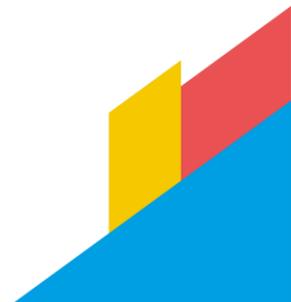# Briefing:

The Transport Select Committee's Mobility as a Service Report

Background

In November 2017, the Transport Select Committee launched an inquiry into Mobility as a Service (MaaS) platforms. The Committee sought to find out more about:

- the global evidence to date on the effectiveness of integrated multi-mode MaaS apps
- overcoming the barriers to implementing MaaS
- the role of central government in furthering development of MaaS
- overcoming concerns about digital exclusion

The CTA responded with a written submission in December of that year, which you can view here. After reviewing all written submissions and oral evidence presented, the Committee recently produced a report on their findings.

What is MaaS

As described in the report, 'Mobility as a Service is the term for the digital platforms (often smartphone apps) through which people can access a range of public, shared and private transport, using a system that integrates the planning, booking and paying for travel.'

Why is MaaS being developed?

MaaS is being developed to make travelling a more integrated and efficient experience. It aims to streamline transport provision so that door-to-door, demand-responsive, multi-modal journeys can be delivered in a convenient and effective way for users.

Advantages and disadvantages

If successfully implemented, MaaS would mean that passengers could plan and pay for an entire journey through a single transaction and using a single app. The app would also incorporate real time information to optimise the journey, and take account of the user's preferences.

It is hoped that MaaS can deliver substantial benefits for both individuals and wider society. These include:

- reduced road congestion
- improved air quality
- healthier travel choices
- more efficient transport networks
- more effective management of transport demand.

However, if MaaS is not sufficiently controlled and regulated, the Committee anticipates that it could unintentionally:

- increase road congestion and worsen air quality
- exacerbate digital and social exclusion
- complicate travel across areas covered by different MaaS schemes.

About the report

The Transport Committee's report into Mobility as a Service is a thorough and comprehensive analysis, structured into three key areas:

MaaS as a concept

This section describes the potential benefits of MaaS, and how it aligns with Government policy and strategies. The Committee also asks the Government to provide leadership, practical support, as well as a suitable legislative and regulatory underpinning to ensure that MaaS can fulfil its best potential.

MaaS in practice

Here, the Committee assesses current MaaS pilots, potential disadvantages of schemes, and Government funding. It recommends that MaaS is sufficiently piloted and researched to both maximise potential benefits and minimise potential negatives. The report asserts that Government funding is key to maximising success.

Governance and regulation

This section discusses data sharing, the regulatory framework, and passenger rights and protection. To compel data sharing, the report recommends that Government work with local authorities towards a "no data, no service" policy that would require all transport operators to share data if they want to provide a service in a given area, while providing support for smaller operators to prevent them from being driven out the market. It also underlines the importance of updating existing regulations and implementing new ones to provide investors, platform providers and passengers the confidence to support the growth of MaaS

Our thoughts on the report

Overall, the Community Transport Association welcome the Committee's investigation and report. In particular, we support the Committee's concerns that insufficient regulation and control of MaaS schemes could exacerbate social and digital exclusion. This is because using MaaS requires (often expensive) modern devices, digital literacy, and good internet connectivity, the latter of which is often unavailable in more rural locations. As a result, those who are most likely to suffer from exclusion tend to be those who are most in need of accessible transport – such as older people, people with disabilities, people who are economically disadvantaged, and those who are geographically isolated – many of whom already rely on community transport due to a lack of accessible transport. On top of this, the report points out that it is currently unclear how MaaS accounts for concessionary fare schemes, which many users of community transport benefit from, meaning that these passengers would likely suffer further social exclusion.

We also share the Committee's concern that if MaaS develops in such a way that they are confined to one place or region, this could make it difficult for people wanting to travel outside that region, hence

entrenching the disparity between transport provision in London and the regions outside of it. If passengers travelling over longer distances have to switch between MaaS apps and be subject to the expense and confusion of different charges and systems, this would risk furthering digital and social exclusion. Many users of community transport are those residing in rural areas where public and commercial transport is scarce to non-existent or unsuited for their needs due often to age or disability. These users rely on community transport to reach vital services, such as hospitals, which are located across boundaries in more urban regions, which they would otherwise be unable to access. Geographical boundaries, if not adequately accounted for through careful regulation, would unfairly penalise these users who are already subject to inadequate transport provision.

Hence, we further support the Committee's recommendation that the Government allocate and divert funding towards MaaS schemes, as current funding, such as the Transforming Cities funding that is exclusively available to combined authorities with metro mayors, risks excluding rural areas and vulnerable passengers from being able to benefit from MaaS.

The role of community transport in MaaS

What is striking about the report is that the role of community transport in MaaS does not benefit from greater attention, given that there is a clear demand for accessible transport in the MaaS ecosystem.

The Whim app, for example, which is being tested in partnership with Transport for the West Midlands (TfWM – the executive transport arm of West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)) is currently one of the most advanced pilots in the UK and has already been downloaded 500 times in its beta release. Despite its success so far, however, WMCA have conceded to the Committee that Whim does not address the needs of all passengers, such as those who do not have a smartphone and those with disabilities who need travel adaptations.

Meanwhile, community transport is an accessible and inclusive solution for user groups who have been excluded from the conventional transport network due to physical or psychological barriers. 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. Services are either provided through demand responsive services run under a section 19 permit or through timetabled community bus services run under a section 22 permit. Many section 22 services are run on routes with lower patronage that feed into main commercial routes, while many section 19 services provide transport to main routes and stations directly from a user's home. By providing the first and last leg of journeys to otherwise inaccessible stops on commercial bus routes and stations, community transport already supports the mainstream network to make the overall journey possible.

As a result, community transport is perfectly positioned to be a transport operator in the MaaS ecosystem. Therefore, we would recommend that community transport operators are given the opportunity to meet with technologists and commercial operators to develop MaaS systems which cater for those most in need of accessible transport services.

More information

To find out more, please email our Policy Executive on suzanne@ctauk.org or call

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