals in organising roles.

A key point highlighted in the report is that: 'CT works best where it supplements conventional services rather than replacing them'.

House of Commons Library – 14th December 2015

There have been concerns in recent years that community transport has been under pressure to replace local bus services that have been cut as part of wider local authority funding reductions, and that they do not have the resources to compensate for all of these cuts. For example, the Campaign for Better Transport told the Transport Select Committee that "community transport can only fill between 10% and 15% of former supported transport provision". [HC 288, July 2014, para 35] Source:

<http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7426> *(Based on the evidence that Community Minibus and Link schemes in Wiltshire undertake around 285,000 passenger trips per year against the 2.5 million Council supported bus service passenger trips each year, the 10 – 15% CT coverage estimations appear to be about right).*

Transport Select Committee (quoted in the Guardian March 2015)

In November the government announced £25m of funding for minibuses for community transport operators. However, the transport committee has challenged the idea that community transport schemes run by volunteers can compensate for decreased bus services in isolated communities. Louise Ellman, transport select committee chair, has said that while the committee recognised their value, "many community transport schemes are tiny and only serve particular groups in the community" and that it was "unrealistic to expect volunteers to replace local bus services"

Source: <http://www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/2015/mar/16/next-government-end-bus-cuts-crisis>