

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND'S LOCAL INTEGRATED TRANSPORT SERVICES PILOT PROJECT¹

Des McKibbin
Research Officer
Research & Library Services

BACKGROUND

There has been recognition in the Republic of Ireland of the opportunity which exists to provide a higher quality and more efficient transport system through making better use of existing resources combined with greater co-ordination and synergy in planning, ultimately reducing the reliance on a continuously high funding stream. This has led to an innovative pilot project: The Local Integrated Transport Services (LITS) pilot project.

The LITS pilot project was the result of a request from the Irish Minister for Transport in 2009 to seek greater integration and efficiencies in transport provision. The project aims “to assess how key stakeholders can work together in partnership to achieve greater synergies, meet identified transport needs and deliver increased value for money for the Exchequer”. This pilot focuses on transport for people with disabilities; however, it undoubtedly has wider implications for the entire transport network in both the Republic and here in Northern Ireland.

LITS PILOT PROJECT

The following organisations are involved in this project and there are two pilot areas, one in the north east and one in the north west of the Republic of Ireland:

- Pobal – Rural Transport Programme (RTP);
- Bus Eireann;
- Health Services Executive (HSE);
- Irish Wheelchair Association;
- Dept of Transport; and
- Dept of Education, Science and Skills (school transport).

The project has sought to investigate:

- How to identify and meet local transport needs;
- How to maximise the level of service provided by the current transport networks through improved resource utilisation and co-operation;
- How to provide a greater and more integrated level of service at a lower cost, while ensuring that health and safety and the needs of the most excluded are not compromised;
- How to ensure that the partner groups can benefit from increased pooling of knowledge and skills, and foster increased integration and co-ordination between planning and IT systems

The range of pilots that have been proposed include the following:

- **“Collect and Connect” type services:** Passengers are collected at their door and brought to an interchange point to connect to scheduled services.
- **Hospital feeder services:** Bus Éireann and rural transport services feed to a Bus Éireann town service to connect to the local hospital for clinic appointments.
- **Co-ordination of disability services:** Increased co-ordination between Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA), Rural Transport Programme and Bus Éireann to reduce service duplication and increase fleet utilisation.
- **Ticketing integration:** Increased levels of ticketing and fares co-ordination between Bus Éireann and Rural Transport Programme, including planning for Integrated Ticketing Scheme.
- **Co-ordinated information provision and journey planning:** Better information for the range of passenger groups including older people.
- **Increased synchronisation of partner systems and processes:** A range of areas are being investigated including training, procurement of services and materials, IT utilisation and marketing/PR systems.
- Joined up thinking in relation to **policy development on transport** related issues.

The benefits that the local transport pilot initiative creates in relation to developing a quality transport system (urban and rural) are as follows:

- The initiatives are being devised on a basis of **joined-up thinking** between all stakeholders. As such it is based on the existing range of programmes and services available for older people.
- The focus within the pilots is to **make better use of the existing range of networks and services** that are currently provided by the partner groups. A key objective of the initiative is to investigate how to provide “more for less”. As such they are being **developed within the constraints of the present fiscal situation**, but recognising that the demand and need for public transport services will continue to increase in the future.
- The initiatives, where appropriate, build on existing policies and operational procedures relating to **children and for people with disabilities**.
- A steering group will evaluate the pilot this summer but afterwards, will remain in place to **monitor progress and identify new areas for development**.

There are four phases involved in rolling out this project (see below), three of which have been completed. The fourth phase, which is a nationwide roll-out of the project, will only take place if the pilots have been successful. This will be determined after an external evaluation and cost benefit analysis which will be commissioned shortly and published by the end of the summer 2010.

1. Stakeholder Engagement – Agree terms of reference for the project
2. Data Analysis and Pilot Design – Design pilot and identify evaluation parameters
3. Pilot phase and business case development – Examine the business case for the roll out of the project
4. Nationwide roll out – If successful, plan for nationwide roll out.

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ⁱ Pobal and Bus Eireann (Not Published) "Integrated Local Transport Service Pilot Project – Progress Report to Department of Transport", Pobal and Bus Eireann: Dublin. Document received through personal communication with Erin Sugrue, Co-ordinator, Rural Transport Programme, Pobal.