



Cymdeithas
Cludiant
Cymunedol
Community
Transport
Association

The National Assembly for Wales' Enterprise & Business Committee Inquiry into Integrated Public Transport

A RESPONSE BY CTA WALES

1 Background to CTA Wales

The Community Transport Association is a UK wide charity, operating a country structure, providing leadership learning and support to member organisations who deliver innovative and flexible transport solutions to achieve social change in their communities. The CTA represents the voice of the sector to governments and other major stakeholders, highlighting the importance of community transport (CT) for vulnerable individuals and isolated communities, the contribution which CT can make both locally and nationally, and the issues which need to be tackled if the sector's potential is to be realised. The CTA promotes excellence through a range of services and support, including training, publications, advice, events and development support for voluntary and community transport providers.

In Wales, we work to support our members through our offices in Clydach and Rhyl. The Welsh Government has provided funding via its Integrated Transport Unit to the CTA for several years as "the voice of community transport" in Wales, to enable us to deliver support and development services to new and existing CT organisations across the country, and to serve as strategic advocate and promoter of the sector.

CT is safe, accessible, cost-effective, flexible transport run by the community for the community. It exists to meet the travel and social needs of people to whom these would otherwise be denied, because of age, disability, location or income, or a combination of these factors.

2 Questions

2.1 *How well is Welsh public transport integrated, particularly bus, rail and community transport services, and what factors limit integration?*

2.1.1 CTA Wales considers that there is currently a limited amount of integration in public transport in Wales, which needs to be addressed. We firmly believe that an accessible, integrated and sustainable transport system, which includes community transport (CT) as a valid part of the transport mix, will support economic, social and environmental sustainability. It will also underpin social inclusion and equality for the most vulnerable in our communities.

2.1.2 There are some examples of integrated transport services involving CT in Wales, not all of which receive public funding. However, they are localised examples generally, and we would like to see many more being developed. Making public transport in Wales into a truly integrated system which includes CT, would bring about benefits for all citizens – "the whole is greater than the sum of the parts".

- 2.1.3 We acknowledge that integration at delivery level is difficult, however well-intentioned policy making may be, due to commercial timetable influences, funding constraints, contract tendering and length, and often a lack of willingness by commissioners to consider an alternative transport mix, including CT. There are opportunities to address gaps in the transport network and poor access to some key settlements due to market failure of conventional modes of public transport, through better and targeted use of CT services within a mixed economy of provision. We believe transport tenders should have some weighting in favour of local transport operators with a proven record of community engagement, ability to meet the transport needs of our most disadvantaged citizens and a commitment to ensuring “access for all”. There should also be a requirement to demonstrate added value, health and social impact and equity of service within a tender, rather than just focusing on the costs of delivery. However, this may prove even more difficult as further reductions in bus funding are announced in future. We would also note that many traditional CT operators have the ability to lever in funding from sources not available to the statutory or commercial sector.
- 2.1.4 We consider that there are several factors limiting integration in terms of the CT sector, including:
- With a few exceptions, service users unable to use their concessionary pass on CT (ref.2.3.1 below).
 - There are no known examples of through ticketing applicable to traditional CT schemes in Wales.
 - CT uses smaller vehicles, which leads to capacity restraints.
 - Inconsistency and short-termism of funding (ref.2.2.2 below)
 - An increasing number of passengers using CT services require bespoke door-to-door (and sometimes room-to-room) assistance, which causes difficulty with any onward travel (ref.2.3.3 below)
 - Information provision (ref.2.3.2 below)
 - Lack of reference or involvement of public and community transport services in determining the location or service design of new or alternate public services (ref.2.2.1 below)
- 2.2 *How successful are legal, policy and administrative/delivery arrangements in Wales in supporting effective, integrated public transport services that meet the needs of Welsh travellers?*
- 2.2.1 The CTA supports the need to strengthen the role of transport planning in policy development and planning, involving public and community transport organisations. In addition to modeling journey time based on car ownership and the availability of public transport services, travel impact analyses also need to consider accessibility for people who do not have cars or find it difficult to use conventional public transport services due to age, disability/mobility, location or income. This will be particularly important in policy areas and for services which are disproportionately accessed by elderly and disabled people (e.g. health and social care services)
- 2.2.2 We would also like to see the provision of longer term (minimum three years) funding for bus and community transport services to enable better forward planning and investment scheduling by operators. Currently, funding is allocated on a year on year basis, with announcements sometimes made well into the financial year. Budget reductions which focus

on marginal transport services impact on key links between settlements, with particular impact on rural communities.

- 2.2.3 We are concerned that interpretation of national policy, if devolved to a regional level, may result in inequitable access and integration across Wales. CTA Wales would like to see an all-Wales CT strategy being developed, with minimum levels of CT services and delivery standards agreed in a phased timeframe, to ensure that all those who are socially excluded and isolated can have equitable access to services. The Wales strategy could then inform the Regional Bus and Community Transport Network Strategies, which are proposed in the Welsh Government Bus Funding review.

2.3 *What steps can be taken to improve public transport integration in Wales?*

CTA Wales considers some of the steps to improve public transport integration, including CT, are:

- 2.3.1 *Mainstreaming concessionary fares use on CT:* we note that the 'Programme for Government' states "We are committed to retaining free bus travel for pensioners, disabled people and their carers." However, many elderly and severely disabled people cannot use their free bus pass on conventional public transport and can only use it on CT if:
- they live in Pembrokeshire (which benefits from a historical arrangement which preceded the All Wales scheme);
 - if there is currently a Community Transport Concessionary Fares Initiative (CTCFI) participating scheme nearby which has provided over 1.3m passenger journeys since 2005-6;
 - the CT service operates less flexible local bus services on a not-for profit basis (section 22).

We are concerned that vulnerable people will be disadvantaged should the scheme be ended, and would like to see concessionary travel extended to all CT services, but on the same basis as the current all-Wales concessionary fares scheme i.e. on a separate fares basis, rather than the core funding model applied in some of the existing CTCFI pilot models.

- 2.3.2 *Better travel information:* providing regularly updated and easily accessible information in different formats about journeys and accessibility of vehicles is vital to enable people to use different forms of transport confidently and efficiently. Furthermore, while elderly and disabled people are often aware of the services which are available in their local area, a lack of information about, and assistance to make, onward connections at their destination hub or station can undermine confidence and act as a deterrent to travel.

We would note that CTA Wales has worked with Traveline Cymru over the last few years to develop our CT page of accessible transport providers on their website at www.traveline-cymru.info/community-transport which now also includes demand responsive services. However, this page is a stand-alone page on the Traveline website, and does not appear on a journey search. The only CT services which show up on a generic Traveline search are fully scheduled, registered services. Fully flexible demand responsive registered section 22 or Dial-a-Ride services are not displayed despite their increasing prevalence. It would be useful to include this function on a live search as a next step.

- 2.3.3 *Ensuring accessibility at all stages of a journey and between all modes of transport:* Accessibility is very patchy, and there may even be differences between a north and south-bound platform within the same station, for instance. In other areas, people with disabilities

may need to exit a train at an earlier station than their final destination and transfer to an adapted taxi or a local CT operator to ensure that they reach their journey end. Whilst accessibility is generally being tackled for buses and trains, with improvement schemes scheduled, there is also a need to highlight issues in terms of lack of accessible vehicles amongst taxi and private hire operators in some areas, which will be the weak link for many elderly and disabled people to get from their home to a public transport hub. Supported travel is required by many traditional CT users and this would need to be addressed.

- 2.3.4 *Ensuring accessible feeder services to transport hubs:* we feel there should be support for the development of CT services to provide feeder services to transport hubs, so that CT is seen as a valid part of integrated transport delivery. Elderly and disabled people who find it difficult to access conventional bus services may be able to make use of CT services (social car services or Dial-a-Ride services) to provide door-to-door access to/from railway or bus stations, but this depends on the availability of different types of CT services throughout Wales. For those who are able to use conventional bus services, the extent to which bus and train service timetables facilitate integration is patchy, particularly in rural areas. The CTA welcomes the National Transport Plan aim 'to improve the quality and integration of local bus services' and the emphasis given to the importance of community transport services in assisting those with specific mobility needs or who live in areas which cannot support conventional bus services.
- 2.3.5 *Integrating the impact of travel into wider decision making:* whilst schools and education transport is generally integrated, we believe that transport planning should be included across WG departments' work as well, particularly in relation to access to health and social services. Transport has increasingly risen up the agenda in the last few years, particularly for elderly and disabled people, young families on low income, those living in rural areas etc.
- 2.3.6 *Supporting innovative CT schemes:* we hope that the Welsh Government will not only support innovative CT schemes, but where these schemes are successful, promote them and share good practice, including lessons learned. All these schemes operate on a not-for-profit basis and subsidy levels once established are minimal. They include:
- Grass Routes CT in Monmouthshire which provides a peak time, demand responsive rail link to the Severn Tunnel junction;
 - Connect2 CT in Caerphilly which links with the Rhymney Valley line;
 - DANSA CT which serves the Swansea interchange;
 - Aberfan and Merthyr Vale CT which provides a service linking Pontsticill with Merthyr bus station.

3 Conclusion

CTA Wales believes that there is limited integration in Welsh public transport generally, with potential for doing much more, particularly in relation to the integration of CT into the mix. CT can provide accessible, flexible, gap filling services (especially in rural areas), linking with bus and rail transport hubs as well as enabling those across Wales who have difficulty in using public transport because of factors noted above, to access services of all kinds using a range of different CT services.

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