



Rail & Community Transport

A toolkit to help the two sectors work together



West
Midlands
Railway



London
Northwestern
Railway



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Introduction

Rail and community transport are both inclusive, sociable and sustainable forms of travel. Both Government and the rail industry want to enable more disabled and older people to use train services. In many cases it is these very same people that community transport helps to get around their local areas, taking them to the shops, health facilities or to meet up with friends and relatives. Despite this link, there is little interaction between the rail and community transport sectors.

Many community transport operators report little or no demand from their current users to access stations and rail services. Meanwhile, disabled and older people are under-represented in respect of use of the rail system.

Despite general acceptance that more needs to be done to make journeys seamless, with straightforward interchange between modes, the UK transport system remains fragmented and difficult to navigate. In the past, train operators have not always acknowledged or got to grips with the importance of community transport and the part it can play in helping people get to and from the railway. Whilst they may publicise onward travel opportunities by bus and taxi, details of local community transport providers are rarely to be found. Similarly, most train operators' Accessible Travel Policies refer to taxis for use by disabled people, but generally not the possibility of community transport. Of course, this isn't just an issue for the rail industry. It might be as much to do with the poor visibility of, and promotion undertaken by, community transport operators.

Whatever the reasons for the poor level of engagement between the two sectors, there are opportunities for closer working. This, in turn, may help to provide more joined-up travel opportunities for users, whereby community transport provides local links between home and station, then from station to destination, with rail providing the longer distance travel element in-between. Achieving this will benefit users, who gain the ability to make journeys not previously open to them, and operators, who gain revenue from the additional journeys undertaken.

Given that the rail and community transport sectors are quite distinct and different, and the lack of experience of the two working together, this toolkit aims to help bring them together. By encouraging collaboration between community transport operators and the rail industry it is hoped that they will together develop better travel options that will give confidence for new users to travel by train. Furthermore, it may encourage thinking around how community transport can meet needs of existing rail users, such as commuters, perhaps by offering new services that link to stations and provide an alternative to driving or getting a lift to the station.

What is community transport?¹

In all parts of the UK, on every day of the year, thousands of community transport staff and volunteers are helping people to stay independent, participate in their communities and access vital public services and employment.

Community transport is about providing flexible and accessible community-led solutions, on a not-for-profit basis, in response to unmet local transport needs. It may be the only means of transport for many vulnerable and isolated people, often those who are older or have disabilities.

¹<https://ctauk.org/about-cta/what-is-community-transport/>

Using everything from minibuses to mopeds, typical services include voluntary car schemes, community bus services, school transport, hospital transport, dial a ride, wheels to work and group hire services. Many are demand responsive, taking people from door to door, but a growing number are scheduled services along fixed routes where conventional bus services are not available. It enables older people with limited mobility to leave their house and meet friends and family; it helps people with disabilities to lead independent lives; and supports children and young people to reach school, college or work, and to socialise.

Community transport puts the community at the heart of all it does, taking a ground-up approach to transport solutions that work for everyone. Services offer so much more than just a journey, empowering people by opening up opportunities for those who would otherwise be excluded. The sector's community led approach means operators can offer outstanding value for money with bespoke, localised services.

Why should community transport work with rail?

- **Life-changing** - improves the lives of people who currently lack the confidence to make particular journeys, providing new opportunities to travel independently and visit new places.
- **Choice** - enhances the travel options for existing users of community transport.
- **Wider-reaching** - gives opportunities of new user markets, including sections of the population that have not been traditional users of community transport, such as commuters and visitors to tourist attractions.
- **Visibility** - raises the profile of community transport, promoting its existence and awareness of the services it can provide.
- **Credible player** - provides opportunities to demonstrate leadership and innovation in the travel and transport field.

Why should the rail sector look to work with community transport?

- **Railway for all** – provides the opportunity for rail to be a truly inclusive travel mode, available to all.
- **More passengers** – helps achieve Accessible Travel Policy outcomes, including greater use of rail services.
- **Integration** – helps to join up longer distance and local transport modes, offering seamless travel opportunities (something particularly important for vulnerable people and those with disabilities), as part of a sustainable transport network.
- **Helpful partners** – gives access to specialist transport providers that can be called upon when particular planned or unplanned needs arise for fully accessible, personalised transport assistance.

The case for working together

Potential rail users

Whilst there are opportunities to improve travel choice and experiences for all, it is important to pay attention to those who may be disadvantaged in their ability to travel. 9% of all adults have mobility difficulties.² Although this proportion has fallen over recent years (12% in 2007), it still represents a large number of people. Also, it has a disproportionate impact on different age groups, with 26% of those aged 70 and over experiencing mobility difficulties.

Increasing age and incidence of mobility difficulties directly impacts on the number of trips made. Overall, people aged 70 and over made an average of 800 trips in 2019, which was 84% of the average trips made across all age groups.³ However, this total masks variations across different travel modes. For walking and car travel, those 70 and over made 71% and 90% of the average number of trips respectively; and for bus, they made 144% of the average number, probably boosted by free concessionary travel. However, trips by train were just 33% of the average of all age groups.

A similar picture exists for people with mobility difficulties, although with lower overall trip rates. Total trips made are 65% of the average across the whole population.⁴ Whilst use of bus, car and walking are at 87%, 69% and 52% of average trip rates, rail is very low at just 16%.

These figures highlight how under-used rail is amongst older and disabled people, compared with other modes. They suggest there is much scope to encourage greater use of the train.

Some of the reasons why this might be the case have emerged from research, such as that carried out by Transport Focus with Great Western Railway.⁵ This showed how people want to retain their independence and social connectivity as much as possible. However, there were various concerns about using the train, including getting to and from the station, as shown below:

- Poorly synchronised bus and train times
- Station car parks full
- Needing to ask for lifts to and from the station
- Lack of information and staff on hand at stations
- Concerns about not being able to navigate the railway, particularly for occasional users
- Confusion over fares and getting the best value ticket

² National Travel Survey 2019: Table NTS0622 Mobility difficulties by age and gender

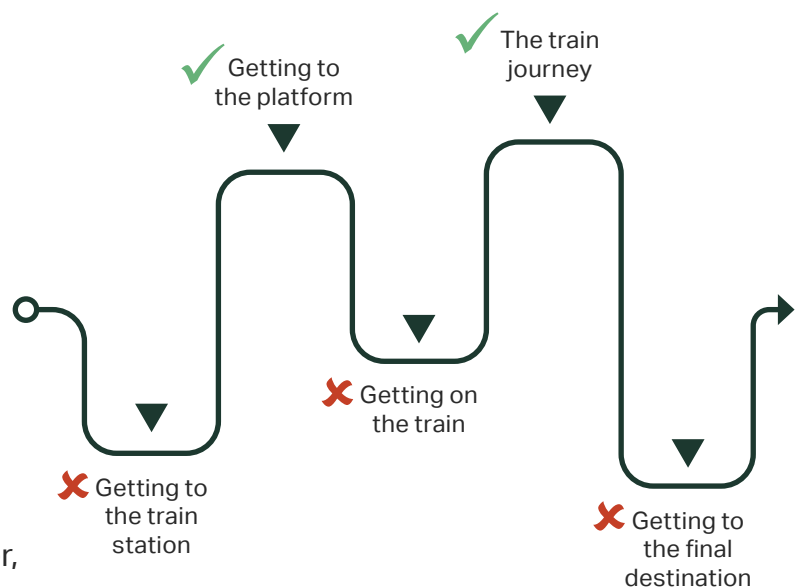
³ National Travel Survey 2019: Table NTS0601 Trips by all modes by age

⁴ National Travel Survey 2019: Table NTS0709 Travel by mobility status

⁵ Transport Focus (June 2020): Age and the train - how younger and older people use the train

Overall, the experience of travelling by train was found to be inconsistent for older people. At times it was disappointing and stressful, but there were times when it was positive and enjoyable.

The research highlighted some real opportunities to encourage older people to travel by train. They may be less confident to drive long journeys, however keen to make the most of their lives and have the time for travel. Enabling them to travel by train will rely on taking steps to make journeys easier, more accessible and understandable, which together will provide confidence.



Similar findings emerged from research amongst disabled passengers.⁶ Whilst many passengers reported that rail was convenient and the quickest way of travelling, they highlighted a variety of challenges, ranging from problems in planning journeys, barriers in getting to stations (including infrequent buses and cost of taxis) and deciding on the best ticket. The challenges outside of the actual train journey itself should not be underestimated. 14% of people mentioned problems getting to the station; 11% had problems in respect of onward travel having reached their destination station.

Many people are able to use rail services because of the free Passenger Assist service offered by rail companies. Research by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR)⁷ showed that most people seeking assistance are aged 65 or over. 59% of assisted passengers could not have completed their journey without Passenger Assist. Most assistance provided involved help boarding the train and/or helping with luggage. In many cases (26%), assistance was obtained without any prior booking.

Use of Passenger Assist highlighted a number of potential improvements to the service:

- Consistency in the assistance provided
- Staff training, particularly for helping those with hidden conditions or complex needs
- Better communication between staff and stations, giving greater reassurance especially when delays or other problems occur
- Better station facilities

Ultimately, passengers want to be less dependent on assistance. Improvements to stations, trains and the whole journey experience will enable this to happen.

Many of the issues above were captured and summarised in an evidence paper for the Williams Rail Review,⁸ which noted that few rail trips were currently made by disabled people.

⁶ DfT and Transport Focus (July 2019): Experience of disabled rail passengers

⁷ ORR (September 2019): Experience of Passenger Assist – research report 2018-19

⁸ Williams Rail Review (March 2019): The user experience of the railway in Great Britain – evidence paper

It concluded that in response to the ageing population, and desire for disabled people to use rail more, a robust strategy was needed to improve accessibility to the rail network.

The evidence in this section highlights some deficiencies in the overall end-to-end journey experience, such as getting to or from stations. It is meeting such needs that community transport could play a useful role.

Partnership working

The rail industry is reliant on working with other agencies and interested organisations. The success of this is demonstrated by the many Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) around the country, which exist to enable communities to maximise the benefit from their railways by improving and promoting them, and supporting local rail awareness, confidence and involvement. Such partnerships and station adoption groups are well placed to make local stations and railway lines into focal points of the community. They can use their links to bring partners together to:

- Deliver improvements
- Use their activities and communications to generate understanding
- Promote interest and pride in the railway and the wider area
- Bring members of the community together around a common interest

The DfT's Community Rail Development Strategy⁹ highlights that rail is at the core of many journeys, but by its very nature is not door to door. Therefore, rail must be developed as part of an integrated transport system, where different modes are considered together and, in particular, consideration is given to the way people get to and from stations. CRPs can be instrumental in bringing different local organisations and service providers together and offer an opportunity for community transport operators to engage, contribute local insights and knowledge and offer potential solutions to problems highlighted around access to the rail network.

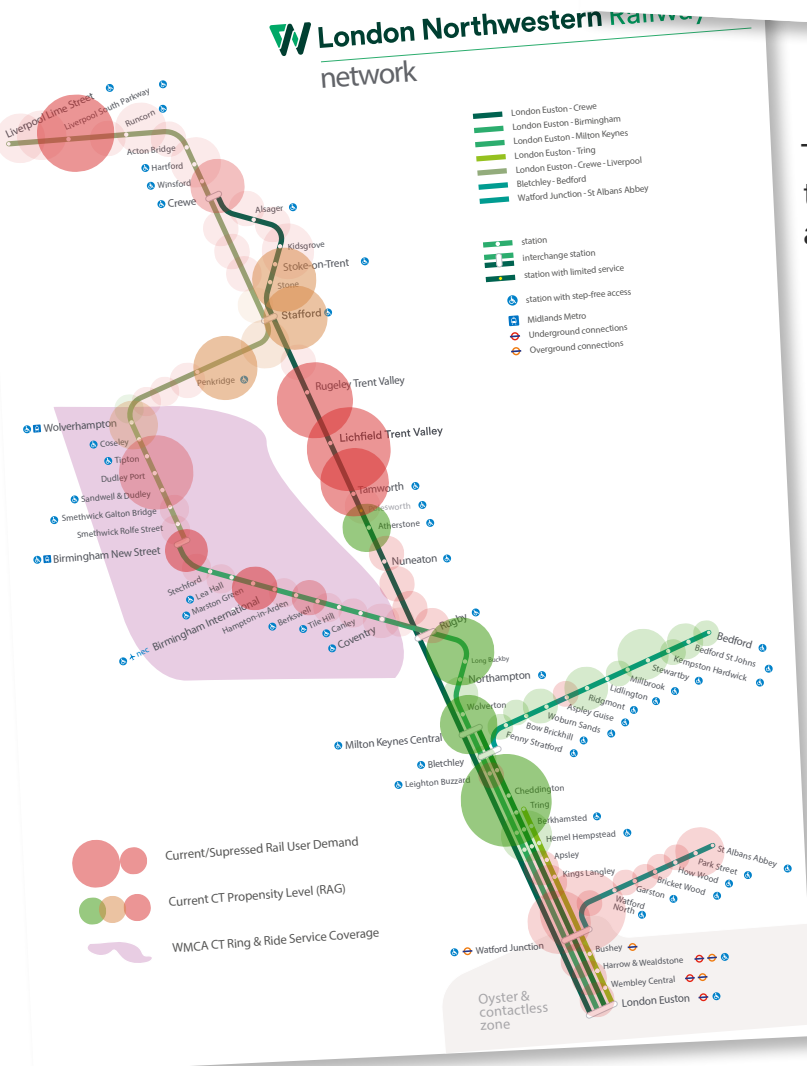
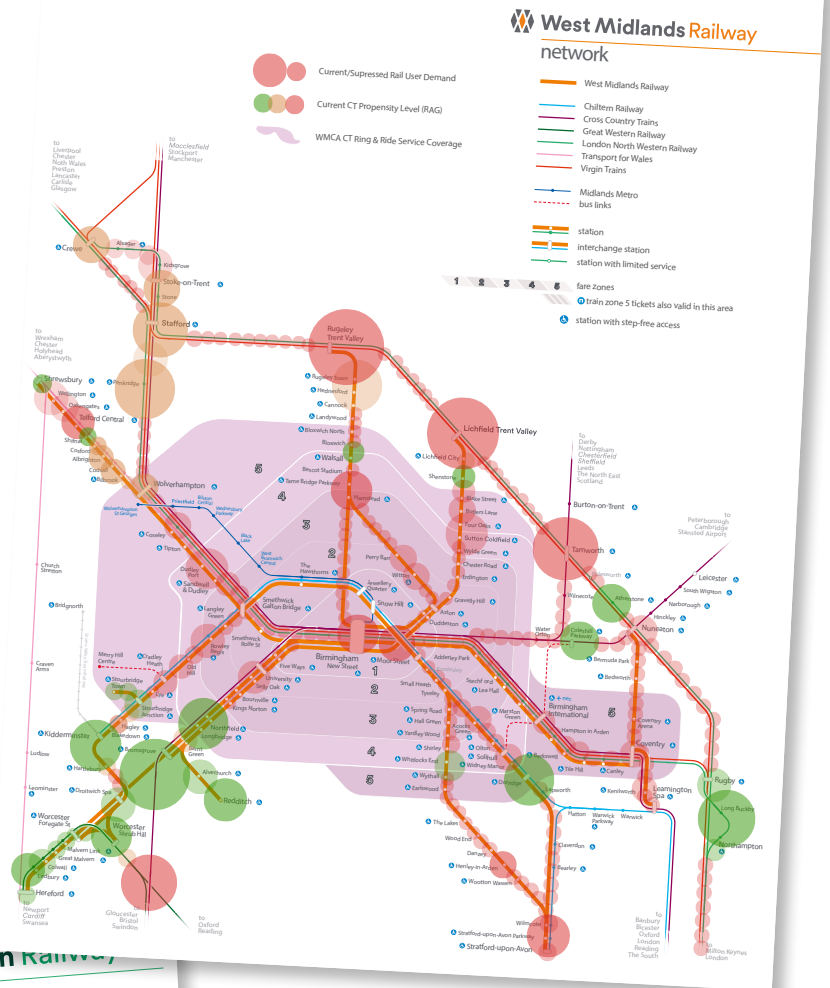
⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-rail-development-strategy>

Why a toolkit?

The idea for this toolkit emerged from research undertaken in 2019 by ITP for West Midlands Trains (WMT). The aim of this was to consider opportunities for community transport to play a greater role in aiding access to rail stations across the WMT network where other public transport options were poor.

Through extensive assessments and engagement with local authorities and community transport organisations, 'heatmaps' were produced to highlight where demand for access existed and the potential propensity for community transport to play a part in meeting these demands, based on a range of criteria.

The heatmaps are reproduced here:



The size of the circles represents the relative assessed level of actual and/or suppressed demand to access each of the stations. The circle colour represents the potential for existing community transport organisations that were identified through the study to play a part in improving access to stations, green being the ones where there is most potential.

Community transport perspective

A survey amongst CTA members (organisations that provide community transport services) during 2020, sought to gather views on working with rail. Many community transport operators reported having no experience of working with rail, mainly because there had never been a reason to do so. Some had not considered it, because their service users had never asked to travel to or from a station.

A number of community transport operators did have some experience linking with rail. In most cases this was on an ad-hoc basis, responding to users' requests to get to or from stations. One or two had looked to more formal joint working arrangements, but these tended to have been short-lived or had not really led to anything.

A number of operators were open to working more closely with the rail sector. The main challenges in doing this were seen as knowing who best to contact and the capacity and ability of community transport to be able to deliver suitably responsive and flexible services, including dealing with situations where trains are delayed or cancelled.

Opportunities offered by rail

An inclusive railway

Britain's railway system is required to be inclusive. This is clearly set out by the DfT in its Inclusive Transport Strategy¹⁰, which requires all train operators to have Accessible Travel Policies that meet minimum standards, as set out Annex A. Engaging with community transport operators offers the potential to strengthen the way some of these standards are met.

The National Rail Conditions of Travel sets out what disabled passengers should expect in using the rail network and confirms the availability of assistance that should be in line with those standards.¹¹ Furthermore, train companies set out their pledge to users in passengers' charters.

To complement the railway being more inclusive, it is vital that potential users have the means to get to and from stations. Community transport is well placed to do this.

Station Travel Plans

Station Travel Plans exist for many stations. They are effectively audits of how well stations are connected by different means of travel – walking, cycling, bus, taxi and car – with consideration given to gaps and ideas developed for improvements. Community transport providers might be in a position to fill any identified gaps or unmet needs.

Community Rail¹²

Community rail partnerships (CRPs) bring together local groups and partners along railway lines to promote understanding of the importance of local railways, in terms of improving mobility and sustainable travel, community cohesion and wellbeing, and social and economic development.

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-transport-strategy>

¹¹ <https://www.nationalrail.co.uk/National%20Rail%20Conditions%20of%20Travel.pdf>

¹² <https://communityrail.org.uk>

The work of community rail partnerships is varied, responding to local contexts, and includes:

- Promoting understanding, use of and access to the railways, such as communicating service improvements, running visits and workshops, and promoting tourism by rail.
- Helping communities engage in and have a voice in railway development so it meets their needs, such as coordinating and supporting volunteers and station friends to enhance stations or advising train operators on timetabling.
- Bringing disused station property back into use, such as by achieving renovations, setting up community group spaces, or running social enterprises.
- Running a range of activities to bring people together and promote social inclusion linked to the railways, such as local events, creative projects and educational programmes.

CRPs and community transport have much in common: they both seek to be rooted in the community and responsive to its needs. With such common purpose, there is real incentive for community transport providers to engage with CRPs, where they exist. Details of partnerships and station adoption schemes can be found at <https://communityrail.org.uk/community-rail/meet-our-members/>

Stakeholder engagement

Most rail companies offer opportunities for engagement with their users and other interested parties through consultative, stakeholder or user groups. With the chance to build relationships, create partnerships, influence service design and make suggestions, such groups provide further opportunities for community transport providers to engage with the rail sector to highlight what they can offer.

Funding

Getting people to and from stations offers opportunities for community transport operators to generate income.

Furthermore, the rail industry may, from time to time, offer opportunities for organisations to apply for grants to develop and deliver particular projects. Some rail operators offer pots of money as part of their franchise commitments. Grants may also be available through the Customer and Communities Improvement Fund, which usually invites applications once a year from organisations.

Case studies

The following case studies provide examples of how community transport can link with and support rail travel for all.

'Joined-up' travel solutions

Ability Northants CIC is a social enterprise providing local community bus services to the residents of Northamptonshire and North Oxfordshire. The organisation has been running since 2018 and its aim is to reduce loneliness and social isolation. Services provided include dial-a-ride, community bus routes, shopping trips, group trips, group hire and minibus driver training. Within a year of starting, it was providing transport for over 500 people. Whilst many passengers are elderly, the service is also used by younger people, some with disabilities, some accompanying an older person, some who have lost their driving licence, and some who are parents with children who are unable to get out and about.



Recognising the need to diversify and meet different market needs, Ability has been seeking to develop links with rail services, in order to offer joined-up travel solutions to people where they use community transport to get to a railway station, and then use the train to reach their final destination. The aim is to create a scheme where anyone living in isolated areas and is struggling to access a rail service can be reliably connected to a station.

Pre-Covid, Ability ran two successful pilot schemes in collaboration with West Midlands Trains and London North Western Railway.

Pilot scheme 1: Dementia patient to attend brother's funeral

A lady from Towcester, whose husband suffers from dementia, reached out for Ability's help to take her husband to his brother's funeral in Birmingham. Her main concern was navigating the transport network, which involved getting a bus to Northampton and then a taxi to the railway station, while assisting her husband and pulling a suitcase!

Ability was able to help the couple by picking them up from home and taking them directly to the station. The friendly and supportive minibus driver assisted them with their bags and got them safely into the station. From there, station staff assisted at both ends of the train journey, helping to navigate around the station and in boarding and alighting the train. This seamless approach made a huge difference for the couple and was much appreciated.

Benefits:

- Cost-effective group travel
- Opens up new destinations for trips
- Less downtime for minibus and driver
- Advanced booking for rail and assistance provided
- New users for the rail network

Pilot scheme 2: Group trip to Crufts

A local retirement village enquired as to the cost of hiring one of Ability's minibuses to travel from Northampton to Birmingham National Exhibition Centre (NEC) to attend the annual Crufts Dog Show. The group of 12 people didn't feel comfortable trying to do the journey by train, some of them not having travelled by rail for many years.

Rather than suggest an expensive drive by minibus direct to the NEC, Ability worked with West Midlands Trains to help the group have a great day out. Ability's minibus conveyed them to Northampton station, where they caught the train to Birmingham International for the NEC and Crufts. At both ends of the train journey, station staff were on hand to assist with boarding and alighting and to ensure that the group got to Crufts safely.

“ *No problems with stairs and lights. Small problem with getting on and off train, but assistance was available. Staff were very helpful in directing us to where we wanted to go. First time travelling on a train for a long time. Would certainly consider using more often.”*

“ *Very well looked after by Ability bus staff and train passenger assistance staff. Wonderful day, bus and train times all fitted together well, very little waiting.”*

“ *Lovely day very helpful from the bus to the train. Service very good. Well organised, assistance when needed. Happy and helpful staff.”*

“ *Excellent service arriving at Northampton station. Also, good service on train. Staff very obliging all round. Would like to travel more often on train.”*

Commuter shuttle service, Kent

Compaid is a charity that assists disabled and older people in Kent. Originally set up to teach computer skills to disabled people, it soon branched out into transport to help people get to and from the training centre. With significant downtime in the use of vehicles, it decided to also provide transport more widely. Operating minibuses under section 19 and 22 permits it is able to help people access day centres, shopping centres and medical appointments, as well as taking groups on outings.

The organisation, which supports 1800 people, operates with a mix of paid staff and volunteers. About half of the transport provision involves running contracts for Kent County Council, including shopping services, dial-a-ride schemes and home to school transport for children with special needs.

In 2016, Compaid was approached by a housing developer to provide a shuttle minibus service between a new housing development on the edge of Tunbridge Wells and High Brooms railway station, 2 miles away. Compaid was keen to provide this service, as the early morning (06:00 – 08:00) and evening (18:00 – 20:00) times for the service were when it had minibuses available. Operating under a section 22 permit, a paid driver was taken on and the services was registered with the Traffic Commissioner as a local bus service open to the public. Residents were given a membership card entitling them to travel for just £1 each way.

A 3-year agreement was signed to provide the service, starting in June 2016. During that period, Compaid developed a good working relationship with the developer and regular review meetings were held. Usage of the service grew to over 50 passengers per day. In early 2019, the developer

In early 2019, the developer suggested that the shuttle bus should link to Tonbridge station (4 miles away) rather than High Brooms. This would give access to more trains and lower season ticket prices. Compaid agreed new terms and the service was changed, with fares rising to £2 each way.

With minimal use during the COVID pandemic, the service was suspended. Following requests from users, it recommenced in October 2020. However, the service as operating now will cease at some point in the future, as a commercial bus operator has indicated an intention to serve the housing development. Whilst this will draw an end to Compaid's involvement, the experience of the successful partnership over 5 years is viewed very positively with a number of beneficial outcomes:

- The ability to provide a useful service to the community, when no other option existed.
- Improved utilisation of existing minibuses that would otherwise be idle.
- Provided a job for a driver and useful revenue for the charity.
- Experience of operating under section 22 permits put Compaid in a position to be able to provide other community link services for Kent County Council for communities that had lost their commercial bus service.
- Operating local registered bus services got Compaid an invitation to join the Tunbridge Wells Transport Forum, alongside representatives from commercial bus companies, rail companies and Network Rail. As well as sharing information, the forum allowed Compaid to be seen as an active player in the regional transport sector.
- Given the boldness to speak to other housing developers about the possibility of running other commuter shuttles.

Local bus service, Gloucestershire

With its fleet of 13 minibuses, Lydney Dial-a-Ride provides accessible transport around Lydney and the Forest of Dean. Services include dial-a-ride, community bus routes and home to school transport for children with special needs.

Having experience of running 5 local bus services for a few years, Lydney Dial-a-Ride was approached by Gloucestershire County Council in 2019 to provide a new local service in and around Lydney that would fill a gap left by a commercial operator. The service, which operates 10:00 – 14:00 Monday to Friday, was designed to provide useful links for shopping, health appointments and to Lydney railway station, ensuring connections with trains could be made.

Having continued to run all services through the COVID pandemic, service 777 has now been running for a year. The timetable continues to be tweaked to ensure that it meets people's needs and connects properly with trains. Consideration is being given to the possibility of expanding the route to serve housing areas that are remote from other bus services.

Through their common interests in improving transport services for local communities, Lydney Dial-a-Ride and the Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership have recently been introduced to one another. It is hoped that through this relationship there can be closer working between community transport and the rail sector.

West Midlands Ring & Ride

Ring & Ride provides local door-to-door transport for residents of the West Midlands metropolitan districts (Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton) who find using conventional public transport difficult. This could include journeys to and from rail stations.

Whilst not a true community transport service, in that it is operated by commercial entity National Express, similar types of services operate up and down the country and are usually provided by community transport organisations.



Ideas and proposals

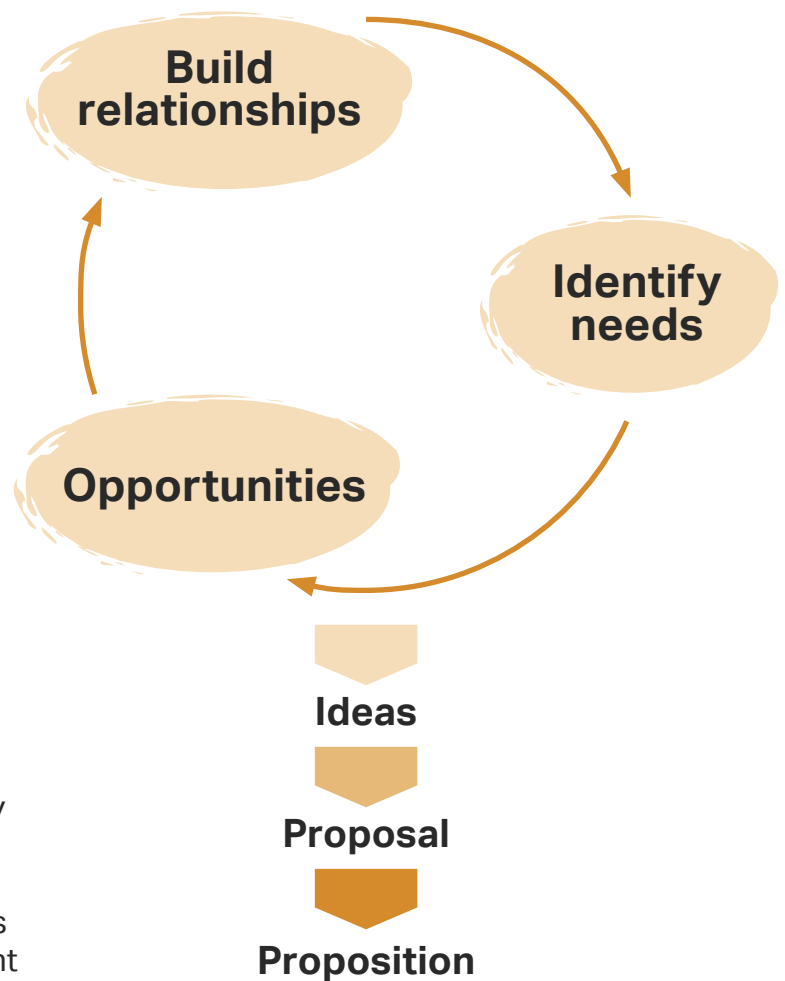
Working with the rail sector could offer community transport operators new opportunities and areas of activity. This might be particularly important in the post-Covid environment where traditional areas of activity might be reduced.

The adjacent figure tries to set out key elements for the formulation of ideas and development of proposals. Whilst there is no single approach that offers a guarantee of success, this provides a framework for taking things forward, with other individual actions and considerations listed below. For any organisation, embracing a proactive spirit is central to success and achievement.

Build relationships

Community transport services are central to people's wellbeing and quality of life. They connect people with services, facilities, friends and relatives. As such, community transport has impacts and influences across many other sectors. Therefore, it is important for community transport providers to engage with other relevant and interested parties, to build alliances and work in partnership. Strong relationships will have a number of benefits for community transport:

- Make it more visible to a wider audience
- Present it as a credible partner
- Increase understanding about what it does or could do
- Opportunities to it to influence and shape wider policy and service provision
- Provide a forum for wider information sharing and problem solving
- Open up opportunities for involvement and funding



Potential actions:

- Make contact with rail operating companies that manage stations and run train services in your area.
- Make an offer to rail operators of assistance when there is planned and unplanned disruption to rail services (rail replacement services).
- Where they exist, get involved in community rail partnerships or station adoption schemes.
- Join local transport forums or user groups.
- Engage with local authorities on the development of transport plans and policies, together with consultation exercises regarding these.
- Develop alliances with other community transport providers elsewhere on the same rail corridor.

Identify needs

Understanding people's needs and travel requirements is vital to designing appropriate transport services. Whilst it is important to understand the needs of existing users, these may change over time. Equally, they might have unmet needs that fall outside of the scope of existing services. Furthermore, there will be needs amongst other groups with no current connection with community transport. These offer whole new potential markets.

As well as identifying needs, it is also important to quantify likely levels of demand as this will help assess the viability of running a service.

Ways of identifying needs and potential demands include:

- Talking with existing users about journeys they would like to make
- Existing published data (Census; National Travel Survey; local authority)
- Transport Focus (National Rail Passenger Survey)
- Rail passenger journey data
- Station Travel Plans
- Local research and surveys
- Consultation exercises
- Observations at stations (e.g. car park utilisation)
- Discussions with travel attractors (e.g. visitor attractions)
- Discussions with those organisations where relationships have developed

Potential actions:

- Decide what quantitative and qualitative information is required and from where it might be sought.
- Speak with existing service users.
- Consider ways to either directly engage with new potential users or via other organisations.

Opportunities

From wider stakeholder engagement, relationships formed and research undertaken, opportunities will emerge where community transport might add value. Issues and problems will be highlighted, new markets might be identified, potential funding streams revealed and new willing partners discovered. Using these insights will be an important basis for developing ideas and proposals.

Ideas to formal proposition

At the ideas stage, it will be possible to process the information and formulate outline thoughts around what could be achieved and the type of approach that might be developed. Having some basic ideas can be useful for gaining interest and support.

Ideas then need to be turned into formal project proposals. This will include a number of things:

- Overall concept envisaged
- What the service or project seeks to do and who it aims to serve
- What the project looks like
- Type of service to be offered
- How the service or project will be delivered

Having established some firm proposals, it will be possible to produce a proposition that will form the basis for funding applications or bids to interested parties. This will need to include:

- Aims, objectives and clear intended outcomes of the project or service
- Background to the project, who has been involved and how it has been developed
- Evidence of need / demand
- Options considered and why a particular one is preferred
- Details of the project or service proposal, how it will operate and who it will help
- How the project links with other initiatives and existing services
- Timescales for implementation
- Costs, revenue projections and wider benefits
- How success will be measured and the project monitored
- How the project will be sustained
- Risks and potential mitigation
- Letters of support

Annex A

Inclusive Transport Strategy: achieving equal access for disabled people (DfT, 2019)

All train operators are required to have an Accessible Travel Policy (ATP), setting out the level of services and facilities that passengers can expect, how to get assistance and how to get help if things go wrong. The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) approves and monitors train and station operators' compliance with the ATP requirements.

The aim of an ATP is to provide assured confidence to disabled and older rail travellers at every stage of their journey.

Assistance offered by operators may vary slightly, but as a minimum all operators must provide:

- **Passenger assist** – assistance should be provided at all stations during hours when trains are scheduled to serve the station. Assistance must also be provided when not arranged in advance, depending on conditions at the time and staff availability.
- **Alternative accessible transport** – if a station is inaccessible, operators must provide, without extra charge, an appropriate alternative service to the next, most convenient, accessible station.
- **Tickets and fares** – if a disabled passenger is unable to book a ticket in advance, they must be able to do so without penalty on the train or at a station.
- **Luggage** – operators must ensure that staff are available to assist with luggage when this has been arranged in advance.
- **Scooter carriage** – operators must make the policy clear in their ATP.
- **Passenger information** – operators must provide up-to-date information about accessibility of facilities and services, timetables, fares, connections and delays, disruption, diversions and emergencies.
- **Aural and visual information** – operators should make a commitment to provide, wherever possible, clear and consistent aural and visual information on train departures.
- **Disabled Person's Railcard** – should be offered, providing one third discount.

The guidance on Accessible Travel Policies aims to reduce the advance booking period for passenger assistance from 24 hours to 6 hours in April 2021 and 2 hours by April 2022.

By July 2021 the aim is for all appropriate rail staff to receive disability awareness training, with a refresher every 2 years.

There is also an intention to ensure that fully accessible vehicles are always available for replacement services when train services are disrupted due to unplanned incidents or planned engineering work.

West Midlands Trains

<https://www.westmidlandsrailway.co.uk/>

West Midlands Trains was awarded the West Midlands franchise in 2017 by the Department for Transport (DfT). This involves running train services that focus on the West Midlands conurbation along with services on the West Coast Main Line between London and Liverpool. Since taking over the franchise, it has looked to meet its franchise obligations and to deliver agreed improvements to the network. One such obligation is a pledge to support and provide small scale funding towards unlocking innovation in transport and the role of the supply chain, including community transport, to support access to railway stations and for meeting the needs of new, existing and prospective users.

Integrated Transport Planning (ITP) Ltd

<https://www.itpworld.net/>

ITP is a transport consultancy with an interest in developing and promoting more sustainable modes of travel. It has provided expertise and assistance to West Midlands Trains, particularly in respect of projects aimed at improving access to the rail network.

Community Transport Association (CTA)

<https://ctauk.org/>

The Community Transport Association is a national charity that represents and supports these organisations: thousands of charities, community groups, schools and other organisations, who all provide transport services that fulfil a social purpose and community benefit. The CTA is both for and about accessible and inclusive transport.

