



Community Transport Strategy for Warwickshire

January 2004

Community Transport Strategy

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of the Community Transport Strategy is to ensure that the Council, external agencies and communities develop a co-ordinated and collaborative approach to community and voluntary transport.

2. Context

- 2.1 The government's White Paper, "A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone," (p147, 1998) identifies Community Transport (CT) as an important element within an integrated transport strategy. Conventional public transport cannot always meet the diverse accessibility needs of people who live in remote rural areas, particularly those with mobility impairments, caused by a physical or mental condition, or who are for other reasons, unable to fully access public transport. CT provides an appropriate, and much needed, alternative to other modes of public transport.
- 2.2 "Transport 2010 – The Ten Year Plan" states that there should be "more flexible transport services, including voluntary and community transport and taxi buses, tailored to meet local needs, including the needs of disabled people." (Department for Transport, Ch.1).
- 2.3 The government's guidance for Local Transport Plans (LTP) also stipulates that the "potential for voluntary or community transport should be considered in terms of how it can be maximised as part of an integrated public transport network." (Guidance on full Local Transport Plans, p37, 2002).
- 2.4 The Social Exclusion Unit of the government's Office of the Deputy Prime Minister published 'Making the Connections: Final Report on Transport and Social Exclusion' in February 2003. The report is mainly concerned with the accessibility of local services and activities. It calls for innovative ways of providing transport solutions, including door-to-door and demand-responsive bus services, as well as providing guidance on accessibility planning for inclusion in the LTP.
- 2.5 The Strategic Plan for Warwickshire 2002- 2005 outlines its vision for 2010 as "ensuring transport is more accessible for people who are currently disadvantaged because they cannot get to the transport provided or they find it difficult to use." Within that vision one of the targets for 2005 is to "increase support for the community and voluntary sector." Traditionally the community and voluntary sectors have been the primary deliverers of community transport.
- 2.6 WCC's Social Inclusion Action Plan has a specific measure "to support and develop Rural Transport Partnership projects and other Government initiatives with the potential to provide an equitable county transport service." (Social

Inclusion Action Plan – Improving the Accessibility of Services to the Rural Community, 2001).

- 2.7 Within the LTP there are several references to community transport or 'unconventional transport.' The plan seeks to encourage greater "integration between public transport services, trains, buses, taxis and unconventional transport." (Warwickshire's 2000 Local Transport Plan p16).
- 2.8 In addition, one of PTES's aims in relation to transport is to "promote and implement transport policies and targets which meet the accessibility needs of people and businesses, improve opportunities for all and produce a better, safer and healthier environment." (Planning, Transport and Economic Strategy: Service Plan 2002/2003. p18).

3. The Community Transport Sector in Warwickshire

- 3.1 The Community Transport sector within Warwickshire has evolved over the past twenty years or so in response to the needs of the community which have not been met through conventional public transport. The range of schemes varies between informal voluntary initiatives, for example car sharing schemes run by the Women's Institute, to the larger more formal community transport schemes. These include dial-a-ride schemes or minibus brokerage projects, usually managed by voluntary sector organisations.
- 3.2 The sector has a history of addressing issues around social exclusion by implementing transport solutions where public transport is inaccessible, unavailable or nonviable. Much of the sector operates on a not-for-profit basis but views itself as a public service. It can dovetail with the work of mainstream commercial transport providers, not compete with them. Increasingly, solutions to transport problems are sought that involve partnership working with the commercial sector. Providing access to transport in isolated areas where demand is low for a mainstream bus service, is often economically unviable. Accordingly, introducing a community transport service where a conventional bus will not meet the individual accessibility needs of people living in the area is more appropriate.
- 3.3 There are established community transport schemes already in Warwickshire. The following list is selective of the types of project that constitute community transport schemes. The majority of these schemes operate in Warwickshire.
- ?? Section 19 small bus permit operations, i.e. group bus services
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 - ?? Section 22 community bus permit services, i.e. community bus services
 - ?? Voluntary/social car schemes
 - ?? Voluntary groups/day centres who operate their own minibus
 - ?? Dial-a-ride and dial-a-bus projects
 - ?? Shopmobility services
 - ?? Minibus Brokerage Projects
 - ?? Volunteer Recruitment and Training programmes

- ?? Some forms of community-based initiatives, e.g. informal car sharing networks between neighbours
- ?? Some taxi services

4. Aims

4.1 This CT strategy aims to encourage greater development and use of community transport in order to:-

- ?? Promote social inclusion by developing suitable community transport solutions, with the help of local communities, for those people either without access to other modes of transport, or for those people to whom community transport offers the most appropriate mode of travel.
- ?? Widen access to services, employment, training, social and recreational facilities for socially excluded individuals / isolated communities.
- ?? Improve the integration of community transport with other modes of transport, to complement them and to increase the range of travel opportunities and options for Warwickshire residents.

5. Challenges and Opportunities

5.1 The main challenges to achieving the aims of the strategy are:-

- a. For community and voluntary sector transport to be integrated with other modes of transport more effectively.
- b. For consistently high standards of operational efficiency and customer service to be evident and acknowledged by partners throughout the community transport sector.
- c. For the potential of funding to be fully exploited through collaboration and co-ordination.
- d. For better co-ordination between CT organisations.
- e. For improved comprehensive timetable information relating to community transport to be more readily available to potential and existing passengers.
- f. For the profile of the community transport sector which undertakes effective work relating to socially excluded communities to be recognised.

5.2 There are also opportunities. Community Transport:-

- a. Offers an opportunity for accessible travel for people who are socially excluded, mobility impaired or rurally isolated.
- b. Is operated by the community for the community and therefore is often more responsive to their needs than other modes of transport.
- c. Does not operate for profit and generally aims to design schemes that offer affordable transport and so help meet the needs of those who cannot access other services.
- d. Can interchange with other modes of transport by feeding passengers into the main transport corridors.

5.3 This strategy includes these measures to address the challenges and exploit the opportunities:-

- a. Developing of new community transport services.
- b. Encouraging those without access to a car, or other suitable modes of transport to use community transport where appropriate.
- c. Improving community transport information and publicity.
- d. Encouraging access to community transport services to and from new developments.
- e. Investigating demand responsive community transport options in key identified areas of Warwickshire.
- f. Developing the “Wheels to Work” scheme in Warwickshire to further enable socially excluded young people to access work and training opportunities.
- g. Working more closely with taxi operators as a means of developing more appropriately targeted transport provision.
- h. Introducing measures to promote integration with other forms of transport.
- i. Improving bus related street furniture and other facilities to encourage people to use public transport.

6. Implementation Programme (Indicative)

6.1 Measures to be implemented in the short term – 2004/05

- a. Criteria for the long term support of Community Transport will be developed.
- b. Criteria to determine how WCC will financially support the Community Transport Sector will be developed. (e.g. a CT grant fund)
- c. Community Transport will be considered in external funding applications (e.g. urban / rural bus challenge bids) where appropriate/ complementary.
- d. Through the Rural Transport Partnerships (RTP's), improvements to the capacity of bus related street furniture will be carried out in identified areas.

6.2 Measures to be implemented in the medium term – 2005/06

- a. WCC will develop Service Level Agreements with community transport groups / operators.
- b. WCC will support community transport, where possible, in kind (e.g. through maintenance and premises)
- c. WCC vehicles will be made available for voluntary sector use, using community transport schemes to broker spare capacity.
- d. WCC will work with the voluntary sector to develop the volunteer recruitment strategy.
- e. WCC will continue to work with other passenger transport bodies to ensure a co-ordinated approach to community transport developments.
- f. Through the Rural Transport Partnerships, ideas for demand-responsive community transport schemes will be investigated, focussing on identified need in each area and on key strategic areas of Warwickshire.
- g. Through the Rural Transport Partnerships encouragement will be given to those without access to a car or other suitable modes of transport, to use community transport by ensuring that simple and clear information is distributed more widely within communities.

- h. WCC will work with the Community Urban Transport Solutions Group (CUTS) and other relevant partners to establish a community transport officer post in Nuneaton and Bedworth. This will act as an urban equivalent to the Rural Transport Partnerships to ensure a truly countywide service.

6.3 Measures to be implemented in the longer term

- a. Community Transport services will be encouraged to take advantage of measures aimed at improving public transport efficiency (e.g. bus lanes, concessions, fuel duty rebate (BSOG) etc).
- b. WCC will ensure that the Minibus Driver Assessment Scheme (MIDAS) is recognised as the official training requirement for all WCC department's drivers, minibus drivers and Community Transport organisations. This will enable a co-ordinated and efficient approach to driver training in Warwickshire.
- c. WCC will ensure that the Passenger Assisted Training Scheme (PATs) is promoted on a countywide basis. This is the nationally recognised training course for passenger transport assistants, and is promoted by the Community Transport Association.
- d. WCC will continue to develop new community transport services through the action plans and work of the Rural Transport Partnerships.
- e. WCC will mainstream the "Wheels to Work" moped Project for 16 – 25 year olds who wish to access work and training opportunities.
- f. WCC will work closely with taxi operators as a means of developing more appropriately targeted transport provision.
- g. Where possible community transport will link with other modes of transport at specific interchange points in order that community transport does not compete with commercial operations but instead supports them. This will ensure socially excluded passengers can feed into mainstream services.
- h. The successful work of the four Rural Transport Partnerships over the period 1999-2006 will be mainstreamed after this period.

Any funding shortfall in relation to developing the programme of work outlined in this section is detailed in a later section.

7. Extending Community Transport Facilitation

- 7.1 To date much of the work that has been carried out by the County Council in relation to community transport has been focused on the rural areas. This was mainly due to the nature of the Rural Transport Partnerships initiative and the associated constraints of external funding from the Countryside Agency. The opportunity for a locally based Community Transport/Research Officer post will both target areas in the largely urban operating environment of Nuneaton and Bedworth and help develop greater recognition countywide of the CT needs of urban communities. This would also help address a need to ensure a balanced coverage of staffing and resources throughout the county, to meet the CT needs of all Warwickshire residents.
- 7.2 There will be a requirement for matched funding towards the Community Transport/Research Officer in Nuneaton and Bedworth in 2004 and 2005. Mainstreaming the post after August 2005 may incur an as yet unspecified

funding requirement, dependent upon the level of support contributed by any funding partners. The County Council will seek partners to help in the delivery of an ongoing programme.

8. Community Transport Information and Communication

8.1 Warwickshire County Council will work with the Countryside Agency, community transport operators, commercial operators, the Rural Transport Partnerships and other appropriate partners to secure both improvements to the availability and clarity of information about community transport services.

8.2 Warwickshire County Council has adopted a Passenger Transport Information Strategy, a copy of which is available on request, under which co-ordinated development of community transport information can take place, using paper-based and electronic formats.

8.3 Issues about communication were prominent in the countywide consultation on the Draft Community Transport Strategy carried out in late 2003. Up to 400 organisations having a direct role in community transport policy and provision or representing community transport users were contacted, illustrating the potential scale of the issue.

8.4 Practical steps can be taken towards addressing any communications shortfalls. For example:-

?? Working with the voluntary sector, via a database of all community transport providers, commissioners across the County. This will incorporate all operators in the many types of scheme listed at 3.2 above.

?? Develop a newsletter dealing specifically with matters of countywide could be distributed at intervals (running alongside area newsletters distributed by RTPs).

9. Delivering the Strategy

9.1 The key role of the County Council is as an initiator and promoter of community transport improvements in partnership with the Countryside Agency and other stakeholders. The Community Transport sector should not operate in competition with commercially viable schemes. However in some instances community transport will offer the most appropriate solution in particular localities. Many schemes are only viable if the wider transport, social and economic benefits are taken into account. As these benefits do not have a cash value for the community transport sector, an element of public funding will be essential if these schemes are to be delivered. Many communities would not survive if community transport didn't exist and therefore the County Council will seek to support community transport provision across the county.

9.2 Warwickshire's partnership with the Countryside Agency underpins the infrastructure for CT delivery in the form of :-

?? up to four Rural Transport Partnership Officers (in support of the Community Transport Officer).

This provides the necessary sustainable environment for research into transport need, generation of scheme proposals, identification of project funding sources and the implementation of community transport schemes.

- 9.3 The County Council will continue to work with its partners to secure ongoing funding from a range of sources, including through the Local Transport Plan settlement, Section 106 agreement funding and others as appropriate.
- 9.4 In order to achieve the aims of this strategy the County Council will work closely with the Community Transport Association, Community Transport scheme operators, The Rural Transport Partnerships, bus operators, train operating companies and other tiers of local government including parish and town councils. The County Council will also continue to seek the involvement of other community transport stakeholders.
- 9.5 Wherever cross-border barriers to co-ordinated, continuous service provision are apparent, the County Council will initially seek solutions for community transport under the framework of its planning for passenger transport generally. This may involve the development of close partnership working with neighbouring transport authorities who face similar community transport issues.

10. Organisation for Community Transport working within Warwickshire

- 10.1 The management arrangements for WCC's community transport work include five posts. The Community Transport Officer oversees the work of community transport across the county, including the work of the four Rural Transport Partnerships and officers. The Community Transport Officer is also responsible for delivering the strategy. In North Warwickshire Borough, Stratford on Avon District, Rugby Borough and Warwick District there are four Rural Transport Partnership Officer posts. Each of these report to a wider Rural Transport Partnership Advisory Group.
- 10.2 Membership of the RTPs consists of the public, private and voluntary sectors including community groups, Community Transport operators, service users, Borough, District and County Councils and representatives from interested organisations. Each RTP links with Warwickshire's Local Strategic Partnership which enables a sharing of relevant research and intelligence and the effective integration of cross agency working. Each RTP liaises directly with their relevant Area Committee of the County Council in order to ensure that there is information exchange and effective decision making. This ensures a strong community involvement in the planning and delivery of community transport schemes. Accountability therefore rests both with WCC and the community.
- 10.3 It is anticipated that the Community Transport/Research Officer for Nuneaton and Bedworth will be in post in the first quarter of 2004/05.

11. Resource Implications

- 11.1 Although the County Council has provided funding for a range of successful projects relating to community transport in the past, new projects have increasingly been established using short term external funding. This strategy is set within the context of National and Regional Policy and can therefore attract European, National and Regional funding. However, the competitive bidding process must be engaged.
- 11.2 Currently, the main source of funding for CT is through the Countryside Agency's Rural Transport Partnership Fund and the Rural Bus Challenge Competition. To a lesser degree, funding has been secured through the Urban Bus Challenge.
- 11.3 Each RTP will endeavour to sustain the projects they establish and either mainstream successful projects or identify an exit strategy. Funding strategies will also be developed, involving contributions from relevant partners and agencies, for each project.
- 11.4 Investigation into the low take up of funding opportunities to date under the Countryside Agency's Parish Transport Grants Scheme will be undertaken. The County Council will work with eligible area interests to develop grant applications for schemes that meet the transport needs that they have researched and identified.
- 11.5 The County Council will continue to work with its partners to secure on-going funding from these sources, from the Local Transport Plan settlement, Section 106 agreement funding (see also 12.0) and other appropriate sources.
- 11.6 However, contributory funding from the County Council will be needed to support the implementation of this Community Transport Strategy, as well as to be able to procure external funding and establish project partnerships. The effectiveness of the strategy will rely on the County Council's ability to mainstream services in order to sustain established community transport initiatives, including:-
- ?? Mainstreaming the "Wheels to Work" project
 - ?? Ensuring the long term support of the BUZZ in North Warwickshire and Stratford District.
 - ?? Ensure the long term support of the "Racing to Get There" project in Warwick District and Rugby Borough.
 - ?? Mainstreaming and continuing the work of the North Warwickshire Information Project.
 - ?? Mainstreaming and continuing the work of the Stratford Rural Transport Partnership Information Project.
 - ?? Mainstreaming and continuing the work of the Easyrider Project in Binley Woods.
 - ?? Mainstreaming Back & 4th Transport (formerly known as the Stratford Rural Transport Partnership and Bus Challenge Brokerage Project).

- ?? Mainstreaming the first three years work of the Rural Transport Partnerships e.g. The BUZZ door to door project.
 - ?? Steps will also be taken to develop new initiatives.
- 11.7 The strategy recognises that there are inevitably uncertainties surrounding the delivery of community transport projects and that this requires flexibility in resource allocation.
- 11.8 Including the level of approved mainstream support for 2004/05, up to £430,000 gross may be required to support all community transport activities. This resource requirement will be substantially reduced if lodged funding applications are successful. Similar calculations apply for 2005/06.
- 11.9 The resource requirement breaks down into that needed to support the costs of activities described at 9.2 above and that to support the schemes detailed in this section:-
- ?? Partnerships and infrastructure: up to £90,000 gross.
 - ?? Mainstreaming and development of schemes: up to £340,000 gross.
- 11.10 In 2006/07, indications are that the resource requirement for partnerships and infrastructure rises to £235,000 gross as it becomes necessary to fully mainstream the Partnerships.
- 11.11 These figures anticipate the required resource stream for the Nuneaton and Bedworth officer post. Until August 2005, there is a matched funding requirement. Thereafter, the continuation of the post will require mainstream support (the County Council has begun to seek match funding of the post from potential partners).
- 11.12 It is acknowledged that the full resource implications of the strategy will need to be considered in the context of the consideration of the capital overall budget for the forthcoming and future years.

12. New developments (S.106 funding)

- 12.1 A contribution towards the costs of providing community transport provision to increase accessibility will be considered when new development is proposed. This would increase the opportunities for those needing a more accessible demand responsive service using the development.
- 12.2 Specific criteria relating to meeting these needs will be listed, so that the development process can fully consider those appropriate to any proposal under discussion.

13. Measuring the success of the strategy

- 13.1 The success of the strategy will be reviewed each year and will be measured against the targets and actions set as well as indicators relating to community transport. It is anticipated that there will be other more local and possibly less tangible measures of success which will be developed and included within the annual review. The strategy will be reviewed as part of the Local Transport Plan process in 2005.