Future of Mobility in Counties
Smart Mobility Roundtables 2 July 2020
Public Transport

This report documents the eleventh and twelfth in a series of roundtable discussions organised by the Smart Mobility Unit at the University of Hertfordshire and sponsored by Department for Transport and others. The format was two 120 minute virtual meetings via WebEx due to Covid-19 social distancing restrictions.

1.0 Participants

There were 51 participants in total (21 in the morning and 30 in the afternoon). Sectors represented were: national, sub-regional and local government, mobility provider, innovation and technology sectors, public transport operator, transport consultancy, professional transport institutions, academic research, and non-governmental organisations. Stephen Joseph chaired the discussion.

2.0 Aim

The purpose of the roundtable was to explore the following questions:

- What are the opportunities and challenges for improving public transport outside cities?
- How can conventional bus and rail maximise their roles and effectiveness ?
- How can they link with other mobility offers like shared and demand responsive transport?
- Should there be a guarantee of universal mobility services, or Swiss-style minimum standards?
- Will Covid-19 affect this in the longer term?

3.0 Papers and links circulated in advance

Presentations

Peter Hardy, ITP   The future of public transport outside cities

Glyn Williams,   One Public Transport Service for Cornwall: Customer Experience
Cornwall County Council

Papers

Peter Hardy (2019)   The future of rural public transport: Viewpoint
https://www.itpworld.net/news-and-views/2019/whats-in-store-for-the-future-of-rural-public-transport

Sam Ryan, Zeelo   The Smart bus sharing services for commuting and school runs

4.0 Presentations

4.1 Peter Hardy

Rural transport has been declining for all the reasons we know about. As a result of Covid-19 we are accentuating this decline. Despite the optimism about 'green shoots' it's likely that we have accelerated this decline forward by 6 to 7 years. This is serious.

I am not optimistic that government support will last long enough to restore bus use. There are lots of redundancies happening or anticipated. I am concerned for the board room discussions underway in the bus industry regarding networks and I wonder where they will be in a few months time. There may be a major restructuring and rural and peripheral services may be lost.

Pre coronavirus, we had a lack of strategic vision for what we want, especially in rural areas. There was a lack of importance attached to the necessity of public transport in rural areas. We tended to treat rural and urban separately because outside urban areas provision is largely subsidised not commercial. The approach outside urban areas services was piecemeal with little sense of a network and reliant on subsidy from public funds and yet there were still unmet transport needs out there.

A great deal of funds are still being spent on school and non-emergency hospital transport. County councils have highlighted this problem in previous roundtables. Essex County Council has done good work in this area with DRT schemes.

But there are still glimmers of hope. Some aspects of public transport work well. For example inter-urban services were growing consistently pre-Covid 19 and different DRT models are in use. The jury is still out on some models of DRT.

How did we get here? Lack of leadership is a major problem. We need to accept that revenue funding for public transport is important and essential. It is unhelpful that we frame rural transport as a problem and place it in the "too difficult" box. We tend to tinker with short term, small scale initiatives which don't address the issues.

For the future we need some strategic and fresh approaches that build upon rather than wiped away what is already in place and working.

The Dutch approach is regionally based but centrally franchised and contracted. Commercial interests are incentivised to raise private funds to build and encourage public transport use.

Limburg in the Netherlands takes a central approach and it is working very well, with a good balance with operators The key is that public transport is seen as an essential and necessary service for all.

The Dutch model is perhaps not as strong as the Transport for London or Greater Manchester approach to franchising but offers a good model for the UK to emulate. For example Greater Cambridgeshire is considering a similar partnership approach rather than franchising.

It is good that political acceptance of public transport emerged during the Covid-19 crisis. Government quickly supported public transport financially because it realised its essential role for key workers. But government has not helped with the messaging to avoid all non-essential public transport.

The key for a future blueprint for public transport outside cities is to gain political acceptance and visionary leadership. We are lacking this vision at present. The National Bus Strategy is still awaited from DfT and it may not demonstrate the scale of leadership we now need given the Covid-19 setback. If we can achieve the political acceptance and leadership then policies and funding should follow.

There is scope for central control and maybe franchising will be an easier ask in rural areas where operators have more to gain and less to lose, since services are already subsidised outside cities.

The Total Transport approach has a crucial role to play, to make better use of existing resources but it has proven difficult to achieve. The Cornwall approach shows strategic thinking and leadership of the kind required.

For the future we need to face up to the need for subsidy in rural areas. We need to adopt a fresh approach and build on what works.

In conclusion, there is already a great deal of transport outside cities but it is segmented into silos (school, health etc). There are lots of weaknesses as well as opportunities. We need to 'get a grip' before it's too late.

4.2 Glyn Williams

Background

The presentation was developed for briefing elected members at Cornwall County Council on One Public Transport Service (OPTS).

Strong leadership is important. Over many years Cornwall's politicians have agreed that public transport is important for people without access to a car. This provides a good base of support for OPTS to draw upon. Cornwall's bus services are 50% commercial and 50% subsidised.

OPTS has been designed entirely around the customers' transport needs. Investment from DfT, Cornwall LEP and private enterprise allowed a series of parallel programmes. CRIP1 was £36.5m for rail only, CRIP2 added a half hourly pulse service to upgrade rail signalling and a new rail depot in Penzance. In addition to £60m for rail, the second phase of investment also included local authority and DfT funding for bus services which allowed the council to consider measures to integrate bus and rail. Phase 3 is funded from the Local Transport Plan, the LEP and operators to enhance bus services and integrate with rail where possible. The program was going well until Covid-19.

Rail investment has totalled £59 million and bus £12.5m, the latter including some contribution from private sector operators. The bus funding started at £10.5m under the growth deal and related to the area between Falmouth and Heston, including the Lizard peninsula. Following transport devolution to the county, members asked for the project to be extended county-wide, which was very challenging and left a funding gap. Funds have been found from many different sources and there's not now much left to find. The elements of the programme still to be delivered are digital ticketing for rail and integration with bus.

OPTS has a unified vision for delivery, consisting of many small elements. It was challenging whether to go for bus franchising or not, so this decision was initially left open. As the plan developed, each element was examined to see if there was a case for franchising. After the bus services bill was published the 'enhanced partnership' approach was chosen because it was more affordable.

Customer experience

The OPTS programme will use a single logo with independent branding from the County Council. The network has three layers with hub to hub and rural feeder services. The app is nearly ready for release and uses all available tools and service technology to provide the best possible customer experience. This includes car parking fill rates and walking and cycling routes, so that journey planning can be as multimodal as possible. The ticketing feed on the journey planner app allows people to choose the exact bus home and time their shopping accordingly. The May 2020 launch was delayed by Covid-19.

Market research

OPTS worked with Transport Focus on customer satisfaction measures, to understand what makes a great bus journey in Cornwall with extensive surveys of users and non-users, including at big events including agricultural shows with a mixture of visitors and locals. Experian Mosaic was used to analyse personas. Some people will never use a car but many are on the cusp of change so susceptible to being tipped one way or the other.

Plans were developed using big data metrics and heat mapping of employment sites and the workforce population. ANPR data from car parking was used to look at travel patterns, desire routes and gaps in services. This informed whether to use demand management or consider community transport.

Market testing panels for three age demographics explored timetable ideas and collected feedback on the mobile app. This was done without revealing the County Council's involvement to avoid contamination from existing perceptions about the authority.

Designing the service

The research gave a very clear steer on what a 'basic' and a 'good' timetable needed to look like. Quality related factors such as cleanliness and driver behaviour feature prominently, whereas journey time less so. Perceptions of value for money consistently fell short in customer surveys so a fares pilot was devised to address this, along with upgrades to bus stops and rail infrastructure. Perception of value for money was a major problem, because longer trips are cross-subsidised by shorter journeys. We needed a plan to address this.

There has been major investment in the bus fleet, including tables on upper decks in places and Wi-Fi. First Group decided to put additional investment into the bus fleet and then GoAhead followed. Under the new tender vehicles will all be Euro VI engines. All available technology and systems were deployed for the

integrated ticketing. The network coverage is designed to deliver the previous network between towns with a supplementary network.

The major rail change, post signalling improvements, was to upgrade Intercity 125 carriages with sliding doors to allow faster departure from platforms enabling a half hourly 'up' service. The half hourly rail service allows better integration with bus. The final rail timetable change was due to start in May 2020, but this has been delayed due to Covid-19.

The app has been designed as a 'transport companion' and will be marketed for anyone to use, car drivers, car club users, pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users. Nudge technology will be used to encourage modal shift, for example showing car park fill rates and costs. Later the app will show the carbon emissions and prices for the comparable public transport journey.

Tendering

In 2019, tendering for a new eight year contract for bus services was an opportunity for a fresh approach. Funded from the Local Transport Plan and DfT, the new tender provided a very good long term commitment to support operators but in return the council made a big ask on school travel, climate, integration and partnership approach. There were four options in the tender, all outcomes-based not focussed on inputs. The politicians had the appetite to accept an exceptionally good offer which came in at a price £5m more than specified. They wanted the climate change programme to be bold which gave them the courage to 'bite the bullet' and agree to fund the gap from other budgets. The deal was signed at the end of 2019/20 and in negotiation with operators for an April launch when Covid-19 hit.

The first step is to integrate bus and train and later aim to include other modes. It was essential to have a single branded point of contact for the customer, to focus the service and the product. The operators must preserve this single point of customer contact but have flexibility over delivery. They can manage the supply chain as they wish with subcontractors, so long as minimum quality standards are guaranteed. Glyn had used this kind of approach in other sectors[1] so was confident it could be made to work. There is a customer charter in the contract which is tough on the quality of the vehicle fleet and key metrics on fares, performance and ticketing.

Ticketing

The county council funds the capital equipment for ticketing and the operator pays for licensing with an agreement to share data. This allows an integrated and high quality service. The digital ticketing for rail has proven very difficult, due to Network Rail's constraints, although there is a local pilot on some branch lines.

Fares pilot

The fares pilot was designed to appeal to the customers who neither qualify for supported nor free bus travel. There will be a basic level of support to allow all rides in town to be £1 and a maximum single anywhere in the county to be capped at £6. It helped that we were able to prove to government that Cornwall had committed to a major investment in the bus contract. The mindset in designing the fares pilot has been to attend to electability and the realities of political capital. Politicians are fickle and needed the comfort of more 'carrots' in the first year, leaving 'complementary' (demand management and restraint) measures to later years.

Covid-19

This programme was mostly ready for launch in April 2020, but was paused due to Covid-19. Recent government announcements to avoid public transport have not been helpful. The modelling work is now 'history'. People are now largely staying close to home. Therefore OPTS may simply concentrate on high frequency services between towns with DRT in local rural areas. The council is currently working on a regeneration plan and continue to work on the fares pilot with DfT as it still has value. The fares pilot could be used as a stimulus to attract passengers back after Christmas if there is no second wave of the Corona virus.

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[1] Glyn is an electrical engineer by training.

Councillors' ongoing commitment to the council's climate emergency policy will determine how the pilot evolves.

5.0 Overview of discussion

Detailed comments from the spoken dialogue and the live chat are recorded in section 6.

A main focus for the discussion was Glyn William's presentation on OPTS, with the group using the Cornish example as a lens through which to examine the future of public transport in counties. This stimulated discussion on future mobility, Covid-19 impacts and wider insights for the future.

5.1 OPTS approach

There was praise for Cornwall County Council's clarity of purpose and strategic vision which in turn has reinforced political commitment and succeeded in gathering funding from a range of sources. OPTS owes some of its success to the wide range of transport functions which Glyn's role encompasses.

There was a great deal of interest in how Cornwall approached tendering of contracts, branding, network integration and delivering quality and a sense of stability to the customer. The Jersey Liberty Bus was cited as another successful model of partnership working.

School transport was universally recognised as a huge challenge for counties, increasingly so under Covid-19. Post Covid-19 traffic flows appear to be stabilising with flatter broader peaks, which may prove favourable to timetabled service schedules.

Tourism's significant role in many rural economies makes leisure travel a delicate target for restraint measures, for example surfing in the South West. Cornwall's OPTS aims to encourage visitors to explore more locations by walking, cycling and public transport so relieving the pressure on honeypots and spreading the tourist spend more widely. Demand management measures require political commitment and attention to the electoral cycle. Climate emergency declarations may increase the political space for stronger measures.

5.2 Future mobility

Demand responsive transport and community transport were discussed at length, echoing themes that emerged in the earlier roundtable on the subject. There are several promising models in operation making more efficient use of the existing rural vehicle fleet, meeting unmet need and attracting customers who would otherwise not use the bus. However there was consensus that DRT is not a magic bullet and subsidy is required to provide stable services to deliver modal shift and integrate into the wider transport network. Several participants noted an increase in volunteering for community transport schemes as a result of Covid-19 and emphasised the need to build upon successful schemes which already have high social value. Low technology services are valuable as well as those driven by smart phone app-based systems. Rural hubs can concentrate demand for shared transport in areas of low population density.

5.3 Covid-19 impacts

Participants almost universally feared for the future of public transport operators as a result of Covid-19 social distancing guidelines from government. There was agreement that there is no 'normality' for the sector to return to, although it was pointed out that commercial operators have weathered recessionary downturns in the past. There was also a recognition that Covid-19 has presented a unique opportunity to fundamentally reassess public transport services.

5.4 Insights for the future

There was agreement on the non-monetary benefits of rural public transport and some fresh ideas on how best to achieve this, including exploration of the concept of a national universal minimum level of service.

Drawing on a wide range of experience in the UK and elsewhere, some participants set out their recommendations for the key elements for a successful rural public transport system.

6.0 Detailed notes of Discussion by Roundtable Participants

The following abbreviations indicate the sector making comments:

ACAD   Academic

NGO   Non-governmental organisation

CONS   Consultant

CC   County council

DEV   Developer

INNOV   Innovation sector

PRO   Professional transport institution

REGG   Regional transport body

GOV   National government.

MOB   Mobility services

TRANS   Public transport operator

[CHAT] denotes written contributions made in real time during the spoken dialogue.

Answer denotes response from Glyn Williams to question(s) about Cornwall OPTS

[…] other comments in square brackets indicate the context of the comment

6.1 OPTS Q&A and discussion

Collaboration for integration

PROF:[CHAT] The work of Cornwall demonstrates that a long term vision, strategic integrated network and an investment plan has substantial benefits both in terms of growth in patronage and funding success.

CONS4: Fascinated and encouraged by Glyn's story especially as I have campaigned for the Swiss model for years. I have experience developing services in Scotland where: the dominant bus operator was not interested in collaboration with rail; bus and rail stations were far apart; high frequency passenger routes were disrupted in the afternoons while vehicles were deployed for school transport. These all served to undermine a reliable inter-urban integrated public transport network.

CHAIR: Cornwall is unusual in this level of transport integration. Are there lessons you would recommend for other counties?

Answer: The key is to get a decision maker from each of the players on a steering group. For OPTS we had a steering group with very senior people from GWR, NR and the bus operators and politicians and the County Council's executive team. For example we had the Operations MD at GWR and the ED of First Kernow. This enabled us to get a high level of commitment from the start. We had a shared steering group agreement that everyone had to sign up to. GWR and First Kernow are in the same group which helped a lot. There are still problems integrating bus and rail with Midlands and Central rail services.

CONS4:[CHAT] I'm working for ScotRail + Transport Scotland on an integrated timetable. The problems: dominant bus operator not much interested, bus and rail stations geographically close, school services upsetting regular patterns. Did Cornwall have these problems ?

Answer: Bus/Rail station distances are not a problem in the main cities in Cornwall (Truro, Penzance and St Austell) and we have lots of good bus services to stations. All stations are planned with a hub approach, designed to enable onward travel. Ideally we would have a single digital ticket across all modes but this has proven hard for rail for historic reasons.

CC2:[CHAT] Have you spoken to TfL about how they managed - rolling out into Herts with Oyster at the moment? [Re challenge of Rail and digital ticketing]

ACAD1:[CHAT] Does anyone know if it's difficult to put bike racks on mini buses etc as obviously not easy on the larger vehicle.

CC1:[CHAT] Agree that quality of the product is key to growth, OPTS has demonstrated that.

CC1: Keen to talk with CC2 about enhanced partnerships. We discovered that after awarding the tender it was hard to get changes to the tender with operators.

Branding

Glyn: OPTS is approaching branding as Transport for London or Transport for Greater Manchester, so there is a single identity for transport requirements within the county. And we want to ensure that anything the council supports will use the OPTS brand in vehicle livery for example. Operators were to some extent doing this before Covid-19. We hope to return to a single brand approach post Covid-19. The benefit of one brand is for the customer to experience a single point of focus. It doesn't matter who delivers behind the scenes. We have a single enquiry point for all services which is more appealing, easy to use and can be tailored to improve services by collecting all customer feedback centrally. The aim was for a very customer focussed service whatever the transport mode, ultimately aiming to include the airport and the ferry services. This was a requirement that emerged as a customer preference early in the research.

Glyn: The Bus Services Act was promising to encourage wider partnership. Although OPTS has adopted a single brand approach it has been prickly and not all operators have signed up, The Bus Services Act was to encourage greater partnering approach but in conversations with Department of Transport and in the operations negotiations operators rapidly defaulted back to traditional company stance. Operators are attached to their own brand, developed over many years. But Covid-19 may elicit a more open response from them.

PRO: Very much like Glyn's long term strategic approach to integrate the transport network in Cornwall.

CONS1:[CHAT] Great approach for Transport for Cornwall. Customer focused, stripping away so much that hinders the customer in other parts of the UK.

CHAIR: The wheel model in Cornwall is probably helpful to demonstrate the strong strategy and vision. And presumably has helped decision makers see how each small project fits into the whole and encourage a commitment to sourcing even small pieces of opportunistic funding. This is a rare approach for a county. Are there any similar projects outside metropolitan areas in the UK?

Glyn: Originally the LEP funded digital ticketing just for the Falmouth and Helston area but this was extended to the whole county. And yes the approach is grab all the money we can get and apply it to the overall project according to the strategic plan. Ridership improvements and modal shift have been delivered because of the investment. The county needed to be flexible to respond dynamically.

CHAIR: In the Smarta webinar case studies, some places had a single brand, strategy and network and others were more like the UK with individual pilot services. DRT and CT can more easily be integrated into a system with a single branded approach.

CHAIR: Consistent branding is central to the approach taken by the Liverpool City Region Bus Alliance Board, aiming for all public transport services to meet uniform standards, whether the operator is subsidised or commercial.

TRANS3:[CHAT] Transport for Wales, using national branding in rural and trains, and I suspect in time with urban buses.

CONS6:[CHAT] On branding, we found, as Cornwall are doing, that our regional passenger information brand was widely recognised as the signal to customers that PT networks were available. The next level (information at stops/stations) revealed the operator and service. This worked well.

TRANS4: Agree that branding is very important but commercial operators are very reluctant to join in. Stagecoach in much of the UK and also First Group in many areas, though it has changed in Cornwall. Post Covid-19 it will probably change further. Operators will look for anything that helps them survive. We need to see other counties try the Cornish approach.

TRANS4:[CHAT] Many operators have been resistant to this 'common brand' as they would consider it cuts across their commercial freedoms and their own brand. In the new world this might be changing and may mean in various parts of the UK operators and authorities can work as one. The Transport Acts have to be fully utilised to deal with Competition Act issues.

TRANS4: Yes, there is a major opportunity now to begin these kinds of discussions and we should encourage other county councils to open those bold discussions and operators to join in closer partnership with transport authorities.

TRANS3:[CHAT] Competition Act seems to have gone out of the window during Covid!

TRANS4:[CHAT] It does seem like that but it would be good if it was formally knocked on the head.

Question TRANS2: OPTS seems to be only covering the subsidised services not the commercial ones?

TRANS2:[CHAT] I've just tried the app now! The 'one brand' in Cornwall seems to only apply to the tendered network with the commercial network not included. Even the App is only applicable to tendered routes so gives misleading information about journey planning.

Answer: No in reality we are working with all operators and the app will include all the non-tendered bus services, and rail and ferry services. The latest version of the app has not been released yet which explains the problem you found. The bus operators are all co-branding but they also have their own corporate identity, as with Transport for London.

CONS7:[CHAT] Lots of useful lessons could be gleaned from TfL...15 years of experience in creating a single operating system (from the perception & point of view of the user, at least...the reality is not quite the same!) - commercial ops, service quality, reputation etc are critical aspects.

TRANS3:[CHAT] As a TfL operator I would agree. Much to learn on quality of service, commercial control, accessibility and brand.

Decarbonisation

NGO2:[CHAT] Brilliant powerpoint Glyn. So great to hear that you started with the data, then the plan, then the simple brand, then the phased roll out. Do you keep track of impact on emissions? e.g. tracking average CO_2/passenger mile travelled. Buses are great when they have more than 8 passengers, but they can produce more CO_2/mile than cars when they have less.

NGO2:Are you tracking carbon emissions, ridership / vehicle occupancy levels? The big challenge in rural areas outside the peak is reaching the occupancy levels required for a bus to be better value on carbon emissions than a private car or taxi. Ridership needs to be monitored as very low occupancy undermines the carbon savings of public transport.

Answer: Yes this is included in the metrics. We did a lot of work before the tendering project, to establish the base emissions of the existing bus fleet and we shaped a vehicle strategy for 4 to 8 years, to consider whether to go electric or hybrid on certain routes. We wove this into the tendering. The average fleet age was approximately fifteen years at the outset of the project and it is much lower now. One hundred new vehicles are included in the contract, all Euro VI.

Totally agree on the vehicle occupancy point. The problem is that the government is undermining public transport ridership with the Covid-19 messaging. We need to encourage people back. It is very hard to guess what future normal will be in relation to pre-Covid and during lockdown ridership levels.

Modal shift

CHAIR: Is there a marketing opportunity to say let's make Cornwall car free?

Answer: We need mitigations for modal shift. Surfing is massive in Cornwall and you need a car to take a surf board to lots of the beaches. But there's more than just surfing in Cornwall. So we need a variety of mitigations including car parking charges, traffic signalling priorities for reliability of service and to control growth and parking demand. We are still working on these measures. We definitely need sticks as well as carrots to deliver modal shift. My role is transport integration and includes parking management and highways technology, so control all the relevant tools. But it's well known that the politicians' views can change in an instant. A policy decision can be reversed in a moment if there's a single meeting where the mood changes. This means that you can't plan too much in advance. Cornwall has declared a climate emergency and Covid-19 has achieved a drop in car use. Can we sustain this by encouraging public transport? Many will work at home now so we have lost some service users from public transport as a result. There are almost too many dials to tweak.

CHAIR: Was the bus fares pilot also intended to attract people out of cars, especially with the proposal for changes to car parking charges in years 2 and 3?

Answer: Looking at how well the congestion charge works in London, we knew we needed sticks to create a rationale for leaving the car at home. So at the outset we planned for the fares pilot to begin in September of the final year of the electoral cycle and introduce the parking increases in the following year, once the politicians were established in the new administration. We used less controversial mitigation in the first year and planned to wield sticks in the second year with a possibility of vehicle charging zones later on. This may still be possible.

Jersey case Study

The Liberty Bus[2] is a minimum subsidy contract, tendered on a model network and then redesigned by the operator after the contract was won. This is a long term ten year contract , run as open book with profit share with the local authority. Ticketer terminals in the local authority allow management to see ridership in real time. Ridership grew by 30% until Covid-19, increasing annually for the last five years. The island has imported less fuel since the contract started, against a background of more residents and a fall in car use.

The key to success has been a partnership approach. The profit share model helps since the council knew they could use income from the contract to replace that lost by remove parking spaces for traffic restraint. The operator has been able to provide better quality buses without exposing the council to risk. Post Covid-19 the Liberty Bus has been suspended despite there only being a few cases on Jersey.

CC1:[CHAT] Agree that quality of the product is key to growth, OPTS has demonstrated that.

Leisure travel

CONS8:[CHAT] Glyn - what focus is there on visitor and leisure travel in designing services and information? ... and is this the time to raise the issue of demand management through e.g. car restrictions to honeypots at busy times?

CON8: Does OPTS focus on visitor needs too?

Answer: Cornwall's GDP is in the majority from tourism between April and November. So we tried to tap into key tourist areas and offer discounts via the journey planner to get people to tour the county and not just go to one place or one event. To offer special prices to keep people out of the car at bit when visiting.

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[2] https://www.libertybus.je/

NGO4:[CHAT] There needs to be better integration between urban and rural areas - but this creates cross-boundary issues. It isn't one way traffic and just a 'rural' problem. Lack of good public transport links out into the countryside / rural destinations means that many urban dwellers hang on to a car for recreational uses as bus and rail services can go away at the weekend.

ACAD4:[CHAT] There might be some worthwhile lessons for surfers and other sports coming from ski areas. Most people take for granted the ski bus from a local area up the mountain with racks/boxes for equipment. Maybe a change of behaviour could be brought about from centres to the beach in a similar way?

Schools

CC3:[CHAT] Did you consider integrating with school transport contracts? Is it a single operator running the whole contract?

CC3: Did you look at integrating with school routes and dedicated school transport? Have school transport services all moved to a single operator?

Answer: School transport is enormous. There is some taxi, some closed school bus transport, some which is integrable with commercial public services. We looked at what could be integrated. But there are all 100 closed services which we run separately. We migrated about 40% so saving a percentage of the costs. GoAhead are our supported network operator for schools services. They subcontract some services to smaller providers with performance clauses. We can retain funding if they don't perform. So the bus operator is incentivised to manage the performance themselves.

CC2:[CHAT] Home to school is going to be very challenging.

CC2: On school transport the guidance published today says that there is no need for social distancing on a dedicated home to school trip. They are still discussing the use of public services for journeys to school in September. This is a major problem for us because we want to encourage children to use the bus with saver cards for under 24s. Our policy is to promote the bus as the young persons' mode of travel of choice. It is easier to build a long term market with a demographic like this to achieve a major long term shift in behaviour.

CC1: School transport is very, very important because it has a major impact on the transport network and it is important for transport integration. We want to integrate services as much as possible onto public buses as it is important to encourage young people to develop transport habits for life. Free Wi-Fi on those buses will be a big attractor for younger passengers. But with Covid-19 social distancing requirements it will be very hard. We know too little at present about how schools will operate when they reopen so we are keeping all options open at present. The future will probably be blended in some way possibly alternate days or staggered start times

CC1: Agree that the morning and evening peak is a major problem with school transport and the volume of other car traffic normally. Government messaging is mixed. Will we have two flows in the morning and evening? It is unclear still how schools will operate in September. It will be bad if parents are advised to drive children and drop them at the school gates.

NGO4:[CHAT] Many local authorities have cut or reconfigured school buses creating a big increase in car traffic as parents cannot either afford to pay for bus passes or won't. Essex was mentioned but has been heavily criticised for cutting school transport to save costs but it actually has ended up spending more.

6.2 Future mobility and hubs

Demand responsive transport

CHAIR: An earlier roundtable in this series dedicated to Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) noted that this approach has not been properly funded or given the long term commitment to move beyond pilots. We know there are people who never travel independently on normal buses but can do so with DRT. We have heard of trips with DRT which would have been impossible due to barriers of interchange or journey travel time.

CONS1:[CHAT] Is there any view from Transport for Cornwall on changing bus service design in the future e.g. DRT, more fluid mobility solutions?

CONS1:Does Cornwall plan to evolve DRT or other solutions?

CONS2:[CHAT] I would like to ask if people on the call think Demand Responsive Transport is part of the future of transport outside cities - I have mixed experience and views on this.

CONS2: I'm very keen to hear views on DRT. Traditionally the transport planning profession has taken the approach that areas with low population density are very hard to serve within a conventional bus network. The attitude is leave DRT to tackle these transport deserts. But rarely is this a success. We need some density to be successful. So two questions. Firstly, do we write off the last mile in rural areas? Secondly, can we be optimistic that technological solutions can close these gaps in the planned transport network?

Answer: Yes, we are considering all options. We will have an open mind as we discover new demand in the next six to twelve months. DRT is an option for the network, including community transport and taxis.

Cornwall is a very rural county, 70% car dependent. We are now trying to get just 5% of this car use for environmental reasons to shift to bus and train for the long term. But the analysis, based on big data, shows the need for an overarching network with DRT to fill gaps. OPTS is working with a county council arms length company on DRT so it's not been written off as an option yet. Previously DRT or CT would be seen as a feeder to fill gaps in the designed network but we don't know anymore what the future will require of us. We have had forecasts of huge traffic problems from 4th July, but we are not certain. All planning is on the hoof at present until we have more data. We are currently meeting DfT's requests to meet their level of service with subsidy. so we are following DfT's lead for now. We may need to renegotiate with operators as we go forward. But Covid-19 means that plans are changing daily. On DRT there is no single answer, so we are open to trying anything in terms of operational model or technology. It will be important to manage social distancing, which might be achieved by showing loadings on the journey planner app or by booking spaces as with a DRT model. But ultimately we can't tailor a solution for everyone.

TRANS4:[CHAT] A DRT vehicle costs very little less to operate each day compared to a normal public service bus. Therefore, it scores over a regular bus service only if it can more efficiently meet demand. Again if it can meet demand from commissioners such as the health bodies you can get a regular utilisation so it's back to how you can blend all the various demands.

MOB2: My technology company is working with many operators in the UK faced with very uncertain and unpredictable demand for buses and unsure if fixed route or DRT services make most sense, especially in rural areas. Our service is proving very successful to get people out of cars. Where there was previously one bus a day, there is now a service available within 20/30 minutes bookable by app or phone. DRT is not a magic bullet but is can make bus services work. It's part of an integrated solution.

CC1:[CHAT] Agree to a point on DRT but there has to be a tip point, sending a bus or minibus via Uber is not environmentally positive.

MOB2:[CHAT] I take your point CC1 but equally, sending a large bus down rural lanes twice a day whether there is demand or not doesn't work for anyone. We are forcing people into private cars or isolation by not giving them services that meet their requirements. There are now a number of examples of where DRT has created real modal shift out of private cars and connected rural communities in an equitable, efficient way.

CONS3: Conclude there is a case for DRT. As a tool it should not be dismissed in any area of low demand. But it should not be seen solely as app-based. It may need to develop low tech community transport schemes. Don't look at DRT in isolation. It needs to be designed in as a feeder for the first and last mile for the mainstream bus network. DRT is not a magic replacement to all bus services. We need a more strategic mixed approach. The problem is that the way apps are developed is at heart a 'suck it and see' approach.

CC6:[CHAT] This is going back a bit, but someone suggested we should be thinking about a lower-tech approach to DRT. I agree with this as a lot of the people more familiar with smartphone apps and who might've ordered a service in this way, may be attracted away from shared modes of transport by the imminent wave of e-scooter hire services.

NGO3:[CHAT] I think it's important that 'blended services' don't leave rural communities wholly reliant on DRT. The inertia DRT needs to overcome for behaviour change in the way people travel makes large scale modal shift from private to public transport substantially harder.

CONS1: I agree with CONS3 The future will be a blended services. DRT is not a silver bullet. Also DRT is used as a term to cover many different types of solution which is not helpful. Success needs integration. A positive coming out of Covid-19 might be in some situations we can better integrate DRT with existing networks as big operators revisit off-peak services. Our scheme is still a good prospect to attract passengers who would never have used a bus.

CC3:[CHAT] We have put in an EOI to the Rural Mobility Fund - awaiting DfT feedback but on paper the operating costs are extremely high compared with traditional buses.

CC1:[CHAT] View on DRT is that there is no one solution anymore.

TRANS2:[CHAT] You need a shed load of money for DRT and even then it's not ideal for the passenger.

INNOV:[CHAT] Again - the question should not be if DRT can meet its costs... if it creates the same or higher benefits as fixed subsidised routes for a lower overall subsidy, than that should be the choice...

ACAD1:[CHAT] I agree. One size does not fit all as users aren't all the same throughout the country/county.

CC1:[CHAT] Transport services in the future is a blended model, and will depend on what the communities return back to ..... Towns are very much now are looking at the local offering to encourage local needs.

INNOV:[CHAT] Would better data on rural travel (supressed) demand help design DRT services?

CONS5:[CHAT] We believe that unique DRT models need to be created for rural areas. E.g. we're working to integrate (shared) local taxis and minibuses into the public transport network. Can be set up to incur zero costs when nobody's travelling, unlike a lot of the city-focused DRT models.

CONS5: The risk in the roll out of DRT at present is that it is using models developed for big cities like New York and London, with minimal adaptation. We are using local fleets of taxis and minibuses especially for access to out of town employment sites. We are able to flex these vehicle fleets into the wider bus networks as well.

CONS2:[CHAT]   Thanks for responses on DRT everyone - really interesting and helpful.

Perceptions of stability

NGO4: People making transport choices have more confidence in a service like a tram which has fixed infrastructure which the council is invested in, than a DRT service for example, which might disappear overnight. A single strong brand probably helps convey stability and commitment and encourage people to make long term plans around the transport options on offer.

NGO4:[CHAT] If people are not to use / buy a car, they need certainty in service provision, whatever that might be. If DRT becomes more mainstream there needs to be more certainty around it with sufficient capacity as it might feel less permanent than a fixed route.

MOB2:Agree with NGO4: on the need for a sense of a consistent, relatable, long-lasting service. DRT has often suffered from pilots but little consistent investment. To get DRT right most will need subsidy and people shouldn't come to it with the assumption that it can operate completely commercially.

NGO5: Agree we should build on the best of what is already in place. We know that in small towns community transport (CT) is a dominant feature of transport provision. It is a shame that we tend to forget what is working now. We need an accurate picture of existing community transport services that are delivering DRT for people who can't drive or use a conventional bus.

CONS8: NGO5 mentioned that CT has been doing DRT for years. See the Smart Webinar. It seems that DRT and CT blur helpfully in some places and we can learn from this.

NGO5: Community transport is already delivering the mainstay of DRT services in many rural areas and small towns, but is absent from much of the discussion about the future of DRT.

CC7:[CHAT] During the peak of the crisis community transport came into its own for journeys to hospitals, shopping etc to replace car journeys.

TRANS3:[CHAT] interestingly during covid we have seen a surge in people who want to volunteer, and a sense of community being stronger. Will this continue?

CC7:[CHAT] Same here TRANS3

CHAIR: We should maybe note Peter Hardy's distinction between DRT or CT which is integrated with the wider transport network or standalone.

MOB2: Agree with NGO4 and NGO5. We should be ambivalent to who provides a service. There is no need to reinvent the wheel and duplicate services, but they do need to be as compelling as possible, using technology as much as possible whilst also catering for phone booking.

MOB2:[CHAT] NGO5, I think CT can absolutely be part of the future of DRT rather than reinventing the wheel with supported commercial services. We are ambivalent on who provides the service (commercial operator or CT) but we do believe strongly in having compelling, technology enabled (but accessible to all), solutions that can compete against the private car.

CONS8:[CHAT] [European models of DRT] and a "seniors" version - volunteer car scheme blurred into secure hitching.

CC3:[CHAT] There is an abundance of transport in our rural areas - the problem is it's private - can't help thinking the solution needs to be around making car sharing and car ownership the focus?

CONS3:[CHAT] Yes, this is where community involvement comes in - both in shaping services and acting as local advocates, but in developing car sharing / car clubs etc as part of the overall PT network.

NGO5: Why replace subsidised community transport with subsidised commercial service? This is just extracting from local places. It's a step backwards. Future modelling is often looking at the needs of people who already have lots of agency and wealth and therefore plenty of choice of mobility. We should include those with less agency and choice. As a first principle we should look out for people without bank accounts and smart phones. It's unfair that they have to pay more because they can't use technology and get benefit of discounts. We shouldn't forget people who are currently experiencing transport poverty and have no choices over transport now.

Hubs

CONS6:[CHAT] The concept of hubs hasn't been sufficiently explored. A hub would have an inventory of all mobility resources in its area, including lift giving and ride-sharing and have access to a back office which would allocate trips to the mode or multi-modal resources meeting the customers' needs. This could be a sort of social/rural MaaS.

CHAIR: Hubs are clearly an attractive idea, as evidenced by the earlier roundtable on this topic. It is interesting that Cornwall has invested in interchanges, facilities and services, which perhaps supports the idea of mobility/accessibility hubs.

REGG: A hub is more than a bus stop. It needs to provide mixed use. We need transport planners to think about using tools like Experian's Mosaic to understand the personas of those groups of customers who may want to use public transport and design the hubs accordingly. Our region recommends this approach should be used more in transport planning to show the propensity to access hubs.

ACAD1:[CHAT] CoMoUK is running a webinar in Scotland later this month[3] on rural transport and hubs pulling on cases studies in Europe. I'm sure they will be advertising it shortly John. We held our Scottish Rural and Transport Community café on hubs (on YouTube)[4] and had international input and discussion but more importantly we have 'hubs' already in Scotland, they just haven't been branded 'hubs'. The key to rural transport is that lots already exists but it's informal or only due to local knowledge that the projects get highlighted.

6.3 Covid-19 Impacts

Collapse of demand

TRANS1:[CHAT] Government is still telling everybody to avoid using public transport!

PROF:[CHAT] What can be done about getting the government to start change the messaging?

CC4:[CHAT] On a different call, authorities were talking about a 'clean bus' accreditation - helping persuade the public that travel is safe (once the government message changes)

TRANS1: Goodness knows what the future will be for bus operators. Previously, inter-urban bus services were showing strong growth, with a 9-10% rise year on year. We were on track for a 9% rise this year before coronavirus. This has all gone and we have to start again. Buses are running more or less empty and the government is putting lots of pressure on us to run buses empty? Why is the government paying us to do this? People are currently working at home or cycling? Over time we will recover but how we get back to a viable bus network again is unclear. Covid-19 caused 100% commercial services to drop to 8% commercial in just three weeks. Now the CBSSGR government grant is a drug costing £30m per week. When this stops there will be a huge crisis and this is only looking at urban and inter-urban services. In one part of my region in rural areas there are no passengers at all on of the recently restored subsidised services.

CC1: Agree in our county 14% bus growth disappeared overnight. The DfT model may help us transition to new models. For example the 11am-4pm pedestrianisation in most town centres and more people working from home may continue. This would be a big shift. We are finding people have got used to socialising more locally and shopping locally and relying on deliveries. So unless people absolutely have to go somewhere they are avoiding travelling. We just need to build and sustain the momentum on pedestrianisation. We keep being asked about free parking but the county council has already lost income from Covid-19 so apart from free parking for key workers, everyone must pay to park. We want towns with Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to sustain pedestrianisation post Covid-19.

CC1: Working with public health colleagues. We saw a 75% of traffic disappear with lockdown with a corresponding improvement in air quality. We are now back to 70% of former traffic levels, so retaining a 30% drop. These are very important trends if we are looking to sustain our climate emergency policy to tackle emissions. So we are considering either parking charges or congestion changes to lock this change in, otherwise people will default back to the norm.

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[3] https://como.org.uk/events/

[4] https://ruralmobility.scot and https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2jUL-spTAZsrR57v1_Iq7w?view_as=subscriber

CC1: The government may have to pay for transport in rural areas or it will be lost altogether. Several people have proposed that rural public transport should be a national service.

CC2:We recognise the problem of ferrying air around the county. We need a change in government advice on travelling on public transport. There are big implications on the commercial model for bus services. In our county, pre-Covid19 we have 5% tendered bus services with a declining trend over time.

CC2: In our county, traffic is currently 76% of pre-Covid-19 levels but we have a longer and flatter peak spread over the entire middle of the day. If this holds it may help bus services to be more sustainable.

CC2:[CHAT] We are seeing interesting traffic patterns at the moment which show us running at about 75% of pre Covid numbers but with the "peak" spread out over the late morning and early afternoon - probably more sustainable if we can get people into buses. Interested in the contribution that the 50% tendered services made to the model working - we are more like 5% - so predominantly commercial - and not sure what implications that has. Agree that we need change of message from government.

CONS1:[CHAT] Agree with CC2. Flattened peaks could be one of the few benefits that may come out of Covid-19 for public transport.

CC2:[CHAT]Unfortunately revenue is likely to be very tight over the next few years as we recover from Covid, further support of health service etc. so my question is whether the model is broken and whether we should be looking at the LAs to deal with "unprofitable" services or whether we should be taking a more holistic approach.

TRANS2:[CHAT] Commercial bus companies are very adept and well used to dealing with changes in demand and adjusting networks to make them cost effective. The issue will be: cash strapped local authorities with no finance available for those bus routes which need public finding to survive. In the late 1980s recession we suffered falling passenger demand of around 5% pa for 4-5 years. So the expected drop of 20% post Covid is manageable - provided LAs have funds for services no longer viable.

INNOV:[CHAT] Well - aren't rural buses half empty at best of times? It might make social distancing easier than in urban, crowded service...

Digitally enabled services

CONS7: We need evolution not revolution and Cornwall is a great example of this, adding quality to existing systems and make them more attractive to the customer. But we feel very strongly that there will be a place for new and different ideas to extend further. There is a growing market now maybe for more digitally enabled service patterns with a range of vehicles. Some may look like traditional buses but some less so. Covid-19 has shown us that we may have political and public acceptance for a scale of change much bigger than we previously thought. Rurally it feels like a good time to rethink what trips we need and how to integrate. We have a "reset" button which we have never had before; this is a massive opportunity if we choose to use it.

CC7: I am fascinated by the new reset opportunity, so future transport models are framed by Covid-19 and more ambitious.

CC7:[CHAT] CONS7 - I would like to explore the post Covid opportunities. In Cumbria, like many areas, we have had a step change shift to digital and this means that we need to rethink what connectivity should look like in both our rural and urban areas to find both financially sustainable and environmental sustainable solutions for our communities. This needs a structural transformation to connect our urban and rural areas.

CC6:[CHAT] For the first of these roundtables, there was only one person dialling in remotely!

ACAD1:[CHAT] Yes that was me dialling in!!

CC1: There is no new normal. We found with pedestrianisation in towns that everyone has drawn close in to their communities. People are staying local and moving away from longer distance travel. So we have to have more flexibility and adapt very dynamically according to demand.

CC1:[CHAT] I would support that statement. There is no normal anymore

CC7:[CHAT] Agreed - there is no normal

Quick win: Flight from cities

REGG: Overlooked in Glyn's presentation is the substantial opportunity for public transport to decarbonise communities. Anecdotally people may now move away from cities and bring with them a desire to use public transport (bus) because of its environmental good. We could market bus services in order to capture behaviour from these people leaving London and other big cities.

CONS7:With the EEH First Mile Last Mile tool it has been very good to be able to see the movement patterns from rural areas into city. And by contrast notice the lack of movement between neighbouring rural places. This reveals blocks in mobility..

Quick Win: Travel to work

CC1: It would help if employers allowed staff to be on work time while commuting into work on public transport with Wi-Fi, to encourage people to work on the journey in. This would make public transport more attractive than the private car. Traffic signalling is also helpful to provide a journey time advantage to bus.

3.07 CC6:[CHAT] Slightly sceptical about being able to do work on the bus, given my physical reaction to trying to read on the bus to work (pre-COVID, of course).

6.4 Insights for the future of rural mobility

Frameworks and approaches

MOB1:[CHAT] A great overview from Peter. I think that two aspects that are really important for Public Transport in Rural Areas are a) Creativity / Flexibility / Multiple-Use in Service Design / Operation and b) Geography - where things such as road network, road width, LA boundaries, location of passenger sources, attractions / targets are really important.

MOB1:Stress that we need creativity, flexibility and multiple use in rural areas. Also to remember that the rural geography is an opportunity and a constraint. Began Moors Rider over 25 years ago. The service was full on the first day and morphed into the Moors Bus over time. The geography, the road network, attractions and the location of demand were all key to establishing these services.

CONS7:[CHAT] Three immediate thoughts...I can explain further if of interest. (1) digital connectivity and rural mobility - there are two distinct aspects here re digital ENABLING a trip vs digital changing (reducing? eliminating?) the NEED for a trip. (2) has COVID given us any new ideas about how we might transform service provision into rural areas, changing travel patterns and demand in a more proactive way? (3) given that we do not want to stifle connectivity and movement in a strategic sense, do we think it is time to rethink the first/last mile elements of connectivity that allow rural communities to access more hubs and nodes, perhaps in new ways?

CONS8:[CHAT] Looking at public transport (PT) from a shared transport perspective leads to

• A framework of scheduled PT that serves the coherent (time/space) flows of demand on corridors

• An overlay of DRT – acknowledging pesky geography and less (spatially) linear demands

• An overlay of shared transport (rides, bikes, cars) - for independent complementary journeys

• An overlay of CT, SEN etc if/as needed & not catered for by above

- ... all integrated in terms of interchange/hubs, info and payments.

NGO1:[CHAT] I like Peter's conclusions- but I'd like to hear more about the 'political acceptance' and 'community involvement' bits.

CC1:[CHAT] The minds and hearts argument needs to be stronger on public transport, similar to plastic bottles in the ocean.

Subsidy

TRANS3: Agree with much in Peter's presentation. We need to focus. If we want rural public transport services we will need supply-side subsidy. We shouldn't shy away from subsidy as an essential approach. With the Covid-19, as a public transport operator I was startled at how quickly we were told to run as near a full service as possible by government and paid £35m per week to do so. DfT acknowledged publicly that the bus is an essential utility for key workers. So post Covid-19 we need to remember that the government knows that we need supply side subsidy and capitalize on this acceptance.

TRANS3: Service models will be diverse, drawing on a mix of UK, Dutch and Swiss models. We need a minimum service level funded from the centre and managed by local authorities. This could involve a low base tender with a minimum subsidy and let the operators enhance it at their own commercial risk.

TRANS4:[CHAT] Agree with TRANS3 that some public and commissioning funding will always be required to run services outside of the key urban centres - so that includes many outer suburban as well as well as rural areas. The key is for authorities, other public bodies eg health, and operators to be allowed to jointly plan services to maximise funding available and provide an integrated offering. So it is 'total transport'.

Business case and appraisal

NGO1: Was it political will that pulled together the business case for the new changes [in OPTS]? How much importance does the council place on the social value of the services? Was this quantified and included in the business case?

NGO1:[CHAT] I may have missed it in Glyn's presentation on Cornwall, but what was the business case for this approach (or was it down to political commitment)?

Answer: The business case evolved. Each stage had its own business case: in 2000 it was a rail driven vision; 2014 and 2019 were separate again. Each case was governed by a single political vision to integrate rail and bus public transport and include other modes where we can. Social value has always been in there but it is very hard to put a financial value on it, just as with estimating the job creation value of a transport scheme.

INNOV: Regarding the business case debate, the Treasury's Green Book and Webtag do not favour monetised benefits only. The problem is there is a bias in how people use these tools. Decision makers focus on the financials and a scheme with lots of non-monetised benefits will be discarded if the bcr is less than 2. So it is the application of the guidance that is at fault not the guidance per se.

PRO: There are many interrelated work streams across different government departments that are important here. DfT needs to look at transport appraisals, HMT and business cases and the green book. We need to keep pressure on DfT especially.

PROF:[CHAT] The treasury green book was meant to being changed so that business cases may change taking account of eg social benefits and decarbonisation

INNOV:[CHAT] I don't think the green book needs to change - it already very much encourages taking account of non-monetised benefits and costs...

CC3:[CHAT]Transport needs to be considered in different government departments - i.e. social isolation = increased social care costs etc. last time we saw something close to this was accessibility planning which required schools to progress travel planning from the DfE.

INNOV:[CHAT] Also 'unprofitable' in commercial is not the same as socially beneficial - if one had a comprehensive approach to valuing the presence (or absence?) of crucial services - valuing the non-cashable' benefit of PT services - for viability of rural areas, for loneliness, for public health, for missed appointments, for volunteering etc, etc - we might very quickly call these services 'wellbeing cash cows....' the total return to society massively repaying the monetary costs...

NGO1:[CHAT] I like INNOV's thinking! But it does need cash too.

INNOV:[CHAT] Exactly - but elsewhere we spend money with potentially much lower returns...

ACAD1:[CHAT] Agreed MOB1. Is there work out there on the social value v benefits and cost savings/economic benefit for rural transport. The nut to crack is the business case as that always seems to be the brick wall. Either crack the business case or change the approach!

NGO1:[CHAT] Methods for accounting for social value is developing well, but it is often variable depending on the situation. There isn't (to my knowledge) a single way of calculating it for transport investments, which means that the forecasts that will go into a business case will have quite wide uncertainty.

ACAD1:[CHAT] Agreed NGO1 which is why we need a different approach in rural areas, yet at the moment the same models are expected/asked in urban and rural. That would be one of my asks of DfT. That would be Innovative!!

CONS6:[CHAT] There's plenty of persuasive anecdotes but little systematic discussion that I've come across. The business case is always the stumbling block as inevitably some parties aren't keen on sharing their data.

Unmet need and social value
NGO4: We need a discussion of what real needs are - the term 'need' has been usurped by local authorities cost cutting exercises leaving many rural areas in particular with services that are basically unusable.

Glyn: Cornwall isn't affluent; Truro and Falmouth are the exception. Many people don't have bank accounts and are forced to use the bus, so we still need to cater for cash. Buses are very social in our county. The concessionary fare riders are elderly and really love meeting up for a sociable ride out for a coffee or lunch somewhere and ride back.

CHAIR:[CHAT] As discussed at previous roundtables, there are unmet needs in rural areas which have big social value but are not visible.

CONS6:[CHAT] Social value needs to be exposed and taken into account in looking at hard costs of services against wider benefits.

CC4:[CHAT] Re social value. Social Value Act[5] could embed these even more but isn't used for transport. Needs changing at government level.

CC4:[CHAT] HCT measured social impact of mainstream bus on Jersey and for Community Transport on the mainland. Measures are humanitarian impact e.g. confidence, independence etc. Ealing CT though - using E&Y - quantified value CT brings.

CONS6:[CHAT]Digital Connectivity hasn't been mentioned yet, there's many places where it isn't sufficient for smartphone apps.

Universal service approach
GOV1:Why don't we look through the other end of the telescope? Traditionally, in some areas of our society, we have universal provision of services, for example Royal Mail or flood defence or the digital sectors. My organisation has pushed government to set a standard level of provision which people can expect in a given type of area. For example with flooding, set standards for areas subject to flooding at the 1 in 100 year and 1 in 50 year levels. We could use this approach for transport. The questions then would be how to identify a

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[5] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-value-act-introductory-guide

minimum standard and how to deliver a minimum standard? This would remove the need for case by case business models.

Perhaps this approach is used for transport in other parts of the world?

CONS4: Switzerland treats access to a basic level of public transport service as a human right for every community. There is a strong commitment to integrate transport across the whole country from any A to any B, to a certain frequency and time of day. This has worked well and delivered achieved a high modal share. So for many reasons we should perhaps campaign for this approach in the UK.

CHAIR: UCL included bus services in some work on universal basic services[6] and the Cornish approach looks to be similar to a universal service. Accessibility hubs with lots of services available could help concentrate transport demand.

GOV1: Very keen to learn more about the Swiss model, especially the delivery models. A business case would look very different to make this work but the benefit would be very different because a systemic change in public transport use would become possible because of the assurance of the service.

PRO: CBT is doing new work with the Cabinet Office on the future of public transport and we also need to keep an eye on this.

INNOV:[CHAT] If you bring in the potential for the local bus to help the loneliness strategy, the inclusive transport strategy, the civil society strategy, door to- door strategy, the various rural strategies and policies... and integrate health, school and other silo-ed transport services - there seems to be quite a bit of benefits (non-cash) to be had from a minimum service guarantee and integrated timetables aka Switzerland...

CONS6:[CHAT] After bus deregulation there was a lot of discussion about the criteria for socially necessary services and minimum opportunities to access essential services was one possibility. In the end it went into the "nice idea but too difficult/controversial" box.

7.0 References and other resources

Campaign for Better Transport (2018), The future of rural bus services in the UK

https://bettertransport.org.uk/sites/default/files/research-files/The-Future-of-Rural-Bus-Services.pdf

Campaign for Better Transport (2020), Covid-19 Recovery Renewing the Transport System

https://bettertransport.org.uk/sites/default/files/research-files/Covid_19_Recovery_Renewing_the_Transport_System.pdf

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[6] https://ubs-hub.org/litreview2019/ and
https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/igp/sites/bartlett/files/universal_basic_services_-_the_institute_for_global_prosperity_.pdf