



# Strategic Transport Projects Review 2

## A Response from CTA

April 2022

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## Summary

- Many Community Transport operators deliver Demand Responsive Transport (DRT). DRT pilot schemes should be inclusive of Community Transport
- Mobility as a Service (MaaS) should be designed to deliver a better integrated public and community transport network
- We believe in DRT and MaaS for all – but this can only be delivered in partnership with Community Transport. Many older and disabled people, as well as rural and deprived communities, rely on our sector, because they cannot afford or access private or public transport
- Community Transport needs greater financial support to decarbonise its fleets to better match the scale of public investment so far in the commercial bus sector’s transition to net zero

## Enhancing Access to Affordable Public Transport

### **21. Please provide any additional comments you have on the theme Enhancing Access to Affordable Public Transport and the recommendations within it.**

We welcome Recommendation 20 to invest in pilot schemes involving Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) and Mobility as a Service (MaaS). We agree that DRT and MaaS will significant offer opportunities to better utilise resources across Scotland’s public transport network. However, we also believe that Community Transport has an important role to play in DRT and MaaS, which could better utilise the assets, potential and resources of the sector as part of an integrated public and community transport network.

Firstly, many Community Transport operators currently deliver DRT services, such as ‘dial-a-ride’ community buses and taxis, especially in rural, remote and island communities where fixed bus routes have been declared commercially non-viable. As smaller, not-for-profit providers, however, Community Transport services are often not as data-driven or technologically-enabled as those delivered by the larger commercial bus operators. Therefore, it will be critical that DRT and MaaS pilots are aligned with investment in capacity-building programmes for Community Transport providers.

Secondly, many Community Transport operators are contracted by local authorities to deliver the kinds of services highlighted as priorities in Recommendation 20, such as home to school transport, special educational needs travel and non-emergency patient travel. These services often plug gaps in the provision of the commercial bus sector, but rely on short-term, small-scale grants to survive. As community-led, not-for-profit schemes with a commitment to the highest levels of accessibility and inclusivity, Community Transport schemes are at the heart of their communities; affordable; deliver value for public money with low overheads; and support Community Wealth Building objectives. STPR2 should therefore direct investment into these existing schemes to harness their expertise, expand their capacity and improve their services.

Thirdly, many older and disabled people, as well as rural and deprived communities, rely on Community Transport schemes, because they do not have access to or cannot afford private or public transport. Most Community Transport vehicles are wheelchair accessible and drivers are professionally trained to assist passengers with physical or mental health and mobility issues. Personalised or tailored 'door-to-door' or 'door-through-door' services are available throughout the sector. Therefore, it is vital that DRT and MaaS pilots and projects are inclusive of Community Transport schemes to enhance the accessibility of the network as a whole. DRT and MaaS for all can only be delivered in partnership with Community Transport.

## Decarbonising Transport

### 25. Please provide any additional comments you have on the theme Decarbonising Transport and the recommendations within it.

We welcome Recommendation 26 to continue to invest in the decarbonisation of the bus network. While the Scottish Government's commitment to remove the majority of diesel buses from public transport by the end of 2023 with £120m of investment was welcome, there has been no similar commitment to or target set for the Community Transport sector, which needs greater financial support to decarbonise its network.

Given the scale of public investment to date in financing the commercial bus sector's transition to zero-emissions vehicles, the Scottish Government's commitment to extend existing funding criteria to ensure the Community Transport sector is not left behind is very positive. This should include new, expanded rounds of the Plugged-In Communities Grant Fund, the forthcoming Community Bus Fund and an evolution of the Scottish Zero Emission Bus Challenge Fund.

The pilot round of the Plugged-In Communities Grant Fund successfully enabled a number of Community Transport operators to purchase Electric Vehicles (EVs). Our ongoing 'Mapping Scotland' project is uncovering the extent of new EVs across the sector. However, the high number and quality of applications demonstrates the scale of investment still required.

In addition to the negative impacts of fast-rising inflation and persistent disruption to global supply chains, the Community Transport sector faces further challenges as a niche market. Limited availability and supply of Electric Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (eWAVs) could delay the sector's transition to net zero. It is important that STPR2 directs investment towards the sector to help it meet the significant, and increasing, up-front capital costs of eWAVs. The Scottish Government should also engage with manufacturers to encourage progress on the development and delivery of more accessible models.

## Further information

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