

# CTA's Response to the Commission on Travel Demand Shared Mobility Inquiry

## About Community Transport

This response is submitted by the Community Transport Association (CTA), a national charity working with thousands of other charities and community groups across the UK that all provide and support local transport services that fulfil a social purpose and community benefit.

One of our activities is to contribute to the formation of public policy where community-led solutions within transport can improve access and inclusion. Central to this is showing how better outcomes are achieved for people and communities when they have access to community transport.

Around 30 per cent of CTA's 1,600 members are charities whose main work is the provision of community transport and they would typically use this label to describe their work. This form of community transport helps to address the quality, affordability and accessibility of transport options for people who cannot drive and don't have access to conventional public transport, especially in rural areas. It also recognises that some needs are best met through communities doing things for themselves.

This is about providing flexible and accessible community-led solutions in response to unmet local transport needs, and often represents the only means of transport for many vulnerable and isolated people. Significant user groups are older people and disabled people.

High levels of volunteer involvement, the ability to attract charitable funds, accessible vehicles and a not-for-profit business model, all mean community transport is often a more reliable and resilient way of meeting a greater range of transport needs, especially for our more isolated and vulnerable citizens.

The other 70 per cent of CTA's members are charities, community groups and other not-for-profits who use the same permit regime to run transport to support their main charitable activities, such as scout groups, Age UK or RVS branches.

Our submission will focus on the questions about who is sharing, why they are sharing, and how sharing is happening in the UK in relation to community transport.

## **Who is sharing and for what purposes?**

In 2017, CTA partnered with the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE) to publish a [short report](#) highlighting major breakthroughs that will lead to demand responsive transport being much higher in the passenger transport mix.

One of the project's goals was to understand the ideas and issues which shaped consumers' behaviours in framing their own transport needs and choices, and how this may differ between certain groups. The report found that decisions surrounding travel and whether to take up shared mobility options were shaped by either a lifestyle choice (in terms of factors such as convenience and cost), or by necessity arising from market failure and public policy imperatives.

Community transport services are often run in response to necessity, where the market has failed to provide services that can cater for the full range of needs within a community. This is due either to 'unprofitable' services being reduced, withdrawn or altered, leaving communities either without service altogether or with limited services that do not meet needs; or because the commercial services that are available are inaccessible, particularly to those with mobility issues. Users of community transport therefore tend to be older people, people with disabilities and those who live in isolated areas.

Services tend to be shared and are either provided as demand responsive services run under a section 19 permit which offers door-to-door transport predominantly for those with mobility issues, or through timetabled community bus services run under a section 22 permit.

Community transport providers operate services for a range of purposes. Many of the trips that CTA members enable are 'everyday' journeys to visit shops, attend school and work, see family and friends, and reach medical appointments, which are vital to passengers' health and wellbeing, enabling them to feel more empowered, healthy and independent, and preventing and reducing social isolation and loneliness.

## **What interventions have been effective at stimulating sharing?**

Community transport solutions are community led interventions where there have been unfulfilled transport needs. However, community transport is about more than getting users from A to B; they are accessible and inclusive services, which stimulate sharing by encouraging the enjoyment of shared mobility.

Community transport vehicles are often wheelchair accessible, with rear passenger lifts and convertible spaces, while drivers and passenger assistants are professionally trained to assist passengers with mobility issues. On top of this, drivers and volunteers go above and beyond to care for and support passengers on their journeys, and to create safe, sociable environments on the vehicles themselves. Operators know their passengers by name and the journeys themselves are also considered to be a social setting where hitherto isolated passengers can socialise, make friends and hear about the news.

Community transport operators also work on specific projects to tackle loneliness and isolation, either on their own or in collaboration with local organisations, local authorities and health groups. A number of community transport providers form local groups to encourage isolated and lonely people to leave their homes and interact with others. These consist of Travel clubs, offering excursions to the seaside, gardens, stately homes, etc.; social clubs, where members meet to enjoy activities such as poetry and art; and mental health groups, such as memory clinics and dementia groups, which offer dementia and social isolation training courses and general support and advice for those with low level anxiety, stress and depression.

As a result, users enjoy the service as much for its shared aspect as for its enablement of the journeys themselves.

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