



# Plymouth Passenger Transport Strategy

## **Community Transport Strategy**

Plymouth City Council

Local Transport Plan 2

2006-2011



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# 1. Introduction

## What is Community Transport?

- 1.1 Community transport is a form of transport provision that is designed to meet the needs of members of society who may for various reasons be unable to utilise more traditional transport (bus, rail, taxis and private hire vehicles). In Plymouth, community transport exists to support these modes of transport. The Council is looking to expand and utilise community transport in ways that will not be detrimental to traditional transport systems.
- 1.2 The primary purpose of Plymouth's Community Transport Strategy is to ensure that community transport services are of a high quality and are seamlessly coordinated.

## Barriers and Opportunities

- 1.3 The main elements of a successful community transport service are:
  - A locally based service which meets the unique needs of Plymouth;
  - A service which is accessible and meets the needs of people who are disabled or socially excluded;
  - Effective interchanges with other modes of transport; and
  - A service which is well publicised and about which information is easily obtainable.
- 1.4 In implementing the Community Transport Strategy the Council will:
  - Recognise the need for improved efficiency in the City's community transport network;
  - Accept the strategy as a key principle of major development plans within Plymouth (such as the Mackay Vision and the developments at Sherford and Plymstock Quarry);
  - Improve interchange between community transport and other modes of transport within the City;
  - Improve the availability and quality of information about community transport in the City for potential and existing passengers and stakeholders;
  - Identify and take advantage of funding sources that are necessary to implement improvements or expansions to the community transport system in the City.

## 2. Policy Context

### National Policy

- 2.1 The Government's 1998 Transport White Paper "A New Deal for Transport: Better for everyone" outlined the important role Community Transport plays in an integrated transport system. Fixed route passenger transport (such as buses and trains) is not always capable of meeting the needs of people who are elderly, have mobility impairments or those who are unable to fully access public transport.
- 2.2 The 2004 Transport White Paper, reiterated the importance of community transport in delivering localised integration and improvements in overall accessibility. It stressed the role that passenger transport can play in areas that are not well served by fixed route bus services. Despite a high level of bus accessibility, fixed route bus services in Plymouth may not be offering 'excluded' members of the community the transport service that they require.
- 2.3 The ODPM's report 2003 "Making the Connections: Final Report on Transport and Social Exclusion" made a number of recommendations in relation to community transport that have an impact on this strategy. These include:
  - The need to incorporate local community groups, especially those involved in community transport, into the local transport planning process;
  - The need to incorporate accessibility planning into the local transport plan process; and
  - A recommendation for local authorities to undertake a resource audit of community, social services, and educational transport provision.
- 2.4 The guidance on second Local Transport Plans (LTP2) outlines the need to work with local community transport providers to develop policies and measures to reduce social exclusion.

### Local Policy

- 2.5 Plymouth's first Local Transport Plan (LTP1) outlined the history of the expansion and coordination of Community Transport in Plymouth. LTP1 stressed the need to utilise development trusts and other organisations in co-ordinating voluntary and community transport, maximising any local employment opportunities. It is the intention of this strategy to build on LTP1 by fostering expansion and encouraging coordination between various organisations.
- 2.6 In 2004 Plymouth published its first City Strategy. The purpose of the document was to identify and tackle the most pressing problems impacting on the City. Community and voluntary transport has a key role to play in helping deliver the initiatives proposed in this strategy as shown in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1 The role of Community and Voluntary Transport in delivering Plymouth's City Strategy**

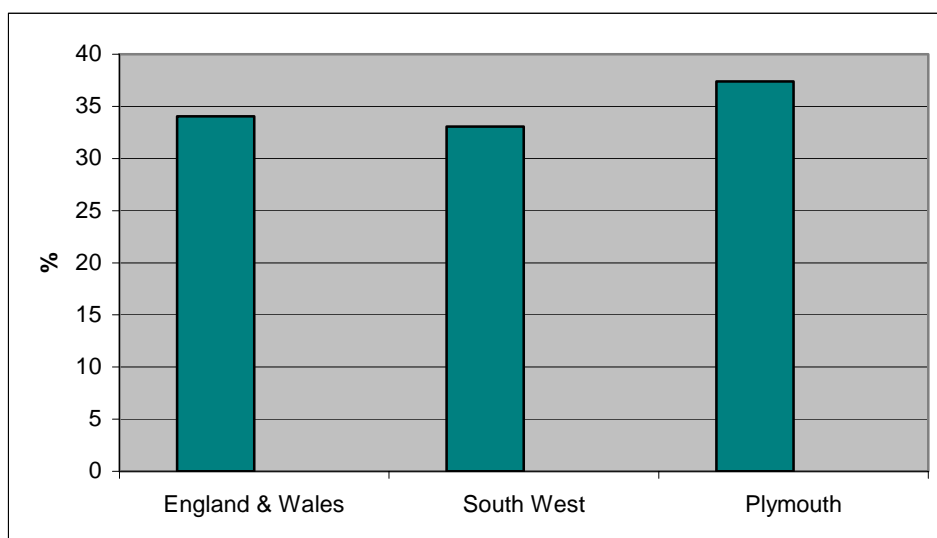
City Strategy Goal	City Strategy Target	How the Community Transport Strategy can assist in achieving Goal
Goal 1: Dynamic Local Communities	Target 1: By 2006 increase the level of voluntary and community activities by 5% compared with figures for 2003/04.	Increase recruitment of drivers and community car schemes.
	Target 2: Improve the quality of life and independence of older people.	Improved access through community transport and better alignment of community transport to meet needs, of older people.
Goal 5: High Quality Buildings, Places and Spaces	Target 14. Increase the number of people using local buses to travel.	Measures to increase the number of people using community transport such as dial-a-ride.

### 3. Community Transport

#### The Need for Community Transport in Plymouth

3.1 Compared to most areas of the country, Plymouth has a relatively high proportion of individuals who are classified as being disabled. As figure 3.1 shows the percentage of households with at least one member with a limiting long-term illness is approximately 3% higher than the national average.

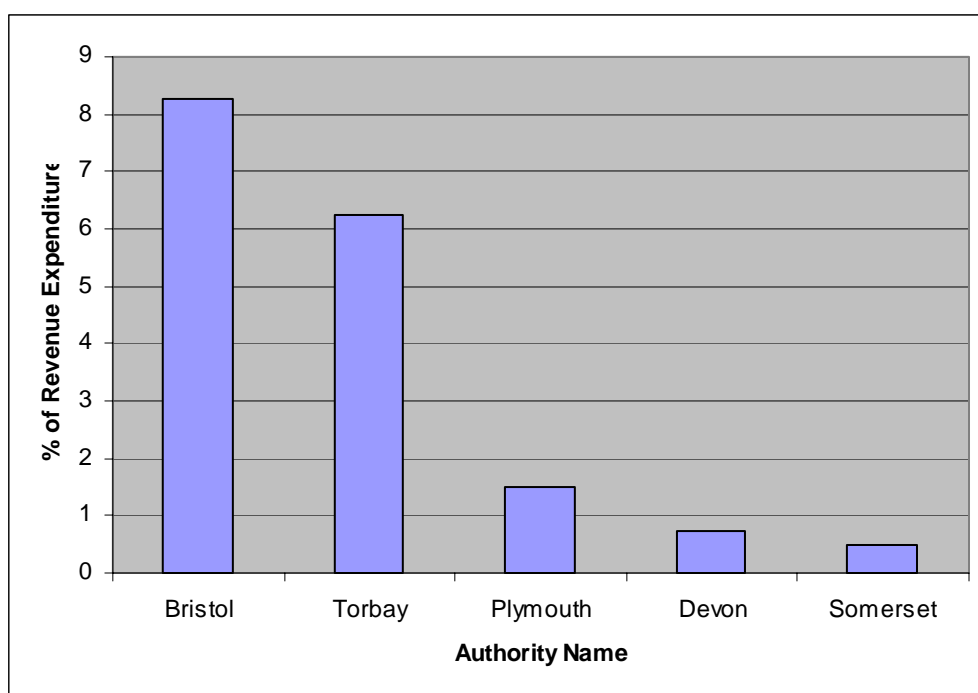
**Figure 3.1 Percentage of households with one or more persons with a limiting lifelong illness**



*Source: 2001 Census*

- 3.2 The high number of households that have at least one member with a disability underlines the need for a robust community transport service within the City. Community transport services, such as 'Dial-a-Ride', can be designed to help meet the needs of people who are at risk of suffering a degree of social exclusion.
- 3.3 The Council could be diverting more resources to the provision of community transport in the City. As figure 3.2 shows, Plymouth spends proportionally less than other Principle Urban Areas (PUA) in the South West Region on providing these services for residents. One of the Council's objectives during the second Local Transport Plan period will be to assess the need to increase the amount of resources directed towards Community Transport.

**Figure 3.2 Benchmarking the Proportion of LTP Revenue Expenditure on Community Transport Services<sup>1</sup> in the South West**



*Source: 2003/2004 LTP1 Annual Progress Reports*

### **Current Provision of Community Transport in Plymouth**

- 3.4 Plymouth currently benefits from a number of community transport services, which are funded from a range of sources including the Council, the NHS Trust and the voluntary sector. This section briefly describes the present level of community transport service in the City.
- 3.5 The current service provision within Plymouth operates to augment fixed bus routes. Community transport services on offer include:
- ◆ **Ring and Ride:** This wheelchair accessible service transports passengers between their homes and Plymouth City Centre and various nearby supermarkets. Services run on a fixed schedule from Monday to Friday between 10:00 am and 3:00 pm. Users must book in advance and pay a small fee to use the service.
  - ◆ **Community Car Clubs:** This service is open to 'frail' elderly and disabled members of the community who are unable to use the City's public transport network. Bookings must be made two working days in advance. The Car Club does not cover trips to hospitals. Community Car is a 'not for profit car' sharing scheme which uses volunteer drivers and transport people who are unable to use public transport because of disability or age. The costs for journeys are calculated on a mileage basis and are charged to cover driver's expenses only.

<sup>1</sup> Devon County Council's community transport expenditure includes community rail and other rural transport provision. All other figures are inclusive of the total revenue block grant.

- ◆ **Taxi-card:** Disabled people in Plymouth are offered half price taxi fares through this Council funded scheme.
- ◆ **Shopmobility:** This free loan scheme provides disabled and elderly residents with wheelchairs or electric powered scooters.
- ◆ **Community Transport4hire Scheme:** This scheme is for the exclusive use of community groups and associations. Wheelchair accessible Mercedes Sprinter minibuses are available for hire 365 days a year at attractive rates, all complete with 15 seats (including the driver) and a wheelchair tail lift for those with mobility difficulties. The hire period ranges from 1 hour to 14 days depending on the needs of the groups and the hire rates are designed to reflect the hire duration.

### Linkages between Community Transport and other Transport in Plymouth

- 3.6 Table 3.1 outlines the links between community transport and other modes in Plymouth.
- 3.7 It is apparent that there is a great deal of potential for the Council to develop community transport by providing new and better connections with bus, rail and taxi services, for example DRT services that link in to main corridor bus routes and rail services.

**Table 3.1 Current Relationship Between Community Transport and Other Modes of Transport in Plymouth**

Mode	Current Linkages
Bus	The main bus operators' (Citybus and First) vehicles are becoming increasingly compliant with disability legislation through investment in fleet replacement. The bus station in Plymouth City Centre is accessible by wheelchair but via an inconvenient route. This will be rectified when a new bus interchange is opened in the medium to long term.
Rail	There is limited coordination between current community transport services and Plymouth's rail stations. Rail stations are not currently fully accessible by people with mobility impairment.
Taxis and private hire vehicles	Taxi and private hire vehicles provide the backbone of transport services for the social services, educational, and community transport sectors within Plymouth. Taxis and private hire vehicles are central to furthering community transport in the City. Additionally, a large number of vehicles are accessible to people with disabilities.

## 4. The Strategy for Community Transport

### Objectives

- 4.1 The objectives of the strategy are:
- ◆ To reduce social exclusion throughout the City through increased transport opportunities for the most vulnerable members of society;
  - ◆ To improve integration of community transport with the wider Plymouth City transport network; and
  - ◆ To improve the efficiency of community transport.
- ◆ **Proposals**
- 4.2 The Council is seeking to make better use of the vehicles used for community transport by carrying out a community transport audit. The need to assess the current operation of vehicles will fall into a broader audit of levels of provision.
- 4.3 The audit will build upon areas where the LTP2 accessibility planning exercise (using the Accession software package) identifies deficiencies in public transport provision. An appraisal will be undertaken to determine if an expanded community transport service can fill identified gaps in the passenger transport network accessibility.
- 4.4 This audit should determine how best to integrate 'dial-a-ride' services with other passenger transport provision in the City including the bus network, rail services, ferries and taxis. It is essential that community transport play a role in the development of any high quality passenger transport proposals. 'Dial-a-ride' services have fixed routes and fixed destinations. The audit should determine if this is the best form of demand responsive transport for a city of Plymouth's size and density. Other forms of demand responsive transport the City is considering include:
- ◆ A fully flexible bus service where all journeys are pre-booked (otherwise known as a 'many to many' service),
  - ◆ Flexible bus services which are able to deviate a short way (500m or less) from a fixed route.
- A central component of this audit will be to determine which sector (voluntary, governmental or private) is best placed to manage and operate any expansion of services. Recommendations made in the audit will lead to the submission of an Urban Bus Challenge Bid, or other funding source.
- 4.5 The audit will determine how best to incorporate the increasing availability and functionality of Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) into the demand responsive transport system
- 4.6 A need also exists to for community transport services during evenings and weekends. As part of the community transport audit, the Council will

investigate the feasibility of implementing special services during these times.

- 4.7 Currently, booking and scheduling of the City's demand responsive services are conducted using manual methods. Within the next LTP period, the Council seeks to upgrade its book system to the national standard. This will include utilisation of a GIS (Geographical Information System) based scheduling and routing package.
- 4.8 In addition to incorporating community transport into the development of interchanges, it is important to integrate community transport with other LTP2 initiatives. For example, the Council will include demand responsive transport vehicles in bus priority initiatives. Such measures will improve the appeal and functionality of community transport in the City.
- 4.9 The Council would like to better promote its community transport services to the public and to stakeholders, for example by means of the Council's website.
- 4.10 The amount of information currently available to the public on community transport is limited. The internet is becoming an increasingly important tool for accessing information and it is desirable that Plymouth should take advantage of this resource. In other areas of the country clients can book trips on local authority demand responsive services efficiently by using the Internet. While take up of on-line booking services has in some cases been slow, it is recognised that with time use of the internet will become more commonplace.
- 4.11 Derriford Hospital is currently underserved by community transport and lacks connections to the community transport providers within the City. The hospital has in place ambulance and non-ambulance transport systems for patients. Both of these services are over-prescribed. Representatives of the hospital have indicated that a more formalised demand responsive service linking to the Derriford site should be implemented.
- 4.12 This service would seek to improve linkages for the disabled, elderly, frail and those who are otherwise unable to access the hospital by other modes of transport. The feasibility of such a service will be included in the community transport audit.
- 4.13 In order to bring schemes forward it will be necessary to identify appropriate funding mechanisms. In addition to community transport schemes, which will be funded through the LTP process, the Council will seek to identify other funding streams for the implementation of further measures. These monies could be derived from either Urban Bus Challenge bids or Community Transport Grant funding.
- 4.14 Community transport services will be included as part of the development of the City's residential growth areas. The Council will ask developers to fund the expansion of services through Section 106 agreements, or successor infrastructure tariffs.
- 4.15 The Council would also like to investigate entering into Service Level Agreements (SLA) with community transport operators and organisations.

Such agreements will help the Council deliver its plans to have community transport at the heart of LTP2. The Council will include the feasibility of SLAs in the community transport audit.

**Table 4.1 Proposals for Community Transport**

Measure type	Time scale
Undertake an audit of the provision of community transport within Plymouth. Identify gaps in accessibility and service provision. Improve integration with other transport modes. Identify best type of DRT service.	Short Term
Identify funding sources for the expansion of community transport.	Short - Medium Term
Improve publicity and availability of community transport information.	Short - Medium Term
Offer an expanded level of service during weekends and for special excursions.	Medium Term
Upgrade Plymouth's Community Transport website to include online booking for Dial-a-Ride and Voluntary Car sharing schemes. Ensure that coordinated links exist between Plymouth City Council's website and the Community Transport website.	Medium Term
Obtain and utilise a GIS based scheduling system for the improved routing and scheduling of Dial-a-Ride services.	Medium Term
Enter into Service Level Agreements with providers of community transport in the City.	Long Term
Improve coordination between Derriford Hospital and the community transport sector. This should include twice yearly meetings between the NHS Trust, Council officers, and operators of the City's community transport services.	Ongoing

## 5. Targets and Monitoring

- 5.1 The Council recognises the significant benefit of obtaining the views of the users of community transport within Plymouth. Surveying users is necessary to gauge their satisfaction with the current provision and to help the Council make changes to the level of provision to better match the needs of users.

**Table 5.1 LTP2 Target for Community Transport**

Objective	Indicator	Target for 2010/11	Method of Data Collection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To reduce social exclusion throughout the City through increased transport opportunities for the most vulnerable members of society;</li></ul>	Patronage	Increase the number of passenger journeys on the two Plymouth Ring and Ride services by 32% from 6038 in 2004/5 to 8000 in 2010/11.	Patronage figures