Regional Development Committee

Inquiry into the better use of public and community sector funds for the delivery of bus transport in Northern Ireland

Together with the Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee relating to the Report and the Minutes of Evidence

Ordered by the Regional Development Committee to be printed 22 May 2013
Report: NIA 65/11-15 (Regional Development Committee)

REPORT EMBARGOED UNTIL COMMENCEMENT OF THE DEBATE IN PLENARY

Mandate 2011/15

Fourth **Report**

Membership and Powers

Powers

The Committee for Regional Development is a Statutory Departmental Committee established in accordance with paragraphs 8 and 9 of Strand One of the Belfast Agreement and under Assembly Standing Order No 48. The Committee has a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role with respect to the Department of Regional Development and has a role in the initiation of legislation. The Committee has 11 members, including a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, and a quorum of 5.

The Committee has power:

- to consider and advise on Departmental budgets and Annual Plans in the context of the overall budget allocation;
- to approve relevant secondary legislation and take the Committee Stage of relevant primary legislation;
- to call for persons and papers;
- to initiate enquiries and make reports; and
- to consider and advise on matters brought to the Committee by the Minister of Regional Development.

Membership

The Committee has 11 members, including a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, and a quorum of five members. The membership of the Committee is as follows

Mr Jimmy Spratt MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Sean Lynch MLA (Deputy Chairperson)[1]
Mr Alex Easton MLA[2]
Mr John Dallat MLA[3]
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA[4]
Mr Ross Hussey MLA[5]
Mrs Dolores Kelly MLA
Mr Declan McAleer MLA[6]
Mr Ian McCrea MLA
Mr David McNarry MLA[7] [8]
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín MLA

1 With effect from 02 July 2012 Mr Seán Lynch replaced Mr Pat Doherty as Deputy Chairperson
2 With effect from 01 October 2012 Mr Alex Easton replaced Mr Stephen Moutray
3 With effect from 23 April 2012 Mr John Dallat replaced Mr Joe Byrne
4 With effect from 06 June 2011 Mr Stewart Dickson replaced Mr Trevor Lunn
5 With effect from 23 April 2012 Mr Ross Hussey replaced Mr Roy Beggs
6 With effect from 10 September 2012 Mr Declan McAleer was appointed as a Member
7 With effect from 26 September 2011 Mr Michael Copeland replaced Mr Mike Nesbitt
8 With effect from 06 February 2012 Mr David McNarry replaced Mr Michael Copeland

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms used in this Report

BRG	Budget Review Group
CCNI	Consumer Council for Northern Ireland
CT	Community Transport
CTA	Community Transport Association
DE	Department of Education
DHSSPSNI	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for Northern Ireland
DOE	Department of the Environment
DRD	Department for Regional Development
DRT	Demand Responsive Transport
NCCT	North Coast Community Transport
NITHC	Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company
PEDU	Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit
PfG	Programme for Government
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SPT	Strathclyde Partnership for Transport

Executive Summary

1. The Committee for Regional Development (the Committee) has long had concerns at the visually apparent duplication of transport services across the three Executive departments, namely those of the Department of Education (DE), Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPSNI) and the Department for Regional through Translink. Anecdotal evidence indicated that it was always possible to see stock from each of these fleets collecting clients and customers at the same time, often at the same place and following the same routes, particularly at school collection and drop-off times.

2. However, during the course of the inquiry, the Committee were advised that in excess of £200 million is expended on transport provision each year in Northern Ireland. This figure excludes any capital provision for fleets maintained by DHSSPSNI Trusts, DE Boards or the DRD grants to the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHC) and its operating arm, Translink.

3. The Committee has concluded that there has been no real attempt to integrate transport provision in the public sector in Northern Ireland. The Committee has acknowledged two minor schemes currently in pilot, the Easilink scheme between Enniskillen and Altnagelvin Hospital and the scheme initiated during the inquiry process in Dungannon. The former is at the early stages of evaluation whilst the latter is at the very early stages of development.

4. Whilst useful exercises, the Committee does not believe that these totally encompass the full spectrum of integration as defined, for example, by Transport Scotland in 2009, namely, *"A mechanism where departments of an organisation or various organisations jointly plan and deliver transport, sharing resources (vehicles/drivers/staff) and procurement to optimise their use to meet service demand, and enhance the delivery of transport to appropriate users".*[1]

5. The Committee frequently experienced examples of Departmental, Trust and Board officials displaying unwillingness to communicate and adopt common goals, reverting to their own individual "silos". The Committee recognises that statutory and regulatory constraints do contribute to this position. However, Members were agreed that the main obstacle to progress was in the mindset and attitude of departments and officials. The Committee believes that a major attitudinal shift is required and is content that this will only occur if there is unified ministerial/Executive support to do so.

6. The Transport Reform process in 2009 provided an agreed platform to progress transport and the delivery of transport beyond the current mandate. The proposed independent agency model, appropriately staffed with professional transport planners, provided the potential for a more coordinated, integrated and functional transport model. This matter will be discussed more fully when the Committee reports on its current inquiry into Comprehensive Transport Delivery Structures. However, it is important to note that the Committee believes this opportunity to have been significantly diluted by the decision to combine the functions of the proposed agency with those of Roads Service, creating a new internal structure within DRD known as Transport Northern Ireland.

7. The Committee commends the Department on the secondment of a professional transport planner during the course of the inquiry. However, the Committee believes that further consideration should be given to this structure and that budget cover should be found to ensure that Executive departments are appropriately supported to ensure the efficient and effective distribution of transport services.

8. The Committee is of the very firm belief that a significant level of integration in transport services is possible in Northern Ireland. Whilst Departmental, Trust and Board officials referred to the "barriers to progress", the Committee, through its study visits, were able to see that these barriers could and have been overcome. The Committee fully appreciates the

1 Research and Information Service Briefing Paper, "Best Practice in transport integration" (NIAR 540-12)

complexities of transport integration and that getting there is not going to be a quick process. However, the real examples of efficiencies that are being achieved through, for example, fleet reduction and fuel procurement, provides the Committee with encouragement that significant efficiencies can be achieved in Northern Ireland and that a user-ended service with a wider and more complete coverage is possible. The Deputy Chief Executive of the Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) provided a succinct analysis of how his organisation had been successful in their integration efforts when he stated that *"You just have to sweat the bus a wee bit more!"* The Committee believes that this is achievable through collaborative working between the public and community sectors and has made a number of recommendations within the report to support this view.

Introduction

9. At its meeting on 4 July 2012, the Northern Ireland Assembly's Committee for Regional Development agreed to commence an inquiry into The Better use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Transport Options in Northern Ireland.

10. The Terms of Reference for the Report were agreed as follows:

- To assess current public and community transport requirements;
- To assess the current public and community sector transport infrastructure and costs;
- To assess current inter-relationships in the delivery of public and community transport options;
- To identify examples of best-practice in the provision of integrated public and community transport options; and
- To consider options for the future provision of public and community transport options.

11. On 6 July 2012 the Committee inserted signposts in the Belfast Telegraph, Irish News and News Letter seeking written evidence on the Inquiry by 14 September 2012. The Committee also wrote to key stakeholders with the same request.

12. During the period covered by this report the Committee considered written submissions from in excess of 20 organisations. A copy of submissions received is included at Appendix 3.

13. The Committee also heard oral evidence at four meetings between 9 January 2013 and 27 February from the following organisations:

- Department for Regional Development
- Department of the Environment
- Department of Education
- Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety Northern Ireland
- IMTAC
- Community Transport Association
- Easilink Community Transport
- North Coast Community Transport
- Consumer Council
- Translink

14. The relevant extracts from the Minutes of Proceedings are included at Appendix 1. Minutes of the evidence extracts are included at Appendix 2. The Committee would wish to thank all those who provided both written and oral evidence.

15. The Committee also undertook four Study visits in the duration of the inquiry. The relevant organisations visited were:

- Total Transport Conference – London
- National Transport Association – Dublin
- Strathclyde Partnership for Transport – Glasgow
- National Assembly for Wales

- Devon County Council
- Reggio taxi Gelderland – Arnhem

The relevant papers from the trips can be found in Appendix 2. The Committee would wish to thank all those who provided presentations and tours during the study trips.

Summary of Recommendations

16. The Committee recommends, therefore, that the relevant departments review their respective legislative and regulatory processes to ensure that vehicles and services can be used for a wider range of services than that for which they are currently deployed. This should include the ability to charge a fare or fee for use of the service.

17. The Committee recommends that:

- The Department for Regional Development and the Department for the Environment liaise on the review of the 10b operating licence with a view to expanding the potential for CT delivery of scheduled, fare-paying routes and other public procurement exercises, such as the delivery of school meals. This will include other ancillary issues such as insurance and vehicle maintenance;
- The Department for Regional Development, in conjunction with the Community Transport Association, examine the potential for realignment of current services in preparation for the expansion of the range of services to be provided under the recommended 10b licence; and
- The Department for Regional Development and the Community Transport Association assesses what capacity building is required to operate an enhanced service. This should not be so bureaucratic as to deter volunteers from providing their services but should be sufficient to ensure that users of the services are protected and that all statutory obligations, such as road worthiness, are catered for.

18. The Committee recommends that the Minister for Regional Development commence formal negotiations with his Executive colleagues to identify the best model for funding of transport across the entire public sector. The Committee further recommends that the Budget Review Group (BRG) and/or the Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit (PEDU) undertake an urgent study on the centralising of the transport budgets to aid and inform the Minister and the Executive in their consideration of this matter.

19. The Committee recommends that the pilot project should look at the potential for full integration of those fleets within the test area, including that of the health fleets. The pilot should also test whether there is a need for a re-design of specific elements of the fleet to allow for a better integration of abled and less-abled customers.

20. The Committee recommends that the Minister for Regional Development undertake a major travel proofing, mapping and identification of appropriate transport options of customer transport needs in Northern Ireland as soon as is practicable. Departmental budgets should be re-examined to identify coverage for the secondment of additional professionally qualified transport planners to undertake this exercise.

21. The Committee recommends that the Department reviews both Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) schemes with a view to permitting the integration of the schemes.

22. The Department should also implement the use of call-centre technology, such as that viewed by the Committee in Glasgow, Arnhem and Dublin as a matter of urgency. With modern methods of tracking buses across the Province a truly integrated method of transport can be brought about.

23. The Committee recommends that Translink explore the options for the full and functional integration of ticketing across all providers, including CT provision. In addition, Translink should ensure, as part of the pilot project in Dungannon, that integrated ticketing information is provided ensuring a full coverage of providers participating in the pilot.

Key Issues

Statutory/Regulatory Issues

24. The provision of transport services across the Executive departments with responsibility to provide such services differs significantly and, in most cases, prevents the integration of transport.

25. DRD's legislative provisions are defined in the Transport Act (Northern Ireland) 1967 which require that in order to operate a bus or coach service for fare paying passengers, the operator requires a Roads Service Licence. The Department of the Environment (DOE) is currently the licensing authority.

26. The Roads Service Licence comprises two main elements; firstly, a licence confirming professional competences to run a bus service and, secondly, a licence to run services on certain regulated routes.

27. In addition, the Act established NITHC and provides for its relationship with the Department.

28. There are circumstances where a Road Service Licence or a Public Service Vehicle Licence is not required and these are referred to as "10b" licences. This type of licence is granted where a bus is used for education, religion, social welfare or recreation purposes or other activities which are of benefit to the community. In order to qualify for the 10b licence, the service provided cannot be used by a member of the general public in a fare-paying capacity or to make a profit.

29. The Transport Act (Northern Ireland) 1967 was amended by the Transport Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. The main purpose of the latter is to create an effective, efficient and sustainable public transport system that contributes to the Executive's objectives relating to transport, the environment, social inclusion and equality.

30. DE advises that education boards are governed by Articles 44 and 52 and Schedule 13 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. Schedule 13 is of particular importance as it establishes the raison d'être for the policy, namely that it allows parents to meet their legal duty to secure their child's attendance at school during the period of compulsory education. This policy was first put into effect in the early 1940's.

31. DHSSPSNI has a statutory duty, through Article 10 of the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 to *"make arrangements, to such extent as it considers necessary, for providing or securing the provision of ambulances and other means of transport for the conveyance of persons suffering from illness, expectant or nursing mothers or others persons for whom such transport is reasonably required in order to avail themselves of any service under this Order…"*

32. DHSSPSNI also has a specific duty, under Article 15 of the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972, to provide or secure the provision of such assistance, to such extent as it considers necessary, to individuals who require access to social care services. Furthermore DHSSPSNI has a specific duty to provide transport to social care facilities for people assessed as having a qualifying disability under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1978, Section 2(d).

33. It is safe to say that the variety of this legislation brings about its own complexities and constraints to integrating. Indeed, it became the mainstay of a number of officials that the reason they had or could not integrate was because of the regulatory environment.

34. There are some vagaries across the legislation and regulatory procedures. For example, DHSSPSNI can, where appropriate, make a charge for any transport provided, whilst DE

and community transport (CT) providers cannot. This limits the ability to collect fare paying customers whenever capacity allows it. In addition, issues such as contracted hours and insurance contribute to ensuring that departments and fleet operators remain within their respective silos.

35. **The Committee recommends, therefore, that the relevant departments review their respective legislative and regulatory processes to ensure that vehicles and services can be used for a wider range of services than that for which they are currently deployed. This should include the ability to charge a fare or fee for use of the service.**

36. As previously stated, the 10b licence cannot be used by a member of the general public in a fare-paying capacity or to make a profit. This licence is used, on the whole, by volunteer drivers providing valuable services in the CT market. The licence is currently under review and there remain concerns, particularly by the members of the Community Transport Association (CTA), that the review will result in the reduction of volunteer drivers.

37. In addition, the current format does not allow CTA members to tender for routes or other works, such as school meal deliveries, in their local areas. The Committee believes that CT is integral to the success of an integrated transport system. Members accepted that there may need to be a restructuring and repositioning of the current provision, particularly in light of proposed council realignments. However, the Committee would point to their visits both to SPT and to Gelderland in the Netherlands as examples of best practice in the use of CT in integrated transport deliver.

38. **The Committee recommends, therefore, that:**

- **The Department for Regional Development and the Department for the Environment liaise on the review of the 10b operating licence with a view to expanding the potential for CT delivery of scheduled, fare-paying routes and other public procurement exercises, such as the delivery of school meals. This will include other ancillary issues such as insurance and vehicle maintenance;**
- **The Department for Regional Development, in conjunction with the Community Transport Association, examine the potential for realignment of current services in preparation for the expansion of the range of services to be provided under the recommended 10b licence;**
- **The Department for Regional Development and the Community Transport Association assesses what capacity building is required to operate an enhanced service. This should not be so bureaucratic as to deter volunteers from providing their services but should be sufficient to ensure that users of the services are protected and that all statutory obligations, such as road worthiness, are catered for.**

"Barriers" to Integration

39. DRD made a presentation to the Committee on the pilot integrated scheme in Dungannon on 15 May 2013, during which they spoke of "barriers to the delivery of the pilot". Some of these have been previously referred to, such as different driver and vehicle licensing requirements, PSV for buses collecting the general public for hire and reward, accessibility of vehicles and insurance requirements.

40. Undoubtedly, a major hurdle to integration is who holds the budget. A great deal of reference has been made during the oral evidence sessions regarding the budgets and the fact that Northern Ireland cannot be compared to local government provision in the remainder of the UK. In addition, transport in England, Scotland and Wales has been deregulated for a number of years.

41. The argument that health, education and transport are contained within local government and that it is easier to integrate the funding stream is a valid argument. However, the Committee

believes that this argument is also systematic of the "silo – mentality" in that individual departments do not wish to lose or share any of their budgets, even if, in the opinion of the Committee, this exacerbates or maintains inefficiencies.

42. The question of where the budget should lie is one that the Executive collectively may wish to look at beyond this mandate. The best solution, again in the view of the Committee, would have been the independent agency model proposed as a result of the Transport Reform process in 2009. However, the Minister for Regional Development has decided, due to budgetary constraints, that this is not possible and that an internal re-structuring of his department will see Roads Service take on policy responsibility that would have transferred to the agency.

43. In the Netherlands, the integration of buses is possible because all the services are coordinated by a provincial or regional transport authority. In England, local authorities have combined to deliver all transport, including that of health and special educational needs (SEN) and have apportioned any savings across the appropriate local authorities. In Scotland, the Strathclyde Partnership for Transport coordinates and manages public subway, bus services, bus stations, bus infrastructure and travel planning for Glasgow and 12 councils. In Dublin, the National Transport Association is to chair the National Integrated Rural Transport Committee following successful pilot projects in the north east and north west of the country.

44. The Committee is currently taking evidence on in its inquiry into Comprehensive Transport Delivery Structures and will make recommendations on this matter in due course. However, the Committee does not believe the centralising of the transport budget to be a barrier to the integration of transport services.

45. **The Committee recommends that the Minister for Regional Development commence formal negotiations with his Executive colleagues to identify the best model for funding of transport across the entire public sector. The Committee further recommends that the Budget Review Group (BRG) and/or the Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit (PEDU) undertake an urgent study on the centralising of the transport budgets to aid and inform the Minister and the Executive in their consideration of this matter.**

46. A major barrier to integration is the attitude of departmental officials in the three main departments with transport responsibilities who appear to be embedded in their respective departmental silos and are actively reluctant to accept suggestions for change. Examples of this include:

- A New Approach to Regional Transportation, which will shape transport investment from 2015, is isolated and insular to DRD alone and does not incorporate transport in other Executive departments;
- The Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) report in June 2005, "Education and Health and Social Services Transport"[2] concluded that *"…there is scope for the development of a greater consensus on how the transport assets available within both sectors might be more effectively coordinated to improve operational efficiency and enhance the services provided to customers"*. DHSSPSNI officials told the Committee that their response to this was to point out the constraints in doing anything to the audit office. DE officials in oral evidence and in follow-up correspondence referred to a "down-time" survey which indicated that there was little scope for sharing of vehicles. This is despite the survey only looking at week days and during school terms.
- Other excuses provided included TUPE, timetabling, driver's contracts, and child protection, even though the majority of school children travel on normal Translink services during school days, in the evenings and at the weekend.

2 NIA 178/03

47. The Committee is content that there are no real barriers to integration, in that they would prevent progress along that particular path. Through the careful targeting of its study visits, the Committee has been able to see practical and actual examples of how these perceived barriers have been overcome, from the design of a front-loading bus that caters for both abled and less-abled passengers, to the leasing of buses to community transport organisations, to the scheduling and collection of fare-paying passengers in remote rural areas by volunteer drivers.

48. The Committee believes that a major attitudinal shift at senior level is required within those Departments, Trusts and Boards with responsibility for transport services and that this should commence immediately and in respect of the pilot project in Dungannon. This project is only looking at the utilisation of the education and Translink fleets but does not include the health fleets.

49. **The Committee recommends that the pilot project should look at the potential for full integration of those fleets within the test area, including that of the health fleets. The pilot should also test whether there is a need for a re-design of specific elements of the fleet to allow for a better integration of abled and less-abled customers.**

Programme for Government considerations

50. The Programme for Government (PfG) 2011 – 2015 seeks to invest £500 million in sustainable modes of transport. However the current budget allocation to the Department for Regional Development has an allocation apportionment of 80:20 in favour of roads against public transport.

51. A number of organisations considered the budget allocation to be in contradiction to the PfG objective and could not see how the necessary modal shift could be made away from cars to use of public transport. There was a view that the emphasis was on capital and structural expenditure rather than on the delivery of travel and transport options to the end-user. The Committee believes that a significant part of this can be put down to the fact that, at the commencement of the inquiry, there were no professionally qualified transport planners employed in the public sector. The Committee notes that the Department has now seconded one on a short to medium term contract.

52. The Committee believes that there needs to be a collaborative approach to the planning and funding of transport. The Committee further believes that, in order to achieve a substantial degree of modal shift, the end-user needs to be consulted in order that the “when, where and how” people wish to travel can be understood.

53. The Committee recommends, therefore, that the Minister for Regional Development undertake a major travel proofing, mapping and identification of appropriate transport options of customer transport needs in Northern Ireland as soon as is practicable. Departmental budgets should be re-examined to identify coverage for the secondment of additional professionally qualified transport planners to undertake this exercise.

Other Findings

54. During its presentation, North Coast Community Transport (NCCT) identified a cross-over between the Dial-a-Lift service they provide and that of the Door-to-Door scheme provided through private operators. There were also issues regarding cross-over of adjacent provision of Dial-a-Lift services where one CT group was prevented from crossing into another area due to funding restrictions. The Committee believes that this negates frustrates the provision of service, particularly as the redistribution of health clinic and hospital provision has seen this provision move to different centres.

55. **The Committee recommends that the Department reviews both Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) schemes with a view to permitting the integration of the schemes.**

56. **The Department should also implement the use of call-centre technology, such as that viewed by the Committee in Glasgow, Arnhem and Dublin as a matter of urgency. With modern methods of tracking buses across the Province a truly integrated method of transport can be brought about.**

57. Translink has often claimed that it has an integrated ticketing system. The Committee would dispute that this is fully or functionally integrated as it is restricted on the whole to those services provided directly by Translink.

58. **The Committee recommends that Translink explore the options for the full and functional integration of ticketing across all providers, including CT provision. In addition, Translink should ensure, as part of the pilot project in Dungannon, that integrated ticketing information is provided ensuring a full coverage of providers participating in the pilot.**

Northern Ireland Assembly

Appendix 1

Minutes of Proceedings Relating to the Report

Wednesday 4 July 2012
Oak Room 2, Seagoe Hotel, Portadown

Present: Mr John Dallat MLA
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA
Mr Séan Lynch MLA
Mrs Dolores Kelly MLA
Mr Stephen Moutray MLA
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín MLA

In attendance: Mr Paul Carlisle (Clerk to the Committee)
Mr Nathan McVeigh (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Tara McKee (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Alison Ferguson (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Jimmy Spratt MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Ross Hussey MLA
Mr David McNarry MLA

10:35am The meeting commenced in public session.

8. Inquiry Into the Better Use of Public Funds for Transport

Members agreed a forward work programme, agreed that the signpost be placed in the local media and agreed that the title of the Inquiry be changed to reflect the remit of the Inquiry being for buses and not public transport generally and agreed to ask Assembly Research for a comparison between the cost of private rail operators in the UK with those of Translink.

12:07pm The Committee went into closed session to discuss the draft report on the Committee Inquiry into Unadopted Roads.

12:18pm The Committee recommenced in open session.

12:25pm The meeting was adjourned.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 17 October 2012
Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr John Dallat MLA
Mr Alex Easton MLA
Mr Ross Hussey MLA
Mrs Dolores Kelly MLA
Mr Declan McAleer MLA
Mr David McNarry MLA
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín MLA

In attendance: Mr Paul Carlisle (Clerk to the Committee)
Mr Nathan McVeigh (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Tara McKee (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Alison Ferguson (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Jimmy Spratt MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Seán Lynch MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA
Mr Ian McCrea MLA

Agreed: As the Chairperson and deputy Chairperson were not present Mr McNarry proposed that Mr Cathal Ó hOisín took the chair. This was seconded by Mr Dallat.

11:05am The meeting commenced in open session.

5. Committee Transport Inquiry Briefing

11:12am The following representative joined the meeting:

Brian Mahon

The representative presented to the Committee in respect of the above. Following the presentation, Members put questions.

11:23am Mr McAleer joined the meeting.

11:41am Mrs Kelly joined the meeting.

11:51am The representative left the meeting.

12:46pm The meeting was adjourned.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 9 January 2013
Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Jimmy Spratt MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Seán Lynch MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr John Dallat MLA
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA
Mr Alex Easton MLA
Ms Dolores Kelly MLA
Mr Declan McAleer MLA
Mr David McNarry MLA
Mr Ian McCrea MLA

In attendance: Mr Paul Carlisle (Clerk to the Committee)
Mr Nathan McVeigh (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Tara McKee (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Alison Ferguson (Clerical Officer)
Mr Brian Mahon (Bursary Student)

Apologies: Mr Ross Hussey MLA
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín MLA

10:32am The meeting commenced in public session

8. CTA Briefing: The Inquiry into better use of public and community sector funds for the delivery of bus transport in Northern Ireland

1:12pm The following representatives joined the meeting:

Kellie Armstrong – Director for Northern Ireland.
Stephen Wood – NI Committee Member and Independent Transport Consultant
Ian Wilson – Manager DART Partnership and NI Committee Member.

The representatives presented to the Committee in respect of the above. Following the presentation, Members put questions.

1:17pm Mr Dickson rejoined the meeting.

1:27pm Mr McNarry rejoined the meeting.

1:50pm Mr McCrea left the meeting.

1:56pm Mr Dallat left the meeting.

1:57pm The Officials left the meeting.

9. Easilink Briefing: The Inquiry into better use of public and community sector funds for the delivery of bus transport in Northern Ireland

1:58pm The following representatives joined the meeting:

Daniel O'Hagan – Easilink Chairperson.
Mary T Conway – Easilink Vice Chairperson.
Bert Wilson – Easilink Director.
Paddy McEldowney – Easilink Manager.

The representatives presented to the Committee in respect of the above. Following the presentation, Members put questions.

1:58pm Mr McNarry left the meeting.

1:58pm Mr Dallat rejoined the meeting.

1:58pm Mr McNarry rejoined the meeting.

2:04pm Mr McCrea rejoined the meeting.

2:33pm Mr McNarry left the meeting.

2:37pm Mr McNarry rejoined the meeting.

2:40pm The Officials left the meeting.

2:41pm The meeting was adjourned.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 16 January 2013
Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Jimmy Spratt MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Séan Lynch MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr John Dallat MLA
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA
Mr Ross Hussey MLA
Mr Declan McAleer MLA
Mr David McNarry MLA
Mr Ian McCrea MLA
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín MLA

In attendance: Mr Paul Carlisle (Clerk to the Committee)
Mr Nathan McVeigh (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Tara McKee (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Alison Ferguson (Clerical Officer)
Mr Brian Mahon (Bursary Student)

Apologies: Mr Alex Easton MLA
Mrs Dolores Kelly MLA

10:32am The meeting commenced in public session.

8. Consumer Council Briefing: The Inquiry into Better Use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport in Northern Ireland

1:04pm The following representatives joined the meeting:

Aodhan O'Donnell- Director of Policy.

Scott Kennerley- Head of Transport.

The representatives presented to the Committee in respect of the above. Following the presentation, Members put questions.

1:07pm Mr McCrea joined the meeting.

1:30pm Mr McNarry left the meeting.

1:43pm The Officials left the meeting.

9. North Coast Community Transport Briefing: The Inquiry into Better Use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport in Northern Ireland

1:44pm The following representatives joined the meeting:

Billy Moore - Manager N.C.C.T

Marie McGinnis - Director N.C.C.T

Thelma Dillon - Chairperson of Causeway Older Active Strategic Team (C.O.A.S.T)

The representatives presented to the Committee in respect of the above. Following the presentation, Members put questions.

2:21pm The Officials left the meeting.

2:21pm The meeting was adjourned.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 23 January 2013
Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Jimmy Spratt MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Seán Lynch MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr John Dallat MLA
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA
Mr Alex Easton MLA
Mrs Dolores Kelly MLA
Mr Declan McAleer MLA
Mr David McNarry MLA
Mr Ian McCrea MLA
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín MLA

In attendance: Mr Paul Carlisle (Clerk to the Committee)
Mr Nathan McVeigh (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Tara McKee (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Alison Ferguson (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Ross Hussey MLA

10:32am The meeting commenced in public session.

9. IMTAC Briefing: The Inquiry into Better Use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport in Northern Ireland

1:30pm The following representatives joined the meeting:

Mr Bert Bailie, IMTAC Vice Chair.

Mr David McDonald, IMTAC Treasurer.

Mr Michael Lorimer, IMTAC Secretariat.

Ms June Best, Convenor Information & Training Working Group.

The representatives presented to the Committee in respect of the above. Following the presentation, Members put questions.

1:33pm Mr McCrea rejoined the meeting.

2:05pm Mrs Kelly rejoined the meeting.

2:16pm Mr Ó hOisín left the meeting.

2:20pm Mr Dickson left the meeting.

2:30pm Mr McNarry left the meeting.

2:30pm The Officials left the meeting.

10. Translink Briefing: The Inquiry into Better Use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport in Northern Ireland

2:31pm The following representatives joined the meeting:

Mr Ciaran Rogan, Translink Marketing Executive.

Ms Michelle Rafferty, Translink.

Mr Bernard Clarke, Research Manager.

The representatives presented to the Committee in respect of the above. Following the presentation, Members put questions.

2:34pm Mr McNarry rejoined the meeting.

2:54pm Mr Dickson left the meeting.

3:16pm Mr McNarry left the meeting.

3:19pm Mr McNarry rejoined the meeting.

3:20pm The Officials left the meeting.

3:20pm The meeting was adjourned.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 30 January 2013
Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Jimmy Spratt MLA (Chairperson)
Mr John Dallat MLA
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA
Mr Alex Easton MLA
Mr Ross Hussey MLA
Mrs Dolores Kelly MLA
Mr Declan McAleer MLA
Mr David McNarry MLA
Mr Ian McCrea MLA
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín MLA

In attendance: Mr Paul Carlisle (Clerk to the Committee)
Mr Nathan McVeigh (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Tara McKee (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Alison Ferguson (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Seán Lynch MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

10:30am The meeting commenced in public session.

10:34am Mr Dickson joined the meeting.

5. Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety: The Inquiry into Better Use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport in Northern Ireland

Mr Easton declared an interest as Assembly private secretary to the Health Minister

10:35am The following representatives joined the meeting:

Jackie Johnston, Director of Secondary Care, DHSSPS.

Daniel Kelly, Assistant Director of Secondary Care, Cancer Services, Diagnostics and Specialist Drugs Unit, DHSSPS.

Brian McNeill, Director of Operations, Northern Ireland Ambulance Service.

Mandy Magee, Transport Services Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

The representatives presented to the Committee in respect of the above. Following the presentation, Members put questions.

10:36am Mrs Kelly joined the meeting.

10:36am Mr McAleer joined the meeting.

10:41am Mr McCrea joined the meeting.

11:26am The representatives left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee would write to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety asking for a breakdown of costs to the Trusts as a result of missed appointments, especially those related to transport issues and asking how many missed appointments were as a result of transport issues.

Agreed: The Committee would write to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety asking for a breakdown of the cost per passenger of journeys made by patients of the health service.

Agreed: The Committee would write to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety asking for information on the policy that the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service has in relation to the use of its vehicles out of hours for non-emergency patient transportation.

Agreed: The Committee would write to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety asking for an update on the Enniskillen to Altnagelvin project.

Agreed: The Committee would write to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety asking why audit reports from 1995 and 2005 containing recommendations for the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety appear to have been ignored.

Agreed: The Committee would write to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety asking why no briefing paper for today's presentation was provided.

6. Department of Education: The Inquiry into Better Use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport in Northern Ireland

11:28am The following officials joined the meeting:

Alan McMullan, Head of School Access Team.

Gary Montgomery, Deputy Head of School Access Team.

Dale Hanna, Transport Officer, SEELB.

The officials presented to the Committee in respect of the above. Following the presentation, Members put questions.

11:33am Mr McNarry left the meeting.

11:38am Mr McNarry rejoined the meeting.

11:49am Mr Hussey left the meeting.

11:56am Mr Hussey rejoined the meeting.

12:01pm Mrs Kelly left the meeting.

12:13pm Mr McAleer left the meeting.

12:14pm Mr Dickson left the meeting.

12:14pm Mr Ó hOisín left the meeting.

12:16pm Mr Ó hOisín rejoined the meeting.

12:18pm Mr Dallat left the meeting.

12:18pm Mr McCrea left the meeting.

12:18pm The officials left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee would write to the Department of Education asking for a breakdown of transport costs of pupils including the costs of providing assistants.

Agreed: The Committee would write to the Department of Education asking why no briefing paper for today's presentation was provided.

7. Department of Regional Development: The Inquiry into Better Use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport in Northern Ireland

12:19pm The following officials joined the meeting:

Sean Johnston, Transport Projects Division.

Ciaran Doran, Director of Transport Finance and Governance.

Stephen McKillop, Head of Operational Delivery Branch.

The officials presented to the Committee in respect of the above. Following the presentation, Members put questions.

12:20pm Mr Dickson rejoined the meeting.

12:20pm Mr Easton left the meeting.

12:24pm Mr McAleer rejoined the meeting.

12:26pm Mr McCrea rejoined the meeting.

12:37pm Mr Hussey left the meeting.

12:55pm Mr McNarry left the meeting.

1:01pm The officials left the meeting.

1:06pm The meeting was adjourned.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 27 February 2013
Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Jimmy Spratt MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Sean Lynch MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr John Dallat MLA
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA
Mr Alex Easton MLA
Mrs Dolores Kelly MLA
Mr Declan McAleer MLA
Mr Ian McCrea MLA
Mr David McNarry MLA
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín MLA

In attendance: Mr Paul Carlisle (Clerk to the Committee)
Mr Nathan McVeigh (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Tara McKee (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Alison Ferguson (Clerical Officer)
Brian Mahon (Bursary Student)

Apologies: Mr Ross Hussey MLA

10:35am The meeting commenced in open session.

6. Department for the Environment Briefing: Bus Operator Licensing

11:21am the following officials joined the meeting.

Iain Greenway – Director of Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation and

Sharon Clements – Vehicle Policy Branch, on bus operator licensing

The officials presented to the Committee in respect of the above. Following the presentation, Members put questions.

11:36am Ms Kelly rejoined meeting.

11:44am Mr McAleer left meeting.

12:47pm The meeting was adjourned.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 22 May 2013
Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Jimmy Spratt MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Sean Lynch MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr John Dallat MLA
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA
Mr Alex Easton MLA
Mr Ross Hussey MLA
Mrs Dolores Kelly MLA
Mr Declan McAleer MLA
Mr Ian McCrea MLA
Mr David McNarry MLA

In attendance: Mr Paul Carlisle (Clerk to the Committee)
Mr Gavin Ervine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Tara McKee (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Alison Ferguson (Clerical Officer)
Mr Brian Mahon (Bursary Student)

Apologies: Mr Cathal Ó hOisín MLA

10:31am The meeting commenced in closed session.

The Committee discussed the draft report on the Inquiry into the Better Use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport in Northern Ireland.

10:35am Mr Dickson joined the meeting.

10:39am Mr Lynch joined the meeting.

10:39am Mr McCrea joined the meeting.

10:43am Mr Hussey left the meeting.

10:50am Mr McNarry left the meeting.

10:55am The Committee recommenced in open session.

5. Consideration of the draft Report of the Inquiry into the Better Use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport in Northern Ireland

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Membership and Powers section of the Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the List of Abbreviations and Acronyms section of the Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Executive Summary section of the Report, subject to agreed amendments.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Introduction section of the Report, subject to agreed amendments.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Summary of Recommendations section of the Report, subject to agreed amendments.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Key Issues section of the Report, subject to agreed amendments.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Committee office takes forward production of the appendices to the Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Report be ordered to print.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward a copy of the Report to the relevant Ministers.

11:24am The meeting was adjourned

[EXTRACT]



Appendix 2

Minutes of Evidence

9 January 2013

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Jimmy Spratt (Chairperson)
Mr Seán Lynch (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr John Dallat
Mr Stewart Dickson
Mr Declan McAleer
Mr Ian McCrea
Mr David McNarry

Witnesses:

Ms Kellie Armstrong	*Community Transport Association*
Mr Ian Wilson	
Mr Stephen Wood	

1. **The Chairperson**: I welcome to the meeting Stephen Wood, Bob Parks, Ian Wilson and Kellie Armstrong. You are all very welcome. You have 10 minutes in which to make a presentation, after which you should leave yourself open for members' questions.

2. **Ms Kellie Armstrong (Community Transport Association)**: Thank you very much, Chairperson. First, I apologise that Bob Parks is not with us. Unfortunately, he slipped on the ice and cracked his head this morning, so he is away to the hospital. However, Stephen Wood and Ian Wilson are with me today. I want to rattle through our presentation quite quickly and try to keep it below the 10-minute mark, because I appreciate that you have questions.

3. The Community Transport Association (CTA) is a national charity that provides advice and support for community organisations across Northern Ireland. Community transport (CT) exists to meet the travel and social needs of people to whom those would otherwise be denied, providing accessible and affordable transport to achieve social inclusion. Community transport is, however, a generic term covering the wide range of access solutions usually developed to cover specifically identified transport needs, typically run by a local community for local community neighbourhoods on a not-for-profit basis. Community transport is concerned with meeting the community's identified access need rather than running scheduled routes or operating for profit.

4. We have over 3,000 volunteers in Northern Ireland, and we try our best to meet the community's needs by using a mix of minibuses and volunteers' own cars. Ten per cent of Community Transport Association members receive funding from the Department for Regional Development (DRD), and they deliver the Dial-a-Lift project, which provides transport for people, particularly older people and those with disabilities in rural areas. These are referred to as rural community transport partnerships, which I will refer to as RCTPs in the presentation.

5. In answering the inquiry, we looked at the first question of assessing public and community bus transport requirements. Public transport is limited to Translink service provision, but due to the commercially sensitive nature of its business, we do not have access to information about Translink. Therefore, we, unfortunately, cannot provide evidence to the Committee about Translink. I will talk about the money side of things in a moment.

6. Community transport has approximately 700 vehicles in action across Northern Ireland. That includes minibuses, people carriers and volunteers' own cars. We deliver transport, using those vehicles, for local health services such as GPs, dentists and pharmacies; for education, recreation and social care; and for people to go to church or to get shopping. We provide a linking service with Translink to enable rurally isolated people to use the public transport network.

7. As regards bus transport infrastructure costs, we can only comment, of course, on the community transport side of

things. If you look at what funding is made available, you see that DRD provides £3·7 million a year through the rural transport fund. Approximately £1 million of that budget is provided to Translink's rural division. The rest, £2·7 million, is provided to the RCTP network and CTA, which provides specific support services for the rural transport fund. The subsidy for the community transport organisation equates to about 60% of the cost of running the Dial-a-Lift service. The rest of that money is made up through the collection of non-profit passenger fares, donations, fundraising and volunteer input. I mentioned that we have 3,000 volunteers, and they contribute approximately £2 million of in-kind benefit for the dial-a-lift services. Obviously, volunteers provide services without any salary costs.

8. At present — although this is not exactly tested because we have not promoted the Dial-a-Lift service — community transport has to refuse about 5% of all requests for transport on the basis that we do not have the resources to do the work. We just do not have the vehicles or the drivers.

9. Most of our requests for transport are health-related and are from people requesting access to hospitals. At the moment, we receive no resources from the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. Very small community grants are provided through local health trusts to provide some transport, but not for hospital appointments. Therefore, when we looked at the infrastructure costs, the CT sector and CTA called for an integrated accessible transport strategy to combine all expenditure on transport and provide a central planning division, preferably within DRD, to take forward the better use of public money for transport.

10. When we looked at the interrelationships in the delivery of public and community bus operations, we thought that we need to better define public transport. In our response document, we stated that community transport is not allowed to provide services for the general public. Under the section 10b permit, we can only provide services to our members or those we are constituted to help. So, if public transport is limited to Translink, it is a bit difficult to consider a way forward for how that interrelationship works. There are other public transport providers out there.

11. There are some local partnership arrangements between community transport and Translink. We are working with Translink in several different ways to try to link people through to its services. We are working with DRD, Transport NI and the mid-Ulster pilot to establish whether there is a possibility of integrating services for better public transport provision. We have discussed with Transport NI whether community transport could use Translink depots to provide people with linking services. However, to be honest, if there are costs attached to that, the community transport sector could not afford to pay them. We have found that there is a lack of commitment. Other Departments have said that it is not within their strategic remit to consider transport, so there are no other opportunities for us to have interrelationships with other Departments to provide transport solutions.

12. We asked the Committee to examine how much money is spent on transport across the whole of government, how it is purchased, whether efficiencies could be created by considering other transport functions already being delivered through other Departments, and whether there could be a coming together of that. We think that there should be an expansion of the public transport reform function within Transport NI to look, in that planning division, at where people wish to travel; how they currently travel; why they need to travel at a particular time; the best mode to get them there; where links between modes can be made; and how efficiencies could be generated. We also think that consideration should be given to how transport is tendered and contracted and whether that is the best way forward. At the moment,

the community transport sector is excluded from all tenders and contracts on the basis that we are not allowed to act commercially. We would very much welcome the provision by DRD of appropriate transport planning for all Departments to integrate the services. We welcome local community transport plans and want the Committee to push those forward to ensure that the needs of local communities are considered. We also asked for cross-departmental agreement to allow the sharing of resources. In our paper, we have given a few examples, such as health or education minibuses being used for community access needs during periods of downtime.

13. We looked at best practice in the provision of integrated public and community transport options. It is a bit difficult because it is very segmented at the moment. Local arrangements have been developed that show that community transport links passengers to the public transport network. However, Translink's journey planner information does not include information for passengers to show that community transport could get them to its services. There needs to be an integrated, accessible transport strategy and plan that enables the better integration of services. We provided examples of strategies used in Devon and Torbay and by the Olympic Delivery Authority where that came together. The mid-Ulster local transport plan pilot may be a step in the right direction to achieving a cross-departmental transport strategy, but, already, there appears to be internal departmental barriers that may prevent that from going forward.

14. We then looked at the future of the provision of public and community bus options. In our response, we provided some idea of a work programme to go forward during the current term of government, up to 2015, that would look at the strategy and how we could take that forward. From 2015 to 2020, there would be the development of a plan, with that plan being implemented in 2020 with cross-departmental consideration and all resources being pooled.

15. I have some concerns from within the sector and from CTA that the transport policy prioritisation framework that DRD is taking forward reviews the current priorities and will not significantly enable innovation expenditure to be released for new strategies or better ways of thinking for the future. Although the framework is certainly a good process, what it is gathering for consideration is quite limited. We reiterate the need for cross-departmental identification of public transport needs and a pooling of resources to enable effective and efficient solutions to be realised.

16. In conclusion, CTA's vision is of a fairer society where everyone, irrespective of where they live or their individual circumstances, has the mobility and accessible transport services that they need to live full and active lives. The Community Transport Association's aim is to identify and help the passenger more so than the provision of vehicles and on-the-ground transport solutions. We will work with everyone and welcome the opportunity to respond to the Committee inquiry. Indeed, we asked the Committee a number of our own questions. We asked for the development of an integrated, accessible transport plan and strategy incorporating all Departments and utilising all available resources and modes of transport, and that can be led by DRD. We ask that the community transport sector is not excluded from the process, because our ability to work within local communities to identify transport and access gaps is vital to ensuring that the public transport network can deliver access for all. We ask that an appropriate investment is made to provide information and to educate the community on the alternatives to car use and about the available public transport options, including community transport, health transport, education transport, private transport and taxis. We ask for appropriate financial support to be made available to transport suppliers,

including the community transport sector, to ensure that the access needs of the community can be met where conventional transport is not appropriate or available for the individual. We ask for the transport sector to be provided with appropriate and financially supported resources such as passenger transport advisory bodies, including CTA and the Federation of Passenger Transport on the private side, to ensure that the health and safety of passengers, value for money and quality of standards are maintained for the community and the Department. We also ask for all Departments to be challenged on their position regarding transport, including their budget spend and their commitment to enabling a more efficient approach by working in partnership to share resources.

17. Finally, thank you very much for allowing us this opportunity. At the moment, the Community Transport Association and the community transport sector are open to all partnership working. However, our one caveat is that we do not know where we will be in a year's time. The Department of the Environment (DOE) is carrying out a review of operator licensing, and that review may not see community transport continuing in its current form in Northern Ireland. We are working with DOE officials to try to see that the legislation, which will not be going out to consultation, allows us still to meet community need. However, it is a concern for us. Although we would very much appreciate being involved in the strategy and the plan as it goes forward, we hope that we will be here to be able to provide that advice, depending on the DOE outcome. Thank you.

18. **The Chairperson**: Thank you for the presentation, Kellie. I will start with a couple of questions. At your conference in August 2012, you stated that the community transport sector has the knowledge to identify specific local transport needs and skills. You specified the need for an efficient integrated transport service. Has your organisation conducted a needs analysis? If so, what conclusions arose from it? During the same conference, you had a round-table discussion and you posed three questions, which I will now put to you. Is there a joined-up approach? Are there any policy barriers to sharing resources and better planning? And who is monitoring departmental partnership working?

19. **Ms Armstrong**: I will go back to your first point about the needs analysis. CTA, as an organisation, works within local communities. We work with local authorities across the UK. Indeed, in Northern Ireland, we have worked with the Department for Regional Development. Each of the individual community transport organisations is made up of voluntary boards from within their communities. It is those voluntary boards and the input of communities that identify where transport is needed and where the gaps are. That is an ongoing and continuous process. DRD has done some customer analysis of people who use community transport. The knowledge that we have is because our people are in the community, and it is our community that brings forward what they need. We have done some work within each of the individual community transport organisations to look at where the needs are. Are they in health or education? Is it a more general need, such as getting to shops, visiting relatives or going to church? We are limited by the current funding to ensure that DRD's Dial-a-Lift service is delivered, for instance. We would very much like to do so much more. There has not yet been investment in a formal production of papers on a needs analysis. I know that the Consumer Council is reviewing the Dial-a-Lift process across Northern Ireland. I expect the report on that to be out before the summer.

20. Community transport is as it says: it is community transport. As far as a joined-up approach among ourselves is concerned, we all work together. For example, we share vehicles. If a church has a vehicle that is sitting all day not being used, a community transport organisation will go in and

ask, "Can we go in and borrow that for better use within the community?" We try to work with Translink. We have met the Federation of Passenger Transport sporadically over the years. We work with health providers on the ground in local areas to see where we can go forward. We have had meetings with different community organisations where transport issues have come up. We have an active input to the Patient and Client Council. We work with the Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC), and so on. Community transport always seems to push the door open a wee bit more.

21. You asked about the policy barriers that are there. At the moment, the Department for Regional Development's rural transport fund limits the activities of the community transport operators that are funded to provide Dial-a-Lift and small group travel. That is Monday to Friday from 8.00 am to 6.00 pm, and it is restricted to very local bits and pieces. To be honest, the biggest policy barrier that we will have is the DOE legislation that is coming forward. We do not know whether, in the future, we will be able to deliver what we are doing now.

22. Who is monitoring the Department? The community and voluntary sector works with the Department. We have quite a strong partnership with DRD. We work with anybody we can. However, as for monitoring the Department, that is for the Department and yourselves.

23. **Mr Stephen Wood (Community Transport Association)**: I will come in on the needs analysis. My background is as a professional transport planner. A detailed needs analysis has not been done. However, given the amount of travel that is undertaken from the rural areas by people who do not have cars or access to conventional public transport in the form of Translink's services, which clearly cannot reach the rural areas, and given the amount of people with particular travel difficulties, whether disabilities or whatever, it is absolutely clear to me that those needs are relatively huge and are not being provided for. Although clearly there could be a needs analysis based on census information and surveys, and so on, that work has not been done. Rather, what the Community Transport Association members do is identify needs on a kind of word-of-mouth and contact basis. However, from my point of view, that is only the tip of the iceberg.

24. **The Chairperson**: Kellie, you said that you do try to work with Translink. That sounded to me like a statement made somewhat in frustration. Is it a frustrating exercise?

25. **Ms Armstrong**: It is not actually. What I meant by that is that we try to work with Translink in whatever way we can. The Community Transport Association does not deliver routes. We have an agreement with Translink — it may be this that creates part of our frustration — whereby we encourage community members to travel together. We may get 15 or 16 people onto a minibus on a regular basis. For example, on a certain day of the week, they may all be heading into the nearest town or village to go to the chiropody or podiatrist clinic. Once we fill that bus and can show for a period of three months that that route is achievable and economically viable, we hand it over to Translink. We have not got to that stage yet because people still want their individual travel needs met.

26. We work with Translink: it comes along to the community transport managers' forum; we lease vehicles from it; it provides depot parking; it helps us with maintenance; and we can access fuel from it, which we pay for. We do all that but, to be honest, with the strategic plan, we do not know how they plan their routes or make a decision on the routes that will be withdrawn. We know that it is down to economics. However, we sometimes see difficulties where the local community could have a service, but we do not have the economic proof that it would work for Translink. That can be a bit frustrating. However, Translink has always been quite professional with us. It understands that we have a very different remit. We try to fill its need by

providing passengers to the network to travel further afield across Northern Ireland.

27. To be honest: it is sometimes the community that causes us the frustration because people do not want to use public transport; that can difficult.

28. **The Chairperson**: There is a heavy subsidy for rural transport. Transport in rural areas will never be profitable. Is there no consultation when Translink decides to withdraw a route? Is there no negotiation to try to secure that route? The route may well serve a very good purpose within the rural community. How do you find Translink in such scenarios?

29. **Mr Ian Wilson (Community Transport Association)**: Over the past decade, a number of routes in my area have been proven not to be economically viable. There has been some engagement with the local community prior to those routes being withdrawn, but it might not have been sufficient as a consultation exercise. Translink generally engages with the community at a level. My experience of local engagement with Translink is that it is a professional relationship. It provides us with a number of important operational aids such as maintenance, use of depots, washing, etc. The will is there from Translink to engage with local communities. It is often a very frustrating exercise for Translink when it has to withdraw routes, and, obviously, there is the attendant flak that goes along with that. However, we, as community transport partnerships, are not actually involved in that process.

30. **The Chairperson**: Is there consultation about withdrawing a service? Is there consultation about how, between community transport providers and Translink, a service could be maintained for the betterment of a rural community?

31. **Ms Armstrong**: Under the 10b permit, CTA cannot deliver routes and collect the general public. We can collect only those people who sign up as members to use us. We tend to find out that the route is gone when the community finds outs. There is not that type of consultation. We will fill the gap if we have the resources.

32. **The Chairperson**: Should there be that type of consultation?

33. **Ms Armstrong**: There should, because it gives us a bit of an idea that there could be an area in which there are people — it may be only a few people — along a rural road who will be left isolated. Perhaps that would be more helpful. As far as I am aware, there is not a formal, written-down consultation process for the removal of routes or the adoption of routes. So, we are not sure about that.

34. **Mr Lynch**: Thank you for the presentation. I come from and represent a rural community in Fermanagh. It has been suggested that the local transport services and community transport services should come under the one funding stream. Would you agree with that? Would you, as an organisation, be prepared to work with it?

35. **Ms Armstrong**: I am not sure what funding stream that would be. At the moment, Rural Lift for South West Fermanagh and FAST Rural Transport receive money from the rural transport fund. Enniskillen has the door-to-door system. At the moment, community transport is excluded from door-to-door. It is a commercially tendered contract that we are not allowed to bid for unless we become commercial. I have to say that it would be very helpful if it was under the one stream. We deal with the needs of passengers on the basis of passengers. It would be a good use of use of resources.

36. **Mr Lynch**: What I am talking about is under the Health and Education Departments.

37. **Ms Armstrong**: I know that the mid-Ulster pilot has looked at that. I was not aware that it was being taken forward in Fermanagh. It is very welcome, because the better use of resources means that more people in the community can get access, and we will of course work with that. The Departments of Health

and Education work under the section 10b permit, as does the Community Transport Association, so we would work with anybody, as long as the community and individuals' transport needs are being met. We will work with anybody to make sure that is done.

38. **Mr Lynch**: Can you estimate the potential savings if we had a localised integrated transport system?

39. **Ms Armstrong**: How long is a piece of string? I am not too sure; it is difficult to say. If we knew what the budget was initially, how much the Health Department, the Education Department and DRD were all spending on public transport, we could get all of that together. There is bound to be duplication there. I mentioned before that I thought there would be a £20 million saving if there was an integration of the use of education vehicles in the evenings and weekends during their downtime, but as to the opportunity that we have for a saving, it will run into millions, but I cannot say exactly how many.

40. **Mr Dallat**: Thanks for the presentation. I come from a rural area, and sometimes I think that public transport is a bit like education in that it has not been reviewed since 1947. In the meantime, rural communities and the people who live in them, irrespective of age, effectively do not have a public transport system outside school buses. Pubs in my area are either closed or are going to close because today we respect the laws on drinking and driving and do not do it, and there is no other way. Public community transport, in effect, does not match the needs of the public, other than, perhaps, people who are going to have their feet treated, or things like that. That is easy, because there is a timetable for that, but, outside that, do you agree with me that there is an urgent need to reassess the whole thing in the interests of that rural economy and of all of the people who live there? Effectively, apart from walking the streets or the roads at night with armbands on, they do not have any transport.

41. **Mr Wood**: I will answer that as a transport planner. The issue is that, clearly, rural public transport is very expensive to provide. The issue for the Assembly and the Executive is about the extent of subsidy that they want to provide for public transport services. Obviously, there are various ways, and we all welcome the fact that that box is being opened and being looked at. In Education and Health, there are various resources out there, including vehicles. There is undoubtedly a better and more efficient way of doing it, but the reality is that it costs money and, like everything else, priorities have to be set. Rural public transport is quite different from urban public transport and the likes of the Metro services and the trams, or whatever, which can be run on a commercial basis.

42. **Mr Dallat**: "Commercially sensitive" is the term that Translink uses incessantly when trying to avoid answering questions that might be helpful. Do you think there is an abuse of that term?

43. **Mr Wood**: Sorry, will you repeat that?

44. **Mr Dallat**: The term "commercially sensitive" is in your report, but I recognise it because it is one that I frequently get in response to tabled questions on the viability of public transport. They simply do not tell you because they see it as commercially sensitive. Have you any ideas about how we can begin to extract the information that we need from Translink without it hiding behind the term "commercially sensitive", which it probably has a rubber stamp for?

45. **Mr Wood**: The normal way of tackling all that is to create a strategic transport plan for the whole of a province and an area and to investigate what standards are required and how much that would cost to supply, in ballpark terms, using industry standard costings. Then, once that transport plan across all modes, urban and rural, has been agreed by the Assembly or whatever, that is the funding that is available and those are the services that one tries to deliver. We have not done that for some time. That,

as I understand it, is what the public transport authority coming from public transport reform is set to try to address.

46. **Mr Dallat**: Who should do that? Are you capable of doing that? Are you willing?

47. **Ms Armstrong**: We already do that for the rural transport fund. It determines how much money is available through grants to those 10% of the community transport groups. It is monitored to the nth degree: we know exactly how much money we are getting, and we have to prove how we are spending it efficiently. I am not going to say that we are as efficient as we can be; we are always trying to improve that. It is very open and clear. All the community transport audited accounts are publicly available because we are charities and we have to be mindful of the community that we serve. We have that system in place for the rural transport fund with DRD. We receive an amount of money, we are told exactly how it is going to be spent and what it can be spent on, and we deliver services on that basis.

48. **Mr Dickson**: Apologies for being a little late back into the room. You are very welcome. Thank you for your presentation, which I have read. When local government is reformed, hopefully next year, it will have a community planning role. How do you see yourselves and Translink fitting into that community planning role?

49. **Ms Armstrong**: At the moment, I am very concerned about it. So far, we have been told that the Northern Ireland public transport authority will consider the public transport network, including the main routes and the high-speed frequency routes. As far as we are aware, there will be no funding for local community plans and local transport plans. If a community identifies a gap in access, I believe that the assumption at the moment is that it will look to its community transport organisation, whether that is the church, the school or a specific community transport organisation, to try to fill that gap. There will be no funding for it. Community transport organisations will, of course, be there. We will try to identify whether there is a bus sitting round the corner and how many volunteer car drivers we can recruit. We will try to meet need, but to be honest, it is not going to be subsidised or financially supported. We are concerned, because it is one of those gaps that local government does not have a remit for.

50. **Mr Dickson**: Councils are going to have that remit.

51. **Ms Armstrong**: They are. We have asked the councils whether we can explain who we are, what we can do and what we can help them with. They are unsure of their future, so they are not talking to us on that basis.

52. **Mr Dickson**: Can you briefly expand on the issues that you will have with the licensing arrangements with DOE?

53. **Ms Armstrong**: DOE is going through a review of the operator licensing system, including a community operator's permit — a section 10b permit. The section 10b permit needs to be modernised; we agree with DOE completely on that. We are very concerned because the current paper states that the rural community transport partnerships that receive funding from DRD will be made commercial. We will lose our volunteers, because volunteers will not be able to work under a commercial licence. Other community church groups, and so on, would be very restricted in what they could do.

54. We prefer an alternative option that is closer to the GB model but, to date, we have been told that that may not be possible because Northern Ireland has a regulated transport system and across the water does not. Basically, something considerably different will happen in Northern Ireland. We do not know whether we are going to be here in a year's time. There will always be community transport. Ian's organisation has been in existence for over 40 years. The community reacts to what the community needs. Unfortunately, we will go back a step. It is a difficult one, and we are very concerned. EU regulations

are being considered, which means it does not have to put this through as primary legislation. On that basis, it will not be going out to consultation; it is something that will happen quite quickly. We hope that we can have input and that it will have some sort of partnership working with the community and voluntary sector to take it forward. We can just wait to see about that.

55. **Mr Wood**: I will return very quickly to your previous question about community planning. It is absolutely imperative that that planning is based on the needs of people rather than the existing services. The actual need can far outweigh what is addressed by existing services.

56. **Mr McAleer**: You are very welcome. As one of the MLAs from a rural area, I can very much appreciate the role that you are fulfilling. I think your submission states that your volunteers provide £2 million per annum of in-kind services. As someone who works in the voluntary sector, I can appreciate that. I just renewed my MiDAS certificate at the beginning of the year.

57. I find it incredible that, outside DRD, none of the Departments has to consider how people access services. Do you think that it would be helpful if all Departments were required to transport-proof their policies?

58. **Ms Armstrong**: I agree with that 100%; that is exactly what we want to happen. You will hear later from our colleagues from the Strabane area, who have had particular issues. I will be quick, but I want to give you one specific example. There are lifelong learning courses that are fantastic for adults with learning disabilities to be able to attend, but nobody considers how they get to those courses. Once they are over the age of 19, they fall out of the Department of Education's transport provision. When they are planning those courses, nobody has to consider how someone who cannot use a car will get to them. We think that should be a core objective of Northern Ireland transport or the public transport authority in DRD. They should take that forward and decide how to transport-proof all the different things. For example, the health service should not arrange a hospital appointment for somebody who lives 35 miles away, at a time when they cannot possibly get public transport. A bit of more clever joined-up thinking on that would be much more helpful for the community. It might cause a few more problems for transport, because it would have to start earlier or finish later, but it is what the community needs.

59. As I said earlier, we have not reviewed this in quite a while. We need to consider who our travelling community is, where they want to travel, where they need to travel to, what times they need to go there, how much it is going to cost and whether there is a duplication of resources that could be shared.

60. Before Departments start to spend public money developing courses or services, they should consider how people will get to them. We have that in the community and voluntary sector, and I always say to people who are applying for grants or money that they should consider how people will get to the service they are developing. If people cannot access a service, it will fall on its face.

61. We absolutely want to see that going forward. All Departments should consider how people get there and the public transport way of getting there.

62. **Mr Wood**: Without weakening Kellie's point, I want to qualify that. Clearly, some thought has been given, but not enough. Too often, there is an assumption that people will either come by car or that Translink will run a service. Not enough thought is given to people's detailed issues and their needs. Undoubtedly, that is where those people fall through the gap. The numbers are very significant.

63. **Mr McNarry**: You make a very compelling case in your report. I can see the gaps that you are filling, but I am worried about the extent of the gaps that have been highlighted. Are you able to demonstrate how wide the gaps are?

Is an audit available? More importantly, are you able to demonstrate how they can be closed?

64. In your briefing paper, you stated that you are looking for an appropriate financial report to be made available to:

"ensure the access needs of the Community can be met where conventional transport is not appropriate or available for the individual".

65. I say "hear, hear" to that, but that is quite a sweeping statement. How do we close the gaps?

66. Additionally, to what extent do you feel that Translink is falling short? With the particular predicaments that Translink has, do you think that its ability to service what it is already doing will be reduced, with the result that more gaps will be created? Should the Committee consider, alongside your compelling report, that Translink needs to improve its game? I am anxious about what we have getting worse and about nobody plugging the gaps.

67. **Mr Wood**: I will try to start to answer that. At our seminar in August, I put up a couple of graphics to try to illustrate the difference in mobility between people who have cars and people who are dependent on public transport. I cannot remember the exact figures, but people who have cars maybe make two or three times as many journeys as people who do not have cars. If you want to, straightaway, you could say that is a gap. Even people who live in urban areas where there is good public transport are constrained by where the services go and the cost of using those services. That means that they do not have as active lives as people who have cars. That is, unfortunately, a 21st century phenomenon, and that is the context that I would set for this.

68. We do not have a formal audit of where the gaps are. You could begin with household surveys and by talking to people in rural areas or people who have particular mobility difficulties.

69. **Mr McNarry**: Do you think that, perhaps, that information is what is lacking? That would enable you to get your head around the full extent of the problem.

70. **Mr Wood**: Undoubtedly. The transport planning process as normally exists includes not only surveys of where people are going to and from by car and by public transport but household surveys that ask where those people have travelled to by foot and other surveys about what their needs might be that are unfulfilled. We could set that baseline. Possibly, you would not need to do that across the Province. All you would need is a sample to allow you to understand the scale.

71. As I said, if you were to try to compare people with and without cars, you would see that there is a huge gap. There is another scale for people who have particular difficulties in using current public transport.

72. The Translink services that we have now are much more accessible than they were in the past. A big move has been made over the past 10 or 15 years to make public transport low-step and whatever to allow people with wheelchairs to use it. It is, potentially, a much greater resource for a much wider range of people than before. However, geographically, it does not necessarily get close to where people live. Therefore, those decisions need to be made, and that is why we have Door-2-Door and Dial a Lift, in some respects, to fill those gaps.

73. I am convinced that the gaps are enormous, and decisions have to be made to prioritise to what degree we want to close those gaps. Elsewhere in Europe and Britain, those are hard decisions that must be taken. There is statutory provision, and the Departments of Education and Health, in part and at least, take people to statutory services. However, there are other journeys that people would like to make that they are, undoubtedly, not making. People self-regulate: when they cannot make a journey because they do not have a relative to take them, they just give up.

74. **Mr McNarry**: Just on that, Chair —

75. **The Chairperson**: Very briefly, David, please.

76. **Mr McNarry**: How close are you to Translink when it decides what needs to be done, what is not being done, what it is going to do and what you can do to close those gaps? Are you in that dialogue? Do you work together on that?

77. **Ms Armstrong**: There have been some very small movements forward, such as the connection to Altnagelvin Area Hospital in the west. However, there has been very little dialogue on that basis and in having that type of planning. At the moment, transport planning resides in Translink for Translink. The wider Northern Ireland transport strategy and plan is not there. We hope that DRD will take that forward, and that is part of the issue.

78. Different groups, including the Patient and Client Council, IMTAC and the Consumer Council, have identified some gaps, but that is where other Departments say that transport is not their statutory responsibility, and, therefore, it falls into the silo. There are quite a lot of gaps that we know of, which as Stephen said, are enormous. Community transport cannot fill them all; we just do not have the resources. We do not have enough volunteers and never will. That is why we need to integrate, work together and share resources to get this sorted out for people in Northern Ireland.

79. **Mr McNarry**: Do you mean integrate with Translink?

80. **Ms Armstrong**: Translink, the Department of Education, the Department of Health, private operators, taxis and whoever provides transport out there all need to be together. There is enough work for everybody, so nobody needs to be worried about toes being stepped on here. It is about the people on the ground. We particularly need to meet the needs of an ageing population because people are less likely to drive when they are in their 80s.

81. **The Chairperson**: What specific barriers would prevent the mid-Ulster plan being taken forward?

82. **Ms Armstrong**: We are dealing with a mix of Departments here, so if Education and Health do not want to come to the table, that is the first barrier. Education has said that its vehicles — the yellow buses — operate under a particular permit, which is allowed by DOE, that enables it to deliver education services. Those buses are not allowed to collect members of the general public. It says that it cannot collect a fare, but I am not sure whether that is completely true. Health's vehicles are used for health purposes. Community transport providers do what we do. Translink has its main routes. So, there are a few internal departmental barriers there. I know that the mid-Ulster pilot group is trying to overcome those barriers and talk to DOE and different people about new regulation or trying a new system for a short time to let that pilot go forward. However, there are barriers there that are created by the different Departments.

83. **The Chairperson**: OK. Thanks very much, Kellie, Ian and Stephen, for the presentation. The session has been recorded for Hansard, as I said, and this session has been very helpful to the Committee.

9 January 2013

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Jimmy Spratt (Chairperson)
Mr Seán Lynch (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr John Dallat
Mr Stewart Dickson
Mr Declan McAleer
Mr Ian McCrea
Mr David McNarry

Witnesses:

Ms Mary T Conway	*Easilink Community Transport*
Mr Paddy McEldowney	
Mr Daniel O'Hagan	
Mr Bert Wilson	

84. **The Chairperson**: I welcome to the Committee Mr Daniel O'Hagan, Mr Paddy McEldowney, Ms Mary T Conway and Mr Bert Wilson. You have 10 minutes in which to make a presentation, after which leave yourselves open to questions.

85. **Mr Daniel O'Hagan (Easilink Community Transport)**: I and my colleagues at Easilink thank the Committee for the opportunity to present here today. I work for a Strabane-based charity called Strabane Community Project, which provides a range of services for older people in that area, including a community meals service; a luncheon club; meals on wheels; a weekend chilled meals service; Good Morning Strabane, which is a listening ear telephone alert service; befriending; respite care; and a handy van service. We are a voice for older people across the Strabane district. I have been a voluntary director with Easilink Community Transport for over six years. I am committed to the organisation's aims of combating social exclusion and isolation. I see at first hand the huge benefit that rural transport services provide in my local area. People who might not otherwise see anyone for days on end can access local and community services and live a happier, healthier and more active life. As chairperson of Easilink Community Transport, I confirm that we, as an organisation, have been crying out for years for better and more efficient working together across statutory transport provision, especially with the Departments of Health and Education and the Department for Regional Development-funded urban door-to-door transport scheme.

86. Speaking on behalf of Easilink's 18 voluntary directors, I think it is critical that the Committee understands that we give of our time, expertise and local knowledge to help Easilink Community Transport. As directors, we see the difference that the service makes to many individuals and groups in our rural areas. We are involved to ensure that as many people as possible get access to critical services, such as local health appointments, luncheon clubs, shopping and community activities. Transport is not our main focus as directors; our main focus is combating isolation and social exclusion. We just happen to achieve that by transporting people to their essential appointments and activities.

87. The Department of the Environment (DOE) is currently reviewing bus licensing in Northern Ireland, and it has indicated that it sees rural community transport partnerships having a commercial bus operator's licence in the new arrangements. The directors of Easilink Community Transport have no interest in running a commercial bus company. We are totally committed to operating a not-for-profit charitable organisation for the benefit of those who need the service to live a healthy and happy life. If community transport is forced into a commercial licence, it will rip the heart out of the 10 years of work that has been put into our company by many committed and dedicated local volunteers.

88. I will now hand over to Mary T Conway, the vice chairperson.

89. **Ms Mary T Conway (Easilink Community Transport)**: Hello, members. I am the manager of Omagh Forum for Rural Associations. We are the rural support network for the Omagh district; one of an infrastructure that covers the whole of Northern Ireland. We provide development support for community and voluntary groups and associations. Through the work that I do, I am very aware of the need for sustainable rural community transport services. I have witnessed the development of community transport in the Omagh area over the past 12 years and have been a voluntary director with Rural Link initially and now Easilink for nine years. I have been a rural dweller all my life.

90. Working with rural community groups across the Omagh district, I see the huge benefit that the community transport service offers those groups. It allows them to bring their members together to participate in local community activities or to travel further afield. What that means is that people from a small town or a small isolated hamlet can access the minibus that comes to their area. It comes to their door, picks up the people and takes them into the local town, where people can do their business. Individual members are dropped off at a particular point where they want to go, and drivers can wait on them and then go on to the next place. What is unique about community transport is that it is a door-to-door service. To that end, the volunteer drivers in those organisations offer the groups a very cost-effective way of travelling to and from their activities. DOE's proposals to change the licensing of community transport vehicles from the current not-for-profit 10b permit to a commercial bus operator's licence will automatically exclude those volunteer drivers. That will have a very negative impact on our rural community groups and their valued activities.

91. Like Danny, I am a very committed voluntary director with Easilink Community Transport. We strive to provide the best service that we can to our rural members though the not-for-profit charitable ethos. Any move towards bringing in a commercial licence for community transport would be a very significant shift away from our ethos and from the very reason why we, as directors, are so committed to the charitable rural transport services that we provide. I feel strongly that that will seriously jeopardise the most important element of our services, which is local people volunteering to help those in need in their own community. Community transport and community development principles support people who are socially excluded — those who really need access to community transport. From that point of view, we fully endorse the work.

92. I will hand over to Bert Wilson, who is a fellow director.

93. **Mr Bert Wilson (Easilink Community Transport)**: I am a farmer and have been a councillor for around 12 years on Omagh District Council. I have been a voluntary director of the Cavan Development Association as well, and I have played a very active part in promoting the rural transport service across the Omagh district through my role as councillor. I have been involved with Easilink Community Transport in our efforts to engage more with the statutory sector in the west, particularly regarding the Departments of Health and Education. We have shown a willingness to work in partnership at any level, but have had only limited success in engaging with the statutory sector. The main barriers we continue to come up against are central procurement policies and procedures within the statutory sector that exclude community transport providers from bidding for any transport work.

94. Those officials working locally in the west within the Education and Health Departments have expressed a desire to engage with us, but tell us that when they go to the Central Procurement Directorate or to departmental level, the idea is rejected due to procurement guidelines. We feel very strongly that

there is work that we could do for those Departments on a non-profit basis that could save the relevant Department money and would allow us to schedule that work along with our existing transport commitments. Imagine one vehicle travelling along a particular rural route carrying 15 passengers, rather than two or three vehicles carrying four or five passengers each — in fact, it is sometimes fewer — the school bus, the day centre bus and the community transport bus.

95. We have exhausted all avenues locally to try to progress the issue but we feel strongly that it can only be solved centrally at departmental level. As Easilink directors, we feel that DRD is best placed to lead on this, and we are aware that any attempts to engage in meaningful discussions to progress it further depend a lot on the willingness of the other Departments to commit to the process. The idea has been mooted for a few years now, but, unfortunately, there does not seem to have been any real progress. The basic assumption with Departments working together locally on transport provision would be to achieve efficiencies and reduce congestion on our roads. We feel that it is a great opportunity to save money and help the environment.

96. As a councillor, I have taken it to Brussels and our MEPs and also, through the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, to the rural White Paper. As a rural person, I believe that rural dwellers are severely disadvantaged. I see taxis travelling on my road, picking up children for school who have health problems. Where three or four taxis run that route, one vehicle could probably do that. As well as that, with our hospitals now at Altnagelvin and Fermanagh, there is no transport for families. In the area that I represent, which includes Gortin, Greencastle and that area, they are mostly one-car families. When the father is away working, there is no transport to bring those people to hospital appointments or anything like that. I believe that we are really disadvantaged. Senior citizens —

97. **The Chairperson**: I ask you to draw your remarks to a close to allow Mr McEldowney some time, because you are totally out of time.

98. **Mr B Wilson**: Senior citizens who have free bus passes and live maybe five miles from a Translink route need some way of getting there. This is one of the main ways that they have of getting there.

99. **Mr Paddy McEldowney (Easilink Community Transport)**: I will quickly give a brief outline of our organisation. I have been manager of Easilink Community Transport for just over eight years. Easilink provides DRD-funded rural transport services across the three council areas of Omagh, Strabane and Derry City. Easilink has been formed by the merger of three previous community transport partnerships from each of those councils.

100. The new organisation employs 25 people across the three council areas, with bases in Omagh, Strabane and Claudy. We are governed by a voluntary board of directors that represents groups and individuals from across those three council areas. Easilink has a very strong and long-standing volunteer car scheme, availing itself of the commitment and dedication of approximately 45 volunteers. Easilink operates 14 accessible minibuses, ranging from 10- to 16-seaters. The Dial-a-Lift services are delivered to our members from Monday to Friday between 8.00 am and 6.00 pm, using a combination of minibuses and volunteer cars. We also have a group hire service, which is available to our rural community groups, which uses our minibuses on a paid-driver or volunteer-driver basis.

101. I will give you a wee snapshot of what we do on the ground. In the financial year ending in March 2012, we provided 42,000 Dial-a-Lift trips to our members. Of those, 59% were via minibus, and in what I consider a huge contribution, 41 % were delivered by local volunteers.

Dial-a-Lift services were delivered in that year at £12·77 per passenger trip. The average cost for Northern Ireland Dial-a-Lift across the community transport sector is around £17 and the urban door-to-door average is £18. So, we feel strongly that we have a shown a good track record in delivering a service very efficiently for the Department and using our money very wisely. In the same period, we provided 37,000 group passenger trips to our rural community groups. Again, it is very important to be aware that 68% of those trips involved a paid driver and 32% involved a volunteer driver.

102. Easilink has always been very proactive in securing additional funding to enhance the service we provide to our rural members. We do not sit and wait on a DRD handout; we go to look for more. In recent years, we have attracted substantial funding from the Lloyds TSB Foundation. In 2008, we got £100,000 for a six-year project, which meant we were able to get an additional vehicle and a part-time driver. Just last year, we secured £90,000 from the Big Lottery for a three-year project for the lease of a minibus and to employ a part-time driver. We have also received funding from Strabane, Derry and Omagh councils, Awards for All, DOE and INTERREG cross-border funding. Those additional resources have helped us to be more efficient in our service delivery and have added to our capacity to deliver a professional and caring service to our clients. That is all possible due to the fact that we are motivated as a charity to develop as an organisation independently from our core funder for the benefit of our clients.

103. Again, as we have touched on already, if the DOE proposals to move us to a commercial bus licence are introduced, we will lose our charitable ethos and our voluntary directors may not want to continue in their role. Our cherished volunteer car drivers will not be able to operate under the commercial licence.

104. I will summarise quickly the points that we would like to leave with the Committee on the better use of public and community sector funds. We talked about Departments working together, but this one is within DRD, so we do not have to work with any other Departments for this one. We feel very strongly that DRD should consider combining the rural transport fund service with the urban door-to-door service and deliver it on a not-for-profit basis. The second half of that sentence is the most important bit. We feel very strongly that that would be a win-win situation for DRD and the clients. Combining the two transport services would save DRD money and would provide the rural and urban clients with a better resourced service, provided that it was delivered on a not-for-profit basis. The two services are currently operating in isolation in the same area and are delivered under two different licences, which means that there can be no crossover between the two.

105. The second point that I would like to leave with you is that DRD should work with other Departments to review procurement procedures to ensure that not-for-profit organisations can bid for statutory transport work. That would save money for the respective Departments within their transport provisions and save DRD money by sharing the cost of community transport back-office costs across Departments. At the minute, DRD foots the bill for all the back-office costs. If the Health and Education Departments were in there, they could share that burden.

106. DRD should be very aware of the DOE proposals for the future of bus licensing in Northern Ireland. Easilink Community Transport is very concerned that all our good work could be undone by a single decision made by another Department in the near future. Our success in the past and the potential for further efficiencies in local transport are all a result of our charitable and community ethos, delivering transport on a not-for-profit basis and using volunteers when appropriate. Any move to a commercial licence will have a very negative effect on our organisation and on our ability to

provide an efficient and caring service to our rural members.

107. I thank the Committee very much for hearing us out today.

108. **The Chairperson**: Thank you for the presentation. You indicate that Easilink is delivering its services at a cost of £12·77 per passenger trip. However, the equivalent cost in the Western Trust, for example, is only £3·60 per passenger trip. If you were successful in taking on additional services from the health trusts or the education boards, could you compete against those significantly lower costs? What are the core elements of value to be derived from providing community transport?

109. **Mr McEldowney**: First, I am delighted to hear a figure such as that being quoted, because we have been talking to the Western Trust for about 10 years and we have never been able to find out how much money is spent on transport.

110. **The Chairperson**: Well, that is the figure.

111. **Mr McEldowney**: It is good to know that. As a charitable organisation that runs 14 minibuses and employs 25 people, we have no intention of saying to the Western Trust that we will provide all their transport, because it runs 200 to 300 vehicles and any amount of —

112. **The Chairperson**: Bear in mind the question that I am asking you, Mr McEldowney. If you were successful in taking on additional services for the health trust or the education board, could you compete against those significantly lower costs?

113. **Mr McEldowney**: My answer would be very direct. We would not compete. They can achieve the £3 or £4 price because of the thousands of people who are travelling. We would ask them to give us the very uneconomical run where we have one taxi taking one route. That trip could cost £25.

114. **The Chairperson**: I am talking about successfully taking on additional services. That would obviously be competing with very significant increases in numbers, etc. It would not be a case of asking you to mop up the rubbish that is left at the end, for want of a better phrase. It would be dealing with the core customer level on a daily basis additionally. Do you think that you could cut your costs from the significantly high figure of £12·77? I am not saying that you should cut it to £3·60, but could you cut it to a significantly lower figure, given increased passenger numbers and footfall?

115. **Mr McEldowney**: We would not want the trust's core business. We want only the non-economical peripheral runs that cost a whole lot more than £3. We would make savings for the trust on the runs that are most inefficient. The trust will run routes that are very inefficient and cost a whole lot more than £3 and £12. We could take those routes on the periphery because we are on that road anyway. It would cost us very little more to lift one more passenger on our way from Plumbridge to Omagh or Strabane.

116. **The Chairperson**: I understand that, but if you were able to compete in some way, you could significantly improve your service at that reduced cost to the very people whom you are talking about. At the end of the day, the money comes out of the public purse, so we are talking about value for money. It is not going to be a case of handouts.

117. Would you expect the Department, were it able to get a thing at a cost of £4 or £5, to pay £12 or £13? I would suggest that the answer to that is no, because the Department will be looking for value for money. We are looking for value for money, as a Committee, in terms of the Assembly and the public purse that has to deliver. We are looking at all these things — health, education and community transport — being joined together in rural areas to improve services to rural communities at a significantly lower cost. However, you seem to be pooh-poohing that.

118. **Mr McEldowney**: Absolutely not. We are one of the most efficient community transport operators in Northern Ireland. The average is £17, and we

are operating at £12·77. The urban scheme is operating at £18. Imagine an urban scheme where you are travelling a mile or two either side of Omagh; we are travelling 20 miles and 25 miles to Killen, Killeter, Aghabrack and Aghyaran. Our £12·77 is a very competitive and efficient cost per trip when it comes to individual door-to-door transport. We are one of the most efficient operators in the community transport sector, and we compare very favourably with the urban door-to-door scheme.

119. We have no desire to deliver huge volumes of statutory transport work. However, we feel that we can offer value for money on their less efficient routes where they are lifting one or two people from a very rural area over a long distance with a single vehicle. We are in that area anyway and we can combine that person with a run that we are already doing. That person will add very little to the cost of our transport on that morning. We will take that person in for next to nothing because we are on the route anyway. We are on the road taking the neighbour to the doctor in Strabane, so the person who is going to the school can jump into the same vehicle. So, we can make efficiencies on those least efficient —

120. **The Chairperson**: So, you are telling me that the passenger cost is not £12·77 and that that is a bit of a red herring.

121. **Mr McEldowney**: Our cost is £12·77. That is the amount of money that DRD gives us, divided by the number of trips that we do. That was published a year ago. Those figures were asked for in Stormont, and they are public information.

122. **The Chairperson**: That is not per passenger.

123. **Mr McEldowney**: It is; £12·77 is our average cost per trip.

124. **The Chairperson**: My second question is: what are the core elements of value to be derived from providing community transport?

125. **Mr McEldowney**: In our opinion, more value could be derived if we were combining services. Earlier, Bert made the point that you have three separate vehicles with three separate drivers and three separate tanks of fuel going down the same road at the same time with two or three people in each vehicle. If one vehicle were to lift those dozen people, you would save two tanks of fuel, two hourly rates for a driver, two vehicles, the cost of maintenance for two vehicles and two everything else. So, it is the combining of the services —

126. **The Chairperson**: Does that not cut costs?

127. **Mr McEldowney**: Absolutely.

128. **The Chairperson**: Could it not be a figure that is substantially lower than £12·77?

129. **Mr McEldowney**: Provided that we get down the route of combining the services and getting people into —

130. **The Chairperson**: So, we have established that you want to increase the footfall, stop duplication and stop, as Mr Wilson suggested, this nonsense of having community transport, the health service bus, the education bus and quite a number of taxis picking up children who are handicapped and what have you and, unfortunately, have to go to different places. You are agreeing that if those things were combined and your passenger numbers were to increase, you could substantially reduce costs. If you do not reduce, the Department will go for whatever is the cheapest option. It has to achieve value for money, under procurement rules and everything else.

131. **Mr McEldowney**: Absolutely. I do not think that I argued against that. There is no doubt that combining those services would reduce the cost per trip.

132. **Mr Lynch**: Welcome to the Committee. You said that you are integrated from a previous system. How long have you been integrated, and how much saving has been made by that integration?

133. **Mr McEldowney**: It was done in two stages. It was not that three organisations came together on the one day. In 2008, what was Easilift Community Transport in Strabane took over the operation of the rural Derry area, which was then covered by Foyle Connect. In April last year, what was then Easilift, covering Strabane and Derry, merged with Rural Link in Omagh. So, there were three previous organisations, but it was done in two stages over three or four years. In each case, we looked at office costs. We moved offices in each of these areas and halved our rent in each. We had a redundancy of a senior person who would have received a manager's salary in the Foyle area. Since then, we have taken any opportunities to be as efficient as we can when people have left the organisation or when recruitment was needed. For example, if a driver on a 37-and-a-half-hour contract left, we replaced him with a driver on a 30-hour contract. We have saved about £40,000 on the payroll with that move, and, in back-office costs, we have saved around another £12,000 a year on moving to cheaper offices.

134. On top of that, and more difficult to measure, is the fact that we have more backup in each of those areas. For example, if a vehicle or a driver is unavailable on a particular day in Omagh, it is very easy to send a vehicle up the road from Strabane or vice versa. There is far more flexibility with our service delivery and far more crossover between the areas. Our experience has been very positive. We have saved money and we have increased our capacity to deliver the service, so it has been a positive move for us.

135. **Mr Lynch**: Chair, that was only half a question.

136. **The Chairperson**: You can have the other half now, Seán. I will not count it as number two on this occasion.

137. **Mr Lynch**: Just to follow on: how would you make the case for greater integration of community transport in your area, after what you have said about the integration that has already taken place, and you have experienced it and explained it?

138. **Mr McEldowney**: In my opinion, bringing organisations together and merging them is not an easy thing to do. It would be very difficult to say that we should have just one, three or five. It is not an easy process. However, where the opportunity arises and where there is a will, it should be pursued. DRD has tried to move the partnerships towards a seven individual partnership model. I have no issue with that, and I think that it is a good idea. However, at some stage, there needs to be a measure of what is manageable. It may be a lot more difficult to manage a community transport operation throughout Northern Ireland, but there is a happy medium. DRD is trying to reduce to seven what were 19, and, in my opinion, the seven areas would be a good level to have. You would still have local representation and local knowledge of the area, and you would be achieving economies of scale by bringing two or three existing organisations together.

139. **Mr McNarry**: You seem to be making a lot of sense, and I am worried about that for a start. *[Laughter.]* I appreciate what is being said, the pitch that is being made, and what you have presented as being a not-for-profit operation, but that is the bit that worries me. Although you are not making a profit, I do not know whether you are making a loss. I would like you to tell me — if you can, and if you cannot, perhaps you would write to us — your annual running costs for the operation and, of that sum, how much you pay for insurance cover.

140. **Mr McEldowney**: I can give you broad figures, which I hope will suffice. We turnover just over £700,000 a year, and we receive about £500,000 from DRD through the rural transport fund. The difference in that shortfall and funding — the £220,000, £230,000 or £240,000 — is secured through what Kelly touched on in the previous presentation, which is the subsidised fare. We secure other funding, which I

touched on in my presentation, from a cocktail of other funders.

141. With regard to insurance, we have —

142. **Mr McNarry**: I want to get clear the difference between your turnover and your running costs. Are you telling me that your accumulated turnover is almost £1·5 million?

143. **Mr McEldowney**: No. I am sorry: we spend about £720,000, so our operating costs are about £720,000. To make up that spend, we get about £500,000 from DRD and we generate an income from our clients for the remainder. Also, as a charity that, in my opinion, is well governed by the three directors here and the other 15 elsewhere, we have a reserves policy through which we try to ensure that we put money aside — a modest amount each year — to ensure that we are ready for unforeseen circumstances. We have modest reserves that can cope with three to six months of no funding or any other emergencies.

144. You asked about insurance. We have vehicle insurance. We have 14 minibuses, and it costs just over £1,000 a vehicle to insure them. Therefore, we are spending around £16,000 to insure our fleet of minibuses, and the public liability and employer's liability costs us about £3,000. Therefore, the total cost for insurance is just under £20,000.

145. **Mr O'Hagan**: The not-for-profit bit comes from the fact that we, as directors, do not get paid. We are volunteers. The other volunteers get a travel allowance. We have to make a profit to stay there but, apart from that, we do not put money into any other —

146. **Mr McNarry**: I am sure that the Chairman will not allow me to dwell on this much longer, but I have asked only a quarter of a question.

147. **The Chairperson**: I am not into quarters, David. The half was pushing it.

148. **Mr McNarry**: You make the pitch in your presentation and you emphasise the quality that you bring by being not-for-profit. That is your term of resistance to being a licensed operator. That is what I am trying to get round. Your whole basis for not wanting to be licensed operators is being not-for-profit. Although everything else I have heard makes sense, that bit does not.

149. **Mr McEldowney**: If we move to licences, it will not allow our volunteer drivers to drive the vehicles any more because they will become commercial vehicles. Their 10b permit not-for-hire-and-reward licence, which I assume you have, allows them to drive community vehicles as volunteers. If those vehicles become commercial vehicles, they will no longer be able to drive them.

150. **Mr McNarry**: That is why I asked you about insurance cover.

151. **Mr McEldowney**: The other point is about the volunteer car scheme in which we have 40 or 45 volunteers. If we operate a commercial business, people do not tend to volunteer for such businesses. We feel that we will lose a lot of our value and efficiencies if we move to a purely commercial basis. We would lose the value of our volunteer drivers in particular.

152. **Mr McAleer**: You are very welcome. I am very familiar with some of the terrain you talked about earlier, Paddy. You spoke about places such a Aghabrack, the Plum, Glenelly and the Sperrins — they are some of the most beautiful places in Ireland and among the most isolated. I am very familiar with the terrain you cover. The argument for integration is a complete no-brainer.

153. One of your core suggestions is to combine urban and rural schemes. At an earlier Committee meeting, I shared the example of a case that I spoke to you about whereby the urban transport people could not guarantee a consistent service to take a young fellow with disabilities in the Omagh area out to his place of sheltered employment because it was outside their zone. The rural group — yourselves — who could do it could not go into the town because that was designated as urban. What

level of interaction have you had with the Department to date in relation to joining up these services? What kind of response or excuses are you getting as to why the services cannot be joined up?

154. **Mr McEldowney**: It is frustrating for us. In our jurisdiction, this applies to Strabane and Omagh. Derry City is serviced by Bridge Accessible Transport through the contract. It is a commercial contract that was tendered for, and the commercial company delivering it in Strabane and Omagh has a contract to deliver, and the membership criteria are key to that.

155. For the urban door-to-door scheme, a person has to live within the boundary of the town. There is a red line on a map, and you can put your postcode into a website that will tell you whether you are in or out. That distinguishes who you travel with. If you live in a town, you can be a member of only the urban door-to-door scheme. You cannot be a member of the rural scheme, and this has been dictated to us by the DRD rural transport fund as well. It will say to us that our membership comprises the rural area and that we cannot have a member who lives in the town. The urban door-to-door scheme will say that a person living in a town can be a member of its scheme.

156. Primarily, where a person lives determines which scheme they can apply to. However, Mr McAleer, you touched very well on the point that the scheme to which a person applies may not be the best one to get them where they want to go. The urban scheme is very restricted in that it tends to operate only in the town. The young person you talked about needed to get to Camphill Community, which is outside the town area, and the urban scheme said that the person could be a member of their scheme but that it could only take them round the town and not out to the centre two or three times a week. The call came from you, Mr McAleer, and from the rural transport fund civil servants who asked whether I could help them out. We bent our rules to accommodate that individual.

157. **Mr McAleer**: You have been recorded in the Hansard report now.

158. **Mr McEldowney**: It is a fact. I would make the point that the urban door-to-door schemes never seem to be forced to bend their rules. They have a commercial contract, and they can say that if it is not in their contract, they are not taking it. They seem to be able to say no to the Department a bit more easily than us. We are grant-funded and are not tied down to saying we must do this or must not do that.

159. What we would consider to be our community ethos and our flexibility meant that we were probably the best people to transport that person. However, technically and by the letter of the law in the DRD rural transport fund or the urban scheme, that person should not travel in our vehicle. We took the decision to do that because we felt that we were the only option for that young fellow. We committed to take on that work.

160. We generate an income and charge a fare. However, it is a subsidised equivalent to the Dial-a-Lift fare.

161. **Mr B Wilson**: Chair, could I make a quick —

162. **The Chairperson**: As long as we do not get into bent rules again.

163. **Mr B Wilson**: On the Derverney Road outside Omagh, there are 12 people who, like me, have free bus passes. Translink wiped out the bus run on that road. I wrote to Translink and was told that the run was uneconomical and that it would not go back on its decision. Easilink takes any of the people on that run who want to lift their pension or whatever else they want to do. Other than that, those people were totally without any means of transport, and some of them are of an age that they are not allowed to drive. This is of great benefit to those people.

164. **Mr McAleer**: I want to thank Paddy. When I referred to the beautiful terrain of West Tyrone, I omitted to mention Carrickmore. I see that Margaret

McMahon gave me a dirty look from the Public Gallery.

165. **The Chairperson**: OK. Now that we have got all the local politics out of the way.

166. **Mr Dallat**: This is getting very parochial, not that I have any problems with West Tyrone.

167. Let us change the spokesperson. Mary, you have obviously been in this for a long time, and you appear to have it pretty well sussed out for the present. In planning for the future, how important will be the concept of not-for-profit registers? I have been involved in the credit union movement for 40 years, and that is a term that has transformed the lives of people across Ireland. Credit unions formed themselves into mutuals or co-operatives. I was at a conference in Wales a few months ago when that discussion took place. In planning for the future and meeting the challenges, has there been any discussion on how you might move forward, not just as a model for West Tyrone but for other parts of the North, as a co-operative or mutual society? That would overcome many of the issues you have been asked about today.

168. **Ms Conway**: We have not looked at the co-operative or mutual models. Easilink is a company limited by guarantee, which gives directors most protection. Other smaller community groups may just be community associations and may have constitutions. A company limited by guarantee gives our directors more protection. Anyone who employs staff and has a big turnover of money is advised to go down that route. We also have another wing that would allow us to trade, and Paddy might be able to back me up on that. However, we have not pursued that actively.

169. **Mr Dallat**: Do you see benefits in allowing your users to buy into the scheme by being subscribers or members of what might be called a co-operative or whatever term you might apply? That would allow the thing to become more cohesive and more of a unit.

170. **Ms Conway**: Our members already subscribe. There is a very small fee for joining, which adds value to the service and people appreciate the service they get. That is how our wide variety of members contribute to the running of the organisation. Likewise, at the annual general meeting, there is a good representation from the three geographical areas we serve. We are not fixed in that and are willing to look at all kinds of models.

171. **Mr Dallat**: I find this very interesting, and I think that the Committee will probably want to look at it again. There is a framework that is well worth preserving and that should not be wiped out by changes under the section 10b permit thing. It is far too important for that. I just threw out the co-operative thing because I am obsessed by it.

172. **The Chairperson**: You are obviously a shareholder, John.

173. **Mr Dallat**: No; not for profit.

174. **Ms Conway**: From a community and voluntary perspective, that is why people get involved. They may have had benefits themselves somewhere along the line and want to give something back. That is why our volunteer drivers are so crucial to the service that Easilink and other community transport organisations deliver. Changing the licensing agreements would wipe that off the slate. Whatever number of volunteer car drivers we have is replicated through other community transport organisations around the North and the change would ruin that.

175. **The Chairperson**: I thank you all for your presentation. It has been very helpful to the Committee and its inquiry. A full report will be made by Hansard and will be part and parcel of the final outcome when it goes to the Assembly.

16 January 2013

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Jimmy Spratt (Chairperson)
Mr John Dallat
Mr Stewart Dickson
Mr Ian McCrea
Mr David McNarry
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín

Witnesses:

Mr Scott Kennerley — *Consumer Council*
Mr Aodhan O'Donnell

176. **The Chairperson**: I welcome again Aodhan O'Donnell, who is director of policy at the Consumer Council, and Scott Kennerley, who is head of transport. You are both very welcome, gentlemen, to discuss the better use of public and community sector transport. Welcome to our inquiry. Papers are at section 5 of members' packs. Gentlemen, you have 10 minutes to make a presentation, and then leave yourselves open to questions.

177. **Mr Aodhan O'Donnell (Consumer Council)**: Thank you very much. Thanks again for hearing from the Consumer Council, this time on the issue of bus transport in your inquiry on public and community transport. Members have received the briefing paper that was submitted in September 2012, which outlines in more detail issues that we wanted the inquiry to potentially consider as part of the process and work that the Committee is taking forward. We have to say that we are very supportive of the Committee's focus on the use of public and community sector funds for bus transport provision. From the Consumer Council's point of view, it is one of the key issues that consumers engage with us on. They raise issues, enquiries and complaints about when the service is provided and accessibility or lack of availability in some areas, especially rural areas.

178. In our brief, we touched upon research that we have undertaken over the past number of years, particularly on issues of integration of bus services between different providers and some people's lack of access, particularly in rural areas, and the impact that that has had. We have also referred to work, which is in its final stages, that we have undertaken with the Patient and Client Council on the use of public transport to access healthcare and health facilities. That has raised issues about people missing appointments and not having access to different healthcare facilities.

179. To summarise the details that we provide in our response, we could break it down into three key areas that we think are issues to be considered as part of the inquiry. One is the issue of integration across services in who provides those services and how they can join up better to provide the passenger with the best experience, accessibility and availability of services. We would look towards greater collaboration and a collaborative approach across Departments with regard to how planning, funding and delivery of transport services are provided and, ultimately, a review of all services that are, at present, supported by public funds in order to ensure that they are being delivered as effectively and efficiently as possible to give passengers access to the services that they need and to provide value for money for the public purse.

180. To summarise, we have included in our brief four recommendations that we feel it would be useful for the inquiry to consider. The first is to assess whether transport services meet the needs of passengers in the most effective and cost-effective way. The second is to get a clear picture and understanding of all the funding that actually goes into the delivery of public transport services. The third is to look at the

recommendations and conclusions that will emerge from ongoing efficiency reviews into Translink, for example, and previous recommendations that have been provided in other efficiency reports as well. The fourth is to seek a commitment that there will be a collaborative approach to planning, funding and delivery of public transport that can be taken forward to ensure the most efficient use and provision of public transport.

181. We are also aware of the inquiry that the Committee is undertaking into transport delivery structures. We propose to provide a submission to that. I think that the closing date is this Friday. Some common issues and themes emerge across both pieces of work. As I say, the paper has more detail. That is a summary of our key issues and recommendations, and I am happy to have a discussion on that or to provide further detail on any of the research or answer questions that members may have.

182. **The Chairperson**: Thanks very much, Aodhan. I will start. Your paper refers to the PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) report on the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company. The report says that there needs to be fundamental change in the operating model and consideration of radical options. What fundamental changes should there be and what are the radical options? I notice that there are some ideas on car parking, retail, and so on, in relation to the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company. Its constitution or set-up is a bit of a mystery to most members of this Committee. Indeed, it is not very transparent — that is probably a good way to put it. What do you see as being the radical options?

183. **Mr O'Donnell**: It is a key issue for us. Those elements are taken from that PwC review and are the recommendations and options that were put forward. For us in the Consumer Council, the first stage of that is understanding the opportunities for reorganisation or for a fundamental review of the company itself. We have some frustration with the follow-up from the recommendations of the PwC report in 2010, and we believe that there should be more reporting on the recommendations that have been accepted as part of the PwC report and detail on how some of them have been enacted. Some of the recommendations are quite clear on opportunities for revenue growth or improving efficiencies, and, for us, it is difficult to see where some of the recommendations got traction and what progress has been made towards them. That is an issue for identifying where the company needs to go in the future.

184. **The Chairperson**: Transparency is a major issue. Are you fully clear about everything in the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company such as its assets, its set-up and its general day-to-day business? Are you totally clear on all that? I am not clear, and I think that most members of this Committee are probably not.

185. **Mr Scott Kennerley (Consumer Council)**: The Consumer Council agrees with that, Mr Chairman. We will go into that in more detail in our response to the comprehensive inquiry, which asks a specific question about the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company. It is essential for us that there is accountability and transparency for organisations involved in the delivery of public transport services.

186. I will link back to our response to this inquiry and pick up on a point that my colleague Aodhan made. There were two reviews, the first of which was the outline business case on public transport reform, and that contained some comments on efficiency. We then had the PwC report on the financial review of the company for the Department for Regional Development in 2010, and, in May 2012, the Minister announced the performance and efficiency delivery unit efficiency review of Translink. So, you could argue that there have been four efficiency reviews within a period of four years, and we do not see a transparent process that demonstrates progress against any of the recommendations. That is

why one of our recommendations to the Committee is that it seeks and is provided with a report that demonstrates what recommendations were accepted — some of them may not have been appropriate for whatever reason — what progress has been made and how improvements in efficiency have been identified and, more importantly, addressed.

187. **The Chairperson**: What research has the Consumer Council done into services that are provided by the health and education boards, etc? Recently, we visited a conference in London, where the local authorities have the governance role in health and education, as I am sure that you are well aware. We were impressed by some fairly significant savings that have come about as a result of working in a joined-up approach. Have you done any specific research into those areas, or have you any views on how there could be improved co-operation between the education boards and the health and social care trusts as they presently exist in Northern Ireland? Have you any views on how we might be able to get better joined-up working and thinking with the rural transport schemes and all the rest of it, so that there is more service for the consumer?

188. **Mr Kennerley**: We have not done any specific research that has looked at the potential savings that could be achieved by a more collaborative approach. We have looked at consumers' views on the transport services that they use. For example, the Transport Matters research that we looked at in 2011 asked young people about their experiences of using transport. They talked about the impact that a lack of transport had on their ability to attend after-school events and things like that. That was particularly pronounced in rural areas. In addition, we have looked at research in relation to health transport and some of the issues that people face. I think that one in five people had cancelled an appointment due to transport issues. That is not just public transport, but it is still a significant issue in relation to the provision of transport services.

189. The short answer to whether there is a joined-up approach from government and whether it could be better is yes. It needs to be looked at. It has been raised by us and has been recognised in the Assembly.

190. **The Chairperson**: Where have you raised the issue in terms of a better deal for the consumer?

191. **Mr Kennerley**: The Transport Matters research, for example, made the point that more efficiencies could potentially be achieved by looking at integrating services and a better joined-up approach from government. Specifically, the young people who were involved in the research identified a need to:

"Develop an integrated approach from all sectors providing transport including Translink, community transport, education and health transport and taxis to ensure services meet the needs of young people in rural areas."

192. That recommendation received support from the Committee for Regional Development in January 2011. It is an issue that has been debated in the Assembly; motions have been passed calling for the Minister for Regional Development and the Minister of Education to work together, and for the Minister for Regional Development and the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to work together. It is important to look at the potential for joined-up working. From 2015 on, we will have the new approach to regional transportation. We, as a member of the integrated transport steering group, recently had a presentation on how that approach will look at shaping investment from 2015 on. That will look at making investment decisions based on transport policy, but that is for only the Department for Regional Development. It is doing that in isolation; the Department of Education and the Health Department are not involved in that. So, it is an area that needs to be looked at if we are to change the status quo for the next comprehensive spending period.

193. **Mr O'Donnell**: The point of the question was to ask what the impact of better integration could be on the consumers of the future. The only research that we have been able to undertake is consumer views of existing services and provision. The Consumer Council could look for further engagement with the Committee on that to see what views and opinions there might be of future service provision if there were better integration across different providers. As I said, we can only test consumers' experience of what sits at the minute, but, if we were to have a better idea of how future integration would potentially work, we could do some further work on that.

194. **The Chairperson**: David, you have to leave the meeting early, so I will bring you in first.

195. **Mr McNarry**: That is very kind of you. Thank you. That was a very helpful submission. It is good to see written recommendations, and, as with the issue of water, it is interesting to see an emphasis on funding and efficiency. That seems to be a trend. It makes you wonder that if there were no Committee inquiries, what would people be getting away with, if I may use that term?

196. Gentlemen, would you welcome competition for the public transport contract, and do you have any views on Translink's procurement policy?

197. **Mr Kennerley**: The Consumer Council does not have a defined position on that. We are welcoming of healthy competition for consumers. Where potential competition exists in relation to the provision of public transport services, there is a danger that, if there are competing providers, the most profitable routes get a number of services on them but the —

198. **Mr McNarry**: That was not my question. My question was about competition for the contract.

199. **Mr Kennerley**: We have no objection to there being any competition for a contract for the provision of public transport services. The issue is about whether the introduction of competition would bring about the situation where the most profitable routes had a number of services available and the less profitable or unprofitable routes that are still socially necessary would see a deterioration in the services available. We would certainly have an issue with that.

200. **Mr McNarry**: What is your view on the procurement policy?

201. **Mr Kennerley**: Do you mean about how Translink purchases buses? I am not sure that I fully understand.

202. **Mr McNarry**: I am referring to the manner in which Translink procures transport equipment.

203. **Mr Kennerley**: We do not get involved in the operational aspects of how Translink purchases equipment, including whether it is getting the best value for the buses that it buys. We do not have a particular view on that. We do have a view on the importance of ensuring efficiency, accountability and transparency, but, as I mentioned earlier, we will probably describe that in more detail —

204. **Mr McNarry**: You have not identified a link between procurement and efficiencies?

205. **Mr Kennerley**: As a general broad-brush point, finding efficiencies and having accountability and transparency is essential to ensuring that the Committee and consumers have confidence that value for money is being delivered. We will provide a fuller response to the second inquiry.

206. **Mr Ó hOisín**: I will further that point slightly. That transparency and responsibility in expenditure is immeasurable in the current dispensation in that we have cross-departmental delivery of various transport models across the board. Particularly in rural areas, there is a potential diminution of public transport services and their non-replacement by the other alternatives, be that community transport, the health service or the education sector. That is where my concern lies. You obviously do

not believe that there is sufficient transparency. We have not been on a level playing field from the very start. What are your thoughts on that?

207. **Mr O'Donnell**: We are coming at it from the consumers' point of view, rather than as a provider of a transport service. It is clear to us that the consumer wants the service to be provided and, perhaps, has fewer views or thoughts about who is providing that service. They want to make sure that they have accessibility to public transport. We think that, because of the many Departments that have provided funding and the different resources and services that are provided, there is almost a need to take a clean piece of paper and get a handle on all the different funding and services that are being provided. No doubt, that will show up the fact that there are gaps in service provision and, maybe, risks to provision, especially in rural areas. However, there might also be duplication of services and other opportunities for greater efficiencies with regard to sharing resources and depots or some link around fuel or tyres. There might be opportunities for greater efficiencies on that basis. We agree with that position. There does need to be an overall assessment across Departments on what funding and services are being provided.

208. **Mr Ó hOisín**: It will be interesting to see how the pilot scheme works out in the Dungannon and Cookstown area, particularly with reference to the connection between Translink and community transport for the delivery of service within rural areas.

209. **Mr O'Donnell**: It is about the integration between services, but it is also about the co-ordination of services and whether people can move across from a community transport provider to the main public transport network. As you said, there are examples of pilots that have been under way, which will help to inform what works and what does not work so well.

210. **Mr Dallat**: Thank you for your presentation. In particular, I am looking at the statistics that you have unravelled for the rural communities. Quite frankly, they are shocking. Something like 18% of rural dwellers use public transport, and the satisfaction level among them is even worse. In your report, you have highlighted the lack of integration between the different providers of public transport. To help us in our inquiry, how do you suggest that we make our recommendations so that another Committee does not have this debate in 10 years' time, or whatever? We get the same complaints, but no solutions. Translink holds the whip. It makes all the decisions. How can we change that so that there is a level playing field and everybody, including community transport providers, is part of a team — all on the same playing field, at the same level — and integrated in terms of concessionary fares, timetables and everything else?

211. **Mr Kennerley**: A step in the right direction would be to create an environment where that can happen. I observed the Committee's evidence session last week. In her evidence, Kellie Armstrong from the Community Transport Association gave a good example of some of the issues that her members experience in relation to being able to deliver services. I believe that it was Mr McAleer who asked the question about whether it would be helpful if Departments were required to transport-proof their policies. The short answer to that is yes. It would be beneficial to creating an environment in which there is not a silo approach and in which organisations and Departments can work together.

212. During Kellie's evidence, she was asked a question and stated that Translink does not give information on community transport services through its call centres, for example. That is a particular issue for anybody who is wanting to plan their journey if they are unfamiliar with the area and the different services that are available. The provision of information is essential to enable people to plan their journey and access a service. If you do not have

all the information, it may appear that the journey you need to make cannot be achieved using the public transport services that are available. However, in the Department's response to the process for public transport reform consultation, it stated:

"The Department … plans to ensure that the Translink call centre provides travel information to customers of all … transport services (not just those of Translink)."

213. Therefore, the ideas are there. Those are things that a commitment has been given to. It is essential for the Committee to seek an outcome that will see a joined-up approach from government and create an environment in which service delivery agents can work together. That, I hope, will be an outcome of the mid-Ulster pilot.

214. **Mr Dallat**: Face it: our public transport system is largely an extended school bus service. How, with very limited resources, can we develop a public transport system that is fit for purpose and, at the same time, not a duplication of school transport?

215. **Mr Kennerley**: The first step, in a combination of the two inquiries, is to seek a review of the services currently being delivered against a travel-needs analysis so that we can see when, where and why people want to travel. You mentioned rural areas on a number of occasions. Public transport in rural areas is for many people a very difficult service to access. Our research into the cost of petrol and diesel shows that rural dwellers are paying considerably more for their petrol and cannot access an alternative. Fewer people use public transport in rural areas, because there is less of it available.

216. **Mr Dickson**: Thank you for speaking to us today. In the recommendations, you quote PwC as saying:

"there would need to be a fundamental change in the operating model and consideration of radical options."

217. Will you take me through what might be a radical option for the now-approved Belfast rapid transit system? Would a radical option be for Translink not to be the operator of that? If it were not, who would you see operating the service and how? That is my first question.

218. I would like to get your wider view on the role of the Transport Holding Company. I know that the Chair and others would also like to get a view on that.

219. **The Chairperson**: It is very difficult to get that.

220. **Mr Dickson**: Finally, there is reference in the recommendations to the potential for charging, or getting additional income from what looks to be, from what I read here, park-and-ride facilities. In other words, you have to pay to park before you can ride. Do you consider that to be an incentive or disincentive to people coming off the road and on to public transport?

221. **Mr Kennerley**: I will clarify something around our submission and the recommendations from the PwC report. Those are PwC's recommendations. They are not ours.

222. **Mr Dickson**: I understand that.

223. **Mr Kennerley**: The point that we were trying to illustrate is that those recommendations were made back in 2010. We still do not know what, if any, progress has been made against them.

224. As to whether the bus rapid transit system is a radical option or a game-changer, my understanding is that the original plan was that it would not necessarily be a given that Translink would be the provider of that service and that it would go out to open tender. However, that was changed.

225. **Mr Dickson**: I do not think we actually know, do we?

226. **The Committee Clerk**: My understanding is that there were some soft soundings of other operators in the system. They came back with an indication that there may be difficulties with integrating the rapid transit system with the remainder of Translink's services. Under EU legislation, the Department could appoint a preferred provider.

227. **Mr Dickson**: I am just seeking your views. You represent the voice of the consumer, so what is your view on that?

228. **Mr Kennerley**: As long as consumers get from where they are to where they want to go in a reasonable time and at a reasonable cost, there will not be a particular issue with who is providing that service. As I said, as long as it is a good service that represents good value for money. I think that that is the essential point, and that links into the view of the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company. I hope that the Committee will receive a clear view from the Consumer Council regarding the Transport Holding Company and its relationship with the Department in our response to the second inquiry, which illustrates challenges to accountability and transparency that not only we but the Committee have experienced.

229. **Mr Dickson**: What about the parking charges?

230. **Mr Kennerley**: There was a recommendation from PwC, and we would like to see incentives that encourage private car users away from their car and on to a public transport service.

231. **Mr Dickson**: Are you saying yes or no to that as a recommendation?

232. **Mr O'Donnell**: Park-and-ride facilities have been shown to be very successful, especially in areas outside Belfast. Where costs have not been applied to a park-and-ride facility, I would prefer not to see a cost applied, as anything that disincentivises people from travelling by bus could increase the commute of people travelling in and out of Belfast.

233. **The Chairperson**: OK, Stewart. You do not look very happy or are you happy enough?

234. **Mr Dickson**: I am.

235. **Mr I McCrea**: A pilot was carried out in the constituency of Mid Ulster, and, as someone who complains regularly that the rural communities are left behind when it comes to public transport, I can understand some of the reasons behind it. Nonetheless, it is difficult to explain to people — especially those in Mid Ulster, where two thirds of the population live in rural areas — why they should be treated less equally than those living in urban areas. How do you see that pilot working and ensuring that people who live in rural areas get the service that they require? In dealing with the community transport issue and the Department of the Environment's responsibilities over the licensing and for changing that, how do you see it going forward? What role will you play in that, and what is your opinion of it?

236. **Mr Kennerley**: There are two key things with the Mid Ulster pilot: it has huge potential to change the way in which transport services are planned and delivered in Northern Ireland, but it also faces huge challenges from a legislative point of view over licensing, and so forth. It is basically about getting everybody together to work towards the common outcome of achieving better engagement and better service delivery for transport in that area, although many of the service providers may still be shackled by the existing silo environment. That will be a huge challenge to overcome.

237. We are planning to be involved in the pilot at some stage so that we can give consumers the opportunity to get involved or engaged. This is basically a pilot to look at what the public transport reform process termed as "local public transport plans". Local public transport plans have the potential to change the way in which communities and stakeholders in urban and rural areas get a say in the transport needs that they have in their area, and how those needs can be matched against the available resources, as opposed to the other way around.

238. **Mr I McCrea**: If the change to the legislation for licensing and whatnot has a more detrimental impact on how the community transport service is provided, surely, although it is outside the remit of the Committee in that sense, it is important that the concerns and the

issues be a key part of moving this forward, even given any changes to the legislation. Hopefully, the outcome of the pilot will bring about those things.

239. **Mr O'Donnell**: That has to be part of it. If we are trying to encourage integration across different services, anything that can prevent that from happening or has the potential to stop that happening, such as legislative changes around licensing, has to be addressed and attempted to be dealt with.

240. You are right about the opportunity for a pilot to influence the public transport reform process. That is a good place for it to go into, to influence how local transport plans are being produced. There will have to be some consideration of how that works or what differences need to be taken account of between an urban area, which will have different transport requirements and potentially different transport providers, and the rural transport provision. Based on the fact that around 45% of our population live in rural areas, so what is required for urban transport provision is almost equal.

241. **The Chairperson**: Thank you very much for your input. The Committee has further questions, but we will write to you with them and ask you to respond.

16 January 2013

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Jimmy Spratt (Chairperson)
Mr John Dallat
Mr Stewart Dickson
Mr Ian McCrea
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín

Witnesses:

Ms Thelma Dillon	*North Coast Community Transport*
Ms Marie McGinnis	
Mr Billy Moore	

242. **The Chairperson**: I welcome representatives of North Coast Community Transport (NCCT): Billy Moore, who is its manager; Marie McGinnis, who is its director; and Thelma Dillon, who is the chairperson of the Causeway Older Active Strategic Team (COAST). You are very welcome to the Committee. You have 10 minutes in which to make a presentation, and then I ask that you leave yourselves open to questions.

243. **Mr Billy Moore (North Coast Community Transport)**: Thank you. This will be a team effort. I will start by giving a short introduction about myself. I have been in post as manager of North Coast Community Transport for almost seven years. I was involved in one of the Department for Regional Development (DRD) rural transport funds pilot projects — Dial a Lift — before the service was rolled out across the Province. I worked with the Department on the development of the transport scheduling software, which was then introduced to all rural community partnerships delivering rural transport fund (RTF) services. I serve on the committee of COAST with Thelma, and I also serve on the committee of Be Safe, Be Well (BSBW) in Limavady.

244. **Ms Marie McGinnis (North Coast Community Transport)**: I am the director and a volunteer committee member. I have helped to guide the company over the past six years. I have extensive experience of working with older people in my role with Ageing Well Roe Valley over 10 years, and I was instrumental in securing £1 million of lottery funding for the Be Safe, Be Well project, which was rolled out in Limavady borough, running various programmes for disadvantaged people.

245. **Ms Thelma Dillon (North Coast Community Transport)**: As the Chairperson said, I am chair of the Causeway Older Active Strategic Team. COAST is a subregional network and has been working in partnership to plan the way forward to serve the best interests of older people in the Limavady, Moyle, Ballymoney and Coleraine council areas. COAST works in partnership with statutory, community and voluntary organisations across a wide range of service areas, including health, housing, education, transport and local government. Our aim is to improve the quality of life, health and well-being of older people in those areas and to promote equal access to services. We are a voice for older people.

246. **Ms McGinnis**: I will give you a bit of background about North Coast Community Transport. It was formed in 2000 and was originally known as Roe Valley Rural Transport, covering the Limavady borough. The name was changed in October 2010 when we were asked by DRD to deliver rural transport fund services in the Moyle and Ballymena boroughs. It expanded again in April 2011 when we were asked to deliver services in Coleraine and Ballymoney boroughs. NCCT is a registered charity and operates as a not-for-profit organisation. We have achieved Investors in People and Investors in Volunteers awards, and we now have offices in Limavady and Ballycastle.

247. We currently have 3,000 individuals registered for the Dial a Lift service and 650 registered groups. Passengers are mainly older people, people with disabilities and those living in rural areas who are unable to access or use conventional public or private transport.

248. Last year, we completed approximately 165,000 passenger trips, and we currently operate a fleet of 20 accessible minibuses. For larger groups, we also have access to larger coaches by working in partnership with various private operators.

249. We employ 35 people either on a full-time or casual basis and have 25 volunteer car drivers, who are registered with our organisation, assisting with the delivery of our Dial a Lift service.

250. We are in the process of developing our trading arm to help generate additional funds to support our charitable work. We have five in-house trainers who carry out various transport-related courses, ensuring that all drivers, office staff, board members and volunteers receive the relevant training.

251. **Ms Dillon**: I will deal with the issue of assessing public and community bus transport requirements. Owing to the lack of available information, it is difficult to comment on the public transport delivered by Translink. However, NCCT, as part of its recent efficiencies, always tries to link passengers to the mainline service of Translink, thus avoiding unnecessary duplication.

252. NCCT's membership continues to grow, showing the need for isolated individuals to access shops, local healthcare, recreation, education and church. Indications show a 20% increase on last year's passenger trips, and that is typical of growth over the past five years. We also link isolated individuals to mainline Translink services for travel outside our operational area.

253. We are an ageing society, which explains the continued annual growth in membership, passenger trips and the need for the service.

254. **Mr Moore**: I will deal with the issue of assessing current public and community sector bus transport infrastructure and costs. NCCT receives grant funding from DRD to provide Dial a Lift services, while the urban Door-2-Door scheme is tendered for and provided by private operators. We believe that integration of those services would prove more cost-effective by utilising current resources.

255. NCCT's operational area includes four urban towns. Our vehicles and volunteer car drivers are constantly in those towns with rural clients and could easily accommodate the additional urban clients, thus providing huge savings. By integrating services, NCCT believes that double the current urban Door-2-Door trips could be provided with the same budget.

256. A review of the urban Door-2-Door scheme may show that tendering is not the most effective solution for the delivery of DRD services and that it has a negative impact on the user. Non-viable routes delivered by Translink could be an option for community transport, using smaller vehicles and linking to mainline service routes. That could prove a more cost-effective use of public funds. However, DRD has already confirmed that applications for a route permit will be limited to commercial, profit-making companies only.

257. **Ms McGinnis**: I will deal with the issue of assessing current interrelationships in the delivery of public and community bus operations. NCCT links clients to mainline Translink services where possible, ensuring efficient use of public funds. It works with Translink to provide better access to hospitals in the Coleraine and Ballymena areas. NCCT believes that consideration should be given to having bus stops close to each hospital, allowing individuals to access appointments.

258. **Ms Dillon**: I will deal with the issue of identifying best practice in the provision of integrated public and community bus transport options. NCCT believes that it demonstrates best practice for transport delivery in the north coast area by

working in partnership with Translink, the private sector and voluntary and community organisations.

259. For large group travel, we engage with several private operators. Last year, NCCT passed £20,000 worth of business to private operators. In addition, we have assessed £25,000 worth of applications to the rural transport fund voucher scheme, again supporting the private operator.

260. For small groups, we encourage volunteers to train as drivers for their groups, thus reducing the cost of travel. For Dial a Lift services, we use our minibuses and our volunteer car scheme to deliver the most cost-effective and flexible transport solutions.

261. The volunteer car scheme currently delivers 36% of Dial a Lift services, thus reducing the cost to the public purse. That commitment will be lost if DRD decides to tender the service.

262. NCCT receives 20,000 volunteer hours a year. The Department of the Environment's (DOE) proposed changes to licensing could also have a huge impact on how services are delivered in future. Volunteering in the sector as we know it would cease to exist. The cost per trip would increase, resulting in fewer trips for the same money.

263. **Mr Moore**: I will deal with considering options for the future provision of public and community bus transport. We want to ensure that continued financial support is made available to community transport suppliers to meet the needs of individuals who find it difficult or impossible to access local services because of the lack of appropriate transport.

264. We want to engage with other Departments to consider integrating services with better use of resources. For example, the amalgamation of DRD's public transport budget with the money that is spent on transport by the Health and Education Departments would create the opportunity for better planning of resources. It would provide a better service for the public, reduce duplication and integrate transport to create huge savings.

265. We want to engage with DOE to ensure that the proposed changes to operator licensing do not have a negative impact on the most vulnerable in society and the voluntary sector. We want to address the procurement of services, and we understand that, on occasion, tendering may not be the most appropriate or cost-effective option.

266. **The Chairperson**: Thank you for your presentation. It does not surprise me, nor will it surprise any other member of the Committee that, in your presentation, you mentioned the lack of transparency and the unavailability of information from Translink. I assume that, as is normal with this Committee and with Members who ask questions in this place, you come up against the commercial confidentiality clause that Translink trots out fairly regularly when it does not want to be transparent or answer questions.

267. How does that affect your day-to-day business as a community transport provider? Were that information available to you, to what extent would it allow you to provide better services? Translink has no competition, so with no competition it can simply go behind that cover, time after time. There is not a member at this table who has not received similar answers to questions that they have posed to the Department or to Translink on a plethora of finance issues whenever its representatives have appeared before this Committee. Much of Translink's money comes from the public purse, and the relevant information should be open, clear and transparent to us all. What are your views on Translink in that regard?

268. **Mr Moore**: I need to be careful because I do not know enough in depth about Translink, which is a large organisation. I can talk only from an NCCT perspective. We are currently having meetings with Translink in the Moyle council area. We are trying to be more efficient by not taking people to the Causeway Hospital, which is outside the Moyle district, and

therefore we need to link to Translink's services.

269. Those meetings take place regularly and are proving to be productive. However, as Thelma can attest to, the problem is that the service takes people to Coleraine bus station and not to the hospital. I said that we should look at having bus stops at the hospital so that people can have access. If DRD is saying that Dial a Lift cannot take them that distance, how do they get there? We are quite happy to link them. However, they must get closer to the hospital. People who are ill cannot have three or four stops before they get to their appointment.

270. **The Chairperson**: Are you saying that there are no stops at the hospital?

271. **Mr Moore**: What a patient has to do is go to Coleraine bus station. Then, every half hour, a bus that passes the hospital leaves the bus station. I am saying that the last stop before going to the bus station should be the hospital.

272. **The Chairperson**: Absolutely. It is appalling that that is not the case.

273. **Mr Moore**: If that were the case, it would tie in with what we are trying to achieve, which is more efficiencies by linking to Translink. We are more than happy to do so.

274. **The Chairperson**: Billy, what excuses does Translink give on that particular issue? I assume that some of you have raised the stop issue?

275. **Mr Moore**: I am not sure that "excuses" is the right word. What I can say is that discussions are ongoing. We have raised the issue, and Translink has looked at it. It said that it will look at it again. I believe that there is a bus stop at Antrim Area Hospital, which is fantastic. However, I am fighting for one in Coleraine. We are saying that we cannot do it. We are getting grief from MLAs and councillors as to why we are not doing it. If we were linked to Translink, it must be able to provide that. If it wants to provide it, it needs to have a bus stop at the hospital.

276. **The Chairperson**: If you travel in places, such as Edinburgh, where there is a good transport system, you see that buses go through hospital grounds to drop people off.

277. **Mr Moore**: That is a great idea.

278. **The Chairperson**: For how long have you been trying to resolve that issue with Translink?

279. **Mr Moore**: I was introduced to it only around three or four meetings back. I know that Moyle District Council has been having meetings with Translink for quite a while. Yes, it is slow. I am not sure why decisions are made or who makes decisions on whether there should be a bus stop at the hospital. At our most recent meeting, we were told that Translink would look at it. Hopefully, when we have our next meeting, it may have an answer for us.

280. **Ms Dillon**: I would like to come in on that, Chair. Our concern is for the isolated, lonely person in the glens who may live a mile away from the nearest bus stop. How does that person get to the bus stop? That is why the Dial a Lift service, which is run by volunteers, is essential to the rural community.

281. **The Chairperson**: It is absolutely appalling. I think that that hospital is one of the newest in Northern Ireland. It is just appalling that public transport — all bus services — does not, at some point, go through the grounds. Do the buses that travel to Belfast stop at the hospital?

282. **Mr Moore**: That service is the bus that leaves the station every half hour and stops at the hospital. It means that the patient has to go to the bus station in Coleraine and wait on that bus to go to the hospital. I do not think that that should be the case.

283. **The Chairperson**: No. It is absolutely appalling. I agree with you.

284. What issues, if any, have emerged that are an impediment to the trial programme that you are running with

Translink? How would you remedy those issues?

285. **Mr Moore**: Do you mean the trial programme from Ballycastle to Coleraine?

286. **The Chairperson**: Yes, that trial programme, not the one that we have just discussed.

287. **Mr Moore**: Again, I think that that is the only issue. I do not think that there is any other issue. If there were that bus stop in the Coleraine hospital grounds, and buses from the glens and Ballycastle stopped there, that would solve a lot of problems. As I said, there is already a stop at Antrim Area Hospital. I do not know about other hospitals throughout the country. Certainly, the Coleraine hospital needs a bus stop. That is it. I do not have any other real issues or meetings about issues with Translink at this time.

288. **The Chairperson**: Members, one thing that we need to put very clearly and formally on the record is that Translink and the Department should tap formally into any planning, particularly for a hospital or suchlike. Obviously, that is not being done, but it certainly should be done. We need to put that on the record formally.

289. Finally, before I pass to someone else, have you heard the term "commercial confidentiality"? Do you recognise that term? Does Translink hide behind it and not give transparent answers?

290. **Mr Moore**: The information that we as a company take from Translink is very limited. Yes, perhaps, we have heard the term. However, it has not really affected North Coast Community Transport. I know that, from the point of view of transparency, we are funded by the same body — DRD's transport fund. We are audited, so we have to have financial returns and to record absolutely everything, down to the last detail, about what we do with our funds. I have no problem with that; that is exactly how it should be done. However, again, I cannot comment on Translink's reporting or confidentiality procedures.

291. **The Chairperson**: I agree with you that that is the way that it should be done. That is the way that Translink should be doing it as well. That is an issue that this Committee will keep banging on about.

292. **Mr Dickson**: Thank you very much for coming to us and for being very helpful. I congratulate you on the service that you deliver, particularly as that is done by volunteers.

293. You raised with us two areas of your submission. The Chair perhaps dealt with one of them, which is a lack of information from Translink. You are trying to link passengers into mainline services, and I guess that most of that relates to the hospital issue. Are there other mainline services that you find it difficult to link passengers to?

294. The second area concerns community planning. If and when the local government reforms go through, the new councils will have community planning responsibilities. Do you think that that would be useful, and do you want to become involved in it? Do think that Translink should also be a player in it?

295. **Mr Moore**: If I can just take your second point first, I think that that would be very useful and that Translink should be involved in it. All transport suppliers, including us, should be involved in it. At times, taxis are better options, and community transport is better at other times. We have to investigate them all, which is the only way to get the right answer. Above all, we are doing this not to tick a box but to ensure that the people's needs are met. That is the key in all this. At too many of the meetings that we have attended with high-ranking officials from DOE, DRD or wherever, I have not heard enough talked about the needs of the people. The talk is about procurement policies and this legislation and that. Surely while doing all that, we have to think about the needs of the people, because the bottom line is that that is who we are trying to serve.

296. Could you please repeat the first part of your question?

297. **Mr Dickson**: It was about the connection with Translink and how co-operative it is with you in linking passengers into its mainline services.

298. **Mr Moore**: It is OK. Mr Dallat made a point in the previous presentation about the public transport service. Once the school stops, there is very little in rural areas. There is little or nothing. I looked around your area, and I found that the likes of Feeny and Magilligan and such places do not get enough services at all. We are more than happy to be involved more in linking into the mainline services, and I think that it would be more cost-effective if we could be involved in that. I was here last week, and I think that one of the MLAs who sits on this Committee said that that was a no-brainer. That is exactly what it is.

299. **Mr Ó hOisín**: Thank very much you, Billy, Marie and Thelma. As a former mayor of the borough of Limavady, I am acutely aware of all the issues that you have brought up to the Committee. I am aware of the good work that you have done down through the years and, indeed, of the difficulties that you have had in tying together services between Translink and yourselves. I met with Translink as recently as last Friday to discuss the same issue. It seems as though you are servicing the service routes, but it seems that it is not servicing anything whatsoever that you are doing.

300. I am also interested, naturally, in finding out what sort of preparatory work might have been done with a view to looking at a pilot scheme that has come out of Dungannon and Cookstown. I was surprised and disappointed to find out that very little has been done on that count. The Chair and Mr Dickson obviously brought out those points. The issue is relevant not only to the Causeway Hospital at Coleraine but to Altnagelvin. Someone living in, say, Park village has to take three buses to get to Altnagelvin, which is just over 10 miles away. That is a very unsatisfactory situation. However, I do not want to labour that point, because other members have done that already.

301. Could I just say about the training that you have provided down through the years that I was very privileged to have done the MiDAS training twice with you. I know how important that is with voluntary and community groups, GAA clubs, Churches and all the rest of it. That is essential. In real terms, what impact would the change to licensing have? Are we talking numbers? What impact would that have on the provision of that level of transport in the voluntary and community sector, particularly in rural areas?

302. **Mr Moore**: At this moment, of the changes proposed by the DOE, licensing is probably our biggest fear. I believe that this is a box-ticking exercise at times and that the needs of the people have not been thought about at all.

303. In our presentation, we mentioned that we think that we have a really good example of best practice on the north coast. In Ballycastle and in the glens of Antrim, we have a huge number of volunteer drivers who drive for local groups such as footballers, etc. That service reduces the costs, which is how they can afford to operate. If they had to pay for commercial licensing, they could not afford to provide that. For example, our volunteers can deliver Dial-a-Lift for what we pay them, which is at an average of £5·51 a trip. These are rural areas, so you must understand the miles that they have to cover. Our volunteers do 1,270 passenger trips a month in the northern coast area. If we were to go commercial, that would be lost. My fear is that, if that were taken up on a commercial basis, only the same budget would be available, so you would not get 1,270 trips. That would mean that the number could reduce. So, that will not meet the needs of the people. We need to do this in the most efficient and cost-effective way, which is what we aim to do.

304. We have been through mergers in the Coleraine and north Antrim areas. A transition period is involved, and that takes time. We have found that our costs have dropped dramatically from last year to this, and I can see that

as we recruit volunteers. We are on a recruitment drive at the moment in the Kilrea, Garvagh and Ballymoney areas, which were low in volunteer numbers. So, we can again reduce the cost-per-trip figure for the Department. Does that answer your question?

305. **Mr Ó hOisín**: I think that there is a recurring theme in all the presentations that we have had: the co-ordination of transport provision across the board. I think that it is incumbent on us to drill down into that. Thank you, Bill.

306. **Mr I McCrea**: Thank you for your presentation. Following on from what was asked previously, I firmly believe that community transport should be more about the people rather than the service telling people where they can go, what type of trips are available and whether they can or cannot take people who live in certain parts to hospital appointments that are beyond certain distances.

307. I think that things have gone a wee bit mad with some of those decisions. We have to more or less work with what is there, but that does not take away from our considering this matter and looking at how people get access to public transport, whether it is through community transport or being taken to a bus station and having to find your own way, which is a lot more difficult and a lot less personal. The good work that you and other community transport associations comes in by giving that personal touch to people.

308. I will get to my question, before I am frowned upon.

309. **The Chairperson**: I am just about to remind you.

310. **Mr I McCrea**: In delivering all this and in taking into consideration the mergers that have taken place and that are taking place, in the desire to make efficiencies, have you seen a model of good practice on how this could be delivered that would make sure that people get the best service?

311. **Mr Moore**: Do you mean only community transport?

312. **Mr I McCrea**: I mean community transport and how it merges into the wider provision.

313. **Mr Moore**: There used to be 19 community transport areas. DRD is trying to get that down to seven, so it now funds seven areas. I was always in favour of that, and I believe that it has shown efficiencies. Through greater flexibility in the use of vehicles throughout the areas, we now find that less money is spent for more services. We were £44,000 less well off last year, but we are going to do 6,500 more trips. That is simply because of the efficiencies that the Department asked us to concentrate on. We are playing ball with the Department by doing that. Salaries alone from the old three partnerships have reduced by £97,000 a year. From April to November this year, the difference in what we can pay out to volunteers for their costs can give us annual savings of £42,500 a year. So, the integration of all that, with different areas coming together and working as a bigger organisation, can help us to reduce the cost. Does that answer your question?

314. **Mr I McCrea**: It does in a sense. I think that the theme that we should integrate all these services is coming out loud and clear.

315. **Mr Moore**: I will follow that up by saying that I believe that more has to happen. It is very difficult for us. We have made several presentations to health bodies, for example. I served on the western transport forum. Health representatives on that forum really wanted to involve community transport, as they said that we could save them money. Indeed, they had us make a presentation to some of the top people in the Western Trust. We thought that the presentation, which was done by representatives from Fermanagh and Strabane, as well as by me, was pretty well received. However, we never heard another thing from them.

316. Last week, Easilink made a presentation that touched on the uneconomical runs that are done. The reason that we were approached by the Western Trust is that it found that some runs were uneconomical. I will give one example. In Limavady, I watch a £75,000 bus taking four or five people to a day care centre. The driver parks the bus up, puts his feet on the steering wheel, gets out the paper and reads it all day before taking those four or five people back. As a transport manager, I know that that is hugely costly. There is the depreciation in the value of the bus, the cost of insurance, the driver's wages, fuel costs — the lot — to consider. If that bus were not there and we were employed to do that small run, that £75,000 could be put into front line health services. That is why we need the integration of transport.

317. **Mr Dallat**: Billy, I listened very carefully to your presentation. If we could take your model, put it into a report and replicate it across Northern Ireland, I would say that your trip here today had been well worthwhile. However, you said that you made a presentation to the Western Trust but never heard from it again. We, collectively, want to ensure that your vast experience can be spun out to the benefit of the rest of Northern Ireland. I am very conscious that good practice is sometimes highly dependent on the individuals who are carrying it out. I am forced to sit and look at that picture of the Assembly on the wall over there, and I am aware that only 27 of the original Members are still here. I am not preaching your demise. However, what could we put into our report to ensure that your experience of amalgamations and all that stuff is used to give us a model of community transport in the future that is fit for purpose? You are right: previous experiments have failed, and people do not listen.

318. **Mr Moore**: Mr Dallat, thank you very much. My first thought is that the Departments need dialogue with each other. We have a fear about what is happening with DOE at the moment. I think that I made this point at a previous meeting, but I ask this Committee to engage with the Committee for the Environment to discuss the impact that those changes could have on communities, because that is the key. If you sat down and looked at it, you would realise the damage that could be done by ticking a box. Our communities could be destroyed by that. So, I believe that that dialogue is the starting point.

319. We are at ground level. We know exactly what people need. We have worked with them, and we know them by their first names now. This will not go away. If these changes are made to the operator's licence, the situation will only get worse. Volunteers and community hubs will disappear. I ask this Committee to please talk to the Committee for the Environment to try to ensure that some of the proposed changes are looked at again.

320. **The Chairperson**: Billy, to clarify for you and members, we are calling DOE officials to the Committee to discuss the licensing issues that we have about heard loud and clear from not only you today but other witnesses in previous weeks.

321. **Mr Dallat**: I am sure that other members will agree that it is not often that people take the trouble to write to you to say that something is good. I am happy to put it on the record that I regularly get letters from older people from across that geographical area from Ballycastle to Limavady who deeply appreciate the type of service that is on offer. They are generally people who had a car for a lifetime. They are no longer mobile, but they feel privileged that they are still able to make appointments and so on that they would not have been able to do otherwise. I think that our report would be highly valuable if it could protect those people by producing a model that delivers that service.

322. **Ms McGinnis**: Thank you for your kind remarks. I have been part of the merger from day one. I thank Billy, our manager, for his incredible vision. We also received very strong support from the Department of Agriculture and

Rural Development and the Community Transport Association, as well as the best legal advice. Everything worked along the way, because the best people were engaged in the merger. Lots of days were spent going up and down and treating individuals. It involved TUPE and so forth. It is thanks to everybody that we have a very strong model today. That model works very well; it is very successful, and we are very proud of it.

323. **The Chairperson**: Finally, Billy, I want to ask you about the new transport section that the Department has announced. In your view, will that new body in the Department fulfil the scope of integrating public transport across all the relevant sectors?

324. **Mr Moore**: I am not clear about either that body or your question.

325. **The Chairperson**: The Department has announced that there will be a body in the Department — I am not sure whether it has a name yet — to oversee the scoping. Maybe I am not explaining this very well. There will be a joined-up approach involving all the relevant sectors, including your sector, health and so on. I just wondered whether you had any views on that. However, if you are not au fait with the announcement that has been made, it is probably better —

326. **Mr Moore**: I would not say that I am au fait with it. However, as we mentioned, it has been shown that the integration of services is very important. I look at transport, and I see that there is Translink, community transport, health transport and education transport. I know that there is efficiency to be made somewhere in there if we could all come together. Budgets are limited, and they are getting tighter and tighter. We fear that the people in need will be affected, as it is always the most vulnerable who seem to suffer. There is probably enough money in all those budgets to deliver to meet the needs of the people, but it will not happen if we all work in isolation.

327. **The Chairperson**: That was a very helpful presentation, and I thank you for it. I am sure that we will speak to you again at some stage. In the meantime, thank you. I wish you well. There were certainly some very favourable comments about your operation, so I congratulate you on that.

23 January 2013

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Jimmy Spratt (Chairperson)
Mr Seán Lynch (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Stewart Dickson
Mrs Dolores Kelly
Mr Ian McCrea
Mr David McNarry

Witnesses:

Mr Bernard Clarke *Translink*
Ms Michelle Rafferty
Mr Ciarán Rogan

328. **The Chairperson**: I welcome officials from Translink: Ciarán Rogan, Michelle Rafferty and Bernard Clarke. You are all very welcome to the Committee. You have about 10 minutes to make a presentation, and then leave yourself open to questions.

329. **Mr Ciarán Rogan (Translink)**: Thank you, Chairman. I am joined by Bernard Clarke, who is our research and technical support manager. He has a broad overview of community and rural transport in the organisation. I am also joined by Michelle Rafferty, who is our project manager for rural transport. She is the face-to-face, day-to-day point of liaison with community transport. I am very grateful for the invitation. We provided a submission to the inquiry, and also a copy of a presentation that I made to an open session that was hosted by the Committee — last August, I think it was. We are not going to go through those page by page; we will just pick up on a few salient points.

330. It was very interesting today and over the past number of weeks to listen in on the evidence provided by other organisations that are involved in community transport. What is coming across very loud and clear is that the key to effective community transport and transport for rural areas is partnership. It is very positive, from our point of view, to hear quite a few of the organisations — most recently the Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC) today — talking about the very positive engagement that they have with Translink in that broad area.

331. Translink's scheduled service — the public transport network — is one part of the overall community transport mix, along with the likes of shared services, flexible services, demand-responsive services, Dial-a-Ride, Door-2-Door, and the education and health transport operations. The task, as Michael Lorimer from IMTAC pointed out a number of times, should be to see how best connections can be made with the scheduled services network of Translink. That is principally from the point of view of value for money and effectiveness, because the public transport network clearly provides the coverage and reach to all parts of Northern Ireland. From a value-for-money point of view, it is clearly significantly cheaper to transport people on scheduled services than to provide bespoke services on an almost individual location basis. As was pointed out, significant amounts of money have been spent on investing in the public transport services that we have to make them fully accessible for wheelchair users, for example. We should look to exploit that level of accessibility where possible.

332. Generally, it is fair to say that, as the Committee recognised previously and as research clearly shows, the level of coverage, scope and geographical reach of rural services in Northern Ireland is significantly higher than equivalent areas in GB and the Republic of Ireland. That is a benefit that should be leveraged and optimised as far as possible.

333. The presentation that I gave more broadly last August talked not just about the scheduled services that we have and the need to access those

services, but about some of the co-operation that exists beyond feeding into scheduled services. Those fall into three broad areas. First, we co-operate very closely in terms of fleet. We provide to community transport groups, which run minibuses, engineering services and maintaining that fleet for them. That co-operation has been in place for the past 12 years, and there is a fleet of 41 vehicles funded by the rural transport fund, operated by the community transport groups, which we basically maintain. Those were originally procured on behalf of the Department for Regional Development (DRD) by us.

334. Secondly, we have been working increasingly closely in the broad area of information, including, where possible, community transport partnership services broadly within the remit of, for example, our public transport maps. Where we provide information, we seek, as far as possible, to have community transport included in the information, even to the point where, for example, late last year, we had a visit from community transport personnel to our contact centre so that they could be made more aware of the services that we offer to make it easier for them to provide information about and linkages to the scheduled services network.

335. Lastly, I will not dwell on it, but the example of the service from Enniskillen to Altnagelvin Hospital was put together in partnership between us and local community transport groups. As you heard, it is a scheduled service. We assist it by producing material, and we rely on community transport and the health authorities to put out the information on when appointments are being made and, as far as possible, to schedule appointments. That is really the way that the thing should work.

336. It is interesting to hear from Seán that there is a degree of scepticism in some areas as to whether it is actually happening and whether all the parties are delivering, but it is a model that is worth pursuing because it really is dipping the toe in the water in trying to integrate our own scheduled services with things such as appointments for hospitals and health services, etc. That is increasingly the way to go, and we fully endorse the idea that we, as a transport service, and the likes of the education authorities and the health authority, should work more closely. We welcome what is happening in the Dungannon area by way of a pilot to take that further.

337. At this stage, I will hand over to Bernard and Michelle. Bernard will take you through some of the high-level statistics in respect of rural transport, and Michelle will give you a flavour of how we work day to day.

338. **Mr Bernard Clarke (Translink)**: Thanks. Originally, I was going to take you through some high-level statistics, but having listened to the previous submission and having read the Hansard reports, I think that we should dwell on certain elements that Translink brings to the table.

339. Translink's role in rural transport is one of many functions, and Michelle is our project manager in that. We have a contract with the Department to administer £1 million of funding and deliver services, and they have evolved over the years. Typically, close to 40 services are supported under that, and, currently, their ridership is about 168,000. Michelle will develop the day-to-day contact and the outreach that we can do and have been doing and various schemes, but I come to the table to give you an insight into what Translink's strengths are. We administer the mainstream public transport networks. In the context of rural transport, we have a skeleton network, which we provided you with a copy of as an annex to our submission, and which is widely publicised. That highlights the links to community transport in areas that, up to recently, changed, and they reduced the number and the areas of operation had changed. That gives you an insight into the collaboration that has started to be done.

340. As a public transport operator, we are good at trying to schedule, in the best

possible and most efficient way, to meet passenger demand as we know it. That does not say that we have all the answers to all the questions. We continuously do market research. Even within the rural transport funded programme, we are very active, and we can give you an insight into some of the findings we are getting on the 294, what is good and bad about it, and maybe we can develop the comments that were made about the local knowledge of that service.

341. We like to think of Translink as a company that can be radical and innovative when it is allowed. That may bring a gasp from members but we have, within the planning context, agitated for and got changes. The biggest bugbear of my life is trying to retrofit solutions, and an awful lot of conversation to date has been about travel needs for hospital appointments. The problem has really been the land-use planning that has been done to date and the involvement of and taking on board advice from the public transport operator as to how best to service that new location, be it Antrim or the south-west.

342. It is only relatively recently, and I give credit where credit is due, that the new acute hospital in Enniskillen has enshrined in its planning permission support for public transport services. That means that that location is accessible, and, hopefully, that will develop. There are plenty of locations, be they hospitals, new education campuses or the Belfast Metropolitan College, or even the relocation of Jordanstown, where the silo mentality that was identified comes to bear. People who have a sole interest in only certain specifics of a project do not stray into transport needs. That is one of the great difficulties we have.

343. I should like to hand over to Michelle, who will give you an insight into the day-to-day linkages we have on the community transport fund. We will be only too happy to take questions afterwards.

344. **Ms Michelle Rafferty (Translink)**: The funding allocated to Translink under the rural transport fund is governed by terms and conditions contained in a financial memorandum between Translink and DRD. The current financial memorandum covers the three-year period from April 2012. That agreement stipulates reporting arrangements, with which we are fully compliant. They include the monthly breakdown of expenditure, comprehensive quarterly performance reports showing passenger numbers and revenue attributable to routes, and a number of other key performance indicators, including subsidies per trip.

345. On a day-to-day basis, in conjunction with our overall sustainability objectives, we are engaged in an ongoing programme of fieldwork. From May last year, we talked to approximately 500 passengers directly on a one-to-one basis on board the vehicles and listened to their views on how the services meet their needs. Overall, the feedback so far has been very positive in how the services provide a lifeline for many people living in rural areas.

346. Where possible within the resources we have, we have responded to some requests for changes to the service in timing and frequencies, etc. On a day-to-day basis, as Ciarán mentioned, we work closely on a practical level with the community transport organisations, including the maintenance and administration of their fleet of minibuses and the provision of fuel facilities at our Ulsterbus depots.

347. We also collaborate quite closely with other Departments where it is appropriate to do so, recently pursuing opportunities with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development under its rural poverty and social isolation framework to see where there are opportunities for collaboration. We worked quite closely with the health trust and Easilink Community Transport in the development of a pilot service from Enniskillen to Altnagelvin. Other departmental groups that we work with include the Department for Social Development on its masterplans, etc.

Anywhere we can see there is an avenue to increase and boost numbers on public transport, we will engage with those people.

348. **Mr Rogan**: We have now completed our submission and are happy to take questions, Chairman.

349. **The Chairperson**: Thank you very much. Maybe I can start with a couple of questions. I note that beyond 2015, the bus transport infrastructure and costs may be cross-cutting. Do you accept that that integration may potentially lead to significant efficiencies, including a reduction in the level of subsidy paid to Translink, in due course? The second thing hits very much on what Michelle said just a few minutes ago. During the process of this inquiry and previously, the Committee has received a number of calls for Translink to be more transparent in respect of its costs, some of which appear to be hidden. You always hide behind the banner of "commercial in confidence", which seems to be a pretty regular phrase that you use, particularly when you are asked questions in relation to costs. Indeed, your presentation today does not touch on costs. Once again, you have given us in your introduction, the Translink documents on the number of passengers, customer satisfaction and all the rest of it that you trot out at any of these briefings that you give us. Michelle has just said that there are papers that go to the Department on a regular basis on costs and all the rest of it. Why are those costs not transparent and open, here, to everyone, including this Committee? I ask you to provide the Committee with those papers because I think that every public representative should be able to see them. In fact, I think that the cost per passenger should be transparent to the public and that there should be none of this hiding behind commercial banners of "in confidence".

350. Now that we have flushed out that there is a regular document that goes to the Department, I do not see any reason why the Committee cannot have access to it. After all, Translink is largely being provided with subsidy from the public purse. I am sure, Ciarán, that you are pleased that you are getting quite a pile of new buses as a result of Sammy Wilson's announcement the other day.

351. **Mr Rogan**: Yes.

352. **The Chairperson**: Again, you have consistently been very lucky. I think that this is the third or fourth time in the monitoring rounds. That is good; the Committee welcomes that and we are very pleased to see it because we want to see the fleet improved, given the number of buses there are and the number of miles that they have done. Buses need to be replaced on a regular basis. I hope that the figures you have given us on the average age of buses will be coming down in the not-too-distant future.

353. **Mr Rogan**: The average may not come down because we have to buy 120 or 130 buses each year, just in order to stand still with regard to the bus/age fleet.

354. **The Chairperson**: At least we are getting there. The other thing was that during your presentation, Ciarán, you mentioned the servicing of the 41 vehicles for the scheme. I assume that that is not done at no cost and that the Department pays you a subsidy that you have not mentioned. You do not service them out of the goodness of your heart.

355. **Mr Rogan**: That is subject to part of the contract, part of the financial memorandum agreed with the Department. That is done on a day brief.

356. **The Chairperson**: So, maybe you can let us know what the cost is, what charges are made to the Department or to whoever for those service charges. That would be helpful as well.

357. **Mr Rogan**: OK. I will take your questions in order. You made an initial reference to integration of infrastructure costs and infrastructure funding. Where does that come from?

358. **The Chairperson**: Beyond 2015, the bus transport infrastructure and costs might be cross-cutting.

359. **The Committee Clerk**: That came from your presentation.

360. **The Chairperson**: I knew that I had seen it someplace, but I see so many documents.

361. **Mr B Clarke**: While Ciarán finds his alleged contribution, firstly, on openness and transparency, we provide the facts and figures on rural transport funded services to the Department. If I look behind me, I can ask them whether those figures are given direct to you or whether they have to go through the Department.

362. **The Chairperson**: Well, I am asking you a direct question as a matter of an inquiry. It is something that we have asked you before. You have hidden behind the banner of "commercial in confidence".

363. **Mr B Clarke**: With respect, I am talking about rural transport funded services. This is the £1 million that is administered through a contract. Our contract is with the Department, so I am duty-bound to —

364. **The Chairperson**: So, it is in confidence with the Department.

365. **Mr B Clarke**: My answer is that we are the client, it is the customer, and it can dictate to us what it wants.

366. **The Chairperson**: So, it dictates to you not to divulge it.

367. **Mr B Clarke**: No, I did not say that. If I turn round, I might get —

368. **The Chairperson**: You are being asked a direct question.

369. **Mr Rogan**: I think, in the past, we have published, or the Department has published, rural transport statistics that would cover a large part of that.

370. **Mr B Clarke**: The last publication was around 2005. The Department was to produce an annual report. We produced the figures, and have done so since.

371. **The Chairperson**: All those figures should be clear, transparent and open, given the degree of public money that is poured into Translink on a year-to-year basis. We have asked you again, and I am happy with what you have told us, which is that your customer is the Department. We will be asking the Department again for those papers and those figures, and I am sure that the officials who are sitting at the back will hear that loud and clear. We need to know the figures to satisfy ourselves just exactly what the cost is.

372. Ciarán, in relation to the first question, it was in part 2 of the document. Did you get it?

373. **Mr Rogan**: That really refers to the references that were made by IMTAC in getting the Departments to do a degree of transport planning in tandem and to integrate on transport services, and we wholeheartedly support that.

374. **The Chairperson**: You would totally welcome that.

375. **Mr Rogan**: It is the objective of the pilot that is under way in the Dungannon area, and we are fully engaged in that.

376. **The Chairperson**: Even if that meant reducing the subsidy to Translink? If it was a more efficient service for the public?

377. **Mr Rogan**: If it produced a more efficient service, it would be very welcome. The efficiency of our service is benchmarked regularly, both for these services and for services generally, and they are demonstrated to be more efficient. The point of view I would take is that if it releases more money, it allows us to provide more transport services, as opposed to necessarily being a cost-cutting exercise.

378. **The Chairperson**: I think that it was David from IMTAC who, very sensibly, mentioned the fact that people could be brought to the main transport corridors. I understand that there is no point in running an empty bus on some of the more rural routes and all the rest of it. You have good experience of having had to do that in the past. It seems crazy that some of the other buses — for instance, school buses or the health buses, and all the rest of it — could not

be used. You probably heard me refer earlier to the conference in London, where very substantial savings have been made by using and co-ordinating some of those modes of transport. They seem to have got out of the — and I am not including Translink in the silo mentality. That is an issue with the Departments. However, that sort of thinking needs to take place to get the savings that may well be used, because we are looking at rapid transit and all sorts of schemes.

379. **Mr Rogan**: We fully endorse that. We regularly make the point that, for example, in County Fermanagh, the education boards have a bigger bus fleet than we have. The point has been made about the high cost of transport in the health service. Only a certain amount of that has to be by ambulance — acute services. A lot of it could be done by public transport. Therefore, any attempt to integrate what we do with other transport operations, be that with the health service or with education, has our full backing.

380. **The Chairperson**: You are obviously happy to have a conversation about that, and you would find that conservation helpful.

381. **Mr B Clarke**: A reference was made to the mid-Ulster or Dungannon/Cookstown initiative. Translink is collaborating on that. Hopefully, that will be a blueprint, and it will be rolled out in other areas.

382. **The Chairperson**: Thank you for that.

383. **Mr Lynch**: Thank you for your presentation. Have you reviewed the Enniskillen/Altnagelvin pilot project, which, I think, runs until March? Have you done a review? Michelle, there has been a process of integration of a number of the community transport providers. Has that process concluded? If it has, what have been the benefits and advantages?

384. **Ms Rafferty**: I think that that process is almost concluded. I think that the partnerships have been streamlined from 14 operational areas to seven. As a result of that process, it will probably make it easier for us to strategically link in with key personnel in the planning of routes at a local level. It will also give us an opportunity to look at the boundaries and the geographical urban and rural definitions of where community transport provides services. What we probably need to move towards is getting a better grasp on the — although we may know the operating area for a community transport partnership, they do not have fixed or semi-fixed routes, so it is difficult sometimes to find out where there are opportunities for people to transfer on to the main public transport network. Obviously, community transport, as you know, is not eligible to pick up members of the general public. Hopefully, that process will make it easier to engage.

385. **Mr Lynch**: Have you done any review of how successful the Enniskillen pilot was?

386. **Ms Rafferty**: We monitor the statistics. At this stage, as you said, we are about six months into a pilot service that started in September. We will have a review meeting with all the key stakeholders, and we will look at the lessons learnt to date, including, obviously, your feedback today. It is disappointing to hear that not everyone who has an appointment is getting a timetable with their appointment letter. We will certainly follow up on that. We have produced the printed material, but we rely heavily on community transport to spread word of mouth and get its members to use the service for hospital appointments.

387. **Mr Rogan**: Do you have an indication of the sorts of numbers?

388. **Mr B Clarke**: We have. With any new scheme or service, there is always a very slow take-up. Our rule of thumb in the past for services that are supported through development gain was that you are talking about a period of three to five years before you will know whether it is going towards commercial or the level of subsidy that it will require.

389. **Ms Rafferty**: The memorandum for the rural transport fund (RTF) services

specifies a minimum period of 26 weeks to allow for an adequate assessment of service performance.

390. **The Chairperson**: It is important, if there has been an agreement, to send out a schedule with each appointment letter. That is not happening, but that is not your fault. If you are going to follow it up, we are going to follow it up with a letter to the Department, and the Health Committee as well.

391. **Ms Rafferty**: We supplied the health trust with a quantity of the leaflets. We are in contact with it regarding stock levels. My understanding was that the trust operated a partial booking system in which patients were sent an appointment letter that asked them to phone up to schedule an appointment, at which point they could ask for an appointment that suited the bus time.

392. **Mr B Clarke**: We picked up in some of the surveys that were undertaken how people learnt about the service. We thought that there was a difficulty. As Michelle said, we contacted the trust about stock levels and reminded it. I do not know how old or recent your information is, but, hopefully, there is a recovery plan.

393. **Mr Lynch**: The co-ordination of the times of appointments is very important. You had people driving the whole way to Derry for 7.30 am or 8.00 am appointments, which is just not realistic.

394. **The Chairperson**: If you follow it up, we will certainly do that as well.

395. **Mrs D Kelly**: Thank you for your presentation. How does Translink define "rural"?

396. **Ms Rafferty**: The definition that we currently use for "rural", which is outlined in the financial memorandum, is a non-door-to-door operating area. That would be the urban door-to-door services, so it is probably comparable with the rural Dial-a-Lift service. Previously, it was a population of fewer than 10,000 people.

397. **Mrs D Kelly**: It has recently been brought to my attention by a constituent that, on routes of equal distance in urban areas under the Metro service and the same distance in a rural transport system, the fare is three times the cost. He raised that as an inequality in the provision of transport.

398. **Mr Rogan**: You should give us the specific information, because the entire fare side is one of my responsibilities. We do a lot of work to equate Metro fare levels with Ulsterbus. The lowest three fares in Ulsterbus are like for like with Metro. If there is an anomaly, please bring us the detail of it and we will get it sorted.

399. **Mrs D Kelly**: I will do that.

400. In relation to the rural transport family, if you like, I live in a very rural area. It is my experience and that of my neighbours that if the schools are closed, there is no transport. That is, by and large, the experience of many people, particularly in villages with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants and in some of the dispersed or settled community areas. I would think of that as being very rural, rather than the concept of a population of 10,000.

401. Chair, in the past, you may have heard me raise issues about transport providers. People are very willing and want to serve the community. However, over the years, what I have seen happen is that people provided a service, the funding closed for that particular type of service, and another pot of funding opened up. They evolved the service, but did not really evolve it. My gripe is that, in some rural areas, operators are getting money to deliver services in the type of community that I live in, but actually do not deliver to that community, or very few people know about them. It is very rare that you would see some of the rural transport operators or, indeed, the Door-2-Door service in the area that I live in. That is largely because people do not know about them. In some cases, people have to use cars. Obviously, with the increase in fuel costs, it is getting more

expensive for people to be able to do that. With regard to ongoing surveys and analysis of patterns, how up to date is transport in actually drilling down into a needs assessment of people in those hard-to-reach areas, as they might be called?

402. **Mr Rogan**: You are talking about deep rural areas. What you have said actually echoes to a degree what Michael from IMTAC said. It is difficult for us to comment on services that are provided by community transport operators. It is they who provide the services. As you said, it seems as though, if people know about it and use it, it obviously works for them. If they do not do that, it does not work for them. That is something that they have to address.

403. From our point of view, when we are providing scheduled services to rural areas, as I said at the outset, the level of rural provision that we have in Northern Ireland is much higher than is the case in the Republic or GB. Statistically, that has been shown time and again. It is of little consolation if you live in so deep a rural area that you do not have service provision. That is why, if there is a gap, the emphasis should be to link into scheduled services that are there and are regular. That is the gap that we are trying to address at present.

404. Bernard mentioned the census, for example. When things like census information emerge, or travel statistics come from DRD, we do a fairly deep analysis to ensure that there are no gaps in the scheduled services that we provide. We also rely very heavily on our local network of district managers throughout the entire Northern Ireland network and keep in very close contact with local councils, stakeholders and community and rural groups, aside from what Michelle is doing at central level, to see whether there are gaps that we can plug. However, first and foremost, we are there to run scheduled services as far as possible with the funding that we have.

405. **Mrs D Kelly**: Michelle talked about £1 million funding up to 40 services. What are those services?

406. **Ms Rafferty**: The services are spread throughout various geographic regions of Northern Ireland. It is very difficult to cluster them. Some of them are mid-morning services. Some of them are evening enhancements.

407. **Mrs D Kelly**: They are bus routes. That is really what you are saying: there will be up to 40 bus routes.

408. **Ms Rafferty**: Yes. Just to clarify that, around 90% of that £1 million is allocated to the provision of front line routes and services. We do our own in-house marketing, so the remainder is spent on that and research. Because we are using Translink, we also benefit from economies of scale and from using our own in-house desktop publishing department for printed material, our service-delivery managers to actually oversee service delivery on the ground, and so on.

409. **Mr Rogan**: What is the model for selecting a service to be supported under the rural transport fund?

410. **Mr B Clarke**: Perhaps, I will take that. What you are hinting at is a gap in the market where a community can identify needs, pass that information on, and then solutions are found for it. I would like to think that our service-delivery managers are well known in the locality, involved in lots of communities and are approachable. I know that they get requests, which they consider. I also know that they get requests that they feel that they cannot satisfy involving community transport in a particular area. The art of the possible is, unfortunately, what Translink must work within. We provide vital-artery mainstream public-transport networks. How people get to the network is probably the crunch issue. We have been heartened by what has happened in certain rural areas. For example, park-and-ride was mentioned, and we have been agitating for that for a long time. That is starting to tick up because people appreciate the time

savings in certain areas, and certainly the savings in fuel costs that can be realised. It is a bit of a patchwork quilt. The Committee could maybe take that forward and address it.

411. **Ms Rafferty**: It is quite difficult to be scientific about how or why you start a particular route because, in some cases, we have piloted services that we thought, on paper, probably would not work well but they did, and vice versa. It is very difficult to quantify precisely.

412. **Mr Rogan**: Individual routes can come from customers, communities, stakeholders or our own people who think that it is a good idea and push those routes. Wherever they come from, routes go through an evaluation process if the funding is there. However, we welcome any additional information or suggestions from this inquiry that improves the means by which we get that information and can test things. That is aside from the funding question.

413. **The Chairperson**: It might be helpful if you send a copy of the current routes to the Committee Clerk so that it can be distributed to members. That might answer some of your questions, Dolores.

414. **Mrs D Kelly**: I was involved with June Best in a community group, and we got Ulsterbus to run services on a couple of Friday nights to the swimming pool in Lurgan, which is about seven miles away for some people. About 60 youngsters went on that trip, just to the swimming pool. That service depended on a community group running it.

415. **Mr McNarry**: You are very welcome. I want to pursue the idea that we will have openness and transparency. Your written submission states that the average bus age is 6·4 years for Ulsterbus and 7·1 years for Metro. What is the average disposable value of those buses?

416. **Mr Rogan**: When they reach the end of their life, zero. They tend to depreciate to no value. If we do sell them, they tend to be sold for scrap.

417. **Mr McNarry**: So they are driven right down to the ground.

418. **Mr Rogan**: I am not sure that I would characterise it as them being driven into the ground, but they are certainly taken to a level where they are of no commercial benefit for us.

419. **The Chairperson**: They are clapped out, David.

420. **Mr McNarry**: A bit like me at times, and it is only five past three. I was very pleased to hear IMTAC say earlier how it meets you regularly. That is very good. However, I got the clear impression from community transport representatives that you do not often sit down together to discuss provisions, linkages and joined-up routes. Is that the case?

421. **Mr Rogan**: I would not characterise it like that. Some of the community transport groups were very positive about our relationship. Michelle is the point of contact with all the community transport groups.

422. **Mr McNarry**: What about Community Transport Northern Ireland?

423. **Mr Rogan**: Yes; the overarching organisation and the individual groups.

424. **Ms Rafferty**: I represent Translink on Community Transport's committee but, as well as that, at a local level, there is some engagement on routes. When we start a new route, especially with RTF services, there is consultation, although it may not be formalised.

425. **Mr McNarry**: That is very interesting because I got the clear impression from listening to the previous group's deputation that that was not happening, that it was a problem and that it was contributing to the lack of joined-up thinking and that we were not approaching some of IMTAC's suggestions. Are you saying that that is not the case?

426. **Ms Rafferty**: There is consultation on the RTF routes.

427. **Mr McNarry**: Do you sit down to plan, collaborate or co-operate and say that it would be better, for example, if Translink took over a service from a certain point? If there is something that you cannot do,

do you suggest that it does that to meet people's needs? Do you sit down and talk about that? Do you come up with joint plans?

428. **Mr B Clarke**: We could give examples of case studies in Downpatrick and the Down area. The 294 route is a collaboration. I can also tell you that Kellie Armstrong was with us in the past six months and that we sat down and had a wide-ranging discussion.

429. **The Chairperson**: In fairness, David, some of the community groups made very positive comments about their communication with Translink —

430. **Mr McNarry**: Yes, I know; I am not criticising them.

431. **The Chairperson**: However, some of them said that when you take off services — maybe non-profitable rural services — there is no consultation whatsoever. They felt that there could be more consultation with them on some of those issues or that some other arrangement could be made. They felt that you tend to take services off because they were not profitable, and that the public are told that a service will not exist from next Monday or whatever.

432. **Mr B Clarke**: From memory, I think that that was one example from Strabane.

433. **The Chairperson**: I cannot recollect where it was.

434. **Mr B Clarke**: We read that and automatically went into search mode. We understand that that was something like 12 years ago. That was quite a long time ago and does not reflect the current situation.

435. **Mr McNarry**: Maybe we will have another look at the Hansard report. I am going from recollection.

436. **The Chairperson**: Certainly, there were one or two areas. However, there were some issues.

437. **Mr Rogan**: When we alter a service, we try to delegate as far as possible to local level. The onus will be on a local manager. We very deliberately have a federated local management structure to stay in touch with schools, councillors, etc. The onus is on individual managers to consult as far as possible with local stakeholders. Councillors and schools tend to be the lead groups and we particularly try to avoid any schoolkids being disadvantaged. Community transport groups would also be part of that consultation.

438. If there are specific instances where we have dropped the ball, we will take a look at those. However, by its nature, consultation has to be local and tailored as opposed to being driven from the centre.

439. **Mr McNarry**: Maybe you would provide us with a list of meetings that you have had with community groups and networks over the past six months so that it is on record.

440. **Mr Rogan**: OK.

441. **Mr McNarry**: That would be helpful. Thank you.

442. **Mr Lynch**: Ciarán, in your presentation you mentioned that the Department of Education has more buses in Fermanagh than you. Without any statistics, I can see that with my own eyes. Why is that?

443. **Mr Rogan**: Throughout Northern Ireland, we bring 65,000 kids to and from school every day. How many do the education and library boards take?

444. **Mr B Clarke**: I have to pass on that. I would need to look it up.

445. **Mr Rogan**: As far as I know, they probably take more than us. To a greater or lesser extent, the education and library boards have built up bespoke transport operations. Depending on the education and library boards in question, and particularly as we move to the Education and Skills Authority, there will be an opportunity to integrate and make efficiencies where possible. That is one of the things that are core to the Dungannon and mid-Ulster issue. It is about integrating and getting our transport infrastructure and the education and library board's transport

infrastructure to work more closely together to drive down costs.

446. **Mr I McCrea**: Surely the legislation that the Department of the Environment (DOE) is bringing through on licensing, permits, and what not, will have a major detrimental effect on how community transport provision is rolled out. Do you have an opinion on the proposed changes? Will you have input to that process? Have you had any discussions with the community transport associations about that?

447. **Mr B Clarke**: We are represented on the Bus Operators Forum, which has taken the views from all forms of operators on the pros and cons of the proposed changes. The last time that we were involved in that forum was before Christmas when, yet again, there seemed to be a change of heart on 10B permits and the restrictions that might impact on community transport. I do not know where that has moved to now; I have not seen the papers. I think that the next meeting of the forum is scheduled for February. The papers for that will be coming out soon.

448. It is a moveable feast. Maybe the representations that have been made have meant that the DOE has had a change of heart. Maybe not. Time will tell.

449. **Ms Rafferty**: Community transport provides a vital door-to-door service. We want that to continue and to maximise the opportunity for interchange between their services and the main public transport network. If they use volunteers, that also adds a vital social aspect.

450. **The Chairperson**: It is quite apparent that you have been following the evidence given to the Committee very closely. You will have heard that the community transport people feel that DOE's proposals to move licences to a commercial basis will have a dramatic effect on their operation. Do you have any views on that? Have you presented those views or do you intend to present them to DOE?

451. **Mr B Clarke**: We gave our views on the implications for Translink in our response to the consultation document. That was about six months ago. We have not received a revised document to review or feed into. If you are asking for a personal opinion, I would reiterate what Michelle has said. Community transport plays a vital role, and any restrictions of a licensing regime need to be well thought through. I do not see an automatic replacement.

452. **Mr Rogan**: I think that it is fair to say that we work closely with the community transport sector, and see it as a very valuable partner that contributes to overall mobility. That is what we are about.

453. **The Chairperson**: Thank you very much for your presentation —

454. **Mr Rogan**: Chair, in the previous submissions, reference was made to bus stops at Moyle hospital. We do have bus stops at Moyle hospital and run several services —

455. **The Chairperson**: Which hospital?

456. **Mr Lynch**: The Causeway Hospital.

457. **The Chairperson**: Is there an actual bus stop at it?

458. **Mr B Clarke**: There are two.

459. **Ms Rafferty**: There is a shelter —

460. **Mr B Clarke**: They were on TV on Monday night.

461. **The Chairperson**: I think the issue was that the buses —

462. **Mr I McCrea**: The community transport buses could not —

463. **Mr Rogan**: Not every service goes into the hospital.

464. **The Chairperson**: If they are travelling from Moyle, people had to get off at the hospital and then get to Coleraine bus station.

465. **Mr B Clarke**: The more frequent service is provided by the town service, which goes from the hub — the bus centre — to the hospital.

466. **The Chairperson**: I understand that buses maybe come down the other side of a dual carriageway and have to do a sort of U-turn.

467. **Mr Rogan**: Looking at the list, there are two types of service that go to the hospital. The 218 direct service from Coleraine to Belfast services the hospital, and we also have a service from Coleraine town. Funnily enough, we had the same conversation about why we could not take the 212 Derry to Belfast express service through Antrim Area Hospital. Quite often, if a service passes directly by a hospital, we will take it in if there is no huge time disbenefit. If a service does not go directly near a hospital quite often, the best option will be to filter to local town services, which are much more frequent. I suspect that that was the —

468. **The Chairperson**: I do not think that the criticism was directed towards Translink, but to planning. Those who gave evidence felt that, in planning any new hospital, there should be consultation with the transport companies and everybody else to make sure that they are facilitated. The new hospital in Fermanagh has that.

469. **Mr Lynch**: Yes. Bernard, I think that you mentioned that there was good planning and co-ordination there.

470. **The Chairperson**: The criticism was on that element. It was not considered to be Translink's fault. That clarifies it: there are bus stops at the hospital.

471. Thank you very much for your presentation. I am sure that we will talk again soon; if not on this subject, on another. Thank you all.

23 January 2013

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Jimmy Spratt (Chairperson)
Mr Seán Lynch (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr John Dallat
Mr Stewart Dickson
Mrs Dolores Kelly
Mr Ian McCrea
Mr David McNarry
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín

Witnesses:

Mr Bert Bailie	*Inclusive Mobility and*
Ms June Best	*Transport Advisory*
Mr Michael Lorimer	*Committee*
Mr David McDonald	

472. **The Chairperson**: I welcome representatives from the Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC): David McDonald, Michael Lorimer, Bert Bailie and June Best. You are all very welcome. My name is Jimmy Spratt, and I am the Committee Chairman. To facilitate June, I will ask members to introduce themselves.

473. **Mr McNarry**: I am David McNarry MLA.

474. **Mr Dallat**: I am John Dallat.

475. **Mr Ó hOisín**: I am Cathal Ó hOisín MLA.

476. **Mr Lynch**: I am Seán Lynch, the Deputy Chair of the Committee.

477. **Ms June Best (Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee)**: Thank you.

478. **The Chairperson**: You are all very welcome to the Committee. The Committee has some other members, but because a number of other Committees meet in the afternoon, some members double up. For some members, it is a case of trying to juggle in the air whatever balls they can.

479. You are very welcome to the Committee. You have about 10 minutes to make a presentation, after which you should leave yourself open for questions. So, I will hand over to Bert Bailie to start.

480. **Mr Bert Bailie (Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee)**: Good afternoon, Chairman and members. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to your inquiry. Our evidence highlights the link between transport and social exclusion. Decades of designing provision around car access has been a major contributor to the decline in public transport. People without access to a car or who are unable to drive rely very much on public transport for access to key services. The scattered population and the range of needs that exist mean that there is demand for appropriate, accessible transport to be dispersed over a very wide geographical area. Conventional public transport does not meet that demand; so many people rely on expensive and limited door-to-door services.

481. IMTAC has argued for the development of a more integrated and flexible public transport that links people to key services locally and to wider travel opportunities through accessible public transport. Key to that, we believe, is a holistic approach to local transport planning that contributes to the effective application of public funds.

482. David and June will give an urban and a rural perspective respectively. Michael will then outline some examples of good practice, and I will summarise with a couple of conclusions.

483. **The Chairperson**: I will just say for June's benefit that Ian McCrea MLA has joined the Committee.

484. **Ms Best**: Thank you.

485. **Mr David McDonald (Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee)**: I want to highlight that social exclusion is as much an issue in the urban

environment as it is in the rural environment, particularly in the smaller estates and the areas off the main routes. If you happen to have either a walking difficulty, are blind, have some difficulty with a wheelchair, have a learning difficulty or are an older person, it is not always easy to get to the bus stops that the main bus routes use.

486. Services such as the Door-2-Door scheme do not necessarily fill the gap and are not exactly the same as a regular scheduled bus service. A scheduled bus service goes along a regular route, and people know when it is coming past. If it is a good day and you want to go out, you can, and if it is a bad day, you can stay in and do your own thing. If you are not feeling too well, it does not matter. For example, some people with MS may on occasion not feel well and cannot always pick the days that they will go out. So, booking the Door-2-Door service four weeks in advance and hoping that you get it is not the ideal situation for many disabled people. The vehicles are not always accessible, so there might be a range of issues with the availability and scheduling of the Door-2-Door service.

487. Trying to maximise the number of people using public buses and public trains is the best option. I differentiate between accessible buses and accessible services. There is a lot of talk about "accessible services", but when people use that term, in reality they mean accessible buses. An accessible bus is a bus that you can physically get on. An accessible service is a service that you can get to or that can get to you. If we had the buses, including the smaller buses, working more efficiently and travelling down the small side streets picking up more people, especially during the day outside working hours, it would free up other services such as Door-2-Door to allow them to pick up the people who really need to be picked up.

488. **Ms Best**: Disabled and older people's demand for transport is obviously more dispersed in the rural areas. Many areas have no train services, and the only option is the local bus services. However, the frequency of bus services varies. Usually, there are morning, school and work services, as well as an afternoon return service. If you are lucky enough to live in an amenity near the airport, there will be many more frequent services. Therefore, services are very much area dependent.

489. I would also like to point out that, in many rural areas, there are no weekend or evening services. That, again, leads to social exclusion. However, the most frequent difficulty and dilemma for many disabled and older people is how they can get from their home to a local bus or train service in an appropriate and accessible vehicle. For example, a conventional bus service is a mile and a half down through the village in my area and the train is 3·8 miles away from me. How are disabled and older people accessing such conventional services independently? They are reliant on taxis — that is one option. However, taxis are not always available in rural areas. For example, drivers do not want to come from seven miles away to take a disabled person on a relatively short journey to conventional transport. Many rural taxi drivers are individuals who rely on contract work. In my case, the local taxi drivers rely on airport and school runs, and the vehicles may not be fully accessible to wheelchair users.

490. Another alternative service in extensive rural areas is the rural Dial-a-Ride. Those services, I am sorry to say, are often inflexible and overstretched. From a passenger perspective, misunderstanding, confusion and frustration are often caused by not being able to travel to where you would like as a result of imposed and restrictive area boundaries. For example, if someone is a member of one company and lives in a small village, they cannot travel within another company's area to visit relatives who are only a few miles down the road. Similar examples exist between boundaries of Door-2-Door and rural Dial-a-Ride. A young blind lady wanted to travel from Ballymena to Broughshane but was told that she could go only to Cargin. So, she opted to go for a

taxi. Those are the practicalities and realities.

491. There are other transport services, such as those in the health and education sectors, that operate separately from other transport services in rural areas. Those include, for example, non-emergency transport to and from hospital and that to and from day care and training facilities. School buses are evident in rural areas, and the community could employ them during the day when local schools are not using them. Privately owned or hire buses are also in evidence where there are commercial enterprises or privately owned businesses.

492. In a predominantly rural Northern Ireland, our communities make little distinction between towns and their rural hinterlands. However, two separate alternative services have emerged: one for the town and one for the country. An opportunity to review and audit the current transport services is required so that a more holistic look can be taken at how to best meet the demand for flexible and appropriate transport in rural areas. The nature of the solution will be different from area to area as population densities and demand differ across the North.

493. I have first-hand experience of trying to organise my life around available and accessible transport. Just one bad or negative experience could knock someone's confidence for ever, which could mean that they will not even try to travel independently. A joined-up and common-sense approach is now required.

494. **Mr Michael Lorimer (Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee)**: Part of the work that we have done over the past year is to look at examples of flexible transport in regions of the South of Ireland and Great Britain. We published a paper last year called 'Flexible Future', which looked at examples of what we call "demand-responsive transport" from GB and Ireland. We highlighted a number of successful examples of demand-responsive transport services, including Lincolnshire Interconnect. Lincoln is an extremely rural part of England. There was a concentration there on developing high-quality public transport corridors with flexible services operating between them and bringing people to those frequent corridors. The flexible services will also bring people into their local market town, where they can access a whole range of other services. The key difference between those types of services and those that we operate is that they are public transport-type services; you do not need to be a member or meet certain eligibility criteria. Also key is the fact that you can phone those services and book them up to an hour before travel. So, from a passenger's point of view, they are much more flexible than our current service.

495. The second example is Cango in Hampshire, which operates around some of the larger towns, such as Andover in Hampshire, and services the rural hinterland. That service runs to an almost semi-scheduled timetable: people can phone up, and the bus will meet them at a pre-arranged point. If they cannot get to that point, the bus will go to their door. The bus will service the supermarket, the train station and the hospital in the town, so it gets people access to key services. Part of that service has been to integrate home-to-school transport.

496. The third example is Clare Accessible Transport in the South of Ireland. It provides a range of timetabled flexible bus services into the urban centres. It has very successfully integrated some contracts with the health service. For instance, as part of the bus service, it transports people into day care provision.

497. The final example that we highlighted is urban: Local Link in Greater Manchester. Similar to Belfast, Manchester has very good transport corridors in and out of the city centre. However, a lot of areas in between are very poorly served by public transport. Local Link is a localised door-to-door transport service that gives everybody in the community an opportunity to access local community

services, such as health centres, libraries, etc. It also links people to the very good transport corridors that run along the outside of those areas.

498. That is a brief summary of some of the good practice elsewhere that we have highlighted.

499. **Mr Bailie**: Chairman, you will recognise from my colleagues' remarks that many people have problems connecting with public transport. IMTAC believes that flexible transport solutions can deliver better outcomes in and between urban and rural areas. Unless there is more use of demand-responsive services, expenditure cuts will mean that it will become even more difficult for many disabled people, older people and others to access essential services. The opportunity should be taken, when reforming public transport, to better use all transport resources. We need to use specialist transport planning and procurement expertise to achieve deliverable, efficient services with input from key stakeholders and users. Solutions can be found only if all stakeholders with an interest in transport work together. A key recommendation of our report 'Flexible Futures', which was published in 2012 and which I think you have copies of, is that government should establish a multi-agency demand-responsive transport forum. That forum should be charged with identifying opportunities to develop more demand-responsive transport as part of the overall mix of transport services that are required throughout Northern Ireland.

500. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry. We are happy to answer any questions that you may have.

501. **The Chairperson**: OK. Thank you very much, Bert. I thank your colleagues who took part in the presentation; it is very helpful to the inquiry. I will maybe start off with a couple of questions. Do you believe that the subregional transport plan (SRTP) is an appropriate strategic plan, or do we need a new and dynamic local transport plan? You state that a certain level of subsidy is acceptable in the demand for responsive transport. What, in your view, is that figure in Northern Ireland, given the context in which we find ourselves at present?

502. **Mr Bailie**: The SRTP was the outworking of the regional transportation strategy. It deals with issues at a local level but it does not deal with the integration and best use of all the flexible transport at that level. One of our concerns is that many agencies run transport and, in many ways, duplicate need in areas. Education, health, public transport and all the responsive services are run independently. In many cases, however, they run empty. On occasion, even normal, scheduled public transport services run empty on certain links. Flexibility could be built in to those services by people coming together and planning together. The subregional transport plan sought to bring together transport planning for the regional development budget area; it does not deal with transport solutions that are applied outside the Committee for Regional Development's remit.

503. **The Chairperson**: Michael mentioned a number of areas. We attended a conference in London at which there were a number of local authorities that, through tying-in with the public transport system, made very substantial savings to the public purse and better use of the money that was available from that for buses, both for health and education. Indeed, as you know, the taxi structure in Northern Ireland also plays a major role, particularly in the field of education. I assume that some of the examples that you mentioned, Michael, show substantial savings for local authorities.

504. **Mr Lorimer**: You asked about the level of subsidy. Certainly, benchmarking, which we have done on the cost of the demand-responsive transports that we currently operate, show that they are extremely high here. When we are talking about a cost of £20 a trip, that is extremely high, particularly for an urban scheme such as Door-2-Door. If you look at somewhere such as the West Midlands, for example, you see

that the cost is around £7 a trip on their door-to-door services. The cost of some services, however, such as Cango in Hampshire, has been low as £4 to £5 a passenger trip. You can then compare that with our rural subsidy of around £19 a passenger trip.

505. **The Chairperson**: Why do you think that it is so high here?

506. **Mr Lorimer**: The model that we use is the least flexible and most inefficient way to provide that service. The only restriction on the use of the service is the geographical area, and some of the areas that we are talking about are large. Providing what is called a "many-to-many" service is the most expensive way of meeting the demand.

507. In England, more efficient ways of capturing demand have been looked at. All rural areas are not the same, and people who live close to main towns — June, for instance, lives close to Moira — have much shorter distances to go to access services than people who live in remote areas of Fermanagh or the Sperrins, for example.

508. **The Chairperson**: There must also be areas in England that are remote for services.

509. **Mr Lorimer**: There certainly are. As I said, we are not saying that these types of services are the answer for every rural area of Northern Ireland. However, at the minute, we have a one-size-fits-all solution that does not recognise the differences and does not try to meet the demand. Again, the demand in different areas is more dispersed. We are trying to argue that there are more effective and efficient ways to meet that demand.

510. **Mr McDonald**: Can I come in at this point?

511. **The Chairperson**: I will bring you in in a second, David. I want to continue on from that last point. Do you think that our present transport system creates some of the inefficiencies?

512. **Mr Lorimer**: I would argue that we have a good core public transport network. Our big challenge is how we effectively link people to that core network. We have spent hundreds of millions of pounds making public transport more accessible and easier for people to get on and off. As David said, the big issue is how we link people to those services. We all know that the public purse is extremely tight, so we need to think innovatively about how we can reduce the cost of linking people.

513. **Mr McDonald**: We have developed door-to-door and rural transport, and door-to-door transport is literally door to door. For example, if you are travelling from Bangor to Comber in my region, you go the whole distance. The nearest bus stop to me is half a mile away and up a steep hill. If you have a walking difficulty, a Zimmer frame or a push wheelchair, it is difficult to get to the bus stop. It would be much more efficient if the door-to-door service could take you to the bus stop and then be freed up to go and pick someone else up to take them to another bus stop or to the town centre. The trouble is that we have a model that takes people from A to B rather than to interim areas.

514. Door-to-door and rural transport were always meant to link with the major hubs. It has not come out like that, which is part of the problem. That is partly why it is difficult to get it. Door-to-door transport also tends to carry one person rather than a group of people. There should really be a small minibus service that goes round picking people up and linking them to the major hubs. That is what we are talking about. We should link individual houses to larger areas so that people can travel further, whether into a town or to a major bus area. For example, people could be dropped off at park-and-ride facilities to pick up the bus. So, we need to look at such areas and get ourselves together.

515. Transport for the health service and the education sector have similar issues. You can only use a health service vehicle to take you to a hospital. Ironically, you cannot take a door-to-door service to a hospital unless you are visiting. So, two vehicles could be

travelling to the same place at the same time.

516. I cannot get on buses with my wheelchair, and I rely on door-to-door transport. If I cannot get door-to-door transport, I have to use a taxi. So, I am very limited with when and where I can get to places, although I can use the train.

517. We need to get our heads together on this, and if we did, we would make big savings. An absolute fortune has been spent making buses accessible. We should maximise that by making sure that we can get people to those vehicles and enable them to use them properly.

518. **Mr Lynch**: Thank you for your presentation. As someone who comes from rural Fermanagh, I understand that rural transport and how you link with services are big issues. We do not even have a really good core transport system, and in some parts, you see a bus only once or twice a day.

519. June, you spoke about holistic solutions. What would be the benefit of such solutions? What obstacles exist here, and how can they be overcome?

520. **Ms Best**: We want a joined-up service that allows you to get from point A, which is your house, to a service that will be provided. I am going to give away my age here, but the old bus service allowed you to hail a bus as it was going past. I know that there are restrictions on times and that we are working to timetables, but it would be useful even if we could access services by hailing buses. For example, I know of a disabled lady who lives on the A1 just two and half miles outside Banbridge. A local service passes her door, but she is totally blind, has a guide dog and if she wants to access that service, she has to walk along that dangerous road to a bus stop. She lives on the road, and if there were some way of communicating so that the bus driver knew that she was there, she could hail a bus. That would provide a solution rather than her having to go to a bus stop. She cannot get a bus home, as she would have to cross the four-lane busy A1 main road that has the islands in the middle. She cannot do that, so she has to go by taxi.

521. There are also restrictions, in that the hours of operation for rural transport make it very exclusive to so many people. If they want to do something educationally, for leisure or whatever in the evening, they cannot because, unless they get expensive taxis, there is no transport.

522. So, there are many problems. That is why I suggested that everyone sit down and look holistically at what the services are and at how we can join them up. That would be a much more common-sense approach.

523. **Mr Lynch**: Do you think that some of the models from County Clare and Manchester that Michael outlined could be models of good practice here?

524. **Ms Best**: I think so. Anything is worth a try.

525. As a farmer's wife and a mother, I have been involved in trying to access transport at a community level for many years. My children have been unable to take part in extra-curricular activities after school, etc, because I cannot drive and farming is priority number one. There are all sorts of difficulties, and I think that those models would be worth looking at. I have looked at the situation in Yorkshire, and I know that about 15 or 16 years ago, Post Office buses brought people to rural areas for care facilities, and so forth. There are so many models out there that must be beneficial.

526. **Mr Lorimer**: I think that the key to this is local transport planning. You will be aware that the regional development strategy has set a framework for development. So, we know that certain settlements will have certain services and that, as you move through, the larger settlements will have more services. People have to travel, and we know that, but it is about how we plan transport to allow people to travel.

527. In GB, the local transport planning model and the principle of accessibility planning are used. That is not about

people getting on and off buses but about how we plan. You could map the access to services in Fermanagh — we have mapped it — and use colour-coding to mark in bright red those people who live in the remotest parts of Fermanagh. We could do that across Northern Ireland. There are lots of data that we could use to plan transport more effectively. Again, it has to involve all the agencies and health and education. This is all transport need. It needs to be dealt with at a more local level than we are dealing with it at the minute.

528. **The Chairperson**: On the back of that, who or what is preventing the joined-up approach to transport services in Northern Ireland? I want you to be quite frank, because that is important for the inquiry. Do not feel that you cannot name the Department, Translink or anybody else. This is what we need to get to. We need to get the system co-ordinated and to get to some of the best practice models that you referred to. So, now is your chance.

529. **Mr Bailie**: To be blunt, the main budget holders in transport provision are the health boards and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS); the education and library boards and the various Departments that deal with education; and the Department for Regional Development (DRD), which holds the public transport fund. Among them, they are running a lot of separate services. They have lots of different fleets of vehicles, and at many stages throughout the day, some fleets are sitting unused while others are fully occupied and overdemanded.

530. The people who provide and control the budgets have to get their heads together to decide how they share and make good use of those combined budgets. There is a range of providers of transport services — the community transport sector and the public transport sector — and there is perhaps a need for more co-operation between them. That is why we see a forum brought together for those people to discuss and have the opportunity to develop further the concept and application of flexible transport.

531. **The Chairperson**: I hope that the eyes and ears sitting behind you from the Department for Regional Development heard what you just said and will report back, because we will certainly be including it in the report.

532. **Mr Lorimer**: I have worked in this sector for quite a while, and there is a silo mentality where Departments protect their own budgets. If Departments are meeting their own objectives, they are happy. Getting co-operation between Departments is hugely difficult.

533. I sat on the review of health service transport, and at one meeting, we had on the agenda how education and health might work more closely together. It came to the discussion, and the officials from the Department of Education opened their files, said that they could perhaps look at more procurement, shut their files, and the chair of the group said, “OK, we have covered that. Job done.” I looked around and thought that the Audit Office had directed them to do that, and the sum total of the co-operation was that we could perhaps look at the shared procurement of vehicles.

534. How do you break down those invisible walls between Departments for the greater good? For instance, we know how much the health service spends on transport. How much of that could be saved if people used public transport options to access hospitals? We know that there are big barriers to people doing that, but it is not impossible. We were dealing with a situation 10 years ago when people had huge difficulties getting on and off buses. We do not have those difficulties any more, so there is the potential for more people to use conventional means to access hospitals.

535. We get a lot of complaints about health service transport being inflexible. People are picked up first thing in the morning and spend all day going to a hospital appointment. There are better solutions

for people out there, but there need to be discussions between Departments, and honest discussions.

536. **The Chairperson**: You hit the nail on the head in two words: "silo mentality". That is the bottom line. It has been a recurring theme from others who gave evidence.

537. **Mr McNarry**: You are very welcome. I believe that there is a trend coming across for the joined-up use of vehicles. I think that that will be highlighted in the Committee's report. You bring to the Committee an insight that I find extremely helpful. I just need you to clear up one thing for me: are rights issues covered or involved in your needs?

538. **Mr Bailie**: Sorry, can you clarify what you mean by "rights issues"? Are you talking about equality or the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)?

539. **Mr McNarry**: Do you feel that your rights are not being addressed? Do you feel that you have rights and that those rights are not being addressed? You did not actually say that anywhere in your presentation, so I do not want to put words into your mouth.

540. **Mr McDonald**: I feel that needs are not being addressed, which feeds into rights. From a disabled or older person's point of view — an older person who has difficulty getting about — there is a lack of understanding of what the real needs of that person might be.

541. I will give you an example as a wheelchair user. I cannot use a public bus because public buses do not secure wheelchairs unless you are facing forwards. That is part of the DDA. It is about getting on and off buses quickly, but I cannot hold on, as I have no strength in my arms or hands. Therefore, I cannot sit on a bus and hold on to the handrail, which is what you are meant to do. Therefore, I cannot use a bus. At the same time, I cannot readily get Door-2-Door help, because many people who could use a bus, if the bus went along their street or got closer to them, do not. The Door-2-Door service is overused in that respect.

542. There is a lack of understanding of people's needs and the complexity of those needs. We are stereotyping a lot of the time, where people just see a disabled person as a disabled person or a wheelchair user as a wheelchair user. There is not an understanding of variation and of each individual's differences and impairment-related needs. That feeds into a lack of rights being fulfilled. I have a right to travel, but I do not find that right being enhanced by government. I am using a public taxi.

543. **Mr McNarry**: I take all that on board. I am glad that you have said it on the record. You make a call for more demand-responsive transport (DRT) in your presentation. The two points following that are these: do any of the service providers meet with you regularly to discuss this, and what is the feedback? Which do you think is in the best position to provide the services? Is it community transport, Translink or private companies?

544. **Mr McDonald**: The services meet with IMTAC regularly. They sit as observers with IMTAC, and so do the Community Transport Association and civil servants from the Door-2-Door unit. They are hearing a lot of what is being said. I think, because of the silo mentality —

545. **Mr McNarry**: When you say that they are hearing, David, do you think that they are listening?

546. **Mr McDonald**: Because of the silo mentality, they work within their own remit, and that is where the difficulty lies. They are not working across each other's remit, and that is why we suggest that we need to get a group together that involves everybody so that we can open this out and find the best solutions.

547. **Mr McNarry**: Have you ever brought all these service providers together in front of you?

548. **Mr McDonald**: We have worked to get people talking, but it is like what Michael said about closing the book. People will come and listen to us and then go away and get back into their own box. That is

what we need to try to kick through. We need to try to get people to understand that there is a general benefit to everybody here if we get people working and talking together. We might actually help the entire community start to move around much more freely.

549. **Mr McNarry**: That would be a good thing.

550. **Mr Lorimer**: When it comes to engagement, we have a very good professional relationship with Translink. We have done some good work with Translink before on vehicle design, particularly innovative vehicle design for rural buses, and things such as information. We do not always agree with what Translink does, but there is that engagement.

551. When you talk about rights, there are rights out there. DDA means, for instance, that whenever we spend money on buses or trains, we cannot buy ones that do not meet accessibility standards. Stations have been improved. However, there are no rights that say that you can expect a bus service to go past or quite close to your door twice a week. There is nothing in rights legislation that will enshrine a quality level of service. When the previous Committee looked at the Transport Bill, we asked it whether it would push for accessibility to be put into that legislation. It is amazing that, when we asked for that, we were talking about accessibility in the sense of being able to access services.

552. **Mr McNarry**: Do you think you were successful with the previous Committee?

553. **Mr Lorimer**: It secured that, but, again, the perception among the officials who drafted the legislation was that we were pushing for buses that people could get on to. They did not understand the concept that what we were actually pushing for were services that people could access, and that public transport reform should look at people being able to access services and having a decent level of access to those services.

554. **The Chairperson**: OK. Cathal Ó hOisín has to leave, and I want to bring him in first, David. If you need to come in again, I will bring you back in.

555. For the benefit of June, I should say that Dolores Kelly MLA has joined us at the table.

556. **Mr Ó hOisín**: Thanks, Chair, and thanks, everybody, for your presentation. I think that we are agreed that there is, generally speaking, a good core network. Someone more cynical might say that that reflects the more profitable routes that are there — from A to B, not those diverting to C or D, or wherever else.

557. Further to Mr McNarry's question, there is a proposal out there for a pilot scheme for the delivery of some sort of co-ordinated system in the Dungannon/ Cookstown area. I have yet to get much detail on that. I do not know how it will work between Translink and the community transport sector. That will be interesting to see. It will also come on the back of the proposed local government reforms, which will have a transport remit. That will be particularly important in rural constituencies.

558. We have a mishmash and duplication. Everybody is agreed on that. It is about how we can best implement the delivery of the service right across those less accessible areas, whether they be urban or rural. Is the community transport network the best way of doing that in line with the likes of Translink or private providers? We had a great presentation last week from North Coast Community Transport, particularly in reference to its volunteer drivers, who are used by the disabled sector and rural users. Do we have some sort of grasp of how a new network or new relationship between the various bodies might work?

559. **Mr Bailie**: I may rely on Michael to supplement my response. We recognise that, as you say, there is a raft of different models out there that meet a number of needs but not every need. It is essential that we look at what is best from those and at adjusting the rules that apply to all those things.

That means that the organisations, the government bodies and the licensing authorities that are responsible for allowing those services to take place come together with the users and those delivering to discuss what changes need to be made to the system. That is where we see the potential being for a forum that allows the debate to take place between those multiple agencies to seek to widen good practice across the whole area for the benefit of everyone.

560. **Mr Lorimer**: I will touch on the rural community partnerships and the services that they provide, as well as the Door-2-Door service. I would say that it is a Marmite service. Some people love it and think that it is the best thing since sliced bread, while other people do not. We get a lot of feedback. It depends on whether you can get the service. When we looked at research into that type of service, which has been operating for 30 years in some areas, we found that it settles down into patterns of usage very quickly. The same people use it week in, week out, and those people are delighted with the service. It is the people who cannot break into the service who find it very frustrating.

561. There is little doubt that that kind of area-wide, door-to-door service will still be needed, particularly in remote rural areas — for instance, the more remote areas of Fermanagh — but, according to what we have looked at, there are better ways to meet that need than what we are currently doing. It may well be that community transport operators are best placed to operate it, but I will give you an example of a service in the New Forest, which is a taxi-share service. The local authority took away the bus service and put on a taxi in its place. Depending on who wants to use it, that taxi runs into the local town on the day. If three people are using it, it will pick up those three people. If nobody is using it, it does not run and does not cost the local authority a penny. There are different ways to do it, and the trouble with the current system is that it is a one-size-fits-all solution.

562. **Mr Dallat**: You are very welcome. I listened very carefully to you, and there is loads of information that you can give us. I was daydreaming, and I do not want to compare people with parcels, but 20 years ago, if I sent a parcel from Kilrea to Belfast, it could have taken three or four days. Today, with new technology, barcoding, and so on, every single item can be personalised, and those providing the service know exactly what they are doing. How important is that in any system, given that there was agreement?

563. **Mr Lorimer**: The technology is there, and that is what has enabled the services in GB to be developed. We now have technology that allows people to book up to an hour before they want to travel. At the minute, people in Northern Ireland have to book three or four weeks in advance for some of the services. We have GPS technology and can track everything. The technology is there, but there is a lack of awareness of how best we can use it.

564. **Mr Dallat**: I am glad to hear that because I believe it to be a key element. If the technology is there and can be applied, we can address many of the issues raised, particularly by June, who impressed me when she spoke of the sense of isolation that people experience, not just in rural areas — we always associate isolation and poverty of that kind with rural people — but in urban and suburban areas. I would like to think that, whatever system evolves, if I wanted to send somebody from Bellarena to Belfast, with the use of technology, it could be done without a difficulty.

565. **Mr Lorimer**: The dispatch is key. Your dispatch centre manages the demand in the system, and the technology enables that dispatch. In the old days, people used whiteboards to do that, but everyone now uses software to generate trips for people.

566. **Mr Dallat**: I have a final remark. If we can send somebody to the moon, we should surely be able —

567. **The Chairperson**: I was going to say that we were getting very parochial, but we are getting very far away now. *[Laughter.]*

568. **Mr McNarry**: There is no snow on the moon, John.

569. **Mr Dallat**: I am not sure whether we can send someone from Dungiven to Derry. Presumably we can.

570. **Mr McDonald**: I am thinking about the realities of what you are saying. When taxi companies send a taxi out to a call, they do a couple of things. First, when the taxi arrives, the driver sends a text to say that the taxi is at the front door or will phone if the person does not have mobile phone. Equally, once the taxi drops its passenger off at the destination, that is relayed to the taxi company's dispatch centre, which then knows to task the taxi to someone nearby next. That saves on mileage, petrol, and so on. I do not see why buses, Door-2-Door and public transport information cannot do that. If somebody phones up at an hour's notice and asks to be picked up, that person's details, such as whether he or she is a wheelchair user, blind or whatever, should be on file. The dispatcher will know who is nearby and who to send so that you can get the vehicle within the hour. It can be the same with a bus. If you are slightly off the road in a rural, or even urban, area and you can divert that bus for the sake of a couple of minutes to pick somebody up by connecting with the bus driver, that would be extremely useful. The woman who is blind could go out to her door and get the bus to stop. We need to work on that to allow people to use mainstream public transport as much as possible and to link into the non-mainstream side when they need to.

571. **Mr Dallat**: That is very useful. Thank you very much.

572. **The Chairperson**: For June's benefit, Stewart Dickson MLA has joined us. I will bring David McNarry back in. David, I apologise. I brought Cathal in because he had to leave, and I did not realise that you were not finished.

573. **Mr McNarry**: I want to tie up a loose end. Do you think that the forum idea is capable of producing the logistics required for linkage to core services? In other words, someone needs to say that it is doable. I have heard you saying all that you have said. Someone needs to produce some logistics that are real rather than expectations. I am saying that it may sound like a good idea, but how do we do it? Therefore, what are the logistics? What is the linkage? It becomes so very local.

574. **Mr Bailie**: Michael, with reference to our paper —

575. **Mr Lorimer**: If members get a chance to look at our paper, they will see that it contains a section called "Lessons from the development of DRT services" from elsewhere, in which we list a number of things. The first is the most important: a change in culture. That is a change in culture in the agencies involved and the transport providers. Everything that we looked states that transport providers are immensely conservative. If we rely on transport providers to provide innovative services, they are not going to happen. The second is partnership-working. Those services do not work unless you have that. Other important issues are understanding local need and a requirement for government to instigate change.

576. Everything from GB suggests that this is not an easy, straightforward process. It will require a huge amount of will and commitment from the various agencies involved. However, the alternative is that we sit on our hands and let the situation get worse. We know that the spending situation can only get worse.

577. **Mr McNarry**: I would like to help to do something to solve this. I am looking at it from the point of view of logistics, because people living in A believe that if they are taken from A to point B, it is easier for them to get to where they really want to go, which is C. It is just the logistics of all that. Is it doable in reality? I hear what you say about taxis. That is a very interesting concept. I know, as you probably do, about some of

the failures that there are with taxis for schools and in getting disabled children to schools, and so forth. Is there some work to which you can point us, or do you think that someone needs to do some work? Can the forum do that work?

578. **The Chairperson**: David, I think that there are good models across the water, and, in fact, some of them have been mentioned. The silo mentality that you talked about, Michael, is certainly something that needs to be looked at. Even from our short visit to that conference in London, I can see that immense savings are to be made for the public purse in education and health transport and all those other bits and pieces of transport. David suggested that some of the systems that are currently in operation in Northern Ireland should bring people to the main routes on which Translink provides a service so that we can get more of them using the public transport system. Last week, when we were discussing health and the rural transport structure, you heard that there is not even a bus stop for people to use public transport to get to the Causeway Hospital. The bus actually goes past the hospital to the bus station, where people have to disembark and get on another bus to get to the hospital. There is no bus stop, as they pass the hospital, to allow them to go in. It is a no-brainer that the bus should go in there on its way.

579. **Mr McNarry**: That is why hearing from groups such as this is of immense value to me. That is one of the great benefits of Committees, as far as I am concerned.

580. The question arises that if we have heard this in the past 15 minutes and previously in our inquiry, what on earth is the Department, with its silo mentality, doing that it is not hearing it, too?

581. **The Chairperson**: In fairness to DRD, it is not just that Department. A lot of Departments need to be dealt with. It is about getting a joined-up approach. You say that you want to do something. The Committee wants to do something. I hope that that will be one of the outcomes of the report. We have heard the message loud and clear, as we have done from other examples that we are looking at.

582. Next week, DHSSPS, the Department of Education and our Department will be before the Committee. There will be an opportunity to raise some of those issues with the various Departments. We have certainly got the message loud and clear.

583. **Mr Lynch**: I want to raise something that I forgot to raise when I got the opportunity earlier. The Department has initiated a pilot scheme between Enniskillen and Altnagelvin hospitals that brings together a number of the players that you suggest for integrated transport. Have you looked at that pilot scheme? I have gathered my own initial views on it, but what is your view?

584. **Mr Lorimer**: I am aware of the scheme, but we were not involved in any discussions around it. I would direct members to our report, in which we highlight some of the pilots that were run in the past. One thing that we find shocking is that none had gone through any proper evaluation process. Schemes may have been pulled because numbers were not good enough, but we need to find out why numbers were not good enough. If we are investing money in innovative services and they do not work, we need to find out why. Similarly, with the service for Enniskillen, we need to ask whether there is going to be a proper evaluation of the service. We need to learn lessons each time we try something like that in a rural area; otherwise, we do not know what works and what does not.

585. **Mr Lynch**: My initial information is that there are very few people on the bus. Those who are being given appointments are not being made aware of the bus times. There is no co-ordination. That is the initial view that I am hearing.

586. **The Chairperson**: In fairness to Translink, it understood that. For each appointment that went out, notification

went to each patient about the bus service from Enniskillen to Altnagelvin.

587. **Mr Lorimer**: May I make a comment on that specific service? There is a frequent bus service, once you get to the Omagh corridor. Rather than duplicating services that are already there, perhaps it is about linking people. My understanding is that people had to go to Ballygawley and sit in the freezing cold to link with bus services at the Ballygawley roundabout. Rather than duplicate other services, ways of linking people to the A5 corridor could perhaps have been looked at. We looked at one example, which was a demand-responsive service that ran between Newcastle and Belfast for a number of years. The bus would go off the corridor and around some of the villages. I travel that route every day by bus. It is a very frequent bus corridor. There are probably three to four buses an hour running to Belfast along that corridor. Why were we putting another service on that route linking people to Belfast, instead of linking people who live off the corridor to the existing services? It just did not seem to make sense. Again, however, that was not evaluated, and we do not have any record of why it did not work.

588. **Mrs D Kelly**: Apologies for my late arrival. If you have already covered this, I will pick it up later from the Hansard report. The review of public administration means that local councils will be given a remit for local transport needs. What discussions have you had with the Department or the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA)? Are you optimistic about that as an opportunity?

589. **Mr Bailie**: We have not discussed that specifically with either the Department or NILGA. We anticipate that council associations will sit down and discuss transport needs with all the appropriate stakeholders before they take over full responsibility for that.

590. **Mr Lorimer**: From our engagement with the public transport reform people, we identified that as an opportunity to look at local transport planning. There is a big opportunity to look at that and to introduce more local transport planning. We have highlighted that to the Department. There seems to be a "we don't know whether we're going to do local transport planning or not" sort of element within the Department.

591. **The Chairperson**: Thank you for your presentation. It was very helpful to the Committee. I am sure that we will talk again in the future.

30 January 2013

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Jimmy Spratt (Chairperson)
Mr John Dallat
Mr Stewart Dickson
Mr Alex Easton
Mr Ross Hussey
Mrs Dolores Kelly
Mr Declan McAleer
Mr Ian McCrea
Mr David McNarry
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín

Witnesses:

Ms Mandy Magee	*Belfast Health and Social Care Trust*
Mr Jackie Johnston Mr Daniel Kelly	*Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety*
Mr Brian McNeill	*Northern Ireland Ambulance Service*

592. **The Chairperson**: I welcome Jackie Johnston, director of secondary care at the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) and Daniel Kelly, assistant director of the cancer services, diagnostics and specialist drugs unit of the Department. You are very welcome, gentlemen.

593. **Mr Easton**: I declare an interest as Assembly private secretary to the Health Minister.

594. **The Chairperson**: OK, we note that.

595. Please go ahead and brief the Committee and then leave yourselves open for questions.

596. **Mr Jackie Johnston (Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety)**: Thanks very much, Chair. We are waiting for a couple of colleagues to arrive, one from the Ambulance Service and one from the Belfast Trust. Hopefully, they will join us during the session, but they seem to have been delayed.

597. **The Chairperson**: OK.

598. **Mr Johnston**: I thank the Committee for inviting the Department to give evidence on this important matter. Daniel and I will be happy to answer any questions that we can. I am relatively new to the subject, so I apologise in advance if I am a bit hesitant in some areas.

599. Dr Andrew McCormick, the permanent secretary of the Department, wrote to you, Chair, on 25 January. His letter provides the basis of the Department's evidence on this issue. The key points in Dr McCormick's letter refer to the 2007 transport strategy for health and social care services, which sets out the framework for delivering user-friendly, high-quality, responsive and efficient transport services in the health and social care sector on the basis of assessed need and the consistent application of eligibility criteria.

600. In particular, the strategy stipulates that transport should be provided for patients and clients who need it to access the health or social care services they require. There should be clear criteria against which to assess the need for transport services and a mixed economy of provision to provide the necessary flexibility. Transport should also be provided free of charge to those entitled to it.

601. The Department's strategy document sets out the framework, and operational delivery of the strategy has been passed to the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service's patient care service. It provides pre-booked, non-emergency transport for patients attending outpatient appointments and those being discharged from or transferred between hospitals, having been assessed by a medical practitioner as needing that service. In addition, the Health and Social Care (HSC) trusts operate transport fleets to facilitate

client access to social care services, for example, day care.

602. Access to the health and social care system transport services is strictly regulated on the basis of assessed medical or social need by medical practitioners and social work staff. It is not generally available in the same way as public or community transport. As the Committee is aware, that is the responsibility of the Department for Regional Development (DRD). That said, DHSSPS is working with DRD to explore the potential for a collaborative approach between Northern Ireland's health and public transport sectors. We are involved with the pilot, which is, I think, in place. The development of DRD's proposals is opportune in terms of the pilot, as the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) recently commenced a review of the Ambulance Service's patient/client service. Therefore, we see the two coming together, giving us an overall assessment of where further areas of collaboration could be developed.

603. That was an overview of the Department's position on this important matter, and we are happy to take questions. Again, I apologise that my colleagues have not arrived.

604. **The Chairperson**: OK, thanks for that, Jackie. I will start with a question divided into three elements. First, what is the cost to the trusts of missed appointments as a result of transport issues?

605. Secondly, why have attempts to co-ordinate transport services in the health and education sectors had such limited success? It has been suggested on a number of occasions that, quite frankly, the Departments live in silos. In other words, Departments protect their own jobs and empires. It is a theme that has come up from various sources. I suspect that it would be the view of quite a number of Committee members and the Assembly generally.

606. Thirdly, aside from shared services, there are potential efficiencies to be made through the joint purchasing of vehicles, maintenance and fuel. To what extent is your Department engaged in joint procurement practices with other Departments?

607. **Mr Johnston**: Do we have information to hand on missed appointments, Daniel?

608. **Mr Daniel Kelly (Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety)**: I am afraid that we do not have that with us today.

609. **Mr Johnston**: May we provide that in written evidence to the Committee, Chair?

610. **The Chairperson**: Yes, that can be forwarded to us in writing. The Committee Clerk will write to you because we would like that information.

611. **Mr Johnston**: The disparate functions of the transport service across community health and social care sectors are really down to the historical fragmentation of services across government. You referred to Departments delivering services from silos. Organisations are constrained in how we deliver those services by our respective legislative requirements. It places some constraints on our ability to operate. I understand that it is a historical position. However, we are keen to move beyond that and see whether it is possible, even within the current statutory framework, to build better collaboration. That is why we are pleased that the health and social care sector is participating in the upcoming pilot.

612. **The Chairperson**: Local authorities across the water have saved vast amounts by sharing services right across the board. This is public money. I expect, and I think that everyone here expects, every Department to do everything in its power to save money. Some of the figures showing what could be saved are scary. I suspect that fairly substantial amounts could be saved by some joint working between Departments on education, door-to-door services in the rural sector, and so on.

613. **Mr Johnston**: We would be keen to examine that, Chair. As I said, as part of the pilot, we are looking at what the possibilities and opportunities are for developing that collaboration. Efficiency savings are very much at the forefront of our minds in that.

614. **The Chairperson**: Why is that being done only now?

615. **Mr Johnston**: DRD has the lead on this. It is a DRD initiative, and it is mounting the pilot as part of its strategic approach. We have been happy to participate, but DRD will be able to advise you on the timing.

616. **The Chairperson**: Would you not have been considering this as part of the drive towards efficiencies in your Department?

617. **Mr Johnston**: The legislative and statutory constraints on us mean that we have not fully addressed that. I accept that. However, we are keen to do so through this pilot.

618. There are constraints on how the Ambulance Service and trusts procure transport. I agree with you that it is another area that needs further investigation.

619. **The Chairperson**: So nothing is being done in procurement on sharing the purchase of vehicles, etc, with other Departments.

620. **Mr Johnston**: Not that we are aware of.

621. **The Chairperson**: What about the procurement of fuel?

622. **Mr Johnston**: Again, not that we are aware of.

623. **The Chairperson**: "Not that you are aware of." In other words, it is not being done.

624. **Mr Johnston**: We will check and confirm that for you, but we are not aware of any such collaboration.

625. **Mr Daniel Kelly**: I know that our Ambulance Service takes advantage of UK national procurement contracts in the purchase of vehicles, so some economy is achieved through that method. Unfortunately, our colleague from the Ambulance Service has not arrived yet. He could certainly provide more detailed information on that.

626. **Mr McNarry**: You are very welcome to the Committee. In 2005, an Audit Office report recommended a pooling of transport budgets to encourage joined-up working. What are your views on that?

627. **Mr Johnston**: At that time, the permanent secretary responded to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on the report. Would it be OK if I read to you what was said at the time, Mr McNarry, or I could let you have a copy?

628. **Mr McNarry**: Not really. I have asked for your views on it. We all work with briefing notes, which is fair enough. Since the 2005 report, what work has been carried out on the basis of that recommendation?

629. **Mr Daniel Kelly**: We understand that, in the health field, the approach was to take advantage of national contracts to ensure value for money in procurement.

630. **Mr McNarry**: With all due respect, that is not really an answer. I asked what work has been carried out. Has no work been carried out? If that is the case, tell me that. What work has been carried out?

631. **Mr Daniel Kelly**: None that I am aware of.

632. **Mr Johnston**: Our colleagues have just arrived. They may be able to enlighten us further.

633. **Mr McNarry**: I understand that it is unfair on you if you do not know, but you are all that I have at the moment. Chairman, may I wait just to see whether —

634. **The Chairperson**: Will the two folks who you have joined us identify themselves and their positions for the purposes of Hansard?

635. **Ms Mandy Magee (Belfast Health and Social Care Trust)**: I have lost my voice. I am Mandy Magee from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

636. **Mr Brian McNeill (Northern Ireland Ambulance Service)**: I am Brian McNeill, director of operations for the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service.

637. **The Chairperson**: You are very welcome to the Committee.

638. **Mr McNarry**: I hope that your voice improves as the day goes on, Ms Magee.

639. Mr Johnston, you said that your two colleagues who have just joined us would be able to help.

640. **Mr Johnston**: Brian might be able to help on what co-operation there is on the ambulance side.

641. **Mr McNarry**: Let us drill down into this. Clearly, you have not done anything. Are you unaware of anything having been done since 2005 in response to the Audit Office report's recommendations? Is that basically it? Is the prevailing view in your Department that there is scope for one government agency to oversee the transport provision for all Departments? Is that a view that you have developed in your Department as a result of the report seven years ago? Surely to goodness you have come to some conclusion in seven years.

642. **Mr Johnston**: We have not explored that area, Mr McNarry. We have not actively addressed it.

643. **Mr McNarry**: Are you really telling me that your Department has ignored the Audit Office report and done nothing about it for seven years?

644. **Mr Johnston**: At the time, the Department explained the constraints placed on its taking forward some of the recommendations, and those constraints still apply.

645. **Mr McNarry**: Effectively, you have done nothing about it. You have just said that there is a problem.

646. **Mr Johnston**: As I said, we were looking for opportunities to engage in procurement.

647. **Mr McNarry**: I realise that we are not getting much further. On the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, whoever this is for —

648. **Ms Magee**: Sorry, but I am from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

649. **Mr McNarry**: I will have another go. The Belfast Trust's submission provides details of patient transport expenditure broken down by provider, but it goes on to say that details of individual journeys are not recorded. It is beyond me, so perhaps somebody will explain how the Department can ensure value for money if it cannot be clear how much the journey costs in the first place? How can it assure the public that a journey is value for money if it does not know how much it costs?

650. **Ms Magee**: The Department can probably work out the cost of transport provided directly by the trust. When the question was asked, it related to all social services transport, which includes transport provided by taxi operators. The difficulty for some trusts is being able to identify the cost per taxi journey. They will obviously have contracts in place for cost per mile, but they may not be able to identify the detail of each journey. However, each trust would be able to identify the cost per journey for the fleet of vehicles that it operates. I know that that can be done because the various trusts benchmark.

651. **Mr McNarry**: Is that information available? In other words, can you provide it to the Committee?

652. **Ms Magee**: I represent one health trust, but I would say that the information is available because it is regularly benchmarked between trusts.

653. **Mr McNarry**: So it would be relatively easy to see the value for money?

654. **Ms Magee**: For certain types of transport, such as the transport provided directly by the trusts using their own fleet of vehicles, that information would be available. When you start involving other types of transport, such as taxis, trusts do not necessarily monitor specific journeys. They just

monitor the overall costs and ensure that journeys meet the contract rate.

655. **Mr McNarry**: Last week, a number of people with disabilities were here, and we heard very compelling evidence from one gentleman who used a wheelchair. He found it very difficult to get on buses and found it difficult to get other Departments to help, and so on. The question of value for money is interesting. I would like you to tell me that what is in position represents value for money — and then back that up with facts and figures. I would like to hear somebody say that this is value for money because they know that it is. Can you tell me that?

656. **Ms Magee**: I cannot tell you that on behalf of all the trusts, but, in the Belfast Trust, we regularly monitor the cost of transport. When tendering for any transport services, we ensure that we get the best possible price available, whether for taxis, private ambulance services or any sort of transport provision.

657. **The Chairperson**: OK, David. I do not think that we will get any facts or figures, so we will have to write about that as well. I must say that the evidence to this point has been very poor.

658. **Mr Hussey**: I come from the west of the Province, and, obviously, it is a very rural area. In your transport policy, you talk about circumstances other than medical need in which patients may have difficulty accessing hospital because of transport difficulties, mobility problems, financial hardship and rural isolation. What is being done to rural proof the situation that we are dealing with, not only of accessing but leaving hospitals? You commented on assessing medical or social need when somebody is being sent home. There may be instances when it is 3.00 am, a little old lady has gone to hospital in her nightie and, with no money, is sent home in a taxi. How do you deal with those situations?

659. **Mr McNeill**: First, I represent the Ambulance Service, and it is important that the Committee realises that it operates two tiers of transport. One is the accident and emergency tier, which operates 24/7. Its primary focus is to respond to 999 calls and requests from GPs and other sectors of primary healthcare for admission to hospital. In parallel with that, we operate the non-emergency tier of the service, which runs from about 7.00 am until midnight. It deals with the routine work associated with moving patients within the healthcare system. That is supported by a voluntary car service whereby members of the community elect to transport patients, mostly to renal and oncology appointments, and have their expenses reimbursed for doing so.

660. The scenario that you described is one in which patients are admitted to an emergency department in the evening hours, and it may take some time for them to be assessed. The decision will then be made that they need to be discharged from the emergency department, at which point we would not have the capacity in the non-emergency tier to deal with that. Therefore, it may require us to use an accident and emergency vehicle, which would be inappropriate for that particular category of call because we would be tying up a blue light ambulance with a paramedic, which may be required for the next life-threatening call. So we would then ask staff in the emergency department to make an assessment to determine whether it was viable and appropriate for a patient to be taken home by taxi, or private ambulance service if required. If that is the case, they make that decision. It is their decision; we have no control over that. However, if a patient has a specific medical need or requires nursing care or some other form of intervention, we will gladly accept that call and take them home. So a patient's transport really comes down to three factors, the first of which is the time at which a call is made. If it is after hours, the only transport available is our emergency fleet. The second factor is whether there is a medical need, and the third is whether there are any mobility issues associated with medical

need. Those are the three things that we need to take account of.

661. **Mr Hussey**: Another thing that you need to take account of is rural proofing. This has not been rural proofed because there are various areas in which patients would be quite a distance from home, and people in pyjamas being sent home in the back of a taxi does not sound right to me.

662. **Mr McNeill**: I certainly accept your point. However, from my perspective, at night, I operate between 40 and 48 A&E ambulances throughout Northern Ireland.

663. **Mr Hussey**: It is not have to be specifically A&E ambulances. Clearly, other forms of transport are not being made available at night.

664. **Mr McNeill**: I accept your point, but it is outwith my control to access those.

665. **Mr Hussey**: Who does have the control to access them?

666. **Mr McNeill**: You are talking about the joined-up approach? From an ambulance perspective, we were very hopeful that the work that the Committee was doing would try to make the links for us to be able to signpost appropriate transport that was fit for the needs of patients. We are very aware that, if we cannot do it, someone else must, but we do not have the connection to be able to make the links.

667. **The Chairperson**: Mr McNeill, the Ambulance Service spends a large amount of public money. Do you not consider that you and individuals in the Department should be doing something about saving money that comes from the public purse?

668. **Mr McNeill**: With all due respect, Chairman, with the funding that we have available for the Ambulance Service and provision for the emergency service, I suggest that we meet a 5% increase in demand every year, and we achieve a response of less than eight minutes to life-threatening calls every year. That is the priority of our business, that is where we put our funds and that is where we direct our service.

669. **The Chairperson**: I do not think that there is any issue with the emergency response. It is good — in fact, it is first class.

670. **Mr Hussey**: Chair, that is why I wanted the question to go back to the Department. Can the Department answer what is it doing to ensure that the policy is rural proofed?

671. **The Chairperson**: It appears that the Department cannot answer. That is another question that we have to put back to the Department as part of our inquiry. There is no blame attached to the Ambulance Service.

672. **Mr McNeill**: Maybe I can help you with that by describing the work that we are doing. The previous question focused on value for money. In the non-emergency side of our business — the patient care service — we are very conscious that a large number of patients who access that service may not meet the eligibility criteria. As a consequence, we know that a number of patients compete for that form of transport. As you saw from the strategies, which you probably read, those decisions are primarily based on the concept of medical need. We have a working group set up at the moment, and we are trying to address the issue of medical need. We feel that the policy needs to be revised to include not only the patient's clinical and medical needs but their mobility needs. The key focus is to try to ensure that people who need access to that transport will get it on the basis of those three factors. The people who have been getting the transport and really do not need it can be transferred to somewhere else, thus creating additional resources that can be used for those who require it most.

673. **The Chairperson**: Should the trusts and the Department not be doing that to help you?

674. **Mr McNeill**: We are working with commissioners on the board to make that happen.

675. **Mr Ó hOisín**: Thanks, Chair. I will go back to your initial line of questioning about transport planning. The Minister for Regional Development recently indicated that discussions are ongoing between DRD and DHSSPS on transport planning. Are you aware of any progress that has been made on that or of the stage that those discussions have reached? Do you know whether there has been any interaction between the new unit in DRD and the Health Department?

676. **Mr Johnston**: The working group has been set up, and I understand that its main output is about taking forward the pilot in Dungannon as a chance to explore opportunities for delivering efficiencies, co-operation and collaboration. That is the main bit of work that is ongoing. A project board has been set up to oversee that work. I know that we await the outcome of that work and that we will evaluate it then.

677. **Mr Ó hOisín**: How has the Enniskillen/Derry/Altnagelvin connection with Translink worked and what has the uptake been? How is its roll-out planned for other areas, particularly rural areas, which Mr Hussey mentioned?

678. **Mr Daniel Kelly**: I understand that some sort of co-operation is going on with that, but, unfortunately, I am not aware of the exact details.

679. **Mr Ó hOisín**: Right. Could we find out, Chair?

680. **The Chairperson**: Yes, I think that we are going to have to get a lot of information in writing. It appears that questions cannot be answered.

681. **Mr Dickson**: Can you tell us what audit reports and Audit Office reports the Department actually takes cognisance of? My briefing tells me that in 1995 an audit report told you to communicate with other transport providers and to work on pilots with joined-up working and efficiencies. In a review in 2000, which was 12 years ago, the Ambulance Service was told to make that a high priority. Is there a better word that we should be using for a 12-year time lag? In 2005, the Audit Office came back and said that something should be done about efficiency and the delivery of co-operation between transport services.

682. It just seems that you cavalierly ignore what the Audit Office tells you to do. Quite simply, what have you done?

683. **Mr Johnston**: We would not accept that, Mr Dickson.

684. **Mr Dickson**: Sorry, but what did you do in 1995 about the report?

685. **Mr Johnston**: We gave the report thorough consideration —

686. **Mr Dickson**: And what?

687. **Mr Johnston**: — and responded to the Public Accounts Committee about our approach to answering those particular points in the Audit Office report.

688. **Mr Dickson**: You did nothing, however.

689. **Mr Johnston**: Again, we came back and explained what the constraints were.

690. **Mr Dickson**: You told it what you could not do; you did not tell it what you could do. You did not co-operate.

691. **Mr Johnston**: We explained the constraints that were involved with taking forward some of the recommendations.

692. **Mr Dickson**: Why do we always have a cannot-do attitude in Northern Ireland? Why can we never have a can-do attitude?

693. **Mr Johnston**: Well, in terms of —

694. **Mr Dickson**: Is it just a total failure of leadership?

695. **The Chairperson**: Let him answer the question, Stewart.

696. **Mr Johnston**: I think that we have a can-do attitude in trying to move forward from where we are.

697. **Mr Dickson**: Twenty years?

698. **Mr Johnston**: Obviously, there have been deficiencies, as you are identifying. However, the fact is that we are now

engaged in a collaborative project with DRD and other parties.

699. **Mr Dickson**: One pilot is under way today. We have one project between Enniskillen and Derry, and you cannot even tell us about it today. It is 20 years on, and we have one miserable pilot going on.

700. **Mr Johnston**: We hope that that pilot will provide a valuable learning experience by drawing out what we need to do to develop the collaboration that we all want.

701. **The Chairperson**: The question was simple. What have you done in the past 20 years? Can you rhyme off a few things that you have done since the various reports were published? Have you done anything? If you have not done anything, tell us that you have not done anything.

702. **Mr Johnston**: We have not been able to take up the recommendations that were in the audit reports. We explained why we could not take them up.

703. **The Chairperson**: Explain to us why you did not take them up.

704. **Mr Johnston**: For logistical reasons, we were not able to scope vehicle sharing between the Department of Education and the health side. That is because the vehicles have seating and access arrangements that are often configured differently to suit different passenger needs and characteristics. Vehicles that belong to different Departments were too often in the wrong places when they were needed, because both have similar peak times. In many cases, the drivers are employed through contracts that would require significant renegotiation to facilitate additional work.

705. **The Chairperson**: Could you not have done that in 20 years?

706. **Mr Johnston**: I take your point, Chair.

707. **The Chairperson**: You take my point? You really are living in a silo, aren't you?

708. **Mr Johnston**: As I said, we are trying to move forward from the position that we are now in —

709. **The Chairperson**: Trying? Trying for 20 years?

710. **Mr Johnston**: We now have —

711. **The Chairperson**: Squandering public money?

712. **Mr Johnston**: We now have a new approach to trying to develop that collaboration between the various sectors.

713. **The Chairperson**: Authorities across the water, with the technology that is available today, such as computers and all the rest of it, have been making very significant savings. Have you done anything like that?

714. **Mr Daniel Kelly**: No. Unfortunately, I am not aware of the authorities that you are talking about or of what they have been doing.

715. **The Chairperson**: Should you not be looking at authorities across the water and at the worthwhile practices in other areas there? We went to a conference in London and were told about very significant savings that were made in a very short space of time. There were savings of half a million pounds in one local authority in a very short space of time. Should you not be looking at best practice in other trusts across the water? Maybe you could learn something.

716. **Mr Dickson**: A lot of this can be very complicated and can involve complex planning and interrelationships between you, education and library boards, Translink and other providers. I remember seeing a documentary about the 1950s in Scotland, and it showed that Royal Mail used a small minibus to deliver the mail in a small rural community, but it also picked up patients for the hospital and took people to various other places. This is not rocket science. A lot of it is simply down to good local planning. As the Chair said, some of it is also down to very sophisticated technology being made available to you. It is disgraceful to be told that a trust does not know how many patients are being moved about

in the care system and how much that costs when the Department for Regional Development knows almost what its clients who use door-to-door and rural community transportation had for breakfast. It knows where they are going and what time they are coming back. We could tell you every single thing, to the last minute, about what happens to those clients, but you cannot do that. It does that on a voluntary basis; you are all being paid to do it.

717. **The Chairperson**: Thanks, Stewart. Maybe we could get some written clarification in response to your questions.

718. **Mr Dallat**: Transport is critical to making appointments. I am sure that you would agree with that. A couple of your panel were late this morning, and I am sure that transport logistical problems caused that. A total of 38,717 people did not make their appointment. Do you have any idea how many did not make those appointments because of transport problems?

719. **Mr Daniel Kelly**: I am aware of some study that the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) carried out that, as far as I am aware, suggests that transport to appointments is, in the main, not a big issue for people who miss them. I do not have the exact statistics on that, but it is certainly not a large percentage.

720. **Mr Dallat**: Could we have that information, Daniel? If we had it, we could decide whether it is an issue. I suspect that it is critical for individuals for whom transport is the problem. I think that you have been well enough hashed over the Audit Office report, but, as a member of the Public Accounts Committee since the Assembly's inception, I am absolutely horrified that an Audit Office report has been treated in this way. For the benefit of this Committee, I want you to find out who should have been on the balcony looking down on that. I am not interested in shooting individual messengers who come here to a Committee, but I want to know whether the Ministers who had those Audit Office reports — the first in 1995 and the second in 2005 — were responsible and did not do anything about it.

721. We just cannot dismiss that. We need to find out the historical facts of why two Audit Office reports have been ignored. Indeed, it is obvious from the evidence this morning that you did not expect this to be a big issue. It is a big issue, because how can any regional government justify its existence if a major Department ignores its Audit Office reports? That should have been obvious. You should have been provided with all the answers this morning, and you quite clearly have not been. That only emphasises just how important the points made by other members, including Ross Hussey and Stewart Dickson.

722. We got the history lesson about the Post Office doubling up as a transport provider in Scotland. That happened in Donegal, which is a lot closer to home. This has been asked about, but you have all the modern technology today that enables any Departments to link up and co-ordinate a transport system. There is no excuse for not doing that. I can order a parcel from Birmingham now and it will be at my door tomorrow morning; that is not a problem. However, because nobody looked at the Audit Office report, you cannot deal with real, human live people, many of them with medical ailments.

723. With your approval, Chairman, I would like to see a very comprehensive report coming back from the Department about why those Audit Office reports were ignored. We as a Committee may then begin to understand how you can get something done. Otherwise, some Committee in the future will be sitting here asking the same silly questions.

724. **The Chairperson**: I find it incredible that the Department has not examined the technology end for making appointments. As you know, the Committee is going to visit Devon County Council to look at excellent usage of different systems and to gain

some knowledge, yet the Department has done nothing. That is incredible, considering the amount of public money that is being spent. I just do not understand that sort of ongoing attitude or silo mentality. Yours is not the only Department; unfortunately, there are others.

725. **Mrs Dolores Kelly**: The Ambulance Service and transport service are distinct business units, if you like, in the health service. It is often a staff complaint that, if a patient were being transferred from, say, Craigavon to the Royal, they went in the ambulance and someone had to follow behind with a file for the case notes. Is that because of different terms and conditions and different staffing levels? That did not always happen because there was an emergency situation. What is the rationale behind that type of scenario?

726. **Mr McNeill**: Again, it depends on the nature of the call. If the case is an emergency transfer or a patient with high acuity, where time is of the essence, usually the patient will be accompanied by a doctor, who will take the notes with them. If the doctor does not travel, but there is a need for information to travel with the patient, the crew will take the notes. If it is a routine and planned appointment, the notes and information are usually transferred electronically, and our crews would not take the information. That is based on clinical governance issues. The need for that information would not be a high priority in a routine appointment. I have been working in the Ambulance Service for 26 years, and I have never had a complaint about or experienced a situation in which someone's treatment has been impacted on by the inability of the physician at the other end to have the information that was required at the time.

727. **Mrs Dolores Kelly**: This complaint is not about a physician; it is about efficiency. I worked in the health service for 22 years, and I know for a fact that it was often the case that notes were driven up the motorway by a transport driver, often behind the ambulance. They were not in emergency situations. I fully accept what happens in emergency situations. It is some years since I left the health service. Is that no longer the case and it is now done electronically, or is it still the case?

728. **Mr McNeill**: To the best of my knowledge, it is not the case. If crews are asked to take the information, they will take it. More often than not, it is transferred electronically. However, sometimes the crew will need to move the patient before the notes are made ready, in which case they will move the patient as a priority.

729. **Mrs Dolores Kelly**: I appreciate that.

730. Chair, we were given to understand that interdepartmental work is being done between the education and health authorities to look at shared transport opportunities. There is a subgroup that, if not at ministerial level, is at fairly senior departmental level. Are you part of any of those discussions? Have you been asked for your opinion? Are you aware of the stage that that work has reached?

731. **Mr Daniel Kelly**: I am not aware of the group that you are referring to, unfortunately. Obviously, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety is working with DRD to investigate areas where transport collaboration is possible. However, we have not engaged with the Department of Education on that subject recently.

732. **Mrs Dolores Kelly**: Chair, I thought that we were given to understand that that work was ongoing.

733. **The Chairperson**: I thought that Mr Johnston said that a committee had been set up.

734. **Mr Johnston**: That is a working group set up by the Department for Regional Development.

735. **The Chairperson**: Are you not able to tell us anything about it?

736. **Mr Johnston**: As I understand it, the main work is being taken forward in the form of the pilot, which is ongoing. It will

see what comes out of the pilot, and that will then be reviewed.

737. **The Chairperson**: Do you have officials on that group?

738. **Mr Daniel Kelly**: I participate in the project board for the Dungannon pilot, which is currently being set up.

739. **The Chairperson**: What about the committee? I assume that it goes wider than Dungannon.

740. **Mr Daniel Kelly**: I think that the initial plan is for a pilot project to be run, and the results of that pilot will then be reviewed with a view to looking at wider application throughout Northern Ireland.

741. **The Chairperson**: Will that take another 20 years?

742. **Mr Daniel Kelly**: I hope not, no.

743. **The Chairperson**: I am glad to hear that.

744. **Mr McAleer**: The figures are quite startling. According to what the Minister said recently, transport costs the Department £18 million per annum. There were 160,000 missed appointments and 180,000 cancelled appointments. We have heard from rural transport providers, such as Easilink, that are more than willing to collaborate with you in getting to the furthest reaches of rural areas, which Ross alluded to. Do you agree that a cross-departmental and inter-sectoral approach would help to drive down the costs and the figures for missed and cancelled appointments?

745. **Mr Johnston**: We hope that that will be tested through the pilot; that is what the pilot is looking at. The scope would lead you in that direction and should assist the situation.

746. **Mr McAleer**: Do you think that it will?

747. **Mr Johnston**: We await the outcome of the pilot, but the intention is certainly to see whether those issues can be tested in the pilot.

748. **Mr Easton**: The two audits were conducted 1995 and 2005 under direct rule. Would the then Ministers have been aware of the audits?

749. **Mr Johnston**: They would have been. The response to the 2005 audit, which was about action that was taken on the Audit Office value for money investigation, was given to the Assembly Public Accounts Committee in January 2009.

750. **Mr Easton**: Do you feel that you have ignored the audit report?

751. **Mr Johnston**: We do not feel that we have. We feel that the questions that were put to the Department in the audit report were answered fully in the response to the PAC. I am happy to make available to the Committee a copy of the response that was made in 2009.

752. **Mr Easton**: That would be helpful. Mr McAleer commented on the £18 million a year that is spent on transport. Do you know how much of that £18 million is spent on taxis?

753. **Mr Daniel Kelly**: No. I would have to ask colleagues in the Health and Social Care Trusts for that information.

754. **Mr Easton**: I am keen to know, because I had a bugbear about using taxis. I would have liked to know the cost, because, from what I understand, it was a lot of money. Is there any way to find out the number of appointments that were missed because of taxis not turning up?

755. **Mr Johnston**: We will check that with the trusts. I know that some of the trusts have supplied written evidence on that to the Committee. The South Eastern Trust, for example, specified the cost of taxis in the three financial years from 2009-2010. The cost ranged from £784,000 to £909,000. I have not seen any figure relating to cancelled appointments, but I can find out for you.

756. **Mr Easton**: Will you remind me and the Committee of your criteria for people using our transport and our paying for it? What are the criteria? Are you looking at those criteria again?

757. **Mr McNeill**: Are you referring specifically to ambulance transport?

758. **Mr Easton**: Yes.

759. **Mr McNeill**: The criteria that are used currently are based on medical need. That is a problem for us, in that there is some difficulty in making assessment based on medical need when it comes to deciding who makes the assessment and who books the transport. So, a medical condition does not necessarily realise as a medical need for transport. Someone with diabetes, for example, has a medical condition but is still able to go about their daily business. We quite often find that, because of the current system, those patients are booked on to the non-emergency ambulance service.

760. Through the work that we are involved in at the moment, we propose to extend the medical need to encompass mobility need and other factors. Therefore, regardless of whether the booking comes from a GP's surgery, a hospital ward or an outpatients department, all requests will go through a criteria filter. If the patient meets the criteria, we will accept the booking and plan to deliver the journey. If they do not meet the criteria, they will be advised why they do not meet it.

761. We are then left with the difficulty of how to signpost those patients towards accessing a service that is appropriate and that will meet their need. That is the bit of work that we are involved in at the moment, and it is why I am pleased to be here to give the Ambulance Service's perspective. We need help with and a joined-up approach to that. Colleagues talked this morning about rural communities. If rural community transport networks are in play, can we advise patients or potential patients that those services are available and of how they can access them? We also need to find out whether we can book the services on their behalf. That is the element that we need to address.

762. **Mr Easton**: Do you accept that there has been a certain amount of abuse of our transport system?

763. **Mr McNeill**: To be perfectly honest with you, yes.

764. **Mr Easton**: Do you have a rough percentage figure for that?

765. **Mr McNeill**: I could not quantify it, and I think that the evidence would be very anecdotal. So, rather than trying to define the abuse, we will hopefully address it by applying the eligibility criteria so that only those who need it will get it.

766. **Ms Magee**: Brian addressed the issue of accessing transport for travelling to hospital, but the health trusts also provide an amount of transport for people to access social care. In 2007, the Department of Health developed guidance for trusts on assessing need for such transport, so anybody who accesses trust-funded transport has to go through that assessment process. A number of elements are involved, such as mobility issues or requirement for supervision. It is quite comprehensive, and it applies to all the trusts.

767. Trusts have a range of transport options available to them, and, in some cases, taxis are the most cost-effective and appropriate option for the client's requirements.

768. **The Chairperson**: I have just one final point, Mr Johnston. There has been a lot of discussion about the audit reports. Do you feel that the audit reports' recommendations were valid?

769. **Mr Johnston**: Where the evidence that the Audit Office brought forward and presented to the Department is concerned, the Department explained why we were not able to embrace those recommendations. They were really proposals and suggestions that were put forward, and we responded to them on the basis of why they were not viable or logistically possible.

770. **The Chairperson**: They were not proposals or suggestions; they were recommendations. Did the Department consider those recommendations to be valid?

771. **Mr Johnston**: We explained in our response why we were not able to implement a number of them.

772. **Mr Dallat**: The Department accepted and signed off on those recommendations. It knew exactly what it was signing off. If the Department felt at the time that it was not possible to achieve them, it would not have agreed them. It was agreed with the Public Accounts Committee.

773. **The Chairperson**: There were quite a lot of questions today that you were not able to answer that need to be answered. I am going to be straight with you: the evidence has been pretty pathetic. It is probably among the most pathetic evidence sessions that I have sat in any Committee and listened to, apart from perhaps the session with the Ambulance Service. I hope that the replies that we get will be substantial. Thank you for attending.

30 January 2013

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Jimmy Spratt (Chairperson)
Mr John Dallat
Mr Stewart Dickson
Mr Alex Easton
Mr Ross Hussey
Mrs Dolores Kelly
Mr Declan McAleer
Mr Ian McCrea
Mr David McNarry
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín

Witnesses:

Mr Alan McMullan Mr Gary Montgomery	*Department of Education*
Mr Dale Hanna	*Southern Education and Library Board*

774. **The Chairperson**: The next briefing is from the Department of Education. I welcome Alan McMullan, who is the head of the school access team; Gary Montgomery, who is the deputy head of the school access team; and Dale Hanna, who is the transport officer for the Southern Education and Library Board. You are very welcome to the Committee, gentlemen. I invite you to make your submission and then to leave yourself open to questions.

775. **Mr Alan McMullan (Department of Education)**: Thank you, Chair. I am the head of the school access team for transport, and Gary is my deputy. Between us, we are the Department's full transport team on the policy side. Dale is on the operational side from the education and library board.

776. I would like to make a few comments. Back in 2005, the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) report commented that co-operation between education and health transport services was limited. At the same time, the report acknowledged that any transition to co-ordinated services would be a complex and challenging concept for all concerned, including community transport, as each served a distinct clientele with different operating environments, funding sources and vehicle requirements. As a result of that NIAO report, an interdepartmental steering group was established to consider the issues and promote partnership. The main outcome of the group was to conduct a downtime survey of both Departments and support services, which established that each had limited downtime that could be utilised by the other. It would take approximately one to one-and-a-half hours downtime to be available to release a vehicle for use by the other party by the time it moved from the end of one operation to the start of another, undertook the actual run and returned to the original location. Also, the pattern of demand for both organisations was essentially the same, reducing the possibility of sharing.

777. In addition to availability, there were other issues such as insurance, the suitability of vehicles for adults and children, child protection concerns and driver contracts, which would have to be overcome before sharing could become a reality. One further issue that will affect health, vehicles and community transport undertaking school work in the future is that new Department of the Environment legislation requires, by September 2014, all school buses to be fitted with particular lighting and signage for safety purposes. That having been said, I would like to make it clear that we are not against improved collaboration or sharing of vehicles or facilities if it is shown to be feasible and cost effective.

778. The Committee will be aware that the Department of Education and the Southern Education and Library Board actively engaged in the DRD-led pilot in the Dungannon area, in which public and community transport providers are working together to explore the potential benefits of working more closely in the

delivery of services to the public. The pilot covers the Southern Education and Library Board area. It is in its early phase, and I look forward to seeing the results as to whether there are opportunities for a more economical service that could potentially contribute to savings to all parties.

779. The Committee should also be aware that the Minister of Education has indicated to the Assembly that he intends to bring forward a review of the home-to-school transport policy once the way forward on the current area planning process for schools becomes clear. The last school transport review was undertaken in 1996.

780. One last point that I would like to draw to your attention is that we are only legally obliged to provide assistance with transport, and not actual transport, to eligible pupils. Also, that assistance is provided for educational reasons; that is, it is to ensure that no parent can claim in court that their children cannot attend school because they live beyond statutory walking distance, which is the rationale behind the distances of two miles for primary schools and three miles for post-primary schools. We will try to answer your questions here today, but should you raise any question that we cannot respond to immediately, we will be happy to give you a written response in due course.

781. **The Chairperson**: OK. Thank you. Just let me set the context. First, I will read out the costs, so that members of the Committee are aware of them. In respect of board vehicles, the average cost per pupil per year is £938, which is £9·38 per pupil per journey; Ulsterbus is £630, which is £6·30 per pupil; Metro is £537 per year, which is £5·65 per pupil; the daily allowance is £591 per year, which is £6·22 per pupil; listen to this one the cost for taxis per pupil per year is £2,371, at a cost of £25 per journey; and private sector coaches and minibuses are £820 per year, which is £8·63 per pupil. That is all public money being spent.

782. The budgets are staggering when you look at the amount of money spent. Ulsterbus costs £28 million a year. The board vehicles cost £23 million a year. Taxis cost nearly £8 million a year. Private operators cost £6 million a year. Metro costs £1·6 million a year. Daily allowance is £1·6 million a year. Northern Ireland Railways costs £352,000. Translink costs £277,000. Bus Éireann costs £89,000. The Strangford and Rathlin ferries cost £12,060. Apart from taxis, board vehicles incur the highest average cost per pupil journey, while the cost of Translink services and even private operators is considerably less. How do you justify the continuing use of board vehicles? Secondly, given that you maintain such an extensive fleet, how do you justify spending almost £8 million a year on taxis? Thirdly, the 2005 audit report recommends a pooling of transport budgets to encourage joined-up working. What are your views on that, given that you are also accused of working in a silo and protecting your own jobs, as opposed to doing what is best value for the public purse?

783. **Mr A McMullan**: I will take those points in order. You commented first on the board unit costs. It has to be remembered that the boards' yellow and white buses operate primarily in rural areas where Translink is not operating. Those buses pick up the more difficult routes; the non-economical routes that Translink will not operate on. Within the statistics you have looked at, board buses are used for children with special educational needs, in some cases extreme medical conditions. They are used for all the children in wheelchairs, and wheelchair buses carry far fewer in capacity. A 33-seater bus fitted out for wheelchairs may take only six or eight wheelchairs. So, hidden within those costs is the transport of a considerable number of medically challenged individuals. That is why the unit cost is considerably higher.

784. **The Chairperson**: What is that number?

785. **Mr A McMullan**: Board vehicles transport about 25,000 individuals.

Within that, you have at least 3,000 to 4,000 children with special educational needs (SEN) going to special schools.

786. **Mr Dale Hanna (Southern Education and Library Board)**: I would like to add to that, from an operational point of view. Take a special needs bus. There are overheads on that bus. There is a driver; there are five or six wheelchair passengers; and we have to have an escort on the vehicle. There are more overhead operating costs. The other key point is that each of those vehicles will go to a pupil's home. Translink buses go down the main roads and pick up at bus stops. We have a fleet of 825 vehicles. About 25% of them are primarily devoted to children with special educational needs. We go to each —

787. **The Chairperson**: How many?

788. **Mr Hanna**: About 25% of the overall fleet is dedicated to pupils with special needs. Each vehicle has to go to the pupil's home.

789. As far as the schools those pupils go to are concerned, there are far fewer specialist settings. For example, I manage the Southern Board area. We have three buses that have to travel to Belfast every day, to Fleming Fulton, because it is the only specialist setting in Northern Ireland. It really is not a case of comparing like with like. Alan was absolutely right to draw out the differences in the overall costs.

790. **The Chairperson**: We have established that 25%. What about efficiencies in the other 75%, which is still costing £9.38 a journey?

791. **Mr A McMullan**: It is not costing £9.38. If you take —

792. **The Chairperson**: What is it costing? You tell us.

793. **Mr A McMullan**: You are taking the complete figure and dividing it by the complete number. If you take SEN out, you then have to do a separate calculation to know exactly what the board cost for, for want of a better word, ordinary, eligible people would be.

794. **The Chairperson**: Can you tell us what that figure is?

795. **Mr Hanna**: In the Southern Board area, the last time we did a calculation, it was about £560 per pupil.

796. **The Chairperson**: That is £5.60 a head. Is that right?

797. **Mr Hanna**: Sorry; it is £560 unit cost per pupil per year. I do not know how you got to the daily figure.

798. **The Chairperson**: It was the Assembly's Research and Library Service.

799. **Mr Gary Montgomery (Department of Education)**: It is possible that it may have taken the number of school days; most pupils are at school for 180 school days. They make two journeys, so it is 360 journeys per year divided into the overall total. I cannot be certain.

800. **The Chairperson**: The Research and Library Service would get all the figures from the Department.

801. **Mr Hanna**: You have members here from rural areas. In fact, the vast majority of Northern Ireland is rural. Alan referred to the statutory obligations of within two and three miles of pupils' homes. We are operating in very rural areas. We have to go up small roads to get to people's homes to provide a service, so there will be an element of cost in delivering that service.

802. **The Chairperson**: You were here for all of the previous presentation. You heard us refer to vast sums of money that have been saved by local authorities across the water. Local authorities there, as opposed to boards and all the rest of it here, deal with education. Very substantial amounts of money have been saved simply by using a joined-up approach. What have you done about that approach?

803. **Mr A McMullan**: I would like to come back on the point about local authorities. You are comparing local authorities in England with the education system that we are running here in Northern Ireland. How schools are managed there and here is not the

same. In England, pupils go to the nearest school. In Northern Ireland, that is not the reality of things; the eligibility criteria for our home-to-school transport is the two- and three-mile distance. It is also about categories of schools. There are six suitable categories. I am not saying that there are six separate bus systems; do not misread me. However, there is a division in the system here that does not happen in local authorities in England.

804. **The Chairperson**: Could there be a better joined-up approach here?

805. **Mr A McMullan**: Possibly. It —

806. **The Chairperson**: What have you, as a Department, done about that?

807. **Mr A McMullan**: We are talking about being joined up with, first of all, Translink.

808. **The Chairperson**: What about with health?

809. **Mr A McMullan**: I will come to health. I will do Translink, then health and then community transport. As far as Translink is concerned, the boards have to look at their whole route planning each year to know exactly how to get the pupils to school. Pupils change each year. The boards work constantly with Translink on the routes that should be public and those that should be dedicated school bus routes. They also discuss how the yellow and white board buses should meet certain Translink routes to help to get children to school.

810. For health, we conducted a downtime survey. The boards looked at every bus in the fleet and put down the route and the times that it is used. Buses are used to get children to school, but they are also used for a considerable number of other things, such as educational trips, swimming trips, youth clubs and other community work. Dale will be able to comment on that. They are also used for delivering meals to country schools. The downtime survey found that an extremely limited number of vehicles would be available to go from where they finished to the point at which they need to pick up and do the run and then be back in position again to meet our obligations to get the pupils back to school. The only area in which there was any scope was in the Western Board, which is an extremely rural area. All the drivers who are employed by us are part-time. Buses tend to be kept not at central depots but at houses. It is more difficult to get additional routes. That was probably the only area in which there was potential for sharing.

811. **The Chairperson**: OK. What about the other question about the 2005 audit report?

812. **Mr A McMullan**: Sorry, your other question was about taxis.

813. **The Chairperson**: Yes.

814. **Mr A McMullan**: When we look at how to get eligible pupils to school, we look first at the mass transport method, which is Translink's public services. For those who remain, we then look at the board buses to see whether we can develop a route. If we cannot have a board bus or a Translink bus in place, we look a private hire contract bus. It is only having gone through that do we get near other possibilities, such as taxis or parental allowances, for children whose situation cannot be resolved by other means. The majority of children in taxis are those with special educational needs. A taxi is given in virtually every case because of the statement of special educational needs; there is a medical reason to do so. It has been decided by medics and it is, in effect, given to the boards saying that it is to be provided. That does not mean that there is one taxi for each individual child. The board looks at the routes that the taxis are on and it will put one, two or three children in the taxi. Also, if the statement allows, the board will use the taxi for a child without a medical need, so we fill up the taxis that way. The taxi cost is high because it is in the statement of special educational needs.

815. **Mr Hanna**: It is very similar to the special needs buses that boards run. Most pupils will require an escort of

some description on the vehicle, so there is a wage cost. It is very much a door-to-door service, because the recommendation will involve the safety of the child getting to and from school. We have to go to the child's home to pick them up. We have to get them to school on time. We have to get them to the specialist settings, which are not just two or three miles down the road. In the Southern Board area, the average distance is at least 10 miles or 11 miles for each child living beside each specialist school. We are transporting children to Belfast. In one instance, we are transporting a child to Scotland to attend school. That is exceptional, but we have to take the child to the airport and we have to have an escort. The headline figure looks —

816. **The Chairperson**: Are you saying that the wage costs of the supervisors are in the £25 per journey?

817. **Mr Hanna**: Yes.

818. **The Chairperson**: Maybe you could give us some evidence of that in writing.

819. The 2005 Audit Office report recommended the pooling of transport budgets to encourage joined-up working. What do you think about that?

820. **Mr A McMullan**: We looked at pooling the vehicles to see whether that would work. Pooling the budgets is a possibility. You could do it on the procurement side. It depends on the type of vehicles that both organisations would be ordering. They meet different requirements: one is for ill people and the other is for schoolchildren. The potential for efficiencies in that regard may not be that great. Dale, do you want to comment on fuel and maintenance?

821. **Mr Hanna**: There could be scope in vehicle maintenance. The boards already procure fuel on a joint basis. Equally, given that a lot of vehicles are located in rural areas, we tend to fuel at local petrol stations through a fuel card system. It is not economical to drive a vehicle 10 miles or 15 miles to a health service or Translink depot to fill up.

822. **The Chairperson**: OK. You said that there could be savings in the procurement of fuel and stuff like that. Does that mean that you have done nothing about it? It is a simple answer: yes or no.

823. **Mr Hanna**: The boards have not done anything about it.

824. **The Chairperson**: OK, so I take it that that is a no. Thank you.

825. **Mr Dallat**: I am sitting here almost daydreaming, and I should not be. School transport in Northern Ireland is a product of the 1944 Education Act, which became law here in 1947. Initially, it was to bring the sons and daughters of farmers to good grammar schools. Is it not hopelessly out of date and does your evidence this morning not suggest that there is a need for a radical reappraisal of the whole school transport system?

826. **Mr A McMullan**: As I said, the rationale behind it is not about transporting children to school but about the situation in which a parent cannot claim that their child cannot get to school because the statutory walking distance is two and three miles. If a child lives within that distance, is not attending school and the parents are taken to court, they have no excuse. If they live beyond that, we are there as a provider of assistance with transport so that they can get to school. That is the rationale.

827. The last policy review was in 1996. Education, like many other areas, has moved on. There is a lot more collaboration and movement of pupils between schools. If we were to review the policy now, we would look at a different provision. The Minister indicated to the Assembly that he will bring forward a review of the transport policy at the correct time. He has judged that to be after the area planning proposals are looked at in detail.

828. **Mr Dallat**: Chairperson —

829. **The Chairperson**: Very quickly, John.

830. **Mr Dallat**: Just one question —

831. **The Chairperson**: We are getting quite a bit behind. I want to move to 2013 as opposed to 1947, please. [Laughter.]

832. **Mr Dallat**: Is Translink cherry picking the transport routes?

833. **Mr A McMullan**: That is a good question. I do not know the answer. Translink provides a service under contract. It has to meet its public service requirements. It carries the majority of our pupils: approximately 50,000 of the 90,000. It really is for Translink to decide how it provides its service on a route, whether a bus is a dedicated school bus for schoolchildren only or whether it is a public service with quite a number of children on the bus. At the end of the day, that is its operational aspect, and within that, we pay an amount to get that number of children to school.

834. **Mr Dallat**: Finally, Chairperson, and without going back to 1947 —

835. **The Chairperson**: Thank you.

836. **Mr Dallat**: — does all this not suggest that the system is hopelessly out of date and does not take into account the modern difficulties that children have, even those within the three-mile limit, who are walking on narrow roads, open sheughs, cow pats and everything else, and should be immediately reappraised?

837. **Mr A McMullan**: I go back to the point that the Minister has accepted that a review of transport policy is required and will be brought forward at the appropriate time.

838. **Mr Ó hOisín**: Just to be simplistic, 60% of schoolchildren are transported by Translink — end of story. The Education Department has 1,000 vehicles. We have an argument. I do not get this downtime thing. I would really need delve more into the detail and get the evidence of that. The school year is 180-190 days, with the result that there are more days in the year when schools are not operating than they are.

839. I take on board what you are saying in respect of educational trips and youth clubs, but there is still a significant portion of the year in which there is no usage. Again, I do not take on board your downtime and usage because I think that the experience of most people and most members when they go by schools is that they see buses sitting there for quite long periods every day. There has to be some sort of radical reassessment, as John Dallat alluded to. What is your view on a single government agency starting to look at this? We hear about all the difficulties and the silo mentality around transport, and the issues here are the same issues that we heard from the health people. There has to be a real radical look at this issue. We have to look at the economies of scale, and we have to look at the critical masses. Those all have to be examined very closely. Do you agree with that?

840. **Mr A McMullan**: I do not have a problem with there being a radical look at it, and all the Departments getting together to take it forward. You commented on the downtime. I am perfectly happy to provide the Committee with a copy of the downtime survey. It shows that, during school time, buses have a very limited amount of downtime to be able to do a full run somewhere else. I will get Dale, who is on the board side, to comment on their use during school holidays. The buses are sitting in the evenings as well, and there is potential there to use them, but, remember, they are board buses that have been built for children.

841. **Mr Hanna**: On a practical level, you have an asset sitting there in the summer holidays. However, if we take the special needs fleet, the vast majority of those vehicles are quite busy during the summer, because special schools have summer schemes that last for three or four weeks. Drivers work during term time, and they are entitled, like any other employees, to annual leave, so they take the bulk of their annual leave during the summer. With board buses, we try to make sure that their main maintenance cycle takes place during the summer, so that buses are not off the road when

they should be on the road. We also introduce training for drivers during the summer. Common sense will say that there is a vehicle sitting there not being used during the summer time, but if you want to use that vehicle, there will be an associated cost, because you will have to employ somebody to drive it, and you will have to put diesel in it. So, there will still be an additional cost. It is not that the vehicles can be used within the current cost structures. There will be additional cost for using them.

842. **Mr Ó hOisín**: There is a cost for them just to sit there as well. With regard to the downtime figures, are those consolidated or are they across the board? In board areas, such as that of the Western Board, it would obviously be higher because of the logistics involved. Is there a breakdown of that?

843. **Mr A McMullan**: The downtime survey includes every vehicle in the board fleet at that stage right down to the registration. I am quite happy to provide the Committee with that.

844. **Mrs D Kelly**: I understood that school transport was being reviewed. Has there been no review following on from the audit reports? Would it not be annual good management practice to have continuous monitoring and evaluation of service delivery?

845. **Mr A McMullan**: There is continuous monitoring. As I said earlier, pupils change each year. You lose a lot and you gain years one and eight. In the main, you know the fundamental numbers that are on most routes, and the routes are likely to remain there. However, they could change the route, and, as a matter of course, the boards have to look at all routes. Going back to taxis, every single taxi is looked at, and an assessment is made as to whether there is the need there for it and whether more children will be put on to it, so that is definitely ongoing all the time.

846. **Mrs D Kelly**: You may recall that there was compulsive competitive tendering under the Thatcher Government in relation to the provision of some health services, particularly around local government. Has there ever been an assessment in respect of competitive tendering within school transport provision?

847. **Mr Hanna**: All taxi transport is competitively tendered for on a regular basis. We have other runs for the buses that we competitively tender. Each board will market test some of its own services as well to assess value for money. In respect of the bulk of the transport, remember that the previous Minister stated that Translink was going to continue as a regulated service. By doing that, it is difficult to get any competitive element into the procurement of public transport, because, by default, there is only one provider in Northern Ireland.

848. **Mrs D Kelly**: So it is a monopoly service, really. In the Minister's making that decision, would the Department not have been advised to test the market on that theory?

849. **Mr Hanna**: That is above my level. I just try to get the buses to people's houses.

850. **Mrs D Kelly**: Earlier, we put a question to the health representatives about the working group and what it is doing to look at greater collaboration between health and education. We know that buses are passing each other in the same country lanes.

851. **Mr Hanna**: We are working with that group in my area. We are networking all our vehicles to see exactly where there are overlaps.

852. **Mrs D Kelly**: Is this in Dungannon?

853. **Mr Hanna**: Yes; in the Dungannon area.

854. Remember that we have vehicles operating in the morning taking children to school, for example. However, in health, they are taking their clients to adult facilities that operate at the exactly the same times. You also have child protection issues. Although clients travelling on health service vehicles are considered vulnerable adults, they are adults. There are child protection issues that would have to be worked around in

respect of transporting an adult with a child. The perception is that there are lots of vehicles being driven around that could be utilised in a much better way, but I do not think that that is the reality.

855. **Mrs D Kelly**: Between £72 million and £78 million for the school population that we have is a huge sum of money that would not be acceptable in any other region.

856. **Mr Dickson**: I will ask you a similar question to what I asked the health officials. Do you simply ignore audit reports? What have you been doing since 1999? You may tell me that it is complicated. In 2000, the Audit Office agreed that it was complicated but said that it was high priority. We are still sitting today with only one pilot. The reality is that you have done nothing since 1995, and it is only now that you have introduced a pilot. I would like you to comment on that.

857. Secondly, is there any reason why some of your vehicles could not simply also pick up fare-paying passengers who may wish to go in the same direction as the pupil, go to the same town as the pupil and take advantage of going back at the same time as the pupil? Have you ever considered that? I am not asking you to put on an additional bus. I am simply asking this: are there places where you have space, and is there any reason why you could not take a fare-paying passenger? Do not give me child protection as a reason, because you would then have to talk to me about child protection in respect of all those children who travel on services run by Metro, Ulsterbus and Translink, which are just normal service providers.

858. **Mr A McMullan**: First of all, we did do something about the 1995 audit report. We did our downtime survey with DHSSPS. We worked very closely with that Department. We went right down to the detail of looking at every single bus. The conclusion was that there was a very limited amount of fare capacity available to do additional routes. So we did do something about that audit report.

859. **Mr Dickson**: Why did you do that only with the Department of Health?

860. **Mr A McMullan**: We work all the time — every year — with Translink on the routes that we have to supply to pupils. We are working with Translink to look at how board buses connect to the Translink route. That work with the boards on how they deliver their service is done on an ongoing basis. The only area that we have not collaborated with is community transport, but there is a licensing issue there that I know that the board will be able to comment on.

861. **Mr Dickson**: Can you explain the licensing issue to us? It is coming up time and time again that there are licensing issues with community transport.

862. **Mr Hanna**: There are various ways to license the operation of a bus. There is a scheme in education called the 10B permit scheme, which allows us to operate our own vehicles not for hire and reward, which sits outside the road traffic legislation of operating for hire and reward. So, fundamentally, we cannot operate for hire and reward. We cannot lift a passenger and take money off them because that is outwith the legislation with which we must comply.

863. **Mr Dickson**: Those are only bits of paper and rules. Rules can be changed. You could be designated as both a school bus and community transport, and you would still not necessarily be lifting a fare.

864. **Mr Hanna**: As regards passengers, you made the point about picking up an adult. You said that you do not want to me to mention child protection, so I will not mention that. However, you are asking about value for money. As a board manager, if I have a bus with 33 seats, I am allocating 33 pupils to that bus. I am not allocating 20 so that there are 13 spare seats.

865. **Mr Dickson**: So every bus is full every day?

866. **Mr Hanna**: I am not saying that every bus is full every day. Parents may decide

not to use the service, and it may not be utilised fully. However, it would be very difficult for us to manage starting to lift fares at any given time. It is possible, but, in the current system, we are trying to maximise our current school transport fleet. I think that I would be better placed making sure that that happens, as opposed to setting up a system that may pick up one or two random adults now and again.

867. **Mr A McMullan**: Also, the routes change each year, potentially. The pupils change every year, and the boards react to that every year and decide how to change their routes. If you thought that you maybe could put on a route that the public would know was operating with a board bus, it may last only one year.

868. **Mr Dickson**: You have certainly given me an insight into why the Audit Office said in 2000 that it was complex. However, it also set it as a high priority for you to resolve.

869. **The Chairperson**: Given that the figure for the board the number of board vehicles, maintenance, and all the rest of it is £9·38 a head, and private sector coaches and minibuses can do it substantially cheaper, with no cost of vehicles or anything else, what have you done to put more and more of the education boards' work out to the private sector?

870. **Mr A McMullan**: As I said earlier on, that £900 figure includes special educational needs. You would have to take that figure out. If you bring that figure out, you will find —

871. **The Chairperson**: We established that that is 25%.

872. **Mr A McMullan**: Yes, but it is a significant amount.

873. **The Chairperson**: We established that that is 25%. The question to you is this: what have you done about reducing the size of your fleet so that the public purse does not have to supply the bus, the fuel or anything else? It can be done by the private sector a bit cheaper. I suggest that it would be done substantially cheaper if you did not have the cost of a vehicle and the cost of fuel. Have you done anything about that? I want a simple answer: yes or no.

874. **Mr A McMullan**: There has been no specific exercise in relation to that. The private sector will not be able to pick up the special educational needs.

875. **The Chairperson**: I understand that. We are taking that 25% out. That is not the question that I asked you, Mr McMullan. I asked you about the other 75% and how we can give better value to the public purse. However, you tell us that you have not done anything about that. That is the simple answer.

876. **Mr A McMullan**: Yes.

877. **Mr Hanna**: There has not been a direct exercise on that, but it is chicken and egg. There is currently not the capacity in the private sector to pick up the additional work that the five education and library boards do.

878. **The Chairperson**: If the work was there, the private sector might buy more vehicles.

879. **Mr Hanna**: I did say that it is chicken and egg.

880. **The Chairperson**: That is not a very satisfactory answer, quite frankly. The work is not there at the minute, but I suggest that the private sector would expand if there was additional work for it to do. It would be substantial saving to the public purse, and you, as a Department, have not even thought about it. That does not shock me for one minute.

881. **Mr McNarry**: I think that I might go into business. Would you go in with me? [Laughter.] It is quite simple. If the costs mean that it is not efficient or value for money, can the transport sector that you are involved in be improved by utilising a joined-up approach? In other words, would you like to see an overarching agency adopted to deliver a joined-up approach?

882. **Mr A McMullan**: I would certainly not be against the various Departments getting

together in a proper exercise to look at the possibility of making savings and sharing vehicles. Whether one particular body is the answer to that issue, I really cannot say.

883. **Mr McNarry**: From what you are saying, it is quite clear that you have not really discussed it in any great detail with any other transport provider.

884. **Mr A McMullan**: No.

885. **Mr McNarry**: That is part of the failing, and it is what this Committee is delving into in its inquiry. I am quite shocked by what I am hearing.

886. The situation can be improved; intuition tells me that. This is like what the Chairman was delving into, but let us try to have a straighter answer. Could your service be improved by a more cost-effective operation that is handled by a commercial company?

887. **Mr Hanna**: The key cost drivers in transport are fuel —

888. **Mr McNarry**: No. Look: it does not matter who is driving a bus; they will all pay the same for fuel. I am asking you a direct question. Could a commercial company replace you and be more cost effective?

889. **Mr Hanna**: I do not know.

890. **The Chairperson**: The figures suggest it, anyway.

891. **Mr McNarry**: Maybe it is something that we might look at —

892. **Mr A McMullan**: Given that we already transport —

893. **Mr McNarry**: I am not criticising you and your jobs. You have a job to do; you use the tools, and those are the tools. I am interested in finding out whether the end product gives value for money. I am not convinced that it does. I understand that you have to take time to look at this, that and the other, and that perhaps you neglected the efficiency side of it. As has been said before, there have been enough reports and recommendations to ask somebody to put it into order, but that, clearly, has not been done. I need to find out whether you are maximising the end product. Until I hear something better from you, I believe that a commercial company would be better value for my constituents.

894. **Mr Hanna**: I do not think that the answer to that is yes, and I will give you some reasons. A commercial operator would come in with commercial ideas about what it would do. It would look at the efficiencies of the service and deliver them in a practical way by reducing the distance of the routes so that it does not have to do as many miles. That will reduce the —

895. **Mr McNarry**: I am not asking you to put up obstacles. If I were a commercial company — I will not dwell on this —

896. **The Chairperson**: It would have to do what you contract it to do.

897. **Mr McNarry**: Exactly. You, Dale, would probably be someone who I would head-hunt. I bet that, if I headhunted you and put you in a commercial company, you would not give me that type of answer.

898. **Mr Hanna**: Maybe not. Sometimes, there is a hidden value. A very real example is the work that the boards do with their vehicles to schools, school trips, swimming trips and youth clubs. We provide that at a no-profit basis. My head is spinning because I am thinking about what you are saying about a commercial venture. The reality is that a commercial venture would come in and not work —

899. **Mr McNarry**: So, you actually work to a profit?

900. **The Chairperson**: You still have to supply the vehicles and all the rest of it. You would have less —

901. **Mr Hanna**: It would want a profit margin.

902. **The Chairperson**: You would have less in salaries. That would be picked up. I suggest that the other sector could do that work as well.

903. **Mr Hanna**: I would have thought that, to begin with, you would have had the

Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE) regulations, so 825 drivers would transfer under current terms and conditions.

904. **The Chairperson**: To where?

905. **Mr Hanna**: To any new commercial venture.

906. **The Chairperson**: In the private sector?

907. **Mr Hanna**: Yes.

908. **The Chairperson**: That may be. I am not going to get into an argument about TUPE with you. Some local authorities across the water said to all of their employees that they are employed today but not tomorrow; they put them onto protective notice for a period and they moved them onto new contracts. That is what they had to do across the water in terms of the cuts, but I do not want to get into that because that is not what we are talking about.

909. **Mr I McCrea**: I appreciate that these guys are working within the confines of the policy that is there. Dale and I have locked horns on a few occasions as he is the transport manager for the area that I represent. Nonetheless, I want to take up the point made by Cathal Ó hOisín, which was the use of vehicles outside school time. I drive around my constituency, and certainly in Cookstown there is a horde of buses sitting around when they are not being used. I look at the usage on Saturdays when, having left my son up, I noticed that the school hires a bus from the private sector to take the kids to the different sports, hockey matches or whatever, when there are dozens of board buses sitting there.

910. They have to take into consideration the price of a driver, and all the rest of it, but I cannot for the life of me understand why there cannot be a competitive cost if you compare that with the private sector when the bus is sitting there at a loss in any case. Is any work being done to address that problem and to see how the board buses can become more competitive in the sense of utilisation in the schools?

911. **Mr Hanna**: We do try to market our service as best we can. The Southern Education and Library Board, for example, does 3,000 trips a year. That is a significant amount of work. Yes; at the weekends our buses are out doing work. In Cookstown, for example, and maybe it is unique in that area, certainly the private sector is used. However, we speak directly to the schools, ask them to come to us and we will give them a price. Again, however, that is their budgets and LMS money, and we cannot dictate to them that they use our services.

912. **Mr I McCrea**: I find it strange, to say the least. It is part of the whole issue of what we are discussing. The money is deemed just to be wasted whenever there is a resource sitting on your doorstep.

913. **The Chairperson**: In relation to Cookstown in your answer to Mr McCrea, I assume that is because the private companies are doing it cheaper than the prices you are giving to schools in the area.

914. **Mr Hanna**: I am not sure exactly what the reason is.

915. **Mr I McCrea**: I do not know but can we find out?

916. **Mr Hanna**: The principal of each school makes a decision based on his or her budgetary requirements.

917. **The Chairperson**: Logic would tell you that that is probably the reason, would it not?

918. **Mr Hanna**: It may well be.

919. **The Chairperson**: I would suggest that it is the reason. Thank you very much for your evidence. There are a substantial number of questions that we will be sending to you in writing, which we would like answers to. A number of papers were referred to, which we will be asking you for as well. Thank you very much.

30 January 2013

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Jimmy Spratt (Chairperson)
Mr John Dallat
Mr Stewart Dickson
Mr Alex Easton
Mr Ross Hussey
Mr Declan McAleer
Mr Ian McCrea
Mr David McNarry
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín

Witnesses:

Mr Ciaran Doran	*Department for*
Mr Sean Johnston	*Regional Development*
Mr Stephen McKillop	

920. **The Chairperson**: I welcome Ciaran Doran, director of transport, finance and governance with the Department. Ciaran, you are no stranger to the Committee. I also welcome Stephen McKillop, head of the operational delivery branch, and Sean Johnston. Sean, I am not sure what your position is.

921. **Mr Sean Johnston (Department for Regional Development)**: I am from the transport projects division.

922. **The Chairperson**: OK. You are all very welcome, gentlemen. As usual, please go ahead and give your briefing to the Committee.

923. **Mr Ciaran Doran (Department for Regional Development)**: Thank you for the opportunity to talk directly to the Committee. Hopefully, you will have received a full written submission from the Department for Regional Development, so we do not intend to go into the detail of that today. What we would like to try to do, spread across the three individuals here, is address the five items in the terms of reference for the review.

924. I will say at the outset that the Department is open to any suggestions from the Committee about how improvements to public transport can be made, but I will also try to set a bit of context from the Department's point of view, in assessing how public and community bus transport requirements are currently met. It is important at the outset to distinguish the concept of public transport from that of community transport. Public transport is available to anybody who wants to use it — for example, as provided by Translink — as opposed to accessible transport schemes that we fund through the community transport partnerships or under the Door-2-Door arrangements. That distinction between community and public transport actually mirrors the Department of the Environment's (DOE) licensing arrangements as they currently exist: full bus operator licences as opposed to the 10B permit regime that operates for the rural transport partnerships.

925. The other point I will make in introduction is that the Transport Acts of 1967 and 2011 are certainly key constraints and key drivers for the Department for Regional Development in terms of how it would address public transport. In the establishment of Transport Northern Ireland, on which I know the Committee received some briefing, we should say at the outset that that is primarily driven by EU rules about the need for contracts to be put in place with the main public transport provider in Northern Ireland, Translink, along with some additional aspects. That is essentially the context as it stands at the moment.

926. I will make a couple of points on the second aspect of the terms of reference, which relates to assessing current public and community bus transport options. From the Department's point of view, they are not necessarily comparable, certainly when you are talking about cost comparisons, because they operate under a different

licensing regime and are for different purposes. To put it in statistical terms, Translink currently provides 68 million journeys on buses each year, including school transport, concessionary travel, and so on. Community journeys currently make up less than 1% of that total. If you then take that information and look at the overall cost or how much government subsidy is going into those areas, you can see that community transport or accessible transport is actually substantially more expensive, as you would expect it to be, because those services are targeted at the most vulnerable people, whether they are elderly, people who are living in rural areas, or disabled people. By their nature, they are likely to be more expensive than a mass transit system.

927. Having said all of those things, the Department for Regional Development would make the point that we have proactively tried to engage with other Departments in finding practical and — an important point that I emphasise — locally based solutions or improvements to public transport, working with the Departments of Health and of Education. That is something that Sean will talk about when we come to the pilot. Stephen will briefly take you through some of the statistics and policy around community transport.

928. **Mr Stephen McKillop (Department for Regional Development)**: Turning to the third point in the terms of reference about assessing current interrelations in the delivery of public and community bus services, I would emphasise that rural community transport partnerships provide a kind of a safety net and are focused on only certain groups and individuals, and those people are members of those schemes, rather than something that is open to the general public, like Translink. It is not a substitute for public transport. Rather, it is complementary to it and, as far as possible, should link in to the existing public transport network.

929. The 10B licence exemptions mean that services should be used primarily for educational, religious and social purposes. Obviously, as you know, they are not used for home-to-school transport, which is the Department of Education's responsibility, or for transport services that the Health Department would be responsible for. They are not intended to be in direct competition with private bus operators.

930. As Ciaran said, the services are locally based and, in respect of the road transport fund, it is because the key policy objective is to improve rural accessibility. On a practical level, we have encouraged the rural community transport partnerships to link into Translink routes as far as possible. A good example of that would be the pilot between Enniskillen bus station and Altnagelvin Hospital that we are trying to promote. We have encouraged the community transport partnerships to pick people up in rural parts of Fermanagh and transport them to the bus station to link in with the new Translink pilot service.

931. We also work closely with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in developing a dial-a-lift scheme. We operate an assisted rural transport scheme that they help by providing subsidy — in effect, a concessionary fare scheme for some of the members of the rural transport partnership.

932. In relation to health and hospital appointments, the rural transport fund is focused on delivering services to its members in the local areas, rather than long trips outside the area to hospitals. It can facilitate people who want to go to their local GP or for local appointments but, given the current budgetary constraints, it is not practical to undertake work that the health sector is supposed to provide.

933. **Mr Johnston**: My team is responsible for the pilot in Dungannon, so I will give you an update on it. I mentioned this when I was last with the Committee in November. We have agreement now from all the Departments and the participating organisations to participate in the pilot. We had the first meeting

of the working group on 19 December in Loughry College, Cookstown. The organisations taking part are ourselves, Translink, the Southern Education and Library Board, various representatives from the health service — somebody will join us from the Southern Health and Social Care Trust at our next session — as well as the community transport partnerships.

934. In relation to some of the discussion earlier on, we have no expectation that we would take on the policy responsibilities of the Department of Education or the Department of Health. They will still have their own particular needs and will want to retain that. I do not know that we would want to have any jurisdiction over that because that is their business, so we have got to be flexible enough to respond to the policy needs as they evolve.

935. At the first meeting, we agreed some key principles. Among those, hopefully you will be glad to hear, was that the focus of our work should be on meeting customer need and value for money. We can have debates about how we assess that, given the rurality of Northern Ireland and the particular terrain we are dealing with, but that was a key element of the working group's focus and will be on an ongoing basis.

936. We agreed some of the early tasks that we need to carry out. We are trying to establish what services are out there, because there is confusion. Who runs what? Who does what? What volume of usage is made of the services? We made a good start in that Translink and the Southern Education and Library Board brought along details of their services. We do not have the volumes of passengers on those yet, but that is in the next stage. A key element is to know what is out there, and the gaps and overlaps, if any. As I said, we agreed the outline of a plan, which our Department is now trying to work up into a project initiation document. Later this month, we will establish a cross-departmental project board to oversee the work and also to get buy-in from the various organisations for their participation. You will have sensed, as will the Audit Office, the complexity and the obstacles that exist, so I suspect that we will need ongoing buy-in and support from everybody to make a success of it. We will also want to engage with local stakeholders, including the councils and others.

937. Some of the improvements will be easier to resolve and implement than others, so we may have to have a phased delivery. We hope that some of the obvious changes, if there are any, could be implemented later this year, and then we will begin the evaluation to see what works and what does not in practical terms. As Ciaran said, every area will be slightly different, but, hopefully, the lessons that we learn from Dungannon and Cookstown can be replicated in other areas across the Province. We will want to evaluate that and see how it goes.

938. One of the other areas that was identified at the group in December was that passenger information was felt to be an area of confusion. A great deal of work is going on in Translink to improve passenger information, but that is for Translink services; it does not cover the totality of the services. It would be neat if we could get better information out about what is available to people. Inevitably, in rural areas, you will have to join up. You will have to be taken to a transport hub that will take you on to your final destination for long-distance journeys, but it is not always easy for people to find that out. In the pilot, we want to tackle the question of whether we can improve it, so that is another task.

939. We have not talked much about the procurement issues, which you raised earlier. I suspect that, as we get into it, we will want to tease out that area to see whether it is feasible and consider how similar or different the vehicles are. At this stage, I do not think that we know. If you were doing procurement, issues such as petrol and diesel would be considered. Perhaps that can be procured, but we have not tackled that issue so far or started to look at it.

940. **The Chairperson**: I am shocked that that is not already taking place between Departments.

941. **Mr Doran**: This issue came up in a couple of previous sessions. There have been discussions between Departments under the remit of the Central Procurement Directorate and about ways in which efficiency can be delivered on procurement, and that covered Translink, as well as school transport and health. As you might expect, Translink is by far the largest purchaser of fuel in Northern Ireland compared with education or health, but it has a very specific requirement because of the need for buses to be on the road essentially all the time. It has looked at fuel, and Translink has been in contact with the Department of Education about engineering or bus maintenance. There are options for improvements to be made, and I am aware that some discussions have been taking place on those issues. The Central Procurement Directorate of the Department of Finance and Personnel obliges all Departments to look at such things, and that has happened.

942. **The Chairperson**: I am shocked that it is not already happening, because —

943. **Mr Doran**: That is what I am saying —

944. **The Chairperson**: Sorry, Ciaran; let me finish. It is already happening in local government; some councils pull together to buy their energy, whether that is gas or whatever. Given the buying power of all the stuff that we are talking about today, it seems shocking that that is not already happening in government. Is it down to Departments working in silos?

945. **Mr Doran**: Silos may be a factor, but, genuinely, from my knowledge, fuel for buses has been considered across the different areas. I am aware of this because Translink is essentially in the lead on fuel purchases in Northern Ireland because it purchases so much. Translink has a massive contract for that. Therefore, the option of school buses, for example, using the Translink contract has been looked at. However, I think that it was found that, technically, it is difficult to merge the two. Dale Hanna from the Southern Education and Library Board said that buses in the western area tend to be based at the bus driver's home, whereas Translink's fleet will be refuelled at depots in certain locations, so there is a cost factor. I am the first to admit that I am not an expert on fuel, but I can give you assurances that that has been considered. I am not trying to suggest that there are not other areas where further work could be done.

946. **The Chairperson**: OK. Why is the Department planning to introduce transport modelling only now, given the significant investment in roads and transport that it has already made? The recent Transport Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 specifically provides the Department for Regional Development with powers to:

"secure the provision of public passenger transport services…enter into contractual agreements",

and to regulate services through the award of service permits. However, "integrated transport" implies that this must be cross-cutting across Departments. Is the new legislation fit for purpose?

947. **Mr Johnston**: When we started on the consultations and on drafting the proposals on the 2011 Transport Act, it was obvious to us, which is why we included the requirement to start doing local transport plans. I do not think that anyone really understands as yet the scope for more integration of services, but when we issued the consultation document that was one of the areas that we put forward. We got widespread support for that in the responses to the consultation, and that is why our Department is keen that we move forward on a pilot to see what could be achieved. That was the catalyst for us trying to press for this to happen. We are glad that it has happened. You might ask why it did not happen before. I do not know; I was not in the Department at that stage.

948. **Mr Doran**: I am genuinely not trying to sound negative, but local government in England is very different from the situation in Northern Ireland. However, it may be difficult to take school or even health transport out of two Departments and put them into, say, Transport NI, without policy on school and health transport following. That is a much more complex area.

949. That is the advantage that local government in England has: Devon County Council is responsible for school policy, as well as for social services and the equivalent of what the Department for Regional Development does here, even with roads to some extent. The difficulty is in transplanting that here. Merging all the transport budgets would have to be an Executive decision, because you are talking about substantial transfers of budgets from the Department of Education and the Department of Health into the regional development budget.

950. As officials, all we can say is that the Transport Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 works within those budgetary and legal constraints. That does not mean that we would not be open to change; in fact, we are actively trying to find ways of better integration. It is one thing to say that; it is another to suggest that all transport budgets should be merged into one. We are not against better working across Departments. However, we need to be careful about what is feasible in the current —

951. **The Chairperson**: It is all about what is best value for the public purse, Ciaran, at the end of the day —

952. **Mr Doran**: Absolutely.

953. **The Chairperson**: — and for taxpayers and for everybody. I assume that the Executive will be very interested in that. At the end of the day, there is one pot of money. Perhaps we can do things better, as they have done across the water. I appreciate what you said about local authorities.

954. I am glad that you are being positive and that you do not want to sound negative. You heard some of the earlier negativity in people's mentality. People threw up issues such as TUPE rules and child protection when the vast majority of people travel with members of the public on Translink buses every day. All those are smokescreens to keep the silo and jobs intact. At the end of the day, we have to learn to do things better, and it may be that fewer people are needed to do it. Has the Department done anything to look at the electronic stuff that many councils are using across the water?

955. **Mr Johnston**: We, on the passenger information side, are actively looking at how we can use that. There is stuff on NI Direct that is not terribly useful. Translink is working to upgrade the passenger information and journey planner. It is like everything else: when things are in silos, any repairs or improvements tend to stay in the silos too. However, the customer does not understand the silos. We are trying to design information so that it is more accessible and ignores the silos. I do not know how difficult that will be, but it is one of the things that we would like to try out in Dungannon to see what is possible and what would work. We assume that nobody will decide to change the rules on policy and budgets any time soon, so we have to work within the constraints and see what improvements can practically be implemented. Sometimes, there will be constraints. Stewart referred to licensing. That can be changed; I do not see that as a block. It can be worked around for the purposes of the pilot. We may have to get ministerial agreement to do that. If we want the Southern Education and Library Board to lift people on its way back with an empty bus, we may have to get it a licence or permission from the DOE to allow it to do that. We may have to have workarounds, which can lead to legislative change, subject to the Assembly's agreement. I cannot imagine that it would not agree to amend the rules in those circumstances.

956. There are all sorts of barriers, some of which may be easy to overcome,

although I suspect that we will struggle to find a sensible answer for others. It will probably take a fair bit of sorting through to get —

957. **The Chairperson**: Does the Department have transport planners?

958. **Mr Johnston**: We will recruit a temporary transport planner very shortly. Eventually, we will recruit somebody long term.

959. **Mr Doran**: My division is moving into Transport NI. Up to now, the Department and departmental officials have not been experts in operational transport issues. We will have to develop better knowledge. The pilot is seen as one way of trying to do that. We will have to consider that.

960. This might seem like a strange point, but, in Northern Ireland, the integration of public transport is, in some respects, very different from England. However, Northern Ireland has an integrated bus and rail network under Translink, which is a major advantage that does not exist in England. It is something to bear in mind.

961. **Mr Dickson**: You may say that we have an integrated transport system, but the timetable specifically gives a public warning that there is no integration between bus and rail in Northern Ireland. That is a misnomer, and I am disappointed to hear a departmental official state that we have an integrated service when the company that delivers it specifically says on its publications that we do not.

962. **Mr Johnston**: That is true, but it tries to design it so that it is as integrated as possible. That is a get-out clause; it is not always integrated.

963. **The Chairperson**: OK. I want to bring members in now because time is of the essence.

964. **Mr McNarry**: Did officials from the Department sit down with Translink for a pre-agreement negotiation prior to the latest contract being signed?

965. **Mr Doran**: There is no formal contract between the Department and Translink at this stage. The intention is that, from April 2014, a formal contract will be in place, but discussions happen each year with Translink about its financial plans. In broad terms, the Department discusses with Translink the level of fares and the targets that we expect it to achieve on passenger journeys.

966. **Mr McNarry**: Does it have a fairly good idea of what it is contracting to and what your expectations are?

967. **Mr Doran**: Yes. Translink sets its own timetable and network; historically, that is how it has happened. Under Transport NI, the intention is that, eventually, the Department will be more active in specifying services to be provided. At the minute, it is more along the lines that we expect it to achieve certain targets.

968. **Mr McNarry**: It seems a very loose arrangement, and that is part of the problem. Is the facility of sitting down and discussing things open to somebody who wants to compete for the Translink operation in Northern Ireland?

969. **Mr Doran**: I refer to the Transport Act 2011. Sean is more au fait with that than I am, but there was a debate about the type of public transport system to operate in the future, and that legislation, which has gone through the Assembly and obtained Royal Assent, specifies that Translink is to be the lead public transport operator, subject to compliance with EU rules. That is the policy that we operate.

970. **Mr McNarry**: I accept that. You will accept that somebody like me does not agree with that because it is closed competition, is very wrong and is against all the European rules — not that I have much faith in any European rulebook. However, because of the legislation and the legislative requirement on Translink to act in a commercial sense, it can exempt itself from scrutiny. Can it exempt itself from the scrutiny of the Minister?

971. **Mr Doran**: I do not believe that Translink is exempt from ministerial or departmental scrutiny. It is a public corporation and part of the public

sector; it is an arm's-length body for the Minister.

972. **Mr McNarry**: That is good to hear. I know that it does not plead the fifth amendment, but when Translink comes to the Committee, it exempts itself from giving answers. So, why —

973. **Mr Doran**: I think that, where it is coming from —

974. **Mr McNarry**: May I finish? I accept what you say. Why is it that, if it is not exempt from scrutiny by the Minister or his officials, it feels that it can be exempt when it comes before an Assembly Committee such as this one?

975. **Mr Doran**: I cannot comment on behalf of Translink, but I understand that Translink —

976. **Mr McNarry**: I am trying to figure out what is in the rules of exemption. It would help us if we knew what it could and could not hide behind.

977. **Mr Doran**: There is no exemption for Translink. However, we need to be conscious of the fact that Translink, under its constitution and under the law, has to operate commercially. The sensitivity arises when information is requested that it might consider to be commercially in confidence.

978. **Mr McNarry**: Is it Translink having to — using your words — operate under the law, or is it the holding company having to operate under the law? Is there not a gap there? Do you see them both as one?

979. **Mr Doran**: Technically, it is the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company, which has a number of subsidiary companies, including Ulsterbus, Metro and Northern Ireland Railways. For shorthand, they have used the brand name of Translink. Therefore, it is formally the holding company, but the holding company encompasses —

980. **Mr McNarry**: So in future should we talk to the holding company and not Translink?

981. **Mr Doran**: I think that they are the same thing in terms of the officials —

982. **Mr McNarry**: They cannot be the same thing, because they send different people.

983. **Mr Doran**: I am not sure what you mean by different people. There is a group chief executive.

984. **Mr McNarry**: Who is that?

985. **Mr Doran**: Catherine Mason.

986. **Mr McNarry**: Therefore, she is Translink's chief executive, too?

987. **Mr Doran**: She is effectively the chief executive for the holding company and the group incorporating all elements of Translink. That is the position. I do not know where —

988. **Mr McNarry**: I am just convinced — I had better not swear in front of the Committee.

989. **Mr Doran**: My division has been the sponsorship division for a few years. I have been at the Committee before, but we would be more than happy to come down as departmental officials to explain to the Committee the sort of information that we receive from Translink.

990. **Mr McNarry**: Would you mind just answering this one question: are you content with Translink's performance?

991. **The Chairperson**: I think that is us now.

992. **Mr Doran**: I am a great believer in continuous improvement [Laughter.]

993. **The Chairperson**: Ciaran, that was a very good, polite, legal answer.

994. **Mr McNarry**: 'Yes, Minister' is back on TV, is it not?

995. **Mr Doran**: Genuinely, in my time in charge of the division, we have set targets for Translink on passenger journeys and accessibility, and, in general terms, Translink has delivered on those targets, even though they have not always been easy to deliver on. During the middle of a recession,

most other transport companies did not increase the number of passenger journeys. To be fair, you have to assess it that way.

996. **Mr McNarry**: You would say that. If you sit down prior to negotiations and contracts and tell them what they need to sign up to, which is effectively what you told me, then you would look after them. Enough said.

997. **The Chairperson**: OK. You got the message there.

998. **Mr Ó hOisín**: On the issue of room for improvement, you might not be able to comment, and it was a very diplomatic answer, but we can comment on it. We have spent all morning here. It is like pulling teeth, and I am just rather frustrated by it.

999. **The Chairperson**: I am thinking of taking up dentistry.

1000. **Mr Ó hOisín**: I think that we are fully qualified.

1001. **Mr McNarry**: We are going into the transport business.

1002. **Mr Ó hOisín**: We are talking about integrated transport systems, but, at the end of the day, we are not going to have that under the current system because of the commercial sensitivity that Translink exercises over parts of the system. Surely, in real terms, unless we address that we will have cherry-picking of the more profitable routes, we will see the demise or running down of less profitable rural routes and see them pass into the community transport sector, which makes up only 1% of that.

1003. One of the big worries that community transport networks have is the proposed new legislation on licensing, which will affect them hugely. What has the Department done in respect of discussions with the Department of the Environment on the implications that that new legislation will have across the community sector?

1004. **Mr Johnston**: We have had discussions with the DOE. The proposals are still under discussion and keep moving, so they are not finalised by a long shot. From my discussions with the DOE in the context of the pilot, I do not think that the changes will have come in by the time we are introducing the pilot. It will probably take longer, so we are probably within the rules as they stand. Perhaps they will have introduced the changes by the time we ever get to roll it out more widely. These are only regulations; they can be changed. I have seen nothing to convince me that the proposed regulations will not be suitable. However, even if the changes that they are proposing go ahead, as they stand, I do not think that it would stop us making the improvements. I do not think that it is a big deal.

1005. **Mr Doran**: We have had discussions with the Department of the Environment. We are sympathetic to the special category of licence that the community transport partnerships operate. That is essentially the argument at the minute, because the Department of the Environment had taken the view that there should not be a distinction between a private bus operator, for instance, and community transport. However, I think that it is reconsidering that view.

1006. **The Chairperson**: The DOE is coming to the Committee on 27 February.

1007. **Mr Doran**: It would probably be in a better position to talk about it. However, if that position holds and we stick with the current licensing regime, which is that the community transport partnerships have a separate licence, certain restrictions in respect of trying to compete with a private bus operator, for example, will be placed on the community transport partnerships. We are sympathetic to that argument.

1008. **Mr Ó hOisín**: Moving to another matter, how confident are you that everything will be in place for the pilot schemes when they are rolled out? Sean, I think that you said that it would be April.

1009. **Mr Johnston**: We have only kicked it off. I think that it will take us a little bit of time to design it. I think that we will be kicking it off later this year, but

I do not see DOE having the changes implemented by then. Therefore, it is probably existing rules.

1010. **Mr Ó hOisín**: Is everything in place with other stakeholders?

1011. **Mr Johnston**: As Ciaran said, if we wanted community transport to start competing, the existing arrangements would not quite suit them. Who knows whether that is the model that we will operate with going forward?

1012. **Mr Ó hOisín**: Therefore, it is all up in the air again.

1013. **Mr Johnston**: If it does not work, we change it, surely.

1014. **Mr Doran**: It is only a minor example, but in Enniskillen we connected a rural transport partnership with a Translink service that was put on to bring a small number of people to Altnagelvin Hospital.

1015. **Mr Ó hOisín**: I do not know how many.

1016. **Mr Doran**: I appreciate that that has taken time to settle, but that practical way of improving things at a local level might be productive. That is our view, and that is why the pilot is based locally in Dungannon. We want to build on that initiative.

1017. **Mr Ó hOisín**: To be clear, it is not starting in April.

1018. **Mr Johnston**: It is not. We had the first meeting of the working group in the week before Christmas. We will have several sessions before we are —

1019. **Mr Ó hOisín**: You talked about April the last time.

1020. **Mr Dickson**: We have heard much about the audit reports and concerns that the Department of Health and the Department of Education did not take things on board as seriously as they might have. Is your role not one of banging heads together? Why have you not been doing that since 1995?

1021. **Mr Doran**: The Audit Office report, which I read in the past day, was the responsibility of the Department of Education and the Department of Health; that sounds like buck-passing, but that is the fact. The report was the responsibility of Education and Health. The recommendation was for Education and Health to get together to talk. That said, this Department has been actively trying to engage with Education and Health, but it has to do so within its remit. There is no point in my saying that I am responsible for school transport.

1022. **The Chairperson**: However, you have a responsibility for the regional transport strategy, Ciaran. Surely that should be cross-cutting.

1023. **Mr Doran**: The regional transport strategy, which ran out at the end of 2012, looked at ways of improving; however, it was looking, primarily, at the position in the Department for Regional Development. For example, it was out of the regional transport strategy that our Department started to focus resources on accessible transport and rural transport. That was one of the concrete developments. We have engaged with the Department of Health, and that is where the pilot in Dungannon is seen as a practical way forward. That is what I have to say about the Audit Office report. It makes some reference to the Department for Regional Development and the Department of the Environment, but it is pretty minor.

1024. **The Chairperson**: It is 20 years later, is it not?

1025. **Mr Doran**: It might be 20 years later, but I think that you asked that question of the relevant Departments earlier. That is all I can say.

1026. **Mr McAleer**: One of the objectives of the regional transport strategy is to meet the social objectives of the Programme for Government. Since you have no transport planners at the minute, how can you achieve social inclusion objectives, particularly for rural areas, when you are deciding whether to reduce or withdraw routes and services?

1027. **Mr Doran**: To a large extent, Translink has operational responsibility for decisions on routes. However, for some

years we have insisted that Translink consult locally where it is making significant changes to services, whether with stakeholders or local politicians, and we believe that that is happening.

1028. In relation to other aspects of social need, our system using grant funding for rural transport partnerships throughout Northern Ireland, plus the door-to-door services in urban areas, which is under contract, gives a pretty good spread. I think that the rural transport partnerships, in particular, where members join those organisations to receive services, are in a very good position to assess where the real need is. There are many advantages in that arrangement.

1029. **The Chairperson**: Ciaran, Sean, Stephen, thank you. If I was marking the three Departments, I might say that our own Department won today, but I will not go down that route.

1030. **Mr Doran**: Tell my boss that. [Laughter.]

1031. **The Chairperson**: We will be meeting him in the next 25 minutes or so.

1032. **Mr Doran**: Fair enough. Chair, we made an offer. If you had a half-hour slot, Stephen and I, and some of the other people from our division, would be more than happy to talk about what the sponsor division in the Department does. It might be helpful.

1033. **The Chairperson**: OK. I appreciate that. Thank you very much.

27 February 2013

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Jimmy Spratt (Chairperson)
Mr Seán Lynch (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr John Dallat
Mr Stewart Dickson
Mr Alex Easton
Mrs Dolores Kelly
Mr Declan McAleer
Mr Ian McCrea
Mr David McNarry
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín

Witnesses:

Ms Sharon Clements	*Department of the*
Mr Iain Greenway	*Environment*

1034. **The Chairperson**: I welcome Sharon Clements, who is from the vehicle policy branch of the Department of the Environment (DOE), and Iain Greenway, who is the director of road safety. You are both very welcome to the Committee. Thank you very much for coming along. As you know, we have been conducting an inquiry into transport issues. One of the issues that has come up consistently is the new licensing regime that is about to be brought in. There are also issues in relation to that licensing, particularly in the rural transport field. You can begin with a presentation, and that will be followed by members' questions.

1035. **Mr Iain Greenway (Department of the Environment)**: Thank you for the opportunity to attend this morning. As you said, I am the director of road safety and vehicle regulation in DOE, and Sharon works in the vehicle policy branch in that division. It might be useful if I highlight some of the key points from the material we sent, because I am conscious that vehicle licensing is something that, perhaps, this Committee has not traditionally heard about.

1036. Bus operator licensing in Northern Ireland is governed by the Transport Act (Northern Ireland) 1967, and DOE began a review of bus operator licensing in March 2010. That is almost three years ago. It was started because it was generally agreed that the 1967 Act was no longer fit for purpose, and, indeed, the parallel freight provisions in that Act were replaced by the Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Act (Northern Ireland) 2010, which commenced on 1 July last year. In a sense, we have done the freight part, and the bus part remains ongoing.

1037. A public consultation on bus operator licensing started in June 2010 and proposed a three-tier licensing regime, which, perhaps, in short, might be described as a full licence at the top, an own-account licence at the bottom, and a middle tier that attempted to recognise the needs of organisations such as the rural community transport partnerships, but not only them.

1038. No clear consensus was emerging from that consultation, so the Department provided an update to the Environment Committee. In line with its request, the Department kept the consultation process open and ongoing. Our engagement with stakeholders continues and has, in recent weeks, been fairly intensive as we attempt to define a licensing regime that meets the needs of the sector. That engagement is through the bus forum, which brings together all key stakeholders in the industry, and bilaterally with particular stakeholders.

1039. The key issues remaining are largely around the larger "community transport providers". The commercial tier at the top is fairly clear and, indeed, is largely set out in European legislation and was largely agreed last summer. The arrangements for small community groups have also reached general

agreement, although there are some smaller matters to be finalised. Many of the remaining issues in that middle ground are around what I would describe as effective management of significant bus fleets. We are talking about operators with up to 30 vehicles in that middle tier. The areas of remaining difference hinge on what activities can legislatively be defined as commercial and non-commercial. That is a complex area, and there are current court cases in Britain on exactly that. We are also engaging with key stakeholders to explore financial standing provisions further.

1040. I wish to put on the record a few key statements. DOE is committed to regulating for a safe, fair and fit-for-purpose sector. It is also committed to ensuring a vibrant and innovative community transport sector. We recognise that that is vital, and we are determined to allow it to continue to flourish, while updating the regime, which, we all agree, is necessary. Thirdly, the Department is committed to ensuring a level regulatory playing field and that the rights and duties for various groups within the sector are kept in appropriate balance. In a sense, those are our three touchstones to which we keep returning as we try to bring forward a regime. We have not yet brought policy proposals to the Minister. Ideally, we wish to bring proposals that will be unanimously agreed by the bus forum, but we also recognise that the consultation period must end to bring certainty of approach for users and operators.

1041. Finally, it is fair to say that this has proven to be a complex piece of work, but all key stakeholders appear committed to getting to a conclusion in the not-too-distant future, and that is important. Thank you.

1042. **The Chairperson**: Thank you for that, Iain. I will start the questions. You have conducted extensive consultation in Northern Ireland on bus permits. Have you benchmarked against anywhere else, for example Scotland, England or Wales? Secondly, the Committee is aware of schemes in other deregulated jurisdictions, where community transport providers are contracted to perform timetabled journeys for a fee. Why can that not be rolled out to Northern Ireland?

1043. **Mr Greenway**: We have been trying to work closely, as you said, with everyone. There are reasonably parallel provisions in Britain, but they are not completely parallel because the primary legislation is different. The one thing on which the industry in Northern Ireland agrees — and the bus forum includes the Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee and the Consumer Council as well as bus providers — is that everybody that operates a bus, including a small bus or minibus, should be within the licensing regime. There should no longer be a permit system, which although a rather quaint term is effectively an exemption from all the provisions of the Act. All of us across the sectors have agreed that it is better to have everybody inside the licensing regime rather than outside, exempted from it. The particular benefit of that is that proportionate action can be taken against those who act in contravention of the licensing regime. Proportionate meaning that if they are genuinely trying to comply and are falling short, we can assist them to meet their requirements, but deliberate and persistent failure to comply can be dealt with by revocation of licence, rather than having people outside the regime.

1044. Sharon and colleagues were in London yesterday talking to the Department for Transport about a number of matters, including this one. It is fair to say that that Department is reviewing the requirements of European law against their current permit regimes, as are we. We are working in parallel. I mentioned court cases. Court cases are going on in Jersey and Nottingham, which although predominantly around state aid, touch very much on the area of what contracted work can be done by community operators, often in direct competition with commercial bus operators, while — to return to my third point — we keep rights and duties in balance. This is a review

of bus operator licensing, not just of community transport providers. It is not an immediately apparent level playing field to have two different operators, one a community operator on a permit and the other a commercial operator on what is currently called a road service licence, directly competing for the same work but having completely different regulatory duties. So we are attempting to look at these rights and duties and keep them in balance.

1045. **Mr Lynch**: Thanks for the presentation. As somebody from a rural area, I know that a lot of people depend on community transport, and many of them are concerned about these proposed new regulations. A lot of community transport operators survive by using volunteer drivers and people who have time on their hands, and they feel that this will impact negatively by not allowing such people to drive for them. That would have a huge financial impact on these community transport companies' services.

1046. **Mr Greenway**: The volunteer drivers issue turns quite a lot on interpretation of applicable European law provisions on what is and is not a volunteer driver. The Department is looking at that area. A volunteer driver who is driving 30,000 miles a year at 45p a mile could be deemed as taking a salary, and we are aware of instances in Northern Ireland where volunteer drivers who are getting 45p a mile are directly competing with local taxi firms and are more expensive than those firms.

1047. To go back to my rights and duties point, I want to re-emphasise the second of the three strands that I set out, which is that the DOE and the Department for Regional Development (DRD) are very aware of the needs that community transport providers are serving. DRD subsidises many of the providers by significant amounts and recognises accessibility, particularly in rural areas. Where they are doing the work that is set out in those agreements with DRD, there will be no conflict with the licensing regime that we bring forward. Where they are starting to look and feel like stage carriage services that do commercial work, it is right and proper that the licensing regime has to determine how we keep rights and duties in balance.

1048. As ever, when looking at regulatory regimes, the challenge is in the middle ground. If a community transport partnership, for example, wishes to do community transport partnership work, a middle tier of a licensing regime will suit them perfectly well. If they also want to compete for commercial work, they need to consider taking on the duties as well as the rights of a commercial operator. Indeed, a number of the partnerships have roads service licences already and are working in that space.

1049. **Mr Lynch**: No doubt some of my rural colleagues will follow up on that.

1050. **Mr McAleer**: I want to reiterate the comments that the Deputy Chair made. I come from a rural constituency, and I understand the importance of rural transport for very isolated areas. I declare an interest as a 10B permit holder. I note from the briefing paper that, from discussions on the operator licence, the Community Transport Association and the Rural Community Transport Partnerships did not feel that the two-tier system would create a suitable framework from which to deliver services. Would the middle tier that you referred to involve the phasing out of the 10B permit? That would have a hugely detrimental impact on the ability of such organisations to execute their duties.

1051. **Mr Greenway**: It would be helpful if I explained that. I did not do that in my introductory remarks, and I apologise for that. We went to consultation on the three-tier model. There was no clear consensus from the consultation, so we continued to engage last year and earlier this year with a range of stakeholders, particularly around what we might describe as the larger community providers, because that is the area where there was a lack of consensus. We then produced a document last summer, which I called the straw man, to try to have a

document against which we could work. To summarise it, in that document, we had two tiers, a commercial tier and an own-account tier.

1052. The community transport partnerships in particular were concerned that their needs were not sufficiently recognised, so, in the latest version of the straw man, we have put a middle tier back in. Apart from the retrofitting of it — and that has left some untidiness on the edges to resolve — we are concerned that, however many tiers we have for operators, users and enforcement officers, we need to be very clear about what the distinctions between each tier are of the rights and the duties so that, by the side of the road, a proper view can be taken of whether this is within the terms of the transport category that you are licensed against. So, the more tiers that we have, the more break points we have to have.

1053. There will not be a 10B permit scheme under the new regime; there will not be a permit scheme. As I said in my opening remarks, all operators will be licensed, but they will be proportionately licensed. That allows all operators to have appropriate support and action taken if they are falling short of the requirements of their duties. Proportionate being education where someone is genuinely trying to comply and is falling short for various reasons or more robust sanctions where somebody is deliberately choosing not to fulfil the requirements. We see that, and the bus forum sees that, as positive because, at the moment, the only sanctions that can be taken against someone outside a regime are criminal proceedings, so we do not have a graduation of supportive or punitive actions that can be taken, if necessary.

1054. The middle tier, as retrofitted, is designed for larger community transport providers, not solely the partnerships. One church in Northern Ireland has a fleet of 27 minibuses. That middle tier is designed to recognise that operating a significant fleet of vehicles for whatever purpose — commercial or community — is a significant undertaking in respect of roadworthiness maintenance, transport management and potential annoyance to neighbours of where those buses are housed. That is a very different issue from the local scout group or the local Gaelic football club or the local rugby club with one minibus.

1055. We had been stretching the bottom tier up to try to include those larger organisations. The danger that we were creating was that we were starting to bring in middle-tier requirements and duties for the scout group, the Gaelic club and the rugby club, when they did not really apply to that small tier — the own-account operator. Indeed, within the own-account operator tier, anybody with five minibuses or fewer would have further reduction of requirements. So, in practice, we are looking at a four-tier scheme, although it is 1, 2, 3a and 3b. I do not believe that the local scout group or the local community group with one or two minibuses will see any change. It will be a small own-account operator licence disk on the windscreen instead of a 10B permit disk. They will not see any difference on the ground. I should say for completeness that the Community Transport Association is not entirely convinced of that at the moment, and we are working with it on a few points to reassure it.

1056. The main areas of difference now set out in the paper are around the larger operators and where a driver is close to drawing a salary rather than being a volunteer. The question of when something is commercial and when it is not commercial is a difficult area. It appears to be very simple to divide it into black and white in a Manichaean way, but when you get to the middle area, what is commercial and what is non-commercial is actually pretty complex, and it is different from what is profit and what is not for profit. The two terms are used differently in European legislation, so they obviously have different intent.

1057. To come back to my central point, the Department is working closely with DRD, and we are absolutely committed to the importance that rural transport brings

to a community. We are absolutely committed to maintaining that within this level regulatory playing field.

1058. **Mr McNarry**: I am sure that you recognise that there is great frustration in the community transport sector. You said that the consultation exercise has been ongoing for two years and there is still more work required, and you are continuing with the discussions. You indicated that, hopefully, that would be finalised in the not-too-distant future. Do you mean in 12 months' time or do you mean tomorrow? Can you give the Committee a potential date to have it wrapped up?

1059. **Mr Greenway**: My intention, sitting here at the moment aware of the remaining issues, and bearing in mind that I am an optimist by nature, is that, before the summer recess, if you want to put a time frame on it, we will have policy proposals to the Minister. Once we are clear on those policy proposals, we will determine what that means legislatively. One thing that we are working with solicitors on at the moment is how much of it can be done under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972, because some of it is enacting European regulations, and how much cannot. As members will know, if we can do that under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act, we can amend primary legislation through secondary legislative routes. We would happily commit to affirmative resolution of a swathe of that so that there could be genuine debate through the Assembly process. If we cannot, and primary legislation is needed, the Committee will be aware that we are running short of time to start that process in this mandate.

1060. Before we came in, Sharon and I discussed the fact that the Department is working on a road traffic amendment Bill, which is close to introduction, around drink driving and the novice driver regime. It has also pencilled in a further road traffic amendment Bill, to be introduced around Easter next year, to tackle drug-driving and mutual recognition of penalty points on the island. Would it be possible, within the ambit of that Bill, to pick up the pieces that cannot be done under the European Communities Act? The solicitors are saying to us, "Well show us rather more of what this beast looks like before we can tell you how much can be done". Therefore, at the moment and without prejudice to the ongoing discussion, Sharon and colleagues are drawing up what the upper and bottom tiers would look like. They will say to the solicitors, "Here are the two ends; the rest will be somewhere in the middle. Now tell us how much can be done under secondary legislation route", so that, when we bring policy proposals forward, we can give some confidence — subject, of course, to the overriding will of the Assembly — to a time frame within which legislation can be enacted.

1061. **Mr McNarry**: I liked your optimism, but you left me when all the "buts", "ifs" and "maybes" came in. However, I appreciate your explanation.

1062. On a side issue, do you see it as necessary to factor the oncoming Welfare Reform Bill into your considerations, particularly in respect of disabled transport users? I am zoning in on the reductions, which may occur as a consequence of some of the issues that you will address, that will knock back accessibility. I am concerned about the new status of disabled people that there may be and the loss of the benefits that go with their present status, which could be caught up in all this to the detriment of many such people.

1063. **The Chairperson**: Accessibility will be discussed after this.

1064. **Mr McNarry**: OK. That is what Translink, with all due respect, and —

1065. **The Chairperson**: Translink is here.

1066. **Mr McNarry**: I do not have an awful lot of faith in it.

1067. **Mr Greenway**: You make an interesting point, Mr McNarry. It is not a connection that we had explicitly made in our minds, but we will make sure that we keep that connection on leaving this hearing. My instinctive reply would be

along the same lines as the Chairman's, which is that DOE is responsible for the regulatory regime to set the floor standards against which operators must work. It is for either the market and/or stimulated by DRD, if required in the accessibility piece, or for the Department for Social Development and other Departments to work within that regime. That would be my starting point.

1068. **Mr McNarry**: I would be grateful to you for thinking about what I said, because —

1069. **Mr Greenway**: Yes; it is an important connection and we will take it away.

1070. **Mr McNarry**: — it is about where it starts and who nibbles at it, and I would like to see it considered up there, where you are, for very deserving people.

1071. **Mr Greenway**: I think that that is an important connection that perhaps needs to be brought out more strongly. Thank you.

1072. **The Chairperson**: Finally, John Dallat.

1073. **Mr Dallat**: I am the finally, Chair. You have spent two years on this, and you have not quite finished, and you do not know if it will be finished before the end of the mandate. Am I right in assuming that all of this is to instil public confidence in public transport? I ask that because I am sure that anyone who watched television last night saw one school bus on its side and another bus on fire in Moneymore. Are you using your energies correctly?

1074. **Mr Greenway**: I am conscious of the two incidents yesterday, and I am also aware that there were no serious injuries or fatalities.

1075. **Mr Dallat**: Please God.

1076. **Mr Greenway**: I am very relieved, I guess, because, again, we are setting a regulatory framework within which it is for those to operate. All car drivers know that they take decisions every day that almost always lead to their safe return home. However, one small decision by a motorist or another road user, or a combination of two of those decisions can lead to a different place altogether. Our roads-fatality level is at its lowest ever, but, as Minister Attwood has said, 48 deaths is 48 too many, and we must continue to work to lower that.

1077. Yes, we are about creating a safe, fair and fit-for-purpose sector — the bus sector, in this case. We are not there yet. There are still some figures from the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA), because it is responsible for enforcement within the Department. It is out there every day, as are the police, dealing with the aftermath of collisions or by the side of the road, stopping vehicles in a random or in a targeted way.

1078. The 2012 bus survey showed that nearly one quarter of buses, 22·6%, had one or more serious defects. That is far too high a figure. If one compares that with the freight industry, where we have brought in a new regulatory regime that came into effect on 1 July 2012, one will see that its statistics for serious defects was over 50% a number of years ago, but is now at a similar level to that of buses, around one quarter, as, incidentally, it is for taxis. One thing that the freight industry is saying to us is that the implementation of the Goods Vehicles Act has been a major factor in a number of operators — unfortunately not all, but DVA will continue to work with those on which it has not had an effect — either upping their game or getting out of the market and using others to transport their freight. The freight industry is telling us that the Transport Act (Northern Ireland) 1967 was, no doubt, a new, improved regulatory regime at the time that the Northern Ireland Parliament passed it, but it is not anymore. It has been a key factor in operators properly reflecting on their responsibilities. So, I do not think it is an "either/or", Mr Dallat, it is an "and". Yes, we need to be out there every day enforcing, but we also need to be updating the regime. They are two key components of getting the sector in the right place.

1079. **Mr Dallat**: Finally, to pick up on what David said, surely, at the end of the day, we have to recognise that community transport is going to have an increasing

role in people's lives, because we are going to get to the stage where people cannot afford to run a car. Can you assure me that this is all about road safety and not merely three layers of bureaucracy, making life extremely difficult for the people who have the least resources to pay for it?

1080. **Mr Greenway**: This is about the bus industry, and I use that term in the broadest sense. It is about the providers of buses being able to show that they are fulfilling the duties that we expect of them. We get on to a bus, and we expect that bus to be safe; to be driven by a properly instructed and qualified, where necessary, driver; to be properly maintained; and to have had the daily walk-around checks. We put our trust in the provider, be that Translink, a local coach company or a community provider. I think that we, as citizens, expect the state to make sure that there are proper, but absolutely proportionate, regimes in place, so that an operator with one minibus for the local church scout group, for instance, ensures that he has the right safeguards. I keep going back to the example of scout groups, because my sons are in the cubs and scouts, and I have a personal, parental interest. The proper safeguards must be there so that when my son's scout group leader is driving, I can have confidence, to the human ability with which we all work, right up to Translink at the other end of the spectrum, with 1,500 buses. I would expect it to be proportionate and graduated, but I think that we have a right, as citizens and users, to expect a proper regime to be enforced across all of them.

1081. **The Chairperson**: Thank you, Iain and Sharon, for the presentation, and for coming along to the Committee.

22 May 2013

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Jimmy Spratt (Chairperson)
Mr Seán Lynch (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr John Dallat
Mr Stewart Dickson
Mr Alex Easton
Mrs Dolores Kelly
Mr Declan McAleer
Mr Ian McCrea

1082. **The Chairperson**: We move to the draft report of the inquiry into the better use of public and community sector funds for the delivery of bus transport in Northern Ireland. Having considered the report in closed session, I need to put a number of questions to you for the public record. Are members content to agree the membership and powers section of the report on the basis that it is all factually correct?

Members indicated assent.

1083. **The Chairperson**: Are members content to agree the list of abbreviations section of the report?

Members indicated assent.

1084. **The Chairperson**: Are members content to agree the executive summary section of the report, subject to any agreed amendments?

Members indicated assent.

1085. **The Chairperson**: Are members content to agree the recommendations section of the report, subject to any agreed amendments?

Members indicated assent.

1086. **The Chairperson**: Are members content to agree the introduction section of the report, subject to any agreed amendments?

Members indicated assent.

1087. **The Chairperson**: Are members content to agree the summary of recommendations section of the report, subject to any agreed amendments?

Members indicated assent.

1088. **The Chairperson**: Are members content to agree the key issues section of the report, subject to any agreed amendments?

Members indicated assent.

1089. **The Chairperson**: Are members content that the Committee Office takes forward the production of the appendices to the report?

Members indicated assent.

1090. **The Chairperson**: Are members content that the report on the Committee's inquiry into the better use of public and community sector funds for the delivery of bus transport in Northern Ireland be ordered to print?

Members indicated assent.

1091. **The Chairperson**: Are members content to forward a copy of the report to the relevant Ministers?

Members indicated assent.



Appendix 3

Written Submissions

Arthur Acheson

Please acknowledge receipt of the following e-mail.

Thanking you.

Arthur Acheson

From: arthuracheson@hotmail.com
To: committee.regionaldevelopment@niassembly.gov.uk
Subject: Public transport Inquiry
Date: Fri, 14 Sep 2012 01:16:48 +0000

Inquiry into the better use of public and community sector funds for the delivery of bus transport in Northern Ireland

Evidence by Arthur Acheson BSc MArch ARAIA RIBA MRTPI AoU chartered architect and town planner

Figures given in the Department's Strategies for Regional Development and Regional Transportation show that people in Northern Ireland spend over **£6 billion** each year on private transport and only **3%** of this figure on **all** public transport. Carbon emissions from transport continue to **rise**, yet global, European, National and regional (DRD) strategies and policies say they should **fall**.

There are many reasons why public transport should be free at the point of use:

1. There is a pressing urgency for severely disadvantaged people to gain access to employment opportunities through training schemes; at present these unemployed people simply cannot afford the public transport fares to go for training or to undertake low paid jobs. This is a public disgrace.

2. Free public transport would encourage more use by current car users - a "modal shift", increasing overall efficiency of the road network, reducing congestion and lowering carbon dioxide emissions, helping to meet a significant target in the programme for government.

3. The wider benefits include changing habits, particularly among young people - our future - and thereby reducing the medium and long term need for expensive road schemes. This would also help to improve and populate our town and city centres as more people use bus and train stations which are always in urban centres.

4. Overall efficiency in public transport improves through eliminating resource costs of ticketing, fare collection, etc.

5. The proposal would invoke delight among tourists who would enjoy their visits to Northern Ireland to a greater degree, resulting in additional repeat visits, overnight stays and tourist spend, particularly as word spreads in tourists' home countries of the extra attraction of coming to this part of the world.

6. Free public transport means reducing emissions, which means better health, partcularly for inner city communities who receive the pollution from excessive commuting by private cars.

7. Public transport includes scheduled public taxi services which are often the only suitable means to provide a service to poorly planned housing layouts of scattered cul de sacs.

I urge that the new arrangements be province-wide on all public transport networks, giving us an improved status in Europe and costing less than half of the current road improvement schemes proposed to accommodate the congestion caused by our present excessive use of private cars in Northern Ireland.

Public transport, free at the point of use, may seem to be expensive, even unaffordable, for a cash-strapped devolved administration.

NO!

It is fully affordable. In current DRD budget allocations alone, simply reducing road improvement schemes would do it now. Across government, free public transport for all of last year could have been paid for by the slippage money alone (money that was allocated but not spent).

We are building buses in Ballymena for London and roads for ourselves. Let's build fewer roads for ourselves, build more buses and put them on.

Let's stop talking about "modal shift" and rapid transit and just do free public transit. That will make all transit more rapid.

You know it makes sense. Since I got my free public transport pass for Northern Ireland, I am on a bus or train eight or ten times a week. Previously - NEVER!

Just changing some journeys by some people would reduce our congestion to school holiday levels. The savings in people's pockets as they buy less fuel and pollute less air might allow a few luxuries or for some people a few necessities to be purchased from a more relaxed family budget.

By the way, we would not be alone. The town of Hasselt in Belgium made the buses free fifteen years ago and has seen a 1000% increase in bus usage. It has turned its economy round. Across Europe and North America fifty or more places run free public transport. We're not stupid. We can see all the benefits and we can start doing it in this Assembly, led by this Department, this Minister and this Committee.

I should be pleased to provide further information on request or to discuss this proposition in greater detail - you just have to think about it for your own family.

Arthur Acheson

Belfast
14 September 2012
arthuracheson@hotmail.com

Committee for Education

Northern Ireland Assembly

Mr Mervyn Storey
Chairperson, Committee for Education

Mr Jimmy Spratt
Chairperson
Committee for Regional Development
Room 254
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

8 October 2012

Dear Jimmy

Home to School Transport

At its meeting on 3 October 2012, the Committee for Education received a joint briefing from the Department of Education and the Department of the Environment on issues relating to school transport. The Committee agreed to pass on information to the Committee for Regional Development which may prove relevant to your inquiry into bus transport in Northern Ireland. A copy of the Stage 1 PEDU Report on Home to School Transport is appended .

The Committee raised concerns regarding the lack of policy cohesion in respect of the provision of Home to School Transport. Members felt that as there is no single body with overall responsibility for an activity that currently costs around £74m p.a., this has given rise to inefficiency and unnecessary bureaucracy. The Committee therefore agreed that there may be merit in enhancing the level of integration in respect of the provision of certain aspects of public transport - particularly Home to School transport.

It is hoped that you will find the appended information of interest.

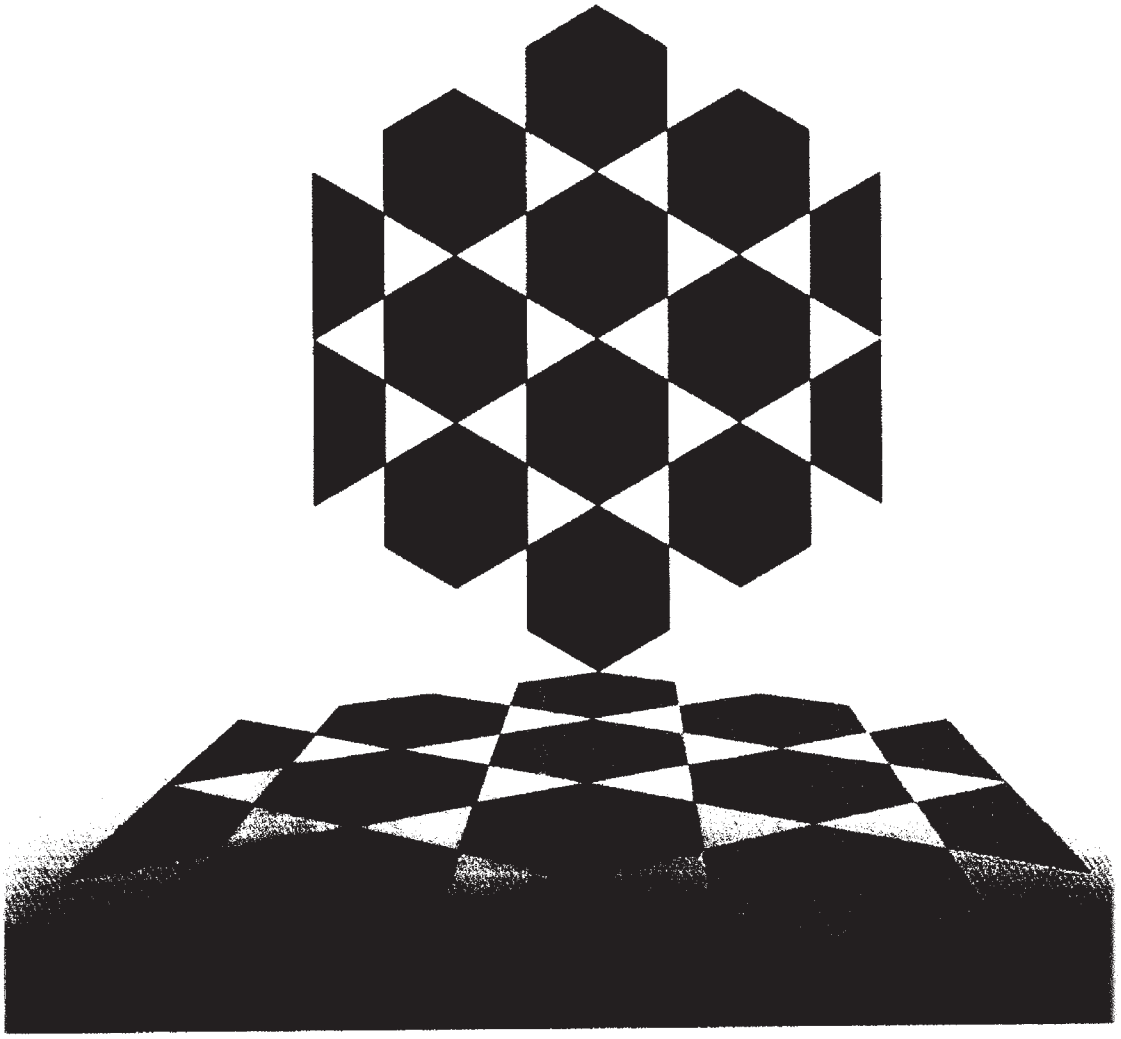
Yours sincerely



Mr Mervyn Storey MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Education

Committee for Education Appendix

DE & DFP Joint Efficiency Review
Stage One Report
March 2011



CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL TRANSPORT

Summary Observations:

a) Across all Boards, Transport Costs have been rising and pupil numbers falling over the past five years, leading to sharp increases in Unit Costs of between 3% pa and 9% pa depending on the ELB.

b) The largest driver of increased costs has been in Ulsterbus and Board Owned Vehicles – each with increases of over £5m. However, with lower pupil numbers transport costs have been rising much faster within Board Owned Vehicles.

c) There is significant variation in the scale of the rise in costs across the five Boards. In particular, the difference in Unit Costs, for Board Owned Vehicles, varies dramatically from Board to Board. There is evidence to suggest that material inefficiencies have accumulated in this mode of transport.

d) Even accounting for the "3 for 2" Initiative and SEN Pupils the rate of escalation in Unit Costs has been very significant in SELB, WELB and NEELB. BELB has seen a 75% increase in Unit Costs for Board Vehicle transport of SEN pupils – an increase in Unit Costs twice that observed in SEELB.

e) For Ulsterbus, the increases in Unit Costs have tended to track the overall changes in Ulsterbus unit passenger revenue – particularly once an adjustment is made for the "3 for 2" Initiative.

f) Although the amount of expenditure involved is much lower, some odd or unexplained variations were also observed on comparative spending on Taxis and the Daily Allowance.

Background

1.1 The current arrangements for the provision of home to school transport came into operation in September 1997. Children are eligible for transport assistance in circumstances where they are enrolled at their nearest suitable school which is located in excess of a set qualifying distance. That qualifying distance is currently two miles for primary pupils or three miles for post-primary pupils.

Overall Cost of Transport

1.2 This section compares changes in the total cost and Unit Costs of all modes of school transport over time. Unit Costs are examined on the basis of pupils transported and the differences between Boards.

1.3 Data on costs, held within DE, was examined for the period from 2004/05 to 2009/10. Figure 1.1 shows that total expenditure on home to school transport increased by £11.3m in the five years since 2004/05, representing an increase of 17.6% or around 3.3% per annum. However, these changes have not been uniform across Boards with costs in SEELB increasing by 8% (or by 1.6% pa) compared to BELB where costs increased by 28% (or by 5.1% pa).

Figure 1.1: Overall Transport Cost by ELB

Board	2004/05 (£)	2009/10 (£)	% change in cost	Pupils Transported
BELB	4,425,000	5,685,589	+ 28%	- 18%
NEELB	16,806,000	18,922,826	+13%	-7%
SEELB	13,285,000	14,368,822	+ 8%	- 7%
SELB	16,367,000	19,934,000	+ 22%	-7%
WELB	13,166,564	16,410,141	+ 25%	- 13%
TOTAL	**64,049,564**	**75,306,826**	**+ 17.6%**	**- 8%**

1.4 In addition, costs increased during a period when the number of pupils transported decreased by around 8% (from 97,791 to 89,853). The combined impact was a significant rise in the Unit Cost of transporting pupils, by 28% over the period or 5% per annum. Once again these changes have not been consistent with Unit Costs in SEELB increasing by 16% (or by 3% pa) compared to, for example, BELB where Unit Costs increased by 57% (or by 9% pa).

Figure 1.2: Transport Unit Costs by ELB

Board	2004/05 (£ per Pupil)	2009/10 (£ per Pupil)	% change Unit Cost
BELB	1109	1741	+ 57%
NEELB	761	923	+ 21%
SEELB	677	785	+ 16%
SELB	619	784	+ 27%
WELB	513	734	+ 43%
Average	**655**	**838**	**+ 28%**

1.5 Overall, in terms of relative movement, BELB and WELB have seen the highest increase in costs, the greatest fall in pupils transported and the largest increase in the Unit Cost of transporting pupils. The following sections look at the different modes of transport to identify those that have contributed most to the increases in costs. While comparisons are made within each mode of transport, caution should be attached to comparing Unit Costs without, for example, the benefit of additional data on the distance travelled for each mode.

Cost by Mode of Transport: Taxi Services

1.6 This section compares changes in the total cost and Unit Costs of Taxi Transport services – which represent about 10% of all transport spend. Although total taxi service expenditure has decreased by 9% over the period, Figure 1.3 shows that pupil numbers transported by this mode have fallen at a faster rate of 19% leading to an increase in the Unit Cost of 13% (or 2.4% per annum).

Figure 1.3: Transport Costs by ELB – Taxis

BOARD	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10		
BELB								
Expenditure	633,000	696,594	736,104	853,290	1,082,816	908,075	275,075	43%
Pupil No.	461	427	381	233	349	339	-122	-26%
Unit Cost	*1,373*	*1,631*	*1,932*	*3,662*	*3,103*	*2,679*	*1306*	*95%*
NEELB								
Expenditure	2,095,000	2,012,000	1,790,000	1,615,000	1,778,422	1,757,306	-337,694	-16%
Pupil No.	628	548	512	533	654	705	77	12%
Unit Cost	*3,336*	*3,672*	*3,496*	*3,030*	*2,719*	*2,493*	*-843*	*-25%*
SEELB								
Expenditure	2,216,000	2,086,759	1,797,052	1,425,854	1,403,503	1,124,066	-1,091,934	-49%
Pupil No.	1,122	910	805	748	614	524	-598	-53%
Unit Cost	1,975	2,293	2,232	1,906	2,286	2,145	170	9%
SELB								
Expenditure	2,022,000	2,097,000	1,838,000	1,917,000	2,200,000	2,000,000	-22,000	-1%
Pupil No.	1,205	1,198	1,034	1,030	1,060	1,071	-134	-11%
Unit Cost	*1,678*	*1,750*	*1,778*	*1,861*	*2,075*	*1,867*	*189*	*11%*
WELB								
Expenditure	1,046,192	1,096,828	1,163,765	1,147,641	1,342,740	1,516,725	470533	45%
Pupil No.	617	597	574	590	616	629	12	2%
Unit Cost	*1,696*	*1,837*	*2,027*	*1,945*	*2,180*	*2,411*	*715*	*42%*
TOTAL								
Expenditure	8,012,192	7,989,181	7,324,921	6,958,785	7,807,481	7,306,172	**-706,020**	**-9%**
Pupil No.	4,033	3,680	3,306	3,134	3,293	3,268	**-765**	**-19%**
Unit Cost	*1,987*	*2,171*	*2,216*	*2,220*	*2,371*	*2,236*	***249***	***13%***

1.7 Spend by ELB on Taxi Services is generally in the £1m to £2m range. Only NEELB has seen the Unit Cost of its Taxi Service expenditure fall, albeit from a level higher than any other ELB. BELB on the other hand has seen the greatest increase in its Taxi Unit Costs which have nearly doubled over the period. Overall, the SELB has the lowest Unit Cost with BELB (+43%), NEELB (+34%) and WELB (+29%) having much higher costs than SELB.

Cost by Mode of Transport: Board Vehicles

1.8 This section compares changes in the total cost and Unit Costs of Board Vehicles – which represents about 30% of spend on Home to School Transport by the Boards. Total expenditure on Board

Vehicles was £17.6m in 2004/05 and this increased by 30% to £23.0m in 2009/10. At the same time pupil numbers decreased from 27,880 to 25,109 (-10%) leading to the overall Unit Cost for this mode of transport increasing by 45%. The increase in the cost of transportation by board vehicles accounts for almost half of the overall increase in all transport costs over the period.

Figure 1.4: Transport Costs by ELB – Board Owned Vehicles (With & Without 3 for 2)

BOARD	2004/05	2009/10	2009/10 Ex 3 for 2	Change £/pupils	Change %	Change - Ex 3 for 2 £/pupils	Change - Ex 3 for 2 %
BELB							
Expenditure	2,268,000	2,802,865	2,802,865	534,865	24	534,865	24%
Pupil No	918	764	764	-154	-17	-154	-17%
Unit Cost	2,471	3,669	*3,669*	1,198	48%	*1198*	*48%*
NEELB							
Expenditure	2,328,000	2,976,582	2,976,582	648,582	28	648,582	28%
Pupil No	2,424	2,357	2,357	-67	-3	-67	-3%
Unit Cost	960	1,263	*1,263*	303	32%	*302*	*31%*
SEELB							
Expenditure	2,927,000	4,174,643	4,026,643	1,247,643	43	1,099,643	38%
Pupil No	2,665	2,972	2,972	307	12	307	12%
Unit Cost	1,098	1,405	*1,355*	307	28%	*257*	*23%*
SELB							
Expenditure	4274000	5,652,000	5,486,000	1,378,000	32	1,212,000	28%
Pupil No	9,443	8,524	8,524	-919	-10	-919	-10%
Unit Cost	453	663	*644*	210	46%	*191*	*42%*
WELB							
Expenditure	5,836,553	7,350,758	6,794,758	1,514,205	26	958,205	16%
Pupil No	12,430	10,492	10,492	-1,938	-16	-1938	-16%
Unit Cost	470	701	*648*	231	49%	*715*	*38%*
TOTAL							
Expenditure	17,633,553	22,956,848	22,086,848	**5,323,295**	**30**	**4,453,295**	**25%**
Pupil No	27,880	25,109	25,109	**-2,771**	**-10**	**-2771**	**-10%**
Unit Cost	632	914	*880*	**282**	**45%**	**247**	**39%**

1.9 All Boards recorded substantial increases in their costs with most, apart from SEELB, transporting fewer pupils by this mode of transport between 2004-05 and 2009-10. As a result, all of the Boards have seen significant increases in the Unit Cost of this mode of transport –ranging from 28% for SEELB to 49% for WELB.

1.10 In addition, there is also a very pronounced difference between the Unit Costs within Boards for this mode of transport. SELB has the lowest Unit Cost, followed by WELB, whilst SEELB and NEELB Unit Costs are around twice these levels and the BELB Unit Cost is over five times the level found in SELB (although its much smaller pupil numbers might explain part, but not all, of this).

1.11 Even when the funding for the "3 for 2" Initiative is taken into account the picture does not change substantially – the overall growth in Unit

Costs is just short of 40%. Indeed, having adjusted for the "3 for 2" Initiative the growth rate in Unit Costs is nearly twice the rate of growth in Unit Cost for Ulsterbus – the other mode of transport materially impacted by "3 for 2".

1.12 Since SEN was potentially a material factor in the costs of Board Owned Vehicles the analysis was progressed to examine relative Unit Costs net of both SEN and the "3 for 2" Initiative. Figure 1.5 shows that the adjustments for both "3 for 2" and SEN do materially change the relative performance of the Boards. For example, after these adjustments, SEELB has experienced no increase in Unit Cost even though NEELB, with a fairly similar pupil transported by this mode, has seen a 31% increase and now has a Unit Cost that is nearly double that of SEELB. However, neither "3 for 2", nor SEN, has been the significant factor in driving the large increases in Unit Costs in WELB and SELB – even after taking account of both of these factors Unit Cost increases remain around the 40% mark.

Figure 1.5: Transport Costs by ELB – Board Owned Vehicles Excluding SEN and 3 for 2

BOARD	2004/05 Ex SEN	2009/10 Ex SEN	2009/10 Excluding SEN & 3 for 2	Change Ex SEN £/pupils	Change Ex SEN %	Change Ex SEN & 3 for 2 £/pupils	Change Ex SEN & 3 for 2 %
BELB							
Expenditure	272,000	13,411	13,411	-258,589	-95%	-258,589	-95%
Pupil No	110	119	119	9	8%	9	8%
Unit Cost	2,473	113	*113*	-2,360	-95%	-2,360	-95%
NEELB							
Expenditure	1,863,000	2,158,591	2,158,591	295,591	16%	295,591	16%
Pupil No	1,937	1,710	1,710	-227	-12%	-227	-12%
Unit Cost	962	1,262	*1,262*	301	31%	*301*	*31%*
SEELB							
Expenditure	1,239,000	1,198,248	1,050,248	-40,752	-3%	-188,752	-15%
Pupil No	1,804	1,551	1,551	-253	-14%	-253	-14%
Unit Cost	687	773	*677*	86	12%	*-10*	*-1%*
SELB							
Expenditure	4,167,000	5,427,000	5,261,000	1,260,000	30%	1,094,000	26%
Pupil No	9,220	8,171	8,171	-1049	-11%	-1049	-11%
Unit Cost	452	664	*644*	212	47%	*192*	*42%*
WELB							
Expenditure	5,556,982	6,786,811	6,230,811	1,229,829	22%	673,829	12%
Pupil No	11,825	9,687	9,687	-2,138	-18%	-2138	-18%
Unit Cost	470	701	*643*	231	49%	*173*	*37%*
TOTAL							
Expenditure	13,097,982	15,584,061	14,714,061	**2,486,079**	**19%**	**1,616,079**	**12%**
Pupil No	24,896	21,238	21,238	**-3,658**	**-15%**	**-3658**	**-15%**
Unit Cost	526	734	*693*	**208**	**39%**	***167***	***32%***

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1.13 The analysis also highlights that the overwhelming cost factor, for Board Owned Vehicles, in the case of BELB is SEN. However, Figure 1.6 shows that the total costs of transporting BELB SEN pupils by Board Owned Vehicles has increased by 40% with the number transported by this mode having fallen by 20% – a Unit Cost rise of 75%. Once again a comparison can be drawn with SEELB which appears capable of transporting more than twice the number of SEN pupils, on Board Owned Vehicles, for around the same overall cost as BELB.

Figure 1.6: SEN Transport Costs for Board Owned Vehicles

Cost £	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	% change
BELB	1,996,000	2,260,041	2,280,452	2,304,214	2,323,267	2,789,454	**40%**
NEELB	465,000	539,000	628,000	660,000	798,799	817,991	**76%**
SEELB	1,688,000	1,740,402	1,934,094	2,584,034	2,765,132	2,976,395	**76%**
SELB	107,000	119,000	177,000	161,000	265,000	225,000	**110%**
WELB	279,571	316,611	383,403	541,987	625,897	563,947	**102%**

Pupil No.	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	% change
BELB	808	823	849	713	644	645	**-20%**
NEELB	487	537	613	618	632	647	**33%**
SEELB	861	1,069	1,219	1,290	1,425	1,421	**65%**
SELB	223	226	311	318	364	353	**58%**
WELB	605	603	751	861	847	805	**33%**

Unit Cost	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	% change
BELB	2,470	2,746	2,686	3,232	3,608	4,325	**75%**
NEELB	955	1,004	1,024	1,068	1,264	1,264	**32%**
SEELB	1,961	1,628	1,587	2,003	1,940	2,095	**7%**
SELB	480	527	569	506	728	637	**33%**
WELB	462	525	511	629	739	701	**52%**

Cost by Mode of Transport: Privately Operated Coach/Minibus

1.14 This section compares changes in the total cost and Unit Costs of Privately Operated Vehicles which currently represent 8% of all transport spend by the Boards, compared 14% in the past. Total expenditure on Privately Operated Vehicles has fallen from £9.0m in 2004/05 to £6.0m in 2009/10. Pupil numbers and Unit Costs have also decreased.

1.15 The fall in Unit Costs is in stark contract to the other modes of transport where a reduction in the number of pupils transported has also been observed. Although this is not the same as concluding that this mode of transport is the most cost effective, (an assertion which should not be drawn from this comparison), it does potentially lead to questions, for example, as to why Publically Operated Vehicles should see such significant increases in Unit Costs which were not observed in the costs for Privately Operated Vehicles. There is again significant variation in the Unit Costs between Boards, although there are appreciable differences in the numbers of pupils transported in this way by each ELB.

Figure 1.7: Transport Costs by ELB – Privately Operated Vehicles

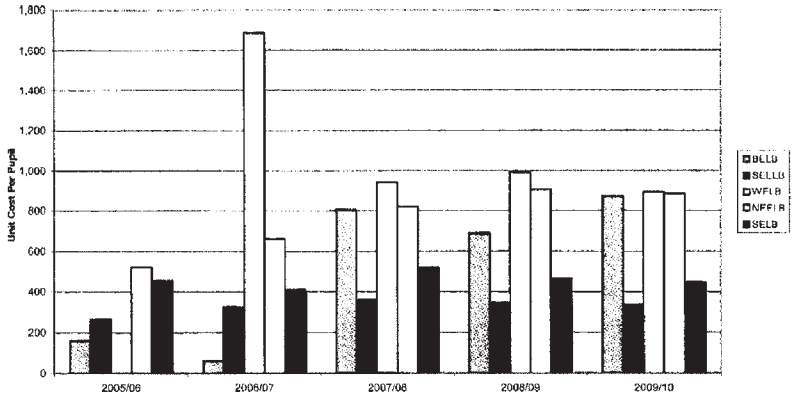
BOARD	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10		
BELB								
Expenditure	338,000	411,098	420,911	361,969	468,923	631,652	293,652	87%
Pupil No	368	340	290	327	367	397	29	8%
Unit Cost	*918*	*1209*	*1451*	*1107*	*1278*	*1591*	*673*	*73%*
NEELB								
Expenditure	3,113,000	2,502,000	1,890,000	1,896,000	2,209,736	2,130,686	-982,314	-32%
Pupil No	1,463	1,252	1,166	1,145	1,001	877	-586	-40%
Unit Cost	*2128*	*1998*	*1621*	*1656*	*2208*	*2430*	*302*	*14%*
SEELB								
Expenditure	1,080,000	852,776	467,389	401,565	380,582	329,448	-750,552	-69%
Pupil No	493	473	314	255	231	192	-301	-61%
Unit Cost	*2191*	*1803*	*1489*	*1575*	*1648*	*1716*	*-475*	*-22%*
SELB								
Expenditure	3,119,000	2,490,000	1,940,000	1,844,000	1,814,000	1,702,000	-1,417,000	-45%
Pupil No	3,586	4,179	3,994	3,671	3,519	3,270	-316	-9%
Unit Cost	*870*	*596*	*486*	*502*	*515*	*520*	*-349*	*-40%*
WELB								
Expenditure	1,300,316	1,166,689	1,004,009	1,037,234	1,013,375	1,173,967	-126,349	-10%
Pupil No	3,060	2,409	2,127	2,002	2,060	2,079	-981	-32%
Unit Cost	*425*	*484*	*472*	*518*	*492*	*565*	*715*	*33%*
TOTAL								
Expenditure	8,950,316	7,422,563	5,722,309	5,540,768	5,886,616	5,967,753	**-2,982,563**	**-33%**
Pupil No	8,970	8,653	7,891	7,400	7,178	6,815	**-2155**	**-24%**
Unit Cost	*998*	*858*	*725*	*749*	*820*	*876*	***-122***	***-12%***

Cost by Mode of Transport: Daily Allowance

1.16 This section compares changes in the total cost and Unit Costs of the Daily Allowance. This is available to a child, attending its nearest suitable school, where there are no Board or public transport options available for travel to, or in the vicinity of, the school. The spend on the Daily Allowance has increased by over 50% (from £1.2m to £1.8m) over the period, although it is a relatively minor part of ELB

spend and contributes just 6% to the increase in overall transport costs.

Figure 1.8: Transport Costs by ELB – Daily Allowance Unit Costs



1.17 Part of the reason for the significant increases in the level of spend on this mode is that the numbers receiving the allowance have also increased. Although it is difficult to be definitive, due to some missing data on pupil numbers, the increase in pupil numbers is probably in the region of 15% to 20%. This would imply an increase in Unit Costs of approximately 35%. Figure 1.8 highlights the significant variation in the Unit Costs between Boards with no clear correlation with, for example, the expected distribution of the population within each Board area.

1.18 In particular, setting aside BELB, it is unclear why the numbers of pupils (presumably in peripheral locations) should have increased by so much (with overall pupil numbers falling) and why the figures for pupils transported by this mode should fluctuate so much from one year to the next (bearing in mind that children will typically continue to attend the same school for periods of around 5 to 7 years).

Cost by Mode of Transport: Translink Ulsterbus

1.19 This section compares changes in the total cost and Unit Costs of Ulsterbus – which represents about 40% of all transport spend by the Boards, transporting around half of all pupils. Total expenditure on Ulsterbus was £24.7m in 2004/05 which increased by 22% to £30.3m in 2009/10. During this time pupil numbers decreased by 5% (from 49,276 to 46,782) leading to the overall Unit Cost for this mode of transport increasing by 29%. The increase in the cost of Ulsterbus vehicles accounts for just about half of the overall increase in all transport costs over the period. The increases in the cost of

Ulsterbus and Board Owned Vehicles, taken together, account for the vast majority of the increase in all transport costs.

1.20 The Translink contract is managed by one Board on behalf of all ELBs. As a result, the degree of variation observed on Unit Costs across Boards is limited. In a similar vein Unit Costs have risen fairly uniformly across the five Boards with the exception of BELB. Overall Unit Costs for this mode of transport have increased at 5.2% p.a. If adjustments are made for the "3 for 2" funding paid to Translink (just over £2m) the growth in Unit Cost would fall to 20% over the period, which would put increases slightly above the rate of general consumer price inflation.

Figure 1.9: Transport Costs by ELB – Ulsterbus

BOARD	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10		
BELB								
Expenditure	249,000	270,271	240,948	409,607	390,508	259,311	10,311	4%
Pupil No	652	538	459	419	401	408	-244	-37%
Unit Cost	*382*	*502*	*525*	*978*	*974*	*636*	*254*	*66%*
NEELB								
Expenditure	7,494,000	7,731,000	8,213,000	8,512,000	8,884,104	9,364,502	1,870,502	25%
Pupil Numbers	14,865	14,773	14,720	14,653	12,952	13,920	-945	-6%
Unit Cost	*504*	*523*	*558*	*581*	*686*	*673*	*169*	*33%*
SEELB								
Expenditure	6,707,000	6,879,635	7,257,085	7,311,359	7,694,190	8,183,434	1,476,434	22%
Pupil No	13,377	13,243	12,958	12,723	12,720	12,869	-508	-4%
Unit Cost	*501*	*519*	*560*	*575*	*605*	*636*	*135*	*27%*
SELB								
Expenditure	5,939,000	6,084,000	6,459,000	7,516,000	6,818,000	7,253,000	1,314,000	22%
Pupil No	11,847	11,726	11,582	11,442	11,378	11,365	-482	-4%
Unit Cost	*501*	*519*	*558*	*657*	*599*	*638*	*137*	*27%*
WELB								
Expenditure	4,340,631	4,354,236	4,551,327	4,784,261	4,999,861	5,215,685	875,054	20%
Pupil No	8,535	8,421	8,268	8,248	8,260	8,220	-315	-4%
Unit Cost	*509*	*517*	*550*	*580*	*605*	*635*	*715*	*25%*
TOTAL								
Expenditure	24,729,631	25,319,142	26,721,360	28,533,227	28,786,663	30,275,932	**5,546,301**	**22%**
Pupil No	49,276	48,701	47,987	47,485	45,711	46,782	**-2494**	**-5%**
Unit Cost	*502*	*520*	*557*	*601*	*630*	*647*	***145***	**29%**

1.21 High level comparisons can also be made with changes over time in Ulsterbus fares for all passengers. Using DRD Statistics, Ulsterbus passenger receipts have increased by 22% over the same period (ELB spend on Ulsterbus was also up 22%). At the same time passenger journeys fell by 7% (ELB pupil numbers fell by 5% for Ulsterbus) and the Unit Revenue per passenger journey rose by

32%, or 5.7% per annum (while ELB Unit Cost for Ulsterbus rose by 29% or 5.3% pa).

1.22 Overall, during the period studied, the changes in ELB costs and Unit Costs for Ulsterbus travel have broadly followed the changes observed in Ulsterbus revenue and Unit Revenue. If the funding for the "3 for 2" Initiative were excluded then the growth in ELB costs for Ulsterbus travel would have been at a lower rate than the Unit Revenue growth for Ulsterbus as a whole.

Cost by Mode of Transport: Translink Citybus / Metro

1.23 This section compares changes in the total cost and Unit Costs of Metro (formerly known as Citybus). Total expenditure on Metro (for BELB, NEELB and SEELB) was £1.4m in 2004/05 which increased by 30% to £1.8m in 2009/10. At the same time, pupil numbers on this mode of transport increased by 7% leading to the overall Unit Cost increasing by 22%.

Figure 1.10: Transport Costs by ELB – Metro (Citybus)

BOARD	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10		
BELB								
Expenditure	613,000	596,330	679,948	595,496	627,759	756,639	143,639	23%
Pupil No	1,300	1,239	1,139	1,114	1,205	1,224	-76	-6%
Unit Cost	*472*	*481*	*597*	*535*	*521*	*618*	*147*	*31%*
NEELB								
Expenditure	682,000	685,000	729,000	739,000	751,042	767,731	85,731	13%
Pupil Numbers	1,399	1,401	1,384	1,394	1,372	1,351	-48	-3%
Unit Cost	*487*	*489*	*527*	*530*	*547*	*568*	*81*	*17%*
SEELB								
Expenditure	107,000	146,258	207,284	222,720	259,391	301,822	194,822	182%
Pupil No	208	310	383	423	472	535	327	157%
Unit Cost	*514*	*472*	*541*	*527*	*550*	*564*	*50*	*10%*
TOTAL								
Expenditure	1,402,000	1,427,588	1,616,232	1,557,216	1,638,192	1,826,192	**424,192**	**30%**
Pupil No	2,907	2,950	2,906	2,931	3,049	3,110	**203**	**7%**
Unit Cost	*482*	*484*	*556*	*531*	*537*	*587*	***105***	**22%**

1.24 Similar to the Ulsterbus spend, there is a fair degree of uniformity in Unit Costs across the three Boards who utilise Metro. In addition, drawing on very high level information, comparisons can be made with changes over time in Metro fares. Metro's Unit Revenue per passenger rose by 19% (or 3.5% per annum) over the period 2004-05 to 2009/10 compared to the ELB Unit Cost for Metro which increased by 22% or 4.0% pa). Over the period, the changes in ELB

units costs for Metro travel have by and large followed the changes observed in Metro's Unit Revenue.

Conclusion

1.25 Between 2004/05 and 2009/10 the main source of increased costs in respect of Home to School Transport has been in terms of Ulsterbus and Board Owned Vehicles, each with increases of over £5m. However, the rise in costs for Board Owned Vehicles has been the more pronounced since that mode of transport carries just over half the number of pupils compared to Ulsterbus. The escalation in Unit Costs for Board Owned Vehicles, net of "3 for 2" funding, is just under 40% – nearly twice the rate observed for Ulsterbus net of "3 for 2" funding.

1.26 Examining Board Owned Vehicles, and adjusting for both "3 for 2" funding and SEN Costs, the analysis still points to significant variation and / or growth in Unit Costs – particularly between SELB, WELB and NEELB. In the case of BELB the overwhelming cost factor for Board Owned Vehicles is SEN. However, the Unit Costs of transporting BELB SEN pupils by Board Owned Vehicles has went up by 75%. In comparison, SEELB transported more than twice the number of SEN pupils, on Board Owned Vehicles, for about the same overall cost as BELB.

1.27 Although the amounts at stake are much lower, some odd or unexplained variations were also observed on comparative spending on Taxis and the Daily Allowance. For example, in relation to the latter it is unclear why, in some cases, the numbers of pupils (presumably in peripheral locations) should have increased to such an extent and why the numbers should vary so much from one year to the next.

1.28 This chapter has indicated that there could be material savings potential in respect of Home to School Transport services. In practice it is likely that any efficiency potential will only be capable of being released gradually since previous management decisions, on assets and facilities will have locked in current approaches to service delivery for some time. While the delivery of savings in this area is likely to involve further detailed work and planning with the Boards, this area is a plausible candidate for Stage Two analysis.

Community Transport Association



Inquiry into the better use of public and community sector funds for the delivery of bus transport in Northern Ireland

14 September 2012
The Community Transport Association

Community Transport Association

About the CTA

CTA is a national charity giving voice and providing leadership, learning and enterprise support to member organisations, which are delivering innovative transport solutions to achieve social change. CTA promotes excellence through providing training, publications, advice and information on voluntary, accessible and community transport.

Voluntary and community transport exists to meet the travel and social needs of people to whom these would otherwise be denied, providing accessible and affordable transport to achieve social inclusion.

The CTA is the representative body for third sector passenger transport operators in the UK. CTA Member organisations are involved in the provision of transport, especially accessible services. Our membership consists of 1400 organisations.

CTA's Response to Consultation
The CTA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the **Inquiry into the better use of public and community sector funds for the delivery of bus transport in Northern Ireland**. Our comments are shown on the following pages.

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1 Introduction

The CTA welcomes the opportunity to respond to the inquiry to ensure: the voice of the Community Transport Sector; the needs of passengers who find it difficult to get out and about; and the Community & Voluntary Sector are included in future considerations.

The Community Transport Sector has delivered alternative transport solutions for isolated and excluded persons for many years in Northern Ireland. In response to community needs the Sector has delivered an effective and efficient solution for those unable to access conventional public and private transport, in many cases this has been completed with no support from DRD of the wider NI Government.

2 CTA Response to the Inquiry

1. Transport impacts all activities in Northern Ireland. It is the method by which we access local services/activities such as; employment, education, health, recreation, religious and faith services, shops, banks/ post offices etc. Transport also involves the freight, construction, tourist and hospitality industries. Transport provides almost 24% of the economic turnover of the whole of Northern Ireland.
2. CTA held a conference 16 August 2012 entitled 'Cooperative Transport'. The conference confirmed the wider community sector, charities, government departments and the wider public need transport in Northern Ireland to be more effectively planned, in order to meet the access needs of our community.
3. Northern Ireland does not have a strategic Accessible Transport Plan. It is vital the Committee considers how a cross-cutting Accessible Transport Plan can be developed and implemented for Northern Ireland.
4. The DRD's Public Transport Reform[1] attempted to create a transport planning framework. However considerations were limited to only public (Translink) and Education's 'home to school' transport provision, therefore could never create the much needed Accessible Transport Plan to meet the wider needs of NI (Appendix i). NB. The proposed DRD Public Transport Agency has not progressed because of current economic pressures; therefore progress on the proposed limited transport plan has not achieved all that was originally proposed.
5. There is no generic Accessible Transport Planning process in Northern Ireland. Therefore the public transport system works in isolation rather than in partnership with Education, Employment, Health and other budgets utilised by Departments within the NI Executive. This has created a system whereby an Ulsterbus is followed up the road by a non-emergency patient

[1] http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/pt-publictransportreform/pt-publictransportreformobc-2.htm

minibus, community transport vehicle, taxi or public transport bus – all of which are not full to capacity.

6. Public transport is limited to the services delivered by Translink. While Translink is confirmed through legislation as the sole public transport supplier[2], there are many other providers of transport in Northern Ireland such as Health Trusts, private coach operators, taxis, charities and community transport.

7. CTA calls for an integrated approach through an Accessible Transport Plan[3]. Accessible transport planning considers not only DRD policy but also Health, Education and Employment and Learning transport. Indeed the plan would encompass a strategic consideration of the most effective and efficient use of public money to support all transport requirements paid for by the public purse.

8. Recently CTA was asked to qualify why people with learning disabilities were being refused community transport to college. During discussion it was confirmed the students were all young adults, over 19 years old and therefore outside the statutory provision of transport for Education. Many of the young adults and their families felt they could not safely travel on public transport. Their Life Skills course had not been planned to consider how students could access the college. Why was a course designed (paid for by DEL) when no consideration was given to how vulnerable students would be able to travel to it? If the college had been required to provide transport options when promoting the service, the young adults with learning disabilities would not have had the stress and pressure of trying to source alternative provision. The flaw is that outside DRD no government department is required to consider how people can access their services or to work in partnership with another Department to consider what transport resources are already available.

9. It is not appropriate for the Community Transport Sector to be expected to provide access to services just because it is not the Department's statutory responsibility to provide direct transport provision. If the Department's had access to appropriate information on the available modes of transport and

[2] DRD, Public Transport Reform Consultation Nov 2009 confirmed as NI was retaining a regulated transport system DRD could continue with the Translink model as the sole deliverer of public transport it would comply with European Union Regulation 1370/2007.

[3] Accessibility (or just access) refers to the ease of reaching goods, services, activities and destinations, which together are called opportunities. It can be defined as the potential for interaction and exchange (Hansen 1959; Engwicht 1993). For example, grocery stores provide access to food. Libraries and the Internet provide access to information. Paths, roads and airports provide access to destinations and therefore activities (also called opportunities). Accessibility can be defined in terms of potential (opportunities that could be reached) or in terms of activity (opportunities that are reached). Even people who don't currently use a particular form of access may value having it available for possible future use, called option value. For example, motorists may value having public transit services available in case they are unable to drive in the future. Evaluating Accessibility for Transportation Planning. Measuring People's Ability To Reach Desired Goods and Activities 25 May 2012. Todd Litman. Victoria Transport Policy Institute

funding was made available for various modes to be provided, then we could be in a situation where the 'public' can use an effective public and community transport network.

10. How transportation is evaluated affects planning decisions. For example, if transportation is evaluated based on vehicle travel conditions (traffic speeds, congestion delays etc.), the only way to improve transport system quality is to improve roads. If transportation is evaluated based on mobility (movement of people and goods), then car share and public transport service improvements can also be considered. If transportation is evaluated based on accessibility (people's overall ability to reach desired goods, services and activities), additional transportation improvement options can be considered (besides road use, car share and public transport), including improved walking and cycling conditions, more accessible land use patterns to reduce travel distances, and telecommunications and delivery services that substitute for physical travel.

11. Whilst in the GB there is a requirement to produce Local Authority-wide transport plans through the Local Transport Planning process, and many Local Authorities develop traffic management strategies for specific smaller areas, there is currently no statutory requirement for local authorities within NI or Ireland to neither develop nor implement strategies and plans for delivering improvements to transport.

12. In Ireland 'The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act (2010)'[4], requires RoI local authorities to promote *'sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas'* without specifically requiring a specific plan to do so. This has created a location lottery – depending where you live in RoI will depend on whether the local transport system can meet your needs.

13. There are specific benefits to creating specific, accessible transport plans and strategies, not least, challenging the status quo and using different starting points for thought processes. Instead of what land should be zoned, and what roads and infrastructure do we need to build to service the land, the starting points are more likely to be:

    13.1. what do we need to do to improve the quality of life within the town, city or county?

    13.2. how do we turn the economic potential in terms of the local population and skills, into economic outputs though the location of employment opportunities within reasonable travel distance on foot, by cycle or by public transport (in its widest sense)?

    13.3. how can we increase the number of people living in our towns and cities to sustain local businesses without causing traffic congestion?

[4] http://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/acts/2010/a3010.pdf

13.4. how do we create walking, cycling and public transport networks to serve currently discontinuous residential estates and isolated pockets of industrial and indeed retail development that are not always yet contiguous with the town?

13.5. how do we develop and retain public support for a sustainable transport strategy which isn't focused on promoting unlimited use of the cars, people carriers, utility vehicles and vans?

13.6. How can we effectively communicate alternative public transport solutions for the wider community? Will our communications include the full range of modes of transport or continue to be limited to only promoting Translink services?

3 Inquiry Terms of reference

CTA aims to provide answers and evidence for the inquiry using the terms of reference outlined in the published call for evidence;

A To assess current public and community bus transport requirements;

14. It is difficult to establish the current community bus requirements in Northern Ireland as the NI Executive does not provide support Community Transport in the province. Only Translink and the DRD can confirm the requirements and supported activities delivered by the public transport network.

15. CTA is unable to include in our response any definitive financial or resource considerations regarding Translink as this information is not available to us on the grounds it is confidential and commercially sensitive information.

16. Community Transport

Community Transport is a generic term covering the wide range of access solutions usually developed to cover specifically identified transport needs, typically run by the local community for local neighbourhoods on a not-for-profit basis.

17. Community Transport is concerned with meeting the Community's identified access need rather than running scheduled routes or operating for profit.

18. Community Transport already operates an Accessible Transportation Planning structure. Local operators identify how best to meet the access needs of an individual or community grouping by identifying;

- Demographics (age, income, employment status, gender, etc.)
- Purpose of travel (commuting, personal errands, recreation, etc.).
- Destination (school, job, shopping, restaurants, parks, friends, families, etc.). These can be divided into common destinations (goods and services available at many locations) and unique destinations (activities at a particular destination, such as a friend's house).
- Time (hour, day, season).
- Usual Mode of travel (walking, cycling, car driver, car passenger, public transport passenger, SmartPass holder etc.).
- Mode split (the portion of trips made by different modes) is affected by factors such as vehicle availability, the quality of alternative modes and community design.
- Distance (from origin to destination and from origin to access each mode, such as walking distance to public transport stops or stations). Community Transport provides a link to the public transport network for many individuals.

19. The best transport option is decided in partnership with the passenger and is dependent on the most appropriate available resource. It could be the most suitable vehicle is a wheelchair accessible minibus, a seat in a volunteer's car, or by providing a link to the public transport network.

20. Community Transport may not actually provide transport, instead referring the passenger to the local Ulsterbus or advising the person to contact their GP or Health Consultant to arrange for transport via the local Trust's non-emergency transport services.

21. CTA, the voice of the Community Transport sector, completed a Northern Ireland State of the Sector report in 2010[5]. That report provided a summary of the activities of a wide range of community transport solutions delivered across Northern Ireland (appendix ii).

22. The CTA Northern Ireland State of the Sector report found there were approximately **700 vehicles delivering community transport services** across Northern Ireland. Vehicles include community minibuses (over 70% are fully accessible), people carriers and volunteers' own cars.

23. The majority of community transport services are delivered by **volunteers who provide Northern Ireland with over £2million worth of transport services** annually. Over **3000 volunteers actively deliver community led transport solutions** each year in Northern Ireland. These volunteers work for charities and community organisations. The majority of community transport providers deliver transport services as an ancillary activity to their organisation or charity's main purpose. Providers include;

[5] http://www.ctauk.org/UserFiles/Documents/In%20Your%20Area/NI/CTA-NI-SotS-Report2010-Web.pdf

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Age Concern, Action Mental Health, Scouts NI, youth groups, churches and faith groups, community associations and many more. Other community transport providers have been constituted to reduce rural isolation and social exclusion through the provision of access to services. Providers include the Rural Community Transport Partnerships who are in receipt of funding through the DRD's Rural Transport Fund.

24. It is important to note **Community Transport is not permitted to deliver public transport services**. Due to the limitations of the Transport Act (Northern Ireland) 1967[6], Section 10b operating permit, Community Transport suppliers may only provide services:

> *10b (2) (B) not being used for the carriage of members of the public nor with a view to profit nor incidentally to an activity which is itself carried on with a view to profit;*

25. In order to obtain a Section 10b operating permit the operator must only provide transport services related to:

> *10B (7) A body is eligible under this subsection if it is concerned with*
> *a. Education*
> *b. Religion*
> *c. Social welfare*
> *d. Recreation; or*
> *e. Other activities of benefit to the community*

26. It is important to note the DoE's Review of Bus Operator Licensing intends replacing the S10b permit with a Community License. There are concerns within the Community Transport Sector on the impact of the draft proposals. CTA and the Community Transport Sector encourage the Committee to consider the effect of the final DoE changes to legislation. It may mean the Community Transport Sector is further restricted and unable to perform as an effective partner in the delivery of a transport network of benefit to the wider NI community.

27. **Community Transport is excluded from all government tenders and contracts** under the DoE's Section 10b operating legislation

28. **Community Transport provides almost 1million passenger trips per year** in Northern Ireland. All transport is delivered on a not-for-profit basis, where the passengers' needs are paramount.

29. Although Community Transport is excluded from the Disability Discrimination Act requirements for transport providers, the Sector is committed to delivery of fully accessible transport solutions that enables people with limited mobility to be able to get out and about.

[6] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/apni/1967/37

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30. **Public transport**

Only DRD and Translink can confirm the current requirements of the public bus or rail network.

As CTA is not privy to commercially sensitive information about Translink's operations we can only provide evidence relating to the Community Transport sector.

B To assess the current public and community sector bus transport infrastructure and costs;

31. Community Transport in its widest sense is not supported by any Government Department in Northern Ireland.

32. While DRD has policy responsibility for transport, it does not provide generic financial support for the Community Transport Sector in Northern Ireland. DRD funding for Community Transport is limited to those Community Transport operators in receipt of the Rural Transport Fund (RTF). Financial support for CTA is limited to only providing technical advice and support for those small number of Community Transport providers who are in receipt of RTF funding. DRD does not support the general development or work of Community Transport in Northern Ireland. While Community Transport delivers transport solutions for isolated and socially excluded individuals and groups across Northern Ireland, it is not considered within any transport plans or strategic considerations by the DRD or any other department within the NI Executive.

33. DRD financial support

DRD provides grant support to 11 rural community transport operators through the Rural Transport Fund. That fund equated to £3.7million per year with around £1million being used to support Translink's Rural Transport section and £2.7million for community transport's delivery of the rural Dial-a-Lift scheme, RTF Voucher Scheme and specific CTA infrastructure support. In order to develop appropriate reporting of demographical statistics DRD provided additonal investment (2011/2012) to install a software booking system in each rural community transport operator.

34. DRD grants RTF recipients a subsidy to deliver 'Small Group Transport' to community groups and organisations that are otherwise unable to avail of conventional transport. This subsidy allows community organisations and charities who support older people, people with disabilities, young people, church and faith based groups, women, children, unemployed and ethnic minority groups to use the community minibus resource to enable their members to attend courses, meetings and community support activities.

35. DRD's RTF grant is limited; therefore priority is placed on delivering services for individuals and in particular for older people and people with

disabilities. Some RTF recipients are overwhelmed by the amount of transport requests received from individuals their local area and have had to restrict or refuse transport due to lack of available resources or capacity. Community Transport operators have tried to meet as much transport as is possible by making best use of resources including volunteers and generating alternative funds. It is important to note approximately 5% of all requests for community transport is being refused due to lack of available resources.

36. CTA is currently provided with £130k[7] to provide specific assistance for the 11 community transport organisations funded by DRD's Rural Transport Fund on page 13. CTA is limited to assisting only those operators to meet legal, safety and Departmental standards and to help support effective and efficient delivery of RTF supported programmes.

37. CTA creates over £100k in savings for the DRD through;

    37.1. Reduced premiums for vehicle insurance (saving @£90k p/a)

    37.2. Reduced costs for driver training (@ £6k p/a)

    37.3. Reduced costs for office equipment and supplies (@ £3k p/a)

    37.4. Reduced costs for fuel and maintenance (@ £2k p/a)

    37.5. And works with vehicle and accessible equipment suppliers to ensure the right equipment is provided to enable inclusive transport to be delivered.

38. CTA is not funded by any other department within the NI Executive nor DRD to provide generic support for the wider Community Transport Sector. Due to CTA's commitment to all our members and to support access needs within the Community, CTA provides a small amount of self-financed advice services to ensure Community Transport operators not in receipt of DRD grant, are helped to provide safe and appropriate access solutions. CTA also provides a voice for people who are marginalised and without appropriate access solutions by reason of location, age or limited mobility.

39. The Transport Act (Northern Ireland) 2011[8], Part 5, Section 35 states "The Department *(DRD)* may pay grants to any person towards expenditure incurred or to be incurred in the provision of advice, information, support or training relating to passenger transport".

    To date no budget has been created to allow CTA or any other passenger transport infrastructure support provider to access appropriate financial assistance to provide: legal and technical support for transport providers to ensure safety, quality and passenger care standards are maintained; or to provide information and support for marginalised individuals or

[7] CTA letter of offer, DRD RTF, 2012-2013
[8] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2011/11

communities who are unable to access local services due to location, age or limited mobility.

40. Although Community Transport is part of the Voluntary & Community Sector as the policy remit for transport is with DRD, Community Transport is excluded from making application for regional infrastructure grant or financial support from the Voluntary & Community Sector Unit within DSD. As DRD holds the policy remit for transport therefore falls to DRD to include as part of their budget support for passenger transport suppliers and support organisations (as per Transport Act (NI) 2011, Part 5, section 35).

41. CTA currently has over 110 member organisations delivering community transport solutions within Northern Ireland. 11 of who receive DRD grant funding – *see Table 1, page 12*. The majority of community transport suppliers receive no direct funding to support the delivery of socially necessary transport solutions. Operating costs are generated from passenger fares, donations, informal service level agreements for service delivery (normally transport is only a part of a general service provision e.g. charity support services) and fundraising.

42. In the CTA Northern Ireland State of the Sector Report 2010, CTA attempted to scope the range of community transport provision in the province. We found;

- Approximately 700 vehicles deliver community transport services across Northern Ireland.
- Over 3000 volunteers deliver community transport solutions by either driving a shared community minibus resource or driving their own car
- 45% of respondents indicated that transport is ancillary to their main organisation purpose
- Approximately 1,000,000 passenger trips are provided each year by community transport in Northern Ireland
- There are over 40,000 individual members who use community transport to get out and about
- There are over 3,500 community groups and associations actively using community transport to provide access to local community services and activities
- Volunteers provide over £2,000,000 of added value and benefit in kind to help deliver community transport services in Northern Ireland
- 78% of community transport organisations have fully accessible vehicles
- 50% of community transport operators expect difficulty financing replacement vehicles

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- DRD currently provide financial support to 10% of community transport operators in Northern Ireland. Those operators are listed in Table 1, page 12 of this document
- The majority of community transport providers receive no funding from government and have to rely on local fundraising or non-profit fares from passengers to cover running costs

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30. Table 1: Rural Community Transport operators funded by DRD's Rural Transport Fund 2011/2012[9]:

DRD Rural Transport Fund Region (community transport operator/s)	Total Annual RTF Grant Funding per region	Total number of community minibuses	Total number of volunteer cars	Total No. of Dial-A-lift Trips (£ subsidy per passenger trip)
Mid Ulster (Cookstown Rural Community Transport, Dungannon & District Community Transport and Out & About Magherafelt)	£599,983.17	**17**	**24**	**45,103 (12.86)**
Ards and Down (Down District Accessible Transport)	£490,618.86	**18**	**34**	**13,731 (35.73)**
West: Strabane, Foyle and Omagh (Easilink)	£549,454.68	**14**	**60**	**41,891 (12.64)**
Fermanagh (FAST and Rural Lift)	£529,164.90	**13**	**10**	**37,997 (13.40)**
Loughside (Lagan Valley, South Antrim)	£325,511.56	**12**	**20**	**18,991 (17.14)**
North: Roe Valley, Coleraine, Ballycastle, Ballymena (North Coast CT)	£598,608.88	**18**	**32**	**36,230 (15.69)**
Southern (Armagh Rural Transport, Newry & Mourne & DART Partnership)	£423,429.78	**14**	**25**	**33,533 (12.02)**
Overall Totals	**£3,516,771.83**	**106**	**205**	**227,476 (av. 17.06)**

[9] Source: FoI response from DRD 2012

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C To assess current inter-relationships in the delivery of public and community bus transport options;

31. We need to define better what is meant by public transport in Northern Ireland.

32. At present we have a fragmented approach to transport in Northern Ireland. There is no attempt to engender a transport planning system to ensure all transport paid for from the public purse is integrated.

    - Health takes care of health's statutory transport – emergency transport, non-emergency access for Trust day care and inter-hospital travel.
    - Education considers home to school and special education needs transport
    - DRD considers public transport, namely Translink and some support for isolated rural and disabled urban dwellers (Dial a Lift and Door2Door)
    - DEL provides some financial support for people attending job interviews and adult education courses

    Without consideration for transport in the development of services, or a national transport planning strategy framework, Northern Ireland Executive will continue to ineffectively spend public money that could be better considered and able to create efficiencies while reducing emissions.

33. Translink and 11 community transport providers (funded by DRD) work together:

- Translink buy accessible minibuses for DRD and then lease those vehicles to the rural community transport network (fees include monthly vehicle safety inspection, PSV test fees and basic maintenance)
- Translink allow rural community transport operators access to fuel and vehicle washing facilities (where available) in local engineering depots. This provides a saving on vehicle fuel costs.
- CTA and Translink facilitated a training day for rural community transport providers at their Contact Centre to learn about the Translink network and how to link passengers to the network who wish to travel outside of the local community area of benefit

34. Where it is economically viable Translink and DRD funded community transport providers aim to work in partnership to meet access needs. One of the main issues for the Community is access to Health. Translink and both Fermanagh Community Transport and Easilink Community Transport are currently piloting a service to Altnagelvin Hospital for isolated individuals from the Western Health Trust region. Community Transport will link passengers to the public transport

network to enable those living in the West to be able to get to Altnagelvin (hospital appointment time permitting). This pilot will run for 3 months from September 2012. Continuation of the service is dependent on economic viability and passenger numbers.

35. CTA calls for a cooperative approach to transport planning in Northern Ireland.

    At the CTA Cooperative Transport Conference, held 16 August 2012 attended by 76 people from Translink, DRD, DoE, Health, Education, community groups, charities and community transport operators, conclusions confirmed until appropriate, cross departmental, strategic, accessible transport planning is considered, there is no opportunity to create an effective transport network capable of delivering a system suitable for Northern Ireland.

36. A cross departmental, accessible transport strategy with a transport planning function would consider the best and most efficient mode of transport to suit the local access needs of Northern Ireland. An effective plan would not segregate transport into public / Health / Education / Community, but rather use the most cost effective mode to enable journeys to take place. Transport linking e.g. between home-Community Transport-Ulsterbus-Metro, has the opportunity to provide the right mix of transport to meet most passenger's journey requirements. The Executive has the opportunity to save money while presenting effective transport solutions.

37. There is no appetite within Departments to consider the availability or sharing of transport solutions or resources. During the CTA 2012 conference DRD's Public Transport Reform representatives confirmed their priority is the development of high speed access through a limited number of public transport arterial routes linking the larger cities. There is little consideration to consider how people wishing to travel rural-rural or rural-towns will be able to get out and about. Given the NI aged population is due to expand by 2020 we could be left with an increasingly isolated and marginalised older population without access to an appropriate public transport network.

38. CTA and the CT Sector urge the DRD Committee to

    a. seek for Executive agreement for a cross Departmental review of all public expenditure on transport within each Department

        i. to examine how much money is being spent on transport

        ii. how transport is purchased

        iii. if efficiencies could be created by considering other transport functions already being delivered through another Department

    b. Consider expanding the Public Transport Reform function within DRD to include a NI transport planning division that will examine

i. where people wish to travel (including Health, Education, Employment etc.)

ii. how they are currently travelling

iii. why they need to travel at a particular time

iv. the best local mode to get them there (consider all forms of transport including Translink, Community Transport, Active travel modes, transport delivered by other Departments etc.)

v. where links between modes can be made (what is the best local option to deliver transport requirements)

vi. how efficiencies can be generated through sharing of resources across NI Executive departments

vii. to provide Department's with appropriate transport planning support to ensure access is considered at service development, not as an afterthought

viii. to include a local community transport plan to ensure the specific needs of local communities are considered

c. To encourage cross departmental agreement to allow sharing of resources.

i. E.g. Health minibuses can be used to provide community access in evenings and weekends when the public transport network is limited; rural community transport is commissioned to deliver/link people to the public transport network so they can travel to work, education and for personal business; to ensure all hospitals have a public transport bus or rail stop within easy walking distance of reception/admission; to enable private/commercial companies to deliver public transport services where Translink is unable or cannot afford to meet need etc.

D To identify examples of best-practice in the provision of integrated public and community bus transport options; and

39. There is no strategic, accessible transport plan or planning in place in Northern Ireland.

40. In order to look at an effective system we need to consider approaches taken outside the province.

41. An effective Accessible Transport Plan considers a holistic approach to the movement of people. It looks at where people need to go, what time they need to be there, the best mode of transport to use and the most cost effective method to deliver. In Northern Ireland we do not have one government department or strategic transport planning function that considers how to integrate ALL services to ensure efficiencies and effective delivery.

    a. Appendix iii: Local Transport Plan Devon and Torbay 2011 – 2026[10]

    b. Appendix iv: London 2012: Accessible Transport Strategy for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games[11]. The Olympic Delivery Authority created and delivered an accessible transport plan for the recent London 2012 Olympic Games. This plan included all modes of transport, provided information on all available modes and ensured Olympians, volunteers and audience could avail of appropriate and timely transport solutions. CTA encourages the DRD Committee to consider the strategic plan adopted by the ODA when considering how to improve the transport network and develop an accessible transport plan for Northern Ireland in the future.

42. In Northern Ireland Community Transport has tried to work with other operators to enable individuals and communities to access services. Community Transport:

    a. Links rurally isolated people to the Ulsterbus network – we are unable to confirm the number of people who have been transferred as the current scheduling software does not include the ability for Community Transport providers to record a 'reason for trip' as transfer to public transport

    b. Is working with Translink to deliver a service for rural people living in the WHSCT to be able to access centralised Health appointments in Altnagelvin Hospital. This pilot being run by Easilink and Fermanagh Community Transport has been established because of concerns raised by rural older people through the Rural Community Network's Skills for Solutions

[10] http://www.devon.gov.uk/dtltp2011-2026strategydoc.pdf

[11] http://www.london2012.com/documents/oda-transport/accessible-transport-strategy-accessible-pdf.pdf

group. The pilot will run for 3 months and will only be considered for extension if passenger numbers/income determines if Translink can continue to afford the route.

c. CTA arranged for Translink's Contact Centre to provide Community Transport's booking staff training on the Translink online Journey Planner and a tour of the Europa Bus Station. This joint approach aimed to give booking line staff the confidence to move those passengers who could use public transport onto Translink services. Community Transport is perfectly placed to deliver local access. By moving passengers, wishing to travel outside the local area onto a Translink vehicle, it means the local community transport service is retained locally. Booking staff based outside Belfast have experience of using the main bus station in Belfast and can advise passengers about the facilities, how to get information and where to go to link to the Metro bus route to the main hospital sites.

d. Two Community Transport operators currently deliver Door2Door urban transport services under contract for the DRD's Transport Programme for People with Disabilities. In order to deliver the programme each operator had to create a commercial company through which they could then deliver the contract. Door2Door was only available through commercial contract not as grant, this prevented the Community Transport Sector from being able to deliver a non-profit solution for DRD. Door2Door is available for people with disabilities and people aged over 85 in urban areas, Monday – Sunday, 7am – 11pm. No concessions are permitted on this service. Passengers are not provided with information on how to avail of alternative passenger transport options (Translink).

e. Community Transport provides the Dial a Lift service on behalf of the DRD's Rural Transport Fund grant under the S10b permit;

    i. This service provides transport for individuals living in rural areas who are unable to avail conventional or public transport options.

    ii. The service ensures people who are unable to use Translink services because of rural location or limited mobility have access.

    iii. The service is limited to Monday – Friday, 8am – 6pm.

    iv. Thanks to investment from DARD passengers with a SmartPass can use that concession for the first time on a service provided by Community Transport. (Includes Senior, 60+, Blind, War Disabled SmartPasses and Half Fare SmartPass for people with disabilities).

v. The Dial a Lift service is complimentary to Translink services not in competition with it.

vi. The service is operated non-commercially benefiting from the input of volunteers and a mix of community minibuses and volunteer cars

E To consider options for the future provision of public and community bus transport options.

43. In the future public and community transport can deliver public transport solutions if it is an integrated, cooperative transport network coordinated through a strategic NI Accessible Transport Plan. The Plan must include a requirement that all services delivered through all Government Departments must consider how people will travel and if travel can be effectively delivered by the public transport network. All Government Departments must coordinate resources to ensure the right transport is provided to meet the needs of the Community

44. Until 2015 – current PfG and budget

CTA accepts the operational and work programme for the current budget period are already set and will not change.

CTA proposes during this PfG and budget period the DRD Committee requests the NI Executive agree to start a cross-Departmental review of all public expenditure on transport. While Departments may determine they do not have a specific transport budget, they are still spending money on transport. Health Trusts spend money on taxis to get people off wards in order to meet ward targets, Education contract transport suppliers to deliver transport for primary schools to go swimming – money is being spent on transport.
The review should confirm what transport resources are paid for by each Department (what vehicles are owned or used, how much money is spent to provide transport and how much money is available in financial support for people to access Departmental services).

The Committee should start now to propose the content of the next work programme (2015-2020). The Committee must demand that in the next budget period DRD will establish an appropriate accessible transport planning division, utilising the transport planning skills already determined within Translink that should have become part of the Public Transport Agency (which did not develop as planned). The DRD Accessible Transport Planning Function will work across all Departments to identify transport requirements, establish the required resources and present an Accessible Transport Plan for Northern Ireland that includes multi modal, private, public and community resources that must be used to deliver future access solutions.

The last PFG was published after the budget had been agreed. In order to prevent this happening again the DRD Committee must agree, with the Minister, investment in public and community transport to be ring-fenced for 2015-2020. The investment should return to the proposed 60:40 infrastructure investment between roads and transport (away from the 80:20 split as is currently experienced). By moving from capital intensive to revenue expenditure the Committee can insure appropriate monies are available to deliver frontline transport services rather than the roads they travel on. Build a road and more cars are encouraged to be driven. Create a better public transport network, suitable to meet the needs of individuals including the work force, school children and the wider community; will encourage a more sustainable and environmentally appropriate transport system.

45. 2015-2020 – Developing the framework and Accessible Transport Plan

During 2015-2020 the Committee should target the DRD to develop the strategic framework and for DRD to produce the first wholly integrated, cross departmental accessible transport plan.

There needs to be more information and education provided for both the public and those organisations/Government Departments to encourage use of the public transport system. Oftentimes employment, education courses, Health centres and clinics etc. are planned without appropriate consideration how the 'public' will be able to travel to the venue. Northern Ireland can no longer afford (financially and environmentally) the high number of cars on our roads. All services must consider access as part of their development/planning. The public need to be informed how to access services other than by car.

The Committee should confirm at least £250,000 per year investment be made available (as per the new Transport Act (NI) 2011) for passenger transport advisory bodies such as CTA and FPT to help develop community and commercial transport options outside the public transport system. This investment will help develop the ability of transport suppliers to react to access needs in the province without limitation or Departmental restrictions. By making transport suppliers fit for purpose the DRD can ensure multi modal options are available for the implementation of the Accessible Transport Plan

46. 2020-2025

Implementation of the strategic NI Accessible Transport Plan, integration of resources and cooperative transport working.

4 Conclusion

47 CTA's vision is "A fairer society where everyone, irrespective of where they live or their individual circumstances, has the mobility and accessible transport services they need to live full and active lives".

48 The DRD Committee's Inquiry provides the ability for CTA and the Community Transport Sector the opportunity to confirm our commitment to help to provide an inclusive transport solution within Northern Ireland.

49 The Community Transport Sector and CTA are pleased to provide evidence to the DRD Committee and ask:

a. For the development of an Accessible Transport Plan incorporating all Departments and utilising all available resources and modes of transport (public, commercial and community)

b. That the Community Transport Sector is not excluded from strategic planning. Our ability to work within local communities to identify transport and access gaps is vital to ensuring the public transport network can deliver access for all

c. That an appropriate investment is made to provide information and to educate the Community on the alternatives to car use

- For appropriate financial support to be made available to transport suppliers including the Community Transport Sector to ensure the access needs of the Community can be met where conventional transport is not appropriate or available for the individual

- For the Transport Sector to be provided with appropriate and financially supported resources such as passenger transport advisory bodies (CTA and FPT) to ensure the health and safety of passengers, value for money and quality standards are maintained

- For all Government Departments to be challenged on their position regarding transport. All spend budget on transport and/or have committed support to providing financial support for people using courses and services developed through their programmes. All Government Departments should have a more efficient approach to expenditure and be challenged to work in more effective partnership to share resources.

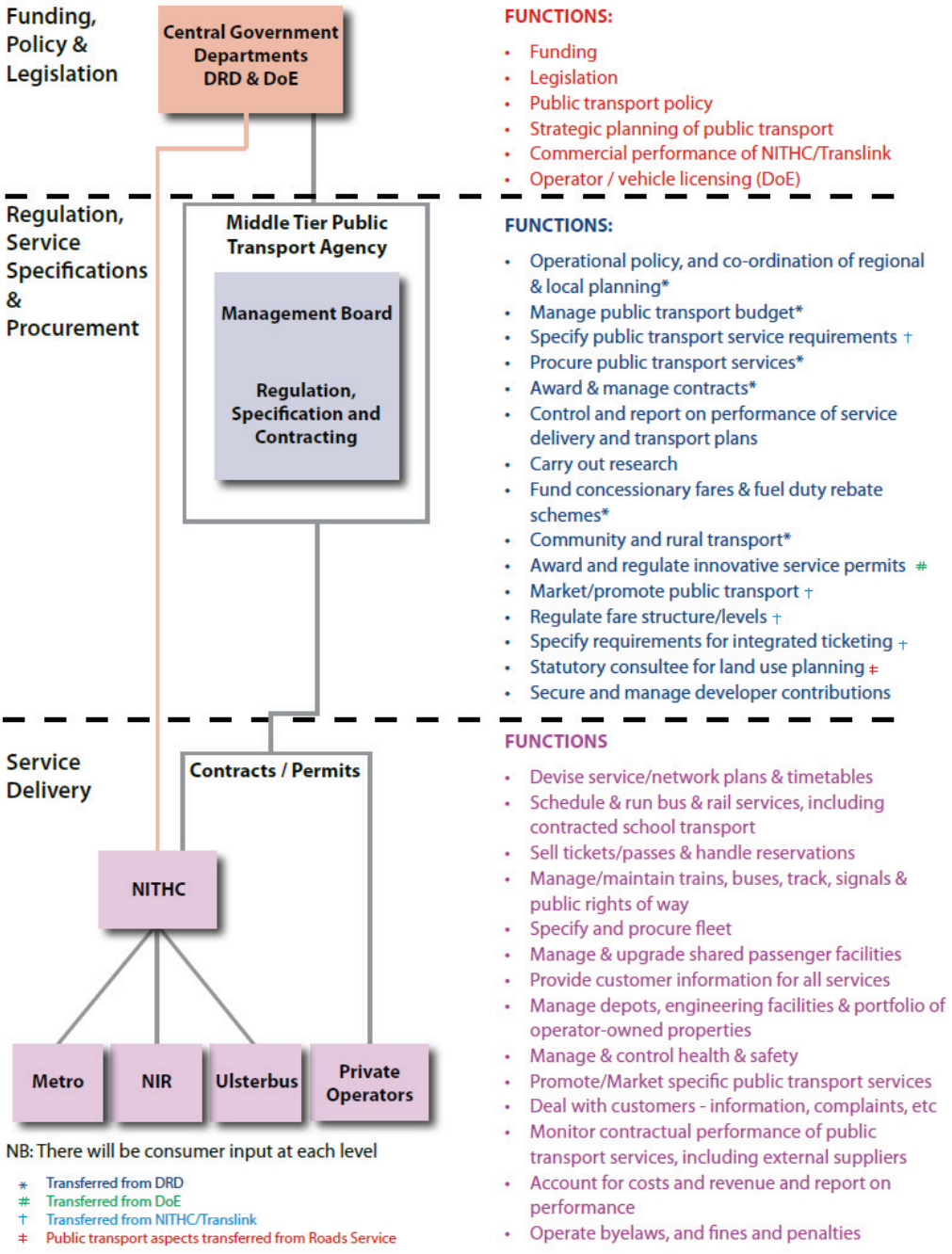
Kellie Armstrong
CTA

Appendix i

From: DRD Public Transport Reform Model (DRD Public Transport Reform Consultation, Page 20)

Annex 1

Proposed Three-tier Model for Public Transport



Appendix ii
CTA Northern Ireland State of the Sector Report 2010

Please note: a hard copy of this report can be provided by CTA on request. This document can be downloaded or viewed online
http://www.ctauk.org/UserFiles/Documents/In%20Your%20Area/NI/CTA-NI-SotS-Report2010-Web.pdf

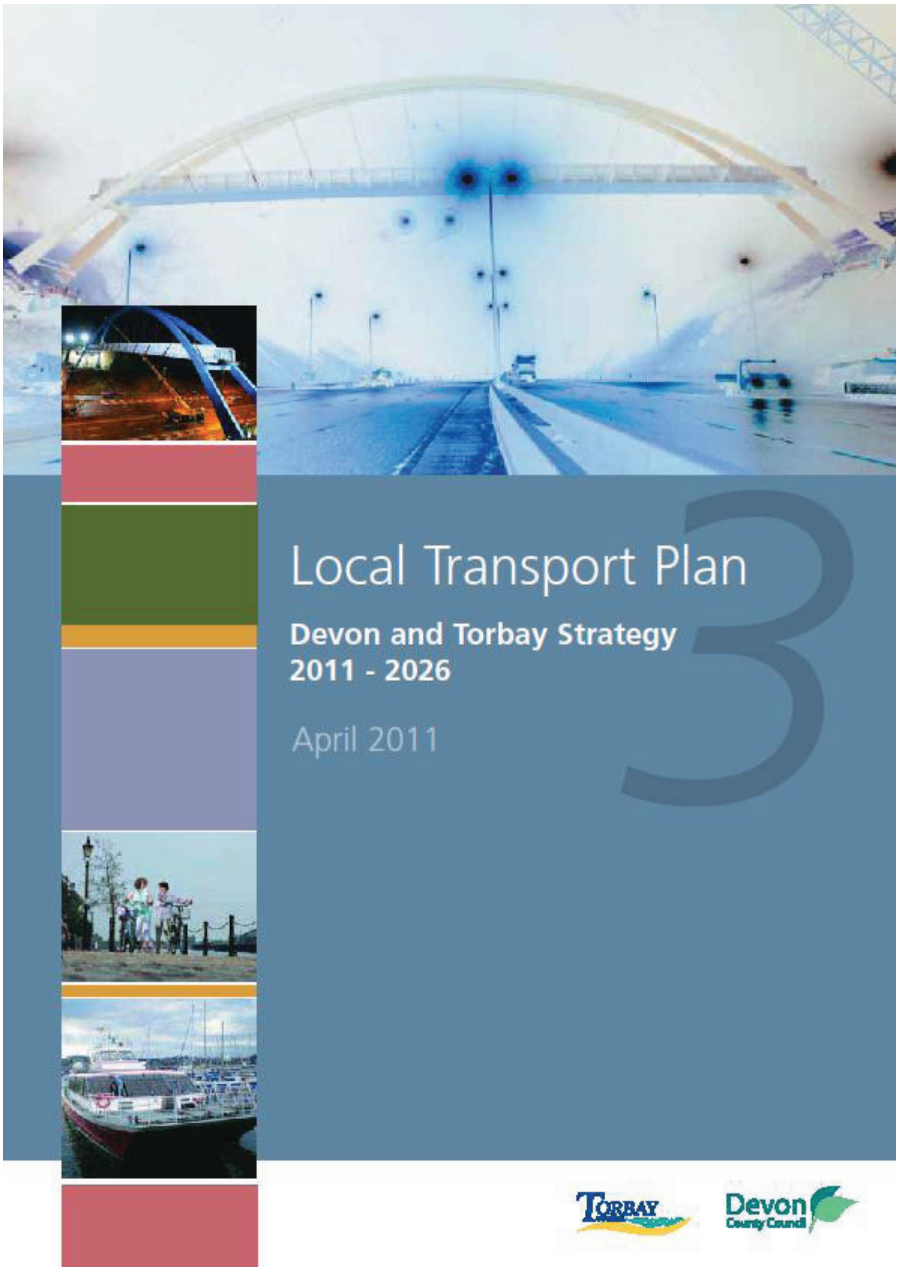


Community Transport Association

Appendix iii

Local Transport Plan Devon and Torbay 2011 – 2026

This document can be downloaded or viewed online
http://www.devon.gov.uk/dtltp2011-2026strategydoc.pdf



Appendix iv

London 2012: Accessible Transport Strategy for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games

This document can be downloaded or viewed online
http://www.london2012.com/documents/oda-transport/accessible-transport-strategy-accessible-pdf.pdf



Community Transport Association

cta n. ireland
Community Transport Association

Delivering social change through leadership, learning and enterprise

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26 October 2012

Paul Carlisle
Clerk to the Committee for Regional Development
Room 254
Parliament Buildings
Belfast
BT4 3XX

Re: Committee for Regional Development Inquiry into Better Use of Public Funds for Community and Public Transport

Dear Paul

The CTA is a regional infrastructure body providing advice, learning and support for members who provide local, community transport solutions. Any activities including consultation responses are made by the CTA on behalf of our membership.

The substance of the submission was taken from the CTA's 'Co-operative Transport Conference', held 16 August 2012, attended by 76 delegates (68 members and 8 others). At that conference membership confirmed the need for an inclusive, integrated, cross-departmental approach to transport strategy and planning. CTA was then confirmed to progress the issue on behalf of the members in Northern Ireland.

In advance of submitting the CTA response to the Committee I shared the document with members for comment and consideration. Their input is contained within the document submitted.

As per your request I have attached the CTA NI membership as it stood at the date of submission. I have divided the list of members by those who are in receipt of RTF and those who are not.
Of the 114 CTA members; 12 receive RTF funding (10%) and 102 do not (90%).

Many thanks

Kellie Armstrong
Director for Northern Ireland

Community Transport Association UK is a charitable company limited by guarantee. Registered in Cardiff no.1985361. Registered office: Highbank, Halton Street, Hyde, Cheshire SK14 2NY. Registered charity no. 1002222. VAT registration no. 425 7711 50.

Community Transport Association

CTA NI Members (2012)

1 Total number of CTA NI members: 114

CTA NI members comprise charities, churches, community groups that provide community transport solutions through the provision of volunteer led services. Transport may be delivered by community minibus or by social car (volunteers providing transport in their own cars).

12 members are in receipt of RTF.

102 members do not receive RTF. Of those 102 members, 2 receive a small subsidy to deliver small community group travel through the TPPD programme. All others receive no support (financial or other) from DRD.

CTA in Northern Ireland currently receives a grant through the RTF. This grant award is to specifically provide technical advice and support for those Community Transport Operators who are in receipt of RTF funds. DRD's grant to CTA specifically excludes the provision of any support to the wider Community Transport sector (to date the DRD have not allocated any budget for passenger transport advisory bodies to enable provision of Sectoral support as contained in the Transport Act 2011).

2 CTA NI members in receipt of Rural Transport Fund (RTF)

DRD Rural Transport Fund Area		Name of Community Transport Providers (CTA members in receipt of DRD RTF funding)
North Coast Area	1	North Coast Community Transport
Mid Ulster Area	2	Cookstown Rural Community Transport
	3	Dungannon & District Community Transport
	4	Out & About
Down / Ards Peninsula	5	Down District Accessible Transport
Southern Area	6	Armagh Rural Transport
	7	Down Armagh Rural Transport
	8	Newry & Mourne Community Transport
Loughside Area	9	Lagan Valley Rural Transport
	10	South Antrim Community Transport
Fermanagh Area	11	Fermanagh Community Transport
West (Rural Derry, Tyrone)	12	Easilink

RTF funded members: 12

3 CTA NI members in receipt of DRD funding for small group hire/disabled transport through the Transport Programme for People with Disabilities (TPPD)

DRD TPPD Area		Name of Community Transport Providers (CTA members in receipt of DRD TPPD funding)
Belfast	1	Disability Action
Londonderry	2	Bridge Accessible Transport

TPPD funded members: 2

CTA NI Members (2012)

4 CTA NI Members excluded from financial or other support from DRD

The following CTA NI members provide a range of transport solutions that are either direct provision of transport to meet the needs of a community, or are an ancillary charity service for beneficiaries.

No	CTA NI member not in receipt of any DRD support (financial or other)
1	1st Bluestone Boys Brigade & Lurgan Methodist Church Circuit
2	1st Newry Scout Group
3	Ancient Order of Hibernians
4	Action Cancer
5	An Munia Tober
6	Annalong Community Association
7	Ardoyne Community Transport
8	Artillery Youth Centre
9	Aughakillymaude Community Association
10	Autism Initiatives
11	Ballyclare High School
12	Ballymoney Church of God
13	Ballymore Open Centre
14	Bangor Community Church
15	Belfast & Lisburn Womens Aid
16	Belfast HSS Trust Transport Services
17	Blackwater Integrated College
18	Bournview Football Club
19	Celebration Church
20	Church of Ireland, Mossley
21	Churchtown Community Association
22	Claudy Rural Development
23	Conservation Volunteers N.I.
24	Corpus Christi College
25	Corrymeela Community
26	Dalriada Rural Surestart
27	Derrytresk Community Centre
28	Direct Links Transport (Upper Springfield Development Co)
29	Disability Action
30	Dominican College
31	Dundonald Filipino Christian Family
32	Dunmurry Christian Trust
33	East Belfast Mission
34	Elmwood Presbyterian Church
35	Emmanuel Church
36	Enable NI
37	Friends School, Lisburn
38	Glenravel Community Transport Ltd
39	Green Pastures The Peoples Church
40	Hill Street Presbyterian Church
41	Holy Rosary Parish
42	Hunterhouse College
43	IMTAC
44	Kilcluney Flute Band

CTA NI Members (2012)

45	Larne Borough Council
46	Larne Football Club
47	Leonard Cheshire Disability- Taylor House
48	Ligoniel Improvement Association
49	Limavady Community Transport Initative (LCTI)
50	Little Hands Surestart
51	Lurgan Elim Church
52	Malone Presbyterian Church
53	McElmeel Mobility Services
54	Metropolitan Tabernacle
55	Moneyrea Primary School
56	Moneyslane Football Club
57	MS Society
58	Naiscoil Eanna
59	Naohm Éanna CLG
60	Newry Christian Centre
61	Newry High School
62	North Eastern Education & Library Board
63	Northern Ireland Prison Service
64	Northern Ireland Scout Council
65	Nu-Track Ltd
66	Oak Healthy Living Centre
67	Omagh Early Years Centre
68	Opportunities Youth
69	Orana Children and Family Centre
70	Our Lady & St Patrick's College, Knock
71	Praxis Care
72	Quaker Service
73	REHABILITY
74	Rockport School
75	Shankill Lurgan Community Projects Ltd
76	Shankill Parish Caring Association
77	Shankill Parish Church
78	Shopmobility Belfast
79	South Eastern Education & Library Board
80	South Eastern HSCT Transport Dept.
81	St Columbanus College & St Comgalls Youth Centre
82	St Marks Parish Church
83	St Patrick's College
84	Star Neighbourhood Centre
85	Strabane Community Development Project
86	Strabane District Caring Services
87	Strathearn School
88	Streetreach Bus
89	Suffolk Community Forum
90	Sullivan Upper School
91	Taxi & Bus Conversions Ltd (TBC), Donnelly Brothers
92	The Celtic Boys & Girls Club
93	The Plum Club
94	The Royal School

CTA NI Members (2012)

95	Tor Bank School
96	Translink (RTF Unit)
97	Ulidia Integrated College
98	University of Ulster Students Union
99	Voice of Young People in Care
100	Volunteer Now

Non-DRD funded members: 100

5 Please note: DRD's Door-2-Door transport is not available for Community Transport operators to deliver. The terms of the tender and contract exclude Community Transport operators from delivering through their 'not-for-profit' basis under their DoE S10b permit. Community Transport operators may only deliver contracted services if they create a separate trading arm, set up a commercial operation that is for profit and operates under a commercial DoE operator's license.

Easilink Community Transport

easilink
community transport

12th September 2012

Re. Inquiry into the better use of public and community sector funds for the delivery of bus transport in Northern Ireland

To Whom It May Concern:

Easilink Community Transport welcomes the opportunity to give our opinions on the above issue.

WHO WE ARE:

Easilink Community Transport is a not-for-profit Community Transport provider delivering Rural Transport Fund services across the Council areas of Derry City, Strabane and Omagh.
Easilink Community Transport is a Charity with the aim of reducing isolation and social exclusion throughout our operational area.
Easilink Community Transport has over 10 years experience developing local services to best meet the needs of local rural people in our area.
Easilink prides itself in providing a professional, caring and cost effective service to our rural clients.
We cater for over 1500 individual members and over 160 rural groups within our North West Region.
Easilink has consistently had a very productive and professional relationship with the Rural Transport team within DRD.
Easilink employs 24 people, has a very committed Board of Directors of 21 people and has 45 volunteer car drivers.

Strabane Office 028 7188 3282
Unit 12 Strabane Enterprise Agency Orchard Road
Industrial Estate Strabane, Co Tyrone, BT82 9FR

Omagh Office 028 8224 8140
29B Gortrush Industrial Estate, Omagh Co Tyrone, BT78 5EJ

Foyle Office 028 7188 3282
The Diamond Centre, 650 Barnish Road, Claudy, BT47 4EA

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

East Tyrone Community Forum is a Company Limited By Guarantee No NI060382
Registered Charity No XR15455 Charity No 103184

OUR OPINION:

- Fasilink CT feels very strongly that there are numerous opportunities for Public, Community & Commercial Buses to work together.

- Fasilink CT was central to the development of the Translink Pilot Service recently introduced from Enniskillen to Altnagelvin Hospital with Community Transport providers - linking in to encourage rural dwellers to use this bus to get to Hospital appointments. This ensures that one vehicle travels the entire route, with Community Transport and others feeding in at the local depots and stops along the way; avoiding duplication (and saving the public purse), reducing congestion on the roads and avoiding parking issues at Altnagelvin.
  - This a perfect example of how on a local level we can work together to provide a much needed service and save money
  - This could be replicated throughout the region.

- With regard to the Urban Door-2-door Scheme we feel very strongly that the best course of action is to Grant Fund this service to the Community Transport Sector. The reasons for this are:
  - If it is grant funded we can operate the Rural Dial-a-Lift and the Urban Door-2-door schemes using combined resources (same back office staff, same vehicles, same scheduling software, and dealing with the same funder).
  - To tender the Door-2-door schemes would mean operating 2 services in very close proximity using 2 separate lots of resources (separate fleets with no cross-over, volunteers not contributing to the Door-2-door service, separate scheduling software etc.)
  - Savings will only be achieved by operating the rural and urban schemes together and we feel the savings would be substantial.

- Fasilink CT are in a position today to take on any amount of Urban Door-2-door work within our operational area (Strabane & Omagh towns) and any other neighbouring towns if the Department so wished

- Similar opportunities also exist within the Health & Social Care Trust e.g. Transport to Day Care and Transport to Renal Dialysis. Work that is currently done by dedicating vehicles to a particular Day Centre or Renal Unit with the vehicles parked for 2, 3 or 4 hours every day. Community Transport could fulfil the requirements of the Day Centre runs or Renal Unit runs and in the down-time complete additional Community Transport trips for our isolated and vulnerable clients.

Paddy McElduowney
Manager
Fasilink Community Transport

Daniel O'Hagan
Chairperson
Fasilink Community Transport

Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee

11 September 2012

Paul Carlisle
Clerk
Committee for Regional Development
Room 254, Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw, Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

Dear Mr Carlisle

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Committee for Regional Development inquiry into the delivery of bus transport in Northern Ireland. Whilst Imtac recognises the investment made by DRD and others in transport services, too many disabled people and older people still find travelling difficult or impossible. This has a significant negative impact on people's everyday lives. Imtac believes a fresh look at how we use existing resources more effectively is long overdue.

Often the debate around improving transport services centres on use of vehicles – if we could only make use of all the buses we could have better transport services. For Imtac, however, the important issue is developing a better understanding of the services that are required and how existing resources (including both public and community) can be more effectively used to deliver better outcomes for people.

From Imtac's perspective better transport planning is crucial to utilising existing resources more effectively. Local Transport Plans in Great Britain provide a blueprint that should be replicated in Northern Ireland. We are particularly keen that the concept of accessibility planning be incorporated into the future design of transport services here.

Local transport planning would represent a significant change in culture and approach in Northern Ireland. It would require cross-departmental working and discussion about sharing resources. However Imtac believes that better transport planning can deliver positive outcomes for passengers. To further inform the present inquiry Imtac would like the Committee for Regional Development to consider research undertaken by Imtac into the development of Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services in Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland. We believe the development of DRT services would be effective in Northern Ireland and illustrate the benefits of local transport planning.

I have attached a copy of our report into Flexible Transport. Members of Imtac would welcome the opportunity to brief the Committee on our findings and how the report fits into the overall inquiry into the future of bus services here.

Thank you again for the opportunity to contribute to the current inquiry. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries about this letter or the attached report.

Yours sincerely

Michael Lorimer
Executive Secretary

Enc.

IMTAC Appendix

Flexible future – lessons from the development of demand responsive transport services

April 2012

Imtac is committed to making information about our work accessible. Details of how to obtain information in your preferred format are included on the next page.

Making our information accessible

As an organisation of and for disabled people and older people Imtac recognises that the way information is provided can be a barrier to accessing services and participation in public life. We are committed to providing information about our work in formats that best suit the needs of individuals.

All our documents are available in hard copy in 14pt type size as standard. We also provide word and pdf versions of our documents on our website – www.imtac.org.uk. In addition we will provide information in a range of other formats. These formats include:

- Large print
- Audio cassette or CD
- Daisy disc
- Braille
- Electronic copies on disc or via email in PDF or word
- Easy read

We will also provide information about our work in other languages if you require this.

If you would like this publication in any of the formats listed above or if you have any other information requirements please contact:

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Email: info@imtac.org.uk

Summary of our findings

This paper looks at lessons to learned for Northern Ireland in the provision of demand responsive transport (DRT) services in England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland. Through this work we have identified the following:

- There has been much greater experimentation with different types of DRT services in other parts of these islands compared with Northern Ireland

- Whilst not always successful these DRT services have provided a wealth of evidence about what works and what does not
- DRT services have proved successful in reducing social exclusion particularly in rural areas
- DRT services have been more cost effective than many of the pre-existing transport services in areas where they have been introduced
- DRT have helped increase the numbers of people using mainstream public transport
- Based on experiences elsewhere there are questions whether existing DRT services in Northern Ireland are effective or represent value for money
- The RDS and RTS has identified current travel patterns in Northern Ireland as unsustainable
- Given the dispersed and rural nature of our society it is questionable whether conventional public transport services on their own can deliver changes in travel patterns and meet need
- Given plans for savings it is likely that public transport, health transport, education transport and services such as door2door will face reductions over the next five years
- There is an overwhelming argument to look at how best we use all resources to ensure people have an opportunity to travel in future
- Imtac believes that greater use of different types demand responsive transport service should be used in Northern Ireland but recognises the many barriers that must be overcome to enable this to happen
- As a first step the Committee is recommending a cross-sectoral DRT Forum be formed to look at options for developing DRT services in Northern Ireland

About Imtac

Imtac is a committee of disabled people and older people as well as others including key transport professionals. Our role is to advise Government and others in Northern Ireland on issues that affect the mobility of older people and disabled people.

Our aim is to ensure that older people and disabled people have the same opportunities as everyone else to travel when and where they want.

Imtac receives support from the Department for Regional Development.

Background to this paper

Evidence shows that disabled people and older people find undertaking basic day to activities problematic because of difficulties accessing suitable transport[1]. The reasons for this are complex but one of the key factors has been transport and land use policies over many decades that promote car use. Research [2]has shown the links between these policies and social exclusion amongst groups in society who have poor or no access to a car including many disabled people and older people.

Over the past decade there has been an increased understanding of this problem through policy developments in Northern Ireland. Developing effective solutions is complex as different people face different barriers to travel and barriers can be different depending on where people live. It is likely that no one solution will address the barriers to travel faced by disabled people, older people and others and that solutions will require a mix of different

1 See Accessible Transport Strategy for Northern Ireland (DRD 2005)

2 The best example of this is Making the Connections: Final Report on Transport and Social Exclusion (Social Exclusion Unit 2003)

services. One such solution that Imtac has advocated is the increased use of flexible or demand responsive transport services.

The purpose of this paper is to look at evidence around experiences of operating demand responsive transport in other parts of these islands. To do this we have examined research and evaluation[3] of these services. We have attempted to identify good practice examples of the services and lessons learned about developing the services. We have looked at developments in Northern Ireland and attempted to assess how developments in Great Britain and Ireland could inform future policy and service development here.

What is Demand Responsive Transport (DRT)?

As conventional public transport operates best along corridors where there is high demand for this type of services there are numerous examples of where this type of service does not meet the transport needs of people whether it is because the person lives too far from the transport or because the service or activity the person wished to access is not served well by the public transport. Studies such as Intermode[4] have highlighted how providing conventional public transport solutions have become more difficult as reliance on the car has increased and demand for services has dropped. Increasingly in Great Britain and elsewhere transport designed around the needs of the individual is often seen as the answer, commonly known as demand responsive transport.

Demand responsive transport has been operating in one form or another for decades in Northern Ireland and elsewhere. Specific transport services provided by both health and education are a form of DRT. This type of DRT includes for example non-emergency transport to and from hospital and transport to and from day-care. Specialised services for disabled people and older people such door2door are another. Services such as taxis or the Belfast taxi bus are commercial examples of demand responsive transport services.

Over the last two decades advances in technology, particularly around booking arrangements, have opened the way for much greater use of DRT services and experimentation with different types of services. Around the world many different types of services have trialled with different methods of operating and with different overall aims. For example the type of service can vary greatly in flexibility – some services provide area wide flexibility such as our door-to-door services others rely on a route with varying degrees of flexibility. Some services are designed to link people to other public transport or to employers others have a focus on reducing social exclusion. Some DRT services try to achieve a number of different objectives with one service.

Developments in Great Britain and Ireland

Background

Over the past decade there has been substantial experimentation with DRT services in Great Britain and Ireland. This is due largely to specific Government funding programmes[5] that have encouraged local authorities to innovate and use new technologies. As previously indicated the purpose and design of services has varied greatly. Many services proved to be short lived, ineffective and unsustainable, but proved useful in identifying the problems in developing this type of service. Other services have been more successful and have become a key part of local authorities approach to meeting the transport needs of their communities. We have identified a number of good examples which we have listed below. The examples we have

3 See Appendix 1

4 Intermode: Innovations in Demand Responsive Transport (Dr Enoch Et AL) prepared for the Department for Transport & Great Manchester Passenger Transport Executive (2004)

5 This includes the Rural and Urban Bus Challenges in GB and the Rural Transport Initiative in Ireland

identified all have a focus on reducing social exclusion although some of the services have other purposes such as encouraging modal shift by providing links for commuters.

Case studies

Case study one – Lincolnshire Interconnect (http://www.lincsinterconnect.com/)

Lincolnshire County Council provides a range of flexible rural bus services under the Interconnect branding. Interconnect is a network of rural bus services linking people to key local services and interchange points where opportunities exist to travel further. These services are supplemented by demand responsive CallConnect services, which is a bookable bus service operating in defined areas that provides transport into and around the local town or links with Interconnect services. This service can be booked up to 1 hour before travel. Research indicates that Interconnect has been successful in reducing social exclusion in Lincolnshire by connecting isolated communities to key services and facilities and increasing access to other public transport services.

Case study two – Hampshire Cango services

(http://www3.hants.gov.uk/passengertransport/communitytransport/cango.htm)

Cango is part of a number of flexible transport services operated by Hampshire County Council. It is a flexibly routed bus service that operates to set timetables and is mainly booked in advance (allowing for bookings on the day). Cango serves rural communities around some key Hampshire towns. The service picks people up from pre-arranged meeting points and stops at key locations in the town including supermarkets, hospitals and bus and rail stations. The service has distinct markets at different times of days, commuters and school contracts in the early morning and evenings and people using the service for social reasons at other times. Research has shown that Cango has reduced demand on other expensive transport services such as health and door2door and has integrated public and home to school transport. Overall the service has been a more effective use of council resources than providing separate conventional bus services, education and health transport and specialised door-to-door services for disabled people.

Case Study three – Clare Accessible Transport

(http://www.catconnects.ie/)

Clare Accessible Transport provides a range of timetabled flexible route bus services from rural areas into urban areas of Clare in Ireland. Services are pre-booked. CAT is a community transport operator and has been able to supplement services supported under the Rural Transport Programme with other funding streams. CAT has also been able to work with statutory agencies integrating delivering a number of health contracts such as transport to and from day centres as part of the service. Services are also promoted to and used by tourists visiting the area.

Case study four – Local Link services in Greater Manchester

(http://www.tfgm.com/buses/local_link.cfm)

Although many of the services we looked at are rural services, accessing transport can be a major problem in urban areas where bus and train service work best along corridors where demand is highest. In Manchester Transport for Greater Manchester has supported demand responsive transport services called Local Link in areas where it has proved difficult to provide conventional bus services. Local Link is a pre-booked service that can provide door-to-door transport within a defined area. Open to everyone it links people to key facilities locally as well as main public transport corridors for onward travel.

Lessons from the development of DRT services

The development of DRT services has been accompanied by significant research into their effectiveness. Imtac has studied the range of work undertaken into DRT particularly the influential Intermode study. From the work undertaken around innovation in GB and Ireland we have identified the following issues as key in developing successful services:

(1) A change in culture

Evidence suggests that developing DRT services requires a radical change in the cultures of many of the organisations involved. It requires statutory agencies to think holistically about transport requirements of communities, work in partnership with others and share information and resources. It requires transport operators to run an unfamiliar type of service. Often services have not been effective when one or more of key organisations are resistant to this change in culture.

(2) Partnership Working

Evidence shows that DRT services have worked best where the range of agencies involved work together. These agencies include statutory agencies involved in transport including health and education, transport providers and users and potential users. The examples we have use illustrate good partnership working between a range of stakeholders.

(3) Understanding local need

Evidence shows that services work best where there is a clear understanding of local need – where, why and when people want to travel. Research suggests services operate best where there is an existing culture of people using public transport services. Research also suggests that services have been less successful in areas where planners have introduced a model they believe will work rather than a model based on evidence of need.

(4) Having a clear market

Evidence suggests that Services work best where there is a clear purpose and a clear market. For instance a service may have a social inclusion focus promoting access to services. Other services promote modal shift or focus on access to employment opportunities. The research suggests that services that try to do everything tend to satisfy none of the potential users and fail quickly.

(5) Government/local authorities has to instigate change

All evidence suggests that successful schemes exist where Government or the local authority initiate the services and provide significant support to operators. Research clearly shows that transport operators are conservative by nature and will not provide the innovative type of services without guarantees from Government.

(6) Reducing Legal/Regulatory barriers

Research shows that often services are limited by legal and regulatory barriers. In GB there has been variation in the interpretation of licensing regulations, limiting the development of flexible services in different areas.

(7) Promotion and branding of services

Research has shown that often transport providers are poor at marketing public transport services. As innovative and unfamiliar services evidence suggests it is particularly important that DRT services have a strong branding and are marketed well. Successful examples of DRT services have a strong branding and easy to use information about the services.

(8) Services require financial support

Evidence suggests that few if any examples of DRT services are commercially viable particularly if the aim of the service is to reduce social exclusion. However research suggests that successful services in GB do operate under what is viewed as an acceptable level of subsidy (broadly similar to subsidies given to subsidised conventional bus services). Many local authorities that operate successful DRT services balance the subsidy required to operate the service against the substantial additional cost of providing an alternative services such as door-to-door.

(9) Political support

DRT services require time to establish and to build up patronage. Research shows that successful services have received long term and sustained political support allowing what are innovative services a chance to develop.

Implications for Northern Ireland

Background

To date Northern Ireland has not seen the same experimentation with different types of demand responsive transport services. This is despite the development of a report into rural transport need as part of the development of the Regional Transportation Strategy[6]. This report recommended the greater use of differing types of flexible transport services and the RTS indicated setting aside around £30 million for piloting schemes.

Two services were piloted by Translink in Down and Fermanagh. These offered varying elements of flexibility including an area wide door2door service in Fermanagh and a flexibly routed bus service between Newcastle and Belfast. The services ended a number of years ago with low demand cited as the reason. No formal evaluation of the services is available.

The Easibus Scheme developed in urban areas in the 1990's did have a demand responsive element to the design including a hail and ride or "hopper" component to the service. However over time many of the more innovative and flexible elements of the service were lost and the extensive initial marketing stopped. Recently services stopped operating in two locations citing low demand and the availability of other services including door2door.

The primary focus of more recent transport policy has been to develop two specialised area wide demand responsive transport schemes. The first is Door2door transport for disabled people and older people living in urban areas. The second is rural Dial-a-lift scheme available to members of Rural Community Transport Partnerships. Both schemes offer area wide door-to-door transport anywhere within the specific operating area. These schemes differ from some of the services we have looked at. For example services here generally try to meet demand over a greater area, can be restrictive in terms of who can use them and are first come first serve taking bookings in some cases weeks in advance.

Area wide DRT such as door2door has operated elsewhere since the 1970's and 1980's. Some of the research we have looked at questions how effective such services are in comparison to other forms of DRT. Studies such as Intermode question the cost of area wide services compared to other forms of DRT. Through informal discussions with operators of rural and urban DRT services in Northern Ireland we believe that a subsidy per trip of between £10 and £20 is not unusual. The schemes we have looked at in Great Britain have achieved a cost of trip level of between £5 and £10, some schemes have operated with a subsidy per trip of under £5. Other studies such as the Review of Demand Responsive Services in

6 Issues of Rural Transport Need – Final Report for the Department for Regional Development by TAS Partnership

Scotland[7] question how effective this type of area wide service is. Evidence suggests these services quickly settle into established patterns of use and are less effective than more targeted local services.

Elsewhere Government in Northern Ireland continues to invest heavily in some of the most expensive forms of demand responsive transport in relation to health and education. Statistics[8] indicate that over £70 million per year is spent by the education authorities on transport (this includes £7.8 spent transporting individuals in taxis). A further £30 million per year is spent by the health authorities on transport. A substantial proportion of this money is spent on dedicated transport for individuals to and from school, hospitals and other social care facilities. To our knowledge little or no work has been done to ascertain whether the need for these journeys could be met more effectively and efficiently.

One of the success stories of the past decade has been the investment in public transport services. Large capital investment has modernised our bus and rail services and accessibility standards mean that more and more disabled people and older people could use public transport. Significant subsidy allows Translink to maintain a substantial public transport network – just over £60 million per year from DRD and additional resources from Department of Education, which helps maintain many rural service levels. Without this subsidy the network would be reduced substantially. Evidence[9] shows that despite investment patronage of bus services outside of Belfast is not going up leaving services vulnerable to spending reductions.

The drivers for change

There are a number of factors that should be influencing change in Northern Ireland and encouraging policy makers to look at a greater use of demand responsive transport services in future.

One of the key drivers for change is social factors influencing transport policy. The recent consultation on the review of the Regional Development Strategy has highlighted a number of issues that will prove challenging in the future. Firstly our population is becoming more dispersed with many more people using the car to travel longer and further than ever before. This has clear implications for how we provide services now and in the future. It also makes providing cost effective and reliable public transport to meet increasingly dispersed demand much more difficult. The second issue that should be influencing policy makers is the projections for an ageing population[10]. Statistics show that car ownership decreases markedly with age. Given the projections for the increasing numbers of people living into their 80's, 90's and beyond this is likely to put unsustainable pressure on our existing services, increase demand for all transport services and will potentially lead to greater inequality and social exclusion.

The review of the Regional Transportation Strategy has already identified that our current travel patterns are unsustainable and that focus in future must make using public transport easier. Given the dispersed and rural nature of our population it is difficult to see how conventional bus services alone can provide a realistic and sustainable alternative to the car. From our research local DRT services have made travel easier in rural areas and proved effective in linking people to the conventional public transport network.

7 Review of Demand Responsive Transport in Scotland – produced for the Scottish Executive by Derek Halden Consultancy, TAS partnership and the University of Aberdeen (2006)

8 Figures from 2008/9 taken from "Achieving Efficiences in Public Transport" NI Assembly Research & Library services 2011

9 For an excellent summary of the impact of investment in public transport see "Transport Governance and the management of Car Dependency in Belfast" NI Assembly Research & Library Services 2011

10 For example see "A demographic portrait of Northern Ireland: Some implications for public policy" NI Assembly Research & Library Services 2011

A second driver for change is the economic situation. The need for savings over the next decade is going to place significant pressure on public and other transport services. Already saving plans have identified reductions in subsidies to public transport services, education and health transport. Whilst it is impossible to predict with certainty the effect of these savings we can say with confidence that current service levels will be reduced. Reductions in current services will do little to address our unsustainable travel patterns as it will increase reliance on the car. For those without access to a car reductions in services will lead to less access to everyday services and activities and increased isolation and isolation. There is an urgent onus on all the stakeholders involved to work together to try and minimise the impact of service reductions.

Imtac recognises the need to make savings is unavoidable. However we firmly believe that much more could be done by agencies working together, sharing resources to ensure that transport need in communities across Northern Ireland is more effectively met. Our research shows that different types of demand responsive services can be an effective way to best utilise the resources we do have.

There are other policy factors that can drive change. In particular it is essential that we develop a much greater understanding of local transport needs. Both the Review of Public Administration and the Public Transport Reform processes represent an opportunity to consider local transport need, to develop innovative solutions and to address potentially difficult issues such as the licensing of services. In particular proposals for the development of local transport plans under Public Transport Reform should influence the development of localised services and potentially lead to a more joined up approach in areas to the services currently provided by amongst others Translink, Health Trusts, Education Boards and community transport operators.

Recommendations

Imtac does not underestimate the significant barriers that must be overcome before we can even attempt to develop more flexible transport services in Northern Ireland. Lessons from elsewhere show this requires significant changes in cultures within various agencies, sharing of resources, the development of specific knowledge and expertise and ultimately re-investment/allocation of resources. However the Committee believes that without looking at using more demand responsive services the effects of savings will mean it is much more difficult for many disabled people and older people and others to get around. This will lead to greater inequality in our society and ultimately lead to greater demand placed on a range of Government services.

Based on all the evidence we have looked at solutions can only be found if all stakeholders with an interest in transport work together. Therefore the key recommendation of this report is that Government here form a Demand Responsive Transport Forum. The forum should be multi-agency involving Government Departments, Health Trusts and Education Boards, transport providers including community transport, representatives of users and potential users of services. The DRT Forum should be charged with identifying opportunities to develop more demand responsive transport services as part of the overall mix of transport services required across Northern Ireland. Imtac is happy to assist in any way with this process.

Appendix 1

Useful publications

Intermode: Innovations in Demand Responsive Transport (Dr Enoch Et AL) prepared for the Department for Transport & Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive (June 2004)

Good Practice Guide for Demand Responsive Transport Services using telematics – produced by the Department for Transport in conjunction with the University of Newcastle (April 2006)

Review of Demand Responsive Transport in Scotland – produced for the Scottish Executive by Derek Halden Consultancy, TAS partnership and the University of Aberdeen (2006)

Demand Responsive Transport: Towards Best Practice in Rural Applications – prepared for the Association of European Transport in 2002

Evaluation Study of Demand Responsive Transport Services in Wiltshire – Enoch et Al (July 2006)

Clare Accessible Transport – a case study – prepared by Pobal in 2009

Issues of Rural Transport Need – Final Report for the Department for Regional Development by TAS Partnership

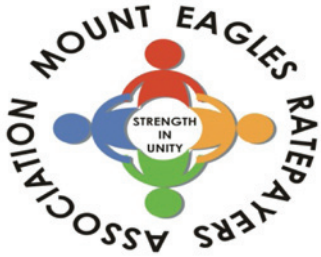
Accessible Transport Strategy for Northern Ireland – DRD 2005

Making the connections: Final Report on Transport and Social Exclusion – Social Inclusion Unit 2003

Revised Regional Development Strategy – DRD 2011

Regional Transportation Strategy 2011 – A sustainable transport future public consultation document – DRD 2011

Mount Eagles Rate Payers Association



The Committee for Regional Development
Room 435
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw,
Stormont
Belfast,
BT4 3XX

12/09/2012

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Mount Eagles Ratepayers Association (MERA) submission to the inquiry into the better use of public and community sector funds for the delivery of bus transport in Northern Ireland:

We would like to make the following strategic comments regarding the above inquiry. These are as follows:

Background – Construction work in Mount Eagles estate commenced in 2000 and was designed to be a village concept. Approximately 650 houses have been completed so far and this may go to around 1250 dwellings. Mount Eagles is part of 13 housing estates in the Lagmore area of West Belfast. Buses operate from 5.30 am to 11pm and service Twinbrook, Dunmurry Lane, and the Falls Road corridor. Currently Mount Eagles estate is the last and starting point on the Metro 10D bus route for the Falls Road corridor. This has resulted in extra long journey times for passengers.

1.Current public and community bus transport requirements

Transport Regulator – Translink is licenced by DOE and operates using guidelines issued by DRD. It seems to be that buses can operate on any road setting regardless of width or adoption status. This has been confirmed to us publicly by Translink and under Freedom of Information request. Please see attached email.

Recommendation – Bus licensing authority should review their fixed set criteria for the operation of buses in private estates to incorporate the following :-

"Creating Places" / DRD Development control advice note 15 – It is abundantly clear from a Mount Eagles perspective that the design of this development does not meet the required standards. In particular the road width of 5.5m -6m is highly unsatisfactory. Creating Places and DRD development control advice note 15 need to be revised to reflect wider minimum road widths of 7.3m.

Recommendation – Review of "Creating Places" / DRD Development control advice note 15"; these need to become compulsory minimum standards rather than being just guidelines.

2. Current Infrastructure

Spinal bus route – Currently the spinal route for the original generic concept planned bus route (circa 1996), has not been completed due to one of the builders going into administration , 12 years after the majority of the estate has been finalised. This has resulted in Translink operating a two way bus service on a residential access road with a width of 5.5m's in parts of the route for 12 years. The implication is that 356 buses pass through Mount Eagles every week during the summer period with 30% more at the start of the new school term. DRD Roads Service have confirmed that buses should not be using the road as a distributor road when it is an access road. A corollary of this is that part of the Lagmore bus route was built as a distributor road (mainly Housing Executive managed section) but joins the Mount Eagles section (privately developed) built to access road specification. Who made this decision? Was this to increase the profit margins of developers at the expense of residents safety.? We have attached a memo from DRD Roads Service regarding the road widths for your perusal which indicates that they were aware of the guidelines pertaining to road widths.

Recommendation – Spinal bus routes in all new developments should be completed prior to houses being built. They need to be built to the minimum requirements of a distributor road. This will reduce operating costs for Translink, as it would be a one way system. Thus reducing the number of bus journeys by 50%. Good examples of distributor road bus routes are Twinbrook estate and Lagmore Avenue (lower section) which combine safety and community accessibility.

Un-adopted Roads/ Road Bonds – Currently in Mount Eagles Translink operates on both adopted and un-adopted access roads. The roads on the un-adopted section have been unfinished for the last 10 years. There is concern that the road infrastructure within Mount Eagles will not be completed due to insufficient funds. At times in the winter Translink cannot operate because the icy conditions make it too dangerous. MERA has concerns about insurance for buses operating on these un-adopted roads with really bad pot holes, no road markings and unfinished tarmacing.

Recommendation – Buses should not be operating on un-adopted roads

-Road bonds should be in place to cover all spinal routes in new developments.

3. Best Practice

Safety – MERA is fully supportive of a safe bus service within Mount Eagles and other private residential areas. However we have safety concerns that have been raised by several residents. As you may be aware this issue was recently highlighted by BBC Newsline and has appeared in the local press. There is a fear amongst many residents that the buses coming into Mount Eagles are a danger to their children. According to the "Creating Places" guidelines a distributor road should be 6.75m in width or 7.3m with a bus layby. The standard width of a bus is 3.5m and a standard width of a car is 2.5m according to the same document. Unfortunately houses within Mount Eagles abut onto the main arterial bus route with road widths ranging between 5.5m – 6m along the bus route. This has resulted in buses and cars having to mount the pavement to pass each other. The fear is that a child could be standing on the pavement or could come out of an open gate onto the main road. Residents were never consulted about the extension of the bus route through the heart of the estate which is a residential setting. There is nothing to distinguish the "proposed bus route" from the rest of the streets in Mount Eagles.

Recommendations – Bus route road widths should be a minimum of 7.3m -Houses in new developments should not abut onto a planned bus route

More Flexibility in use of different bus types i.e. shuttle bus (Optare etc) and times (peak and off peak) e.g. use double decker for peak times and shuttle buses in off peak times. A good example is in Lisburn where ten routes within residential housing developments are serviced by shuttle bus services.

Planning permission – It is imperative that with all new developments that planning permission for bus routes is obtained with the original first concept plan. This was not the case for Mount Eagles with the planning permission for the bus route being given 11 years after the original concept plan. All residents on the point of house purchase should be notified of the bus route. This should be a material consideration. Developers who do not adhere to this may be deemed to be in breach of contract.

Recommendations – Planning permission for bus routes needs to be considered and granted along with the original concept plan not as an after thought .

-All potential residents prior to their house purchase should be notified of bus route.

Consent – Many residents in Mount Eagles feel that a high frequency bus route is being imposed upon them and are powerless to do anything about it. This is to the detriment to the tranquil village residential setting that they were promised. There are implications pertaining to house prices as to whether residents live on or away from a designated bus route.

Recommendation - Residents should have the right to add, modify or remove a bus route in their residential area. Criteria should be formulated for opting in or out of bus services on bus routes.

Bus Corridor – Translink priority is to facilitate the Metro Colin and Falls road bus corridor with double/ single decker buses which are leaving Mount Eagles mostly empty during off peak times. This is causing severe disruption to residents along the bus route in Mount Eagles. Problems include Noise pollution, road subsidence, damage to drainage systems on un-adopted roads, extra long bus journeys. no bus link to our facilties as ratepayers in Lisburn City council or local train station.

Recommendation – A flexi bus service going direct at peak times to Belfast / Lisburn city centres and to the Dunmurry/ Derriaghy train stations.

Review of the Bus corridor to try get a shorter journey times and higher occupancy rates.

Provision of an integrated bus and rail ticket system

4. Future options:

It is imperative that the existing Mount Eagles Bus service is retained and fully funded! Whilst we have shown examples of good practice, there is within Mount Eagles a clear need and demand for a safe bus service provision. The recommendations above should all be incorporated, where appropriate to any future options considered. We hope that people will learn from the mistakes made within Mount Eagles and that this is not replicated elsewhere in the future.

We would appreciate if you would take these issues into consideration. We look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,

Gerard Daye & Orla McCabe
Mount Eagles Ratepayers Association (MERA)
47 Mount Eagles Drive
Dunmurry
Belfast BT17 0GX

Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company

Inquiry into Comprehensive Transport Delivery Structures Response about ICE Northern Ireland

The Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) is a global membership organisation, of over 83,000 members that promotes and advances civil engineering around the world.

ICE Northern Ireland (ICE NI) is a leading source of professional expertise in transport, water supply and treatment, flood management, waste and energy in Northern Ireland. ICE NI's vision is to place civil engineers at the heart of society, delivering sustainable development through knowledge, skills and professional expertise.

1. To assess the current legal status of the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company and its relationship with the Department for Regional Development;

   ICE NI supports this assessment as NITHC and DRD are closely linked, with NITHC receiving large amounts of funding and subsidies from DRD. DRD effectively holds the purse-strings for NITHC and ensures that all expenditure is appraised and follows the correct procurement policies. DRD own the majority of infrastructure used by NITHC services – roads and bus lanes, while NITHC are responsible for the land that their premises occupy and also several individual bus lanes i.e. link road from M1 to the Europa.

2. To undertake a comparative analysis of the costs and subsidies to maintain the current and future public transport infrastructure and service delivery in the UK and Republic of Ireland;

   ICE NI is supportive of the decision to compare the costs and subsidies to other regions but would be unsupportive of any decisions to reduce subsidies which may result in the withdrawal of loss-making services which may be vital to small rural communities in Northern Ireland.

   ICE NI feels that the current subsidies from DRD give better results than if services were privatised, for example the provision of Wi-Fi on all Metro and Goldline services is a benefit that would be unlikely with private companies. NITHC reinvest all their surplus income in order to continue to provide increasingly good services.

3. To compare the policy objectives for provision of public transport in the UK, Republic of Ireland and in Europe;

   Again this is something that ICE NI supports; the policy objectives for provision are vital to further enhance the service that is provided to people in Northern Ireland. ICE NI reinforce that we would be unsupportive of any reduction in services or subsidy removal which would result in withdrawal of services.

4. To assess whether current structures and Transport NI proposals are the best suited for the efficient and effective delivery of public transport legislative and policy objectives;

   While ICE NI agrees that an assessment on the current structures is necessary to deliver more efficient and effective delivery of services, it will be necessary to gain more information on Transport NI and their structures as this is something that little detail is currently known about.

5. To optimise the organisational and delivery structures to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery

   ICE NI is supportive of this in principle, but more information is required on how this is possible. More effective methods of expenditure could be investigated, for example invoices for new buses come from NITHC capital budgets, which are then reimbursed by DRD.

In conclusion, ICE NI is supportive of this review and the five points which are above. As an independent, professional body the Institution is prepared to assist in any way which is necessary to improve the transport infrastructure and service delivery in Northern Ireland. It is also important to note that ICE NI would be against the reduction of any services in Northern Ireland, particularly the rural areas which provide important links for residents of those areas. ICE NI also feel that a sustainable, environmentally friendly transport network is vital and the infrastructure laid down now will have impact on the environment for many future generations. ICE NI would also be keen to ask NITHC about their plans to introduce annual tickets for NI Railways which would include tax relief as the system is available for Metro customers.

For more information, contact ICE Northern Ireland on 028 9087 7157.

North Coast Community Transport

From: billy@northcoastcommunitytransport.com
To: +Comm. Regional Dev Public Email

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for giving North Coast Community Transport (NCCT) the opportunity to comment on the above subject.

Who are we?

Formed in 2000 and originally known as Roe Valley Rural Transport covering the Limavady Borough . Changed our name in 2010 to NCCT when asked by the DRD to take over the services in the Moyle and Ballymena areas and then expanded again to deliver services in the Coleraine and Ballymoney areas.

We have offices in Limavady and Ballycastle.

We now have approx. 3000 individual members registered with our Dial a Lift service and 650 registered groups.

We completed over 165,000 passenger trips in the last year and currently run a fleet of 20 accessible minibuses. We also have access to larger coaches for the larger groups, through working in partnership with the private sector.

We employ 35 people either full time or casual and have 25 volunteer car driver's registered with our organisation who help deliver the Dial a Lift service.

We are in the process of developing our trading arm to generate funds to support our charity.

We have 5 in-house trainers who carry out various transport related courses ensuring all driver's, office staff, Board and volunteers receive relevant training.

Being a current member of the Community Transport Association NI we will have contributed, reviewed and agreed to their response. But from NCCT's point of view we would like to add the following;

1. We feel that in the past there has been a stand off between Community Transport and the Private Operator which serves no purpose other than deprive clients of the most efficient services possible, yet in the NCCT area we have always worked in partnership with Private Operator's and Translink and find this to be a very good example of best practice. There is enough work for all but there needs to be trust between all parties involved before a solution can be found. Selfish motives will serve no-one. We pass approx. £20,000 worth of work to Private Operator's each year and the trust and relationships have flourished.

2. Private, Community, Health, Education must come together and find ways of integrating services, thus reducing costs to each Department and allowing funds to be re-allocated to better use especially during these difficult times. NCCT and other community transport organisation have tried numerous times to convince Health to open their doors, try to pilot different transport options but without success. Are organisations too protective of their own budgets, refuse to work in partnership, become less efficient with the ultimate result of wasted resources and money.

3. **Grant funding versus Tendering** - NCCT receive grant funding from the DRD to deliver Dail a Lift while the Urban Door 2 Door scheme is tendered and run by Private Operators. We believe this is a total waste of resources and money. We have campaigned in the past that by integrating these services money could be saved. In our operational area we have 4 Urban towns, Limavady, Coleraine, Ballymoney and Ballymena, our vehicles are frequently

in these towns as we transport people from rural areas. We could easily use the same vehicles to accommodate urban clients thus saving on vehicle, fuel, labour costs etc. We also have volunteer car drivers in each of these towns to help with transport delivery. Currently volunteer car driver's deliver 35% of NCCT's Dial a Lift service which if applied to Urban Door 2 Door would help reduce costs. Administration costs would also be reduced as our current offices could cover all additional queries. If we then consider who makes use of both schemes, isolated individuals, people on low incomes, people with disabilities, elderly, etc then I believe that if both schemes were grant funded and we could use our volunteer base, the service would be more efficient, flexible, affordable. Also bear in mind that we are ' not for profit' organisations.

4. Our fear is that while the battle between Private and Community transport continues we overlook the real reason for being here – **to deliver the best possible transport solutions to all**. Private operators are now heavily involved in the Voucher Scheme and whether this scheme continues or not there is still this huge market for coach work that they should control. As mentioned earlier, NCCT has always worked well with the Private operator, we get numerous requests for larger vehicles and we always engage with the Private sector.

5. We continually see health and education buses(£75,000 vehicles) sitting idle for long periods during the day waiting to transfer 4 or 5 clients home from Day Centres. This work could be catered for by Community Transport producing real savings for the Health budget whilst utilising community vehicles and helping fill the void left by the reduction in funding.

6. The review of Operator Licensing is another worry, if Community Transport can't deliver under the current state (10b permit) and forced to get operator licences then the additional costs will be sought from our clients who currently struggle financially, this would have an adverse effect and result in less trips and increased isolation for the most vulnerable in our society. Again, this proposed change may be influenced by the Private sector who feel they could have a slice of the community cake not understanding the negative impact higher costs will have on the membership that we serve.

Sincerely

Billy Moore – Transport Manager - NCCT

Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Health and Social Care Trust

Northern Ireland Ambulance Service
Health and Social Care Trust

Our Ref: AD/CE/71(2)LMcI/MC

14 November 2012

Mr Jimmy Spratt, MLA
Chair to the Committee for Regional Development
Room 254
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
STORMONT
Belfast
BT4 3XX

Dear Mr Spratt

COMMITTEE FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT INQUIRY INTO THE BETTER USE OF PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY SECTOR FUNDS FOR THE DELIVERY OF BUS TRANSPORT OPTIONS

Thank you or the opportunity to input to the above enquiry and for sharing the Terms of Reference and other relevant information to support same.

By of way of background I would advise as follows. The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) operates a Patient Care Service (PCS) for the non-emergency transportation of patients and where appropriate carers/escorts. We employ in excess of 230 Ambulance Care Attendants operating in 105 non-emergency PCS ambulances across the whole of Northern Ireland. In addition the Service is supported and supplemented by Voluntary Car Service (VCS) drivers who undertake a high proportion of renal and chemotherapy/radiotherapy patient transportation on behalf of the NIAS. The VCS drivers are paid expenses based on mileage claims for the valuable work which they undertake. NIAS provides its non-emergency PCS transportation in line with DHSSPS Guidance as reflected in its 2007 document "A Transport Strategy for Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland". Eligibility for access to non-emergency ambulance transport is based on medical need as determined by the relevant medical practitioner acting on behalf of the patient. The definition of medical need applied is "where the patient's condition could be significantly worsened if there was failure to provide transport, or where the patient's condition is of such severity that it renders them unfit to travel by any other means, except non-emergency ambulance transport".

In the 2011/12 financial year, NIAS undertook a total of 199,845 PCS journeys in Northern Ireland. The vast majority of these, 163,982 were out patient journeys and in addition to these NIAS undertook 21,170 discharges, 11,212 inter-hospital transfers, 3,448 admissions and 33 home assessments.

Northern Ireland Ambulance Service HSC Trust, Ambulance Headquarters, Site 30, Knockbracken Healthcare Park, Saintfield Road, Belfast BT8 8SG
Tel: 028 9040 0999 ❁ Fax: 028 9040 0900 ❁ Textphone: 028 9040 0871 ❁ www.niamb.co.uk

NIAS has configured its non-emergency ambulance provision to meet the requirements of a wide range of patients, from patients who are mobile and require basic transportation to and from hospital, to those who have severe clinical or mobility issues which require transportation on a stretcher within the ambulance and access to oxygen therapy. We have also configured our fleet with specially adapted vehicles to meet the requirement of bariatric patients. We see the use of the VCS which provides a more individualised engagement with patients as being a very positive element of the service we provide. We target VCS on patients with particular needs including those undergoing renal dialysis, chemotherapy and radiotherapy. We recognise the frailty of these patients and the VCS offers us a way of addressing their needs in the early stages before they potentially require more intensive engagement to provide transportation by ambulances with a stretcher capacity, for example.

In looking to options for the future provision of public and community transport options I feel that there will be a continuing requirement for non-emergency ambulance transportation of patients and their carers/escorts. The continuing centralisation and reconfiguration of acute and non acute services may reverse current trends which have seen the requirement for non-emergency transportation decline. Alternatively enhancements to public and community transportation and better integration could lead to new models of non-emergency patient transportation. I think it is also worth noting the potential impact in the use of technology which could negate the requirement for transportation to the hospital clinics for assessment and consultation, investment in technology at a local level particularly in rural areas and using facilities such as GP Surgeries for video conferencing, teleconferencing and tele-health could potentially open the door for local General Practitioners or other clinicians to act as the advocate for the patient in a local setting in a direct two way telecommunication conference with the relevant specialist in the acute/speciality setting. The integration of electronic health records would allow the same information to be presented to both parties and a viable face to face consultation take place remote from the specialist centre. I would again stress the importance of investing in and developing local clinicians to act as the advocate for the patient in such interactions. The technology already exists, is readily available, however is rarely used in this manner. The implications beyond healthcare are also evident for development such as this and it offers a range of opportunities in relation to public and community transportation requirements for the future.

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
	£	£	£
TRANSPORT	59,791,501	54,624,956	62,290,460
Emergency	51,656,639	45,921,228	53,800,320
Non-Emergency	7,628,867	8,006,540	8,490,034
Other Services	505,995	697,188	105
	59,791,501	54,624,956	62,290,459

Non Emergency transport per passenger	£ 36.42	£ 38.92	£ 41.36
Emergency transport per passenger	£ 426.85	£ 363.17	£ 366.72

I trust this correspondence will be of value in the enquiry you are undertaking and as ever would be happy to assist further if required.

Yours sincerely

Liam McIvor
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Stephen Wood Consultancy

StephenWoodConsultancy
31 Moira Drive
Bangor
BT20 4RW

13th September 2012

The Committee for Regional Development
Room 435
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw,
Stormont
Belfast,
BT4 3XX

Dear Sir / Madam

Inquiry into the better use of public and community sector funds for the delivery of bus transport in Northern Ireland

Please find below my views on the points raised in the Terms of Reference.

About Stephen Wood Consultancy
Stephen Wood is a professionally qualified Transport Planner (one of only three in Northern Ireland). Through StephenWoodConsultancy, Stephen offers independent transport planning advice drawing on over 25 years of experience in private consultancy and central government. The views expressed in this reply are Stephen's own professional views; they seek to assist the Department in identifying an improved public transport network for Northern Ireland. Stephen has provided evidence to the previous Committee on a range of transport policy issues and is available to provide additional clarification on this response.

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1. **To assess current public and community bus transport requirements**

    a. Public transport requirements should be assessed using accessibility modelling approach as used elsewhere in GB. Accessibility standards for various services (ie places of work, hospitals, weekly grocery shops) will need to be set to prioritise provision of bus services.

    b. Community transport is a form of delivery of public transport – it is unclear how its requirements can be assessed separately from public transport. However scenario testing techniques could be used in combination with accessibility modelling and accessibility standards to identify possible 'breakpoints' between conventional public transport services and community bus transport.

2. **To assess the current public and community sector bus transport infrastructure and costs**

    a. This will only be possible if Translink is content to release detailed financial information which is generally confidential for commercial purposes.

    b. Similarly the level of detail of information held by community transport operators is not currently known.

    c. It must be borne in mind that community transport operations are generally catering for dispersed journey needs which are uneconomic to serve by conventional (Translink) services. It is unwise to 'compare' the costs and efficiency of these two types of service without a detailed understanding of these journey needs.

3. **To assess current inter-relationships in the delivery of public and community bus transport options**

    a. It may be useful to identify any overlap in such operations - however these are not expected to be particularly common or significant in

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scale. To identify overlap will require analysis of detailed journey records of community transport operations – where these exist.

b. It is suggested that a more useful investigation would be focused on the potential overlap of statutory transport provided by operators other than Translink for Education and Health purposes. In recent years the Education and Health sectors have independently reviewed their own operations: DE & DFP Joint Efficiency Review Stage Two Report – Review of Home to School Transport – January 2012; and DHSSPS Transport Strategy for Health and Social Care Services – August 2007. However, in the main, the recommendations for cross-sectoral co-ordination of transport remain – as set out in the NIAO Report, Education and Health and Social services Transport – June 2005.

4. To identify examples of best-practice in the provision of integrated public and community bus transport options

a. As noted earlier, it is unclear whether this line of investigation is likely to be particularly productive. Rather investigation of health / education operations may be more productive.

b. It is suggested that examples relating to Demand Responsive Transport in rural areas, such as the Welsh Bwcabus (http://www.bwcabus.traveline-cymru.info/) and the Lincolnshire InterConnect and CallConnect services (http://www.lincsinterconnect.com/) may be more relevant to the issues surrounding rural accessibility.

5. To consider options for the future provision of public and community bus transport options.

a. It is assumed that this is concerned with the respective roles of conventional 'stage carriage' services (operated by Translink) and more flexible services (operated by community transport operators). In my view there is no 'silver bullet' other than when it is not financially viable to operate conventional bus services then the service should be

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adjusted (eg re-timed, shortened or withdrawn). Subsequently community transport may be used to 'plug the gap' where rhere continues to be a demand for bus transport. It is also notable that this process has been reversed by the Bwcabus in Wales which initially operated a number of routes, with local variations, on a demand responsive basis. However as demand has increased these routes have been converted to conventional timetables. Bwcabus is operated with government support by a commercial operator (Richards Brothers).

b. A second interpretation concerns the split of responsibilities (and government funding) between Translink and community enterprises. Regarding this interpretation, in my view, the obvious answer is that the responsibilities should be split according to the respective strengths of the organisations. Simply put, Translink or a commercial bus operator is best suited to operating clearly defined services operating over clearly defined hours. In contrast, a community transport operator has particular strengths in identifying dispersed local demands and using volunteer drivers and appropriate vehicles to control costs.

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Southern Health and Social Care Trust



Northern Ireland Assembly

Committee for Health Social Services and Public Safety
Room 410
Parliament Buildings
Tel: +44 (0) 28 90521841

From: **Kathryn Bell**
Clerk to the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety

To: **Paul Carlisle**
Clerk to the Committee for Regional Development

Date: **3 December 2012**

Subject: **Inquiry into the Better Use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport Options**

At its meeting on Wednesday 28 November the Committee considered a response from the Southern Health and Social Care Trust regarding the Committee for Regional Development Inquiry into the Better Use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport Options.

The Committee agreed to forward this response to you.

Kathryn Bell
Clerk

HSC Southern Health and Social Care Trust

Quality Care - for you, with you

Chair
Roberta Brownlee

Chief Executive
Mairead McAlinden

Our ref: MMcA/fr/ew

22 November 2012

Mr Jimmy Spratt, MLA
Chair to the Committee for Regional Development
Room 254
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
BELFAST BT4 3XX

Dear Mr Spratt

INQUIRY INTO THE BETTER USE OF PUBLIC & COMMUNITY SECTOR FUNDS FOR THE DELIVERY OF BUS TRANSPORT OPTIONS

I refer to your letter dated 23 October 2012 regarding the above and attach the response from the Southern H&SC Trust, which I hope will assist the Committee.

If you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

MAIREAD MCALINDEN
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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COMMITTEE FOR ERGIONAL DEVELOPMENT INQUIRY INTO THE BETTER USE OF PUBLIC & COMMUNITY SECTOR FUNDS FOR THE DELIVERY OF BUS TRANSPORT OPTIONS

The patient transport service to acute hospitals in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust area is provided by the NIAS. There is, on occasions, a need to supplement this service using St John's Ambulance for some hospital discharges; however, this is only on an adhoc basis.

The Trust's Transport Service Department provides transport for service users to social care facilities in the Southern area, for example Day Centres, Social Education Centres, Voluntary and community based lunch and evening clubs.

The service is also supplemented by private sector taxis, wheelchair accessible vehicles, and minibus/coach operators. Where service users are safely able to use private or public transport, or if relatives, carers or others are able to provide appropriate transport, they are encouraged to do so rather than depend on the Trust for transport provision.

The Trust also encourages the use of alternative forms of transport i.e. Door 2 Door, Rural Transport, Dart, Voluntary Drivers, etc. Feedback from service users shows that there are still significant concerns in relation to the congruence of transport options with hospital/HSC service appointments. In a recent survey by the Patient Client Council, between 20-25% of respondents stated that they had either missed or had to cancel an appointment due to issues with travel.

The Southern Trust follows the guidelines in the NI Transport Strategy 2007 which provides the framework for the delivery of a user friendly high quality, responsive and efficient service based on an assessed need for transport through the consistent application of the eligibility criteria.

All options that are available to meet the service user's transport needs must be assessed before users are considered for Trust-procured or funded transport. In accordance with the eligibility criteria, transport must be provided to those service users with high needs; in respect of moderate-need clients, every effort will be made to provide the required transport and for those with low needs, Trust procured or alternative means of transport is not required to be provided.

If it is not possible to provide a service for someone with immediate need, the Trust will provide information and advice about other organisations that may be able to assist.

Meeting the current public and community transport requirements create significantly greater challenges in rural areas which impacts upon the effective delivery of transport and public services for the community. The main challenges are due to geographical remoteness from the centres of service delivery and an older population, in comparison to urban areas.

The challenge for many people living in rural areas, many of whom are either older or young people with mobility needs, is to obtain the services they need within the constraints of their personal transport options be they private, public or community.

The community transport option has a critical role to play in rural delivery and enabling access to services. However, certain areas are better served than others and thus providers such as Rural Transport Partnerships are able to take up delivery opportunities afforded by public service non availability. This Sector is capable of providing much of the transport in rural areas, though this needs to be done in partnership with the Trust, local transport providers, private hire operators and taxi firms.

Many of the existing community transport schemes operate criteria that, in the main, exclude provision of transport to the main healthcare facilities such as hospitals unless they are specifically contracted to do so (although exceptions will be applied in some cases). However, where a health and social care service exists within a community-based facility, the same constraints are not always applied. This can lead to confusion and frustration on the part of both patients and service providers in trying to determine where and when community transport might be considered as a viable alternative to public or private transport in ensuring that patients can access the relevant service in a timely manner.

The range of community transport providers throughout the Southern Trust are funded and operated independently of each other and while most of them have broadly similar access criteria, these are not always fully matched – again leading to confusion on the part of potential service users.

There is some anecdotal feedback that the registration forms for the Door-2-Door scheme operated by DRD are off-putting for potential service users and that additional support is sometimes required in order to facilitate patients or carers to complete the relevant forms for registration.

Consistency of the service provided is also an issue and recently Rural Transport had been providing transport for daytime opportunity service users but due to a reduction of funding from the DHSSPSNI this service was significantly reduced. The Rural Transport service only operates within specific council boundaries, which has led to a large number of service users no longer able to avail of the scheme. The cost of alternative private hire providers has become a major concern to carers and the service users involved.

There are also some positive initiatives such as the Down, Armagh Rural Transport Partnership 'Funding Boost for Rural Transport Service in the Banbridge area'. This project provides transport for rurally isolated older people over 60 in the wider Banbridge area. This project trains volunteers aged over 60 to develop and jointly manage a new transport scheme for community groups working with older people in the area. The Trust welcomes such a scheme within this area and will work with the partnership to develop the scheme as a future provision of an affordable and accessible transport for over 60s clubs and organisations in the area.

Finally, there is a need within the area of rural transport for all to work in partnership to look at all options to provide appropriate links between all providers with a view to providing an integrated transport service across all government departments that will meet the needs of all the community.

Financial Information

Actual outturn expenditure on Health and Social Care transport;
Assumptions have been made on the definitions of Health and Social Care transport by reference to the 2007 document "Transport Strategy for Health and Social Care Services in NI" as follows:

i) Non-emergency transport: is "transport to hospitals recommended by a medical practitioner"; this is assumed to be "Health" transport as referenced in part 1 of the question and is provided primarily by the NI Ambulance Service

ii) Social Care transport: is "transport provided or arranged by Health and Social Care Trusts to help people gain access to social care services". Social Care Transport is provided by SHSCT through its own Transport Service, and also by contracted 3rd Party Providers (i.e. Taxis, Coaches and Voluntary Drivers).

SHSCT is able to provide a response for its own Trust Transport Service, using a number of assumptions as referenced below, but is unable to provide a response on 3rd Party costs for Health and Social Care transport as this cannot be defined within overall 3rd Party transport costs.

Social Care Transport (Trust Transport Services only)

This is based on the following assumptions, as applied to overall Trust Transport costs:

- Payroll costs: total cost has been split based on current driver numbers – 48 Bus (passenger) drivers and 29 Freight drivers. An additional weighting has been applied to reflect the fact that Passenger drivers are graded Band 3 (Factor 1.13) and Freight drivers are Band 2 (Factor 1)

- Running Costs: a 2011-12 Benchmarking cost exercise (undertaken for all Trusts) which split running costs between bus and freight transport has been used as a basis for calculation of running costs for the 3 years requested

The costs for Trust Transport Services iro Social Care transport for the 3 years, 2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12 are as follows,

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Annual Cost	2,080,953	2,107,269	2,101,283

Heath Care Transport: Costs would be negligible/Nil

Expenditure on social care transport per passenger carried [per annum]
The Trust provides figures each year in its Annual Report of the average "daily" figure for passengers for 'social care'. These are set out below, along with a calculated average cost per passenger per annum carried (based on costs in the Table above).

SHSCT

	2009-10	**2010-11**	**2011-12**
Annual Cost	2,080,953	2,107,269	2,101,283
Average Daily Passengers	515	536	562
Average per Passenger	£4,041	£3,931	£3,739

Expenditure on non-emergency transport per passenger carried or Per mode/provider

Negligible / Nil

The Consumer Council



Consumer Council response to the Committee for Regional Development inquiry into the better use of public and community sector funds for the delivery of bus transport in Northern Ireland

September 2012

1. Introduction.

The Consumer Council is an independent consumer organisation, working to bring about change to benefit Northern Ireland (NI) consumers. Our aim is to make the consumer voice heard and make it count.

We have a statutory remit to *promote and safeguard the interests* of consumers in NI and we have specific functions in relation to energy, water, transport and food[1]. These include considering consumer complaints and enquiries, carrying out research and educating and informing consumers[2].

The Consumer Council is also a designated body for the purposes of supercomplaints[3], which means that we can refer any consumer affairs goods and services issue to the Office of Fair Trading[4], where we feel that the market may be harming consumers' best interests.

In taking forward our broad statutory remit we are informed by and representative of consumers in NI. We work to bring about change to benefit consumers by making their voice heard and making it count. To represent consumers in the best way we can, we listen to them and produce robust evidence to put their priorities at the heart of all we do.

[1] The Consumer Council undertakes its specific functions in relation to food recognising the role of the Food Standards Agency (FSA). The FSA has responsibility for the development of food policy and for the provision of advice, information and assistance, in respect to food safety or other interests of consumers in relation to food. Therefore, to ensure good value and use of public money, the Consumer Council and FSA have a memorandum of understanding and the Council's strategic focus on food is primarily in relation to food prices and customer experience.
[2] The General Consumer Council (Northern Ireland) Order 1984, 1984 No. 1822 (N.I. 12), http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1984/1822/contents
[3] The Enterprise Act 2002 (Part 9 Restrictions on Disclosure of Information) (Amendment and Specification) http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2003/1400/schedules/made
[4] The OFT is the UK's consumer and competition authority. Its mission is to make markets work well for consumers. It is a non-ministerial government department established by statute in 1973 http://oft.gov.uk/about-the-oft/

2. Better use of public and community sector funds for the delivery of bus transport in Northern Ireland

The Consumer Council welcomes the Committees focus on current provision of bus based transport services, including regular routes operated by mainstream public transport operators such as Translink along with community based transport provision in both rural and urban areas.

The Consumer Council, as statutory representative of transport users, regularly conducts research with passengers (and potential passengers) to ascertain their views and experiences of all forms of transport. A consistent theme emerging through much of this research is the impact that a lack of access to transport has on individuals. Use of flexible, demand responsive services such as those operated by community transport operators can help to address this in many instances, enabling access to local services and a means through which passengers can link in to the mainstream public transport network, particularly in rural areas.

Previous Consumer Council research[5] has found that a lack of integration between operators, issues accessing information on services operated by different transport providers and concerns over interchange between services are just some of the issues which limit the scale to which cooperative working can deliver more effective services for passengers. Issues when interchanging between different bus and train services operated by Translink were also highlighted, indicating that greater integration of mainstream bus and train services operated by Translink is required in addition to integration across operators.

There are a number of examples of joined up working between public transport and community transport operators such as cooperation in the procurement and maintenance of vehicles and local arrangements at Translink depots to allow access for community transport vehicles to assist passengers interchanging between services.

[5] A summary of relevant research can be found in Appendix 1 at the end of this submission

However, the above are peripheral to the core needs of consumers. Consumer Council research consistently shows that passengers continue to experience issues when interchanging between Translink services and between services provided by different operators. This indicates that improved integration between current Translink services and across services provided by other operators such as the Door-2-Door service and Rural Community Transport Partnerships is still required to deliver the most effective outcome for public funding provided for these services.

3. Funding for Transport Services across Government Departments

Previous Consumer Council research has identified the need for more collaborative working between government departments involved in the funding of public and community transport together with health and education sectors.

This issue of co-ordination is one that has been recognised by the Assembly and recently debated. In October 2011 the following amended motion was carried:

That this Assembly notes the importance of an effective home to school transport policy; believes that the current policy is out-dated; and calls on the Minister of Education to work with the Minister for Regional Development to create an holistic and sustainable school transport policy which will ensure that school transport is provided in the most cost effective, efficient and safe manner.

In December 2011 the following amended motion was carried:
That this Assembly recognises the dependency that our rural communities have on the community transport scheme for medical visits and access to other local services; and calls on the Minister for Regional Development to work closely with the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Minister of Finance and Personnel to ensure that this service is sustained to facilitate the most vulnerable people in our society.

Therefore, in order to fully assess the current public and community sector bus transport costs the Committee inquiry must seek the collation of information regarding funding provided for transport from all Government departments.

It is also essential that the Committee seeks action on ensuring that those services funded by the public purse are providing the best possible value for public money. A review of the transport services delivered and the performance of transport providers needs to be considered against the current budgets provided together with an assessment of what is expected to be delivered.

Efficiency should encompass better planning and co-ordination of transport provision across Governments departments and operators to improve the offering to consumers and reduce any unnecessary duplication.

Consumers need assurance that efficient transport services are provided which prevent duplication and overlaps and address gaps in consumers travel needs.

Consumer Council research has shown that consumers want availability, reliability and value for money. They want convenient access to their desired destinations whether it is a medical appointment, a journey to college or a visit to a local town or further afield. It is consumers who are exposed to the risk of inefficient services, either through increased fares, reduced services or reduced public funds for other areas. It would be hard for passengers to accept if opportunities to improve services are being hindered by a lack of co-ordination at departmental level. Therefore, the relevant Departments must examine if better collaborative working would deliver a comprehensive, integrated transport system designed to meet the needs of passengers.

In 2010 a report was provided by Price Waterhouse Cooper (PwC) for DRD that identified a number of cost efficiencies and revenue options the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company could implement to improve performance. A summary of some of these options is contained in Appendix 2.

Many of these measures were considered to have short or medium term lead in times and therefore some progress should have been made. Specifically, the report stated within the Executive Summary that for 'Translink to deliver revenue and capital projects expected in future years there would need to be a fundamental change in the operating model and consideration of radical options.' [6]

Given this statement the Consumer Council believes a report that documents the changes have been implemented or are planned for the Translink operating model should be provided to the Committee for Regional Development as part of this inquiry.

In addition to this, the report should also outline what progress has been made against the findings of the 2010 PwC report and should include the following information:

- A list of the recommendations that were accepted and acted upon and reasons to explain why any recommendations were not enacted.

- Details of any changes that have been implemented, the efficiencies that have been achieved and the impact for passengers as a result of the report.

In an NI Assembly debate on 8th May 2012 the Regional Development Minister was quoted as saying, 'Following two earlier efficiency reviews of Translink as part of the programme for the reform of public transport my department is in the process of initiating a further efficiency review.'

[6] Page 3 – Executive Summary of Final PwC report March 2010

Therefore, given that an efficiency review of Translink is currently taking place the Committee's inquiry should consider the findings of this latest review, together with an assessment of progress made against the recommendations made in the 2010 PwC review as outlined above.

4. **Review of current passenger transport services supported by public funds.**

In addition to clarifying the funding and efficiency of transport services, the inquiry should also seek a detailed report on what services are being delivered in exchange for public funds.

The Committee's inquiry should seek a review of all of the passenger transport services that are supported with public money including public transport, community transport, education and health service transport and any private operators that form part of the wider transport network.

A number of private operators provide services which form part of consumers travel needs and a pilot is currently ongoing to allow access to bus stations for privately operated services to improve integration and convenience for passengers. Private operators are also able to apply to participate in the Concessionary Fares Scheme funded by DRD.

Airporter is a an example of privately owned provider of public transport, which has been providing direct links between Derry / Londonderry and the two Belfast Airports since it was established in 1996. DRD concessionary passes are valid for use on all Airporter services.

The Consumer Council welcomes the focus of the Committee's inquiry to ascertain how current funding levels can be most effectively utilised to deliver more effective and integrated transport services for consumers.

However, in order to address the need for greater integration of services the inquiry must seek a wider review of all passenger transport services that will provide clarity on the following key areas:

- Detailed analysis of how much money is spent from the public purse in the provision of transport services across all government departments
- A detailed outline of what services are provided as a result of this funding
- A review of any overlap, duplications or significant gaps in service provision
- A review of what improvement to service provision and efficiencies can be achieved by joint working / flexible service provision.

The Committee should also seek a commitment from the relevant government departments to work together to develop an integrated approach from all sectors providing transport including Translink, community transport, education and health transport.

Historically there has been recognition of the need for greater integration of transport services and what is required to achieve this.

A NI Assembly Research and Information Service Briefing Paper published in August 2011[7] identified two elements crucial to achieving the aims of the Regional Transportation Strategy, namely:

- ***Securing sufficient funding; and***
- ***Encouraging / facilitating a huge cultural shift***

Whilst a number of strategies aim to improve public transport and facilitate a cultural /modal shift, the key remaining issue is the need for sufficient and sustained investment to deliver better services.

[7] "*Transport governance and the management of car dependency in Belfast*", NI Assembly Research and Information Service Briefing Paper, NIAR 421-11.

The current budget period for 2011-15 will see an average allocation of 80:20 in favour of roads to public transport funding over the four year period.

The Economic Strategy published in 2011 stated over £500 million will be invested in a programme of measures to secure more sustainable modes of travel and achieve an annual average of 77 million journeys by public transport. This target of 77 million journeys has been in place since 2008 and was contained in the Public Service Agreement 2008-11 between DRD and Translink.

Translink have been achieving this target since 2007/08, therefore the target for the number of public transport passenger journeys will be the same in 2015 as it was in 2008. This applies no pressure on Translink to increase passenger numbers beyond a baseline set in 2008.

In order to support additional investment in our transport services the Committee and consumers must have the confidence that the current level of investment is delivering the most efficient services possible.

Given that Consumer Council research has consistently illustrated the issues that passengers continue to experience in relation to the lack of integration across transport services the Consumer Council requests that the Committee consider the recommendations of this submission.

5. Recommendations

The Committee's inquiry should seek a review of all of the passenger transport services that are supported with public money including public transport, community transport, education and health service transport and any private operators that form part of the wider transport network.

The Committee's inquiry should seek to assess the impact of all transport services provided or supported by public money to assess whether they are meeting the needs of passengers in the most efficient and cost effective way.

The Committee's inquiry must seek the collation of information regarding funding provided for transport from all Government departments.

The Committee's inquiry should consider with the findings of the current efficiency review of Translink, together with an assessment of progress made against the recommendations made in the 2010 PwC review.

The Committee should seek a commitment from the relevant Government departments including Department for Regional Development, Department for Agriculture and Rural Development, Department for Health, Social Services and Personal Safety and the Department of Education that a collaborative approach to the planning, funding and delivery of transport services will be in place in time for the next budget period beginning in 2015.

Appendix 1 - Summary of Consumer Council Research into consumers views of Public Transport

Public Transport – on the right track? (June 2009)

Northern Ireland is still largely dependent on the car with 75 per cent of overall respondents travelling by car at least three times per week. This rose to 84 per cent in rural areas, with rural dwellers indicating greater dissatisfaction with the choice, convenience and frequency of public transport compared to those living in urban areas. Amongst rural respondents, only 41 per cent had ever availed of bus transport, dropping to just 18 per cent who indicated they travelled by bus at least once per month.

Ratings for information provided about bus services were also relatively low, with just 45 per cent of rural dwellers indicating they were satisfied with the levels provided. Satisfaction with integration between different modes of transport was even lower, at just 32% amongst rural areas.

Consumer 2010 (October 2010)

The research found that consumers continued to view public transport routes, times and connections as not convenient enough for them to consider using public transport as a real alternative to the car, especially in rural areas. Access to public transport was identified as one of the areas in which rural consumers feel most disadvantaged, both in terms of routes that are available and frequency of services. As a consequence, those without a car face major disadvantages in their private and work life. The survey found that dissatisfaction with choice for public transport is higher among rural consumers (19 per cent dissatisfied compared with 11 per cent in urban areas). Interviews undertaken with key stakeholders from representative groups also stressed the problems that those with a disability faced when accessing public transport, which was further confirmed by the survey which found that dissatisfaction with choice of public transport is higher among those with a long standing illness or disability.

Transport Matters – Young People's Experiences, Attitudes and Ideas for Improving Public Transport (January 2011)

The research found that young people want to use public transport with over half of those involved (57 per cent) indicating that public transport was important to them and 55 per cent stating that using public transport was their first choice. Young people were aware of a range of public transport options which were available and had a desire for more options in the range of public transport services available which they felt would help to increase uptake among young people. These included extending the rail network to cover more areas, improving access to community transport and other options including bicycle hire schemes to allow young people to access the main public transport network.

A further key finding from the research was that young people face barriers which prevent them from accessing suitable transport provision. The availability of public transport was an issue for sixty per cent of the young people consulted, with a number of examples provided where services were not within walking distance or not at the right time. Access to transport was particularly highlighted as an issue for young people living in rural areas where services were viewed as sporadic with little or no services in the evenings.

"To get to Enniskillen from Garrison you have to go 7 miles backwards before travelling 24 miles to Enniskillen!"

As a result of the lack of suitable public transport services, young people in rural areas such as Fermanagh and Tyrone indicated use of the car as the only viable means of travel:

"If you live in a rural area you really need your driving licence"

The research found that the lack of public transport limits young people in what they can do. The majority of young people (85 per cent) were very aware

of how the lack of public transport impacted on their lives whether this was taking part in after school activities, accessing job opportunities or being able to socialise with their friends.

The research also highlighted the significant disparity between services in rural and urban areas. Limited transport in rural areas was seen to have a significant impact on young people's lives particularly limiting their opportunities to meet up with friends and take part in activities. The young people interviewed highlighted some of the improvements needed to encourage greater use of public transport by people of all ages.

Examples of this included improving how journeys integrate where it is necessary to use more than one service, including increasing links with community transport.

The young people involved in this research identified the need to:

"Develop an integrated approach from all sectors providing transport including Translink, community transport, education and health transport and taxis to ensure services meet the needs of young people in rural areas".

This recommendation received support from the Committee for Regional Development during the launch of the report in January 2011. The report of the launch event[8] held in Parliament Buildings notes that "t*he Committee supports this approach and recommends that both Translink and the Department takes forward work on this issue as a matter of urgency. More recently, the Committee heard from Translink that it has started work on this issue, although it is at an early stage. There is a strong economic rationale, in*

[8] Committee for Regional Development - Report on the Launch of the Transport Matters Report (available from http://archive.niassembly.gov.uk/regional/2007mandate/reports/2010/report50_10_11r.htm or here - http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/committees/2007-2011/regional-development/)

the current climate, to utilise existing transport resources more effectively. It is the view of the Committee that strong political leadership, across departments, will be required to drive forward a move to integrating the transport resources held across the public sector and harnessing them to meet the needs of all groups in society, young people, older people and those living in rural communities".

Your journey to Health and Social Care (November 2012)

The Consumer Council, in partnership with the Patient Client Council has undertaken work with consumers from across Northern Ireland, public transport and community transport providers and representatives from the health service to investigate transport issues faced by consumers when accessing health and social care facilities.

Access to suitable, affordable transport is an important factor in ensuring access to health and social care, with previous research from both organisations indicating that passengers had previously experienced issues with connections between services or accessing information on transport services which were available.

The research found that only one quarter of patients had been provided with any information on public transport options available to them. A fifth of those who completed the survey indicated they had missed an appointment due to problems with transport and a quarter indicated they had cancelled an appointment due to transport issues. The cost to the health service for missed or cancelled appoints is significant and the research shows that issues with accessing suitable transport is a considerable factor when appoints are not attended.

Other issues raised included the cost of travel, lack of transport options to reach their appointment and issues with the physical accessibility of transport services.

The research also found limited awareness of rural community transport services or the Door-2-Door service available in urban areas.

The Consumer Council would welcome the opportunity to jointly present the research findings to the Committee along with representatives from the Patient Client Council once the research has been published.

These findings echo views expressed by older people who participated in the 'Pensioners Parliament' events held by the Age Sector Platform across Northern Ireland earlier in 2012. A motion was passed at the events calling on the "Minister for Regional Development to improve transport in rural areas to enable older people and others to make the necessary trips to doctors, hospitals and other essential appointments". This follows earlier findings from the same events held in 2011 at which older people indicated that issues with the coordination and integration of rural community transport and the Door-2-Door service in urban areas created barriers to travelling.

Appendix 2 – Summary of the PwC Financial Review of NITHC for DRD, March 2010

Background

In advance of the 2010 fare review process DRD commissioned PWC to undertake an independent financial review of Translink.

Recommendations contained in the PWC review

The PWC review stated that for Translink to deliver revenue and capital projects expected for future years there would need to be a fundamental change in the operating model and consideration of radical options

The Review identified a number of additional cost efficiency and revenue options (some examples below):

- Cost efficiency and service optimisation. There is considerable potential to strengthen and extend the cost efficiency and service optimisation programme.

- Car parking. Car parking currently generates a net contribution of £1.7m for NITHC. Partial automation of existing car parking operations in Belfast and the extension of paid parking to selected stations outside Belfast could generate additional income of between £350k and £750k p.a.

- Retail. There is considerable potential to develop the retail business at key rail stations and bus termini. This could generate additional income of between £2m and £5m p.a.

- Extension of services provide to Health and Education Boards. There is a significant amount of duplication between the service and operation that NITHC operates and the services and operations that a number of Health and Education Boards operate. NITHC could extend the range of services provided to Health and Education Boards – maintenance, repair, fuel and operations for Heath and Education

- Asset disposal. NITHC owns a number of assets which may be underperforming or surplus to requirements in the near future, for example shares in Abbey Centre, Short Strand bus depot.

Translink

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Introduction

The context for Translink's response to the Committee for Regional Development's Inquiry into the better use of public and community sector funds for the delivery of bus transport in Northern Ireland is the Department for Regional Development's document "Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future: A New Approach to Regional Transportation" and not the 2002 Regional Transportation Strategy or the schemes and proposed investment contained in the Sub-Regional Transport Plan.

1. To assess current public and community bus transport requirements;

Translink is, and will continue to be (as a consequence of the Transport NI Act 2011), the major provider of bus passenger transport services in Northern Ireland. The summary statistics for 2010-11 are contained in the table below. The present networks operated by Translink are shown in Appendix (A).

	Ulsterbus	**Metro**
Passenger Journeys	42 million	26 million
Bus Miles	36 million	8 million
Staff	2,340	760
Av. Bus Age	6.4 years	7.1 years
No. of Buses	1,193	305
No. of Services	245	59
No. of Stations	28	0

However, it is acknowledged that a mix of public and community bus transport is necessary to cater for the access requirements of residents of rural areas in a proven manner that is both affordable and ensures value for money. Translink would therefore expect that lessons learnt from the significant amount of investment in respect of innovative Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services, Rural Transport Partnerships, etc. will shape the possible strategic transportation interventions that will be considered in the new approach to Regional Transportation Decision Making that are now to be applied after 2015.

2. To assess the current public and community sector bus transport infrastructure and costs;

DRD undertook benchmarking of Translink's performance against other operators as part of the Public Transport Reform OBC, this showed an efficiency gap of just 2% - this would lead to the conclusion that there are only very limited efficiencies left to be made. In addition there are high levels of bus services customer satisfaction and there is growth being achieved. Appropriate level of funding for transportation will need to be found if the high level transport

aims and strategic objectives prescribed in the "Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future" document are to be realised. There is also the potential that public and community sector bus transport infrastructure and costs beyond 2015 because of their policy fit will be cross-cutting covering several Departments e.g. DRD, DHSS, etc. as well as ensuring collaboration between service providers in an integrated and co-ordinated manner.

3. To assess current inter-relationships in the delivery of public and community bus transport options;

The Committee for Regional Development will already be aware of the existing inter-relationships in the delivery of public and community transport. They include:-

(a) Co-operation in Fleet

For the past 12 years, the fleet (41 vehicles) of Rural Transport Funded minibuses operated by Community Transport Groups have been maintained at a number of Ulsterbus garages. In addition these vehicles were procured by Translink on behalf of DRD.

(b) Co-operation in Marketing and Passenger Information

The Public Transport Network Maps developed and circulated by Translink include a reference to the Rural Community Transport Partnership operating areas – see Appendix (A). These maps incorporate the network of express, local and cross-border services operated by Translink and illustrate the Rural Transport Network (both funded and non-funded services) highlighting linkages and access.

In March 2012, Translink tailored an information and training package for Community Transport staff at the Translink Contact Centre. This partnership approach will provide rural communities and businesses with more and better advice as to their travel choices.

(c) Co-operation in Action

A pilot Ulsterbus service from Enniskillen to Altnagelvin Hospital in L'derry commenced operation on the 5th September 2012, operating two days per week / 2 return journeys per day. It is funded by DRD under the Rural Transport Fund and was developed in conjunction with the local Community Transport Groups – Easilink and Fermanagh. The local Community Transport Group will be able to pick passengers up at their home and feed into the route of the Ulsterbus service for their longer journey.

Translink has produced marketing and timetable material and the local Community Transport Groups will assist with the direct mailing. In addition, the Western HSC Trust operate a partial booking system – a patient will be sent a letter accompanied by a timetable for the service asking them to phone and make an appointment and at that stage they can ask for an appointment time that suits the bus times. Ultimately, promotion of this service will rely heavily on the local Community Transport Groups offering advice to their members in order to encourage usage of the service.

4. To identify examples of best-practice in the provision of integrated public and community bus transport options; and

Fundamental to a new approach for transportation locally is a focus on the movement of people (and goods) rather than vehicles. This will challenge the current institutional arrangements as to existing roles and responsibilities in funding and providing public and community bus transport options to ensure that they are provided efficiently and economically yet address the reasonable needs of rural communities with respect to issues of exclusion, access to education, employment and social and recreational opportunities yet maximising the attributes of the core mainstream bus network. An examination of international best practice must therefore be a pre-requisite before committing to services, equipment or facilities that benefit only certain sections of the public.

5. To consider options for the future provision of public and community bus transport options.

It is Translink's understanding that consideration of the future provision of public and community bus transport options will be through the proposed Transportation Policy Prioritisation Framework outlined in the document entitled "Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future: A New Approach to Regional Transportation". This approach is expected to result in a prioritised appraised list of interventions to be used by the Minister and his Executive colleagues to agree a Delivery Plan compatible with future Comprehensive Spending Reviews and Draft Budget settlements.

6. Should further information or clarification of these points be required Translink can of course provide evidence directly to the Committee.

Ciarán Rogan
Translink

Translink Appendix



Translink's Role in Rural Transport

Translink is the brand name for the main provider of Public Transport in Northern Ireland, made up of Ulsterbus, Metro and NI Railways. Translink, with support from the Rural Transport Fund scheme, makes an important contribution to reducing rural isolation.

The Rural Transport Fund scheme is administered by the Department for Regional Development (DRD) and enables Translink Ulsterbus to provide rural services which are deemed socially necessary.

Rural Bus Services

The Rural Transport Fund scheme supports a range of bus services. Some Translink Ulsterbus services are wholly subsidised by the scheme, while others are partly subsidised. Rambler services are also supported by the scheme and improve access for local residents, as well as enable visitors to experience what's on offer in scenic rural areas.

In 2010/11 over 160,000 Translink Ulsterbus passenger journeys were made possible as a result of support from the Rural Transport Fund scheme. Historically, a total of 12 rural services have successfully grown to become commercially self-sustainable and resources re-allocated for new routes.

Currently, over 30 Translink Ulsterbus services are supported by the Rural Transport Fund scheme, including seasonal bus services which assist the local tourist industry. Timetables for rural services are available at bus stations, from www.translink.co.uk or on request 028 90 66 66 30.

Passenger Information

Improvements to passenger information at Translink stations, bus shelters and Tourist Information Centres have also been initiated under the Rural Transport Fund scheme.

The Travelling with Translink Public Transport map (printed overleaf) shows the network of bus services available throughout Northern Ireland, as well as the Rural Community Transport Operating Areas.



















The objective of the scheme is to reduce social exclusion by improving/providing transport opportunities for people with reduced mobility in rural areas.

Travelling with Translink

translink.co.uk

Translink is the main provider of Public Transport in Northern Ireland.
We are dedicated to providing integrated bus and rail services, throughout Northern Ireland which are attractive, sustainable and good value.
Translink operate Metro, Ulsterbus and NIRailways services.

Where to contact us:

www.translink.co.uk
or call (028) 90 66 66 30
Textphone users dial 18001 followed by full telephone number.

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter:

www.facebook.com/TranslinkNI
www.twitter.com/Translink_NI



let's go together
translink.co.uk

Translink

Western Health And Social Care Trust

Western Health
and Social Care Trust

12 November 2012

Jimmy Spratt MLA
Chair to the Committee for Regional Development
Room 254
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormount
Belfast
BT4 3XX

Dear Mr Spratt

RE: Committee for Regional Development Inquiry into the Better Use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport Options

I refer to your letter dated 23 October 2012.

The Western Health and Social Care Trust were requested to provide this information under the above inquiry to our colleagues in the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, NI which we duly provided.

Below is the detail provided to the DHSSPS on the three particular questions raised in your letter:

Question 1: Actual outturn expenditure on Health and Social Care transport.

Detailed below is the expenditure year on year since 1/4/09 for all transport provision in the Western Health & Social Care Trust. This includes all transport staff, vehicle running costs and contracted in vehicle and taxi hire to support the delivery of Trust services. The costs below cover both passenger/client transport and freight transport. These are costs are purely revenue and have no capital element.

2009/10 £3.694M
2010/11 £3.705M
2011/12 £3.895M

Question 2: Expenditure on social care transport per passenger carried

With regard to expenditure on Social Care transport per passenger carried please see details below:-

Year	Expenditure £	Passengers Carried	Cost Per Passenger Carried £
2011/2012	1,210,838	336018	3.60
2010/2011	1,126,689	335119	3.36

Chief Executive's Office
MDEC Building, Altnagelvin Hospital Site, Glenshane Road, Londonderry. BT47 6SB
Tel: 02871 611335 Fax 02871 611222

Western Health and Social Care Trust

The above expenditure figures relate to Trust owned vehicles and the costs associated with professional transport only. Passenger numbers carried by taxis and hired coaches are not included in the above and are not readily available.

Question 3: Expenditure on non-emergency transport per passenger carried or per mode/provider

The Western Trust does not provide any non-emergency transport.

I hope the above information is helpful to you and your colleagues.

Yours sincerely

Elaine Way

ELAINE WAY CBE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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Appendix 4

Memoranda and papers from the Department for Regional Development (DRD)

Department for Regional Development

CENTRAL MANAGEMENT BRANCH

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Paul Carlisle
Clerk to the Committee for Regional Development
Committee Office
Room 254
Parliament Buildings
BELFAST
BT4 3XX

Your reference: DALO 3C/2/2013
Our reference: DRD/SUB/095/2013

06 February 2013

Dear Paul

DALO 3C/2/2013 - TRANSLINK AND COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

I refer to the request from the Committee for information in respect of the inquiry into public and community bus transport. The responses to the four queries raised are set out below:-

1. *Can the Committee be provided with detailed reports regarding the costs of delivering metro and Ulsterbus services respectively in the last three financial years, including the cost per passenger journey for each service and the cost per mile travelled for each service?*

   Translink provides the Department with monthly information on the cost per passenger journey and cost per km travelled. The relevant information for both services for each of the last three financial years is as follows:-

	2011-12		2010-11		2009-10	
	Metro	Ulsterbus	Metro	Ulsterbus	Metro	Ulsterbus
Cost per passenger journey	£1.44	£2.35	£1.33	£2.28	£1.30	£2.28
Cost per km travelled	£2.29	£1.42	£2.17	£1.40	£2.19	£1.38

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

2. *Can the Committee be provided with copies of costing reports in respect of the RTF provision to community transport organisations?*

The total cost of funding to each of the seven Rural Community Transport Partnership operating areas, together with the average cost per trip for each area, in the last financial year is as follows:-

Operating Area	Total cost of funding	Average cost per trip
CDM (Cookstown, Dungannon & Magherafel)	£566,467	£12.56
Down District Accessible Transport (Down, North Down & Ards)	£490,619	£35.73
Easilink (Omagh, Strabane & Foyle)	£518,855	£12.39
Fermanagh CT	£499,083	£13.13
Loughside (South Antrim & Lagan Valley)	£315,562	£16.62
North Coast (Limavady, Coleraine, Moyle, Ballymena & Ballymoney)	£565,509	£15.61
Southern (Armagh, Lurgan, Banbridge, Newry & Mourne)	£390,986	£11.66

These figures do not take account of the distance travelled.

3. *Can the Committee be provided with the costs for the last three years associated with maintaining and servicing the CTA fleet undertaken at the various Translink depots?*

The fee (per vehicle) for undertaking maintenance and service work on Community Transport vehicles is as follows:-

Year	Fee per vehicle
2009-10	£2,880.50

2010-11	£2,880.50
2011-12	£2,880.50

Translink maintain 41 Community Transport vehicles.

4. *Can the Committee be provided with details of meetings that both Translink and the Department have held with CTA groups over the past six months?*

The Department has attended 27 meetings with CTA groups over the past six months. These have ranged from AGMs to discussions on financial support, business plans, Dial-A-Lift activity and regular spot checks.

Translink has extensive contacts with Community Transport representatives, including scheduled and ad hoc meetings. The following is a snapshot of Translink's engagement and is not intended to be an exhaustive list. Indeed, at times contact is on a daily basis.

Scheduled / Regular meetings	
NI Bus Operators Forum and associated working groups	Monthly
CTA NI Committee	Bi-monthly
Rural Community Network – Rural Older People Skills for Solutions Project	Quarterly
Events	
CTA AGM	June 2012
CTA NI 'Co-operative Transport' Conference	August 2012
Project specific meetings	
Newry and Mourne District Council - Age Friendly Strategic Alliance Partnership	July 2012, Nov 2012
Development of 294 Pilot service from Enniskillen to Altnagelvin – meetings involving Translink, Easilink, Fermanagh CT, DRD, and Western HSC Trust	Five meetings during 2012
Dungannon Pilot Study	December 2012
Additional / ad hoc meetings	
Translink and CTA meeting to strategically discuss opportunities for collaboration	June 2012
Patient Client Council and Consumer Council regarding transport to hospitals	August 2012
Translink, NCCT, Moyle District Council	Four meetings during 2012

Ard's Older People focus Group	October 2012
Information and training package for community transport staff at Translink Contact Centre	March 2012
Dialogue with CTA regarding Translink production of Rural Transport printed promotional material – Rural Transport information leaflet, Public Transport network map incorporating RCTP operating areas and contact details	April 2012
Routine business transactions / Minibus contract management	
Translink initiated a series of meetings in keeping with pace of RCTP re-structuring. Seven individual meetings completed with each one of the seven streamlined RCTP operational areas. The meetings included RCTP Rep's, DRD, and Translink managers and engineers.	Seven meetings in Enniskillen, Coleraine, Omagh, Downpatrick, Lisburn, Newry, Dungannon in 2012
Dialogue as and when required between RCTP's and Translink depot engineers and service delivery managers in respect of maintenance, and use of depot facilities for fuelling and parking.	As required – typically daily
Periodic dialogue with RCTP staff on fleet mileage and payment of accounts	As required – typically monthly

The content of this letter is fully disclosable under FOI.

I trust that this clarifies the position.

Yours sincerely

Alan

ALAN DOHERTY
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

Department for Regional Development

CENTRAL MANAGEMENT BRANCH

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Paul Carlisle
Clerk to the Committee for Regional Development
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Room 254
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BT4 3XX

Your reference: DALO 4/2/2013
Our reference: DRD/DALO 4/2/2013

12 February 2013

Dear Paul

DALO 4/2/2013 - QUERIES FOLLOWING ORAL EVIDENCE - INQUIRY INTO THE BETTER USE OF PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY SECTOR FUNDS

In your letter dated 1 February you raised a number of queries on the better use of public and community sector funds. I have sought to address these queries in the order they were presented.

1. *The Regional Transport Strategy aims to support the Executive's economic, social and sustainability objectives by providing integrated, safe, efficient public transport services. Does this include those requirements within the health and education sector or is the Department merely focussing inwardly?*

The New Approach to Regional Transportation was launched in March 2012 and sets three high level aims covering the economy, society and the environment for the future development of transport. These are driven by the Executive's Programme for Government and are supported by twelve strategic transport objectives.

The New Approach introduces a new Policy Prioritisation Framework to assess the "policy fit" of what we do and to help us reach better decisions on transportation investment by identifying those schemes which will best achieve our strategic objectives. The Department has been developing this framework in liaison with other Departments including the Departments of Education and Health, Social Services and Public Safety. The Department will continue to work with other key stakeholders in the

development of the framework to ensure that the desired policy outcomes of the Executive are achieved.

This builds on the partnership working already developed as part of the pilot of the local public transport plans in Dungannon and Cookstown District Council areas. Any such work to join up passenger transport services funded by the different Departments can only be achieved with their agreement and involvement.

2. *What sort of Key Performance Targets does the Department set Translink? Do these include, for example, cost per passenger journey/mile?*

The Department has a Management Statement and Financial Memorandum in place with the Northern Ireland Transport & Holding Company (NITHC) which sets out a series of performance measures for monitoring Translink's performance.

In addition, the Minister has agreed the objectives, key targets and performance measures within the Programme for Government and the NITHC corporate and business plans. The Department has established a framework of Key Performance Indicator (KPI) targets which set out the specific measures of performance which it expects NITHC and its subsidiary companies to achieve in each business planning period. These KPI targets include;

- A target for passenger journeys per annum across all bus and rail public transport (as agreed within the Corporate Planning process);
- Revenue subvention per passenger;
- Total cost per passenger;
- Operating cost per passenger;
- Operating cost per vehicle Km;
- Indirect overhead cost;
- Number of passengers per category;
- Average fleet age;
- Degree of accessibility compliance.

2

Progress against these KPI targets is monitored by the Department on a monthly basis and reported to the Minister at least annually. In addition, the Translink Passenger Charter sets reliability and punctuality targets for bus and rail services. Performance against these targets is independently monitored and the results are published biannually.

3. *Does the Department have transport planners? If not, how can they be content that the routes being provided meet customer needs?*

The planning and delivery of services along bus routes is currently the responsibility of Translink and its subsidiary companies. In most jurisdictions operators are closely involved in route planning, particularly where they bear the costs of the operations, as is the case with the Translink companies. The Departmental arrangements for managing the performance of Translink are outlined above. In the case of rail services the current Public Service Obligation requires agreement on the weekly schedule of services. This type of model will be helpful in defining the bus networks under proposed new contracting regime.

The Department has recently appointed a senior transport planner who will develop the Department's future transportation modelling capability. As part of the pilot local public transport plan in the Dungannon and Cookstown District Council areas, the Department will investigate the extent to which transportation modelling and scheduling can be used to assess current bus routes and to identify any major gaps and overlaps in current service provision in the area. This will take some time to work through.

4. *Does the Department have the necessary expertise to challenge and monitor Translink performance?*

The Department's Sponsor Division manages the performance of Translink with support from the Department's economics branch and other policy staff as required. The Division includes three qualified Accountants, including the Director, all of whom have substantial experience in Public Sector finance. In addition, the Department has recently reviewed the organisational structure of the Division to ensure that it remains appropriately staffed.

The NI Audit Office has conducted a review of the governance arrangements and published its findings in the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) report for 2011/2012 which indicates that the governance arrangements are appropriate. A link to the C&AG reported is provided below.

http://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk/index/publications/financial_audit_publications/financial_auditing_and_reporting/general_report_2012.pdf

The Department believes that this indicates that control arrangements are operating effectively. In relation to the move towards a contracting regime from 1 April 2014 there are clearly important matters to be considered in terms of building up expertise in transport planning and associated operational matters which are being considered as part of the planned move to Transport NI.

5. *How many local transport plans are in place?*

There are no integrated local public transport plans currently in place. Local plans are reflected in the schedule of services provided by the different operators. As noted above, the Department has recently commenced work to establish a pilot local public transport plan in the Dungannon and Cookstown District Council areas, with a view to starting the pilot later in 2013. This will enable those involved to assess the degree to which the integration of services is possible, help identify the barriers and potential solutions to such integration and enable all the organisations involved to consider the longer-term implications for delivery of services, including local transport planning.

6. *What is preventing the meaningful integration of transport services?*

There are a number of organisations that provide passenger transport services across Northern Ireland. The main ones are: Translink, Health & Social Services, Education Boards, and the Rural Community Transport Partnerships. The passenger transport services being delivered by each of these organisations have evolved over a number of years to meet the specific policy requirements of each sponsoring Department.

The proposed pilot of local transport plans in Dungannon and Cookstown District Council areas is an opportunity to identify the current provision of public transport services in this area and to consider if there are opportunities for improving passenger services and efficiency. This will include the potential to integrate existing services. The pilot is currently at the design stage and is due to commence later in 2013, with the potential for a phased approach to improvements as barriers are overcome.

Until some more work is done on the design and the pilot gets underway, it is not possible to fully identify all the barriers to integrating transport services. At this stage the potential barriers to integration are thought to be:

- The current separate statutory and policy responsibilities for health & social services, education, and public transport, which have evolved over time to meet the transport needs of each Department;
- The separate budgetary arrangements, which distributes funding for passenger transport across the various Departments in order to meet specific needs;
- The difficulties of joining up funding streams while ensuring that one organisation does not offload its responsibilities without bearing the associated costs;
- The complexity of individual organisations' internal processes and the diverse transport needs of the different client groups;
- The need to comply with the Department of the Environment's (DOE) bus operator licensing regime;
- The different requirements for vehicle licensing;
- The accessibility of vehicles;
- The insurance requirements for buses;
- The terms and conditions of employment of drivers;
- School opening and closing times, which increases the number of vehicles required, particularly in the early morning;
- The different needs of transport users whether in education or health & social services or Public Transport; and
- The lack of reliable and easily accessible information about what services are available to meet the different needs.

7. *What work has been carried out thus far on the integration pilot, and can the Committee see these statistics when they are available?*

As noted above, the first meeting of Working Group to establish a pilot local transport plan in the Dungannon and Cookstown District Council areas was held in December. Participants agreed a number of key principles that should guide the review. A copy is attached for information.

It is anticipated that the pilot will commence on the ground later in 2013 and run for six to twelve months. The Department will be happy to brief the Committee when meaningful data is available and plans have been developed and to share the pilot evaluation.

8. *How has the working relationship been between the different partners in this scheme and is it indicative of how you hope the relationships will work going forward should the pilot be rolled out in the future?*

The first meeting to establish pilot local public transport plans was well attended by the representatives of the key groups involved: the Department for Regional Development, Translink, the Southern Education and Library Board, the Rural Community Transport Partnerships, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Health and Social Services Boards. While the pilot is at the initiation stage, all of the attendees approached the meeting with a positive attitude and this bodes well for the project going forward.

Whether this is the best model for wider implementation will need to be considered as part of the evaluation but inevitably local involvement is going to be necessary because designing services to meet passenger requirements will need to be tailored to local circumstances. It is hoped, however, that there will be sufficient lessons learned from the pilot to inform how wider roll-out could be tackled.

9. *The briefing paper states that the main problem is because transport services and provisions are so fragmented. What is the solution to this issue? Would a fully rolled out Public Transport body have negated some of these issues?*

As noted above, there are a number of organisations that provide public transportation services across Northern Ireland, each having their own transport policies, budgets and vehicles. This ensures that transport provision operates in support of each organisation's objectives and priorities.

The objective of the pilot local transport plan is to consider the potential to integrate existing services within the Dungannon and Cookstown District Council areas. In the longer term and depending on the outcome of the pilot, Departments may need to consider how funding can be more effectively and efficiently managed to provide for a more joined up and integrated approach to service delivery. Any such change would, however, need to guard against one Department's responsibilities being transferred to another without appropriate funding. Ultimately the transfer of budgets and responsibilities to a single body, if this was considered to be the best way forward, would be a decision for the Executive. It is also important to ensure transport decisions are not made in isolation from wider educational or health and social services policy matters and that any changes to such policies do not place unplanned and unfunded demands on public transport services.

I hope this addresses the matters raised by the Committee.

The content of this letter is fully disclosable under FOI.

Yours sincerely



ALAN DOHERTY
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

KEY PRINCIPLES ON APPROACH TO PILOT PROJECT FOR LOCAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT PLANNING IN DUNGANNON/COOKSTOWN AREA

1. The main focus of our work will be on the needs of passengers and prospective passengers.

2. We will seek to integrate public transport services where possible, identify any gaps in provision, any overlaps or duplication of services and deliver improved value for money.

3. We will identify and test those changes that can be implemented within the scope of the Pilot Project, including any quick wins, and we will identify any other changes that are needed in the medium to long-term that have the potential to improve passenger transport services and efficiency.

4. We will share existing resources to run the pilot.

5. Wherever possible we will aim to achieve win/win outcomes for participating organisations, while remaining open minded about the longer term changes that may be needed.

6. We will be flexible in our approach to any changes that are required to service delivery during the course of the Pilot in order to meet the objectives of the study.

7. We will share our resources, expertise and information openly in order to assess the efficiency of the current network of services and to identify potential improvements in the integration of services including the use of fleet and drivers.

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9. We will collect data throughout the course of the Pilot and openly evaluate the success of the pilot, identify the challenges faced and make recommendations on how these may be overcome in the future.

10. We will be flexible in our approach to the time line for the Pilot which is currently estimated to begin in December 2012 and run until December 2014.

8

Department for Regional Development

CENTRAL MANAGEMENT BRANCH

Department for Regional Development
www.drdni.gov.uk

Room 413c
Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
Belfast BT2 8GB

Telephone: (028 905) 41140
Facsimile: (028 905) 40064
Email: alan.doherty@drdni.gov.uk

Paul Carlisle
Clerk to the Committee for Regional Development
Committee Office
Room 254
Parliament Buildings
BELFAST
BT4 3XX

Your reference: DALO 4/2/2013
Our reference: DRD/DALO 4/2/2013

12 February 2013

Dear Paul

DALO 4/2/2013 - QUERIES FOLLOWING ORAL EVIDENCE - INQUIRY INTO THE BETTER USE OF PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY SECTOR FUNDS

In your letter dated 1 February you raised a number of queries on the better use of public and community sector funds. I have sought to address these queries in the order they were presented.

1. *The Regional Transport Strategy aims to support the Executive's economic, social and sustainability objectives by providing integrated, safe, efficient public transport services. Does this include those requirements within the health and education sector or is the Department merely focussing inwardly?*

The New Approach to Regional Transportation was launched in March 2012 and sets three high level aims covering the economy, society and the environment for the future development of transport. These are driven by the Executive's Programme for Government and are supported by twelve strategic transport objectives.

The New Approach introduces a new Policy Prioritisation Framework to assess the "policy fit" of what we do and to help us reach better decisions on transportation investment by identifying those schemes which will best achieve our strategic objectives. The Department has been developing this framework in liaison with other Departments including the Departments of Education and Health, Social Services and Public Safety. The Department will continue to work with other key stakeholders in the

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

development of the framework to ensure that the desired policy outcomes of the Executive are achieved.

This builds on the partnership working already developed as part of the pilot of the local public transport plans in Dungannon and Cookstown District Council areas. Any such work to join up passenger transport services funded by the different Departments can only be achieved with their agreement and involvement.

2. *What sort of Key Performance Targets does the Department set Translink? Do these include, for example, cost per passenger journey/mile?*

The Department has a Management Statement and Financial Memorandum in place with the Northern Ireland Transport & Holding Company (NITHC) which sets out a series of performance measures for monitoring Translink's performance.

In addition, the Minister has agreed the objectives, key targets and performance measures within the Programme for Government and the NITHC corporate and business plans. The Department has established a framework of Key Performance Indicator (KPI) targets which set out the specific measures of performance which it expects NITHC and its subsidiary companies to achieve in each business planning period. These KPI targets include;

- A target for passenger journeys per annum across all bus and rail public transport (as agreed within the Corporate Planning process);
- Revenue subvention per passenger;
- Total cost per passenger;
- Operating cost per passenger;
- Operating cost per vehicle Km;
- Indirect overhead cost;
- Number of passengers per category;
- Average fleet age;
- Degree of accessibility compliance.

Progress against these KPI targets is monitored by the Department on a monthly basis and reported to the Minister at least annually. In addition, the Translink Passenger Charter sets reliability and punctuality targets for bus and rail services. Performance against these targets is independently monitored and the results are published biannually.

3. *Does the Department have transport planners? If not, how can they be content that the routes being provided meet customer needs?*

The planning and delivery of services along bus routes is currently the responsibility of Translink and its subsidiary companies. In most jurisdictions operators are closely involved in route planning, particularly where they bear the costs of the operations, as is the case with the Translink companies. The Departmental arrangements for managing the performance of Translink are outlined above. In the case of rail services the current Public Service Obligation requires agreement on the weekly schedule of services. This type of model will be helpful in defining the bus networks under proposed new contracting regime.

The Department has recently appointed a senior transport planner who will develop the Department's future transportation modelling capability. As part of the pilot local public transport plan in the Dungannon and Cookstown District Council areas, the Department will investigate the extent to which transportation modelling and scheduling can be used to assess current bus routes and to identify any major gaps and overlaps in current service provision in the area. This will take some time to work through.

4. *Does the Department have the necessary expertise to challenge and monitor Translink performance?*

The Department's Sponsor Division manages the performance of Translink with support from the Department's economics branch and other policy staff as required. The Division includes three qualified Accountants, including the Director, all of whom have substantial experience in Public Sector finance. In addition, the Department has recently reviewed the organisational structure of the Division to ensure that it remains appropriately staffed.

The NI Audit Office has conducted a review of the governance arrangements and published its findings in the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) report for 2011/2012 which indicates that the governance arrangements are appropriate. A link to the C&AG reported is provided below.

http://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk/index/publications/financial_audit_publications/financial_auditing_and_reporting/general_report_2012.pdf

The Department believes that this indicates that control arrangements are operating effectively. In relation to the move towards a contracting regime from 1 April 2014 there are clearly important matters to be considered in terms of building up expertise in transport planning and associated operational matters which are being considered as part of the planned move to Transport NI.

***5.** How many local transport plans are in place?*

There are no integrated local public transport plans currently in place. Local plans are reflected in the schedule of services provided by the different operators. As noted above, the Department has recently commenced work to establish a pilot local public transport plan in the Dungannon and Cookstown District Council areas, with a view to starting the pilot later in 2013. This will enable those involved to assess the degree to which the integration of services is possible, help identify the barriers and potential solutions to such integration and enable all the organisations involved to consider the longer-term implications for delivery of services, including local transport planning.

***6.** What is preventing the meaningful integration of transport services?*

There are a number of organisations that provide passenger transport services across Northern Ireland. The main ones are: Translink, Health & Social Services, Education Boards, and the Rural Community Transport Partnerships. The passenger transport services being delivered by each of these organisations have evolved over a number of years to meet the specific policy requirements of each sponsoring Department.

The proposed pilot of local transport plans in Dungannon and Cookstown District Council areas is an opportunity to identify the current provision of public transport services in this area and to consider if there are opportunities for improving passenger services and efficiency. This will include the potential to integrate existing services. The pilot is currently at the design stage and is due to commence later in 2013, with the potential for a phased approach to improvements as barriers are overcome.

Until some more work is done on the design and the pilot gets underway, it is not possible to fully identify all the barriers to integrating transport services. At this stage the potential barriers to integration are thought to be:

- The current separate statutory and policy responsibilities for health & social services, education, and public transport, which have evolved over time to meet the transport needs of each Department;
- The separate budgetary arrangements, which distributes funding for passenger transport across the various Departments in order to meet specific needs;
- The difficulties of joining up funding streams while ensuring that one organisation does not offload its responsibilities without bearing the associated costs;
- The complexity of individual organisations' internal processes and the diverse transport needs of the different client groups;
- The need to comply with the Department of the Environment's (DOE) bus operator licensing regime;
- The different requirements for vehicle licensing;
- The accessibility of vehicles;
- The insurance requirements for buses;
- The terms and conditions of employment of drivers;
- School opening and closing times, which increases the number of vehicles required, particularly in the early morning;
- The different needs of transport users whether in education or health & social services or Public Transport; and
- The lack of reliable and easily accessible information about what services are available to meet the different needs.

***7.** What work has been carried out thus far on the integration pilot, and can the Committee see these statistics when they are available?*

As noted above, the first meeting of Working Group to establish a pilot local transport plan in the Dungannon and Cookstown District Council areas was held in December. Participants agreed a number of key principles that should guide the review. A copy is attached for information.

It is anticipated that the pilot will commence on the ground later in 2013 and run for six to twelve months. The Department will be happy to brief the Committee when meaningful data is available and plans have been developed and to share the pilot evaluation.

***8.** How has the working relationship been between the different partners in this scheme and is it indicative of how you hope the relationships will work going forward should the pilot be rolled out in the future?*

The first meeting to establish pilot local public transport plans was well attended by the representatives of the key groups involved: the Department for Regional Development, Translink, the Southern Education and Library Board, the Rural Community Transport Partnerships, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Health and Social Services Boards. While the pilot is at the initiation stage, all of the attendees approached the meeting with a positive attitude and this bodes well for the project going forward.

Whether this is the best model for wider implementation will need to be considered as part of the evaluation but inevitably local involvement is going to be necessary because designing services to meet passenger requirements will need to be tailored to local circumstances. It is hoped, however, that there will be sufficient lessons learned from the pilot to inform how wider roll-out could be tackled.

9. *The briefing paper states that the main problem is because transport services and provisions are so fragmented. What is the solution to this issue? Would a fully rolled out Public Transport body have negated some of these issues?*

As noted above, there are a number of organisations that provide public transportation services across Northern Ireland, each having their own transport policies, budgets and vehicles. This ensures that transport provision operates in support of each organisation's objectives and priorities.

The objective of the pilot local transport plan is to consider the potential to integrate existing services within the Dungannon and Cookstown District Council areas. In the longer term and depending on the outcome of the pilot, Departments may need to consider how funding can be more effectively and efficiently managed to provide for a more joined up and integrated approach to service delivery. Any such change would, however, need to guard against one Department's responsibilities being transferred to another without appropriate funding. Ultimately the transfer of budgets and responsibilities to a single body, if this was considered to be the best way forward, would be a decision for the Executive. It is also important to ensure transport decisions are not made in isolation from wider educational or health and social services policy matters and that any changes to such policies do not place unplanned and unfunded demands on public transport services.

I hope this addresses the matters raised by the Committee.

The content of this letter is fully disclosable under FOI.

Yours sincerely



ALAN DOHERTY
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

KEY PRINCIPLES ON APPROACH TO PILOT PROJECT FOR LOCAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT PLANNING IN DUNGANNON/COOKSTOWN AREA

1. The main focus of our work will be on the needs of passengers and prospective passengers.

2. We will seek to integrate public transport services where possible, identify any gaps in provision, any overlaps or duplication of services and deliver improved value for money.

3. We will identify and test those changes that can be implemented within the scope of the Pilot Project, including any quick wins, and we will identify any other changes that are needed in the medium to long-term that have the potential to improve passenger transport services and efficiency.

4. We will share existing resources to run the pilot.

5. Wherever possible we will aim to achieve win/win outcomes for participating organisations, while remaining open minded about the longer term changes that may be needed.

6. We will be flexible in our approach to any changes that are required to service delivery during the course of the Pilot in order to meet the objectives of the study.

7. We will share our resources, expertise and information openly in order to assess the efficiency of the current network of services and to identify potential improvements in the integration of services including the use of fleet and drivers.

8. We will liaise with local stakeholders including those best placed to represent the views of customers so that they are aware of and can contribute to our plans for improvement.

9. We will collect data throughout the course of the Pilot and openly evaluate the success of the pilot, identify the challenges faced and make recommendations on how these may be overcome in the future.

10. We will be flexible in our approach to the time line for the Pilot which is currently estimated to begin in December 2012 and run until December 2014.



Appendix 5

Other Papers

Community Transport Association

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CTA Cooperative Transport

16 August 2012
Long Gallery
Stormont

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Community Transport Association

Mr Cathal O'hOisin MLA

cta uk
Community Transport Association

Stephen Hickey

Chair
CTAUK

cta uk
Community Transport Association

Cooperative Transport

Kellie Armstrong
Director for Northern Ireland
CTAUK

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International Year of Cooperatives 2012

"Cooperatives are a reminder that it is possible to pursue both economic viability and social responsibility. "

Ban Ki-moon

United Nations Secretary-General

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Definition of Cooperatives

- A **cooperative** is an autonomous association of persons who voluntarily cooperate for their mutual social, economic, and cultural benefit.
- Cooperatives include non-profit community organizations and businesses that are owned and managed by the people who use its services (a consumer cooperative) and/or by the people who work there (a worker cooperative).

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Working Cooperatively to achieve transport solutions

- Community Transport realises cooperative working in order to meet a social need
- In order to deliver a holistic and realistic transport solution we need to consider working in a cooperative manner across the transport network

7

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Launch of CTA Cooperative Transport programme

- CTA will
  - Open dialogue and discussion
  - Encourage communities and individuals to identify transport needs
  - Actively engage our members to work collaboratively
  - Promote networking and mutual support across the transport sector
  - Facilitate strategic opportunities and initiatives

8

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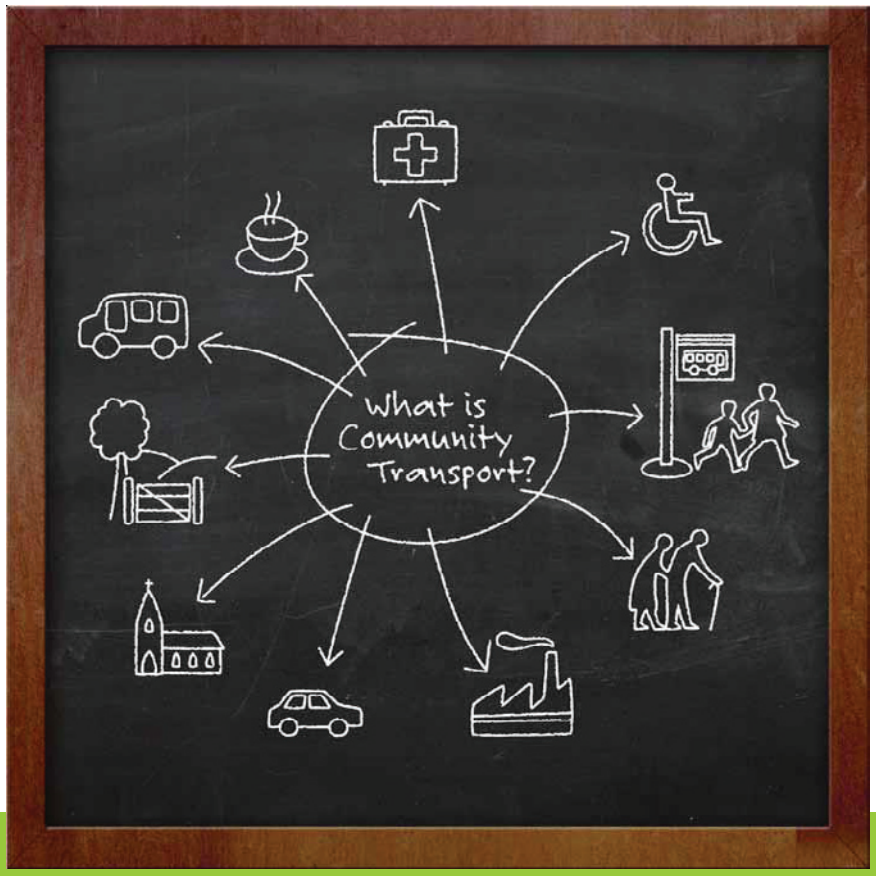
Why work cooperatively?

- CTA's vision is of

"*A fairer society free of social exclusion and injustice where everyone has personal choice, mobility and access to the services they require.*"

9

Community Transport Association



10

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Come with us on a journey



11

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Community Transport Association

Transport gives freedom and independence



12

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Community Transport Association

Access is provided using the most suitable mode for the person



13

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Community Transport Association

Transport solutions need to meet the passengers' various needs



14

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Community Transport Association

Travelling together not segregated



15

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Community Transport Association

Community Transport reduces loneliness and isolation



16

Community Transport Association

The Community must be involved in specifying type and appropriate mode of transport



17

Community Transport Association

Having access to appropriate transport improves health and wellbeing



18

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Even if only to go for a coffee



19

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Or a look around the shops



20

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Or help to get to work



21

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CT provides access by sharing information about the range of transport options



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Accessible Communications – RNID TypeTalk



23

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Promoting Travel options with DRD and Translink



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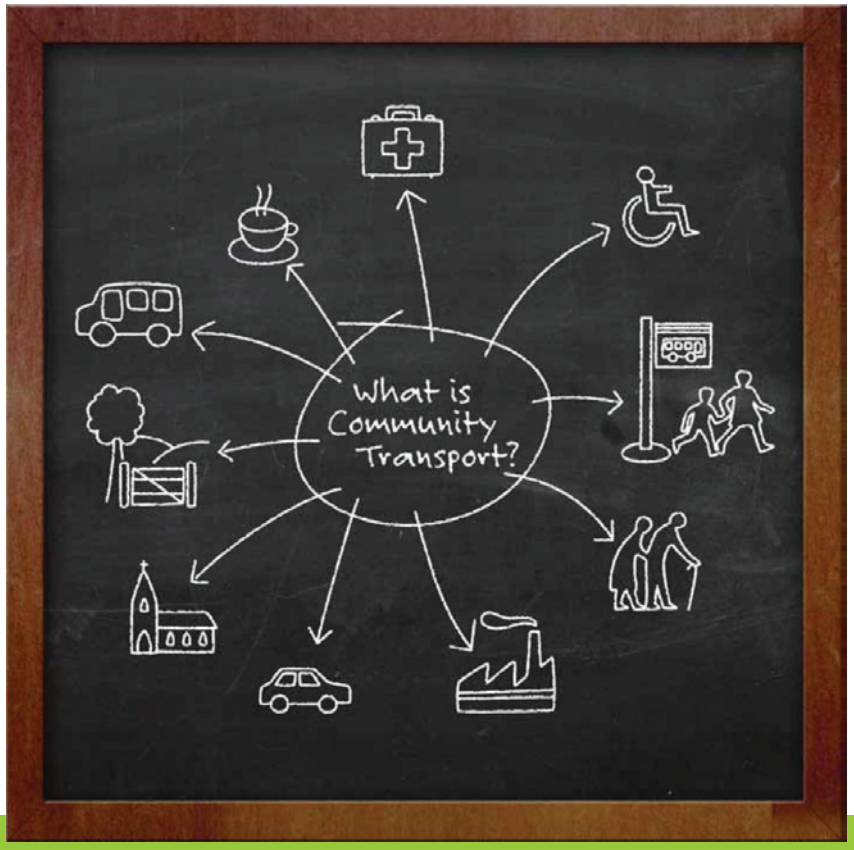
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Bridge to employment programme



25

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Cooperative Transport

CTA begins today a call for:

- Open dialogue between transport suppliers
- Clarification where and how NI money is being spent on transport
- Cross-departmental transport planning
- Sharing of resources
- Start planning today the content of the next PfG and budget to ensure Departmental priorities are able to be delivered

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CTA

Kellie Armstrong
kellie@ctauk.org
028 9094 1661

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Integrated Transport Planning

Stephen Wood
CTA Northern Ireland Committee

Integrated Transport Planning

Why it is essential for Government Objectives

Stephen Wood (TPP)
CTANI Committee

CTA Conference
16 August 2012

Content

1. The Need for Transport Planning
2. New Approach to Regional Transportation
3. The role of Community Transport
4. Integrated Transport Planning to include Community Transport
5. Key Messages to Government

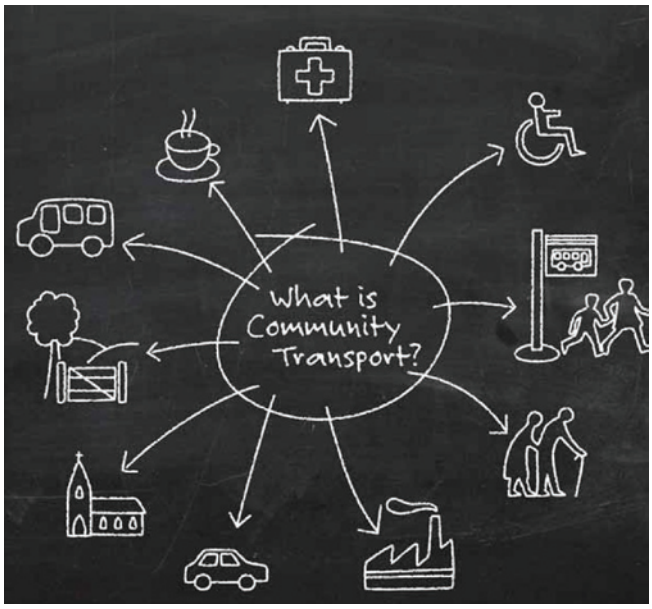
31

1a. The Need for Transport Planning

- Providing transport is expensive (for government) and can have major impacts
  - New roads and railways
  - Operating buses
- Transport Planning is a statutory requirement elsewhere in GB and Ireland
  - Local Transport Plans GB (Local Transport Act 2008)
  - Ireland Development Plans to provide details of: the availability of public transport within the catchment of residential or commercial development (Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010 – Ireland)

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1b. The Need for Transport Planning



- Transport is a derived demand related to:
  - Where people live, work, shop and socialise
  - When, how often and how easy and how cheaply

Source: CTA NI State of the Sector 2011

33

2a. New Approach to Regional Transportation - Objectives

DRD

Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future:

A New Approach to Regional Transportation



A. Support the Growth of the Economy

1: Improve connectivity within the region
2: Use road space and railways more efficiently
3: Better maintain transport infrastructure
4: Improve access in our towns and cities
5: Improve access in rural areas
6: Improve connections to key tourism sites

B. Enhance the quality of life for all

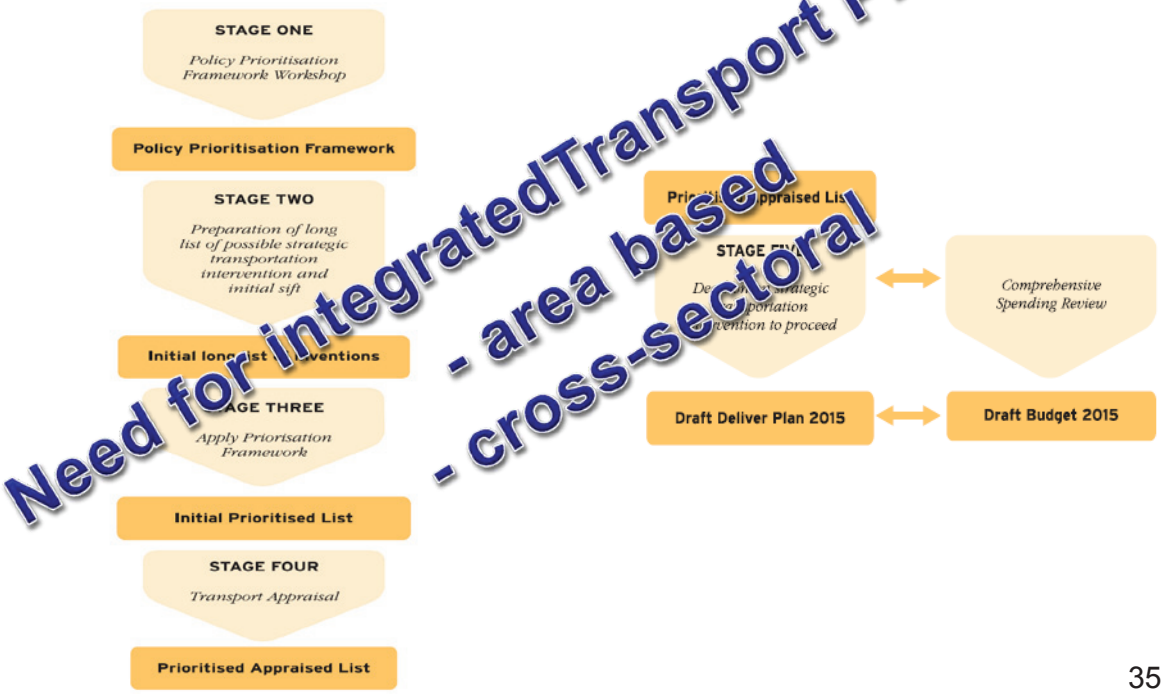
7: Improve Safety
8: Enhance Social Inclusion
9: Develop transport programmes focussed on the user

C. Reduce the Environmental Impact of Transport

10: Reduce Greenhouse gas emissions from transport
11: Protect biodiversity
12: Reduce water, noise and air pollution

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2b. New Approach to Regional Transportation - Process



Need for integratedTransport Planning
- area based
- cross-sectoral

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2c. New Approach to Regional Transportation

Consultation Document included a long List of Transport Interventions, including:

Introduction of Further Innovative Public Transport Services which meet the Needs Of Communities

These will include Door-to-Door services, Demand Responsive services, Rapid Transit and services tailored to the needs of older people and people with disabilities.

Working with Communities to Better Understand Their Needs

Through, for example, the community planning process and neighbourhood renewal partnerships, we will work to make sure that transport meets the needs of the communities it is meant to serve. This will include exploring how public transport can be delivered as a shared service.

Improved Accessibility For Older People and People with Disabilities

Older people and people with disabilities face additional barriers when using the transport network. We will continue to work to reduce those barriers and maximise the accessibility of our transport networks.

Must ensure these interventions are understood and retained

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3. The Role of Community Transport

- NI transport solutions in terms of 'convenience' for user (© S Wood)

Best

1. Car (if you own a car and can afford to park)
2. Taxi (if you can afford it)
3. Train (if your OD near a station and you can walk)
4. Bus (if your OD near a stop and you can walk and the services / timetables suit)
5. Cycle and Walk (if your OD convenient and you can)

Worst

6. Special Needs Transport eg Door-2-Door, Rural Transport Fund (if you fulfil requirements)

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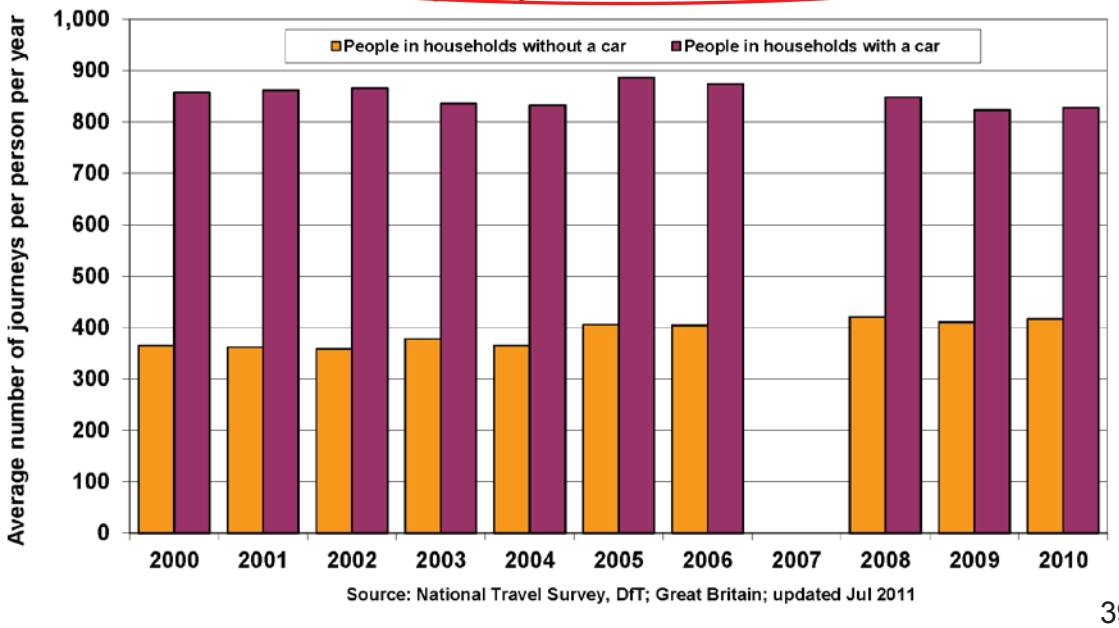
3. The Role of Community Transport

- Community Transport is the only potential solution for many people:
  - Don't own a car (or can't get a lift)
  - Can't afford taxis
  - OD not convenient to rail stations or bus stops
  - Rail or bus services do not run (time of day/week)
  - Physically cannot walk (or cycle)
  - Don't qualify for Special Needs Transport

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No Car No Life ! (1)

People in households without a car make half the number of journeys as those with a car

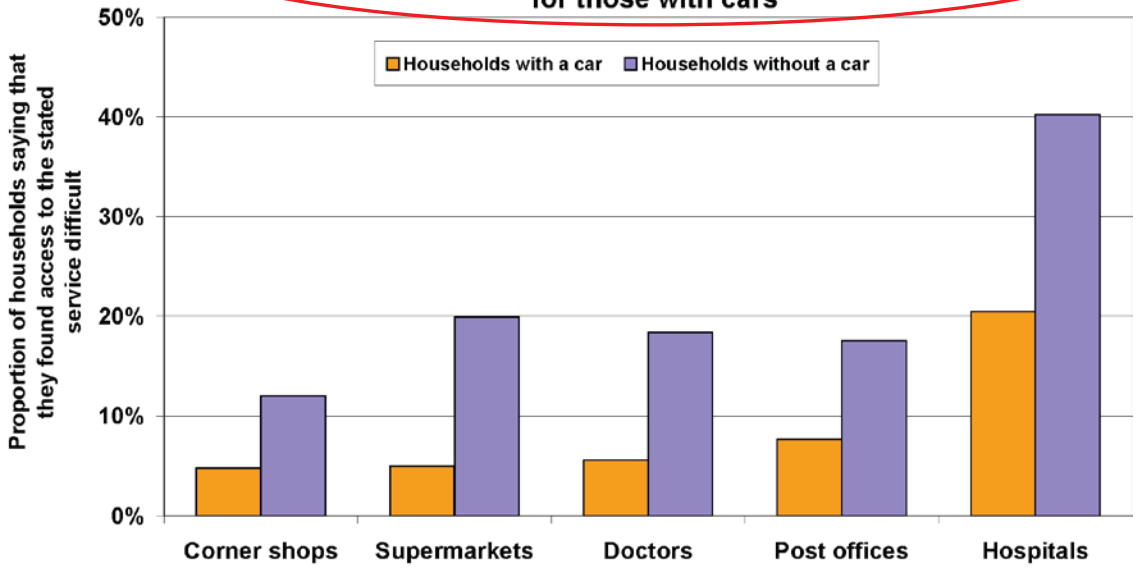


Source: National Travel Survey, DfT; Great Britain; updated Jul 2011

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No Car No Life ! (2)

The proportion of households who find it difficult to access essential local services is much higher for those without cars than for those with cars

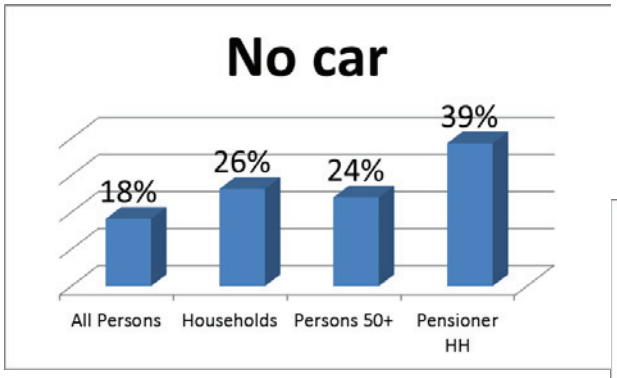


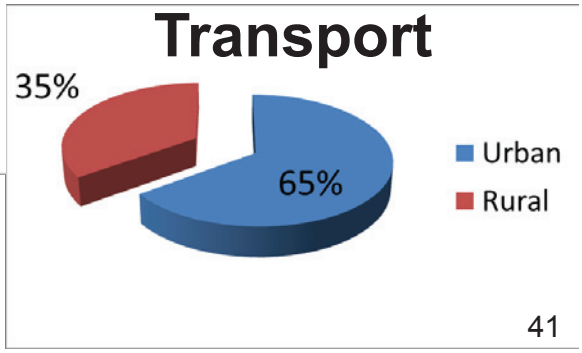
Source: Survey of English Housing 2007/08, DCLG; England; updated Dec 2009

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No Car No Life ! (3a)

The numbers of people in NI without a car or without public transport are very large





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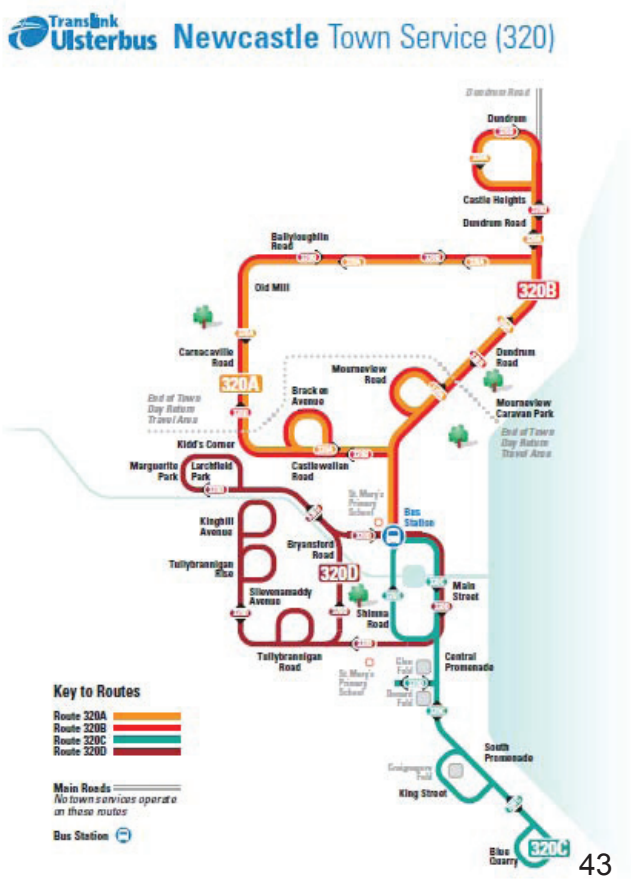
No Car No Life ! (3b)

Bus services cannot compete with the frequency, coverage and convenience of car

Newcastle Town Service						Service 320A
Newcastle Town Service						**Service 320B**
Monday to Friday						
Service:	A	B	B	A	B	A
Notes:		D				
Newcastle, lay-by outside Station	1000	1100	1300	1400	1500	1600
Mournview	1005	|	|	1405	|	1605
Bracken Avenue	|	1104	1305	|	1505	|
Maghera (Down), Old Mill	|	1113	1310	|	1510	|
Dundrum, Castle Heights	1014	1117	1315	1414	1515	1614
Maghera (Down), Old Mill	1017	|	|	1417	|	1617
Bracken Avenue	1022	|	|	1422	|	1622
Mournview	|	1126	1322	|	1522	|
Newcastle, lay-by outside Station	1025	1128	1325	1425	1525	1625

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No Car
No Life !
(3c)



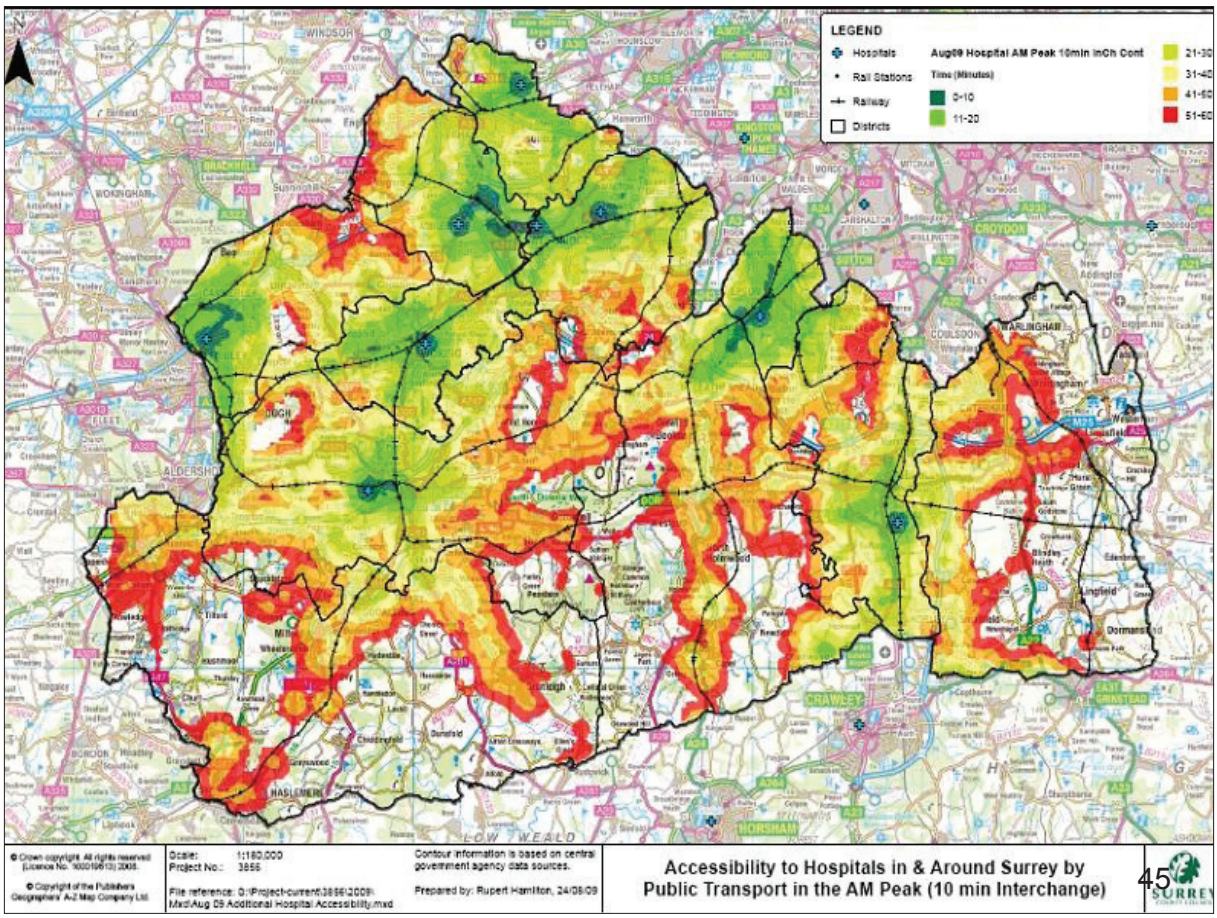
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4. Integrated Transport Planning to include Community Transport

- Accessibility Planning
  - How to access essential public services by means other than private car
  - Services include shops, doctors, hospital, bus or rail stations
  - NI wide residential locations (urban and rural)
  - Take account of time of day/week and length and journey time (including wait/interchange)
  - Helps identify weaknesses in current public transport networks

Part of GB Local Transport Plan

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4. Integrated Transport Planning to include Community Transport

- Community based knowledge and skills
  - Understanding the community needs
  - Understanding the local transport networks and services (Translink, DRD, health, education, taxis, community/voluntary)
  - Linking the transport services or plugging the gaps
  - Seeking operation efficiency where possible
  - Making use of volunteers

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5. Key Messages for Government

1. Transport is key to a number of government objectives and therefore justifies investment in Transport Planning analyses, eg
   - Road congestion can impact on economic objectives
   - Lack of public transport has huge impacts on social inclusion objectives especially elderly and rural

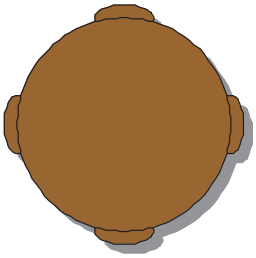
2. 2015 Budget and the New Approach to Regional Transportation needs Transport Planning inputs
   - Strategic - to ensure that the case for 'long-list interventions' and area-based transport planning are articulated
   - Local – to ensure that accessibility analyses are used to identify transport need

3. The Community Transport sector has the knowledge to identify specific local transport needs and the skills to specify efficient integrated transport services

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Round table discussion



- What transport is delivered by the Departments of the NI Assembly?
  - Is there a joined up approach?
  - Are there any policy barriers to sharing resources and better planning?
  - Who is monitoring Departmental partnership working?

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Working in Cooperation

Ciarán Rogan
Translink

CTA Conference - Cooperative Transport 2012
16th August 2012

Working in cooperation
Ciarán Rogan | Translink

let's go together

translink.co.uk

Cooperation at work



examples of partnership working between Translink and CTA

individual Rural Community Transport Partnerships (RCTP's)

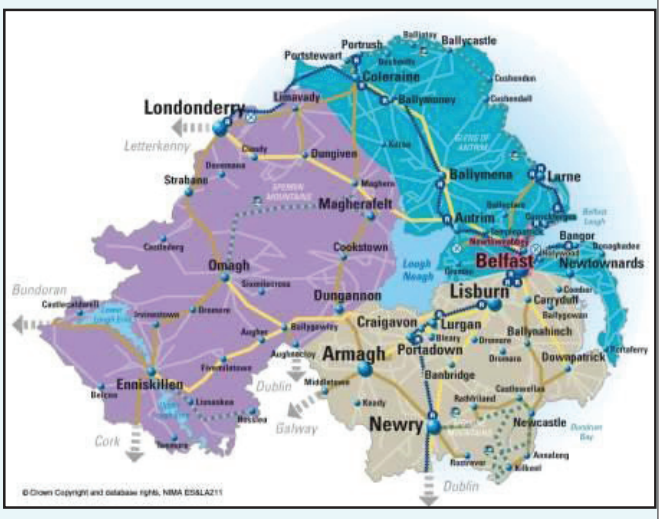
let's go together

translink.co.uk

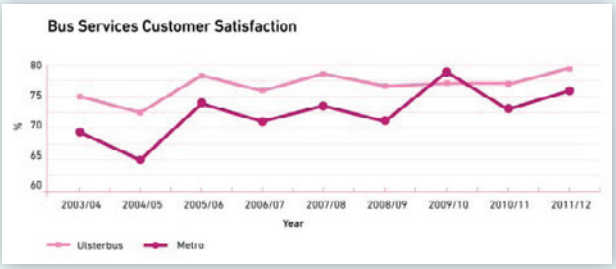
Translink – An Introduction

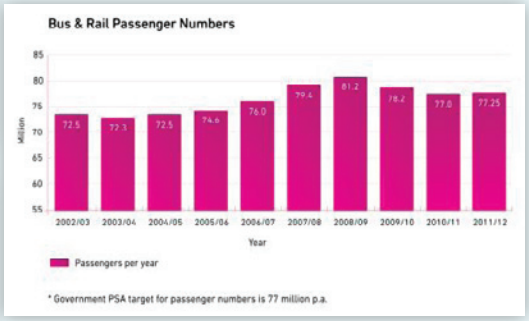
Translink is the major provider of passenger transport services in Northern Ireland and the 2010/11 transport statistics were:-

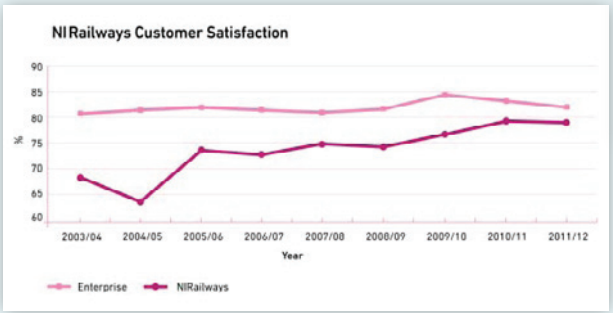
	Ulsterbus	Metro
Passenger Journeys	42million	26million
Bus Miles	36million	8million
Staff	2,340	760
Ave Bus Age	6.4 years	7.1 years
No. of Buses	1,193	305
No. of services	245	59
No. of Stations	28	0



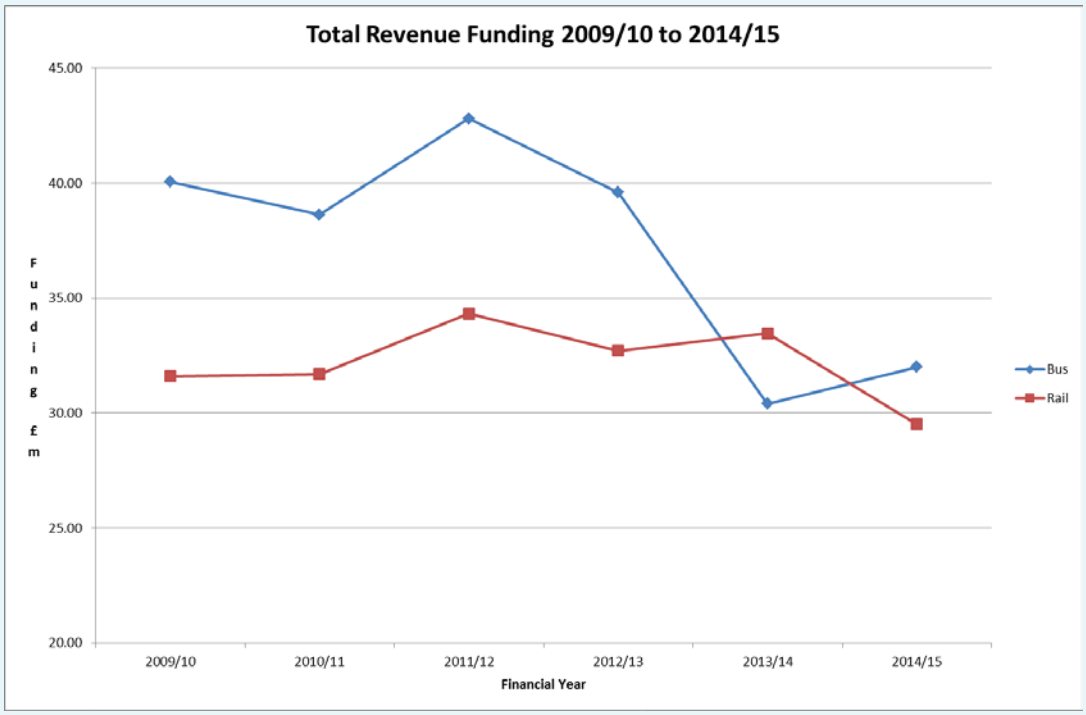
Performance



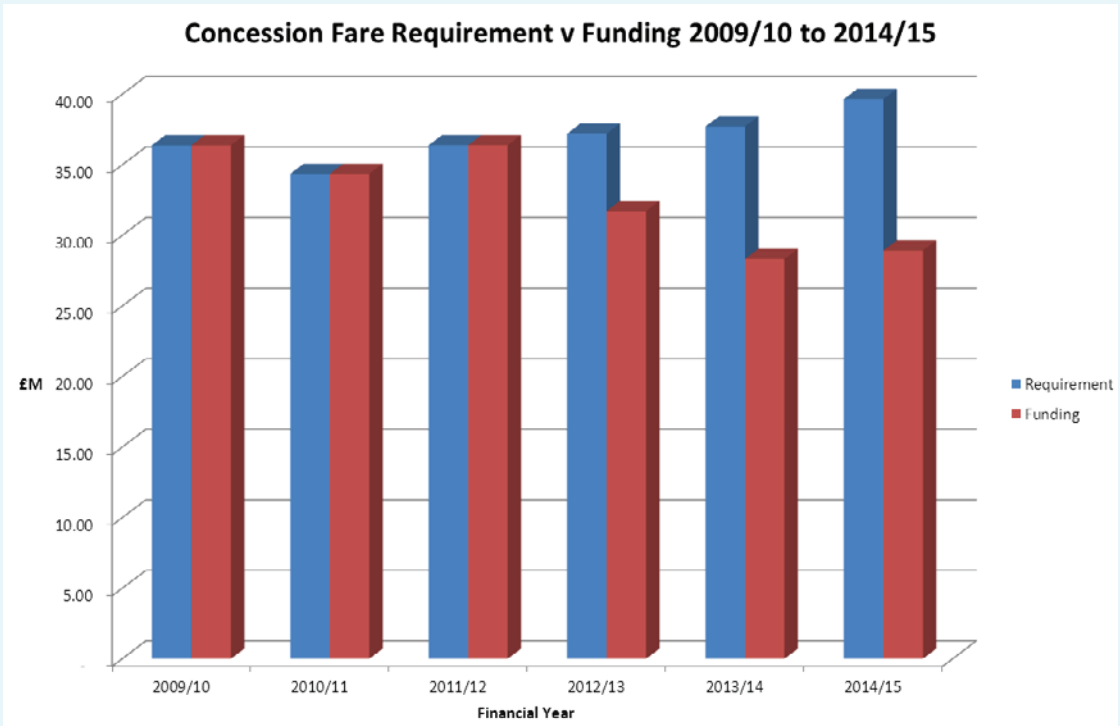




let's go together translink.co.uk



let's go together translink.co.uk



let's go together translink.co.uk

...cooperation in fleet

Cooperation over the past 12 years

maintenance service across Ulsterbus garages for the fleet (41 vehicles) of Rural Transport Fund (RTF) minibuses operated by CT groups.

We also procured these vehicles on behalf of DRD

let's go together translink.co.uk

...cooperation in information

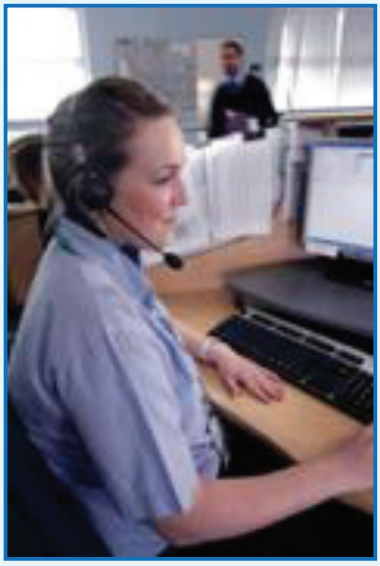
Public Transport network maps include the Rural Community Transport Partnerships operating areas.

The maps incorporate the network of express, local, and cross-border services operated by Translink and illustrate the Rural Transport network (both funded and non-funded services)

Highlighting linkages and access

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...cooperation in passenger information



In March 2012 we tailored an information and training package for CT staff at the Translink contact centre.

This partnership approach to the delivery of transport will provide rural people with more choices when travelling around NI

let's go together translink.co.uk

...cooperation in action

pilot Ulsterbus service (294) from Enniskillen to Altnagelvin hospital from September

operating two days per week / 2 two return journeys per day.

funded by DRD under the RTF and developed in conjunction with the local CT groups, i.e. Easilink CT and Fermanagh CT.

The local CT group will be able to pick passengers up at their home and feed into the route of the Ulsterbus service for their longer journey.

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...cooperation in action

promotion of this service will rely heavily on the local CT groups offering advice to their members in order to encourage usage of the service

Translink will produce the printed material and CT will assist with the direct mailing.

The Western HSC Trust have said that they operate a partial booking system - a patient will be sent a letter (accompanied by a timetable for the service) asking them to phone and make an appointment and at that stage they can ask for an appointment time that suits the bus times.

let's go together translink.co.uk

ciaran.rogan@translink.co.uk

click translink.co.uk or call 028 90666630

let's go together

translink.co.uk

cta uk

Community Transport Association

Accessing Health and Social Care

Stella Cunningham
Southern Area Manager
Patient and Client Council

Today's Presentation

- Role and function at PCC
- How can access to health and social care be improved
- Your journey to health and social care facilities
- Transforming Your Care - a service user perspective



HSC Patient and Client Council

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PCC Role and Function

- A powerful independent voice for patients, clients and carers and communities
- NDPB established by legislation in April 2009
- Non-executive Board - 5 local teams
- Five local advisory committees



HSC Patient and Client Council

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Statutory Functions

- Listen and act on people's views
- Encourage people to get involved
- Help people make a complaint
- Provide advice and information
- Duty to involve
- Duty to comment on HSC consultation schemes
- Provide a home for Bamford Monitoring Group

HSC Patient and Client Council



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How can access be improved

- Access to services is a wide issue and is a public priority
- Transport is a recurring public priority
- Transport is core yet peripheral to HSC
- Vulnerable groups tend to be big HSC users
- PCC exploring "Your journey to health and social care facilities"

HSC Patient and Client Council



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Your journey to health and social care facilities

- Joint Project with Consumer Council
- Range of Methods
- Over 400 respondents/participants
- Use of car a preference for most
- Issues of cost of travel and lack of information
- Report and further action in the autumn



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Working together to improve transport access

- No one agency can do it alone
- Public debate about expectation
- Cohesive planning and financing
- Targeting of resources
- Making information more accessible

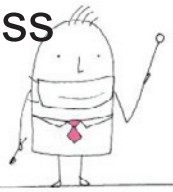


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Transforming Your Care - a service user perspective

- Review of Health and Social Care
- Developing hospitals as networks
- Delivering services locally where possible
- Managing long term conditions
- Access will be key to this process



HSC Patient and Client Council

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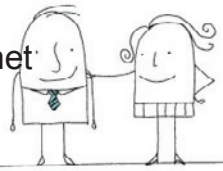
Contact Details



Patient & Client Council
Southern Area Office
Quaker Buildings
High Street
Lurgan
Craigavon
BT66 8BB

Tel: 028 3834 9900
Fax: 028 3834 9858

www.patientclientcouncil.hscni.net



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The Consumer's Experience

Aodhan O'Donnell
Consumer Council

energy • transport • water • money affairs • education • consumer support

Consumer Council for Northern Ireland

Customer Service and Passenger Expectations

energy • transport • water • money affairs • education • consumer support

Content

Customer Expectations

Importance of Customer Service

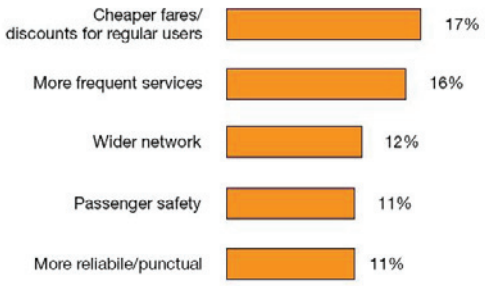
Service Improvement

energy • transport • water • money affairs • education • consumer support

Customer Expectations

Top five priorities for public transport in Northern Ireland

Q: What should be the top priorities be for public transport in Northern Ireland in the future?



"Public Transport – on the right track?", Consumer Council, 2009

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Barriers to Complaining Overview

The research was conducted to examine:

- The willingness of passengers to make a complaint
- The barriers passengers face making a complaint
- Passengers' satisfaction with the response they received
- Passengers' awareness of how to make a complaint

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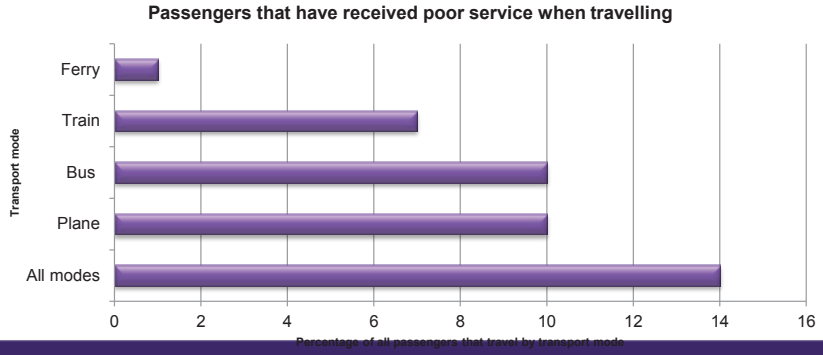
Methodology

- Questionnaire data was collected in February 2012.
- Interviews were conducted across Northern Ireland with a sample of 1,013 adults surveyed.
- In April 2012 Consumer Council staff also conducted a focus group comprising adults with a learning disability who are clients of the Orchardville Society.

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Findings

- In the past 12 months 14 per cent of passengers have experienced poor service when travelling
- Delayed and cancelled services and poor staff attitude are the types of poor service most frequently experienced across all modes of transport.



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- Passengers felt entitled to complain in half of all instances of poor service.
- However, only a quarter of instances of poor service resulted in a complaint being made by the passenger.
- Main reasons for not making a complaint:
  - Passenger believed it would be a waste of time
  - Making a complaint was considered too much hassle
  - The passenger did not want to cause a fuss

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- Only approximately half (55 per cent) of passengers that made a complaint received a response.
- Of the passengers that received a response only approximately a third (35 per cent) were satisfied with the response received.

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Reasons for not feeling entitled to complain	All modes	Bus	Train	Plane
Nothing would be done	19%	18%	17%	24%
No one would listen to the complaint	16%	12%	17%	24%
Didn't know who to complain to	6%	6%	8%	6%
Not important enough	6%	6%	17%	0
Problem was beyond the control of the transport company	6%	0	0	18%
Too much hassle	5%	3%	8%	6%
Not enough time	5%	6%	8%	0
Didn't want to complain	5%	9%	0	0
Happens frequently	3%	6%	0	0
No major problems	3%	3%	8%	0

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- Passengers from low income households are generally less likely to complain and passengers from high income households are generally more likely to complain

- Consumers are much less likely to make a complaint when travelling than when buying other goods or service. For transport, a complaint was made in only 25 per cent of instances of poor service whereas 94 per cent of consumers who felt a reason to complain when buying other goods or services did so.

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Recommendations

Transport providers must address the perception that nothing will be done if a complaint is raised, by:

- Active promotion of complaints handling services
- Ensuring complaint processes address passengers' concerns and improve service standards.
- Enabling passengers to complain in the manner and medium which suits them best.
- Ensuring passengers receive a substantive response within a specified timeframe.

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- Transport providers should ensure all customer facing staff:
  - Receive appropriate customer service training
  - Are fully aware of passenger rights
  - Are committed to providing passengers with information on how to make a complaint
- Transport providers should provide free-phone complaints lines

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Conclusion

- Importance of having clear consistent complaint procedures
- Provides an opportunity for a positive outcome from a negative experience
- Failure to handle effectively can magnify impact
- Need to place sufficient value on complaints
- Business improvement.

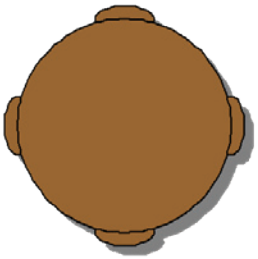
energy • transport • water • money affairs • education • consumer support

Questions

energy • transport • water • money affairs • education • consumer support

Community Transport Association

Round table discussion



- How can we ensure the passenger's needs are a central part of the Transport Planning Process?
  - Are access needs being considered by Government?
  - Who can someone complain to if they don't have appropriate access to services? Should they complain to the transport provider or to Health/Education/service provider?

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Community Transport working in Cooperation

Kellie Armstrong

Director for Northern Ireland

CTAUK

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Community Transport Association

Community Transport: working in Cooperation

- DRD's Dial a Lift and Door2Door programmes
- Down Community Transport & RCN – access to Lagan Valley Hospital
- Easilift and Fermanagh CT & Translink – access to Altnagelvin
- Green Pastures – community youth programme
- Enable NI – respite care Southern HSCT Area
- North Coast CT – access to major events

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Community Transport: expected to deliver the solution

- Not my statutory responsibility!
- Assumption Community Transport has to provide transport
- Assumption people cannot use public transport

Onus is on all to consider access issues

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2015 - expectations

- New PfG and budget term
- Continued economic pressure
- Aging population
- Impact of recession – social and rural exclusion
- Continued centralisation of services

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Moving to Cooperative Transport

- Effective transport planning
- Cross-departmental policy and sharing of resources
- Cross-departmental communication and information provision
- Consider the best mode of transport based on cost and quality
- Appropriate integration of services

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Summary and Close

Stephen Hickey
Chair
CTAUK


cta
uk
Community
Transport
Association
CTA Cooperative Transport 2012

North Eastern Education and Library Board

Committee for Education
Room 241
Parliament Buildings
Tel: +44 (0)28 9052 21821
Fax: +44 (0)28 9052 1371

To: Paul Carlisle
Clerk to the Committee for Regional Development

From: Peter McCallion
Clerk to the Committee for Education

Date: 7 December 2012

Subject: Inquiry into the Better Use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport Options

Please find attached correspondence from the North Eastern Education and Library Board dated 19 November 2012 regarding your Inquiry into the Better Use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport Options.

The Committee for Education noted this at its meeting of 5 December 2012 and agreed to forward it to the Regional Development Committee.

Regards

Peter McCallion
Committee Clerk

NEELB
Developing People for Life

North Eastern Education and Library Board
County Hall, 182 Galgorm Road, Ballymena BT42 1HN
Telephone: (028) 2565 3333 Fax: (028) 2564 6071
Minicom: (028) 2566 2404 (Textphone)
Websites: www.neelb.org.uk
www.education-support.org.uk

Mr Peter McCallion
Committee Clerk
Northern Ireland Assembly
Committee for Education
Room 241, Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
BELFAST BT4 3XX

19 November 2012

Dear Mr McCallion

Inquiry into the Better Use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport Options

I acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 16 November 2012.

The Board will respond directly to the Committee for Regional Development Inquiry within the specified time frame.

Yours sincerely

S N S McCurdy
Chief Executive

Department of Education

Committee for Education
Room 241
Parliament Buildings
Tel: +44 (0)28 9052 21821
Fax: +44 (0)28 9052 1371

To: Paul Carlisle
Clerk to the Committee for Regional Development

From: Peter McCallion
Clerk to the Committee for Education

Date: 14 December 2012

Subject: Inquiry into the Better Use of Public & Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport Options

At its meeting of 12 December 2012, the Committee for Education noted the attached correspondence from the Department of Education and the Belfast Education and Library Board regarding your Inquiry into the better use of public and community sector funds for the delivery of bus transport options.

The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to you for information.

Regards

Peter McCallion
Committee Clerk

Department of
Education
AN ROINN
Oideachais
MANNYSTRIE O
Lear

Peter McCallion
Clerk to the Committee for Education
Room 243
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
BELFAST
BT4 3XX

Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
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Bangor
BT19 7PR

Tel No: (028) 9127 9849
Fax No: (028) 9127 9100

Email: veronica.bintley@deni.gov.uk

5 December 2012

Dear Peter

Committee for Regional Development Inquiry into the Better Use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport Options

The Education Committee recently forwarded to the Department two letters dated 7th and 15th November from the Regional Development Committee inviting comments on the above Inquiry and seeking the appearance of officials to give oral evidence to the Inquiry on 30th January 2013.

Attached is the input to the Inquiry, including the statistical information requested. I can also confirm that transport officials from both DE and the Education and Library Board will attend as requested to give oral evidence on school transport policy and operations respectively. Their names will be notified to the Regional Development Committee shortly.

Grateful if you would forward on to the Regional Development Committee the attached response.

Yours sincerely

Veronica

Veronica Bintley
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

ACTUAL OUTTURN EXPENDITURE HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT 2009/10

SUMMARY SHEET

	BOARD VEHICLES	ULSTERBUS	METRO	NIR	BUS EIRANN/ SWILLY	TAXIS	DAILY ALLOWANCE	PRIVATE OPERATORS	TRANSLINK PRIVATE HIRE	STRANGFORD/ RATHLIN FERRY	TOTAL
CONTROLLED:											
PRIMARY	3799999	363702	789	674	0	282983	344599	686383	74733	0	**5553862**
POST-PRIMARY	2229909	4274389	68400	22888	0	275695	72501	222385	19061	0	**7185228**
MAINTAINED:											
PRIMARY	4320538	356517	3040	786	547	710854	251290	1024030	24355	0	**6691957**
POST-PRIMARY	3196431	4973167	164005	3026	14763	270047	105309	835985	0	2264	**9564997**
CONTROLLED INTEGRATED:											
PRIMARY	158139	20300	6333	2675	0	21832	63768	39379	0	0	**312426**
POST-PRIMARY	75979	438633	5504	5684	0	9375	5823	78519	0	358	**619875**
GMI:											
PRIMARY	80181	31787	90346	0	547	87623	304773	248581	68301	0	**912139**
POST-PRIMARY	267263	2011108	455042	83488	0	70888	43381	451591	46593	0	**3429354**
IRISH-MEDIUM:											
PRIMARY	26224	3711	3535	0	0	46114	120446	205340	0	0	**405370**
POST-PRIMARY	0	31868	93993	324	0	6142	24377	3913	0	0	**160617**
CONTROLLED GRAMMAR	330217	4461060	62659	8905	0	37271	92250	8385	0	953	**5001700**
VOLUNTARY GRAMMAR											
DENOMINATIONAL	988386	7684934	440870	20330	86212	126238	73909	503229	0	11440	**9935548**
NON-DENOMINATIONAL	125129	4918094	386605	215782	13670	36858	93432	12665	0	403	**5802638**
SPECIAL:											
PRIMARY	743473	30183	4743	0	547	1258134	122016	180544	14438	0	**2354078**
POST-PRIMARY	449812	648230	38696	10340	3281	1800298	60490	144598	9997	715	**3166457**
SPECIAL SCHOOLS	6494963	9893	399	925	0	2017750	54877	1553439	71293	0	**10203539**
AEP	41523	17328	1235	423	0	422052	0	5590	0	0	**488151**
TOTAL	**23328166**	**30274904**	**1826194**	**376250**	**119567**	**7480154**	**1833241**	**6204556**	**328771**	**16133**	**71787936**

BUILDING MAINENANCE: 123,059
ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS: 1,849,115
OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY): 2,093,735 (3 for 2 Payments to Translink)
INCOME **506,004**
TOTAL HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT EXPENDITURE 2009/10: £75,347,841

ACTUAL OUTTURN EXPENDITURE HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT 2010/11

SUMMARY SHEET

	BOARD VEHICLES	ULSTERBUS	METRO	NIR	BUS EIRANN/ SWILLY	TAXIS	DAILY ALLOWANCE	PRIVATE OPERATORS	TRANSLINK PRIVATE HIRE	STRANGFORD/ ATHLIN FERRY	TOTAL
CONTROLLED:											
PRIMARY	3745415	290587	798	692	0	352409	365808	493100	59737	0	**5308546**
POST-PRIMARY	2046370	4162733	66959	25419	0	214076	78116	217708	0	0	**6811381**
MAINTAINED:											
PRIMARY	4655057	329481	3869	615	0	499204	293550	930211	106044	0	**6818031**
POST-PRIMARY	2891763	5232158	165408	1372	5858	283149	117462	667010	0	2374	**9366554**
CONTROLLED INTEGRATED:											
PRIMARY	67121	64234	6441	1600	0	13769	62998	22196	0	0	**238359**
POST-PRIMARY	85609	417169	1080	4103	0	16346	4925	63655	0	528	**593415**
GMI:											
PRIMARY	105140	28696	62349	331	0	58636	332995	190651	60741	0	**839539**
POST-PRIMARY	253794	2006344	404916	86625	0	103171	54607	438228	43673	0	**3391358**
IRISH-MEDIUM:											
PRIMARY	35917	3049	3793	0	0	51947	123538	174942	0	0	**393186**
POST-PRIMARY	0	37057	87088	473	0	9579	66071	0	0	0	**200268**
CONTROLLED GRAMMAR	327137	4527551	69230	8133	0	37691	53797	10205	0	1055	**5034799**
VOLUNTARY GRAMMAR											
DENOMINATIONAL	1110982	8013317	460959	23383	78631	124910	137339	403678	0	14113	**10367312**
NON-DENOMINATIONAL	118036	4750411	360142	227688	12692	43480	71727	10562	0	754	**5595492**
SPECIAL:											
PRIMARY	790960	24873	2825	1067	488	995756	133914	155460	4016	0	**2109359**
POST-PRIMARY	497235	731603	35615	10778	3905	1858956	57681	90720	4518	528	**3291539**
SPECIAL SCHOOLS	6469157	13193	570	946	0	2175962	50475	1158532	0	0	**9868835**
AEP	38037	18570	0	159	0	374558	517	6948	0	0	**438789**
TOTAL	**23237730**	**30651026**	**1732042**	**393384**	**101574**	**7213599**	**2005520**	**5033806**	**278729**	**19352**	**70666762**

BUILDING MAINENANCE: £ 144,132
ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS: £ 1,799,899
OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY): £ 2,394,728 (includes £2,315,513 - 3 for 2 Payments to Translink and £72,308 for 5 Board Driver Training Costs)
INCOME **543,308**
TOTAL HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT EXPENDITURE 2010/11: £74,462,213

ACTUAL OUTTURN EXPENDITURE HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT 2011/12

SUMMARY SHEET

	BOARD VEHICLES	ULSTERBUS	METRO	NIR	BUS EIRANN/ SWILLY	TAXIS	DAILY ALLOWANCE	PRIVATE OPERATORS	TRANSLINK PRIVATE HIRE	STRANGFORD/ RATHLIN FERRY	TOTAL
CONTROLLED:											
PRIMARY	2970136	218420	1564	0	0	438933	339961	449461	34275	0	**4452750**
POST-PRIMARY	1740547	3939844	52612	29070	0	106659	66046	154679	11089	0	**6100546**
MAINTAINED:											
PRIMARY	3944352	305861	4982	0	0	399777	320532	1067793	88323	0	**6131620**
POST-PRIMARY	2702825	5225940	164056	3335	4320	155159	119580	670135	4536	2377	**9052263**
CONTROLLED INTEGRATED:											
PRIMARY	50701	73313	8210	1567	0	4247	45320	13451	0	0	**196809**
POST-PRIMARY	45476	454300	1139	4233	0	2123	8826	56748	0	594	**573439**
GMI:											
PRIMARY	98885	31135	54826	0	0	121189	321041	238782	0	0	**865858**
POST-PRIMARY	361896	1909811	404742	90611	0	51370	40605	436558	19154	0	**3314747**
IRISH-MEDIUM:											
PRIMARY	36590	3168	2703	0	0	112441	87729	215643	0	0	**458274**
POST-PRIMARY	18176	40377	82941	473	0	4023	4932	11350	0	0	**162272**
CONTROLLED GRAMMAR	269320	4282969	76744	8690	0	10685	108117	2458	5544	1634	**4766161**
VOLUNTARY GRAMMAR											
DENOMINATIONAL	1093023	7800679	447763	24444	69509	70047	121926	345039	5544	14115	**9992089**
NON-DENOMINATIONAL	469564	4510819	374015	245235	14401	30352	135577	8602	0	475	**5789040**
SPECIAL:											
PRIMARY	1118564	19125	3168	1045	0	905120	187903	62675	1008	149	**2298757**
POST-PRIMARY	747637	886561	42298	10455	2400	1738310	97320	156529	1008	1040	**3683558**
SPECIAL SCHOOLS	8540341	8315	0	473	0	1945019	107372	857910	0	0	**11459430**
AEP	8812	13889	2810	878	0	179807	0	2103	0	0	**208299**
TOTAL	**24216845**	**29724526**	**1724573**	**420509**	**90630**	**6275261**	**2112787**	**4749916**	**170481**	**20384**	**69505912**

BUILDING MAINENANCE: £137,866
ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS: £1,655,431
OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY): £2,265,118 (3 for 2 Payments to Translink)
INCOME from Board Vehicles: £1,188,616
TOTAL HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT EXPENDITURE 2011/12: £72,375,711

Jimmy Spratt MLA
Chair to the Committee for
Regional Development
Room 254
Parliament Buildings
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Stormont
Belfast BT4 3XX

XXX December 2012

Committee for Regional Development Inquiry into the Better Use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport Options

Your Committee recently forwarded via the Education Committee two letters dated 7th and 15th November to the Department of Education (DE) inviting comments on the above Inquiry and seeking the appearance of officials to give oral evidence to the Inquiry on 30th January 2013.

Attached below is the DE input to the Inquiry, including the statistical information requested. I can also confirm that transport officials from both DE and the Education and Library Board will attend as requested to give oral evidence on school transport policy and operations respectively. Their names will be notified to the Regional Development Committee shortly.

Background: Existing school transport policy

Currently, the Department of Education's transport policy is predicated upon two eligibility criteria, namely 'distance' and 'suitable school'. The distance criterion is two miles for pupils attending primary schools and three miles for those attending post-primary schools. It is measured using the shortest route capable of being walked. A suitable school is one in the recognised categories of controlled, integrated, Irish medium, maintained, denominational or non-denominational grammar. No other definition of suitable is used.

When a parent selects a school in a particular category for their child, then the child is assessed on the basis of distance from the chosen school and all other nearby schools in the parent's chosen category. If there is no suitable school within the distance criterion then the pupil is eligible for assistance with transport. If there is a school, or schools, in the same category chosen by the parent and within the relevant distance criterion of their home, then the parent must apply to all these nearer schools and be refused a place in each before assistance with transport to a more distant school will be granted.

Terms of Reference of the Regional Development Inquiry

(a) Current school transport requirement.

Education and Library Boards are responsible for providing pupils with assistance with transport. Usually, this takes the form of a seat on a bus but may take the form of an allowance in lieu of transport. By application of the school transport policy, approximately 90,000 pupils are eligible for assistance of whom c.92% travel by bus.

(b) School transport infrastructure and costs, and
(c) inter-relationships.

School transport by bus is provided by a combination of Translink designated (ie., pupils-only) and stage carriage services, Board vehicles, and private operator vehicles. Translink has estimated that around one thousand of its buses (both designated and stage carriage) convey about 50,000 pupils to school. The Board fleet is comprised of approximately 850 buses conveying around 26,000 pupils, while private bus and taxi operators carry around 10.800 pupils. Costs and pupil numbers are summarised in the attached tables. Board and private operator services may overlap with Translink routes (particularly in urban areas) or complement them (particularly in rural areas where Translink services are few, or absent).

(d) Identifying examples of best practice, and
(e) Future options

While the existing school transport system exemplifies the integration of public and private transport networks and services, the Department of Education and Boards, along with DHSSPS and Community Transport have agreed to participate in a DRD-led pilot study which seeks to examine existing practice, infrastructure, inter-relationships and options. The study will take place in the Dungannon area in the coming months.

School Transport costs

In the last three years for which the Department has data, school transport costs were as follows.

(i) Special Education Needs expenditure per pupil carried (nearest £):

2011/12: £17,441,745 / 9,013 pupils = £1,935 per pupil

2010/11: £15,269,773 / 8,616 pupils = £1,772 per pupil

2009/10: £15,130,882 / 8,533 pupils = £1,773 per pupil

(ii) Actual Outturn Expenditure:

See attached tables.

I trust this information is useful to the Regional Development Committee.

Yours sincerely

Mr Peter McCallion
Clerk to the Committee
Committee for Education

Belfast Education and Library Board

GB/BC

5 December 2012

Mr J Spratt MLA
Chair to the Committee for Regional Development
Room 254 Parliament Buildings
Stormont
BELFAST
BT4 3XX

Dear Mr Spratt

Inquiry into the Better Use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport Options

I refer to your letter dated 7 November 2012 inviting the board to provide evidence regarding the Committee's inquiry. The Belfast Education and Library Board welcomes the inquiry and will co-operate as required with the ongoing examination of the issues.

In relation to the financial information requested, all education and library boards provide annual financial statistics to the Department of Education. It is my understanding that the Department will provide this information on behalf of all boards.

The Belfast board operates a fleet of 84 buses including spares which transport approximately 940 pupils. The overwhelming majority of these pupils require specialist transport to cater for their complex and challenging special needs. Eligible mainstream pupils are issued with Translink travel passes to facilitate their attendance at school.

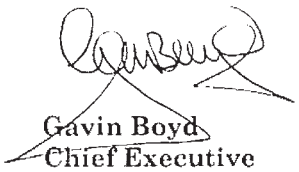
In addition to the home-to-school transport function, the board's fleet is extensively used to provide passenger transport to facilitate a range of educational visits and outings for special school pupils. Transport is also provided to registered youth groups on request and the board vehicles provide substantial support to special school summer schemes. Board buses are also used during the day to transport school meals from 40 meals kitchens to one hundred dining centres plus internal mail deliveries between board headquarters and some 200 schools.

Finally, education and library board transport officers have been liaising with Translink officials to explore the concept of transport integration. I am aware of a joint pilot project between the local education and library board and Translink

Belfast Education and Library Board, 40 Academy Street, Belfast BT1 2NQ Website: www.belb.org.uk
Telephone: 028 9056 4000 • Fax: 028 9033 1714 • Email: info@belb.co.uk • RNID Typetalk: 18001 028 9056 4000

in Dungannon and Cookstown which aims to test the concept of pupil transport integration. Whilst this pilot scheme is still in its infancy, I am sure its development over the coming months will provide valuable insight into the potential for further integration of public transport in Northern Ireland.

Yours sincerely



Gavin Boyd
Chief Executive

Southern Health and Social Care Trust and Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Committee for Health Social Services and Public Safety
Room 410
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Tel: +44 (0) 28 90521841

From: Kathryn Bell

To: Paul Carlisle, Clerk of the Committee for Regional Development

Date: 17 December 2012

Subject: Inquiry into the Better Use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport Options

At its meeting on 12 December 2012 the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety considered a response from the South Eastern HSCT and the Northern HSCT regarding the Committee for Regional Development's Inquiry into the Better Use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport Options.

The Committee agreed to forward this on to you.

Kathryn Bell
Clerk

Enc.

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Chairman
Colm McKenna

Chief Executive
Hugh McCaughey

Mr Jimmy Spratt MLA
Chair to the Committee for Regional Development
Room 254
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

27 November 2012 **Our Ref:** HMcC/EM/ts **Your Ref:**

Dear Mr Spratt

Re: Committee for Regional Development Inquiry into the Better Use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport Options

Thank you for your letter of 23 October 2012, addressed to Dr Andrew McCormick. I can confirm that the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust currently operates a fleet of 161 vehicles. Whilst many of these are used for the carrying of goods we do provide passenger carrying vehicles which service:

1. Centres for Elderly Persons
2. Centre for Persons with Physical Disability
3. Centres for Persons with Learning Disability

These services are provided from 3 main bases Newtownards, Downpatrick and Lisburn. The Trust also holds contracts for Courier and Taxi Services (including wheel chair taxis) which are used when the carrying of single individuals is more appropriate.

One of the key areas where there could be linkages is between Health Trusts and Education and Library Boards. Often, particularly with persons with Physical Disability they will be transported by Education yet when they leave school or college they will move across to Health and Social Care Trust. This means that on occasions public sector transport from 2 organisations may be in the same streets or areas duplicating the costs. It is appreciated that this would require administrative refinement but would in our view offer potential for savings.

The Trust does also have contracts with Community Transport Associations where these represent best value for money and can be more tailored to particular client needs. However, there is currently a limit to the capacity which such bodies can offer.

As an organisation, we would welcome the opportunity to work with other public and community transport providers to ensure best value is obtained for the public purse.

Further to the specific financial queries, please see listed below:-

- **Actual Outturn Expenditure on Health & Social Care Transport**

The total cost for each year, split by Provider, is shown in the table below. It includes:-

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, Trust Headquarters, Ulster Hospital, Upper Newtownards Road, Dundonald, BT16 1RH - Tel (028) 9055 3100 - Fax: (028) 9055 3199 - www.setrust.hscni.net

- Transport for patients attending outpatient appointments and hospital discharges.
- Travel for clients attending Day Care services.
- Transport for children in care.
- Transport for Patients in long stay Hospitals.

Information on Transport Provision over the Past 3 Financial Years

Actual outturn expenditure on Health and Social Care Transport

	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10
Trust Transport	1,466,992	1,365,799	1,306,628
Core Expenditure(Fuel, Insurance,Repairs,Tyres etc)	1,006,653	1,053,631	794,941
NIAS	410,830	406,762	426,874
Taxis	909,079	731,163	784,758
Private Ambulance Provider	166,324	276,926	233,519
Volunteer Drivers	60,503	77,757	48,481
Hospital Travel Cost Scheme and Direct Payments	172,260	194,705	216,190
TOTAL	**4,192,641**	**4,106,743**	**3,811,391**

Taxi costs can not easily be split between social care and non-emergency transport journeys and it is also not possible to show the Hospital Travel Cost Scheme and Direct Payments separately.

➢ **Expenditure on Social Care Transport per Passenger Carried**

This information is difficult to provide for all Social Care transport as records are not maintained of individual passenger journeys made by taxi and there is no breakdown of direct payments. The cost per passenger journey for passengers carried on Trust operated vehicles is show in the Table below. This includes the staff and vehicle operating costs (maintenance, fuel and insurance).

Cost per Passenger Journey for Social Care Transport

	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10
Internal Trust Transport	4.09	3.75	Not Available

➢ **Expenditure on Non Emergency Transport per Passenger Carried or per Mode/Provider**

The Trust does not have passenger details for NIAS and other providers, therefore is unable to provide the cost per journey.

Yours sincerely

Hugh McCaughey
Chief Executive

Northern Health and Social Care Trust

28th November 2012

Mr Jimmy Spratt MLA
Chair to the Committee for Regional Development
Room 254
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
BELFAST
BT4 3XX

Dear Mr Spratt,

Committee for Regional Development Inquiry into the Better use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport Options

I refer to your letter of 23rd October and apologise for the delay in responding.

Staff have been able to ascertain that over the past 3 years the Trust has expended the amounts noted below on providing transport to members of the public, such as coaches, taxis, etc., to enable their attendance at clinic/doctor/hospital appointments.

2009/10: £67,828
2010/11: £81,980
2011/12: £109,906

Unfortunately our finance systems do not record the number of patient journeys that this covers nor the cost per passenger carried.

I trust this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely

Sean Donaghy
Chief Executive

Chief Executive's Office, 'The Cottage', 5 Greenmount Avenue, Ballymena.
Tel: 028 25633701, Fax No: 028 25633737
Email: chief.executive@northerntrust.hscni.net.

Department of Education

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To: Paul Carlisle
Clerk to the Committee for Regional Development

From: Peter McCallion
Clerk to the Committee for Education

Date: 15 January 2013

Subject: Committee for Regional Development – Bus Inquiry

With regard to your Committee's inquiry into the Better Use of Public and community Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport Options, please find enclosed, correspondence and other relevant material for your information.

Regards

Peter McCallion
Committee Clerk

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18 October 2012

Dear Peter

HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT - HEALTH & SAFETY

Thank you for your letter of 8 October on behalf of the Education Committee seeking further information in relation to:

(i) Contracts which were discontinued as a consequence of health and safety non-compliance issues. (Including detail on the fifteen operators who lost contracts due to these issues; the criteria used for the termination of contracts and whether any of these operators have subsequently been given new contracts.)
(ii) How AccessNI provides clearance for non-UK nationals involved in the provision of home to school transport services;
(iii) an update on a report of whistle-blowing/fraud prevention considered by the Committee prior to the summer; and
(iv) an update on the renewal of contracts with Translink and whether this has resulted in any efficiencies and savings being generated.

Discontinued contracts

The Boards have provided the following information in relation to the discontinued contracts referred to in evidence to the Committee on 3 October. (The Committee should note that, following a DE request to provide more detailed information, the Boards revised the number of contract terminations downwards from fifteen to thirteen.)

[redacted]

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

SEELB

	OPERATOR STATUS	REASON FOR CONTRACT TERMINATION	CONTRACTOR RE-APPOINTED Y or N	IF YES, WHAT LENGTH OF PERIOD BETWEEN TERMINATION AND RE-APPOINTMENT
2008/09	Taxi	Contractual non – compliance – contractual issues other than vehicle safety	N	
2010/11	Taxi	Contractual non-compliance – contractual issues other than vehicle safety.	N	
2010/11	Taxi	Contractual non-compliance – contractual issues other than vehicle safety.	N	
2010/11	Taxi	Contractual non-compliance – contractual issues other than vehicle safety.	N	

SELB

	OPERATOR STATUS	REASON FOR CONTRACT TERMINATION	CONTRACTOR RE-APPOINTED Y or N	IF YES, WHAT LENGTH OF PERIOD BETWEEN TERMINATION AND RE-APPOINTMENT
2008/09	Taxi	Contractual non – compliance – contractual issues other than vehicle safety	N	
2009/10	Bus	Contractual non-compliance – contractual issues other than vehicle safety.	N	
2010/11	Bus	Serious contractual non-compliance issue - vehicle safety	N	

WELB

	OPERATOR STATUS	REASON FOR CONTRACT TERMINATION	CONTRACTOR RE-APPOINTED Y or N	IF YES, WHAT LENGTH OF PERIOD BETWEEN TERMINATION AND RE-APPOINTMENT
2008/09	Taxi * 1 operator with 6 contracts	Contractual non – compliance – contractual issues other than vehicle safety	N	

In summary, only one contract was terminated as a consequence of health and safety non-compliance issues – referred to in the table above as "Serious contractual non-compliance – vehicle issue". This termination related to a serious vehicle defect that gave immediate concerns for pupil safety. The remainder of the contract terminations were for, "contractual issues other than vehicle safety", for example, failure to provide appropriate paperwork such as insurance, PSV certificates or AccessNI certification. None of the operators who lost contracts have been reinstated.

The operation of AccessNI

AccessNI has advised the Department that, for checks of Southern residents working on school transport services, it has an agreement with the PSNI which then contacts the Garda which in turn carries out criminal record checks. Any information passed from the Garda to PSNI is then forwarded by the latter to Access NI which adds the information to its Enhanced Disclosure Certificate (EDC). Boards then consider the EDC as part of the contract-awarding process.

With regard to non-British/Irish nationals from outside the island of Ireland, AccessNI reports that it is unable to obtain criminal records or other relevant information as part of their Disclosure service. AccessNI is only able to provide details of offences committed in the UK. Responsibility for employing non-UK/Overseas nationals falls to employers. AccessNIs recommendation is that employers contact the relevant country's representative in the UK or examine the website of the police force of the country of origin.

Alternatively, AccessNI reports that many countries, and most other EU countries, permit their citizens to obtain certificates of good conduct, or extracts from their criminal records, that employers might use. AccessNI advises that such certificates should be treated with caution as they are difficult to confirm as genuine/complete.

I am pursuing additional information in relation to whether school transport contractors employ any non-UK/RoI nationals and will forward this information to you in due course.

Whistle-blowing/fraud prevention.

Unfortunately, this information was not available within the timescale for this response. However, I shall provide this for the Committee once it is received by the Department.

Renewal of Translink contract

The Southern Education and Library Board, which negotiates the contract on behalf of all Boards, reports that negotiations have recently concluded. As a result, Translink agreed to freeze the cost of a sessional ticket ("bus pass") and to provide a £300k rebate for the current financial year.

I trust that the Committee finds this information useful.

Yours sincerely

Veronica

VERONICA BINTLEY
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

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Peter McCallion
Clerk to the Committee for Education
Room 243
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31 October 2012

Dear Peter

HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT - TRANSLINK

Thank you for your letter from the Committee of 12 October seeking further information in relation to the process by which bus passes may be surrendered, the level of financial recompense in recent years, and the net costs to DE or the ELBs of this policy.

I should say, at the outset, that the issue of surrendering a bus pass for an allowance in lieu of transport has been interpreted erroneously by the media. This has led to widespread misunderstanding of the policy, which I trust the following will illustrate.

THE PROCESS

Once pupils are assessed as eligible, they are legally entitled to receive assistance with school transport. Boards may respond by offering a seat on a bus (Translink, Board, or privately operated), taxi, or, in certain circumstances, they may offer an allowance in lieu of transport. For example, an allowance may be offered where there are too few pupils on a route to justify the expenditure of providing a bus.

At the beginning of each school year, Boards issue Translink sessional tickets ('bus passes') to pupils who live on or near a Translink route that passes, or has a stop near, their school. Surrendering tickets is only possible in the period from September to October, and, as indicated above, where circumstances permit. This is because Translink does not issue its invoice to Boards for sessional tickets until 31 October. Since a Board has not paid for a ticket in

[redacted]

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

September/October, then it has experienced no financial loss in returning it. Media commentators did not appreciate this point, which explains why the issue attained such a high profile recently.

LEVEL OF RECOMPENSE/NET COST

The value of the allowance in lieu is never more than the value of a sessional ticket, therefore there is no additional cost to Boards to operate this aspect of the policy.

I trust that I have explained the policy, and its outworking, satisfactorily.

Yours sincerely

Veronica

VERONICA BINTLEY
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

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2 November 2012

Dear Peter

HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT - HEALTH & SAFETY

In my response of 18 October to your letter of 8 October, I indicated that I would write to you with additional information in relation to the checking of non-UK/RoI nationals who may be employed, typically, as drivers for school transport.

AccessNI – employment of non-UK/RoI nationals

The Department understands that AccessNI can provide details of offences committed by overseas nationals in the UK, but is unable to obtain overseas criminal records or other relevant information as part of its Disclosure service. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the employer to consider and evaluate the risks involved in these circumstances.

In order to evaluate the risks, AccessNI suggests that employers may wish to contact the country's representative in the United Kingdom, and consider examining the website of the Police Force of the country of origin. Also, many countries, including most other European Union countries, allow their citizens to obtain certificates of good conduct or extracts from their criminal records and these could be provided to employers.

The Education and Library Boards have confirmed that they do not employ any non-UK/RoI nationals to work as drivers or escorts on their vehicles. It is possible, however, that private operators under contract to the Boards might employ such persons.

[redacted]

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

At present, Boards do not seek information from contracted private operators that any overseas drivers and escorts are appropriately assessed. However, the Department has asked Boards to include, in the tendering and contracting process, a requirement that private operators reveal whether they are using non-UK/RoI nationals as drivers or escorts, and if so that they provide assurances that these persons have been evaluated using the guidance provided by AccessNI.

I trust that the Committee finds this information useful.

Yours sincerely

Veronica

VERONICA BINTLEY
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

Department of
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15 November 2012

Dear Peter

HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT - HEALTH & SAFETY

Further to my letter of 2 November concerning AccessNI checks of non-UK/RoI nationals.

The Boards have asked that I clarify the following statement from my letter to you:

> "At present, Boards do not seek information from contracted private operators that any overseas drivers and escorts are appropriately assessed."

The Boards have asked me to emphasise that AccessNI can check non-UK/RoI nationals for the period that such individuals have been resident in either the UK or RoI. This point was made in my letters of 18 October and 2 November.

Also Boards have asked me to correct the impression given in the statement above that they do not seek checks for the period in which overseas nationals were resident in the UK or RoI. These checks are, in fact, carried out.

It remains the case, however, that Boards no not seek checks from private operators for any overseas nationals prior to their residency in either the UK or RoI. As I noted previously, DE has asked that Boards now introduce, into the contracting process, a requirement for private operators to provide the relevant assurances with respect to overseas nationals prior to their residency in UK/RoI.

In the interests of children's safety, DE has also asked the Boards to seek relevant assurances from existing contractors even though there is no contractual obligation to provide this information.

[redacted]

INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

I apologise for any confusion caused and trust that the Committee finds this information useful.

Yours sincerely

Veronica

VERONICA BINTLEY
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer



Research and Information Service
Briefing Note

Paper 000/00 10th December 2012 NIAR 914-12

Caroline Perry

Seat belts on home-to-school transport

Summary

Legislation

The Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Seat Belts) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 require that:[1]

- Children aged from three to 12 years (or measuring 4ft 5ins – whichever they reach first) must wear a child restraint where seat belts are fitted – however there is no obligation for taxi drivers or minibus operators to provide child restraints;
- Children aged 12-13 or over 4ft 5 inches must wear a seat belt if fitted;
- Adult passengers must wear a seat belt if fitted (their own responsibility).

Policy

The Education and Library Boards (ELBs) adopted the four main recommendations from the Assembly Environment Committee's inquiry into school transport in 2001. These included the fitting of seat belts on all buses used primarily for home-to-school transport; 'no standing'; the abolition of 'three for two'; and the introduction of improved bus signage and lighting.

Implementation

This policy position applies to all designated (pupil only) buses and taxis provided by ELBs or contracted by ELBs. All Board contracts (Translink and private hire) stipulate that each pupil

1 Departmental Circulars 1996/41 and 2007/07 also provide guidance on home-to-school transport.

on designated services must have access to a seat with a seat belt, and that there should be no standing passengers. However, the policy does not apply in the following cases:

- Translink stage-carriage services (as they are not pupil-only); and
- Pupils not eligible for transport assistance.

The ELBs carry out a programme of random and targeted checks which aim to ensure that each operator is checked for compliance with the policy annually. Random checks are also carried out based on information from parents, principals and the public where concerns are raised. Witnesses to the Education Committee have noted that 18 checks are carried out each week across the five ELBs.

Unmet recommendation from the Environment Committee inquiry

The 2001 inquiry from the Environment Committee recommended that ELBs should gradually require the provision of seat belts on services including stage-carriages used primarily for home-to-school transport.

However, Translink has stated that it would not be possible to provide seat belts and ensure that pupils use them ahead of other passengers. In addition, the Department notes that ELBs do not have authority over Translink in this area. Plans for Translink to make a phased move to fully seat belted buses have not progressed significantly.

1 Legislation

The Department of the Environment brought in new regulations on the wearing of seat belts which became effective from 27th February 2007. The change was brought about by EU Directive 2003/20/EC which requires member states to introduce legislation on the wearing of seat belts.[2]

The Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Seat Belts) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007[3] include the following requirements:[4]

- A seat belt must be worn in cars and goods vehicles where one is fitted;
- Child restraints rather than adult seat belts to be worn in cars and goods vehicles by children up to age 12 or 135cms in height;
- In buses and coaches with seat belts fitted, passengers aged 14 and over must wear them; and
- Passengers on vehicles used as a local service on routes consisting of restricted roads or where provision has been made for standing passengers and the operator permits standing, are exempt.

The following table summarises the legislation.[5]

2 Department of the Environment New Seat Belt Regulations [online] Available at: http://www.doeni.gov.uk/roadsafety/index/cars/newseatbeltregulations.htm

3 Legislation.gov.uk The Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Seat Belts) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations Northern Ireland 2007 [online] Available at: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2007/8/contents/made and Legislation.gov.uk The Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Seat Belts) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 (Northern Ireland) 2007

4 Department of the Environment New Seat Belt Regulations [online] Available at: http://www.doeni.gov.uk/roadsafety/index/cars/newseatbeltregulations.htm

5 Department of the Environment New Seat Belt Regulations [online] Available at: http://www.doeni.gov.uk/roadsafety/index/cars/newseatbeltregulations.htm

Table 1: Legislation on the wearing of seat belts

	Front seat	Rear seat	Responsibilit
Child under 3	Correct child restraint must be used	• Correct child restraint must be used • If one is not available in a taxi, may travel unrestrained	Driver

Child from 3rd Birthday to 135cms (4ft 5ins) or 12th Birthday, whichever they reach first	Correct child restraint must be used	• Correct child restraint must be used where seat belts fitted
		• Must use adult belt in rear seat if correct child restraint not available:
		  • In a taxi; or
		  • For a short distance in an unexpected necessity; or
		  • If two occupied child restraints prevent fitting of a third
			Driver

Child 12 or 13, or over 135cms	Adult seat belt (or child restraint) must be worn if fitted	Adult seat belt (or child restraint) must be worn if fitted	Driver
Adult passenger	Seat belt must be worn if fitted	Seat belt must be worn if fitted	Passenger

It is important to note that with regard to home-to-school transport:[6]

- There is no obligation for a taxi provider to supply child restraints;
- There is no legislative requirement for a minibus operator to provide a child restraint.

The regulations also place a duty on operators to inform passengers of the need to use seat belts, either by an official announcement or by a sign displayed at each passenger seat equipped with a seat belt.[7]

2 Policy

In light of the new legislation described previously, the Department of Education (in conjunction with the Department of the Environment) released Circular 2007/07 (27th February 2007) to provide guidance to bodies and schools on operation of seat belts.

Departmental Circular 1996/41 details the Department's policy position on pupils who are eligible for assistance and travel on Board buses or Board-contracted services.[8] The Circular states that pupils eligible for transport assistance 'should be able to travel in safety and reasonable comfort'. The key requirements include:[9]

- Boards should ensure that the number of pupils being carried on their vehicles foes not exceed the maximum laid down in the Public Service Vehicles Regulations;
- Where Board vehicles are fitted with seat belts Boards should bring this to the attention of pupils.

6 Department of Education (2007) Circular Number 2007/07 Guidance on the operation of the child car restraints regulations in relation to school activities Bangor: Department of Education

7 As above

8 Information provided by the Department of Education, November 2012

9 Department of Education (2009) Circular NO 1996/41: School Transport Bangor: Department of Education (updated in 2009)

In addition, the Department states that Boards have adopted the four main recommendations from the inquiry of the Assembly Environment Committee in 2001 on the safety of school transport.[10] These were (for eligible pupils only):[11]

- **The fitting of seat belts** on all buses used primarily for home-to-school transport;
- **The introduction of 'no standing' for all children entitled to transport**;
- **The abolition of the provision that allows three children under the age of 14 to share two seats**;
- **The introduction of improved school bus signage and lighting**.

Application

The above position applies to designated (pupil only) school buses provided or contracted by ELBs. It does not apply to Translink stage-carriage vehicles on which eligible pupils may use a sessional ticket (bus pass), as stage-carriage vehicles are not pupil-only services.[12]

Pupils not eligible for transport assistance are not included within the Department's policy position – the Department states that it has no responsibility or authority over how these pupils travel to school.[13]

Eligibility for home-to-school transport assistance

Children are eligible for transport assistance if they are enrolled at a school beyond a certain qualifying distance from their home (two miles for primary pupils and three miles for post-primary pupils) and were not successful in seeking a place at a closer suitable school.

Implementation of policy

The Department states that all Board contracts (Translink and private hire) stipulate that each pupil on designated services must have access to a seat with a seat belt. Each contract also requires that there are no standing passengers (exceptions are outlined above).[14]

In evidence to the Education Committee on 1st February 2012 officials stated that the ELBs carry out a programme of random and targeted checks of vehicle providers. These aim to ensure that each operator is checked at least once annually, with random checks also undertaken based on information from the public, parents or principals who have concerns. They noted that failure to meet the safety requirements of a contract can lead to its termination.[15]

Other witnesses to the Committee noted that 18 checks are carried out each week across the five Education and Library Boards, and questioned the adequacy of this approach.[16]

10 Information provided by the Department of Education, November 2012

11 Department of the Environment School Bus Transport - NI Assembly Inquiry [online] Available at: http://www.doeni.gov.uk/roadsafety/index/buses/buses-school_buses/buses-school_buses-niinquiry.htm

12 Information provided by the Department of Education, November 2012

13 As above

14 Information provided by the Department of Education, December 2012

15 Northern Ireland Assembly Official Report Wednesday 1st February 2012 Committee for Education School Transport Health and Safety Issues [online] Available at: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Official-Report/Committee-Minutes-of-Evidence/Session-2011-2012/February-2012/School-Transport-Health-and-Safety-Issues/

16 As above

Transport arranged by schools

Circular 2007/07 gives schools guidance on the arrangement of travel for pupils (for example, on school trips). However, schools are ultimately responsible for complying with the legislation.[17]

Unmet recommendation of the Environment Committee

With regard to the fitting of seat belts, the Environment Committee's inquiry recommended that the ELBs should gradually require the provision of seat belts for all schoolchildren on contract services, Translink scheduled stage carriages used primarily for home-to-school transport and on their own buses.[18]

However, the Department notes that Translink has stated that it would not be possible to both provide seat belts on all public-stage-carriage services *and* ensure that pupils can avail of them ahead of other passengers. The Department states that Boards do not have authority over Translink in this domain and cannot do more than make a request.[19]

It further states that it was intended that Translink move to fully seat belted buses through natural wastage (i.e. redundant buses would be replaced with seat belted buses). The Department states that Translink has not made significant progress in this regard.[20]

17 Information provided by the Department of Education, November 2012

18 As above

19 Information provided by the Department of Education, December 2012

20 As above

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Mr Paul Carlisle
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20 February 2013

Dear Paul,

Following our correspondence of January 2013 please find attached a copy of the Environment Committee briefing document on the status of the ongoing review of bus operator licensing in advance of Department's Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division officials attending the Committee for Regional Development on 27 February.

I trust this information is of assistance, should you require anything further please contact me directly.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Richmond
DALO
[by e-mail]

Cc Alex McGarel



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Mrs Alex McGarel
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Date: 8 February 2013

Dear Alex,

I refer to the Environment Committee's request for an update on the ongoing review of bus operator licensing.

I apologise that the Committee only received late notification of our request to reschedule the original briefing date. We did pass this information on but unfortunately there appears to have been a mix up and the message was not confirmed with the Committee secretariat until after the holidays.

Background

In March 2010 the Department began its review of the licensing of bus passenger service providers with a view to developing proposals for a modern bus operator licensing regime. The current licensing framework is established within the Transport Act 1967 (the 1967 Act) and is no longer robust or flexible enough to deal effectively with the variety of bus service providers.

Under the 1967 Act (as amended) operators either require a full operator licence (known as a Road Service Licence) or, if an operator provides not for profit transport for social, recreational or educational purposes, they can obtain a 10B permit which exempts them from the requirements to hold an operator licence and to have their vehicles PSV tested, and their drivers are able to drive a minibus on a car licence.

In June 2010 the Department released an initial consultation outlining proposals entitled 'the Future of Bus Operator Licensing in NI.' The consultation set out a number of options for a new licensing regime and included the Department's preferred option of a three tier licensing regime.

Analysis of the responses to the consultation showed that over 80% of respondents agreed that change was needed, but only around half agreed with the Department's preferred option. Given the mixed response to the consultation the Department agreed to undertake further detailed stakeholder engagement to further clarify the situation.

CTAUK

The Community Transport Association (CTAUK) is an advisory body who provide advice and guidance to their members regarding any passenger transport they undertake. CTAUK do not

provide any transport themselves. They receive part funding from the Department for Regional but the remaining revenue is obtained from a membership charge.

Bus Forum

In December 2011, Minister Attwood, in recognition of the importance of meaningful engagement with the bus industry, set up a Bus Forum. The Forum brings together experts on and providers of bus passenger services and creates a framework to discuss and resolve issues which affect the industry.

The Forum is comprised of representatives from the industry and includes representation from DRD, Translink, the Federation of Passenger Transport NI (FPTNI), CTAUK, a selection of non-aligned operators (i.e. not linked to any public transport advisory body), Education and Library Board and Health Trust transport managers. Following a recent review of the Forum, representation been expanded to include Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC), the Consumer Council, the Rural Community Transport Partnerships (RCTPs) and the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA).

Stakeholder Engagement

In November 2011 the Department began an extended process of engagement with key stakeholders. During this process officials had detailed discussions with CTAUK and the RCTPs and in February 2012 a series of meetings were held in order to meet with licensed bus operators to gather information on the needs of the bus industry.

The research, and the information gained from the engagement, was used to inform a high level discussion paper which was initially shared with key stakeholders. The discussion paper (informally referred to as the "strawman paper") was initially shared with the Bus Forum in June 2012, and since then the Department has undertaken a series of informal discussions with specific stakeholders alongside the forum. These have included meetings with the Education and Library Board, the Health Trusts, FPTNI and DRD. This engagement was intended to give stakeholders the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification with formal feedback taking place through the Bus Forum.

Although stakeholders were largely content with the proposals and they way the Department has engaged with them, the Department is aware that there are concerns from CTAUK and the RCTPs in relation to where their activities would place them in the proposed new licensing regime. The Department continues to engage with these groups with a view to developing proposals which will meet their needs whilst complying with relevant European legislation and providing a robust and equitable licensing regime for buses, for the benefit of operators and users alike.

Discussion paper on operator licensing ("the strawman")

The proposal, as outlined in the strawman, is for a licensing regime which could accommodate all operators from Translink down to the local scout group bus and represents the Department's commitment to creating a safe, fair and modern framework for all bus passenger services. The June iteration of the strawman paper proposed a two tier licensing regime with operators either obtaining a full licence or a restricted operator licence.

A full operator licence would be required by any person providing bus passenger transport on a commercial basis. An operator with a full operator licence would be considered fit to carry out all passenger carrying services – i.e. the licence would be unrestricted.

A restricted operator licence would be required by any person providing bus transport which is incidental to their main purpose, is on a non-commercial basis (in that they are only carrying their own members) and is on a non profit making basis. A charge could be made to cover the cost of keeping the bus on the road but passengers would not be able to pay the driver at the time or on the bus. These operators would not be able to provide tendered / contracted

services. All voluntary groups and other organisations providing not for profit transport which is ancillary to their main business would be eligible for this category of licence.

Discussions around this version of the strawman paper indicated that while the majority of stakeholders were content with the proposal for a two tier licensing system both CTAUK and the RCTPs were concerned about how their activities would be accommodated within the proposals. The RCTPs are uniquely constituted in that they are set up specifically to provide passenger transport on a not for profit basis. However, as DRD provides only part funding, many of their passengers are charged for their services. Currently they carry out this work under the 10B permit scheme.

Both CTAUK and the RCTPs agree that all passenger transport activities should be licensed; however discussions are still taking place with a view to developing a regime which accommodates this sort of passenger transport.

It was clear from meetings with both CTAUK and the RCTPs that neither felt the two tier system created a suitable framework in which they could deliver services.

In moving forward the Department has held a number of meetings with both CTAUK and the RCTPs in order to develop a regime which takes account of their concerns raised. The Department is fully committed to taking the needs of community transport into account, within the new licensing regime.

As part of the ongoing process of policy development the Department is engaging with CTAUK who have developed and submitted a set of proposals for a community licence. The Department is currently considering the proposal and will be meeting with CTAUK on 12 February to discuss the content of the paper.

The Department has undertaken this focused engagement to ensure that the valuable contribution of the RCTPs and CTAUK to passenger transport is maintained. However in accommodating the RCTPs within a licensing regime the Department also considers that it is important to ensure that community transport operators operate on a level playing field which supports all those who provide bus passenger transport.

Once policy proposals have been finalised the Department will undertake rural, equality and regulatory impact assessments to ensure that any new licensing regime is safe, fair and transparent and has no negative impact on passenger service delivery in Northern Ireland.

Rural Community Transport Partnerships

Officials met with representatives of the RCTPs on 30 January 2013 to discuss an amended version of the discussion paper. The latest version of the strawman provides for a three tier regime with new middle tier specifically designed for the RCTPs.

The proposed community transport licence would be available to organisations which are not run with a view to profit or incidentally to an activity which is carried out with a view to a profit. Since these groups receive grant funding from a number of Government Departments part of the eligibility criteria would be a recommendation from the sponsoring Department setting out the terms under which the operator is funded and the types of service they undertake on behalf of that department. This category would be considered as being non-commercial in that they would be restricted to carrying their own members and those groups for which they receive government funding. In addition, given the non-commercial status of holders of this licence category, the organisations would not be able to tender for or undertake any form of contracted service to carry the general public, even on a social or welfare basis.

The meeting on 30 January was very positive with everyone committed to working together to identify a licensing regime which accommodates the work of the RCTPs. However, work on policy for this category of licence is still ongoing as the RCTPs need time to assess the proposal and to further discuss the way forward with their directors and respond on the matter.

CTAUK Alternative Proposals

CTAUK have been involved in the discussion process with regards the future of bus operator licensing in NI. Throughout the engagement process CTAUK have agreed that change to the current licensing regime is needed, however, they have disagreed with the elements of the Department's policy proposals.

On 18 January 2013 CTAUK forwarded a paper outlining what they considered an appropriate licensing regime for the community transport sector (to include the RCTPs).

Officials are in the process of reviewing the CTAUK paper with a further meeting scheduled for 12 February when both the updated strawman and the CTAUK paper will be discussed.

Initial analysis of the CTAUK paper indicates that whilst there are many areas of agreement between the Department's proposal and that of CTAUK, there are five main areas of difference which remain to be resolved.

1. CTAUK propose that community transport operators should not be required to hold any financial reserve. The Department considers that operators with more than 5 minibuses should hold a financial reserve to ensure that sufficient funding to maintain vehicles and guarantee a reliable service is readily available. However, the Department is considering the level of reserve required by the community transport sector.

2. CTAUK considers that Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (Driver CPC) is not required for non-commercial and not-for-profit purposes. The requirement for driver CPC was introduced by Directive 2003/59/EC and the Department will consider this proposal after careful consideration of the requirements set out the Directive.

3. CTAUK propose that fares may be collected in advance, at the time of travel, or by invoice following travel. With regards to fare collection the Department considers that as community transport providers are carrying their own members there should be no requirement to charge passengers a fare on the bus.

4. CTAUK propose that community operator licence holders may bid for tendered and other contracts but will be required to comply with the 'no-profit' rules set out above to demonstrate this. In order to ensure clarity and fairness within and between licensing tiers the Department considers that tendered and contracted work should be carried out by the holders of a full operator licence.

5. CTAUK also propose a series of changes to the role in which they would play in a licensing regime, including:

    - That they would be the decision making body in relation to the suitability of a community transport provider to hold a community transport licence whereas the Department considers that all decisions about the suitability of an operator to obtain/hold a licence should be made by the Department. This would mirror the Goods Operator and Taxi Operator licensing regimes;

    - That the Department maintain a website providing up to date information and guidance on the application process, support provided by the CTA, licensing conditions, suspension/ revocation scheme. The Department intends to maintain a website which will contain relevant licensing information and guidance. However, the Department will not be able to endorse any company/ business and the role they provide; and,

    - The CTAUK paper suggests that applications for a Community Operator Licence would be processed through the CTA who would submit to the Department for approval and issue. The CTA would pay the Department the appropriate application

(and any separate per-vehicle) fees. The CTA would invoice the applicant for the cost of application, any separate per vehicle charge and an appropriate administration fee to cover the cost to process. It would be the Department's intention that the DVA as an agency of the Department will process all applications, and determine if said application meets the criteria as prescribed in legislation by the Department. CTAUK may, by agreement with an applicant, check applications and advise members on completion of forms and meeting of requirements. It would not be intended to require that all community licence applications must come through CTAUK. Any fees/ charges made by CTAUK and their members would be for agreement between these parties, and outside of the remit of a licensing regime.

These details and therefore the viewpoint of the Department will be discussed in detail with CTAUK on 12 February.

The way forward

The discussions around the latest version of the strawman paper are the culmination of a substantial public and stakeholder consultation exercise which has been ongoing for more than two years. At this stage more work is required in order to finalise the high level proposals of a new licensing regime to a stage where all stakeholders can sign up to the regime. In addition, due to the range of organisation sizes and work carried out by each provider, the licensing of bus operators is extremely complex and final detailed proposals of any regime are yet to be developed. It is therefore planned to continue these discussions with stakeholders, with a view to developing a further version of the strawman to be presented to all members of the forum for scrutiny.

The Department is committed to continuing the discussions with both the RCTPs and CTAUK, with a view to resolving the current issues around how any new regime could accommodate all types of community transport while creating a fair, safe and transparent licensing regime.

In addition the NI Bus Forum, and any sub groups, will proceed with the engagement on a broad range of stakeholders. Issues, concerns and proposals around the proposed licensing regime will be discussed with these groups prior to finalising the proposals.

I trust this information is of assistance, should you require anything further please contact me directly.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Richmond

DALO
[by e-mail]

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Mr Paul Carlisle
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22 March 2013

Dear Mr Carlisle

COMMITTEE FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT INQUIRY INTO BETTER USE OF PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY SECTOR FUNDS FOR THE DELIVERY OF BUS TRANSPORT OPTIONS

1. Thank you for your request of 1st February 2013 for information with respect to 'unanswered queries' following the appearance of officials from the Department of Education (DE) at an evidence session on 30th January.

2. I apologise for the lengthy delay in responding but some of the information required was not held in a format suitable for addressing the Committee's queries. This related specifically to the unit cost information on Board buses which came under close scrutiny by the Committee. The figures at Annex 4 required a significant exercise by the Education & Library Boards (ELBs) to disaggregate the costs of mainstream and special educational needs pupils. This exercise was essential to demonstrate the considerable cost of transporting medically challenged pupils and to remove the impact of this from Boards' unit costs to allow a true comparison with other bus providers who do not cater for such pupils.

3. Responses to the Committee's fourteen queries, which are based on information provided by the ELBs, are set out below. We trust you will find this helpful.

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

Query: 1 Down-Time Survey

4. The survey was conducted following the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) report of 2005 which recommended that ELBs consider the potential for sharing school buses with the Department of Health, Social Services, and Public Safety (DHSSPS). The results summary from the survey report is at Annex 1. A full breakdown by Board area can be provided if required.

5. Within the survey, DE and DHSSPS considered the circumstances under which an ELB vehicle could be useful to DHSSPS. The concept of 'useable' down-time was defined as being of more than 90 minutes duration based on:

   (a) two fifteen minute periods, one to travel from the last set-down point on a school run to the first pick-up point on a DHSSPS run, and one from the last DHSSPS-determined set-down point on a health run back to the first pick-up point on a school run; and

   (b) one hour for the bus to complete a DHSSPS-determined route along which patients would be picked-up and conveyed to, say, a health centre or hospital.

   For the purposes of this exercise, the ELBs and DHSSPS ignored issues such as the fact that school buses are built around the dimensions of pupils.

6. The survey results revealed only two Board areas had any "useable" downtime. The North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) area had only four buses (and no drivers). The exception lay in the Western Education and Library Board (WELB) area where drivers' terms and conditions are based on part-time hours. In WELB 211 buses had useable downtime but only 18 drivers. DE made it known to DHSSPS that the WELB buses could be used for health-related purposes if DHSSPS would fund drivers, licensing, etc. This offer was not pursued by DHSSPS.

7. The fact that there is so little useable down-time may appear to be surprising as there is a general perception that the Boards' fleets are used solely to carry pupils to school in the early morning and home again in mid-afternoon. However, buses are used throughout the school day, for example, to provide transport for pupils to swimming lessons, for school trips and other curriculum-related activities, and to deliver school meals to small schools with no production kitchen.

Legislation

8. At this point, I believe it would be useful to introduce the legislation under which ELBs operate when delivering their service to pupils as it has an important bearing on the Committee's Inquiry.

9. The service provided by ELBs is governed by Articles 44 and 52, and Schedule 13, of The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986]. The Articles and Schedule are presented in Annex 2.

10. Schedule 13 sets out the raison d'être for the service provided by Boards. Under the tenets of compulsory education, a parent is legally obliged to secure the regular attendance at school of their child, once that parent has secured a place for the child in a grant-aided school. Only three exceptions are made to this duty, one of which is for pupils that live so far from their school that to walk there (in the last resort) would mean that the child would not be capable of performing at their best as a result of the effort expended in getting there. This legal duty reduces assistance with transport (not necessarily transport per se) to a tightly defined group of pupils whose parents would otherwise fall foul of the tenets of compulsory education.

11. The Committee raised the issue that the transport policy, which was first emplaced in the late 1940s, is now out of date. However, since the raison d'être for the policy is to support parents in their legal duty to secure their child's attendance at school during the period of compulsory education, the fundamental rationale for the policy still remains valid. That said, the Minister for Education has indicated his intention to conduct a review of the existing school transport policy, and the review is likely to include a consideration of the rationale for the provision of transport assistance.

12. Once the number of eligible pupils has been defined, Boards are then obliged, under Article 44, to deliver a service that avoids unreasonable public expenditure. Article 44 has a significant impact on many of the Committee's queries; they will be dealt with in the paragraphs following the discussion of import of Article 44.

Article 44

13. In response to the Article 44 duty, Boards select the most economic and efficient means of transporting pupils to school; namely, mass transport (bus/coach). 92% of all pupils travel on buses provided by Boards, Translink or private operators contracted by Boards. Of the remaining 8%, approximately 3% travel to school in taxis of which two-thirds (2%) travel in response to their statement of Special Education Needs (SEN). The issues surrounding the use of taxis are discussed in greater detail in the section below relating to queries 2 to 7.

14. The Committee will also be interested to know that the transport service operated by the ELBs was the subject of a recent review by the Department of Finance and Personnel's (DFPs) Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit (PEDU). The PEDU Team produced a report on the ELB transport system that made thirty recommendations (see Annex 3) for further efficiencies – that is, for further improvement or enhancement of the Article 44 duty to avoid unreasonable expenditure. The majority of these recommendations relate to the convergence of aspects of the service which have diverged over time due to

pressures experienced by each Board that were unique to the area that each represents. The 'convergence agenda' arising from the PEDU report has itself dovetailed with a convergence agenda adopted by DE ahead of the formation of the ESA. That is, through the work of the Education and Skills Implementation Team (ESAIT) DE and the ELBs were in the process of identifying and dealing with many of the PEDU transport recommendations before the report was published. Finally, of the thirty recommendations made, only one, recommendation 2.2, dealt with co-operation or co-ordination with bodies outside the ELBs; in this instance, in relation to procurement strategies.

15. It is at this point that I wish to draw the Committee's attention to the emphasis placed by DE/ELBs, and latterly DFPs PEDU team, on economy, efficiency and effectiveness, and to the impact of the drive to maximise the transport resource. Emphasis on maximising the resource explains why, for example, the Down-Time survey found that Board vehicles had so little useable down-time. In meeting their legal duty by maximising their use of the resource, Boards may well appear to be 'working in a silo'. Thus initial appearances and perceptions about the school transport service can be misleading. For example, the scope afforded by the legal duties for working in anything other than a tightly prescribed manner is extremely limited and easily, but mistakenly, perceived as a lack of willingness to broaden the scope of what Boards do with their resource. It should, however, be acknowledged that if Boards (and presumably DHSSPS too) did not have to operate under their existing legal remit then there may be greater scope for a more widely coordinated, or possibly unified "public transport service". This issue will be discussed under queries 9 to 13 below.

Queries: 2 to 7 - Board bus and taxi Costings

16. Annex 4 provides the figures requested in query 2 in relation to taxis, and in query 3 in relation to Board vehicles. The information DE provided to the Committee prior to the hearing was in standard in-house format. It is used by DE to monitor the yearly cost of the service and so was not, as I mentioned above, in a format that provided ready comparison with other providers. The figures now provided have removed an element of Boards' bus unit cost that is not present in the unit costs of other providers, that is, the presence of pupils with statements of special education needs.

Taxis (queries 2 and 7)

17. In query 7, the Committee asked how DE/ELBs justify spending so much on taxis. There are two reasons. First, approximately 68% of all pupils travelling in taxis do so because this form of transport has been specified in a statement by Education and Welfare specialists in response to each such pupil's Special Education Needs (SEN). A statement is provided for any pupil whose health – physical, mental, or both – requires a specific form of transport to meet their individual needs. Invariably, the health and education professionals who make the assessments for statements of SEN indicate that a taxi is the most suitable means to convey such pupils from their home to school. Unlike the cases of non-statemented, that is "mainstream" pupils, Boards' transport officers do not contribute to the determination of how pupils with statements are assisted. In

that sense, provision of assistance for statemented pupils lies largely outside the influence of Article 44.

18. 2% of all eligible pupils who are assisted travel by taxi through a SEN statement. The taxi table in Annex 4 shows the Committee the difference between catering for statemented pupils' needs and those of their non-statemented counterparts and how catering for the needs significantly increases unit costs, especially if the statement requires the provision of an escort.

19. The remainder of pupils who travel by taxi - 1% of all eligible pupils – do so largely because they live in remote rural areas. As noted, Boards place eligible pupils on buses where the numbers justify doing so. However, there are rarely enough pupils living in remote areas to justify the expenditure on a bus. For example, on a route with only 4 or 5 pupils the Board will provide a single taxi at a cost of, say £2,500pa, rather than provide the smallest bus available (typically a 16-seater minibus) with costs in excess of £20k pa (for driver's wages, fuel, maintenance, taxation, etc). Clearly, under the Article 44 duty to avoid unreasonable public expenditure, a Board, which is also legally bound under Article 52 to assist these eligible pupils, will respond by selecting the most cost-effective means of transport – in this instance, a taxi.

20. Occasionally, parents may accept a monetary allowance in lieu of transport and drive their own children to school. For those pupils living in very rural areas this is the most cost-effective solution – more so than providing taxis. Allowances account for 4% of all those assisted. The remaining 1% of all eligible pupils are assisted by a variety of other means (e.g. train passes).

21. In summary, taxis are either necessary in response to statemented pupils' specific health needs, or are the most cost-effective form of transport available to Boards for pupils (without statements) who live typically in remote areas. The Committee has taken evidence from the Community Transport sector which may suggest that Boards could reduce costs vis-a-vis taxis by using Community transport. Boards would, of course, be very agreeable to reducing costs in this way. However, although Boards explored this alternative, they were precluded from contracting Community Transport providers, not by any decision made by themselves but by licensing issues which are the domain of the Department of the Environment.

Queries 3 and 4 - Board Buses

22. The Committee has queried why Board vehicles appear to "incur the highest average cost per pupil journey" (Query 3) and why the cost of Board vehicles appears "so disproportionately high" (Query 4). As explained above in relation to taxis and the impact of providing for statemented pupils, the same is true of the provision of buses by Boards. In order to make like-for-like comparisons with either Translink or privately operated transport costs it is essential to disaggregate the cost of providing for statemented pupils, as no other operator provides for them.

23. Approximately 25% of all Board buses are used to transport pupils with SEN statements that require a specific type of vehicle to meet those needs. For example, wheelchair-friendly vehicles must be modified with the addition of a tail-lift and the removal of most, or all, seats to make the necessary room. Typically, a 33 seater bus, when modified for wheelchairs, carries significantly fewer pupils. This has a very significant impact on unit costs. Neither Translink nor private operators have modified vehicles to provide for such statemented pupils other than in single cases.

24. The Bus table in Annex 4 has disaggregated the costs of statemented pupils and shows that Board vehicles are as cost effective, if not more so, than other bus providers. Unit costs vary from £551 to £732 with two Boards being more cost-effective than Translink (whose sessional ticket costs £650), one Board costing approximately the same and one costing more. Boards spent £4,749,916 on private operator buses used to transport 6,309 pupils in 2011/12 giving a unit cost of £753. All four Boards operate their services more cost-effectively than this. The Committee will note that the comparisons exclude the Belfast Board. This is explained in a footnote to the table. However, it is worth drawing out here that because of the density of schools in Belfast very few pupils are eligible for assistance. Those that are can travel by Ulsterbus or Metro and so BELB does not need to have a fleet for the use of non-statemented pupils. Instead, the BELB fleet is, in effect, dedicated to supporting pupils with statements and so cannot be compared to other bus providers including other Boards.

25. Also it cannot be automatically assumed that if a Board unit cost figure is greater than Translink's, then Translink should therefore provide the service. It may well be that Translink does not have a bus suitable for, say, small rural roads, as the vast majority of their single decker buses are 57/60 seater. Also Translink's unit costs are heavily influenced by the high numbers of pupils transported in urban areas or on major rural roads, that is, short journeys with high numbers transported. So, if they had to take over lesser rural routes from Boards, on which services are less cost-effective, then it is likely that the sessional ticket rate of £650 would increase to the point where all Boards would be more cost-effective than Translink.

26. In summary, once the figures for statemented pupils have been disaggregated, and a like-for-like comparison made, then it can be seen that Board-provided bus transport does not, in fact, "incur the highest average cost per pupil journey". The cause of the unit cost appearing to be "so disproportionately high" is the requirement to include the costs of statemented pupils in returns to the Department. As noted previously, Education Welfare professionals make the decision about the transport response for these pupils based upon their individual health needs. The cost of modifications to vehicles, and the maintenance of these, plus the costs of escorts, clearly increases the unit cost of transporting these pupils, as can be seen from the disaggregated costs for buses in Annex 4.

Queries 5 and 6

27. The Department and ELBs are not against providing transport through the private sector. However, as demonstrated above, the unit cost of that sector is greater than those of the Boards and Translink. So, under the Article 44 duty, private bus operators must be used sparingly, accounting for the fact that only around 7% of all eligible pupils travel by this means. Also, the private transport market in this country is at present small and fragmented. That is, there is no single private company capable of transferring the Boards' services to. Even Translink is unlikely to have the capacity to "maintain, procure, and depot" the Boards' bus fleet of approximately 850 vehicles in addition to its own fleet. Also, the results presented immediately above show that aside from the costs of transporting statemented pupils, Board transport is more cost effective than Translink or private operators. So, the transfer of business elsewhere is likely to result in an increased cost to Boards, rather than a saving thereby contradicting the Article 44 duty.

28. The Department appreciates the role that DHSSPS could play in delivering transport to pupils with Special Education Needs. Transferring responsibility for these pupils (and the vehicles, etc used by them) to DHSSPS would bring greater continuity to the grouping of passengers based on their needs. However, it is unlikely to bring a saving to the public purse in that the cost to DHSSPS is likely to be the same as the cost to DE, unless DHSSPS could merge the pupils' services with other Health runs and either:

    - reduce the number of buses required to serve both Health and statemented pupils' needs, or

    - make greater use of the vehicles transferred by the Boards.

29. As noted above, the Down-Time survey would appear to preclude this possibility. However, the Department for Regional Development (DRD), DE/ELBs and DHSSPS are currently engaged in a pilot study of the potential to combine services, fleets, etc, in the Dungannon area. We await the outcome of this pilot, which will provide the platform for further consideration and action in relation to coordinating with DHSSPS and Translink.

Queries 8 and 14 - Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) 2005 Report

30. We would like to take this opportunity to say that DE was not approached to be part of the NIAO review of DHSSPS ambulance services in 2000 and we are not aware of any approach by DHSSPS at the time to increase co-ordination between providers on the grounds of that review.

31. The 2005 NIAO review was, however, a different matter and both DHSSPS and DE were conjoined in the report which concentrated on the potential for joint fleet management through vehicle-sharing and shared procurements. DE responded quickly to the report by undertaking "The Down-Time survey", which we outlined above. As noted, the survey indicated that the scope for vehicle-sharing was negligible. In relation to procurement, both DHSSPS and ELBs

already operated through Centres of Procurement Excellence (CoPEs) so much of what was procured for the respective fleets already met the NIAO requirement.

32. It was felt that the scope for a joint-procurement strategy was further limited by the fact that the respective fleets differed in certain crucial aspects. For example, the ELB fleet is founded upon the 33-seater chassis as this size of bus is more effective for use on narrow, difficult rural roads, but still capable of accommodating a typical class of 30^{+} pupils. In reality, this chassis is built to accommodate 29 adults, but can legally provide for 33 children as they are smaller than adults and seating can be arranged accordingly. The DHSSPS fleet has its own unique requirements, therefore reducing the scope for joint-procurement of parts, etc.

33. In terms of procurement, the Department of Education has recently reviewed the delivery of procurement services in the education sector. The Procurement Board has mandated the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) to aggregate government demand for goods and services, to develop common procurement arrangements across the public sector and seek out collaborative opportunities. Education will be at the heart of this collaboration, as the Minister has decided that CPD will act as the Centre of Procurement Expertise (CoPE) for the sector for a 3 year period from the establishment of ESA. This will secure immediate access to COPE accredited procurement arrangements for ESA. Initial discussions have taken place with CPD and it is envisaged that a formal project structure to take forward the transfer of procurement services will be adopted in the near future.

Queries 9 to 13 - The future

34. In the preceding paragraphs we have endeavoured to illustrate that ELBs have limited, if any, scope to offer in terms of cooperation with DHSSPS because of the requirements of existing legislation and that both Departments were already following good procurement practices. However, DE recognises that the existing provision, and its legal and policy underpinning, does not have to persist into the future. In what follows, we will discuss possible future scenarios raised by the Committee.

35. It is the Department's view that the pooling of funding between Departments is unlikely to offer a potential solution. Not only does each Department's transport budget come under pressure, but the totality of each Department's budget also comes under pressure regularly. The stresses and strains unique to each Department are likely to impinge on their ability to commit funding to a pool year-on-year. Lack of consistent funding could impact on the quantity and quality of services that would be unacceptable to users.

36. In relation to cooperation (rather than a pooled-funding scenario) the differences between the fleets, in both purpose and the ways in which the Departments must attend to their respective purposes (i.e., the practicalities of providing transport) have largely precluded close cooperation for reasons set out above.

37. Subject to the views of Ministers, it may be that a single transport agency presents the best way to make progress. Transferring vehicles and related services (maintenance, depots, etc) would overcome the issue of limited capacity in a small and fragmented private sector. The funding issue could be addressed more sensibly by providing such an Agency with its own separate budget and, if required, the ability to raise additional income through charging.

38. However, rather than speculate on the way forward, the Department would suggest to the Committee that all parties await the outcome of the Local Transport Plan pilot in the Dungannon area. With an appropriate hypothesis to test, the pilot should provide quantitative evidence concerning scope for the potential for either greater coordination across the respective public transport fleets, or whether a single Agency responsible for all public transport, and with its own budget, might present a more practical solution.

Conclusion

39. Finally, as we noted above it is likely that the Department intends to review school transport before the Dungannon pilot concludes. The review will consider the raison d'être for providing assistance with transport and may, therefore, disengage the service from the existing legislative constrictions. In any review, the Department will bear the pilot in mind, and the view that future public transport services should be either integrated more effectively, or, indeed, unified.

Yours sincerely



PAUL SWEENEY

Annex 1

Department of Education - Down-Time Survey results of Education & Library Board buses – Summary

Education & Library Board area	No of Buses and drivers Available							
	0 - 30 mins		31 - 60 mins		61 - 90 mins		91+	
	Bus	Bus & Driver	Bus	Bus & Driver	Bus	Bus & Driver	Bus	Bus & Driver
Belfast	30	30	10	10	7	7	0	0
North-Eastern	67	29	63	20	23	4	4	0
South-Eastern	38	0	41	3	2	2	0	0
Southern	2	0	5	0	7	0	0	0
Western	3	1	11	3	21	1	211	18
Total	**140**	**60**	**130**	**36**	**60**	**14**	**215**	**18**

Under the definition of "useable" downtime, any Board vehicle with more than 90 minutes available could potentially be used by DHSSPS. The survey revealed that aside from those in the Western Education and Library Board, there were only 4 vehicles (NEELB) available elsewhere (though without drivers available too) for DHSSPS to use.

Annex 2: Legislation governing school transport

(i) The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986

Article 44 – *Pupils to be educated in accordance with wishes of their parents*

44 . In the exercise and performance of all powers and duties conferred or imposed on them by, the Department and boards shall have regard to the general principle that, so far as is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure, pupils shall be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents.

Article 52 – Provision of transport for, and payment of travelling expenses of, certain pupils

52 .—(1) A board shall make such arrangements for the provision of transport and otherwise as it considers necessary or as the Department may direct for the purpose of facilitating—

(a) the attendance of pupils at grant-aided schools; and

(b) the attendance of relevant pupils at institutions of further education;

and any transport provided under such arrangements shall be provided free of charge.

(2) Arrangements made by a board under paragraph (1) (other than arrangements made in pursuance of a direction of the Department) shall be subject to the approval of the Department.

(3) A board may, in accordance with arrangements approved by the Department, provide transport for, or pay the whole or part of the reasonable travelling expenses of—

(a) pupils attending grant-aided schools; and

(b) relevant pupils attending institutions of further education,

for whom the board is not required to make provision under arrangements made under paragraph (1).

(4) In paragraphs (1) and (3) "relevant pupils" means pupils of a class or description specified by the Department for the purposes of this Article.

(5) Any arrangements under paragraph (3) shall include provision—

(a) for the board to make charges (payable by the parents of the pupils concerned) in respect of transport provided under that paragraph; and

(b) as to the cases in which, and the extent to which, such charges are to be remitted by the board.

(6) With a view to assisting in the prevention of accidents, a board may carry into effect such measures as may be set out in a scheme framed by the board and approved by the Department.

Schedule 13 - Part II

3.—(1) Subject to the following provisions of this paragraph, it shall be the duty of a parent of a registered pupil at a school to secure his regular attendance at that school.

(1A) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (1) and of any proceedings under paragraph 4, attendance by a pupil at a school or other place in pursuance of arrangements under Article 21 of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 shall be taken to be attendance at the school at which he is a registered pupil.

(2) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (1) and of any proceedings brought under paragraph 4 in respect of a child who is not a boarder at the school at which he is a registered pupil, the child shall not be deemed to have failed to attend regularly at the school only by reason of his absence there from—

(a) at any time when he was prevented from attending by reason of sickness or other unavoidable cause;

(b) if the parent proves—

(i) that the school at which the child is a registered pupil is not within walking distance of the child's home; and

(ii) that the child is one for whom the board is required to make provision under Article 52(1), but no suitable arrangements have been made by the board for his transport to and from school; and

(iii) that no suitable arrangements have been made by the board for boarding accommodation for the child at or near the school or for enabling him to become a registered pupil at a school nearer to his home;

(c) at any time when he is employed in accordance with the provisions of Article 63(2).

(3) Where, in any proceedings brought against a parent on the ground that a child who is a registered pupil at a school has failed to attend that school regularly, it is proved that the child has no fixed abode, sub-paragraph (2)(b) shall not apply but the parent shall be entitled to be acquitted if he proves that he is engaged in any trade of business of such a nature as to require him to travel from place to place and that the child has attended (at the school at which he was a registered pupil) as regularly as the trade or business of the parent permitted provided that, in the case of a child who has attained the age of six years, he has so attended on at least one hundred days during the period of twelve months ending with the date on which the proceedings were instituted.

(4) In any proceedings as aforesaid in respect of a child who is a boarder at the school at which he is a registered pupil, the child shall be deemed to have failed to attend regularly at the school if he is absent therefrom at a time when he was not prevented from being present by reason of sickness or other unavoidable cause.

(5) For the purpose of determining whether a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school has failed to attend regularly because of sickness, a board may cause the child to be examined either at his home or elsewhere by a medical practitioner and where the parent of a child unreasonably prevents a board from exercising its power to have a child so examined he shall be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 2 on the standard scale.

(6) In this paragraph "walking distance" means, in relation to a child who is a registered pupil at a primary school, two miles and, in the case of any other child, three miles measured by the nearest available route.

(ii) Article 52 and Schedule 13 Part II were subsequently amended by

Article 23 – The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1997

Provision of transport for, and payment of travelling expenses of, certain pupils

23.—(1) For Article 52 of the 1986 Order there shall be substituted—

"Provision of transport for, and payment of travelling expenses of, certain pupils

52.—(1) A board shall make such arrangements for the provision of transport and otherwise as it considers necessary or as the Department may direct for the purpose of facilitating—

(a) the attendance of pupils at grant-aided schools; and

(b) the attendance of relevant pupils at institutions of further education;

and any transport provided under such arrangements shall be provided free of charge.

(2) Arrangements made by a board under paragraph (1) (other than arrangements made in pursuance of a direction of the Department) shall be subject to the approval of the Department.

(3) A board may, in accordance with arrangements approved by the Department, provide transport for, or pay the whole or part of the reasonable travelling expenses of—

(a) pupils attending grant-aided schools; and

(b) relevant pupils attending institutions of further education,

for whom the board is not required to make provision under arrangements made under paragraph (1).

(4) In paragraphs (1) and (3) "relevant pupils" means pupils of a class or description specified by the Department for the purposes of this Article.

(5) Any arrangements under paragraph (3) shall include provision—

(a) for the board to make charges (payable by the parents of the pupils concerned) in respect of transport provided under that paragraph; and

(b) as to the cases in which, and the extent to which, such charges are to be remitted by the board.

(6) With a view to assisting in the prevention of accidents, a board may carry into effect such measures as may be set out in a scheme framed by the board and approved by the Department."

(2) In Schedule 13 to the 1986 Order in paragraph 3(2) for head (b) there shall be substituted—

"(b) if the parent proves—

(i) that the school at which the child is a registered pupil is not within walking distance of the child's home; and

(ii) that the child is one for whom the board is required to make provision under Article 52(1), but no suitable arrangements have been made by the board for his transport to and from school; and

(iii) that no suitable arrangements have been made by the board for boarding accommodation for the child at or near the school or for enabling him to become a registered pupil at a school nearer to his home;" .

(3) In paragraph 3(6) of Schedule 13 to the 1986 Order for the words "who has not attained the age of eleven years" there shall be substituted the words "who is a registered pupil at a primary school",.

(4) In Article 130(1)(a) of the 1989 Order for the words from "other than" to the end there shall be substituted

"other than—

(i) education or transport in respect of which by virtue of Article 128 no charge may be made; or

(ii) transport provided by a board under Article 52 of the principal Order." .

(5) In Article 137 of the 1989 Order after paragraph (4) there shall be inserted—

"(4A) Nothing in the provisions of this Chapter relating to charges applies in relation to charges made by a board under Article 52 of the principal Order.".

Annex 3: PEDU Recommendations

Recommendation
1.1: All ELBs should move towards the SELB and WELB staffing structure for the operation of Board Owned Vehicles. (*Para 2.29*)
1.2: All ELBs should be set a target of reducing the percentage of the Home to School Transport budget on administration to below 1.5% with an adjustment for SELB to reflect its lead role in respect of the Translink contract. (*Para 2.35*)
1.3: ELBs should review the form of Home to School Transport provided to each SEN pupil on an annual basis to ensure that it remains the most appropriate, particularly in respect of cost effectiveness. (*Paras 3.12-3.13*)
1.4: All ELBs should move to a Gate to Gate policy in the assessment of eligibility for Home to School Transport. (Para 3.21)
1.5: All ELBs should regularly market test the provision of all services including the review of existing contracts and vehicle maintenance. (Para 3.22)
1.6: All ELBs should adopt a common approach to the calculation of the Daily Allowance Rate with a view to matching the levels in SEELB. (Para 3.26)
1.7: All ELBs should adopt the SEELB approach of moving to a 10 month contract for Board Owned Vehicle drivers. (Para 3.24)
1.8: All ELBs should consider the adoption of each of the measures included within the SEELB 2010 Transport Efficiency Project. (Para 3.27)
1.9: All ELBs to undertake work to consider whether the better co-ordination of school days and opening times could reduce Home to School Transport costs. *(Para 3.31)*
1.10: As it is a discretionary service, all ELBs should only provide Home to School Transport for those pupils which are eligible for support. (Para 3.32)
1.11: Eligibility for Home to School Transport should be reviewed on a regular basis. (Para 3.32)
1.12: The WELB compensation scheme, for bus drivers undergoing a reduction in hours, should be removed. (Para 3.33)
1.13: The recommendations from the Transport Review in WELB that will lead to cost reductions should be applied in all ELBs. (Para 3.35)
1.14: All ELBs to consider, on an ongoing basis, the actions being taken by Local Authorities in the rest of the UK to achieve savings in respect of their Home to School Transport budgets to see if there are any which could be implemented in their area. (Para 4.10)
1.15: The Department of Education should review the findings from the CMSU review of Home to School Transport to consider the extent to which the original recommendations were implemented as well as the scope to take forward the outstanding recommendations at the current time. (Para 4.11)

Recommendation
Long Term Impact 2.1: The Department of Education should require NEELB and BELB to examine, in line with their statutory duty of best value, why the unit cost for Taxis is higher than the other ELBs and test the outcome of that exercise to ensure that it is satisfied that value for money has been secured. (*Para 2.22*)
2.2: All ELBs should increase the level of co-ordination and collaboration between Boards in respect of the procurement of goods and services. In addition, the scope to make further savings by working with other parts of the public sector should also be examined. (*Para 3.9*)
2.3: The Department of Education should develop and ensure the implementation of clear guidance in respect of the most cost effective form of Home to School Transport provision depending on the extent and nature of the SEN to ensure consistency between ELBs. (*Para 3.12-3.13*)
2.4: The Department of Education should require BELB, in line with its statutory duty to achieve best value, to examine the reasons for the high cost of Board Owned Vehicle transportation in BELB and test the outcome of that exercise to ensure that it is satisfied that value for money has been secured. (*Para 3.10-3.15*)
2.5: NEELB, SEELB and BELB should consider whether there is scope to stimulate the market for Privately Operated Home to School Transport to see if they can match the unit costs for this mode achieved in WELB and SELB. (*Para 3.19*)
2.6: All ELBs should adopt the SEELB approach of an annual review of routes including, where practical, the amalgamation of previous taxi routes onto Board Owned Vehicles. *(Para 3.25)*
2.7: In order to ensure a consistent approach to the delivery of services a single body (such as ESA) should have responsibility for the provision of Home to School Transport. (*Para 4.5*)
2.8: The Department of Education to consider whether any of the findings from the review of school transport in England might provide further scope for efficiency and could be implemented in NI. (*Paras 4.8-4.9*)
2.9: All ELBs should regularly collect data on the rates of absence for Home to School Transport staff, including the financial impact of absences on the Home to School Transport budget, and agree a target with DE to reduce this rate. (*Para 4.18*)
2.10: All ELBs should consider leasing rather than purchasing School Vehicles. (*Para 4.27*)
3.1: In advance of the establishment of any regional authority (such as the ESA), the Department of Education should take a stronger and more proactive role in ensuring that best practice in cost effectiveness in the delivery of Educational services applies to all ELBs. This should include providing clear guidance in respect of the delivery of services as well as ensuring that this is implemented.
3.2: The Department of Education should take action to ensure it reviews, promotes and challenges the implementation of best value in the provision of services across all ELBs until ESA is established and then by ESA.
3.3: Looking at best practice elsewhere, the Department of Education should develop a set of value for money Performance Indicators (including unit costs for each major service to allow the monitoring of

Recommendation
performance between ELBs and with other jurisdictions). The performance in respect of each indicator should be reported to the Minister of Education and published on a regular basis.
3.4: The Department of Education should work with the ELBs to ensure a consistent approach to the collection, collation and reporting of financial and non-financial management information as part of a wider performance management framework for the service.

Annex 4: Costs of taxis and Board buses

NOTE: It is important to read the table footnotes to fully understand the figures before making comparisons with other bus providers.

Table 1 Taxis Unit costs (per pupil per year), and total journeys

BOARD	Taxis with statemented pupils only	Taxis with statemented pupils and escorts	Taxi with mainstream pupils only	Taxi with mainstream pupils and escorts	Total taxi journeys
BELB	£1,845	£4,999[1]	£0	£0	151
NEELB	£0[2]	£2,072[2]	£1,223	£0	533
SEELB	£2,408	£3,167	£1,457	£6,023[3]	285
SELB	£2,100	£3,314	£1,706	£6,001[3]	570
WELB	£2,046	£4,586	£941	£0	540

Footnotes

1 The BELB area has by far the highest concentration of special needs schools and thus they carry the greatest number of special needs pupils and those with the most challenging medical conditions, thus the highest unit cost.

2 Some statements require the presence of an escort while others do not. All Boards, except the NEELB, separate those requiring escorts from others who do not and provide transport accordingly. The NEELB unit cost figures of £0 and £2,072 in columns one and two of the table are not, therefore, directly comparable with the entries for the remaining Boards in columns one and two of the table.

3. Both SEELB and SELB have a very small number of cases in which mainstream pupils have unusual/exceptional needs which result in the apparently anomalous figures in column four of the table. The reasons for the unusual/exceptional needs cannot be related here as to do so may result in the identification of individual pupils and this is not permitted under Data Protection.

Table 2 Board Bus Unit costs (per pupil per year)

BOARD AREA	Bus unit cost (statemented pupils including escorts)	Bus unit cost (mainstream pupils only)
BELB	£2,657	£0[1]
NEELB	£2,091	£736[2]
SEELB	£2,641	£619[2]
SELB	£3,026	£551[2]
WELB	£3,645	£656[2]

Footnotes

1 The BELB carries no mainstream pupils on Board buses. Its entire Board fleet is used for special needs pupils, except two buses which provide a specific service that lies outside the Home to School Transport scheme.

2. These figures are a direct like-for-like comparison with Translink's sessional ticket unit cost of c£650, and the private operator unit cost of £753. In order to achieve this comparison, the unit cost figures for statemented pupils travelling on Board buses were disaggregated. The disaggregated costs for statemented pupils can be found in column 1 of the table.

National Transport Authority

Northern Ireland Committee for Regional Development

The National Transport Authority

Anne Graham
Director of Public Transport Services
06 February 2013

Who We Are

- National Transport Authority established on 1st December 2009
  - Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008
  - Public Transport Regulation Act 2009
- Offices at Harcourt Lane
- About 100 staff
  - Planners
  - Engineers
  - Economists/accountants
  - IT specialists
  - Administrators
- Formerly from Dublin Transportation Office, Department of Transport, Railway Procurement Agency, Local Authorities

Ambitions underlying establishment of the National Transport Authority (1)

Údarás Náisiúnta Iompair
National Transport Authority

New legislation (2008 and 2009 Acts) created the platform for fulfilling significant Government Ambitions

- Better integration of transport provision with land development through statutory transport plans and integration with land use plans
  - Transport Strategy
  - Implementation and Traffic Plans
  - Inputs to the regional and Local Authorities in the Greater Dublin Area in relation to Regional Planning Guidelines, Development Plans, Local Area Plans
  - Statutory inputs to the Regional Authorities outside the Greater Dublin Area in relation to Regional planning guidelines
- Greater controls on utilisation of public transport subsidies
  - Performance based contracts
  - Reviews of 5 year bus contracts/10 year rail contract
  - Tendering of additional subsidy contracts

Ambitions (2)

Údarás Náisiúnta Iompair
National Transport Authority

- Enhanced and uniform regulation of "Commercial" bus providers
  - Develop and administer a new regulatory regime for commercial bus services
- Achieve Integration across modes and operators
  - Information, fares, smartcards, brand, shared services (bus stops, shelters, facilities)
- One integrating/controlling body for the major programme of public transport investment to be delivered in the Dublin region
  - Devise priorities
  - Scrutinise business cases
  - Integrate funding streams for large and small projects

What We Do

- Statutorily responsible for a wide range of functions including:
  - Delivery of public transport services nationally
  - Regulation of commercial bus routes nationally
  - National taxi regulation
  - National public transport information and ticketing
  - Transport planning and capital investment in public transport in Greater Dublin Area
  - Rail and Marine passenger rights

- We manage for the Department of Transport
  - The *Regional Cities Grants* for sustainable transport
  - The national *Accessibility Fund*
  - The *Rural Transport* programme
  - The planned integration of *rural, health and school transport* services
  - The national *Smarter Workplaces* travel programme
  - Oversight and funding of the *Green Schools* programme

Public Transport Services in the State

- Provision of Public Transport Services in the State:

- **Rail Passenger Services:** Iarnród Éireann under contract with NTA
- **Luas light rail services in Dublin:** Railway Procurement Agency (RPA)
- **Commercial Public Bus Passenger Services:** Bus Éireann Expressway Services, Aircoach, Citilink etc.; licenced by the NTA
- **State Subsidised Public Service Obligation (PSO) Bus Passenger Services:** Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann under contract with the NTA
- **State Subsidised Rural Bus Passenger Services:** Rural Transport Programme (RTP)
- **School Transport Services:** Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills,
- **Health Related Transport:** Directly by the HSE or under contract with the HSE. RTP Companies also provide a number of these services, on behalf of the HSE
- **Other: Charitable Organisations** e.g. Irish Wheelchair Association various funding sources including different Government Departments

Údarás Náisiúnta Iompair
National Transport Authority

RURAL TRANSPORT

Rural Transport

Údarás Náisiúnta Iompair
National Transport Authority

- Funded under the National Development Plan 2007-2013, the principal aim of the Rural Transport Programme (RTP) is:
  "to provide a quality nationwide community based public transport system in rural Ireland which responds to local needs"
- Value for Money and Policy Review Report 2011
- RTP came under the aegis of the National Transport Authority in April 2012
- Establishment of the National Integrated Rural Transport (NIRT) Committee under chair of the Authority.
  –Streamlining and integration of services to improve coverage and efficiency

Rural Transport

Údarás Náisiúnta Iompair
National Transport Authority

- 35 RTP groups
- 190 staff employed
  - Coordinators/Managers/Dispatchers
  - and Drivers/PA's
- 413 Private Operators using 881 drivers
- 1.7 million passenger journeys in 2011, an increase of 22% compared to 2010.
- Conventional & Unconventional Delivery Models
- Services available: Scheduled fixed and flexible services, demand responsive and once-off trips
- 69% of service trips are defined as either fully or partially accessible

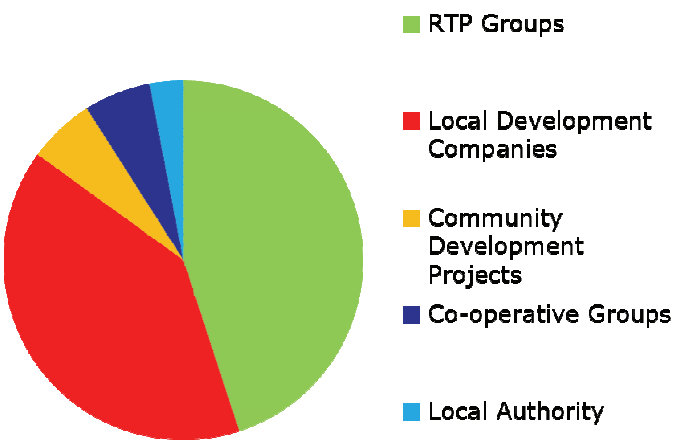


RTP currently delivered locally by 35 community-based not-for-profit groups.

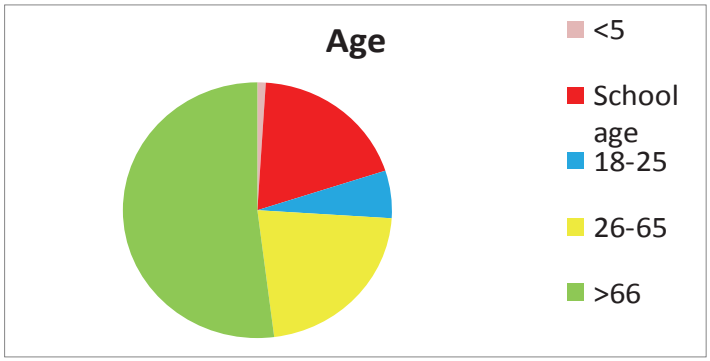
Rural Transport

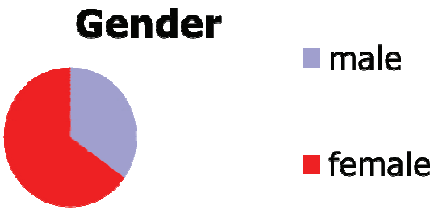
Údarás Náisiúnta Iompair
National Transport Authority

- 2011 – Rural Transport Services delivered by 35 not for-profit groups



Rural Transport
Characteristics of Passengers





Rural Transport
Characteristics of Groups

- Volunteerism – 1000+ people giving 43,000 person-hours in 2011 (predominantly in managing)
- Source services locally
- Multiple sources of funding
- Procurers of transport services (27)/ direct service providers (9)
- Diversified activities

Rural Transport 2011 – Value for Money Review

Údarás Náisiúnta Iompair
National Transport Authority

- Continuation of support for RTP, *subject to conditions:*
  - *Key performance indicators, including the measurement of trends in improving social inclusion*
  - *Greater efficiencies*
    - *Administration*
    - *Cost control – maximum cost /service*
    - *Development and use of IT systems*
  - *Organisational re-structuring to standardise practices and improve shared services*

Rural Transport Restructuring

Údarás Náisiúnta Iompair
National Transport Authority

- NTA is currently working to:
  - Bring the RTP practitioners into an appropriate legal framework
  - Examine costs of programme to drive efficiencies in the programme
  - Examine the reporting requirements for the programme and simplify where possible
  - Integrate RTP services into Journey Planner
  - Find the means to integrate HSE services and usage of fleet involved in school transport

Rural Transport Change

Údarás Náisiúnta Iompair
National Transport Authority

- Factors influencing change:
  - Government strategy to involve Local Government
  - Need to improve integration between services delivered under different programmes
  - Continuing pressure on public finances
  - Develop the most efficient delivery system for rural transport

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National Transport Authority

INTEGRATED RURAL TRANSPORT

Local and Rural Integrated Services (LARITS) Initiative

- *January 2009*: Deloitte's *Cost and Efficiency Review of Dublin Bus and Bus Eireann* – Recommended Bus Eireann should better integrate its services with other local services.
- *May 2009*: the Local Integrated Transport Services (LITS) initiative is established to identify opportunities to better integrate BE services with others, and to develop pilots. LITS Steering Committee established.
- *July 2010*: MVA Consultancy is appointed by the LITS Steering Committee to examine the effectiveness of the LITS initiative.
- *July 2011*: Minister for State at the DTTaS emphasises the importance of rural transport, thereby changing the acronym to LARITS (Local and Rural Integrated Transport Services).

Government decision 26 January 2012

DTTaS to re-constitute LARITS as National Integrated Rural Transport Committee – NTA to chair.

Rural Transport Barriers to Integration

Údarás Náisiúnta Iompair
National Transport Authority

- **General Barriers:**
  - Definition of Integration
  - Access to information on services
  - Application of Free Travel Scheme funding
  - Multiplication effect on reporting requirements for different transport services
  - Legislation governing regulation of public bus passenger services
  - Funding
  - Fluctuating demand for services in particular locations
  - Procurement
  - Mapping of services

Rural Transport
Barriers to Integration

Údarás Náisiúnta Iompair
National Transport Authority

- **School Transport Services:**
  - Child Protection legislation and guidelines
  - Availability of seating on Schools Transport
  - Closed nature of school transport services
  - Tax and insurance implications if not for school transport only
  - Availability and payment of drivers for downtime of buses
  - Seasonal nature of school transport provision
- **Health-related Transport Services:**
  - Lack of information at a national level
  - Transport services organisation varies across HSE areas and services
  - No statutory requirement to provide transport to access health services
  - Continued funding for services

Rural Transport
Barriers to Integration

Údarás Náisiúnta Iompair
National Transport Authority

- **Logistics to support integration:**
  - Technical and safety discrepancies in relation to Community/Voluntary owned vehicles as public service vehicles
  - Fares Structures
  - Physical Infrastructure e.g. accessibility and shelter at bus stops, connecting points
  - Level of assistance to passenger on RTP services versus on main public transport services
  - Funding required to support infrastructure
  - Lack of trip booking systems
  - Lack of Integrated Information for Customer
  - Lack of Integrated Ticketing

Rural Transport
Barriers to Integration

Údarás Náisiúnta Iompair
National Transport Authority

- **Structures to support integration:**
  - Diverse groups providing transport services
  - Lack of integrating structure
  - Number of RTP groups
  - Different RTP structures

Údarás Náisiúnta Iompair
National Transport Authority

QUESTIONS

Strathclyde Partnership for Transport

joining up journeys SPT Committee Report

Proposals to seek variations to the existing regulatory provisions to improve the co-ordination and delivery of bus services

Committee	Operations		
Date of meeting	9 March 2012	Date of report	1 March 2012
Report by Assistant Chief Executive (Operations)			

1. Object of report

1.1 The object of this report is to seek approval for SPT's proposals to seek variations to the existing regulatory provisions to improve the co-ordination and delivery of bus services – attached at Appendix 1 - and their dissemination to the Scottish Government and other relevant organisations.

2. Background

2.1 At its meeting on 10 February 2012, the Partnership approved a report entitled 'Competition Commission (CC) Inquiry into the Local Bus Market: Final Report and Next Steps for SPT'. The paper outlined the CC's decisions, their impact on SPT's work, and that officers would continue to develop SPT's proposals for an improved bus policy, including taking account of the CC's decisions.

3. Proposals

3.1 SPT has been liaising with council officers, other RTPs, the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT), operators, and other agencies, in addition to Transport Scotland, to promote SPT's views on bus. Furthermore, additional work has been undertaken to flesh out the actions required therein, taking account of market changes or other factors, including, for example, the CC's Inquiry.

3.2 The outcome of this further development can be summarised as follows:

- To allow Public Transport Authorities (PTAs) – like SPT - to secure (or provide) bus services where there is clearly a need, even if it may be in conflict with the perceived commercial view of the operator.
- The payment of Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) for new or varied registered mileage should only be made where that registration has been confirmed as not operating to the detriment of overall provision in that area.
- Public Transport Authorities should be given powers to require compulsory participation in ticketing schemes that they may introduce in their areas
- The modifications to provisions on Statutory Quality Partnerships introduced in England and Wales in the Local Transport Act 2008 should also be introduced in Scotland.

- The minimum period a service should operate as registered should be increased to 180 days. In addition, regulations should be made in accordance with S.46 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 restricting dates on which local services may be varied in local areas.
- Consideration should be given to compliance inspectors vehicle inspection engineers employed by PTAs who would be trained and certified to VOSA standards, being given relevant powers equivalent to VOSA officers.
- The Traffic Commissioner should consider not accepting local service registrations submitted by Community Transport groups (S. 22 permit holders) unless the registration is supported by the PTA and the group is registered on the Community Transport database. Additionally, a date should be set for the revocation of all existing Community Bus permits which may then be re-issued subject to application and compliance with minimum quality standards.
- Where a bus operator enjoys an effective monopoly and may be seeking subsidy from the PTA, the PTA should be given access to service cost and revenue figures to satisfy themselves that the operator is not seeking excessive subsidy costs or acting in an anti-competitive manner.
- Electronic Bus Service Registration (EBSR) to become the mandatory format for submitting bus registration particulars by 2014, and that such submissions are not accepted without the PTA acknowledging receipt of such information as prescribed in regulations.

3.3 SPT has invested significantly in providing high quality infrastructure to stimulate and improve the bus market and continues to do so. Our 5 year Capital Programme has included:

Projects	**Cost £m**
Bus station developments	£8.4
Bus infrastructure (shelters, stops, roads and signals)	£19.6
Quality Bus Corridors	£4.8
Real Time Passenger Information	£3.0
New small fuel efficient buses	£5.3
Ticketing systems	£1.8
Public transport interchanges	£4.3
Total	**£47.2**

Even with this investment and quality operators benefiting from SPT's commitment, to create the required 'step change' in the overall provision of the delivery of bus services requires changes to the existing regulatory regime as noted in the proposals.

3.4 These suggestions, if adopted, would positively impact across a range of themes, including:

- Providing a more consistent, passenger focused, integrated bus network
- Providing opportunity for PTAs to ensure best value for public money in securing subsidised services
- Creating a far more secure bus network
- Improved information for passengers, and a more efficient method of receiving that information, thus reducing cost to public purse
- Safer buses on the roads
- A stronger community input to the transport sector
- Better targeting of public funds where they are needed most

- A more attractive, seamless, convenient ticket offering for passengers
- A workable mechanism to achieve a higher quality bus network
- A more co-ordinated approach to network planning and development.

3.5 Most importantly, implementation of these suggestions would lead to significant improvements in the provision of bus services in communities across Scotland.

4. Committee action

4.1 The Committee is recommended to:

- Approve SPT's proposals for additional bus powers attached as Appendix 1 and their dissemination to the Scottish Government and other relevant organisations.

6. Consequences

Policy consequences	In line with Regional Transport Strategy and SPT's Proposals for an Improved Bus Policy in Scotland.
Legal consequences	Implementation of some of these proposals would require changes to legislation.
Financial consequences	None at present.
Personnel consequences	None at present.
Social Inclusion consequences	Implementation of these proposals could have a significant positive impact on communities across the SPT area.
Risk Consequences	None identified at present.

Eric Stewart
Assistant Chief Executive (Operations)

Gordon Maclennan
Chief Executive

For further information, please contact Bruce Kiloh on ext 3740

Enc: Appendix 1 – 'Proposals for additional powers/regulations to assist Public Transport Authorities in securing an integrated, comprehensive bus network to better serve communities across Scotland'

Appendix 1

Proposals for additional powers/regulations to assist Public Transport Authorities in securing an integrated, comprehensive bus network to better serve communities across Scotland.

1 To allow Public Transport Authorities (PTAs) – like SPT - to secure (or provide) bus services where there is clearly a need, even if it may be in conflict with the perceived commercial view of the operator.

Current position:

- PTAs have powers to secure bus services they deem socially necessary to meet the needs of communities in their respective areas.
- Operators fundamentally structure their bus services to generate an operating margin, (i.e. they focus on the most profitable routes), meaning some communities are often bypassed by bus services if the operator feels they will not deliver a significant profit.
- Current legislation[1] limits PTAs to only provide those services which otherwise would not be commercially viable for a private operator, and where commercial services would not be unreasonably affected.
- This can lead to PTA's being reluctant to secure a service for fear of legal challenge on the grounds of interfering with the commercial market, and PTA-secured services being unattractive to users or potential contractors through having contrived, fragmented or circuitous routes, and restrictions imposed on them e.g. passenger eligibility.
- This current position may not be in best interests of passengers or communities and in reality serves to maximise profit and revenue for commercial operators.

Required action:

- ***Modify legislation so that PTAs simply have a power to secure those services they consider necessary to meet the requirements of their area.***
  - ***Modify Transport Act 1968 - S.9A(1) to read '….within their area' and delete S.9A (4)(a).***
  - ***Modify Transport Act 1985 - S.63 (2)(a) to read '…within their area' and delete S.63(5)(a).***

Benefits:

- PTAs able to design and secure 'whole' routes that better reflect the travel patterns of their communities.
- Commercial operators more likely to consider the consequences of their operations if, when maximising profit, they may precipitate the introduction of a subsidised competitor thereby reducing their income.
- Operators likely to more closely align commercial services to the network aspirations of PTAs.
- In addition, when bidding for any subsidised transport element additional to a commercial service, the possibility of competition over the whole route would moderate bids by the incumbent.

1 S.9A of the Transport Act 1968 and S.63 of the Transport Act 1985,

2 The payment of Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) for new or varied registered mileage should only be made where that registration has been confirmed as not operating to the detriment of overall provision in that area.

Current position:

- Currently, BSOG is paid to all operators of registered local bus services, irrespective of the value that each service may provide to the passenger. As a result, the BSOG 'subsidy' can, in some cases, contribute towards wasteful or predatory services that may also, in the longer term, affect the viability of other services and incur additional public subsidy.
- Examples include the registration of duplicated journeys several minutes ahead of a competitor, rather than splitting headways, the registration of journeys only at profitable times abstracting from a more comprehensive provision, and registering journeys over subsidised services in the short-term to potentially and allegedly 'game' the award of contracts.
- Such tactics are legal, but in a time of severe economic restraint it is considered that efforts should be made to target public subsidy more effectively.

Required action:

Each bus registration should be evaluated by the relevant PTA to consider whether it would stimulate passenger growth or whether it is merely a predatory registration to abstract passengers from a previously registered bus route, and in particular with regard to the timing of bus provision on the route. BSOG should not be paid for mileage that brings no public benefit or does not stimulate the bus market in a sustainable way.

Benefits:

- The positive impacts of this action for passengers would be a more effective, integrated and complementary provision of bus services in their area.
- The withholding of BSOG for other than beneficial service provision to passengers would discourage bus operators from indulging in 'wasteful' competition.
- When combined with the suggestion that registrations operate for a minimum 180 days, the measures would be a significant disincentive to predatory behaviour.
- Additionally, the BSOG subsidy would be targeted to maximise benefit to the passenger, rather than the operator.

3 Public Transport Authorities should be given powers to require compulsory participation in ticketing schemes that are introduced in their areas

Current position

- Whilst PTAs currently have power to introduce Ticketing Schemes they can only do so following the failure of operators to introduce Ticketing Arrangements
- Any Ticketing Scheme or Arrangement can be frustrated by bus operators who may determine the price of the ticket and apply a high premium, rendering the ticket uneconomic to the user.
- Operators of registered local bus services are currently required to participate in the National Concessionary Travel Scheme ticketing arrangements.

Required Action:

- ***Adopt the recent remedy recommendations for multi-operator tickets of the Competition Commission's investigation into the bus market.***

Benefits:

- Attractive integrated ticketing for the passenger stimulating growth.
- This action would address the anti-competitive aspects of dominant operators.
- It would reduce the perceived fragmentation of bus services in some communities, providing more seamless, attractive, convenient ticketing arrangements.

4) The modifications to provisions on Statutory Quality Partnerships introduced in England and Wales in the Local Transport Act 2008 should also be introduced in Scotland.

Current position

- S. 3 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 limited the ability of PTAs to prescribe the operation of services in an SQP.
- The process of introducing an SQP is protracted.
- The PTA requires to invest significant capital monies prior to the introduction of any SQP when the outcomes of the mechanism are uncertain.
- There is no significant sanction to ensure compliance

Required Action:

- ***Provisions of Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 should be relaxed to permit the specification of maximum frequencies/timings in SQPs as per Local Transport Act 2008***
- ***PTAs should be permitted to define 'registration criteria' to prevent the provision, variation or withdrawal of services in an SQP area. The Traffic Commissioner would determine whether to accept specific registrations/variations/cancellations by reference to these criteria***
- ***Consideration should be given to fines or reduction in BSOG for non-compliance with SQP undertakings***
- ***Consideration should be given to the establishment of an adjudicator, or board, to consider admissible objections to the making of an SQP. This would reduce the likelihood and costs of delays associated with operators seeking to frustrate the introduction of an SQP to which they are unable or unwilling to commit.***

Benefits:

- A higher quality bus offering for passengers across communities where SQPs are implemented
- SQPs would become easier to implement
- PTAs would be encouraged to introduce SQPs as outcomes are more assured.

5.) The minimum period a service should operate as registered should be increased to180 days. In addition, regulations should be made in accordance with S.46 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 restricting dates on which local services may be varied in local areas.

Current position:

- In Scotland, a bus service must operate, as registered, for a minimum period of 90 days[2].
- Operators can introduce, vary or withdraw registrations at any time, subject to minimal notice requirements.
- Operators often seek to modify registrations simply to gain a temporary advantage over a competitor.

2 This condition, in addition to the 70-day notice requirement, contributed to the reduction in service changes in the SPT area from 1300 per year to around 900.

- This can lead to excessive change in bus service provision creating consumer confusion and loss of confidence in network stability.
- Railways, express buses and ferry companies generally adhere to two timetable changes per year at recognised times.

Required action:

- ***Amend time period for which a service is required to operate from 90 days to 180 days.***
  - ***S.45 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 to be amended and regulations under S. 46 of to be made to restrict the dates on which services may be varied to no more than 4 dates a year.***
- ***Acknowledging that there are often unforeseeable circumstances which require a quick change, there should be an added requirement that application to the Traffic Commissioner to register, vary or withdraw services at short notice must be accompanied by support from the public transport authority.***
  - ***Amend S. 6(2) of the Transport Act 1985 to reflect this requirement.***

Benefits:

- The above actions would yield significant benefits for customers. Greater network stability, improved reliability of service for customers, and more consistent information, with a longer 'shelf life.
- A reduction in the ability of bus operators to introduce short-term modifications to services to deter competition through over-bussing or head-running.
- A reduction in cost to the public purse through less network changes or requests for subsidy for withdrawn or varied services.

6 Consideration should be given to compliance inspectors/ vehicle inspection engineers employed by PTAs who would be trained and certified to VOSA standards, being given relevant powers equivalent to VOSA officers.

Current position:

- SPT currently employs vehicle inspection engineers and compliance inspectors to monitor the quality and operation of vehicles and services provided by bus operators under contract to SPT. This monitoring is undertaken primarily to protect the safety of passengers and other road users and ensure legal compliance.
- In addition, compliance officers note the operation of all local services and advise the Traffic Commissioner of observed breaches in relevant regulations, in accordance with an agreed protocol.
- Whilst carrying out monitoring, staff are often able to identify deficiencies in service operation with potentially serious implications and whilst prohibitions can be issued to operators and against vehicles contracted to SPT, they are unable to take any action with regard to the commercial services providing the majority of the bus network.
- Currently such inspectors are only able to advise the operator and vehicle inspectorate of potentially dangerous situations.
- It is suggested that, subject to training and accreditation, Inspectors employed by PTAs be given powers to inspect and prohibit vehicles commensurate with those of VOSA.

Required action:

- ***A training and certification scheme for inspectors and engineers employed by PTAs such as SPT to be established such that actions taken by them and evidence submitted to the Traffic Commissioner is deemed compliant with regulations and requirements. Legislation may be required to legally empower officers.***

Benefits:

- The primary benefits of this action would be safer vehicles on the roads for use by the travelling public, and a more effective reporting regime.
- Empowering inspectors employed by PTAs such as SPT would significantly increase the resources currently deployed on ensuring the safety and legality of bus operations in Scotland thereby maximising the effectiveness of the work of the Traffic Commissioner, who only has a small number of staff dedicated to this task at the current time.
- These additional monitoring resources will encourage bus operators to be more aware of, and adhere to, the legal and safety requirements of bus operation in Scotland.
- Currently, when operators are called to public inquiry by the Traffic Commissioner, the Commissioner may call on evidence provided by SPT staff. Much time and effort is taken up at enquiries proving the competence and jurisdiction of inspectors or engineers employed by SPT, whilst such issues are seldom raised with regard to VOSA inspectors. By certifying and empowering the PTA inspectors the business of any public enquiry can be expedited more efficiently

7.) The Traffic Commissioner should consider not accepting local service registrations submitted by Community Transport groups (S. 22 permit holders) unless the registration is supported by the PTA and the group is registered on the Community Transport database. Additionally, a date should be set for the revocation of all existing Community Bus permits which may then be re-issued subject to application and compliance with minimum quality standards.

Current position:

- Recent decisions offering BSOG to services operated by Community Transport groups and changes in powers of Community Transport Providers under the Local Transport Act 2008 (payment to drivers) are likely to encourage Community Transport groups to register and operate local bus services.
- Such measures are broadly welcome, especially in more remote areas where conventional bus services are likely to be uneconomic, but concerns exist over the governance and technical proficiency of some groups and the possibility that some registrations may affect the viability of mainstream marginal bus services, leading to their withdrawal.
- Operating costs of Community transport, along with overheads are invariably lower than conventional bus services. The maintenance regimes and vehicle standards are less onerous than those expected from the holders of PSV operators licences and often grants towards the purchase of vehicles by councils or other bodies has helped defer costs.
- Historically, S. 22 permits have been granted without time limit to groups that may have changed significantly in governance, personnel and ability since the grant. Regulations under the Local Transport Act 2008 imposes a duty on Traffic Commissioners to maintain a database of permits granted and limits the duration of new permits to 5 years.
- This enables a periodic quality check to be carried out and therefore will go some way to addressing concerns over quality. Existing permits should be revoked from a given date and re-issued where appropriate, ensuring existing permit-holders are also suitably qualified.

Required action:

Most of the necessary legislation for this proposal is in place. Regulations requiring the Traffic Commissioner to maintain records of permits issued and the time-limited nature of these new permits have already been made. A further regulation does, however, require to be made identifying a date when all previous permits should be revoked. Holders of these permits would then be required to re-apply for time-limited permits. SPT would be willing, on

behalf of the Traffic Commissioner for Scotland, to establish and maintain the database of all S.19 and S. 22 permits issued.

Benefits:

- The principal benefit in this proposal is in raising the quality and safety of community transport provision through the establishment of minimum acceptable standards for community transport, and regular review and monitoring of the proficiency of groups seeking to provide such services.
- PTAs, like SPT, see community transport providers as an essential part of the future of public transport provision, especially in times of financial constraint, and improved standards will encourage PTAs to partner these providers in improving services in their areas, further stimulating the community transport market.
- The requirement for the Traffic Commissioner to maintain a database of permits issued will assist in the monitoring of the sector, and the revocation of existing permits would necessitate their renewal providing a complete database of all groups.
- The increasing likelihood of community transport registering local services does, however, raise concerns that they may in some circumstances compete with mainstream provision. Thus, requiring all S. 22 permit holders to have applications to register services endorsed by the PTA, should reduce such conflicts.

8.) Where a bus operator enjoys an effective monopoly and may be seeking subsidy from the PTA, the PTA should be given access to service cost and revenue figures to satisfy themselves that the operator is not seeking excessive subsidy costs or acting in an anti-competitive manner.

Current position:

- Bus operators enjoy an effective monopoly in many areas of Scotland. Such monopolies can often result in alleged 'gaming' by companies, which could be perceived as being simply to extract further monies for profit from PTAs on contracted routes.
- This can result in operator's undertaking market manipulation, service reduction or variation (and subsequent request for public subsidy to replace), high fares, reduced frequencies, and predatory behaviour against other operators
- The PTAs only method of addressing this is through service subsidy or the introduction of a Quality Contract (QC), which, to date, not one PTA has introduced due to the complexity involved.

Required action:

- ***Where an operator enjoys an effective monopoly (for example, over 75% of market in an area), and the PTA considers that this could result in excessive subsidy from the public purse, the operator should be placed under a duty to detail costs, income and profit margins of relevant contracting depots.***
- ***This 'open book' approach would permit an assessment of whether the operator is abusing a monopoly position and whether action to address this is warranted.***
- ***The PTAs request for information would be subject to approval from an arbitrator e.g. Traffic Commissioner or Scottish Ministers.***
- ***Any information supplied to PTAs under this proposal would remain confidential and subject to similar conditions detailed in S.43 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001.***

Benefits:

- PTAs would be better informed about operation, income and therefore subsidy requirements of services in their communities, assisting the assessment of potential remedial measures.

- Operators would be less inclined to seek higher subsidy for providing a PTA-secured service enabling better use of PTA's limited financial resources to provide further vital services for communities across its area.

9 Electronic Bus Service Registration (EBSR) to become the mandatory format for submitting bus registration particulars by 2014, and that such submissions are not accepted without the PTA acknowledging receipt of such information as prescribed in regulations.

Current position:

- Current system for receiving and processing registrations allows operators to submit completed registration forms in 2 formats: paper-based documents or an electronic copy, meaning separate processing regimes with consequent costs.
- This 'double' processing regime can lead to confusion, 'grey areas' and additional costs for the PTA and the Traffic Commissioner, all in all potentially resulting in poorer information being provided to the customer.

Required action:

- ***The Traffic Commissioner would require to advise operators that applications for registration, variation or cancellation of local service details should be submitted in the EBSR format from a given date e.g. 2014.***
- ***No submission should be accepted by the Traffic Commissioner unless it has been formally receipted by the PTA in accordance with the prescribed timescales.***

Benefits:

- By requiring that all registrations, variations and cancellations are submitted through EBSR, significant savings could be made in resources required to process and record the information
- Furthermore, this will create a more robust, resilient, auditable system of service registrations with a clear, electronic information record.
- This would result in an immediately accessible, comprehensive database of services to assist planning and emergency services.
- Lastly, but most importantly, there would be huge benefits for the travelling public through the provision of up-to-date information.

10) The Public Service Vehicles (Registration of Local Services)(Scotland) Regulations 2001 should be amended such that the duty to inform the relevant authority(ies) of an application to register, vary or withdraw a bus service is replaced by a duty to consult.

Current position;

- In Scotland bus operators are required to inform Public Transport Authorities of their applications to change or introduce bus services 14 days before the application is submitted to the Traffic Commissioner.
- Following initial uncertainty the Traffic Commissioner has determined that the information submitted to the PTAs must be a copy of the completed registration particulars.
- The period between submitting informing to the PTA and submitting the registration documents to the Traffic Commissioner enables the Authority to identify any faults in the documents and advise the operator of the failings. It does not permit the Authority to enter meaningful discussions on the proposals.

Required action:

S.4(1) of the regulations should be amended such that the word 'consult' replaces the word 'inform'.

Benefits:

- A statutory two-way dialogue in the period before a registration is submitted will enable the PTA to advise the operator of the likely result of the proposed service changes, the response, if any, of the PTA and, as at present, any technical faults within the document.
- The operator's knowledge of the response of the PTA may influence the final proposals avoiding the requirement to tender services, the submission of successive registration documents and excessive disruption to the passenger.
- If the proposal above in relation to payment of BSOG is adopted, this consultation will advise the operator whether the registration is supported by the PTA in benefiting and sustaining the bus market.
- Overall, this proposal will ensure that a more co-ordinated approach to network planning and development is place, which is to the significant benefit of passengers and communities.

AGENDA

- Introduction, welcome, agenda
- SPT - Who we are, what we do
- Bus in Scotland
- Demand Responsive Transport
- MyBus Web Booking - Demo
- Social Transport
- Community Transport
- Q&A
- MyBus Contact Centre - Visit
- Buchanan Bus Station - Visit
- MyBus – Demo
- Lunch

Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Regional Development

7 February 2013

Gordon Maclennan

Chief Executive

What we are

- Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT)
- Largest of 7 Regional Transport Partnerships in Scotland (RTP's)
- Unique as established with different powers
- Retain bus powers, requisitioning powers and capital investment programme.

Constituent Councils

- Argyll & Bute
- East Ayrshire
- East Dunbartonshire
- East Renfrewshire
- Glasgow
- Inverclyde
- North Ayrshire
- North Lanarkshire
- Renfrewshire
- South Ayrshire
- South Lanarkshire
- West Dunbartonshire

Turnover approx £100 million

- **Funds managed of around £70 million**
  - Revenue
  - Agency
  - Local Concession

- **Capital and Ticket Revenues of over £30m**

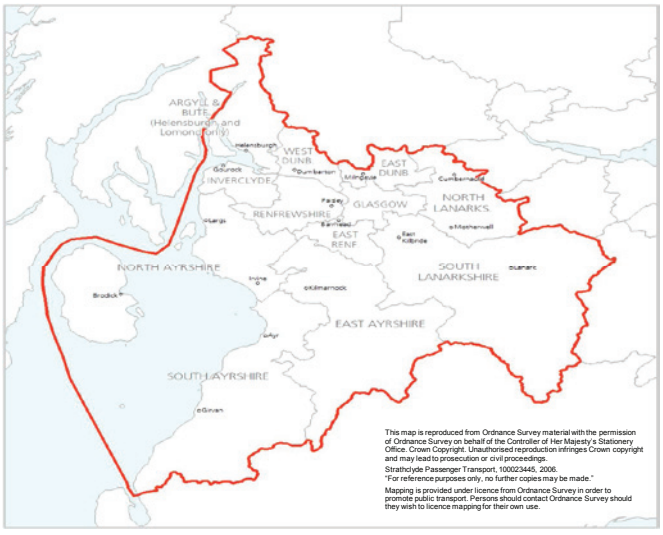
What we do

- Subway
- Bus Services
- Bus Stations
- Bus Infrastructure
- Travel Planning
- Projects
  - Subway
  - Bus
  - Rail
  - Active Travel
  - Local Authority

Mission

“A world-class, sustainable transport system that acts as a catalyst for an improved quality of life for all.”

SPT



Population = 2.16 million (42% Scotland)

Public Transport Trips =

285 million

Car trips =

700 million

Modes

PUBLIC TRANSPORT TRIPS:

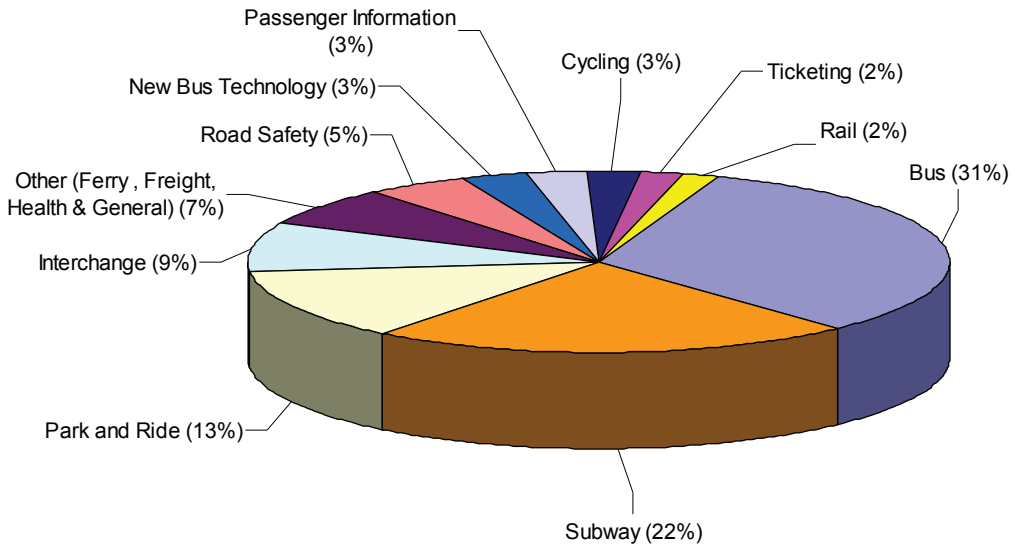
1% FERRY

4% SUBWAY

17% RAIL

78% BUS

SPT Capital Spend by Mode
2008 - 2012



Projects

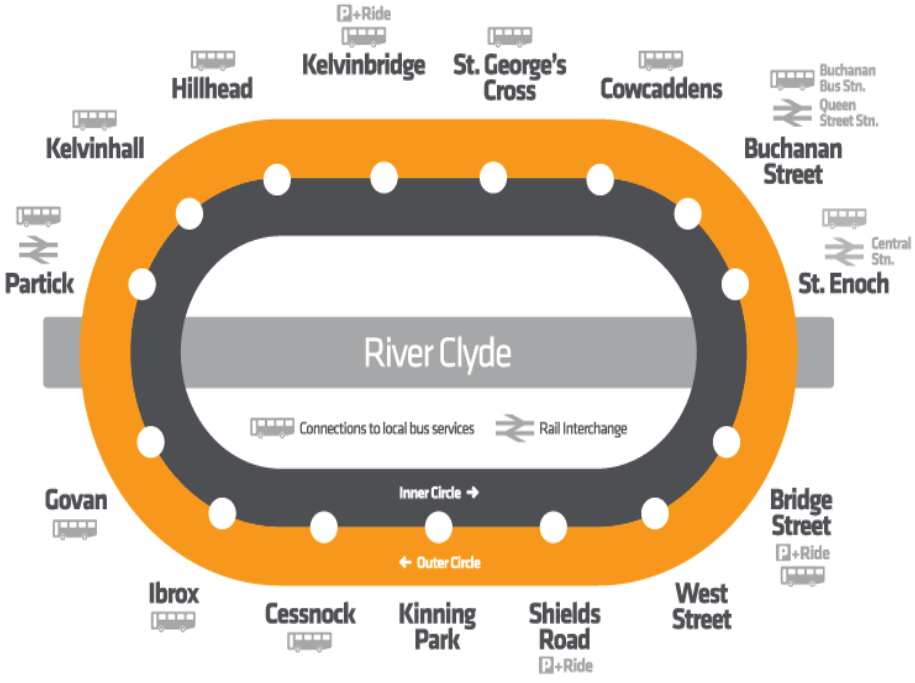
SUBWAY MODERNISATION (£286M)

FASTLINK (£40M)

SMART TICKETING "OYSTER STYLE" (£8M)

BUS INVESTMENT (£47.2M)

Subway Network



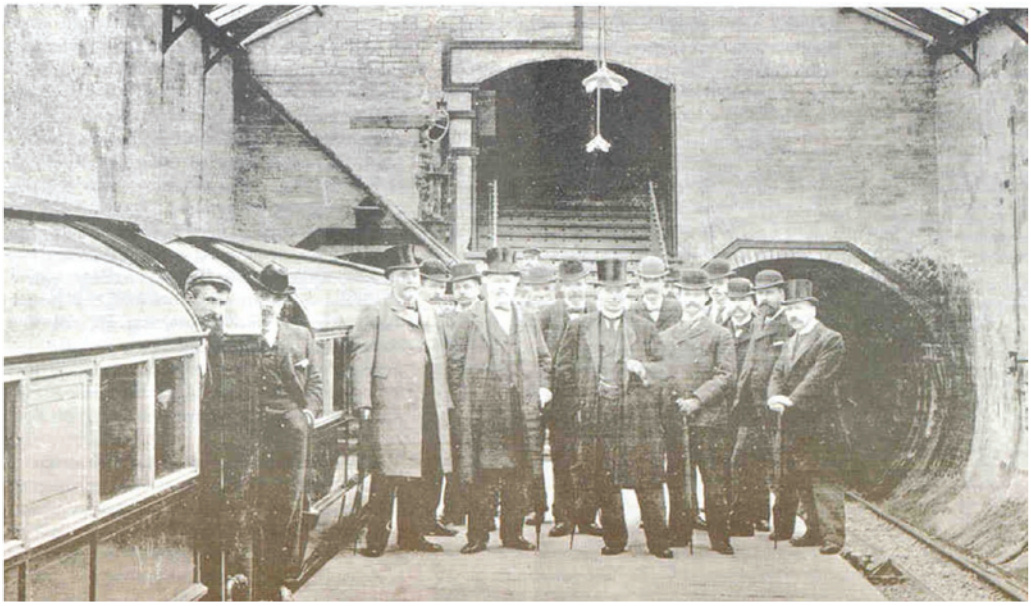
Subway - How does it compare?

Public "Subsidy" per passenger trip:

- **Rail = > £6.00 franchise cost.**
- **Bus = around 20p BSOG, and including Concessionary Reimbursment around 50p**
- **Subway = around 7p.**

All net of capital; Network Rail, Roads, Infrastructure & Tunnels.

Subway then….



....now



Subway



Subway



Croy Park & Ride



BUS CAPITAL SPENDS (£m):

2006/07	-	2.24		
2007/08	-	1.13		
2008/09	-	7.33		
2009/10	-	8.41	+	5.38 (Local Authority bus projects)
2010/11	-	9.27	+	6.79 (Local Authority bus projects)
2011/12	-	7.82	+	1.74 (Local Authority bus projects)
2012/13	-	11.29	+	3.15 (Local Authority bus projects)

Greenock Bus Station - before



Greenock Bus Station - before



Greenock Bus Station - before



Greenock Bus Station - now



❖Integrated Transport Project of the Year at Scottish Transport Awards 2012

Hamilton Bus Station



Modes

PUBLIC TRANSPORT TRIPS:

1% FERRY

4% SUBWAY

17% RAIL

78% BUS

BUS OPERATORS	**-**	**>100**
MILES OPERATED	**-**	**88 million**
Commercial 93% Subsidy 7%		
NUMBER OF ROUTES	**-**	**850**
BUS STOPS	**-**	**11,000**
SCHOOL TRIPS	**-**	**20 million**

- **286,000,000 unfulfilled trips**

- **93% of mileage commercial;**

- **does not mean 93% of the population can access bus services**

Bus services in SPT area: “an all time low….”



Daily Record
15 June 2007
(45)

Only trouble with public transport is the public ..and, er, the transport

By Paula Murray
reporters@dailyrecord.co.uk

Passengers list biggest gripes with the buses

UNPOPULAR: Users don't rate buses

Most REGULATED, De-regulated industry in the world:

DfT

VOSA

Office of the Traffic Commissioner

OFT

Competition Commission

Devolved Government

Transport Scotland

Public Transport Authorities

RTP's

Compliance

PCV Regs

RTA

TRC's

TRO's

WTD

Licence Agreements

Conditions of Contract

EU CPC

etc, etc……

- **PUBLIC EXPENDITURE TO REDUCE BY 20% OVER THE NEXT 5 YEARS**
- **ELDERLY POPULATION > 31% OVER THE NEXT 20 YEARS**

We believe the 'status quo' is now unsustainable.

'NO CHANGE'

IS NOT AN OPTION.

93% of bus market in Scotland commercial

80% of English market commercial (outside London)

c. £300,000,000 of value

Main commuter corridors, good quality, well served

Evenings, Sundays. Not so

Rural areas. Worse or non-existent

Proper co-ordination, accessibility. No

Proper consultation. No

Is public transport important, politically. ?

Does the public think it should be better. Yes

1. **Allow PTAs to secure (or provide) bus services where there is clearly a need, even if it may be in conflict with the perceived commercial view of the operator.**
2. **The payment of BSOG for new / varied registered mileage should only be made where that registration has been confirmed as not operating to the detriment of overall provision in that area.**
3. **PTAs should be given powers to require compulsory participation in ticketing schemes that are introduced in their areas.**
4. **Modifications to SQPs introduced in England and Wales should be introduced in Scotland.**
5. **The minimum period a service should operate as registered should be increased to 180 days. In addition, regulations should be made in accordance with s.46 of 2001 Act restricting dates on which local services may be varied in local areas.**
6. **Consideration should be given to compliance inspectors / vehicle inspection engineers employed by PTAs who would be trained and certified to VOSA standards, being given relevant powers equivalent to VOSA officers.**
7. **7. The Traffic Commissioner should consider not accepting local service registrations submitted by Community Transport groups (s.22 permit holders) unless the registration is supported by the PTA and the group is registered on the Community Transport database. Additionally, a date should be set for the revocation of all existing Community Bus permits which may then be re-issued subject to application and compliance with minimum quality standards.**
8. **Where a bus operator enjoys an effective monopoly and may be seeking subsidy from the PTA, the PTA should be given access to service cost and revenue figures to satisfy themselves that the operator is not seeking excessive subsidy costs or acting in an anti-competitive manner.**
9. **EBSR to become the mandatory format for submitting bus registration particulars by 2014, and that such submissions are not accepted without the PTA acknowledging receipt of such information as prescribed in regulations.**
10. **The Public Service Vehicles (Registration of Local Services) (Scotland) Regulations 2001 should be amended such that the duty to inform the relevant authority(ies) of an application to register, vary or withdraw a bus service is replaced by a duty to consult.**

- **Based on SPT's 10 point plan, Scottish Transport Minister now established a Bus Stakeholders working group to advance proposals (potential new Transport Act – Scotland)**

  - **Bus Industry (CPT)**
  - **Traffic Commissioner**
  - **SPT**
  - **Local Authorities**
  - **Scottish Government**
  - **Passenger Focus**

Opposition advancing a Franchising Bill

Status Quo is unsustainable

Right Time

- SPT proposing
  - Voluntary Partnership (Statutory)
  - Franchise Packages (Sting)
  - 10 Point Plan (Practicality)
  - Community Transport
  - Local Authority Fleets
  - Progressive Social Care Fleet integration (SAS etc.)

SPT DEMAND RESPONSIVE TRANSPORT SERVICES

DEREGULATION

1985 SAW THE DEREGULATION OF THE LOCAL BUS SERVICE MARKET IN THE UK

IT WAS DESIGNED TO STIMULATE THE MARKET FOR BUS SERVICES

ISSUES OF DEREGULATION

- **HOWEVER, NO-ONE FULLY CONSIDERED:**
  - **THE ELDERLY**
  - **THE DISABLED**
  - **ADDITIONAL SPECIAL NEEDS**
  - **SOCIAL WORK**
  - **ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE**
  - **COMMUNITY TRANSPORT**
  - **AND OTHERS – ACROSS SCOTLAND 100'S OF AGENCIES & PARTNERS – E.G. SCOTTISH AMBULANCE SERVICE, WRVS, BRITISH RED CROSS**

SPT DEMAND RESPONSE TRANSPORT SERVICES



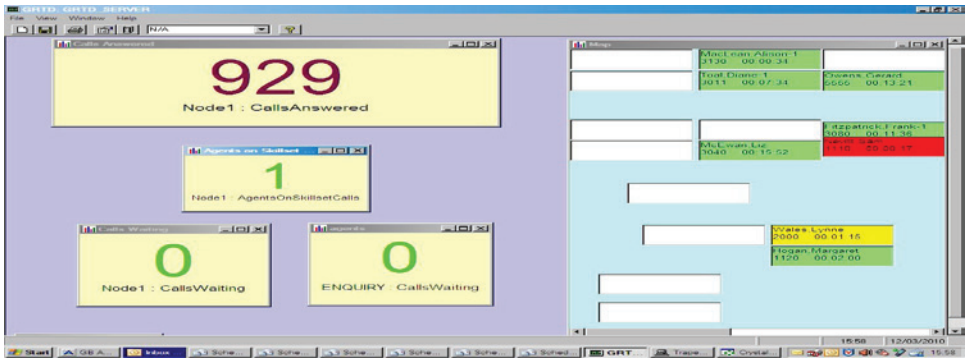
"First remove the plank from your own eye then you will see clearly……."

SPT'S DEMAND RESPONSIVE TRANSPORT SERVICES (MyBus)

- **PROVIDED THROUGHOUT THE WEST OF SCOTLAND USING THE FOLLOWING:**
  - **STATE OF THE ART ADAPTABLE VEHICLES**
  - **BOOKING/SCHEDULING SOFTWARE IN A DEDICATED CONTACT CENTRE**
  - **ONLINE BOOKING SERVICE**
  - **MOBILE DATA TERMINALS (MDTS) – REAL TIME INFORMATION**
  - **GPS VEHICLE TRACKING**

DRT CONTACT CENTRE





MyBus



- 2.05 METRES
- SEATING ADAPTED TO REQUIREMENTS WHILST IN SERVICE
- BUS (PSV)
- WELFARE BUS
- 24 MPG

ADAPTABLE SEATING



BENEFITS

Contract Cost Operator Bus (£)	Contract Cost SPT Bus(£)	SAVING (£)
1,648,035	861,221	786,814
1,379,085	1,043,070	336,015
5,760,180	4,499,460	1,260,720
8,787,300	6,403,751	2,383,549

19 VEHICLES CAPITAL COST £1,564,975 (CIRCA £82K EACH)

PAYBACK 39 MONTHS

TECHNOLOGY



MOBILE DATA TERMINALS

Real time bookings

Real time tracking

Communication with driver

MyBus Web
Book 24 hours a day,
365 days a year
Real time information
Shared service potential



INCREASE IN PATRONAGE

- **480,907 PASSENGER TRIPS DURING 2011-12**
- **530,636 PASSENGER TRIPS PROJECTED FOR 2012-13**
- **AN OVERALL INCREASE IN PATRONAGE OF 10% AND CONTINUES TO INCREASE**
- **MYBUS RE-BRAND RESULTED IN A 12% INCREASE UNDER 55S (MOBILITY)**
- **MYBUS WEB NOW ACCOUNTS FOR 7% OF THE BOOKINGS MADE ON MYBUS**

SCOTTISH TRANSPORT AWARDS BEST BUS SERVICE WINNER 2012

DELIVERING INTEGRATED HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE TRANSPORT

FLEET INTEGRATION

SPT PARTICIPATED IN THE GLASGOW INTEGRATED TRANSPORT PROJECT, A TWO YEAR STUDY INVOLVING THE NHS, SCOTTISH AMBULANCE SERVICE, GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL'S LAND AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT AND COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

THE STUDY FOUND:

- 117 VEHICLES ON STANDBY DURING THE DAY
- 87 VEHICLES USED FOR THE TRANSPORT OF LUNCHES

OVERALL EFFICIENCY WAS RELATIVELY POOR IN COMPARISON TO BOTH SPT VEHICLES AND THOSE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR

CLYDE VALLEY SOCIAL TRANSPORT PROJECT OVERVIEW

ARBUTHNOTT REVIEW….

- REVIEW OF SHARED SERVICES ACROSS THE CLYDE VALLEY COUNCILS CARRIED OUT IN 2009 TO MOVE TO A MODEL OF INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY IN CERTAIN KEY AREAS
- FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF REVIEW, THE CLYDE VALLEY COUNCILS ESTABLISHED A SOCIAL TRANSPORT AND FLEET MANAGEMENT WORK STREAM TO CONSIDER JOINT SCHEDULING AND FLEET MANAGEMENT

SPT, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CLYDE VALLEY COUNCILS:

- DEVELOPED AN OPERATIONAL PILOT WITH GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL
- UNDERTOOK A DETAILED SCHEDULING EXERCISE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CLYDE VALLEY COUNCILS (NLC, WDC, ERC, IC & EDC) TO LOOK AT ASN AND SOCIAL WORK CLIENT RUNS

SPT'S RESOURCES

- CENTRALISED BOOKING AND SCHEDULING
- SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENT IN CONTACT CENTRE – SOFTWARE AND TELECOMS
- 'REALTIME' GPS VEHICLE TRACKING AND WORK ALLOCATION

OPERATIONAL PILOT WITH GLASGOW CC

- PILOT CURRENTLY DEMONSTRATING THE PRACTICAL, OPERATIONAL AND VALIDATION OF THE BENEFITS OF SCHEDULING AND BOOKING OF TRANSPORT ONTO THE DOWNTIME OF GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL'S VEHICLE FLEET
- OVERALL SAVINGS IDENTIFIED TO DATE - £4.8M BY BETTER VEHICLE UTILISATON AND REDUCTION IN COUNCIL'S VEHICLE FLEET

SAVINGS DELIVERED

- GCC SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT VOLUNTARY CLUB TRANSPORT:
  - WAS COSTING £500K OVERTIME ONLY
  - SPT SCHEDULED JOURNEYS TO ACHIEVE SAVINGS WITH RUNS OPERATED BY CT SECTOR
  - RESULT? TOTAL COST NOW < £300K AND WITH MORE CLUBS ADDED!
  - A DELIVERED SAVING OF 42%

SCOTTISH TRANSPORT AWARD WINNER 2011 FOR INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

SAVINGS DELIVERED

- ASN TRANSPORT TO ASHCRAIG SCHOOL IN GLASGOW:
  - 12 BUSES USED TO TRANSPORT PUPILS BY GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL IN 2010
  - FOLLOWING SPT RE-PLANNING ROUTES ONLY 10 BUSES WERE REQUIRED IN 2012
  - OVERALL SAVING OF £80K
- SPT HAS IDENTIFIED FURTHER SAVINGS FOR GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL AND NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL TO WORK IN PARTNERSHIP TO INTEGRATE TRANSPORT AT SOME ASN SCHOOLS – SAVING OF £60K

CLYDE VALLEY - SCHEDULING EXERCISE WITH COUNCILS

EXERCISE IDENTIFIED:

- RESOURCE SAVINGS AND EFFICIENCIES FOR 5 COUNCILS THROUGH THE SCHEDULING THEIR CURRENT TRANSPORT
- VEHICLE DOWNTIME (MOVE CURRENT PLANNED AND AD-HOC TAXI JOURNEYS)
- INTEGRATING TRANSPORT RESOURCES WITH COUNCILS WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH EACH OTHER
- SIGNFICANT SAVINGS IF TIMES ARE MOVED FOR DAY CENTRES

OVERALL KEY FINDINGS ACROSS THE 5 COUNCILS:

- REDUCE VEHICLE FLEET BY 5% THROUGH SCHEDULING
- 93,552 HOURS OF VEHICLE DOWNTIME AVAILABLE EACH YEAR
- FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES TO INTEGRATE 17 BUS OR TAXI JOURNEYS BETWEEN COUNCILS
- REDUCTION OF 33 VEHICLES IF DAY CENTRE TIMES MOVED
- OVERALL SAVINGS OF £2.6M (BUS SAVINGS AND DOWNTIME ONLY)

GOING FORWARD:

- WORKING WITH COUNCILS TO REALISE SAVINGS

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

- LOCAL COUNCILS – FLEET RE-CONFIGURATION:
  - ENCOURAGING COUNCILS TO MOVE AWAY FROM TRADITIONAL WELFARE TYPE VEHICLES TO PUBLIC SERVICE VEHICLES (AS USED IN MYBUS) – THIS WILL PROVIDE GREATER OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTEGRATION AND DELIVERY OF TRANSPORT SERVICES IN THE FUTURE THROUGH A COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP WITH SPT – TO ASSIST WITH THIS SPT HAVE OFFERED TO GRANT FUND THE DIFFERENCE IN THE COSTS
- NHS BOARDS:
  - PROVIDING ASSISTANCE WITH NHS TO IDENTIFY INTEGRATING THEIR TRANSPORT RESOURCES AND PROVISION
- SCOTTISH AMBULANCE SERVICE:
  - PROVIDED ASSISTANCE AND ADVICE IN RELATION TO THE MODELLING AND SET UP OF SAS WEST OF SCOTLAND CALL CENTRE OPERATION
  - IN DISCUSSIONS WITH SAS TO LOOK AT THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INTEGRATED TRANSPORT HUB

SWEAT THE ASSETS

OVERALL:

DO MORE FOR LESS!!!!

DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

IN WEST OF SCOTLAND

DEVELOPING CT THROUGHOUT SPT AREA – RESOURCES

- SINCE 2008 PROVIDED FUNDING OF £2.4M
- CURRENTLY LEASING 7 LOW FLOOR VEHICLES TO COMMUNITY TRANSPORT OPERATORS, A CAPITAL INVESTMENT OF £546,000
- SUPPORTED AND FUNDED 25 COMMUNITY TRANSPORT SCHEMES/SERVICES SINCE 2008
- WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS TO DEVELOP CT IN AREAS WHERE THERE ARE GAPS
- CURRENTLY DEVELOPING AND SETTING UP BACK OFFICE AND TICKET MACHINE SUPPORT TO ENABLE CT TO DELIVER MORE LOCAL BUS SERVICES IN FUTURE





DEVELOPING CT THROUGHOUT SPT AREA

- WEST OF SCOTLAND COMMUNITY TRANSPORT NETWORK
  - ITS MAIN AIMS ARE TO:
    - WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CT OPERATORS TO DELIVER COMMUNITY AND DEMAND RESPONSIVE TRANSPORT
    - SET AND MAINTAIN STANDARDS FOR CT SERVICES ACROSS THE NETWORK
    - BUILD THE CAPACITY OF EXISTING CT OPERATORS IN RELATION TO SOCIAL IMPACT, FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY, TRAINING, VOLUNTEERING, QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND FLEET DEVELOPMENT
    - DEVELOP NEW CT INITIATIVES TO ADDRESS GAPS IN THE NETWORK
    - PROMOTE THE SECTOR TO COMMUNITIES, FUNDERS AND SERVICE COMMISSIONERS

DEVELOPING CT THROUGHOUT SPT AREA

- CT QUALITY FRAMEWORK:
  - STANDARDS THAT:
    - SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PROFESSIONAL AND ACCOUNTABLE CT SECTOR
    - ARE APPROPRIATE TO THE LEGAL AND PRACTICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE CT SECTOR
    - INCREASE THE QUALITY OF TRANSPORT PROVISION FROM THE THIRD AND VOLUNTARY SECTORS BOTH ON THE PART OF PASSENGERS AND FUNDING /CONTRACTING BODIES
    - INCUR A MINIMAL EXTRA ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN
  - 4 MAIN QUALITY AREAS: VEHICLE MANAGEMENT
    GOVERNANCE
    FINANCE/PLANNING
    OPERATIONS
  - SUPPORT AND TRAINING IS BEING PROVIDED TO CTOS EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTIES IN ACHIEVING OR MAINTAINING STANDARDS FROM SPT AND MEMBERS OF THE NETWORK STEERING GROUP





DEVELOPING CT THROUGHOUT SPT AREA - SERVICES

- TIMETABLED COMMUNITY BUS SERVICES – 5 IN OPERATION THROUGHOUT WEST OF SCOTLAND – 1,500 PASSENGERS PER WEEK
  - CB SERVICE IN DRUMCHAPEL WON CTA SCOTLAND AWARD FOR BEST NEW COMMUNITY TRANSPORT INITIATIVE 2012
- HOSPITAL EVENING VISITING TRANSPORT SERVICE
- SOCIAL WORK VOLUNTARY CLUB RUNS TRANSPORT
- “MYBUS” SERVICE ON ARRAN
- ASN SCHOOL TRANSPORT



West of Scotland Community Transport Network

Quality Framework

1. Introduction

This Quality Framework has been created and developed by the West of Scotland Community Transport Network (WoSCTN) Steering Group.

The quality standards contained within the framework have been chosen which:

- Support the development of a professional and accountable Community Transport (CT) sector.
- Are appropriate to the legal and practical framework of the CT sector.
- Increase the quality of transport provision from the third and voluntary sectors both on the part of passengers and funding/contracting bodies.
- Incur a minimal extra administrative burden.

2. About West of Scotland Community Transport Network

The West of Scotland Community Transport Network is a partnership between Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) and the Community Transport Sector throughout the West of Scotland to assist in bringing co-ordination, enhanced quality and better use of resources within the sector.

The Network is overseen by a Steering Group comprising of Officers of SPT and representation from Community Transport Operators (CTO) that SPT currently fund. The Steering Group is responsible for supporting the development of the Network and the delivery of outcomes in the development of Community Transport throughout the West of Scotland.

The aims of the Network are to:

- Work in partnership with community transport providers at a local and regional level.
- Build the capacity of community transport in the SPT area.
- Provide training and information to community transport operators.
- Develop and implement best practice and quality standards in community transport.
- Support Network Members by providing links to other members for the purpose of sharing resources and information.

Membership Levels

Membership of the West of Scotland Community Transport Network is available to Community Transport Operators in two tiers:

Basic Membership – CTO's which are working towards full compliance of this Quality Framework

Full Membership – CTO's which can supply evidence and prove compliance with the standards relevant to their category contained within the framework. These CTO's will be awarded accredited status.

Compliance Requirements

There are four categories of compliance that CTO's can apply for depending on the nature of services they provide:

Category 1

CTO

- Operating vehicles up to 16 seats and above.
- Be able to tender and deliver local subsidised bus, MyBus, school and demand responsive transport contract work on behalf of SPT.
- Apply/receive SPT funding.

Category 2

CTO

- Operating vehicles up to 16 seats and above.
- Be able to tender and deliver school, demand responsive transport contract work on behalf of SPT.
- Apply/receive SPT funding.

Category 3

CTO

- Operating smaller vehicles below 16 seats.
- Providing local CT Services.

Category 4

Volunteer/Social Car Schemes

- Apply/receive SPT funding.

3. The Framework

The structure of the framework is divided into 4 main areas, Vehicle Management, Governance, Finance/Planning and Operations, designed to cover the key aspects of operating a Community Transport Organisation.

Each area is subdivided to show:

- A set of quality indicators
- The evidence required to prove attainment of the indicator(s)

The final column references the applicable compliance category to the relevant indicator.

4. Implementation

Implementation of these requirements will begin in the Autumn of 2012. It is envisaged that full implementation will be phased over an 18 month period, accompanied by support where required to enable operators to attain the relevant accreditation.

5. Support Arrangements

Support and training will be available to CTOs experiencing difficulties in achieving or maintaining standards from SPT and members of the WoSCTN Steering Group.

Basic members will be offered support to enable them to reach full membership under their relevant compliance category within 1 year.

A 2 year lead in time will be given to those CTOs working towards the Management Certificate of Professional Competence in Road Passenger Transport required for Category 1 accreditation.

6. Assessment Process

CTOs will require to complete a Membership Application Form and will be asked to submit relevant documentation as outlined in the Quality Framework.

On receipt of the application and the relevant documentation being in order an assessment visit and vehicle inspection will be arranged.

The assessment visit will be undertaken by SPT to gather the evidence outlined in the framework to ensure that the CTO meets the relevant quality indicator under each area.

An SPT Engineer will inspect the vehicles of the CTO and inspect their maintenance regime records and paperwork relating to the vehicles. The CTO will be required to provide or arrange suitable garage facilities at their own expense to allow the vehicles to be inspected.

A compliance report will be complied following the assessment visit and engineer inspection outlining if the CTO meets the criteria for becoming an Accredited Operator under their relevant compliance category and, if they do not meet the criteria, where they have failed and recommended action.

7. Accreditation

For organisations that meet the required standards for Full Membership, accreditation is awarded annually for 12 months from 1 April.

Such organisations will be allowed to use the WoSCTN “Accredited Operator” logo on vehicles and stationery during this period.

Marking

All quality indicators are considered essential to the relevant categories. However, failure to comply with the **Vehicle Management Area** and the **Management – Social/Volunteer Car Schemes Area** is regarded much more seriously and will require immediate rectification to maintain accreditation.

Accreditation will not be awarded to an organisation that cannot provide evidence of complete compliance. Basic Membership may be awarded, at the discretion of the Network, if the organisation agrees to work within an agreed timeframe for meeting the standards.

Re-assessment

Any organisation which fails an assessment will be offered support by SPT and the members of the WoSCTN Steering Group to enable them to attain standards and undertake a re-assessment within an agreed timeframe but not exceeding one year.

Maintaining standards

Although assessment visits will take place on an annual basis, with vehicle engineering inspections undertaken at periodic intervals, members are expected to comply throughout the 12 month accreditation period.

To maintain accreditation, each Full Member CTO must therefore be able to demonstrate compliance with the standards set out in the Quality Framework at any time.

Main Quality Area	Activity	Quality Indicator(s)	Evidence Required	Compliance Category
Vehicle Management	Management	One staff member to hold a Management Certificate of Professional Competence in Road Passenger Transport and there is evidence of Continuing Professional Development	Copy of certificate and evidence of Continuing Professional Development	1
	Daily Walk round Checks	All vehicle check records up to date	Sight of auditable records	1, 2, 3
	Driver Licensing	Auditable system to ensure that all drivers are appropriately licensed	Sight of signed off pro-forma check sheet and copy licenses	1, 2, 3
	Safety Inspections	Planned inspection regime by agreed frequency displayed through wall chart or electronic system	Sight of auditable fully completed records matching planned events – 6 to 10 weeks	1, 2, 3
	MOT	Vehicles have MOT Certificate in appropriate Class	Copy of MOT certificate(s)	1, 2, 3
	Servicing and Maintenance	Planned servicing and maintenance regime based on manufacturers recommendation, mileage or time	Sight of auditable fully completed service records matching planned events	1, 2, 3

Main Quality Area	Activity	Quality Indicator(s)	Evidence Required	Compliance Category
Vehicle Management	Nil Defect Reporting System	Auditable system for reporting defects from drivers daily walk round checks through to signed off rectification	Audit record of drivers defects against inspection and service reports retained for a rolling 15 month period	1, 2, 3
	Maintenance Agreement Internal/External	A signed maintenance agreement is in place between operator and maintenance supplier(s) covering all legal and operational requirements or appropriate arrangements within a lease agreement	Copy of signed maintenance agreement and record of maintenance provider	1, 2, 3
	Accident/Incident Management	Auditable procedures and systems for accident/incident management	Evidence of a accident/incident management procedure and auditable accident/ incident report and records retained for a minimum of 3 years	1
	Insurance	Certificated Road traffic insurance in place for all vehicles	Copy of valid insurance certificates	1, 2, 3
	Vehicle Road Tax	Vehicles have appropriate road tax disc(s)	Copy of road tax certificate(s) and check with DVLA	1, 2, 3

Main Quality Area	Activity	Quality Indicator(s)	Evidence Required	Compliance Category
Vehicle Management	Vehicle Resources	Schedule of fleet (age, type, mileage, capacity)	Copy of auditable records checked against fleet	1, 2, 3
			Engineering inspection of vehicles by SPT	1, 2, 3
		Vehicles fitted with entrance/ exit "door open" warning device	Engineering inspection of vehicles by SPT	1 and 2 if operating SPT school contracts
	Permit Legislation	Operator working under Section 19 and/or 22 Permit legislation	Copy of permits and records	1, 2, 3
	Passenger Lifts	Lifts are subject to regular service and inspection by an appropriate person	Sight of auditable service records and copy of valid Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations (LOLER) six monthly inspection reports	1, 2, 3
Management – Social/Volunteer Car Schemes	Vehicles	A process is in place to ensure that the drivers are aware of their responsibilities in relation to their vehicles being roadworthy	Sight of signed agreements in place with drivers	4
		System in place to ensure that volunteer's vehicles are insured	Sight of system	4
		System in place to ensure that volunteer's vehicles have current road tax	Sight of system	4
		System in place to ensure that volunteer's vehicles have current MOT	Sight of system	4

Main Quality Area	Activity	Quality Indicator(s)	Evidence Required	Compliance Category
Management – Social/Volunteer Car Schemes	Drivers	A documented system in place to ensure volunteer's drivers licenses are checked	Sight of system	4
Governance	Legal Status	Incorporation as either a Company Limited or Scottish Charities Incorporation Organisation (SCIO)	Check with relevant regulator - Companies House/OSCR and copy of governing document	1, 2, 3, 4
		Charitable Status	Check with OSCR and copy of governing document	1, 2, 3, 4

Main Quality Area	Activity	Quality Indicator(s)	Evidence Required	Compliance Category
Governance	Management	Required Officer Posts filled	Check with relevant governing document	1, 2
		Minutes present & up to date	Sight of documents	1, 2
		Register of members present and up to date	Sight of documents	1, 2
		Register of current directors, trustees or management committee members up to date and in accordance with governing documents	Check with relevant regulator	1, 2
			Sight of documents	1, 2
		Appropriate arrangement and levels of delegation in place	Clear delineation, via job descriptions, of relative roles of staff and governing body	1, 2

Main Quality Area	Activity	Quality Indicator(s)	Evidence Required	Compliance Category
Finance/Planning	Accounts	Report and accounts up to date and audited/verified by certified/ chartered accountant	Copy of Annual Report and certified copy of latest year's accounts	1, 2
		Accounts submitted to relevant regulator	Check with relevant regulator	1, 2
		Annual Return submitted to relevant regulator	Check with relevant regulator	1, 2
		Turnover figure for last financial year available	Verifiable (i.e. with auditable source) figure supplied	1, 2
		Breakdown of Income (grants, contracts & self generated) available	Verifiable (i.e. with auditable source) figure supplied	1, 2
	Business Plan	Business and financial planning processes in place	Evidence of business and financial planning processes in place/copy of plan	1, 2
Operations	Insurance	Public liability insurance in place and current	Copy of certificate	1, 2, 3, 4
		Employer's liability insurance in place and current	Copy of certificate	1, 2, 3, 4
	Driver training	Drivers are trained to appropriate level with MiDAS being the minimum requirement for minibuses 12 seats and above	Sight of appropriate training records	1, 2, 3

Main Quality Area	Activity	Quality Indicator(s)	Evidence Required	Compliance Category
Operations	Employment, staffing and volunteers	Accurate and up to date recording of staff and volunteers	Sight of records (including evidence of systematic and regular checking of driver records/ licences)	1, 2
		Staff development	Evidence of annual staff reviews/ appraisals	1, 2
	Safeguarding	Protection for children/ vulnerable adults	Sight of PVG vetting policies and procedures	1, 2, 3, 4
			Sight of PVG records for relevant staff/ volunteer	1, 2, 3, 4
	Policies and Procedures	Health and Safety Policy	Sight of written policy	1, 2, 3
		Children and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy	Sight of written policy	1, 2, 3
		Equal Opportunity Policy	Sight of written policy	1, 2, 3
		Data Protection Policy and Registration	Copy of Registration and sight of written policy	1, 2, 3
		Volunteering Policy	Sight of written policy	1, 2, 3
		Customer Care Policy	Clear mechanisms for customer comments and complaints	1, 2, 3
		Disciplinary Procedure	Sight of written procedure	1, 2, 3
		Grievance Procedure	Sight of written procedure	1, 2, 3

Main Quality Area	Activity	Quality Indicator(s)	Evidence Required	Compliance Category
Operations	Policies and Procedures	Smoking Policy and Procedure for Vehicles	Sight of written policy and procedure ensuring legal compliance relating to vehicles	1, 2, 3
			Sight of No Smoking signs on vehicles	1, 2, 3
		Mobile Phone Use in Vehicles	Sight of procedure	1, 2, 3

Total Transport

24th October 2012 – Local Government House, London

Background

On 24th October 2012, ***pteg***, Local Government Association, ATCO and the Community Transport Association held the 'Total Transport' event in London, attended by around 50 delegates and speakers.

The event follows on from the publication of the pteg report, 'Total Transport: Working across sectors to achieve better outcomes'.

What is Total Transport?

One of the report's recommendations was to hold an event, focusing on the potential to pool vehicle fleets and budgets as a practical, tangible step towards a more joined-up, cross-sector approach to transport provision.

The partners worked together to deliver this event, intended as a practical, working session with plenty of opportunities to learn from, and network with, like-minded colleagues.

Format

The event was split into two main parts – the morning 'Explain and Exchange' session, and a choice of two afternoon surgeries.

The Explain and Exchange sessions used a 'World Café' style format, where delegates visited a series of four tables. Each table had a host, who explained their work on vehicle and budget pooling and gave people around the table the opportunity to share their experiences, ask questions and get advice. The table hosts were:

- Nick Roberts (Essex County Council) who has been involved in efforts to combine non-emergency ambulance and adult social care fleets.
- Danny Nicholls and Nigel Rowe (East Riding Council). The Council is involved in sharing SEN transport services to schools and delivering a joint call centre for community transport and the Yorkshire Ambulance Service.
- Ian White (Wiltshire Council) who manages the council's Integrated Passenger Transport Unit which brings together procurement and management of transport for supported bus, mainstream and SEN education transport as well as client transport for social care teams.
- Doug Bennett (Norfolk County Council) is Adult Integrated Transport Manager at Transport Plus – an integrated transport partnership between the Council and the East of England Ambulance Service, the service has a combined section of Transport Planners who organise approximately one million health, social and wellbeing trips per year using a mixture of fleet, voluntary car drivers, private operators and CT schemes.

The afternoon surgeries enabled delegates to get advice on one of two topics:

- Getting started in vehicle and budget pooling – led by Steve Caunt of Peopletoo. Peopletoo work with the public sector to transform transport and deliver efficiencies, including through the creation of regional, cross-sector transport hubs.
- Developing systems to support vehicle and budget pooling – led by Lyn Costelloe of Little Red Bus. Little Red Bus draws on a network of providers in North Yorkshire to integrate bus services and reduce duplication backed by IT systems.

Key learning points

During the morning 'Explain and Exchange' session, delegates were asked to note down any key learning points they picked up as they moved between the tables. Post-it notes were provided for this purpose and over 150 learning points were recorded in this way. Analysis of these produced a number of common themes, many of which were also picked up in the afternoon surgery sessions.

You can think big – but start small

There is nothing wrong with having ambitious plans for Total Transport – however, successful projects often take a 'softly, softly' approach. They may have a big, long-term strategic vision, but they do not expect that this will be easy, or quick, to achieve. Instead, they aim for small pilots and easy wins initially to demonstrate savings and build trust and buy-in from partners or potential partners.

Think about what can be done, don't fixate on what can't

This relates to starting small and keeping things manageable. It is easy to become overwhelmed with the scale of the task and begin focusing on all the obstacles in your way. Instead, look at things that can be done – however small.

On the day, many delegates expressed their difficulties and frustrations in trying to get health sector stakeholders on board. The lack of health buy-in can become an excuse for inaction. Instead, focus on what can be done without them – take along those who are willing and start to build an evidence base that can be used to convince others to come on board later.

Start with the benefits for the user

Often making savings and efficiencies is among the key motivations for exploring Total Transport approaches. However, in focusing on this, the user experience can be forgotten. For example, would merging two services to a daycentre result in unacceptably long or circuitous journeys for the user? Users can ultimately make or break a project.

Get to know your stakeholders

By far the strongest message to come out of the Explain and Exchange session was the importance of putting in the preparatory work with stakeholders to gain their trust and buy-in. This takes at least six months, if not more. It means:

- Understanding who your stakeholders are – who are the ones who can really make a difference?
- Involving them from the outset in developing a shared vision.
- Being clear about aims, objectives and expectations.
- Ensuring each stakeholder is talking about the same thing – 'integration' for example will mean different things to different people.
- Spending time with them to understand their priorities and show how your plan can help them meet their goals. For the health sector, for example, transport may not be a major priority, but tackling 'did not attends' probably is.
- Being sensitive to the fact that each stakeholder will probably think they know best in terms of how to deliver transport to their clients. Value and find ways to retain their knowledge of client groups and the local area.
- Gaining a thorough understanding of collaborating transport organisation's terms and conditions, vehicle specifications and standards and looking for common ground.
- Being willing to share information on costs and demand.
- Recognising that compromises are sometimes necessary.

Ultimately, you will need to build trust and buy-in at every level – from CEO to user. Champions at the top in particular will help drive the project forward but it may take time and some pilots/early wins to build their trust.

Integration, coordination or something else?

There are many different models for 'doing' Total Transport. Some look to create a single managed provider, others encourage a plural market that is centrally coordinated. Others will find an alternative model works for them. All have their pros and cons. A fully integrated model, for example, can enable economies of scale, better buying power and a unified voice for transport. However, it could also alienate smaller operators and risk losing the vital local knowledge that a more plural approach brings.

Ultimately, the model selected should work for the particular situation in your area and have the buy-in of local stakeholders.

Maintain dialogue with stakeholders as the project progresses

Moving towards delivery, successful projects maintain a close working relationship with their stakeholders.

A number of projects have found, for example, that from an operational perspective it helps if collaborating transport organisations work together in a joint team, ideally in the same offices. Norfolk, for example, found that a joint planning team promotes dialogue on a day-to-day basis and leads to better understanding of partner's services.

In taking such an approach, however, it is important to recognise differing staff cultures and possible tensions and have a strategy for dealing with this.

Take account of the wider policy landscape

Given the long timescales involved, a lot can change through the course of a Total Transport project. It is worth keeping an eye on the wider policy landscape and considering how it may impact on your project. Health reforms leading to restructuring in the NHS, for example, have hindered some projects as key contacts are lost, along with any relationship or trust that may have built up. Elsewhere, moves towards greater localism and personalisation are already making the provision of integrated transport services more complex.

Ways forward

During and after the surgery sessions, delegates were asked to suggest any tools, assistance, networking or resources that they would find useful in helping to develop their work towards Total Transport approaches. Ideas proposed included:

- Keep the networking going/set up on-going contact network (done)
- Bring together the experience of the day in the form of a briefing note summary (done)
- Research around urban examples/applications of Total Transport?
- Documenting good practice, identifying different models
- A more in-depth session on case studies
- Get together a smaller group of experienced people to work together on ways forward – possibly a working group approach?
- Anything we can do with Norman Baker MP who is taking a keen interest in cross-departmental collaboration, especially with health? It would be good to get him to register the work the sector is doing in this area.

- Update of TAS partnership model for 6 hour workshop session built around role play in respect of vehicle sharing including broadening of scope and possibly tailoring towards interaction with the health sector (Greater Manchester have expressed an interest in this, including as a host venue).
- Audit of what different local authorities do on Total Transport e.g. which ones join up schools/adult social care or health?

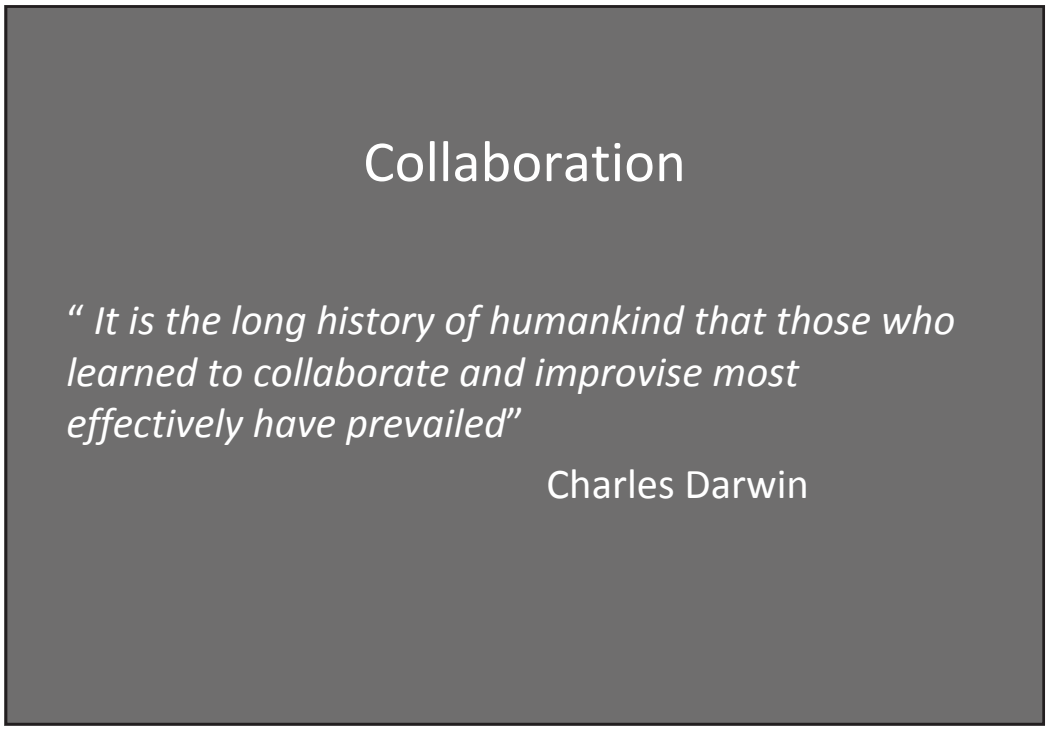
The immediate next step is for the event partners to hold a teleconference to discuss which of the above suggestions we could practically take forward and whether there are any other actions we can take. The partners will then report back to the Total Transport contact list.

In the meantime, further ideas, particularly from practitioners, are welcomed and should be sent to rebecca.fuller@pteg.net.


Peopletoo
It works better with you
pteg
delivering public transport solutions
Total Transport
Getting Started
Steve Caunt
www.peopletoo.co.uk
steve.caunt@peopletoo.co.uk


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Total Transport
It will never work because…
What does collaboration mean?
Taking the first steps
Challenges to overcome


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It will never work because…
Different user communities
Different eligibility/entitlement
Different funding/budget
Different objectives
Private v public interests
'Small v large' & 'weak v powerful'
Different governance
Lack of leadership
Lack of vision
Over-ambition
"Collaborating is really hard!"


Collaboration
" It is the long history of humankind that those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed"
Charles Darwin



Peopletoo
It works better with you

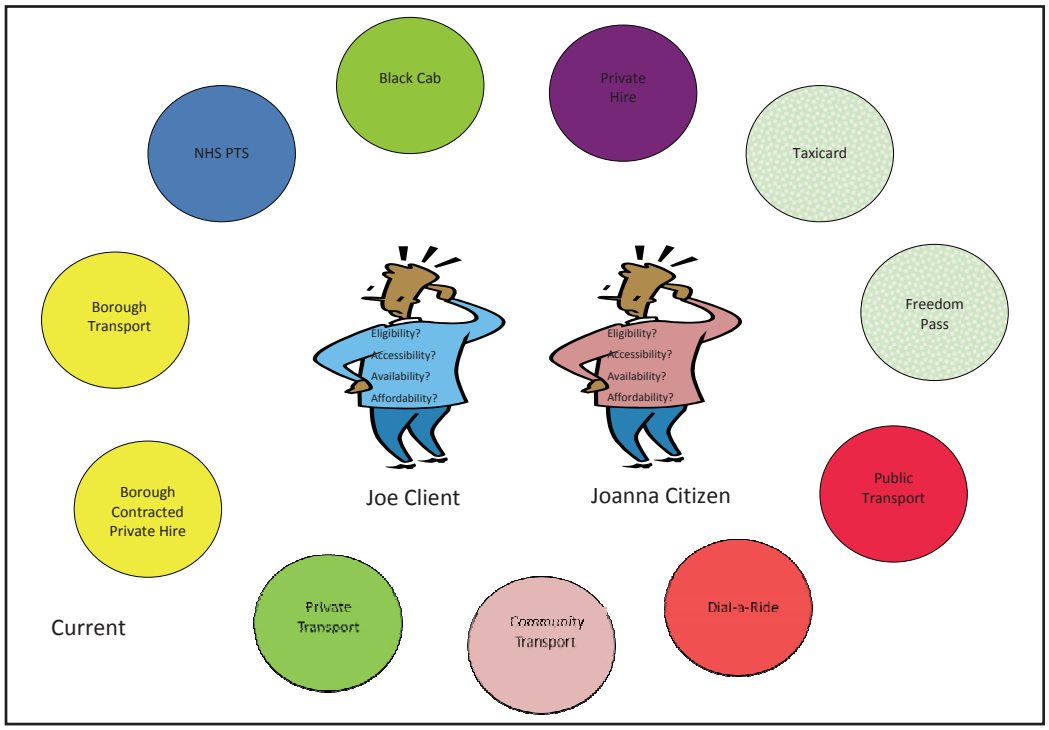
pteg
delivering public transport solutions

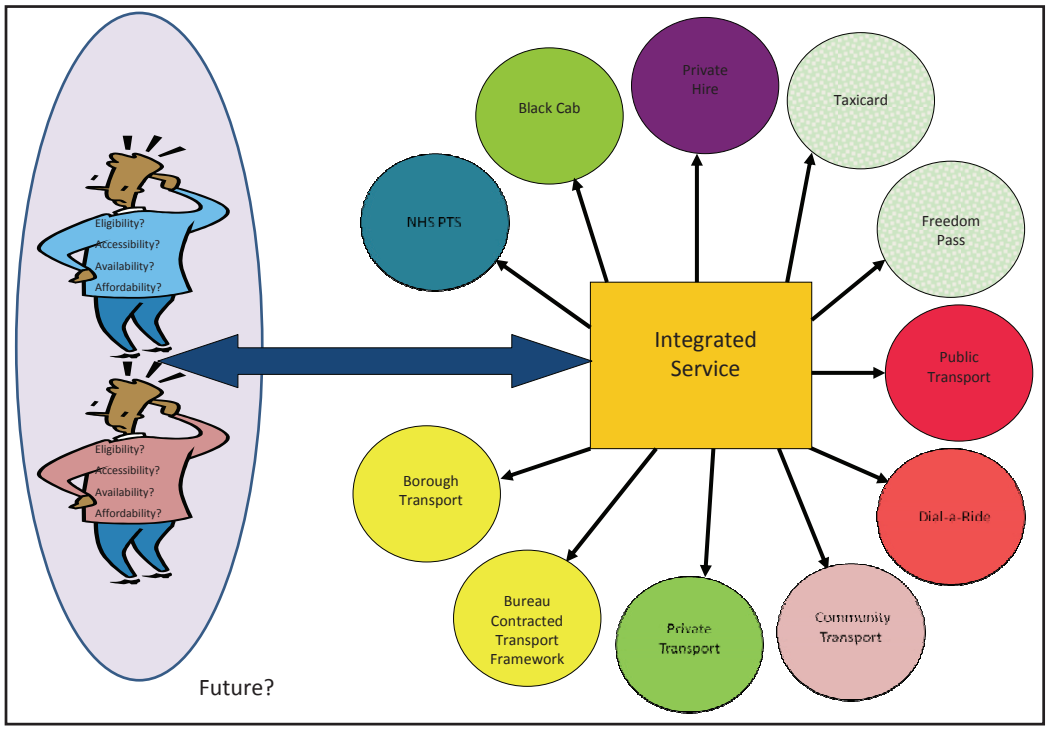
Collaborating means…….

- Recognising the difficulties!
- Engaging with a really open mind
- 'Buying-in' to the collaborative vision
- Recognising different interests
- Sometimes surrendering the individual interest to the collective interest
- 'Give and take'
- Willingness to let others lead


Peopletoo
It works better with you
pteg
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Taking the first steps….
Taking a lead…….
Get together!
Consider an 'honest broker'
Establishing a powerful coalition of the willing
Make the case – establish the vision
Communicate and engage
Focus on what can be done – not what can't
Identify 'easy wins' and build on those
Map the strategy – short-term and longer-term
Take risks – try it and see!


Peopletoo
It works better with you
pteg
delivering public transport solutions
Challenges to overcome…….
What's the model? Integration, federation…?
Collaborative agreements and resource sharing protocols
Establishing a transport hub/bureau/focal point
Cost/income sharing mechanisms
Common booking/scheduling systems
Cross-charging arrangements
Common 'currency' – smartcards etc
Legal/Contractual/Insurance constraints
Personal data sharing agreements


Black Cab
Private Hire
NHS PTS
Taxicard
Borough Transport
Freedom Pass
Eligibility?
Accessibility?
Availability?
Affordability?
Joe Client
Joanna Citizen
Public Transport
Borough Contracted Private Hire
Private Transport
Community Transport
Dial-a-Ride
Current


Eligibility?
Accessibility?
Availability?
Affordability?
Black Cab
Private Hire
Taxicard
NHS PTS
Freedom Pass
Integrated Service
Public Transport
Borough Transport
Dial-a-Ride
Bureau Contracted Transport Framework
Private Transport
Community Transport
Future?


Come on in – the water's warm!

Essex County Council

Coordinating with the PCT's

The Essex Experience

Nick Roberts, Development & Delivery Manager LGA Total Transport Event 24th October 2012

Essex County Council

The Ambition

- To bring together the procurement of two public sector organisations' transport services in order to, integrate clients, make better usage of vehicles and offer value for money, under a single managed provider.
- This included the management of clients and the Council's in house fleet
- It was also to include the call centre requirements of the PCT's

Nick Roberts, Development & Delivery Manager LGA Total Transport Event 24th October 2012

2

Essex County Council

The Process/Approach

- Engaging all parties
- Definite roles and responsibilities
- Identify financial data/costs
- Defining expectations (consortium agreement)
- Competitive Dialogue
- Produce single T&C and integrated specifications
- Understand how the contract would me managed /mobilise post award

Nick Roberts, Development & Delivery Manager LGA Total Transport Event 24th October 2012

3

Essex County Council

The Problems

- Lack of trust
- Inconsistent & changes governance processes
- Inadequate data and cost certainties
- Inadequate resource and uncertainty
- Weakness in procurement approach
- Too many T&C contradictions
- Inconsistent requirements for moving the same passengers

Nick Roberts, Development & Delivery Manager LGA Total Transport Event 24th October 2012

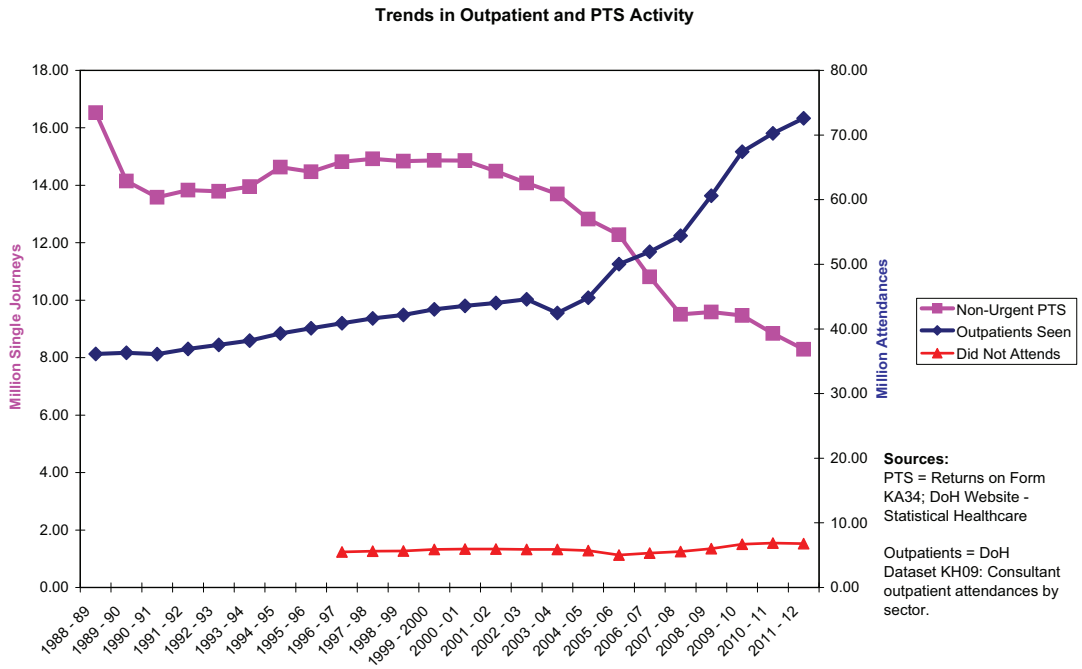
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Essex County Council

The Lessons learnt

- Realistic in ambitions
- Commitment to resources
- More engagement with suppliers
- Realistic savings targets
- Stakeholder buy in.
- Understand the political consequences

Outpatient v PTS to 2011-12



Prepared by John Taylor 29/06/2012

Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Mr Jonathan Bill
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Belfast
BT4 3XX

12 February 2013

Dear Jonathan

At its meeting on 6th February 2013 the Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Regional Development regarding its Inquiry into the Better Use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport Options.

The Committee agreed to forward you the attached letter.

Yours sincerely

Dr Kathryn Bell

Dr Kathryn Bell
Clerk, Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Enc.

Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Room 414, Parliament Buildings, Ballymiscaw, Stormont, Belfast, BT4 3XX
Telephone: (028) 9052 1841 • Fax: (028) 9052 1667
E-mail: committee.hssps@niassembly.gov.uk

Northern Ireland Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Paul Carlisle
Clerk to the Committee for
Regional Development
Room 254
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast BT4 3XX

1st February 2013

Dr Andrew McCormick
Permanent Secretary
Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety
Room C5.11
Castle Buildings
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3SQ

Committee for Regional Development Inquiry into the Better Use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport Options

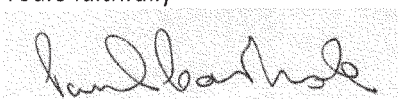
Dear Dr McCormick

Officials from the Department attended the Committee for Regional Development on Wednesday, 30th January 2013 in respect of the above inquiry.

The Committee has asked that I write to you with a series of questions that officials were unable to provide answers to and I have appended these to this letter. I would be grateful if you could forward responses to this office by noon, Thursday, 14th February 2013.

I am happy to discuss.

Yours faithfully



Paul Carlisle
Clerk to the Committee for Regional Development

Appendix 1

Unanswered Queries

General

1. Can the Department explain why audit reports from 1995 and 2005 containing recommendations for the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety appear to have been ignored?

2. Can the Department provide the Committee with a written update on the Enniskillen to Altnagelvin project?

3. What is the number and cost to the Department and Trusts of missed appointments as a result of transport issues?

4. What is the average cost per passenger journey and per kilometre/mile travelled?

5. Do the Department or the Trusts employ any transport planners?

6. What discussions have you had with other providers in England and Wales who can and do offer integrated services between health and education providers, including special needs clients?

7. What cognisance does the Department and Trusts give to transport needs whenever offering appointments?

8. The Minister for Regional Development has indicated that discussions have taken place between the DHSSPS and DRD around a more joined up approach to transport planning – how have these progressed?

9. In your transport strategy the main types of circumstances, other than medical need, in which patients could have difficulty accessing hospital because of transport difficulties, are: mobility problems; financial hardship; and rural isolation.
    - How are these issues assessed with regards to entitlement; and
    - How do you ensure that the method of travel prescribed is what is best for both the patient and public purse?

10. Do Trusts provide patients with information on what transport options are available to them and how they may avail of these options?
    - Is this provided with the appointment letter?
    - If not, do you agree that this may have a positive impact on reducing missed appointments?

11. Figures provided by the Minister show there are some 160,000 missed appointments per year in Northern Ireland (AQW 17334/11-15) with a further 180,000 cancelled (AQW 16411/11-15). What proportion of these does your department fell may be attributable to the patient's inability to access transport?

12. Do you not feel that it would be an important part of tackling the significant problem of missed appointments to know exactly why people miss appointments?

13. It is noted with interest in your 2007 Transport Strategy that although permitted under current legislation, trusts do not operate a charging system for users of transport. Have the implications of introducing a means tested fee been discussed?

14. Why have attempts to coordinate transport services within the health and education sectors had such limited success?

15. The Audit Office's 2005 report on Education and Health and Social Services Transport highlighted the fact that despite recommendations by the Audit Office in 1995 and a subsequent review of Ambulance services in 2000 to increase coordination between providers, little had been done. That report went on to recommend that any complex issues which need to be resolved should be taken forward as a high priority can you explain why this does not appear to have been actioned?

16. What impact do you see Local Transport Plans having in the future and in your view are they a prerequisite to coordinated cross-sectoral transport?

17. The 2005 Audit Office report recommends a pooling of transport budgets to encourage joined-up working – what are your views on this?
    - Was any work carried out based on this recommendation?
    - In your view is there scope for one Government Agency overseeing transport provision for all Departments?
    - What, if any problems to you foresee if such a model were to be adopted?

18. Aside from shared services there are potential efficiencies through the joint purchasing of vehicles, maintenance and fuel. To what extent is your department engaged in any joint procurement practices with other departments?

19. The Health Minister, responding to a written question from Patsy McGlone, MLA, (AQW 16836/11-15) on missed appointments in NHCST and what percentage of those missed appointments were due to travel, responded: "Consequently the information for a patient missing an appointment is not collected by the Department". Is this poor level of research due to the fact that the Trust does not place a high level of importance in keeping such numbers and therefore running a more efficient service?

20. The Health Minister indicated in Plenary on the 18th November 2011 that the Department spends £18 million per year on Transport. Do you feel that this money could be better spent if there was more cross departmental collaboration?

21. The figure of 38,717 is the number recorded by the Belfast Trust with the reason given as missing the appointment 'no reason or incorrect reason given' Does the Department accept that there may be travel issues here that are not being recorded? And if not what reasons are responsible for this disproportionately high number, especially when compared to the other trusts.

22. What interaction has the department had with the new Transport unit within the DRD with regard to greater integration of transport?

Ambulance Service

1. What is the policy in the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service in relation to the use of its vehicles out of hours for non-emergency patient transportation?

South Eastern Health Trust

1. The submission by the South Eastern Health Trust provides details of patient transport expenditure broken down by provider but goes on to say that details of individual journeys are not recorded. How does the department ensure value for money if it cannot be clear on how much each journey costs?

Belfast Health Trust

1. In the submission from the Belfast health Trust, there is a suggestion of "inappropriate referrals" to the Ambulance Service due to the lack of alternatives in your trust area – such as community transport.
    a. How widespread is this problem of inappropriate referrals and what measures are in place to ensure this does not happen?
    b. Given that Belfast is a fairly accessible city, with an extensive public transport system? Could the trust not do more to inform patients of the options which exist, such as bus and train connections?
    c. Your website currently provides links to Translink, door-to-door, and community transport NI – do you feel this is sufficient to enable patients to properly plan their journey?

2. Your website states that where there is no alternative (i.e. where patients have restricted mobility or where public transport is not available for all or part of the journey) patients can be reimbursed to use a taxi or volunteer car service for whole or part of the journey.
    a. Without any significant co-operation between providers how can this be assessed?
    b. And therefore if not assessed properly isn't there significant room for abuse?

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

FROM THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH,
SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY
Edwin Poots MLA

Department of
Health, Social Services and Public Safety
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Jimmy Spratt MLA
Chair to the Committee for Regional Development
Room 254
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
BELFAST
BT4 3XX

Our Ref: AGY/106/2013

Date: 15 April 2013

Dear Jimmy

Thank you for your letter of 1 February seeking further written evidence to the Committee for Regional Development Inquiry into the Better Use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport Options. I apologise for the delay in replying.

I attach a paper in the annex to this letter which sets out the Department's answers to your Committee's questions. You will see that I have grouped these questions for convenience into a number of areas ie

- 1995 and 2005 Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) reports;
- missed hospital appointments;
- Health and Social Care Trusts transport;
- review of other transport provision models;
- collaboration with DRD and its arm's length bodies; and
- miscellaneous.

I trust this response will be helpful to the Committee.

I am sending a copy of this to Sue Ramsey MLA, Chair of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

Edwin Poots MLA
Minister for Health Social Services and Public Safety

ANNEX C

COMMITTEE FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT - QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Audit reports 1995 and 2005

Q1. Can the Department explain why audit reports from 1995 and 2005 containing recommendations for the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety appear to have been ignored?

Q17. The 2005 Audit Office report recommends a pooling of transport budgets to encourage joined-up working – what are your views on this?

- **Was any work carried out based on this recommendation?**
- **In your view is there scope for one Government Agency overseeing transport provision for all Departments?**
- **What, if any problems to you foresee if such a model were to be adopted?**

1. The Department does not consider that it has ignored the audit reports.

2. The Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP), in consultation with the then Health and Personal Social Services (HPSS) Management Executive, published a Memorandum of Reply in 1996 in relation to the 3rd and 4th reports from the Committee of Public Accounts Session 1995-96. This included observations, approved by the then Ministers for DFP and DHSS, on the Committee's report: 'Health and Personal Social Services in Northern Ireland: Transport Services'. .

3. The Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) 2005 report on Education and Health and Social Services transport made a series of recommendations, specifically that the Health and Education sectors should co-ordinate their respective transport fleets to improve operational efficiency and enhance customer service.

4. . The Permanent Secretary wrote in January 2009 (**ANNEX C annex 1**) to update PAC on the progress of the Department of Education (DE) and DHSSPS steering group which had concluded that there was no viable scope for vehicle sharing between the two sectors. He also advised that the issue of joint procurement of vehicles together with the shared provision of fuel, parts and other consumables had also

been raised with Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) and the Regional Supplies Service (RSS) and that both organisations made it clear that these issues were being taken forward in compliance with public procurement policies. As part of this process, projects were in place which were intended to identify new purchasing practices with the potential for further savings. Furthermore, education and health bodies were taking advantage of national and local contracts to ensure value for money in procurement

Q14. Why have attempts to coordinate transport services within the health and education sectors had such limited success?

5. See answers to question 1 above.

Q15. The Audit Office's 2005 report on Education and Health and Social Services Transport highlighted the fact that despite recommendations by the Audit Office in 1995 and a subsequent review of Ambulance services in 2000 to increase coordination between providers, little had been done. That report went on to recommend that any complex issues which need to be resolved should be taken forward as a high priority can you explain why this does not appear to have been actioned?

6. See answer to question 1 above.

Missed hospital appointments

Q3. What is the number and cost to the Department and Trusts of missed appointments as a result of transport issues?

7. Please refer to paragraphs 23 and 24 below. Information on missed hospital appointments is collected by DHSSPS on a quarterly basis. The cost to the Health Service of cancelled or missed medical appointments is not available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

8. However, information on the number of consultant led appointments attended, cancelled by the patient (Could Not Attend) and missed by the patient (Did Not Attend), in each of the last four years, is shown in the table below:

Financial Year[1]	No. of Appointments	No. of Cancelled Appointments	No. of Missed Appointments

2008/09	1,523,802	182,694	184,792
2009/10	1,503,529	180,067	172,877
2010/11	1,502,611	186,260	171,740
2011/12	1,513,998	184,718	157,781

Source: Quarterly Outpatient Activity Return (QOAR) Part 1

9. Depending on the circumstances of each case in which a hospital appointment is missed, it may be possible to re-deploy some or all of the staff and other resources to other productive health and social care activity. Hence, the loss to the health service will be reduced, but it is not possible to quantify this effect precisely.

10. There may also be some administrative costs associated with managing the consequences of missed appointments. However, such costs cannot be quantified with any degree of certainty as any incremental administrative costs arising from re-arranging appointments could not be disentangled from the normal running costs

11. Action has been taken to minimise the number of missed appointments, for example;

- DHSSPS has required Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts to produce an annual report providing an analysis of the root causes and demographics of non-attendance together with performance against local DNA targets. DHSSPS will review these reports and take further follow up action as necessary.

- Questions relating to failure of patients to attend outpatient appointments with a hospital consultant were included in the Continuous Household Survey. The questions cover issues such as reasons for non-attendance, reasons for failing to cancel an appointment, and interventions that could be introduced to reduce the number of missed appointments.

- The Department continues to closely monitor non-attendance at all hospital sites, particularly those with the highest non-attendance rates.

12. To improve patients' choice about the date and time of their appointment, Trusts have introduced partial booking for new outpatient appointments across all outpatient specialties. Under partial booking, patients are contacted six weeks in advance of when an appointment can be offered and given a choice of dates and times of available clinics. This will reduce the likelihood of non-attendance.

Q7. What cognisance does the Department and Trusts give to transport needs whenever offering appointments?

13. The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) offers appointments on a basis of medical priority. Appointment letters advise patients that the Trust's hospitals are accessible by public transport and provide contact details for the Translink Journey Planner. GPs or consultants make the decision to offer patients transport to access hospital appointments on the basis of an agreed criteria and clinical judgement. Where a decision is made to provide transport a record is maintained on the Patient Administration System (PAS).

14. The Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT) offers hospital outpatient appointments across six hospital sites: Moyle Hospital, Larne; Whiteabbey Hospital; Antrim Hospital; Braid Valley Hospital, Ballymena; Mid-Ulster Hospital, Magherafelt and Causeway Hospital, Coleraine. It operates an appointments booking system for new appointments whereby patients contact the Trust to arrange their appointment and the Trust endeavours to agree an appointment at the hospital site and appointment date/time most convenient for the patient. Patients attend any review appointments at the same hospital site as they attended their new appointment. Corporate Support Services are however working with outpatients and Translink to look at volumes and appointments. This is at an early stage.

15. In the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (SEHSCT), patients are offered a selection of appointment times so they may choose one which best meets their needs.

16. The Southern Health and Social Care Trust (SHSCT) provides information on public transport on its website. It does not currently provide details of public transport to acute hospitals on appointment letters to patients.

17. In order to provide a responsive service to patients, Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSCT) consultants generally offer access on a northern and southern sector basis across its area. Appointments are offered using a partial booking system where the patient contacts the Trust to select the appointment time which suits best. All reasonable efforts are made to facilitate appointments as close to the patient's home as possible.

18. The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) is not directly responsible for offering appointments but is involved in providing transport to patients with a medical need determined by a medical or healthcare professional. During 2011/12, NIAS completed 205,670 patient journeys of which 164,357 were to and from hospital outpatient appointments.

Q10. Do Trusts provide patients with information on what transport options are available to them and how they may avail of these options?

- **Is this provided with the appointment letter?**
- **If not, do you agree that this may have a positive impact on reducing missed appointments?**

19. All BHSCT appointment letters advise patients that its hospitals are accessible by public transport and provide contact details for Translink's Journey Planner. Patients are also given a helpline number to use if they have any problems with the appointment. If a query relates to transport, helpline staff give the patient advice to contact their GP who will make a referral to NIAS patient care services (non-emergency transport) if applicable. Information is displayed in poster form in Outpatient Departments about the various travel options available eg public transport, Door to Door Transport, Hospital Travel Cost Scheme, family and friends or self. The same information is also available for staff in Outpatient Departments to give to review appointment patients. Travel information is also promoted through the Trust's website which has specific information about public transport links to all the hospital sites and of the range of alternative travel options.

20. Translink has provided NHSCT with "easy to read" commonly used bus times and routes leaflets. These are available at all reception desks and will also be issued to Hospital Outpatient departments. Hospital appointment booking offices provide information to patients when appointments are being arranged.

21. Information on the SEHSCT website about transportation links to its hospitals is currently being updated as part of region wide website development. This information is not provided on the outpatient appointment letter. SEHSCT takes the view that including such information in the appointment letter would not have any significant impact on reducing missed appointments as its experience is that, when a

patient cancels an appointment, the reasons given in the main are either that they are ill or have another appointment which clashes. Very seldom is the reason that patients have transportation difficulties although, on some occasions, patients' appointments have to be cancelled as pre-booked ambulance transport was subsequently cancelled by NIAS. A bus timetable is displayed on the reception wall. The reception check-in desk has a laminated information card about the Hospital Travel Cost Scheme. In addition Bus Timetables can be accessed through a touch screen wayfinding/information kiosk in the foyer of the Ulster and Downe Hospitals.

22. As with other areas, NIAS provides patient transport service to SHSCT acute hospitals. The SHSCT's own Transport Service provides transport to social care facilities in its area eg day centres, social education centres, voluntary and community based lunch and evening clubs. The service is also supplemented by private sector taxis, wheelchair accessible vehicles, and minibus/coach operators. Where service users are safely able to use private or public transport, or if relatives, carers or others are able to provide appropriate transport, they are encouraged to do so rather than depend on SHSCT transport. Information leaflets are available to individuals who access trust provided/ procured transport. SHSCT does not currently provide details of public transport to acute hospitals on appointment letters to patients. It does provide information on the Hospital Travel Costs Scheme through its website.

23. In WHSCT, patients' transport is discussed at the same time as the discussion on the appropriate appointment area (see answer to question 7). Each outpatient area and GP practice was sent and displays a poster giving details of Translink's Enniskillen to Londonderry bus service. WHSCT also advertises various social transport companies which are supported by the Trust and Disability Action which offer escorted transport alternatives at low cost.

24. NIAS does not itself engage directly with patients about their transport needs.

Q11. Figures provided by the Minister show there are some 160,000 missed appointments per year in Northern Ireland (AQW 17334/11-15) with a further 180,000 cancelled (AQW 16411/11-15). What proportion of these does your department fell may be attributable to the patient's inability to access transport?

25. See answer to Q3 above. As the Minister explained in his letter of 21 May 2012 to the Chair of the Committee for Regional Development (**ANNEX C Annex 2**), medical appointments are missed for a number of reasons but unfortunately these are often not conveyed to Trusts' administrators and so details of the reasons for missed appointments are not available. However, the most recent statistical data available on this issue was provided by NISRA's Continuous Household Survey 2008/09 bulletin in July 2009. This cites the most common reasons for not attending an appointment as: forgetting about it, being too ill to attend, the appointment's being at an inconvenient time, and no longer needing the appointment. Transportation may be an issue for some missed appointments, but it does not appear to rank highly compared to other reasons.

26. WHSCT has also advised that the level of research required to provide data on the reasons for patients failing to attend appointments would entail staff being taken away from front line administration and patient contact duties. The Health and Social Care Board would, therefore, have to endorse any decision to do so and approve the possible financial implications. Currently, WHSCT does monitor the reasons for cancellation when a patient contacts the Trust in advance of the appointment. From this, it appears that transport is not an issue.

Q12. Do you not feel that it would be an important part of tackling the significant problem of missed appointments to know exactly why people miss appointments?

27. A missed appointment (or a Did Not Attend, DNA) is one where the patient failed to attend, and did not give advance notice to the hospital for an outpatient appointment. This includes patients who cancelled their outpatient appointment on the same day on which the appointment was scheduled. These should not be confused with those who could not attend and who did warn the hospital in advance (before the day on which the appointment was scheduled).

28. A patient-cancelled appointment (Could Not Attend, CNA) is one where the patient could not attend, and gave advance warning to the hospital, for an outpatient appointment before the day of the scheduled appointment. These should not be confused with those who either did not attend without prior warning or those who could not attend and informed the hospital on the day on which the appointment was

scheduled. This does not include appointments cancelled as a result of the hospital being notified of the patient's death.

29. An appointment cancelled by the hospital is one which was intended to be held but which did not occur. Such cancellations do not include those cancelled by the patient (Could Not Attend), appointments the patient did not attend without giving prior notice (DNA) and appointments cancelled by the hospital as a result of the patient's death.

30. The Committee for Regional Development's question specifically refers to missed appointments. As stated above, a missed appointment is one where the patient failed to attend, and did not give advance notice to the hospital (including patients who cancelled their outpatient appointment on the same day on which the appointment was scheduled). Consequently, information on the reason for a patient missing an appointment is not collected by the Department.

31. However, as the response to question 11 above states, NISRA's Continuous Household Survey 2008/09 bulletin suggests that, while transportation may well be an issue for some missed appointments, it does not appear to rank highly compared to other reasons.

Q19. The Health Minister, responding to a written question from Patsy McGlone, MLA, (AQW 16836/11-15) on missed appointments in NHCST and what percentage of those missed appointments were due to travel, responded: "Consequently the information for a patient missing an appointment is not collected by the Department". Is this poor level of research due to the fact that the Trust does not place a high level of importance in keeping such numbers and therefore running a more efficient service?

32. The Department does not consider that the absence of information for a patient missing an appointment is due to 'a poor level of research' but rather that there is currently no mechanism for collecting the reason for patients missing an appointment.

33. NHSCT provides quarterly reports to the DHSSPS on the number of cancelled appointments and reasons for cancellation. The cancellation reasons are recorded in line with the HSSPS 'Data Definitions and Guidance Document - Reporting of

Quarterly Outpatient Activity Information'. The only cancellation reason available to the Trust relating to transport is 'Hospital Transport - Ambulance Unavailable' At a recent Health, Social Services and Public Safety Committee meeting on Consultant Led Outpatient Appointments, the Chief Executive of the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) and Trust Chief Executives acknowledged that the data captured on cancelled appointments was not fit for the purpose of scrutiny required by the Committee and undertook to complete a quick piece of work to ensure that information was being captured in a consistent way, and that the number of cancellations which had an actual impact on patients could be identified.

Health and Social Care Trusts transport

Q4. What is the average cost per passenger journey and per kilometre/mile travelled?

34. BHSCT uses a range of transport options to meet the transport requirements for health and social care service users. The cost of passenger transport is detailed below and where the information is available to identify a cost per passenger journey and per mile travelled, this has been provided.

	Average cost per Passenger Journey 2011-2012	Average cost per Mile 2011-2012
Trust Transport	£2.80	£3.74
NIAS	£29.00	N/A
Taxis	£7.40	£1.50
Private Ambulance	£150.00	N/A
Volunteer Drivers	N/A	£0.40

35. NHSCT is unable to provide details of the cost per passenger journey and per mile travelled.

36. In 2011/12, SEHSCT transport cost £2.85 per passenger journey and £0.80p per mile travelled.

37. SHSCT calculates that the average cost per passenger journey (based on 20 miles per journey) is £38.13 while the cost per passenger mile travelled is £1.91.

38. WHSCT does not collect data on passenger numbers carried by taxis and hired coaches and cannot, therefore, provide cost per passenger information in respect of these. However, the cost per passenger journey for Trust owned transport was £3.36 in 2011/12. The cost per mile travelled was £0.79.

39. As regards NIAS's non-emergency ambulances, the cost per journey is £41.28 and the cost per mile is £1.51.

Q5. Do the Department or the Trusts employ any transport planners?

40. BHSCT's Transport Services Department is responsible to ensure directly provided transport is managed efficiently. Department managers and supervisors plan routes to ensure vehicles are used to maximum capacity and collect clients and patients by the most direct route.

41. NHSCT has three ambulance transport co-ordinators on the Causeway and Antrim Area Hospital sites who deal with discharges and transfers and GP out-patient requests from the Causeway area. These must have 'Medical Need Approval' from each GP and the consultant subsequently decides if the patient requires ambulance transport for the next review appointment. Any other transport queries are referred to the hospital cash office to vet if each person qualifies for transport either by taxi or bus and can be re reimbursed depending on each individual case.

42. SEHSCT and SHSCT do not employ transport planners.

43. WHSCT's Transport Management Team undertakes all aspects of transport planning.

44. NIAS employs 2 planners based at its Non-Emergency Ambulance Control, Altnagelvin to plan non-emergency patient journeys 24 hours in advance of scheduled appointment.

Q9. In your transport strategy the main types of circumstances, other than medical need, in which patients could have difficulty accessing hospital because of transport difficulties, are: mobility problems; financial hardship; and rural isolation.

- **How are these issues assessed with regards to entitlement; and**

- **How do you ensure that the method of travel prescribed is what is best for both the patient and public purse?**

45. Guidance is made available to BHSCT consultants on the criteria for Trust funded transport. This guidance only relates to the criteria of medical need. In many cases, however, the decision to provide transport is made by the GP for the first referral to hospital. The GP may consider other criteria but BHSCT is not involved in this initial assessment. The consultant may change the decision to provide transport on subsequent assessment. BHSCT has no process for ensuring the prescribed method of travel is what is best for the patient and the public purse.

46. In the NHSCT area, there are community based travel schemes that are available to transport patients to and from hospital appointments. Within the NHSCT area these are: North Coast Transport Out and About Community Transport Magherafelt; Cookstown Rural Community Transport; South Antrim Community Transport; Door to Door Transport; CART Community and Rural Transport. People age 65 and over can apply for a Senior Smart Pass which entitles them to free travel on Translink Services. Hospital Reception staff and appointment booking staff have this information and advise patients as necessary on available schemes. The Hospital Travel Cost Scheme is available for the reimbursement of the cost of travel to hospital for patients, escorts and dependents receiving benefits or those assessed as having a low income.

47. In SEHSCT, GPs will assess patients' transport needs for new outpatient appointments and determine whether ambulance transport to hospital is appropriate and, if so, will book it. For review appointments, hospital clinicians determine whether ambulance transport to hospital is appropriate and, if so, this is booked by hospital clerical staff. If patients experience financial hardship they can get financial assistance towards their travel costs through the Hospital Travel Costs Scheme. This also applies where patients are rurally isolated.

48. WHSCT works closely with GPs and its patient transport Department. As explained in the answer to question 7, WHSCT aims to provide appointments close to the patient's home to minimise the difficulty and financial implications associated with travel. As explained in the answer to question 2, WHSCT has worked with Translink to provide transport from the South West Acute Hospital to Altnagelvin Hospital for appointments which can only be provided there.

49. NIAS currently attempts to meet all requests for non-emergency ambulance transport based on the confirmation of medical need by a medical practitioner or healthcare professional. NIAS does not engage directly with patients to determine the need. Proposals are being developed by the HSCB Patient Care Services Review Group to introduce a revised eligibility criteria based on medical conditions and mobility assessment.

Q13. It is noted with interest in your 2007 Transport Strategy that although permitted under current legislation, trusts do not operate a charging system for users of transport. Have the implications of introducing a means tested fee been discussed?

50. Under the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 article 10, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) has a statutory duty to 'make arrangements, to such extent as it considers necessary, for providing or securing the provision of ambulances and other means of transport for the conveyance of persons suffering from illness, expectant or nursing mothers or others persons for whom such transport is reasonably required in order to avail themselves of any service under this Order..".

51. DHSSPS also has a specific duty under article 15 of the Order to provide, or secure the provision of, such assistance, to such extent as it considers necessary, to individuals who require access to social care services.

52. Furthermore under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1978 Sections 2(d) and 1(1), DHSSPS has a specific duty to provide transport to social care facilities for people assessed as having a qualifying disability and to determine the terms and conditions on which transport services shall be provided.

53. These functions are exercised on behalf of DHSSPS by the Health and Social Care Board and Health and Social Care Trusts (Trusts), including the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS). Although the legislation empowers DHSSPS to set charges for transport, in practice all patients and clients who satisfy the existing eligibility criteria currently receive transport free of charge.

54. The Department attaches importance to formulating and implementing a robust process to stimulate, monitor and maximise income generating opportunities, within its statutory powers. Therefore, in order to progress Recommendation 99 of

'Transforming Your Care' in relation to "*initiating a sensible debate about growing income within the spirit of NHS principles*", the Department is currently assessing a range of proposals approved by the Minister as part of consideration of the 2012/13 budget. This includes a proposal to charge for Non-Emergency Transport.

Q18. Aside from shared services there are potential efficiencies through the joint purchasing of vehicles, maintenance and fuel, to what extent is your Department engaged in any joint procurement practices with other departments?

55. The HSC Business Services Organisation's Procurement and Logistics Service (PaLS) provides professional supplies services exclusively to all public HSC organisations. It is a recognised Centre of Procurement Expertise (COPE) established under the Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy approved by the Northern Ireland Assembly.

56. Vehicles for HSC Trusts are procured from the national UK framework administered by the Government Procurement Service (GPS). This is a competitive exercise which all public bodies in the United Kingdom can utilise. Trusts can also opt to buy chassis from the same national framework and then utilise the NI regional contract for "Construction and/or Conversion" to produce a vehicle for their specific use.

57. A regional tendering exercise for HSC Trusts vehicle maintenance is conducted by the PaLS. It may be possible to let such a contract across a number of NI Departments but the potential impact on suppliers contracting at an all NI level would have to be borne in mind. NI HSC organisations can utilise fuel cards which are available from the national framework administered by GPS for United Kingdom public bodies. Vehicle fuels are also purchased via a national contract let by GPS.

Q20. The Health Minister indicated in Plenary on the 18th November 2011 that the Department spends £18 million per year on Transport. Do you feel that this money could be better spent if there was more cross departmental collaboration?

58. As mentioned in Edwin Poots' MLA letter of 21 May 2012 to the Committee for Regional Development, the Department appreciates the Committee's interest in this

important issue, and can assure the Committee that we are keen to co-operate closely with the Department for Regional Development (DRD) and other departments on any areas where practicable collaboration could be pursued.

Review of other transport provision models

Q6. What discussions have you had with other providers in England and Wales who can and do offer integrated services between health and education providers, including special needs clients?

59. The Department has not engaged in discussion with transport providers in England and Wales, particularly in view of the conclusions drawn about the feasibility of integrating health and education sector transport in Northern Ireland on foot of the NIAO reports referenced previously.

Collaboration with DRD and its arm's length bodies

Q2. Can the Department provide the Committee with a written update on the Enniskillen to Altnagelvin project?

60. DHSSPS is not directly responsible for this project. However, we understand that the Department for Regional Development (DRD) in conjunction with WHSCT, Translink and the Rural Partnerships introduced a pilot bus service operating two days a week (Wednesday and Thursday) from Enniskillen to Altnagelvin Hospital. DRD is providing funding through the Rural Transport Fund for the pilot. There are two return journeys each day. The pilot service has been operating since 5 September 2012 and up until 27 December 2012 there were 967 passenger journeys on the new route. DRD has advised that the service is still in the early stages of establishing demand. This service, which was requested by elected representatives from the Fermanagh area, is an example of co-operation at a local level.

Q8. The Minister for Regional Development has indicated that discussions have taken place between the DHSSPS and DRD around a more joined up approach to transport planning – how have these progressed?

61. DHSSPS is represented on the DRD Local Public Transport Plans Dungannon/Cookstown pilot project board along with representatives from the HSCB. The key objective of the pilot is to "assess the opportunities for a more joined up approach to the delivery of publicly funded passenger transport services and to assess the potential for improved operational efficiency and better public transport services for passengers so that the costs and benefits of a wider roll out can be quantified."

Q16. What impact do you see Local Transport Plans having in the future and in your view are they a prerequisite to coordinated cross-sectoral transport?

62. The DRD Local Public Transport Plans Dungannon/Cookstown pilot project is in the early stages of development. The project board estimates that the pilot will extend to December 2014 at which time its effectiveness will be assessed based on data collected throughout its course. It is, therefore, too early to formulate a view on the potential for Local Public Transport Plans in co-ordinating cross-sectoral transport.

Q22. What interaction has the department had with the new Transport unit within the DRD with regard to greater integration of transport?

63. See answer to question 8.

Miscellaneous

Northern Ireland Ambulance Service

Q1. What is the policy in the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service in relation to the use of its vehicles out of hours for non-emergency patient transportation?

64. NIAS's non-emergency PCS vehicles can operate from 0700hours to 12 midnight depending on the resource type across NI and Local Commissioning Group boundaries. Single manned, sitting case vehicles generally operate between 0700 to 1800 hours (but can operate on occasion outside of these hours also) and transport patients with a defined clinical or medical need to hospital outpatient appointments, admissions etc. NIAS's Intermediate Care Vehicles (stretcher type vehicles) can operate across this period also and undertake inter-hospital transfers, Doctors urgent calls, admissions etc. These vehicles transport patients with differing mobility needs and medical conditions such as renal patients, cancer patients etc.

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Q1. The submission by the South Eastern Health Trust provides details of patient transport expenditure broken down by provider but goes on to say that details of individual journeys are not recorded. How does the department ensure value for money if it cannot be clear on how much each journey costs?

65. SEHSCT does not record the total number of individual journeys. However, journeys undertaken by taxi are invoiced by the taxi company detailing patient name, miles per run and cost per mile as per the terms of conditions of the contract. SEHSCT also has a Policy in place for the Use and Ordering of Taxi Services.

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Q21. (in main list): The figure of 38,717 is the number recorded by the Belfast Trust with the reason given as missing the appointment 'no reason or incorrect reason given' Does the Department accept that there may be travel issues here that are not being recorded? And if not what reasons are responsible for this disproportionately high number, especially when compared to the other Trusts?

66. BHSCT has no means of ascertaining the exact reason for the cancellation of those patients recorded on the system under "no reason or incorrect reason given" and cannot therefore comment on the proportion of these that may have had travel as a primary cause of cancellation.

Q1. In the submission from the Belfast health Trust, there is a suggestion of "inappropriate referrals" to the Ambulance Service due to the lack of alternatives in your trust area – such as community transport?

- **How widespread is this problem of inappropriate referrals and what measures are in place to ensure this does not happen?**
- **Given that Belfast is a fairly accessible city, with an extensive public transport system, could the trust not do more to inform patients of the options which exist, such as bus and train connections?**

- **Your website currently provides links to Translink, door-to-door, and community transport NI – do you feel this is sufficient to enable patients to properly plan their journey?**

67. NIAS has identified the issue of inappropriate referrals to BHSCT anecdotally. This issue has not been quantified. In 2011, BHSCT provided guidance for all consultants on the criteria for provision of non-emergency ambulance transport. Posters are also displayed in Outpatient Departments giving patients information on travel options and on the Trust's website. In many cases the decision to provide transport is made by the GP for the first referral to hospital. Belfast Trust is not involved in this initial assessment

68. All appointment letters advise patients that the Trust's hospitals are accessible by public transport and provide contact details for the Translink Journey Planner. Information is displayed in poster form in Outpatient Departments about the various travel options available for patients. These include public transport, Door to Door Transport, Hospital Travel Cost Scheme, Family and Friends. The same information is also available to give to patients in Outpatient Departments. Travel information is also promoted through the Trust's website which has specific information about public transport links to all the hospital sites and of the range of alternative travel options.

69. In addition to information about travel options on the Trust's website, information is also available on appointment letters and displayed in Outpatient areas. Ideally all appointment letters should have an individualised travel plan to get the patient from their home to the hospital but this is not practical in terms of cost or the potential delay in processing appointments.

Q2. Your website states that where there is no alternative (i.e. where patients have restricted mobility or where public transport is not available for all or part of the journey) patients can be reimbursed to use a taxi or volunteer car service for whole or part of the journey.

- **Without any significant co-operation between providers how can this be assessed?**

- **And therefore if not assessed properly isn't there significant room for abuse?**

70. Payments under the Hospital Travel Cost Scheme (HTCS) are made through the hospital cash office. If use of a taxi is claimed, BHSCT finance staff require written confirmation from the relevant consultant or hospital medical professional that the patient's condition or circumstances warrant this and receipts must be produced. Finance staff do not check that an alternative transport option may have been available to the patient, however, it should be noted that in the Trust's experience, taxi journeys being claimed through the HTCS are a rare occurrence and volumes of this type of reimbursement are extremely small.

71. While reimbursement of taxi costs under the Hospital Travel Cost Scheme are on the basis of a medical assessment, BHSCT does not have the resources to investigate whether there were less expensive travel options available to the patient for their journey.

ANNEX C annex 1

From the Permanent Secretary
and HSC Chief Executive
Dr Andrew McCormick

Department of
Health, Social Services
and Public Safety
www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí

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Ref: SECCOR/196/2008
AMCC 2043

Date: 23 January 2009

Dear Paul,

NIAO Report: Education and Health and Social Services Transport (HC 32, NIA 178/03, 9 June 2005)

NIAO Report: Private Practice in the Health Service (HC 1088, 18 May 2006).

Thank you for your letter of 17 December requesting specified further written evidence in respect of the above reports.

I attach herewith the Department's responses in the format and order in which they were presented in your letter.

I trust that the Committee will find these responses satisfactory.

Yours sincerely

ANDREW MCCORMICK

Working for a Healthier People

Education & Health and Social Services Transport (HC 32, 178/03)

1. **In relation to paragraph 2.11 of the report, has the Department developed a clear statement of objectives for its transport services setting out what is to be achieved, how, by what date and at what cost?**

   The Transport Strategy for Health and Social Care Services in NI (the Strategy[1]) published in August 2007 sets out the principles and best practice guidance that should underpin the assessment of need for and provision of transport services to patients and clients. It relates to the provision of non-emergency transport for patients and transport provided by Trusts to facilitate access to social care services.

   The Strategy reflects the comments and views expressed in response to the widespread consultation exercise carried out by the Department 2005 and carries forward the proposals set out in the consultation document:

   - transport should be provided for patients and clients who need it to access the health or social care services they require;
   - there should be clear criteria against which to assess need for transport services;
   - there should be a mixed-economy of provision to provide the necessary flexibility in transport services;
   - transport should be provided free of charge to those entitled to it; and
   - data sets should be established to gather information about transport services on a more consistent basis.

   The Strategy also provides for monitoring arrangements under which all Trusts are required to compile and submit transport services returns. Included in this information are the costs associated with the various categories of transport and activity level indicators such as miles travelled, patient journeys etc.

   There is provision for annual monitoring of achievement against the objectives, inclusive of costs, beginning from April 2008. The first such set of monitoring information will be available by mid 2009.

2. **With reference to paragraphs 3.6 and 3.7, what has been the outcome of deliberations on how transport assets in the health and social services might be integrated with those in the education sector to improve efficiency and enhance services?**

3. **Has the issue of pooling health and education transport funding been addressed, as referred to in paragraph 3.24?**

[1] A copy of the strategy can be accessed at:
http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/a_transport_strategy_for_health_and_social_care_services_in_northern_ireland.pdf

4. **With reference to paragraph 3.29, what steps have the Department taken to establish arrangements with the education sector for the joint purchasing of vehicles, maintenance and fuel?**
Questions 2, 3 & 4 – Combined Response

The 2005 NIAO Report identified the need for a DE/DHSSPS Interdepartmental Steering Group led jointly by the two departments to consider and share information on a series of transport issues. The Interdepartmental Steering Group held a series of meetings which began in June 2005.

The PAC recommendations were considered and further researched by the Steering Group, which concluded that diversity of need and the requirement to provide transport at the same peak times significantly reduced the opportunity for shared transport. The Group compiled detailed information on driver and vehicle downtimes. This showed that, mainly for logistical reasons, there is negligible scope for vehicle sharing between DE and DHSSPS:

- the vehicles have seating and access arrangements which are often configured differently to suit different passenger needs and characteristics;
- vehicles belonging to different Departments are too often in the wrong places when needed because both have similar peak times, and;
- in many cases the drivers are employed through contracts which would require significant renegotiation in order to facilitate additional work at the times required.

On the basis of the information gathered, the Interdepartmental Group concluded that there was no viable scope for vehicle sharing between health and education vehicles.

The issue of joint procurement of vehicles together with the shared provision of fuel, parts and other consumables has also been raised with Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) and the Regional Supplies Service (RSS). Staff from both organisations made it clear that these issues are being taken forward in compliance with public procurement policies. As part of this process there are projects in place which are intended to identify new purchasing practices with the potential for further savings. Education and health bodies are taking advantage of national and local contracts to ensure value for money in procurement.

Further, it is expected that the 2007 Transport Strategy, together with changes being brought about as a result of RPA, will enable the efficiencies envisaged in the NIAO report to be delivered to the maximum extent possible. However, while it is not possible at this stage to quantify the full effects of RPA efficiencies for both health and education transport services all opportunities will be taken by DHSSPS to avail of these efficiencies and they will be monitored and reported as appropriate.

ANNEX C Annex 2

FROM THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH,
SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY
Edwin Poots MLA

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and Public Safety
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Mr Jimmy Spratt, MLA
Committee for Regional Development
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Our Ref: COR/376/2012

21 May 2012

Dear Jimmy

Thank you for your letter of 07 March about community transportation in rural areas. I apologise for the delay in replying.

I appreciate the Committee's interest in this important issue, and can assure you that I am keen to co-operate closely with the Department for Regional Development (DRD) on any areas where we have a mutual concern. The Committee may be interested to know that a meeting between DHSSPS and DRD officials took place on 13 February 2012 to explore the potential for a collaborative approach between Northern Ireland's health, education and public transport sectors. This dialogue is ongoing, with another meeting planned within the next few weeks to further explore options. We are also awaiting information on the review of the pilot ARTS scheme which has been completed by DRD and DARD.

With regards to the Committee's five questions as set out in your letter, I will address these in turn below.

What is the annual cost to the Ambulance Service of transporting patients from rural areas to and from non-emergency medical appointments?

NIAS does not have costings at the level requested, but has confirmed that the total cost of non-emergency transport in 2010/11 was approximately £8million.

Does DHSSPS consider the service currently provided by the voluntary and community transport organisations to be a saving in the Department's annual budget?

I readily acknowledge the importance of voluntary and community initiatives which assist and support the health service, particularly where they impact on the lives of the vulnerable in society. Voluntary and community transport organisations make a valuable contribution in providing patient transport to and from medical appointment, such as the Dial-a-Lift service, whereby Rural Community Transport Partnerships can transport people to local GP surgeries, dentists and other clinics.

As the Committee may be aware, Health and Social Care Trusts have also been at liberty to use CTA members to provide transport to and from hospitals since 2010, budgets permitting and where clinical need does not necessitate an ambulance.

However, further investigation into the scope, extent and recipients of community transport services would be required to determine whether there is any saving in the Department's annual budget.

What is the annual cost to DHSSPS for medical appointments missed due to a lack of transport for patients?

Medical appointments are missed for a number of reasons, but unfortunately these are often not conveyed to the administrators in the Trusts, and so they cannot provide details of the reasons for missed appointments. Therefore, I am unable to provide an exact annual cost of missed appointments due to a lack of transport difficulties.

The Committee may wish to note, however, that the most recent statistical data available on this issue was provided by NISRA's Continuous Household Survey 2008/09 bulletin in July 2009. It cites the most common reasons for not attending an appointment as: forgetting about it, being too ill to attend, the appointment's being at an inconvenient time, and no longer needing the appointment. Transportation may well be an issue for some missed appointments, but it does not appear to rank highly compared to other reasons.

What additional cost can DHSSPS expect if funding for the CTA (Community Transport Association) is not continued after March 2012?

As noted above, further investigation into the usage of the CTA would be required in order to determine whether any additional costs will be incurred.

What consideration is given to the issue of transport to and from rural areas when issuing medical appointments?

Under the Integrated Elective Access (2008) protocol, a number of good practice guidelines assist staff with the effective management of outpatient, diagnostic and inpatient waiting lists. Offering patients a choice of date and time for their appointment is essential in agreeing and booking appointments. Trusts are required to ensure that booking systems enable patients to choose and agree hospital appointments convenient for them.

Six weeks prior to appointment, patients are issued a letter inviting them to contact the Trust to agree and confirm their appointment. Advanced booking in this way gives the patient notice of the date so that they can make any necessary arrangements, such as child care, work or travel arrangements.

Please be assured that my Department will continue to pursue this issue with our colleagues at DRD to address any lack of provision.

I trust you will find this helpful.

Edwin Poots MLA
Minister for Health Social Services and Public Safety

cc. Clerk of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety

ANNEX

INSERT ANNEX C FROM SUBMISSION ABOVE.



Appendix 6

Research Papers

Northern Ireland Assembly

Research and Information Service
Briefing Note

Paper 000/00 31st August 2012 NIAR 602-12

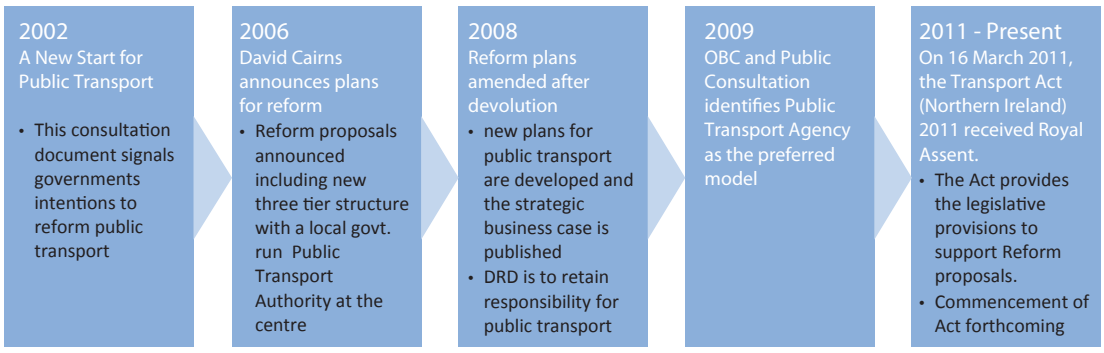
Des McKibbin

Public Transport Reform

1 Overview

This paper provides an outline of the current legal status of the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHC) and its relationship with the Department for Regional Development (DRD). This paper is written in the context of the on-going reform of public transport which was legislated for with the Transport Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. The Transport Act will significantly alter how public transport services are delivered in Northern Ireland and will enable an improved and more accessible public transport system. Figure one below shows a timeline of the reform process to date with all key dates considered further in this paper.

Figure 1: Timeline representing the progression of public transport reform in Northern Ireland

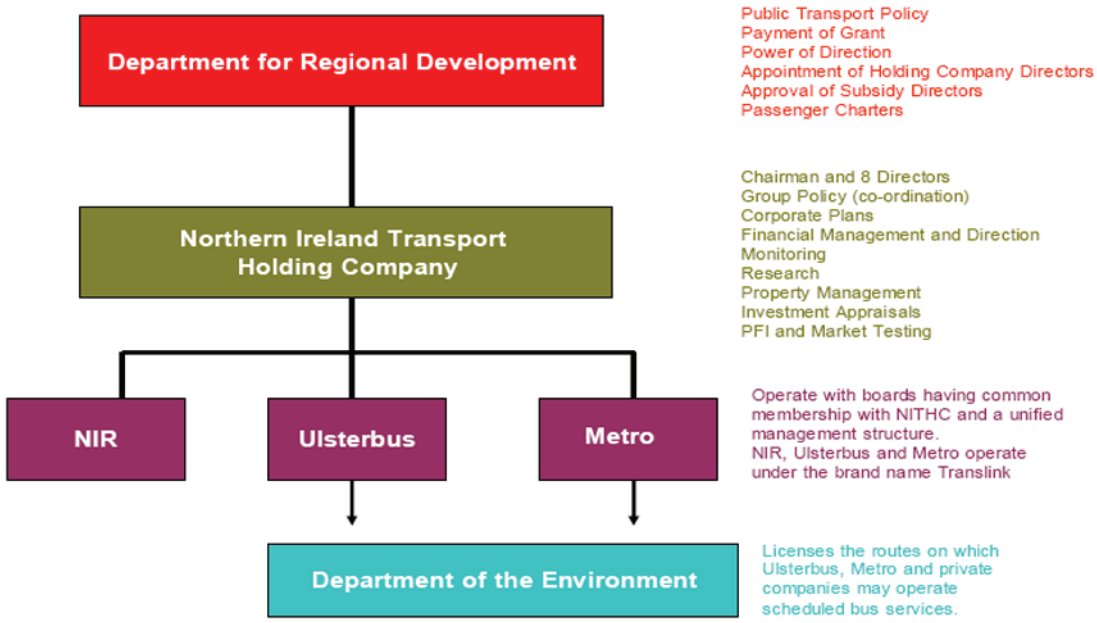


Source: Ports And Public Transport Division 2007

2 The current relationship between DRD and NITHC

The Department for Regional Development (DRD) has overall responsibility for public transport policy and planning in Northern Ireland, whilst the Department of the Environment (DoE) is responsible for the safety and operating standards of road passenger transport providers and for the licensing of bus routes. Delivery of the majority of public transport services is the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHC) and its subsidiary companies; Metro, Ulsterbus and NI Railways which operate under the collective brand name of Translink (see figure 2).

Figure 2: Current structure of institutional arrangements for the provision of public transport in Northern Ireland



2.1 NITHC Status

The NITHC is a statutory body (public corporation) established by the Transport Act (NI) 1967. In common with other public corporations, NITHC:

- is a trading body, recovering (a proportion of) its costs from fees charged to customers;
- is controlled by central government;
- has substantial day to day operating independence, acting commercially as required by section 48 of the Transport Act (NI) 1967 and should be seen as an institutional unit separate from the Department for Regional Development.

The Department for Regional Development is the sponsoring department of NITHC/Translink and as such the Minister has ultimate authority over the way the company operates and how they use public funds.

2.2 Operating framework

As required by the Transport Act (NI) 1967 the Minister, the Department and NITHC/Translink agree a broad framework under which NITHC/Translink operate, this is published in the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum (MSFM). The Management Statement includes:

- NITHC's overall aims, objectives and targets in support of the Department's wider strategic aims and the outcomes and targets contained in its current Public Service Agreement (PSA);
- the rules and guidelines relevant to the exercise of NITHC's functions, duties and powers;

- the conditions under which any public funds are paid to NITHC; and
- how NITHC is to be held to account for its performance.

The associated Financial Memorandum sets out in greater detail certain aspects of the financial provisions which NITHC is required to observe.

3 Public Transport Reform

Government announced its intention to reform the way in which public transport is delivered in 2002 via the consultation document 'A New Start for Public Transport in Northern Ireland'.[1] The reform process was intended to create an effective, efficient and sustainable public transport service that contributes to the Government's mobility, environmental, social and economic objectives.

The overall aims of the Public Transport Reform proposals are to deliver a public transport system that:

- supports the implementation of the Regional Transportation Strategy;
- provides safe, efficient and high quality public transport services;
- complies with EU regulations;[2]
- encourages the greater use of public transport; and
- maximises efficiency and value for money.[3]

Initially the intention was to devolve responsibility for planning, designing and securing public transport services to the new 'super councils' that were to be established under the Review of Public Administration (RPA). However, following devolution in 2007 it was decided that public transport should remain the responsibility of the DRD. Local roads were also earmarked for devolution, however given the complimentary nature of both roads and public transport, it was agreed that responsibility for both should be retained by the DRD.

3.1 Regulated bus services

At all stages in the reform process it was widely agreed among key stakeholders that public transport provision should remain regulated with designers and providers of services remaining accountable to the Minister for Regional Development who would therefore be accountable to the Northern Ireland Assembly. The position taken was that accountability is crucial, given the role public transport plays in many of the Government's economic, mobility, environmental and social objectives. Under the reform proposals responsibility for the regulation of bus routes will transfer from the Department of the Environment to the Department for Regional Development with effect from April 2014.

3.2 Drawbacks of deregulation

The experience of Great Britain (GB), where bus services were deregulated in 1986, demonstrated the potential drawbacks of such a model. Since deregulation, bus operators have been able to design and develop their own commercial services and set their own fares. It was envisaged that this type of competitive system would bring about a higher

1 (DRD) Department for Regional Development (2002) A New Start for Public Transport in Northern Ireland [online] available from: http://nia1.me/d0

2 EU Regulation (1370/2007) on public transport by rail and road came into force in 2009 aiming to ensure regulated competition within public transport delivery. This has implications for the current system in Northern Ireland as it requires public authorities who award exclusive rights or provide funding to an operator to do so within the framework of a public service contract that must be strictly controlled and adhere to a performance-based contractual regime (NIAR 373/09)

3 (DRD) Department for Regional Development (2010) Public transport Reform: Final Report on Public Consultation [online] available from: http://nia1.me/10d

quality service and lower fares, ultimately benefiting passengers. However, the opposite has occurred[4] and the situation exists where there are too many services on busy routes and not enough on quiet ones. This has resulted in 'fares which are too high and service quality which is too low'.[5] It has also resulted in the local Councils in GB having to fund and contract with operators to provide services on routes that are unprofitable

3.3 Reform proposals

DRD along with key stakeholders including Translink/NITHC, the Federation of Passenger Transport (FPT) and the Consumer Council concluded that future public transport needs in Northern Ireland would best be met by a three-tier structure with consumer representation at each level.

The reform proposals therefore included a three tier structure: a government top tier, responsible for broad policy, legislation and regulation; a middle tier responsible for designing and managing services and securing provision from transport operators; and a third tier which comprises the transport operators.

The Strategic Business Case (SBC) for Public Transport Reform, prepared by DRD in 2008, identified and evaluated five main structural options for delivering reform, focusing on the establishment of a new organisation at the middle tier. The options considered were:

1. Do Nothing;
2. Revised Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHC) / Translink Model;
3. Local Authority Based Passenger Transport Authority (PTA);
4. Executive Agency; and
5. Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB).

3.4 Options for Reform (Outline Business Case)

The SBC recommended that two options be taken forward to an Outline Business Case for a more detailed review against the 'do nothing' option. Therefore the OBC report considered the 'revised NITHC/Translink' option and the 'Agency' option for reform, particularly focusing on the potential monetary and non-monetary costs and benefits, and the risk associated with each option.

3.5 Preferred Option

Following the publication of the OBC and subsequent public consultation the 'Public Transport Agency' was chosen as the preferred option which would operate as an Executive Agency within the DRD, thereby making it accountable to the Minister for Regional Development, the Executive and the Assembly. The intention is for the agency to take control of some of the Authority functions currently undertaken by the NITHC and its subsidiaries while also incorporating the various regulatory powers for public transport currently held by DRD and the Department of the Environment (DOE).

According to the Outline Business Case for Public Transport Reform[6] the proposed formation of an Executive Agency to oversee and manage public transport in Northern Ireland will bring benefits such as efficiency and improved service. Therefore DRD proposed:

4 (OFT) Office of Fair Trading (2009) Local Bus Services [online] available from: http://nia1.me/10c

5 Preston, J. (2004) The Deregulation and Privatisation of Public Transport in Britain: Twenty Years On. Transport Research Foundation [online] available from: http://nia1.me/10b

6 McClure Waters (2009) Outline Business Case for Public Transport Reform. DRD: Belfast [online] available from: http://nia1.me/10e

"A single client body with expertise in the specification of integrated transport services and facilities, and in procurement and contract management is necessary in order to achieve and sustain the best possible value for money over the long term".[7]

This model received significant support in the public consultation[8] with the DRD stating that the agency model was chosen based on consideration of a number of options and it was "… concluded that the agency option provided greater independence and offered the prospect of a more efficient system overall."[9]

The Department emphasised the need for an independent body as an important factor in bringing together all the various stakeholders involved with public transport into a cohesive unit, in order to provide the best possible service; this would not be achievable through the existing NITHC model. The proposal was that the new public transport agency would be responsible for:

- Public transport regulation, planning and policy implementation;
- Working with others, including new local authorities, to develop and agree local public transport plans;
- Specifying the public transport service requirements;
- Securing the delivery of those public transport services through performance-based contracts, awarded either directly to Translink or, in some specific circumstances, subject to open competition;
- monitoring and evaluation of service delivery performance by operators;
- the granting and enforcement of public transport service permits where gaps in service provision are identified;
- the designation of bus/rail stations as shared facilities, to allow permitted independent operators to set down and pick up passengers at those locations; and
- providing public funding subsidies.

3.6 The Transport Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

On 10th June 2010, the Northern Ireland Executive gave approval for a Draft Transport Bill to be introduced into the Assembly which provides the legislative basis for bringing forward the proposed reform of public transport. The Transport Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 received Royal Assent on 16 March 2011. The Act provides the necessary legislative provisions to support the Public Transport Reform proposals.

3.7 Current status of public transport reform process

The reform process is on-going and subordinate legislation will be required to facilitate most of the powers given to the DRD by the Transport Act. In the short term, a pilot scheme involving the opening up of Translink's Europa Bus Centre has just commenced on 3 September 2012, while further down the line the powers to issue public transport service permits will transfer from DoE to DRD in April 2014.

Significantly the remit of the original Public Transport Agency model is now to be combined with the responsibilities of Roads Service; thereby forming one Departmental grouping called Transport Northern Ireland. This is broadly similar to the position in Wales and Scotland, where Transport Wales and Transport Scotland perform broadly similar functions to those

7 DRD) Department for Regional Development (2009) Public Transport Reform Consultation: Detailed policy proposals [online] available from: http://nia1.me/td

8 In total there were 109 written responses to the consultation; 56 responded on the agency issue, six of which were opposed.

9 (DRD) Department for Regional Development (2010) Public transport Reform: Final Report on Public Consultation [online] available from: http://nia1.me/10d

proposed for Transport NI. These proposals are still at an early stage and are not expected to come into play before 2013. Roads Service ceased to be an Executive Agency on 31st March 2012 and is now part of the Core Department within DRD.

The new organisation will not be an Executive Agency. The CRD is due to receive a briefing on this in October

3.8 Forthcoming legislation

The following subordinate legislation is currently being developed.

- Conduct at or near bus stations – to bring conduct in bus stations broadly in line with rail stations;
- Service agreement (contracts) and service permits regulations to enable the Department to enter into directly awarded contracts with Translink (in line with EU Regulation 1370/2007) and to enable the DRD to take over responsibility for regulating permit applications where gaps in the market result in operators putting forward proposals for new services;
- Access to shared bus stations and bus stops – to enable other permitted operators to access NITHC/Translink bus stations and bus stops.



Research and Information Service
Briefing Note

Paper 000/00 12 September 2012 NIAR 540-12

Des McKibbin

Best practice in transport integration

1 Background

The UK Government's 2010 Spending Review introduced drastic cuts to public spending, aimed at tackling the UK's £156 billion deficit.[1] This policy resulted in a £4 billion reduction to the Northern Ireland block grant (for the budget period 2011-15)[2], requiring government departments to look at ways in which savings could be made, while limiting the impact on front line services.

Cross-departmental working has been identified as key mechanism for reducing costs and there is growing evidence from Great Britain[3] and Ireland[4] of the potential to save money by coordinating the planning, management and delivery of transport across government departments.

Collectively transport provision requires in excess of £200 million per annum from the Northern Ireland public purse. This is divided among the Department for Regional Development (DRD); The Department of Education (DE); and The Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS). However, cross-departmental cooperation is limited to the DE contracting Translink (DRD) to provide home-to-school transport and the agreement whereby DE purchases free bus passes from Translink. This is despite recommendations made by the Committee of Public Accounts (PAC) at Westminster and the

1 HM Treasury (2010) Government announces £6.2bn of savings in 2010-11 [online] available from: http://nia1.me/114

2 Official Report (Hansard) Monday 18th June 2012 [online] available from: http://nia1.me/118

3 HOC Transport Committee (2011) Bus services after the Spending Review [online] available from: http://nia1.me/116

4 MVA Consultancy (2010) External Review of the Local Integrated Transport Services Pilot Project. LITS Central Steering Committee [online] available from: http://nia1.me/qw

Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) for DE and DHSSPS to look at the possibility to achieve efficiencies by coordinating their transport planning and provision.[5]

In addition to saving money better co-ordination or integration of different transport services has the potential to improve the service. Transport plays a vital role in supporting social inclusion and connecting people to education, health care, and employment.[6] However, there are gaps in the existing provision, particularly in rural areas, which could potentially be addressed through integrating existing services.

This paper provides an insight into the concept of 'Integrated Transport' and examines cases of best practice. Already RaISe publication NIAR 250-12 has considered the outcomes of a pilot scheme in Ireland which looked at ways in which mainstream bus services provided by (the publically owned) Bus Éireann could be integrated with other transport services such as home-to-school, rural/community and health transport. This paper will therefore focus on the cases of transport integration in Great Britain (GB).

2 Integrated Transport

Transport integration has been central to transport policy since the UK Governments 1998 Transport White Paper. Since then integration has taken on various meanings with policies designed to achieve integrated ticketing; integrated timetables; and integrated services. In addition to service integration, this paper will examine the potential costs/benefits of integrating management arrangements; the Northern Ireland Audit Office identifies three ways in which this might happen:

Cooperation – two (or more) departments could achieve efficiencies with joint procurement of fuel, maintenance and insurance.

Joint-use agreement – two (or more) departments could share the same resources e.g. a joint vehicle pool.

Integration – All transport services could be consolidated under one agency.[7]

For the purposes of this paper, transport integration is defined as:

> *'A mechanism where departments of an organisation or various organisations jointly plan and deliver transport, sharing resources (vehicles/drivers/staff) and procurement procedures to optimise their use to meet service demand, and enhance the delivery of transport to appropriate users.'*[8]

3 Transport Integration in England and Wales

In England and Wales responsibility for transport planning and delivery is devolved to local authorities. Within England's six largest conurbations: Greater Manchester, Merseyside, South Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear, West Midlands and West Yorkshire this function is delivered by Passenger Transport Executives (PTE). PTEs are regional bodies representing district authorities. They are overseen by a Passenger Transport Authority (PTA) which is made of elected representatives from the respective districts. PTEs designated for "the purpose of securing the provision of a properly integrated and efficient system of public passenger transport to meet the needs of (their) area".[9]

5 NIAO (2005) Education and Health and Social Services Transport [online] available from: http://nia1.me/117

6 RaISe (2012) Achieving efficiencies in public transport delivery: The role of Local Integrated Transport Services (LITS) [online] available from: http://nia1.me/115

7 As above

8 Transport Scotland (2009) Providing transport in partnership [online] available from: http://nia1.me/111 (Page 15)

9 Transport Act 1968, Part II, Section 9

All transport authorities, whether local authorities or PTE/PTA, have a statutory (under the Transport Act 2000) responsibility to produce local transport plans (LTP) based on consultation with local people, businesses and statutory bodies (e.g. health and education). The Local Transport Act (2008) (LTA) amended The Transport Act reemphasising the need for local authorities to plan their own transport services around the needs of local people[10], and significantly it gave greater powers to transport authorities to deliver better and more integrated transport services.[11]

3.1 Integrated Transport Areas

The LTA made some significant changes to the governance arrangements for PTA/PTEs, changing the name of passenger transport authorities to "integrated transport authorities". In addition:

- The LTA allows for the possibility of new PTEs to be created and for the areas of existing ones to be altered;
- The LTA has strengthened the powers of PTEs/ITAs to regulate bus services; and
- ITAs can do anything in relation to transport which they think might improve the 'social, economic or environmental well-being' of their area as they are the sole transport planning authorities in their areas.[12]

3.2 Coalition Policy

The Coalition Government released its new Transport White Paper 'Creating Growth, Cutting Carbon – Making Sustainable Local Transport Happen' in January 2011. The focus of their policy is on economic growth and carbon reduction together with an emphasis on local delivery: this is reflected in two of the four funding streams: the Integration Block and the Sustainable Transport Fund. There is also a commitment to examine the best ways to encourage the development of integrated (including multi-operator and multi-modal) schemes with the possibility of a legislative framework to support this.[13]

3.2 Integrated Transport Units

Outside of the ITAs, responsibility for planning, organising and procuring transport rests with the local authority. In general local authorities are responsible for home to school transport; social services transport; co-ordinating/subsidising passenger transport; staff travel; fleet management; one-off transport hires; and quality standards and processes.[14]

Often these responsibilities are divided between a number of departments whereby social services, education and health departments, facilitate provision of transport for their specific needs without any coordination. However, as there is a statutory duty on English and Welsh local authorities to deliver services to clear standards – of cost and quality – by the most economic, efficient and effective means available[15], a number of local authorities have identified better coordination/integration as a way of delivering best value.

An Integrated Transport Unit (ITU) is a single division responsible for coordinating all the authority's transport services, rather than doing this across a number of teams. Figure one (below) shows how this works at a local authority level in England/Wales. Effectively it is a three tier system involving a top tier of individual clients/departments; the ITU is the middle

10 HOC Hansard 26th March 2008 [online] available from: http://nia1.me/11a

11 DfT (2008) The Local Transport Act 2008: Creating the right public transport system for your area [online] available from: http://nia1.me/11g

12 PTEG (2008) A Full Guide to the Local Transport Act [online] available from: http://nia1.me/11b

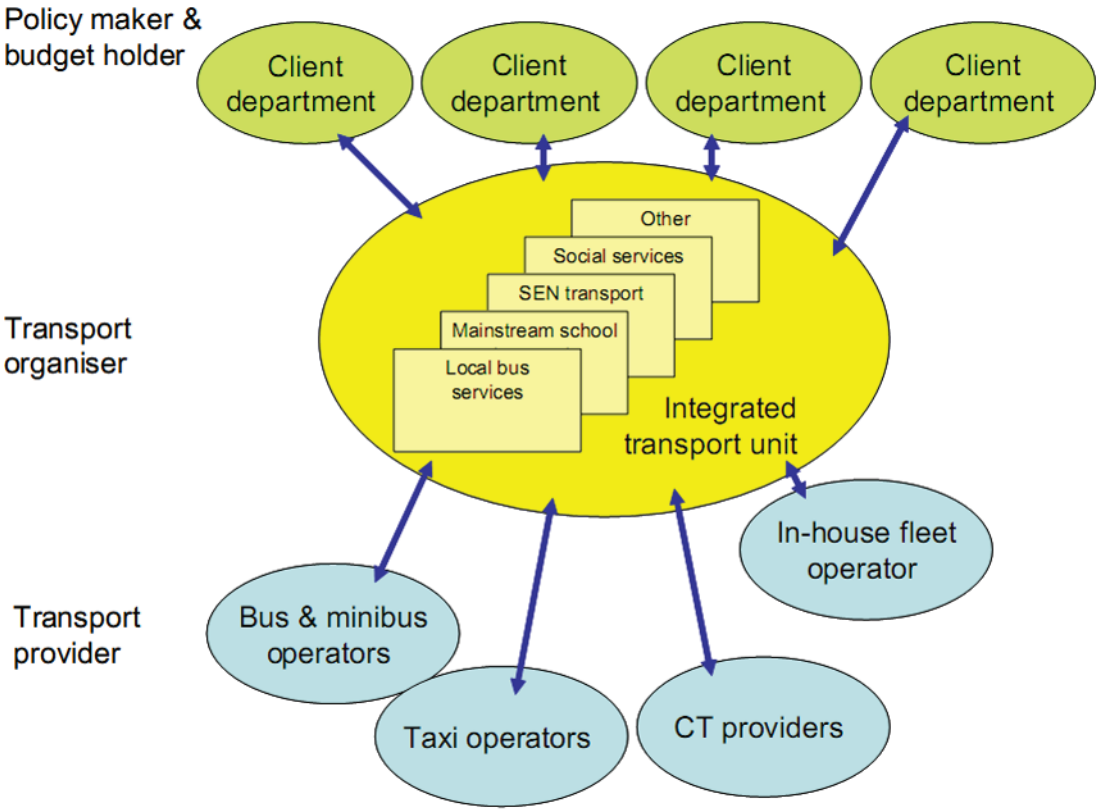
13 DfT (2011) Creating Growth, Cutting Carbon: Making Sustainable Local Transport Happen. UK Government [online] available from: http://nia1.me/11o

14 Audit Commission (2002) Devon County Council: Transport Provision [online] available from: http://nia1.me/11k

15 The Local Government Act 1999 [online] available from: http://nia1.me/11i

tier, responsible for designing and managing services and securing their provision; and the third tier comprises transport operators.

Figure 1: Typical passenger transport service delivery with an Integrated Transport Unit



Source: NWCE (2006)[16]

3.2.1 Benefits of ITU

The North West Centre of Excellence (NWCE) published a best practice paper detailing different factors for achieving efficiency in local transport. According to their paper, there are five main areas where efficiency benefits can be realised in moving to an organisational model based on an integrated transport unit from one where different passenger transport services are planned, organised and procured separately. These are:

- More focussed professional staff
  - An integrated approach presents the opportunity to assemble a team of transport professionals with the skills and experience to address the range of issues around the movement of people.
- More efficient staff utilisation
  - An integrated approach can streamline and standardise processes, cutting out duplication.
- Better service planning and packaging of external contracts
  - An integrated approach encourages consideration of the whole range of transport needs in planning and procuring passenger transport services;
  - An ITU provides a single point of contact for service providers;
  - An ITU wields greater purchasing power; and
  - An ITU will reduce duplication;

16 NWCE (2006) Integrated Transport Units – A Good Practice Paper [online] available from: http://nia1.me/11h

- Better in-house vehicle fleet utilisation
  - Better use can potentially be made of the in-house vehicle fleet, particularly where a fleet is under-utilised or used only at certain times e.g. school bus fleet.
- Greater flexibility
  - An integrated unit with professionally focussed staff gives a powerful vehicle for responding to new challenges in transport organisation.

3.2.2 Costs

There may also be initial costs associated with setting up an integrated transport unit, Key cost elements in moving to an alternative organisational model may include:

- Re-location costs
  - Costs associated with removal to new premises and re-siting of IT systems
  - Costs of any preparatory works at the new premises
  - Costs of any transitional arrangements for re-located staff
- Staff training costs
  - There will almost certainly be a need for significant staff training and education
- Staff package costs
  - Costs associated with any staff redundancies or early retirements where staff numbers are reduced
- IT costs
  - Costs of any new integrated systems required to underpin the integrated transport unit
- Change management support
  - External consultants may be required to support establishment of ITU
- Contingency
  - Inclusion of a contingency sum within the implementation budget to cope with unforeseen events is strongly recommended.

3.2.3 Case Study – Devon County Council Transport Co-ordination Service

Devon County Council (DCC) was designated by Government as a Centre of Excellence for Integrated Transport Planning in 2001, having demonstrated best practice in transport planning. DCC is one of fourteen authorities that were designated by the Government in 2001. The County Council was particularly recognised by Government in terms of its transport co-ordination, traffic management and control across a large rural county.[17]

DCC is in the south west of England and while it is the third largest county in England, it is also one of the most sparsely populated with around 735,000 people living there (2006).[18] The major centre of population is Exeter (111,000), with other towns, such as Barnstaple (20,800), Newton Abbot (23,600) and Exmouth (32,400) acting as focal points for a large rural hinterland. There are also important small towns, which have developed to serve local communities.[19]



Figure 2: Map of Devon County Council area

Source: Transport Scotland 2009[20]

17 Devon County Council [online] Transport Planning: Centres of Excellence, available from: http://nia1.me/11l

18 Devon County Council (2010) State of Devon and Torbay's Transport [online] available from: http://nia1.me/11m

19 Audit Commission (2002) Devon County Council: Transport Provision [online] available from: http://nia1.me/11n

20 Transport Scotland (2009) Providing transport in partnership [online] available from: http://nia1.me/111 (Page 50)

Devon has four times more agricultural activity and twice as many tourism businesses than the national average, and is characterised by many small businesses. The public sector is the largest employer in the area.[21]

DCC's transport is managed in-house by the Transport Co-ordination Service (TCS). The TCS is a corporate unit within the County Environment Directorate and acts in a co-ordinating role for transport provision across the County Council.[22] The TCS is responsible for providing the following services:[23]

- Transporting students to and from school;
  - DCC transports 20,000 pupils per day and manages a school transport budget of £20m
  - DCC also manages and coordinates Special Education Needs (SEN) transport for schools and FE colleges
- Transporting clients to and from social care facilities;
- Operates the County fleet and manages maintenance contract;
- Manages 220 external contracts for various travel routes;
- Manages contract held by South West Highways, for maintenance of the County's transport fleet;
- Manages customer contacts centre and ticketing service SWPTI Traveline;
- Network planning;
- Schedules/timetables (6 area timetable books covering all Devon);
- Concessionary fares (130,000 pass holders) & education tickets;
- Monitoring service performance/data analysis;
- Publicity & information; and
- Local Transport Plan implementation.

This integration model is based on joint-commissioning of mainstream public and home-to-school transport by one in-house unit. According to the Audit Commission this approach provides economies of scale in the technical skills necessary to manage transport, allow them allowing them to better integrate home-to-school transport with the wider transport policy and improve the prices obtained when letting contracts.[24] DCC TCS also integrate their SEN transport requirements with special needs vehicles used for health and social services. Special needs transport is often more expensive with many users requiring adapted vehicles and/or specially trained drivers. Therefore, using these vehicles for both school runs and health and social service appointments brings greater efficiencies by maximising the use of both physical and human resource.

The Audit Commission also praised DCC TCS for:

- Generally good satisfaction levels from end user surveys;
- Service agreements and good interaction with principal clients (Education and Social Services);
- A high standard of travel information, easily accessible by service users;

21 Devon County Council (2010) State of Devon and Torbay's Transport [online] available from: http://nia1.me/11m

22 Audit Commission (2002) Devon County Council: Transport Provision [online] available from: http://nia1.me/11n

23 Taken from combination of Sources: Transport Scotland (2009); Audit Commission (2002) and Devon City Council (2010)

24 Audit Commission (2001) Going Places: Taking people to and from education, social services and healthcare [online] available from:

- DCC was recognised as an example of best practice by the Audit Commission in its going places publication for its co-ordinated approach to transport management;
- The positive attitude of TCS staff and their good understanding of the TCS business, service aims and client/customer relationships;
- Positive relationships with transport contractors; and
- Robust performance management systems.

The only negatives for the DCC TCS were the relative high costs of Devon's school transport and community transport schemes although it should be noted that many factors influence the cost of transport services including geographical characteristics, population density and the competitiveness of the local transport service provider market.[25] As noted above Devon is sparsely populated and predominately rural.

4 Transport Integration in Scotland

Transport Scotland was established as an executive agency of the then Scottish Executive in January 2005. As of September 2010 Transport Scotland merged with Transport Directorate of core Scottish Government but they continue to be called Transport Scotland albeit with an expanded portfolio of responsibilities, including:

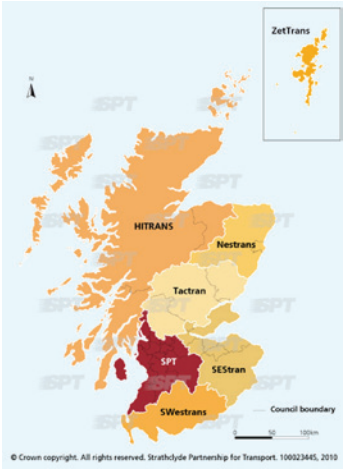
- Rail (management and investment);
- Road (management and investment);
- Transport Strategy;
- Sustainable transport, road safety and accessibility;
- Local roads policy;
- Aviation, bus, freight and taxi policy;
- ferries, ports and harbours; and
- Concessionary travel and the Blue Badge Scheme (disabled persons' parking permits).

4.1 Regional Transport partnerships

Another one of Transport Scotland's roles is to liaise with and monitor the funding of Scotland's Regional Transport Partnerships (RTP). The Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 required the establishment of Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs) covering the whole of Scotland. Seven RTPs were established on 1 December 2005 (figure 3):

Figure 3: Regional Transport Partnerships in Scotland

- Zetland Transport Partnership (ZetTrans)
- Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS)
- North-East of Scotland Transport Partnership (NESTRANS)
- Tayside and Central Scotland Transport Partnership (TACTRAN)
- South-East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)
- Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT)
- South-West of Scotland Transport Partnership (SWESTRANS)



Source: SPT (2012)

25 Audit Commission (2002) Devon County Council: Transport Provision [online] available from: http://nia1.me/11n

RTPs are governed by boards which consist of councillors from each of the constituent local authorities, who have voting rights, and external members appointed by Scottish Ministers, who may only vote in certain circumstances,[26] in this way they are comparable to the English/ Welsh Integrated Transport Authorities (formerly PTAs).

PTAs have a responsibility to publish a Regional Transport Strategy (RTS). The RTS influences all of the future plans and activities of the organisation and informs future national and local transport strategies. The Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 sets various requirements for RTS but essentially the must consider the best way to meet local transport requirements while taking account of cost, funding and practicability.[27]

4.1.1 Strathclyde Partnership for Transport

Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) is the largest of Scotland's seven regional transport partnerships. SPT has a broader suite of powers having replaced and then retained the functions of the former Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive (like those in England). Unlike the other RTPs, which are funded solely by local authorities, SPT is also funded by Central Government (mostly capital funding) to carry out transport planning, transport co-ordination, capital investment and project development for the 12 member councils in its area. Examples of the services SPT provides include:

- The operation of the Subway;
- The management of socially necessary and demand responsive bus services (MyBus);
- Capital investment in regional transport projects for all modes;
- The operation of regional bus stations/interchanges;
- The administration of the regional ticketing scheme (ZoneCard);
- The administration of the Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme;
- managing school transport contracts; and
- bus stops and shelter maintenance.[28]
- While there has been criticism levelled at the current RTP in Scotland in terms of variable outcomes, there is recognition that the additional powers held by SPT make it an exemplar of regional integrated transport planning and provision.[29]

5 Lessons for Northern Ireland

There are currently two Transport Plans for Northern Ireland:

- The Sub-Regional Transport Plan (SRTP)
- The Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP)

These are high level strategic documents designed to deliver an overall vision of transport for Northern Ireland. However, the fail to consider the unique characteristics of Northern Irelands diverse communities and landscape and do not deal with the day-to-day issues of delivery like the local (England and Wales) and regional (Scotland) transport strategies discussed in this paper.

26 Rehfisch, A (2011) SPICE Briefing: Transport in Scotland [online] available from: http://nia1.me/11q

27 The Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 [online] available from:

28 SPT (2011) Strathclyde Partnership for Transport : Annual Report 2010/2011[online] available from: http://nia1.me/11v

29 Peakin, W. (2011) Are Regional Transport Partnerships worthwhile? Hollyrood, April 12th 2010 [online] available from: http://nia1.me/11w

As a result of public transport reform the DRD proposed to provide an improved and more efficient customer focused service, built around integrated local transport plans.[30] As part of the reform process a local council based transport authority was considered (Discussed in NIAR 602-12). However, it was considered favourable to retain responsibility for public transport provision within central government alongside complimentary business areas such as road planning.[31]

A three tier structure was approved; initially involving the formation of a Public Transport (Executive) Agency. However, there are now plans to combine public transport and roads service into one departmental body. These proposals are still at an early stage and are not expected to come into play before 2013. To date, there has been no (public) discussion of the potential for this body to take on responsibility for coordinating SEN, health and education transport. However, this paper has provided examples of cases where this approach has been beneficial both in terms of improving service and delivering efficiencies.

30 (DRD) Department for Regional Development (2010) Public transport Reform: Final Report on Public Consultation [online] available from: http://nia1.me/10d

31 RaISe (2008) Public Transport Reform: Analysis of Strategic Business Plan Options [online] available from: http://nia1.me/11p

Northern Ireland Assembly

Research and Information Service
Briefing Note

Paper 000/00 7th December 2012 NIAR 891-12

Des McKibbin

Integrated Transport in the Netherlands

1 Overview

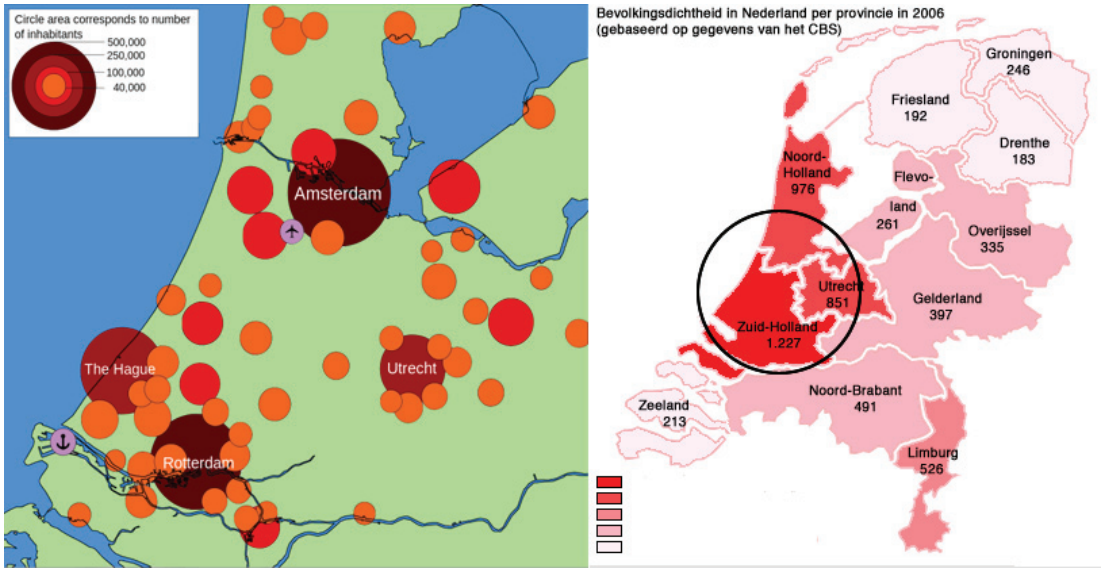
This is the third thematic paper in support of the Regional Development Committee's inquiry into 'the better use of public and community sector funds for the delivery of bus transport in Northern Ireland'. This paper examines integrated public transport provision in the Netherlands. The first two papers looked at integrated transport planning in the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain respectively.

Transport governance in the Netherlands is devolved to 12 provinces and seven of the largest conurbations. The country is quite diverse, with the west characterised by large densely populated urban areas, while the North and East are more rural. The case of the Netherlands is of particular interest as a number of the regions have successfully integrated community and demand responsive services with mainstream services.

2 The Netherlands

The most populous parts of the Netherlands are confined to the West of the country. The four largest cities in the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht) all lie within the conurbation known as the Randstad. This area has a population of approximately 7 million; almost half of the 16.6 million inhabitants of the Netherlands, and has an average population density of approximately 1000 people per km2. The Netherlands as a whole has an average population density of 487 people per km2 however there are a number of distinctly rural provinces outside of Randstad which allow for meaningful comparisons to be made with Northern Ireland.

Figure 1: Urban centres in Randstad (left) and population densities (people per km2) across the 12 provinces of the Netherlands (right).



Source: Wiki Commons

2.1 Governance

There are three levels of government in the Netherlands:

- The National Government is responsible for national policy and law. The Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment is responsible for transport and mobility policy and it provides funding to regional authorities.
- The 12 Provinces and some major city regions make up regional government. They are responsible for land-use planning, public transport, infrastructure (roads, bus stops), health policy and recreation (within policy boundaries prescribed by national government);
- There are 58 (local government) municipalities which have various responsibilities such as education, spatial planning, and local infrastructure (roads, bus stops), this within policy limits prescribed by national and provincial governments.

2.1 Public Transport

Public transport governance in the Netherlands was reformed through the 'Wet Personenvervoer' (The Passenger Transport Act (PTA)) in 2001. The PTA had the dual aim of increasing public transport use and increasing the cost recovery ratio (50% subsidy/50% fare box).[1] [2] The two most significant regulatory changes made by the PTA were the introduction of controlled competition and decentralisation of transport authority powers.[3]

3.1 Decentralisation

The PTA decentralised public transport to 35 territorial authorities (see figure one):

- all 12 provinces;
- seven groupings of municipalities covering the biggest urban areas; and

1 Van de Velde, D. and Pruijmboom, E. (2003) 'First experiences with tendering at the tactical level (service design) in Dutch Public Transport'. 8th Conference on Competition and Ownership in Land Passenger Transport. Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), 14-18 September 2003 [online] available from: http://nia1.me/17y

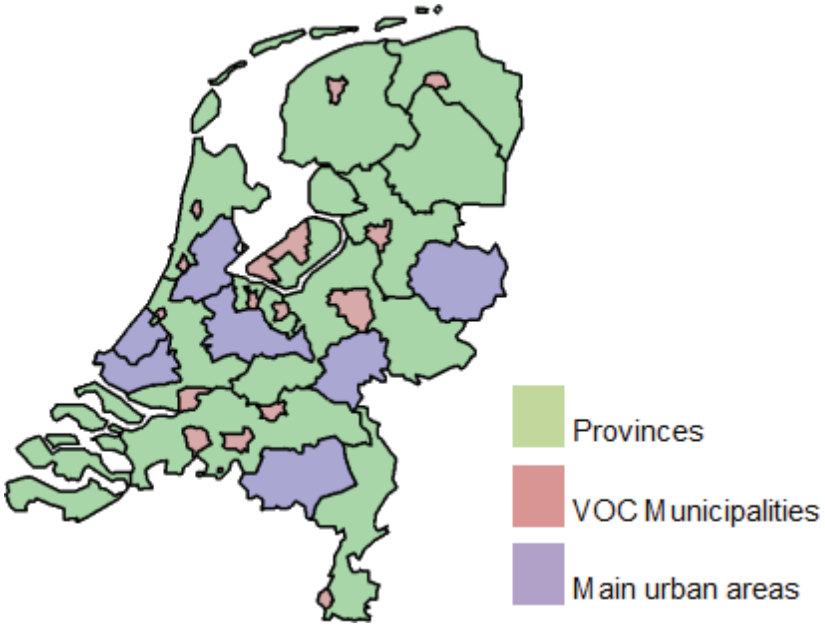
2 Baanders, A., Rienstra, S. and Lebouille, R. (2003)' Emerging competition and market power in public transport in the Netherlands'. European Transport Conference 2003 [online] available from: http://nia1.me/17z

3 CfIT (2001) Study of European best practice in the delivery of integrated transport: report on stage 1 – benchmarking [online] available from: http://nia1.me/18h

- sixteen individual cities (VOC Municipalities).

The state provides approximately €1.8 billion annually to the authorities for regional mobility; the majority is spent on the operation and maintenance of regional public transport.[4] They are then responsible for governing and financing all of the public transport in their region (bus, tram, metro and on the regional railways in their territory. The national government kept the control over the national railway network.

Figure 1: Transport Authorities in the Netherlands



2.2 Competitive Tendering

Public transport is delivered by concessions. A concession is an exclusive contract awarded through a competitive tendering process to a private contractor, allowing them to provide a transport services in that region. Urban and regional transport has been contracted out everywhere except in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague. However, the Dutch Government is currently negotiating with these regions to implement the tendering process, or they may have to cut services.[5]

The Dutch provinces have always placed strong emphasis on providing a comprehensive public transport network for all urban and rural areas. Before concessions were introduced this meant service frequencies were typically low: 20 or 30 minutes in (sub) urban areas and every 30 to 60 minutes in rural areas. However, now typical service levels are:

- Urban: every 10 - 15 min
- Suburban: every 15 - 30 min
- Rural: every 30 - 60 min[6]

3.3 Integrated ticketing

Despite being governed regionally the entire public transport ticketing system in the Netherlands is fully integrated. The strippenkaart was the first fully integrated national travel card which could be used to pay for trips on buses, trams and local trains anywhere in the Netherlands. This has now been phased out (not valid since 2011), with the ov-chipkaart

4 Government of the Netherlands (2012) Concessions and tenders [online] available form: http://nia1.me/18q

5 Government of the Netherlands (2012) Concessions and tenders [online] available form: http://nia1.me/18q

6 PTEG (2010) Public Transport Tendering in the Netherlands

providing a similar facility but using up-to-date, contactless smart card technology, as opposed to a paper ticket.

The introduction of the OV-chipkaart means that public transport costs are now calculated per distance (km) travelled, rather than the 'zone' travel systems. The 'zone' travel system was unfavourable for some travellers, though favourable for others. The cost per km is now completely equitable although costs vary across the country, as local fares are set by the relevant public transport company.[7]

3.4 School (education) Transport

Dutch higher education students are entitled to free public transport. This system was introduced in 1991 as a commercial contract between the Ministry of Education and the transport operators, replacing former travel allowances to the students. This contract amounted to approximately €300 million in 2009.[8]

The free travel scheme does not include high school students. However, all persons under the age of 14 are entitled to a 34% reduction in fares.[9] Similarly to the policy here in Northern Ireland, eligibility for free school travel is based on proximity to the school (more than 6 km). These bus services are not usually integrated with regular public transport and the funding source is also separate, however in some regions students do make use of mainstream transport services.[10]

3.5 Health and social service transport

The right to live independently and have access to transport is enshrined in Dutch legislation. Under the Social Support Act (Wet Maatschappelijke Ondersteuning), known as the WMO, the Dutch government provides funding to municipalities out of which they provide for the needs of eligible citizens; this includes provision of door-to-door transport.

The solutions adopted by the various transport authorities vary quite a bit, all according to local circumstances and priorities. For example, the Province of South Holland abolished some regular public transport services in favour of a larger integration with WMO transport, resulting in a balance of about 50% regular public transport users in its WMO services.

Another example is the rural province of Fryslân (Friesland) where regular bus services to the smallest villages were replaced with demand-responsive services. The operator has subcontracted these services to local taxi companies which also operate the local WMO-services, resulting in a higher efficiency (same vehicles can be used for both services).[11]

3.5.1 Regional taxi

The regional taxi (RegioTaxi) is a national brand that offers a demand responsive transport (DRT) service. This service can be used by both WMO and mainstream passengers as all vehicles are fully accessible shared taxi-buses. The idea is that these buses can go to destinations where regular public transport does not. The price of regional taxis lies somewhere in between public transport and regular taxi fares, although in most areas disabled people pay the standard public transport fare, while non–disabled people pay a higher rate. The services are run by groups of local bus companies and taxi firms.

Reservations for the Regiotaxi are made by telephoning the Travel Dispatch Centre (RVC), an organisation of regional taxi companies. They use software that automatically creates clusters of individual bookings and allocates these to vehicles. The system is flexible but known

7 Ov-Chipkaart [online] available from: http://nia1.me/18s

8 PTEG (2010) Public Transport Tendering in the Netherlands

9 Ov-Chipkaart [online] available from: http://nia1.me/18s

10 PTEG (2010) Public Transport Tendering in the Netherlands[online] available from: http://nia1.me/18y

11 Ibid.

regular rides are booked and clustered in advance. Connections with mainstream transport services are guaranteed when reservations are made at least two hours in advance.[12]

Technical specifications

- PlanVision software is used to assist the scheduling process and calculation of fares. On-board computers then communicate with the PlanVision software;
- All vehicles are equipped with a navigational system, Carin (a speaking computer), which calculates the shortest or fastest route and relays this to the driver.

Users

- The service is available to all members of the public. However, 93% have some degree of disability. The service is used almost exclusively for social activities

Costs

- The scheme costs €3m per year. Fares make up 9% of this while the government and each municipality make up the shortfall.[13]

3.5.2 Valys Connexxion Taxi Service

Valys (a bus company) is commissioned by the Netherlands Ministry of health, Welfare and Sport (MHWS) to run a Connexxion Taxi Service. This is similar to door-to-door Regiotaxi however, this service is only for WMO eligible persons, and is designed to provide opportunities for social and recreational trips outside of the area where they live; this is defined as more than five transport zones (30km) from their home address, which would have otherwise not been possible (by train etc.).

To make use of this service, passengers must have a valid Valyspas, which is funded by the MHWS. Each Valyspashouder is issued with a personal mileage allowance, which ranges from a standard mileage budget of 450 km, to the higher mileage budget of 2,250 km, based on need. While on trips the Valyspashouder is entitled to have one person accompany them for free and up to three companions can come at the same rate paid by the Valyspashouder.

4 Case study - Friesland

The province of Friesland is a largely rural region in the north of the Netherlands. It has a population of 638,000 living across 3,350 km2 (population density = 192 people/km2). The provincial capital is Leeuwarden (population = 90,700). Drachten (53,000) and Heerenveen (41,250) are the next largest urban centres in the province. Agriculture and tourism are the two main industries in Friesland.

4.1 Concessions

Within the mainland of Freisland, there are three public transport concessions, with North and West Friesland the first area to apply this structure in its 2006 tendering process. The tendering process allows the province to set certain requiremnsts, such as service frequency and vehicle standards (including emissions) although a key part of the process is that providers are allowed room to be innovative in how they deliver their services, so long as it complies with the Provinces local transport plan.

12 ELTIS [online] MOBIMAX, Achterhoek, The Netherlands. Available from: http://nia1.me/18x

13 ELTIS [online] MOBIMAX, Achterhoek, The Netherlands. Available from: http://nia1.me/18x



Source: Wiki Commons

4.1 Local Transport Plan

All provinces are required by legislation to produce Provincial Traffic and Transport Plans (referred to as PVVP). The first PVVP for Friesland was published in 2006 and runs to 2020 although it is currently being reviewed. The main objective of the PVVP (2006) is to achieve a sustainable traffic and transport system in Friesland:

- that meets the needs of residents and visitors;
- which satisfies the need to transport goods;
- that contributes to strengthening the economy;
- that is safe; and
- that limits damage to wildlife, the landscape and environment.

4.2 Integration

One of the main focuses of the PVVP was transport integration or as it is referred to; 'Chain Mobility'. The strategy led to works being carried out to ensure the provision of quality interchanges in the transport chain, at stations, bus stops, transfer points and park and ride/ share facilities.[14]

4.4 Demand Responsive Transport (DRT)

DRT was a key feature of the 2006 PVVP in Friesland. At its core is the idea that the transport system should be based on actual demand rather than potential demand. Since the

14 EVALUATIE PVVP 2006 Deel Beoordeling van het PVVP (Transalation: Assessment of local transport pland) [online] available from: http://nia1.me/18t

publication of the PVVP Transport supply has therefore been divided into three sub-systems which are all designed to complement and integrate with each other:[15]

Attractive Collective Public Transportation (ACOV) is a bus priority system, similar to those operated in Belfast and Dublin. In Friesland these services operate in the towns with populations in excess of 10,000. Buses are faster, more frequent and more comfortable than normal services in order to make them a realistic alternative to the private car.

- ACOV is only deployed on routes where demand is high and so only operates from 06.30 and 18.30;
- There is a minimum of two services per/hour and in the evenings at least one per hour – there is a much higher frequency during peak hours;
- ACOV stops in urban and regional centres, often along main roads, and has good reliability.
- The network of the ACOV is designed so that it is accessible to around 60% of the inhabitants of Friesland, this equates to 75% of travellers;

Collective Public Transport (COV) is also scheduled, but with less frequency and stops, delivered on standard buses. These are offered in areas with a population between 5,000 and 10,000. According to the PVVP, these services fulfil a social function and many people, particularly those without access to a car rely on them.

- Service frequency is a minimum of one per hour;
- COV operates on municipal roads;
- COV has a limited number of stops between centres;
- The network is designed to be accessible to 35% of the population and it accounts for 22% of total passengers;

Individual Public Transport (IOV) is an on-demand transport services that has fixed stops (variable route); it can also provide a door-to-door service. This service guarantees that even people in the most isolated areas have access to public transport:

- IOV operates in settlements with a population between 250 and 5000 inhabitants.
- IOV services go from rural to more urban areas where the regular public transport stop is more than 400m from the centre of the village;
- If nobody calls, the service doesn't operate – all users must pre book;
- The IOV provides at least one connection per hour to the scheduled service, and waits for a scheduled service, if one is not there;
- The first trip is available from 07:00 to 22:00.
- If there is an identified demand i.e. where and IOV service carries a large number of passengers on a given route, then this can be replaced by COV
- In total the IOV service was anticipated to cater for 3% of all travellers.

In addition to these services, a community transport service called Buurtbus (neighbourhood bus) also operates in Friesland, and indeed across the Netherlands. Buurtbus, much like the community transport services here in Northern Ireland is a voluntary service run in rural areas where there is insufficient demand for regular public transport. Vehicles can carry up to eight passengers but are not normally accessible to wheelchair users; they have their own tariff system.

15 Haeften, M.V., Volker, G., Kemper, R., Teffelen, P.V. and Ubbel, B. (2009) Effects of the provincial public transport policy in Friesland (Original Document in Dutch) [online] available from: http://nia1.me/18u

As part of the concession to provide mainstream transport, operators must maintain the Buurtbus vehicles. In some instances where a particular route has been successful it is put back on the mainstream route.

4.5 Other regions

There are a number of provinces with similar spatial characteristics to Friesland, such as Groningen, Drenthe, Zeeland, Gelderland, Flevoland and North Holland. All of these areas place a strong emphasis on demand driven supply which connects to the main transport routes.

4.5.1 Groningen and Drenthe

There is one agency responsible for public transport across the Northern provinces of Groningen and Drenthe. There were two separate concessions tendered for this region in 2009; one for regular bus services and one for WMO and demand responsive transport.

Unlike the Friesland concession companies here were asked to continue with the existing network, rather than to develop anything new. As in Friesland there are three subsystems:

- a quality system (HOV);
- the “basic network”; and
- Additional elements such as a Regiotaxi.

As described previously, the Regiotaxi is a combination of small-scale (provincial) public transport and the (municipal) WMO transport. They provide a combination of door-to-door, door-to-stop, and stop-to-stop services. Customers must phone to book passage and fares must be paid in cash.

4.6 Discussion and transferability

An evaluation of this demand driven approach returned some mixed views on its success. Interviews carried out with residents in four municipalities showed that awareness of the IOV (on demand) service was limited and as a result the service was rarely used (by respondents). There was a further suggestion that only a very small number of Friesan people depend on public transport and particularly IOV, most saying it is a nice safety net. However, quantitative data does not support these claims.

That being said, this type of response is understandable; the majority of people in rural areas do have access to a car, mainly out of need. In Northern Ireland this figure is over 75%. However, there are a significant number who do not and these are the people who could really benefit from this type of service.

Demand driven, stop-to-stop services are an interesting alternative to the door-to-door services which are more common in Northern Ireland, and one which may be particularly suited to those with no mobility issues, aside from where they live. Young people in rural areas are particularly susceptible to social exclusion, as they are often dependent on others to get access to their friends, youth clubs and other services, particularly after 6p.m when many mainstream public transport rural routes stop operating. A demand for door-to-door services will remain from the same demographic who currently make use of the current community transport provision.

It is striking that DRT it is a central component of the transport offering in the Netherlands and that it is used by such a broad cross-section of society. This is reflected in the nationally recognised and highly successful Bellbus brand, which provides 5% of all passenger km travelled in Friesland.[16] The voluntary Buurtbus contrasts with the UK community transport

16 PTEG (2004) Rural Transport Futures, Case Study: Friesland [online] available from: http://nia1.me/18w

product in that it is designed to accommodate able bodied passengers whereas community transport in the UK is almost exclusively used by people with mobility problems.

There is little doubt that that the application of telematics technology has the potential to dramatically change the way public transport is delivered in rural areas. This type of system became more widespread across the EU following the European Commission's SAMPLUS demonstration projects. However, the Netherlands is the first example of telematics based DRT being integrated into the main public transport network.

The demand driven policy in the Netherland has contributed to passenger growth on mainstream lines. Because capacity on little used lines has been replaced by IOV, ACOV and COV have increased their capacity by 60% and 20% respectively. This has led to a 40% increase on passengers using ACOV and 30% increase in passengers using COV. The fact that IOV acts as a feeder service to ACOV must also be a factor but this has not been quantified.

Currently the Department for Regional Development (DRD) provide financial support for economically unviable but socially necessary routes through the Rural Transport Fund (RTF) but timetable issues including a lack of late evening services and frequency make these unattractive and increasingly unviable, even with subsidy.

Northern Ireland has a large rural population who travel to the large regional centres for work, education and social interaction. As things stand a car is a virtual necessity if they are to play a full part in society and unfortunately for a growing number of people owning a car is simply unaffordable. On demand transport in this country is limited to community transport and taxi's while the Netherlands has shown that the real solution lies somewhere in the middle.

The primary objective of the RTF is to support transport services designed to give people in rural areas improved access to work, education, healthcare, shopping and recreational activities and by so doing assists in reducing their social isolation. However, there is little doubt that the current arrangements have to be looked at to ensure demand is being met in the most efficient manner. Across the Netherlands Demand Responsive Transport has been shown to be a very efficient and economical way of connecting people to main transport routes and reducing social exclusion.

National Transport Authority (NTA) paper

The National Transport Authority is a statutory body established by the Minister for Transport on 1 December 2009. The legislation establishing the Authority is available online.

At a national level, the National Transport Authority has responsibility for securing the provision of public passenger land transport services. This includes the provision of subvented bus and rail services by Bus Éireann, Dublin Bus and Irish Rail.

The Authority also licences public bus passenger services. On January 1, 2011, the National Transport Authority assumed responsibility for the regulation of the small public service vehicle sector (i.e. taxis, hackneys and limousines). Provisions to enable this were included in the Public Transport Regulation Act 2009. The staff and functions of the previous body, the Commission for Taxi Regulation, have been incorporated into the Authority, which now regulates the small public service vehicles sector, in accordance with the provisions of the Taxi Regulation Act (2003).

The Authority also has responsibility for the development of an integrated transport system within the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) – Counties Dublin, Kildare, Meath and Wicklow.

The principal functions of the Authority with respect to the GDA are:

- Strategic planning of transport;
- Development of an integrated, accessible public transport network;
- Promoting cycling and walking;
- Provision of public transport infrastructure generally including light rail, metro and heavy rail;

The principal functions of the National Transport Authority in the Greater Dublin Area are:

1. preparation and regular review of an integrated long-term (20 year) transportation strategy for the Greater Dublin Area
2. adoption of a medium term (6 year) integrated implementation plan and strategic traffic management plan
3. ensuring that the actions of the implementing agencies are supportive of the Authority's strategy
4. allocating finance to implementing agencies from the Authority's block grant provided by the Exchequer and certain revenues generated by the transport system itself
5. undertaking works where it considers it more convenient, expeditious, effective or economical to do so
6. promoting an integrated public transport network, implementing integrated ticketing, fares and information schemes, regulating fares and encouraging increased public transport use

At the National level the principal functions are:

1. to secure the provision of public passenger transport services
2. to license public bus passenger services that are not subject to a public transport services contract
3. to develop and maintain a regulatory framework for the control and operation of taxis, hackneys and limousines.

The Authority is under a statutory obligation to have regard to cost-effectiveness and value for money in the discharge of its functions.

Just look at the National Transport Authority – how it came about, what it replaced and what it does now.



Research and Information Service
Briefing Paper

Paper 000/00 13th February 2013 NIAR 890-12

Des McKibbin

Government Support for Public Transport in Great Britain and Northern Ireland

1 Overview

This paper compares the types and levels of transport subsidy paid in Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

2 Transport Subsidies in Northern Ireland

Broadly speaking a transport subsidy refers to the public funding provided to meet transport costs which are not recouped from fare paying passengers. Subsidies help transport providers keep their costs down, supporting lower fares and thereby making public transport more attractive to passengers.

The Department for Regional Development provides both revenue and capital funding for public transport (buses and trains) and publically funded transport (such as, door-to-door and community transport) services through the payment of various grants and subsidies.

2.1 Subsidy/Grants paid to Translink

The vast majority of public transport services in Northern Ireland are provided by the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHC) through its subsidiaries: NI Railways, Ulsterbus and Metro (Translink). NITHC/Translink is therefore in receipt of most of the available public funding.

In contrast to the deregulated UK market where unprofitable routes are subsidised by transport authorities to ensure services are maintained, Translink's monopolistic control of

the local transport market enables it to cross-subsidise its uneconomical routes with the revenue generated by its profitable routes.1 The effect of this arrangement is that Translink is not allocated additional route subsidy. However, Translink is in receipt of a number of other grants/subsidies including capital support which is not provided to operating companies in GB.[1] [2]

2.1.1 Bus (Capital) Grant

According to the DRD, it provided Translink with funding of almost £155m between 2004/05 and 2011/12 to assist in the purchase of new buses and the upgrade of bus stations, workshops and garages. This funding enabled Translink to purchase over 960 buses from 2004/05-2011/12, with a further 66 buses being delivered in 2012/13.2

The bulk of this funding (£95.8m) was provided between 2005/06 and 2007/08 when bus services in the Greater Belfast area were rebranded from Citybus to Metro. This money was used to make significant improvements to Belfast's bus network including new rolling stock, improved halts, passenger information systems and bus priority schemes (Quality Bus Corridors). The impact of this investment was immediate with passenger numbers increasing by 30% between 2004/05 and 2007/08 (see annex 3).3

2.1.2 Fuel Duty Rebate

Fuel Duty Rebate (FDR) in Northern Ireland is paid by the DRD to operators of bus services towards defraying customs or excise duty charged on eligible fuel used in operating a bus service. The present rate of rebate is 43.21p per litre.4

2.1.3 Concessionary Fares

The Northern Ireland Concessionary Fares Scheme provides free and half fare travel on public transport for several groups of people, including children, senior citizens and some people with disabilities. The Scheme is funded and administered by the Department for Regional Development (DRD).5

2.1.4 Accessible Transport

The accessible transport grant referred to in table one is for the provision of transport services for those who would otherwise be isolated due to either a personal mobility issue caused by old age, disability or where they live. There are two funding streams which support this: the Transport Programme for People with Disabilities (TPPD) and the Rural Transport Fund (RTF).

The TPPD supports urban based Door-to-Door services which aim to target social exclusion, particulalrly among the elderly and disabled people who find it difficult to use mainstream public transport. In 2011-12, over 148,000 passenger trips were undertaken by members of this service.6

The RTF offers support through two primary means of assistance:

- Subsidy for new rural services provided by Translink which are economically unviable but socially necessary; and
- Revenue and capital funding for Rural Community Transport Partnerships (RCTP) that offer a range of services, including door-to-door to their members.

RCTPs do not receive concessionary fare reimbursement or Fuel Duty Rebate payments.

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1 The UK Government does operate Ad Hoc programmes which provide capital funding to support particular policy objectives, a current example is the Green Bus Fund, see: http://nia1.me/1bn

2 Full details of the Financial support paid to transport operators in NI by DRD is contained in Annex one.

2.1.5 NILGOS

Translink/NITHC participates in the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation ("NILGOS") scheme. The DRD provides NITHC/Translink with revenue funding for contributions to this pension scheme.

2.2 Financial Support paid to NITHC/Translink

Table one provides a detailed breakdown of the revenue and capital funding provided to NITHC/Translink. Annex one provides a breakdown of all financial support for public transport

Table 1: Annual Public Transport Financial Support paid tor NITHC/Translink 08/09 – 14/15

£m	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
BUS revenue					**Budget**	**Indicative**	**Indicative**
Concessionary Fares	£22.0	£24.7	£25.0	£26.7	£27.7	£25.6	£26.1
Fuel Duty Rebate	£10.5	£10.5	£10.3	£9.9	£10.3	£9.3	£10.3
NILGOS	£ 3.7	£4.4	£6.7	£4.8	£5.4	NIL	£1.5
Accessible Transport	£1.3	£1.0	£1.1	£0.9	£1.1	£1.1	£1.1
BUS capital	£ 9.0	£14.2	£8.2	£16.5	£11.4	£0.1	£1.4
TOTAL BUS	£46.5	£54.8	£51.3	£58.8	£55.9	£36.1	£40.4
RAIL revenue							
Public Service Obligation (PSO)	£22.9	£23.6	£22.3	£24.1	£25.0	£25.2	£21.3
NITHC Pensions	£ 0.6	£0.6	£0.5	£0.5	£0.5	£0.5	£0.5
Con Fares Rail	£6.1	£7.9	£9.0	£10.0	£11.1	£11.7	£11.7
RAIL capital	£36.1	£35.7	£53.4	£92.0	£40.8	£16.2	£23.6
TOTAL RAIL	£65.7	£67.8	£75.2	£126.6	£77.4	£53.6	£57.1
Total Bus and Rail	£112.2	£122.6	£136.5	£185.4	£133.3	£89.7	£97.5

2.2 NITHC/Translink Turnover vs. Subsidy

In 2011 and 2012, Ulsterbus and Metro had a combined turnover of £128.6m and £129.3m respectively;[3] over the same period bus services received grants and subsidies of £51.3m and £58.8m respectively giving them operating revenue of £177.2m and £185.5m respectively. Therefore, for both years, around 70% of NITHC/Translinks total operating revenue is derived from commercial activities including fares with around 30% coming from the public purse (table 2).

3 In 2010/11 and 2011/12 Ulsterbus and Metro made a combined profit of £2.7m and £2.6m respectively. This should be subtracted from Turnover to give a more accurate

Table 2: NITHC Turnover 2011 and 2012

	Turnover		Profit		Govt. Support		Total Operating Revenue (TOE)		Govt. Support as % of TOE	
	2011 (£m)	2012 (£m)	2011 (£m)	2012 (£m)	2011 (m)	2012 (m)	2011 (m)	2012 (m)	2011 (%)	2012 (%)
NI Railways	53.7	55.7	-2.8	-1.6	75.2	126.6	131.7	183.9	57	69
Ulsterbus	93.1	93.7	1.5	2.1						
Metro	35.5	35.6	1.2	0.5	51.3	58.8	177.2	185.5	29	32
Total	182.3	185.0	-0.1	1	126.5	185.4	308.9	371.5	41	50

Note: The Formula used to calculate total Operating Revenue is Turnover + Govt. Support – Profit

Note: This figure represents total Operating Expenditure for Ulsterbus and Metro Combined

Source: DRD/Translink

2.2 Subsidy per passenger journey

In order to make comparisons with the level of support and grants paid in other regions it is useful to break payment down to a lower and more comparable unit. Therefore for the purposes of comparison later in this paper the payments made per passenger journey have been calculated: The support per passenger journey in 2010-11 was 77p (table three).

Table 3: Support and Grants paid to Ulsterbus and Metro per passenger 2008/09 to 2010/11

	2008-09		2009-10		2010-11	
	Million	£	Million	£	Million	
Passenger Journeys/Subsidy per passenger journey[4]	70.5	0.66	68.2	0.80	66.6	0.77

Source: DRD/Translink

2.3 Regional Comparisons

The Outline Business Case (OBC) compiled by consulting company FGS McClure Waters provided a comparison of government subsidies paid in Scotland, Wales, England and Northern Ireland. This analysis showed the subsidies received Ulsterbus and Metro per passenger journey were higher than in Scotland and England, but lower than in Wales. Overall the consultants reported that subsidy levels are not significantly different in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.7

Table 4: Support and Grants for Local Bus Services in Scotland, Wales, England and Northern Ireland 2007/08

Subsidy	Scotland	Wales	England (ex. London)	Northern Ireland
Subsidy Per Passenger Journey	0.59	0.90	0.56	0.63

Source: FGS McClure Waters/Translink

The remainder of this paper will look at public subsidies and grants paid in England, Scotland and Wales. Support for the rail industry will be discussed briefly in the next section. However,

4

given the significant differences in the nature and scale of the rail systems in GB and NI are not readily comparable to the system in Northern Ireland.

3 Support for Rail

Prior to 2001 support for passenger rail services was channelled through the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising (OPRAF) and the Passenger Transport Executives (PTEs). In 2001 Office of Passenger Rail Franchising (OPRAF) was replaced with Strategic Rail Authority support, which in 2005 was replaced with grants made by the Department for Transport (DfT), the Welsh Assembly Government and Transport Scotland. Since its creation in 2001, Government grants have also been paid to Network Rail.

Government support to the rail industry in GB consists mainly of support grants paid to Network Rail, Train Operating Companies (TOC), and PTE Special Grants. Rail freight grants are also paid by Government to encourage the movement of freight by rail; in 2011-12 this support was in excess of £3.9 billion).Government support comprises:8

Table 5: Government support to the rail industry2001-02 to 2011-12 Great Britain (£ million)

£m	Central government grants	PTE grants	Direct rail support	Other elements of government support	Total government support excluding PTE grants	Total government support including PTE grants	Freight grants
2001-02	731	306	684	105	1,520	1,826	57
2002-03	935	304	1,166	183	2,284	2,588	49
2003-04	1,359	414	1,670	179	3,208	3,622	32
2004-05	878	389	2,370	154	3,402	3,791	26
2005-06	879	332	3,366	24	4,270	4,602	23
2006-07	1,456	313	4,463	76	5,995	6,308	30
2007-08	1,123	310	3,673	187	4,983	5,293	18
2008-09	273	317	4,266	356	4,896	5,213	21
2009-10	467	316	3,798	38	4,303	4,619	20
2010-11	-51	207	3,680	125	3,753	3,960	20
2011-12	-133	214	3,744	76	3,687	3,901	17
NOTE: this negative figure reflects money which was received by government from the various train operating companies as part of their franchise agreement.							

Source: ORR (2013)

3.1 Comparison with Northern Ireland

The most recent figures from (2010/11) the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) show that in 2010/11 1.16bn rail journeys took place in Great Britain – up 8.9% from 2009-10. This indicates that in 2010/11 the governments of England, Wales and Scotland provided (collectively) a subsidy of £3.40 per passenger journey. In 2010/11 the DRD provided £7.27 in subsidy per passenger journey.[5]

5 In 2010/11 NI Railways accommodated 10.35m passenger journeys and received £75.2 in subsidy from the DRD.

In 2011/12 there were 10.96m journeys on NI Railways with a subsidy of £126.6m (£92m capital) which indicates a subsidy of £11.50 per passenger journey. However these figures cannot be considered typical as they record a period of significant capital investment in railway, including:

- The purchase of 20 new Class 4000 trains;
- A programme of work to extend platforms across the network;
- a new maintenance facility at Adelaide in Belfast; and
- The upgrade the Coleraine to L/Derry rail line

4 Support for local bus services in Great Britain

Local buses are the most available and frequently used mode of public transport in Great Britain with some 5.17bn passenger journeys in 2010-11 (2.4bn outside of London); this compares to 1.16bn rail journeys.9 10

There are multiple sources of support for the bus industry in Great Britain, administered at both Central and Local Government levels, the three main sources of revenue funding are:

- Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) – this is a fuel duty rebate;
- Concessionary Travel reimbursement[6];
- Tendered Service Support – paid by local authorities for non-commercial routes;

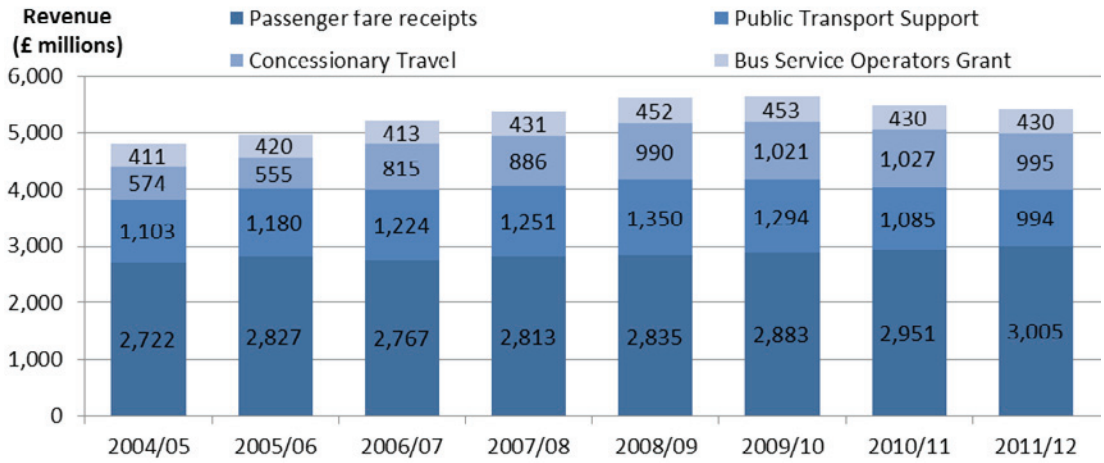
4.1 England

In England in 2010/11, an estimated 55 per cent of operators' revenue came from passenger fare receipts (54% in 2010/11) with the remainder from public transport (tendered service) support (20%), concessionary travel (19%) and Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) (8%) (figure 1).

- Total net public funding revenue support for local bus services and concessionary travel in England was £2.3 billion in 2011/12;
- Since 2004/05, total net support has increased by 15 per cent in real terms, mainly due to a 73 per cent increase in funding for concessionary travel (following the introduction of statutory free off-peak bus travel for the elderly and disabled); and
- Between 2010/11 and 2011/12 there was a 5 per cent real terms decrease in net funding support in London, with a 3 per cent decrease in English metropolitan areas and a 7 per cent decrease in non-metropolitan areas.11

6 DfT statistics branch do not consider Concessionary Fare Reimbursement as a subsidy to the bus industry as operators are reimbursed for carrying concessionary fare passengers on a no better off, no worse off basis.

Figure 1: Breakdown of Total Operating Revenue for Local Bus Services in England, from 2004/05 to 2011/12

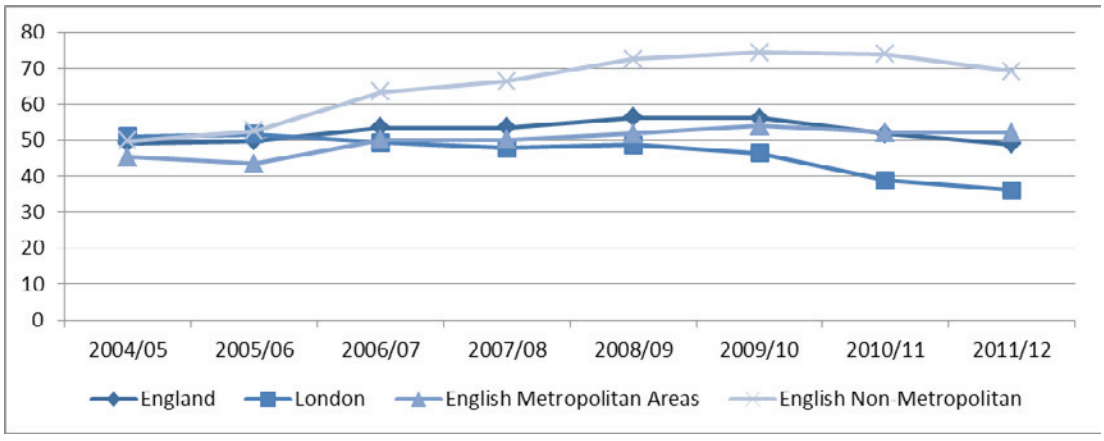


Source: DfT (Table BUS0501)

Support per passenger journey varies significantly, depending on the region:

- Support in London is lowest (£0.38 per passenger journey) where there has been a 30% drop in support between from 2004/5 and 2011/12;
- Support in English Metropolitan Areas has remained relatively stable over the same period (there has been a 14% increase in support);
- Support is highest in English non-metropolitan areas where there has been a 28% increase between 2004/05 and 2011/12 (figure 2).

Figure 2: Total Govt. Support for Bus Services per Passenger Journey (pence) at 2011/12 prices



Source: DfT (2012)

Table 6: Support and Grants for Bus Services in England (by region) per passenger journey

	2008-09		2009-10		2010-11	
	Million	£	Million	£	Million	
Passenger Journeys/Subsidy per passenger journey						
England	4627	0.56	4604	0.57	4609	0.54
London	2228	0.46	2238	0.44	2269	0.38
English Metropolitan Areas	1080	0.50	1073	0.52	1055	0.52
English Non-Metropolitan Areas	1317	0.80	1291	0.84	1285	0.84
Northern Ireland	70.5	0.66	68.2	0.80	66.6	0.77

Source: DfT (Tables: BUS0501a; BUS0106a; BUS0106b; BUS0203a and BUS0203b)

4.1.1 Comparison with Northern Ireland

The analysis above indicates that the subsidies Ulsterbus and Metro receive per passenger journey are generally somewhat higher than in England:

- Subsidy in NI is 43% higher per passenger than in (all of) England;
- It is more than double that in London;
- 48% higher than in English metropolitan areas; but
- 8% lower than in English non-metropolitan areas.

4.2 Wales

The Welsh Government spends in excess of £100m a year to support bus and community transport services, of which:

- the Local Transport Services Grant (LTSG);
- the Bus Service Operators' Grant (BSOG), and
- the concessionary fares scheme.

In Wales in 2010/11, this accounted for approximately 49% of operators' revenue (£210m)12. The remainder came from passenger fare receipts.

Table 7: Public Transport Expenditure by Local Authorities in Wales

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Support to Operators	17,966	21,253	23,010	22,789	23,400	24,536	25,063	27,315	27,223
Concessionary fares	29,743	37,006	40,850	47,642	51,683	56,818	65,751	66,598	67,305
Co-ordination	3,256	3,461	4,007	5,386	5,602	5,623	10,294	7,125	5,618
Total	50,965	61,721	67,867	75,818	80,685	86,977	101,109	101,038	100,147

Source: Stats Wales (2013)

3.2.1 Comparison with Northern Ireland

When comparing bus services, Wales is the UK region which has most in common with Northern Ireland, from the point of view of population density, sparseness etc. The subsidy per passenger journey is almost 8% higher than in Northern Ireland (£0.83 in Wales, £0.77 in Northern Ireland) as shown in table 8.

Table 8: Support and Grants for Bus Services in Wales (and Northern Ireland) per passenger journey

	2008-09		2009-10		2010-11	
	Million	£	Million	£	Million	
Passenger Journeys/Subsidy per passenger journey in Wales	120	0.84	120	0.84	120	0.83
Passenger Journeys/Subsidy per passenger journey in Northern Ireland	70.5	0.66	68.2	0.80	66.6	0.77

DfT (2012)13

4.3 Scotland

Total Government support on local buses services in Scotland was £295 million in 2010-11 – a 5% decrease from 2009/10.[14] This represented 47% of the total operating revenue (£622m[7]) of local bus services.

Table 9: Public Transport Expenditure in Scotland

	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Public Transport Support	48	53	53	61	57
Concessionary Fares	155	163	180	187	175
BSOG	59	60	63	64	63
Total	262	276	296	312	295

Transport Scotland (2012)

Table 10: Support and Grants for Bus Services in Scotland per passenger journey and per bus km

	2008-09		2009-10		2010-11	
	Million	£	Million	£	Million	
Passenger Journeys/Subsidy per passenger journey[8]	493	0.60	467	0.66	438	0.67

Transport Scotland (2012) and DfT (2012)[15]

4.3.1 Comparison with Northern Ireland

This analysis indicates that the subsidies Ulsterbus and Metro receive per passenger journey are 15% higher than in Scotland.

7 Total Government Support + Total Fare revenue see: Transport Scotland Bus and Coach Statistics 2011-12

8 Formula: Total Bus Support (Table 1) divided by total passenger journeys (Northern Ireland Transport Statistics 2010-11 available from: http://nia1.me/1bb)

5 Summary

This paper has compared the levels of grant and subsidy provided for local bus service in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. As a means of making comparisons the level of grant and subsidy paid by each region on a per passenger journey basis was examined. The results are shown in table 11:

Table 11: Passenger Journeys and Subsidy per Passenger Journey in GB and NI 2008/09 – 2010-11

	2008-09		2009-10		2010-11	
	Million	£	Million	£	Million	
Northern Ireland	70.5	0.66	68.2	0.80	66.6	0.77
England	4627	0.56	4604	0.57	4609	0.54
London	2228	0.46	2238	0.44	2269	0.38
England – Metropolitan Areas	1080	0.50	1073	0.52	1055	0.52
England – Non-Metropolitan Areas	1317	0.80	1291	0.84	1285	0.84
Wales	120	0.84	120	0.84	120	0.83
Scotland	493	0.60	467	0.66	438	0.67

5.1 Main findings

- Overall, subsidy levels are 43% higher in Northern Ireland, than in England;
- However, this is skewed due to the relatively low subsidy paid in London (per passenger journey);
- Differences in overall subsidy levels (per passenger journey) in Northern Ireland and Scotland, Wales and Non-Metropolitan areas of England are less marked;
- Only English non-metropolitan areas and Wales pay more grant and subsidy (per passenger journey) than Northern Ireland; and
- Fare revenue makes less of a contribution to the total operating revenue of local bus operators in GB (47-55%) compared to Northern Ireland (69%);
- The nature and size of the rail network in GB makes any comparison with Northern Ireland's rail network questionable. However, the analysis shown in section 3 of this paper has shown that subsidy paid per passenger journey in Northern Ireland (£7.27) is more than double that which is paid in GB (£3.40).

These findings provide a useful illustration of subsidy levels in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. However, caution is advised against using this information as a means of ranking the various regions as no consideration has been given to the numerous variables which will impact on transport expenditure including, inter alia, public spending priorities; topography; population density and demographics.

Annex 1:

Annual Financial Support for Public Transport in Northern Ireland

£m	2008/ 09	2009/ 10	2010/ 11	2011/ 12	2012/ 13	2013/ 14	2014/ 15
Concessionary Fares					**Budget**	**Indicative**	**Indicative**
Translink	£22.0m	£24.7m	£25.0m	£26.7m	£27.7m	£25.6m	£26.1m
Others	£ 0.4m	£ 0.4m	£ 0.4m	£0.5m	£0.6m	£0.4m	£0.4m
Total	£22.4m	£25.1m	£25.4m	£27.2m	£28.3m	£26.0m	£26.5m
Con Fares Rail	£6.1m	£7.9m	£9.0m	£10.0m	£11.1m	£11.7m	£11.7m
Fuel Duty Rebate (FDR)							
Translink	£10.5m	£10.5m	£10.3m	£9.9m	£10.3m	£9.3m	£10.3m
Others	£ 0.1m	£ 0.2m	£ 0.2m	£0.3m	£0.5m	£0.6m	£0.6m
Total	£10.6m	£10.7m	£10.5m	£10.2m	£10.8m	£9.9m	£10.9m
Public Service Obligation (PSO)	£22.9m	£23.6m	£22.3m	£24.1m	£25.0m	£25.2m	£21.3m
NILGOSC Bus	£ 3.7m	£4.4m	£6.7m	£4.8m	£5.4m	NIL	£1.5m
NITHC Pensions	£ 0.6m	£0.6m	£0.5m	£0.5m	£0.5m	£0.5m	£0.5m
Accessible Transport							
Translink	£1.3m	£1.0m	£1.1m	£0.9m	£1.1m	£1.1m	£1.1m
Others	£6.5m	£7.1m	£7.3m	£7.8m	£7.5m	£7.3m	£7.3m
Total	£7.8m	£8.1m	£8.4m	£8.7m	£8.6m	£8.4m	£8.4m
Bus Route Subsidy	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Park & Ride			£0.3m	£0.3m	£0.4m	£0.4m	£0.4m
Annual Public Transport Financial Support: Capital							
Bus	£ 9.0m	£14.2m	£8.2m	£16.5m	£11.4m	£0.1m	£1.4m
Rail	£36.1m	£35.7m	£53.4m	£92.0m	£40.8m	£16.2m	£23.6m
INTERREG & Match Funding					£1.6m		
EU Programme & Match Funding					£11.6m		
Total Resource	£74.1m	£80.4m	£83.1m	£85.8m	£90.1m	£82.1m	£81.2m
Total Capital	£45.1m	£49.9m	£61.6m	£108.5m	£65.4m	£16.3m	£25.0m

NOTE: The Department has agreed with Translink an assumed level of In Year Support in 2013/2014 and 2014/2015. This is £7m and has been added into the figures. £3m to Rail Concessions and £4m to Bus Concessions. This assumption is subject to future budgets.

The Capital figures for 2014/2015 could be impacted negatively by assumptions made about Asset Disposals by Translink. It is hoped to address this through the use of EU support but this is still on-going work.

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(Endnotes)

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