

Transport in Oxfordshire: Survey Report

March 2018

Introduction

Transport and access to services remains one of the key barriers to a good quality of life for many Oxfordshire residents. Over the last few years, the public transport network has been negatively impacted by austerity measures. The most recent and impactful change has been the withdrawal of subsidized bus services in 2015, the impacts of which we are still trying to understand.

As part of Community First Oxfordshire's infrastructure support work, a survey on transport and community transport was undertaken in the latter part of 2017. The aim of the survey was: 1- to gain an insight into the level of transport needs in towns and parishes, and 2: to understand what existing community transport capacity was.

The survey report attempts to act as an overview of what is essentially a little understood and complicated picture of local transport needs in Oxfordshire.

Summary of findings

An online survey was sent to community transport coordinators (Appendix 1) and another online survey focusing on transport needs was sent to all town and parish councils and parish meetings (Appendix 2). Both surveys were carried out during the latter part of 2017.

The community transport survey received 36 (58%) online responses from community transport schemes. The town and parish council transport survey received 108 online responses and 3 separate hardcopy responses, 111 responses in total, which represented 35% of all local councils.

The key findings from the surveys were:

Community Transport Providers survey

(36 responses received)

- 80% of community transport schemes that responded to the survey were car schemes.
- 89% of car and minibus schemes state that hospital and health appointments are the main type of journeys made.
- All clients are older people, with 94% of clients being 66 years of age or above (64% are older than 76 years of age)
- All volunteers are older adults, 64% of which are in the 66 -80 age range
- Just over a third of the schemes felt that they either do not meet the demand for the service or that they prioritise types of journeys in order to meet demand.

The findings above, along with the open text responses, suggest that community transport providers (both volunteer car schemes and community minibuses) focus heavily on access to health services.

It is clear from the data provided that older people are the main service users, and this age bracket is also the key age for volunteer drivers and organisers. Community transport schemes, as stated in the open text responses, raised volunteer recruitment as the main issue to running a successful transport scheme. With this in mind, it is crucial to recognize the importance of recruiting younger volunteers to maintain sustainable community transport services. It is also important for the charity sector to work closely with health departments, local authorities and businesses to increase opportunities to collaborate and innovate the sector.

Town, Parish Councils and Parish Meeting survey

(111 responses received)

- 81% said some or most transport needs are not being met.
- General shopping and health are the two main destinations where transport needs exist, followed by employment.
- 18% of local councils were aware of particular community groups that needed community transport services.
- 70% of local councils said their communities have either limited access or no access to public transport
- Minibus availability questions suggested at least 14 locally owned minibuses were available for the community.
- There is reasonable knowledge of community transport schemes serving the parish and towns, though 29% state they have no community transport schemes in their localities.

The findings show that transport needs continue to exist in the majority of the local council areas that responded to the survey.

In terms of mapping locally owned minibuses, the response was low, with only 22 local councils stating they knew of available minibuses in their communities. And out of the 22, only 14 were stated to be available for community use.

Local council open text responses varied from stating little to no need in securing better transport to parishes stating that the lack of available transport has isolated residents who do not have access to a private vehicle.

A number of local councils asked for better, joined up information from the County Council on public transport information, and to engage with and broker discussions with bus operators. In addition, understanding the procedures involved in developer funds, in particular S.106 funds and how they might be used by the town or parish to improve public or community transport was mentioned in two open text responses, and also in several anecdotal conversations with CFO before and after the survey was carried out.

All responses that stated a need for advice on (or interest in) community transport will be contacted by CFO.

Recommendations

Based on the findings above and information provided through networking opportunities, such as the Transport Representative meetings and community transport network meetings, three recommendations have been made:

1. **Increase transport needs data and understanding:** the data and information received from the surveys is limited, and therefore, a study on understanding the wider transport and accessibility needs along with current services provided would be beneficial to planning future service provision. A multi-agency approach to sourcing better data should be undertaken.
2. **Build upon existing community transport support structures:** community transport schemes benefit from specific support to reduce barriers in maintaining each service i.e. support in recruiting volunteers, enabling collaboration, offering free insurance and DBS checks, improving hospital accessibility and providing means to share experience and knowledge. CFO offer support to community transport schemes and this should be further developed.

3. **Increase local connectivity:** a number of local councils wanted better access and support from the County Council (in terms of S.106 funds) and wanted opportunities to share experience and knowledge with other communities, community transport providers and bus operators that have collectively sought transport solutions.

Conclusion

The report findings offer an insight into the level at which transport needs exist in local communities. They do not, however, offer a detailed understanding of specific transport needs in Oxfordshire. In summary, the most common transport needs met by community transport schemes was health focused. This need along with shopping were echoed by many local council responses.

Based on the data provided by the community transport groups and the local councils, three recommendations have been made as stated on the previous page. All three recommendations can only be actioned effectively if we take a multi-agency approach, and collaborate in providing or enabling solutions. CFO will actively pursue this in 2018/19.

Appendix 1

Community Transport Survey - questions

Q1 What is your name

Q2 What is your CT scheme's name

Q3 What is the nearest postcode (you can use your home address if needed)

Q4 Please indicate the type of scheme you run:

1. Car scheme
2. Minibus scheme using s.19 permit
3. Minibus scheme using s.22 permit
4. Both a car and minibus scheme
5. other

Q5 How many volunteers in total does the scheme have?

0-10, 11-20, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51+

Q6 How many return journeys does your scheme make, on average, a year?

1-250, 251-450, 451-600, 601-900, 901-1200, 1201-1500, 1500+

Q7 What types of journeys does your scheme cover?

Hospital and health, Day centre/lunch clubs, Shopping, Social/leisure, Other (open community use..)

Q8 What is the main journey type (pick one)

Hospital and health, Day centre/lunch clubs, Shopping, Social/leisure reasons

Q9 What geographical area do you cover (e.g. where are your clients based)?

Local area only, Village cluster (several villages/communities), District cover, Countywide

Q10 what is the average client age?

0-18, 19-45, 46-65, 66-75, 76-85, 85+

Q11 what is the average volunteer driver age?

0-18, 19-45, 46-65, 66-80

Q12 Can you meet the demand for your transport service?

Yes, No

Q13 what are the main issues to running a successful CT scheme? And how can CFO and other agencies help?

Appendix 2

Parish and Town Council Transport Needs Survey

2. Please state the specific parish council (or meeting) or town council you represent

3. Are you aware of transport needs in your community that are not being met?

Yes, Some needs not being met (e.g. accessing GP appointments), No

If yes, please let us know more.....

4. If you are aware of transport needs not being met, what category do the needs fall into?

Health, Education and training, Employment, General (shopping, banks, Post Office), Leisure

Please let us know more, if needed

5. Are you aware of any need that community groups may have for transport? (e.g. the day centre is seeking accessible transport for their members, but has not been able to find a suitable provider)

Yes, No

If yes, please let us know more.....

6. Does your community have access to public transport (buses and trains)?

Yes, Limited access, No

7. What community transport provision is there locally?

Volunteer car scheme, Community minibus scheme, Shared taxi, Informal car sharing

None

Other (please specify)

8. Are you aware of any minibuses which are owned by a group or organisation in your community? (e.g. primary school, scouts, care home)

Yes

No

If yes, who are the groups that own the vehicles and how many are there?

9. If you are aware of locally owned minibuses, are they available for community use?

Yes

No

If yes, can you tell us more (e.g. are they well used? are they open to use for the whole community?)....

10. Do you have any further comments on transport needs and provision?