



East Sussex County Council Community Transport Strategy 2010 - 2026

1. INTRODUCTION

Being able to travel to services (e.g. medical appointments, libraries and post offices), local shops and job opportunities is important for every resident in East Sussex. There is public transport in East Sussex which helps many people access these important destinations in daily life, but there are still places where the conventional bus service does not operate and leaves residents unable to travel to where they need to go. In these situations, community based transport may be able to help and East Sussex County Council is committed to encouraging the development of such schemes.

Community transport is the term used to describe a type of transport service which is developed by and within the local community. This transport will help people who find it difficult or impossible to use standard public transport, or who have no public transport in the area they live in or are travelling to. It's not a particular type of bus, but is the concept of developing some local transport to help local people get around.

The term 'Community transport' is used to describe a number of different types of not-for-profit transport. It could, for example, be something as small scale as a person using their own car and offering a lift to their friend/neighbour/local resident to the Doctors Surgery (sometimes called a Voluntary Driver Scheme). Or it could be used to describe a minibus service which drives through a number of villages and picks up passengers at their door and drops them off at their destination (often called a Dial a Ride).

Community transport encourages the development of locally created and led transport to solve a transport need in the local community. No two places are the same, so a good understanding of the local public transport and where the gaps and needs are, is very important before developing a community transport scheme.

2. BACKGROUND

The County Council carried out a number of studies¹ to better understand the existing bus and community transport sector and to find out where the weakest areas were in the county in terms of available transport. These reports helped to show where there were gaps and unmet transport needs.

The research also highlighted where conventional local buses are not feasible to operate because of high costs and low passenger numbers and fares. There appeared to be a large difference in the transport available not just between urban and rural areas, but also between rural areas themselves. The research also showed transport gaps for certain age groups, income levels and journey purposes.

¹ These studies included: Zero Based Budget Review of Bus Services (Sept 2008); Review of Community Transport Services (Sept 2008); East Sussex County Council Accessibility Strategy (March 2006); and numerous Accessibility Strategy Local Assessments (LATS)

The studies also led to advice that we should focus resources to develop a stronger community transport sector. This Community Transport Strategy aims to try and achieve this. This process is also supported by two external factors: conventional bus services are costing more and more to run and there have been recent legislative changes as a result of the Local Transport Act 2008.

3. POLICY SUPPORT

We will develop, along with our partners, the direction of community transport within the county and will include this as within the next Local Transport Plan, LTP3 which runs from 2011 to 2026. The successful delivery of this Community Transport Strategy will support the Objectives of LTP3.

The broad objectives for LTP3 are:

- Improving economic competitiveness and growth
- Improving security, safety and health
- Improving quality of life
- Reducing carbon emissions
- Provide sustainable transport opportunities to enhance social inclusion

Our vision for transport is based on the integrated sustainable community strategy called Pride of Place² which was developed by the County Council and its partners in the East Sussex Strategic Partnership. This sets the strategic priority of improving sustainable travel choices and access to services within and between communities in the county.

The Pride of Place vision says that the main goal for the County Council's Accessibility Strategy³, is to provide greater travel choices for those opportunities which are most likely to influence overall quality of life. These include access to:

- Employment – especially for young people living in rural areas
- Healthcare – the priority is to help older people living in rural areas
- Healthy affordable food – especially, again, for older people living in rural areas.

LTP2⁴ identifies the important contribution already made by community transport schemes in providing access to services and local facilities within the county. LTP2 supports a greater role for community based transport schemes with the following specific policies:

- Promote improved transport infrastructure to deliver innovative solutions to rural transport matters
- Encourage better community and voluntary transport provision

It is expected that LTP3 will contain similar policies which support improved transport access, particularly within rural areas, and the development of the community transport sector generally.

² Pride of Place: A Sustainable Community Strategy for East Sussex 2008-2026

³ Local Transport Plan 2006-11 (LTP2), Appendix A, Accessibility Strategy

⁴ Local Transport Plan 2006-11 (LTP2), East Sussex County Council

The East Sussex Bus Strategy⁵ recognises that conventional bus services are not always appropriate and that in these cases, the County Council will encourage the development of community transport. Although mainly associated with rural areas, the Bus Strategy also acknowledges the need to encourage schemes in those socially deprived and excluded urban areas where sustaining a conventional bus service is difficult.

The role of community transport is also acknowledged in the East Sussex Time of our Lives strategy⁶ work which aims to improve and promote the quality of later life for people in East Sussex. It recommends working with the voluntary and community sector to empower local communities and villages to develop their own transport to solve their transport needs.

Putting People First⁷ is a national policy which describes how Government wants social care to be provided in the future. The policy also affects how transport is provided within local authorities.

The Care Quality Commission regulates health and adult social care services in England. It recognises the importance of transport and mobility support in improving quality of life. In a review of East Sussex services⁸ it stated that transport, particularly within rural areas, remains a complex problem for East Sussex which must be addressed to help reduce the burden of social isolation.

The delivery of the Community Transport Strategy will support County Council's commitment to tackle unequal access to services and employment⁹. It acknowledges the importance of improving accessibility for all residents throughout the County - in particular those without access to a car and who are unable to make use of conventional bus services. An initial Equalities Impact Assessment has been done to work out the effect the Community Transport Strategy will have. This will be monitored and regularly updated to ensure the promotion of equality of opportunity.

As a sustainable form of transport, community transport can contribute to the County Council's actions to improve air quality and lessen climate change.

4. VISION

To work in partnership to ensure the opportunity exists for all residents in East Sussex with otherwise unmet travel needs to have access to local services by means of community based transport solutions.

5. OBJECTIVES

Through the implementation of the Community Transport Strategy, the County Council aims to achieve the following Objectives:

- Provide support and advice to community groups whilst identifying need and solution options

⁵ Draft Bus Strategy 2009-2016, East Sussex County Council

⁶ The Time of Our Lives Strategy 2008-11: Improving and Promoting Quality of Later Life, ESCC

⁷ Putting People First, July 2009, East Sussex County Council

⁸ Annual Performance Assessment Report 2008/09 Adult Social Care, Care Quality Commission

⁹ Equality of Opportunity and Diversity Policy Statement, ESCC, Updated July 2007

- Ensure accurate community transport advice and information is available.
- Continue to develop strong partnerships with stakeholders.
- Develop an affordable pricing arrangement.
- Monitor existing community transport schemes and report bi-annually.

6. CURRENT COMMUNITY TRANSPORT SERVICES

Community transport includes a range of different types of services and providers. It comprises of a variety of organisations many of which may be best thought of as 'social enterprises' – these are businesses with social objectives and whose financial surpluses are principally reinvested for the same purposes rather than used to generate profits for shareholders and owners.

Community transport schemes in the County help many residents get to shops and health appointments and to visit friends and relatives. They are also used to get some children to schools, and enable some users of social services to reach day care facilities. The community transport sector in East Sussex includes:

- Bus services operated by small vehicles which run to a standard timetable and are open to the general public. These services are operated under permits issued in accordance with section 22 of the Transport Act 1985.
- Dial-a-ride and other demand responsive schemes which can normally only be used by passengers who are registered scheme members. These are operated under permits issued under section 19 of the Transport Act 1985.
- Voluntary car schemes which are available for people with a specific purpose and which often only serve a limited area – for example a requirement to get to a hospital outpatient appointment.

There are over 40 community transport schemes operating in East Sussex – about one third of these receive funding from the County Council. This funding is issued through supported bus service contracts or through grant funding programmes managed by the County Council. Schemes range from those which use just a single car or minibus to relatively large operations with 10 or more vehicles.

Not all towns and villages have community transport and the coverage varies greatly across the county. A number of factors influence this - the extent of the commercial bus service provision, how much user demand there is, what the availability of resources is like, and crucially, local "champions" who are willing and able to manage individual schemes. This means that the description and scope of community transport schemes varies in different areas of the county. This Strategy will create the environment in which schemes can be developed to suit local needs and circumstances in a more co-ordinated way, but where county-wide best practice and support can also be provided.

7. EXPANSION AND RISKS

There are some practical obstacles to the growth of community transport schemes in the county but many, especially the larger, Community Transport Operators are known to be willing to consider expansions of their services if suitable support and funding is made available. The County Council will aim to provide the strategic guidance and co-ordination to aid this expansion.

The County Council will also ensure that Community Transport Operators are given equal opportunities to tender for passenger transport service contracts when they are considered. By establishing a “level playing field”, there is less need to set budgets for the different sectors, apart from possible development and “seed corn” funding to directly expand the community transport sector.

The County Council recognise that community transport relies very heavily on the commitment and support from individuals and community groups. The general public have the ability to make community transport a success and are responsible for the initial want to develop and grow the services. It is a community led model and with this comes risks. The County Council has limited funds available and is aware of the risk that without support, sometimes community transport schemes fail. To help manage these risks, the County Council will assist Community Transport Operators with information on operation efficiencies, passenger needs assessments, available grant funding sources, and the best use of existing fleets.

8. PARTNERSHIP

The delivery of community transport is not possible unless good partnership involvement is inbuilt in the process and development of schemes. A joined up approach which includes a number of Partners will help to guarantee that there is a detailed understanding of the needs and will support the robustness of the transport proposed. It is important that effective partnerships are built by identifying the key links between organisations and delivering practical multi-party arrangements.

Strong commitment from voluntary organisations, community groups, Parish and District Councils, and Community Transport Operators are crucial to the success of community transport. Community transport schemes rely heavily on volunteers to coordinate and run the services and without them the financial sustainability of the services may be threatened. Community transport schemes do not need to be complicated in their design; however they do need support from the local community.

Some of the Partners who will be involved with community transport projects and their roles in the process are detailed below:

- **Voluntary Sector:** is an essential part of community transport and support and engagement from them is crucial.
- **Community Groups:** often have a clear understanding of local knowledge and needs. Community groups are often the driving force behind transport solutions.
- **Social Enterprises:** wherever possible social enterprises which contribute great value to the development of community transport within East Sussex will be supported and joined in partnership discussions.
- **Primary Care Trust:** many of the community transport schemes in the county take residents to health appointments. It is possible that Community Transport Operators could contract directly with NHS trusts to provide a service which complements existing hospital transport schemes operated by the South East Coast Ambulance Trust or through other voluntary driver schemes.

- Community Transport Operators: have the technical know-how and ability to implement schemes. They can offer value for money savings by using spare vehicle capacity on existing services where possible when expanding services.
- Parish Councils: the local nature of many community transport needs and schemes means that town and parish councils are often best placed to understand how to develop existing services and introduce new ones.
- District and Borough Councils: apart from funding travel concessions, most district and borough councils in East Sussex have little involvement in local transport provision, even though they have discretionary powers to support public transport. There are good reasons to support the increased involvement of these authorities in community transport because in meeting a local need, schemes often operate at a specifically district/borough level.
- County Council: will provide advice and facilitation on community transport topics and will coordinate the Community Transport Operators Forum which pulls together all operators to share their best practice and work towards achieving successful community transport services within East Sussex. There is also good potential to allow dual and triple uses of existing vehicles and the County Council values the link between the Transport and Environment Team and the Home to School and Adult Social Care networks.

The County Council will engage with communities and encourage them to identify the transport needs of their communities and develop suitable community transport solutions themselves. This bottom-up approach is different to what occurs in many other situations where the County Council would lead on such problem identification and solution development. The Community Transport Strategy will engage local communities and allow them to have full steer on the solution with the County Council providing advice when required.

9. THE CONTRIBUTION COMMUNITY TRANSPORT CAN MAKE

Our Community Transport Strategy will support the development and stability of community transport services throughout East Sussex. This will contribute towards:

- Accessibility – improved access to transport in those areas currently unserved by public transport, particularly (but not exclusively) for the young and elderly.
- Quality of life – community transport enables isolated individuals to engage in activities, employment and interact socially. The significance of this improved accessibility on their quality of life could be great. Community transport has the ability to increase the social networks for many isolated and vulnerable individuals.
- Sense of community – community transport is led at a community level and the implementation of a scheme will as such build bonds and a sense of community between the members of the local village / town as well as the organisations and charities which can support them.
- Economic growth – community transport can contribute to the economic growth of an area by stimulating the uptake of jobs and shopping because of improved access to centres.

- Medical access – community transport can provide door to door transport to and from hospital and doctor appointments, contributing to a reduction in the number of missed appointments and allowing the provision of care that the patients need.
- Compliments other Council services – the provision of community transport compliments a number of other areas where work is carried out by the Council. For example: Adult Social Care, Youth Services, Air Quality, and Sustainable Transport.

10. ACTIONS

To achieve the Vision and Objectives described in this Community Transport Strategy, the principal actions are:

- To establish a comprehensive and up-to-date database of all community transport services in the county with contact details, setting out the services provided, user eligibility criteria and booking arrangements.
- To establish a robust analysis approach to monitor the value for money of community transport provision and assess the value of potential new and extended community transport services that contribute towards the County Council's policy objectives.
- To provide practical support to stakeholders to maintain existing services, identify and develop new community transport schemes, and explore opportunities to access potential funding sources.
- To establish effective partnership working with stakeholders including investigating how best to encourage better engagement with district, borough and parish councils to improve communication and scheme development.
- To share examples of good practice from within the county and elsewhere.
- To promote the availability of community transport services generally and to work with partners to market specific services to potential users, within the legal restrictions.
- To work with partners to develop affordable pricing arrangements for community transport services, and, where there is no conventional bus alternative, consider the role for the Sussex County Card concessionary bus fare scheme.
- To establish the post of Community Transport Development Officer within the County Council to implement the Community Transport Strategy and deliver the Action Plan.

This Strategy will be implemented by means of the Community Transport Action Plan. This explains the tasks and actions required to deliver the Strategy. The programme identifies the responsibilities of the County Council and partners to undertake these tasks, the timescales for delivery, and the targets by which achievement will be measured. The Action Plan is set out in Appendix 1.

11. MONITORING

It is essential that the progress against the Community Transport Action Plan is properly monitored and managed. The establishment of formal partnerships with the community transport sector will enable key stakeholders to participate and

contribute to the ongoing development of the Strategy, and therefore help ensure its effectiveness in contributing towards the delivery of the Council's policy objectives.

Following the allocation of the community transport grant funding during 2010/11, a review will be carried out on those services which received funding – this will be completed by the end of March 2011. Patronage levels, passenger satisfaction, and financial stability of each service will be reviewed. A formal report will be compiled to record the findings and as a record of best practice. It is then proposed that all community transport services in East Sussex be monitored and reported on bi-annually.

DRAFT

**APPENDIX 1
DRAFT ACTION PLAN**

Outputs	Actions and Targets						Responsibility / Partners
	First year by 31 March 2011	Second year by 31 March 2012 (first year of LTP3)	Third year by 31 March 2013	Fourth year by 31 March 2014	Fifth year by 31 March 2015	Sixth year by 31 March 2016 (fifth year of LTP3)	
1. Ensure accurate CT advice and information is available	<p>Monitor and report (on Down Your Way and Pilot schemes)</p> <p>Review and update CT database bi-annually</p> <p>Develop an interactive CT map for ESCC website with links to bus services too</p> <p>Update ESCC CT webpages</p>	<p>Monitor and report (first monitoring report of all CT schemes)</p> <p>Review and update CT database bi-annually (July '11, Dec '11)</p> <p>Update ESCC CT webpages (April '11, Oct '11)</p> <p>Develop an affordable pricing arrangement and consider the role for the Sussex County Card concessionary bus</p>	<p>Review and update CT database bi-annually (July '12, Dec '12)</p> <p>Update ESCC CT webpages (April '12, Oct '12)</p>	<p>Monitor and report (all CT schemes)</p> <p>Review and update CT database bi-annually (July '13, Dec '13)</p> <p>Update ESCC CT webpages (April '13, Oct '13)</p>	<p>Review and update CT database bi-annually (July '14, Dec '14)</p> <p>Update ESCC CT webpages (April '14, Oct '14)</p>	<p>Monitor and report (all CT schemes)</p> <p>Review and update CT database bi-annually (July '15, Dec '15)</p> <p>Update ESCC CT webpages (April '15, Oct '15)</p>	ESCC, CT Operators

Outputs	Actions and Targets						Responsibility / Partners
	First year by 31 March 2011	Second year by 31 March 2012 (first year of LTP3)	Third year by 31 March 2013	Fourth year by 31 March 2014	Fifth year by 31 March 2015	Sixth year by 31 March 2016 (fifth year of LTP3)	
		fare scheme					
2. Maintain existing CT services	<p>Bi-annual Community Transport Operators Forum meetings</p> <p>Share recognised good practice across CT Operators</p> <p>Promote CT services through press releases and articles (at least three per year)</p> <p>Monitor & update Equalities Impact Assessment</p>	<p>Bi-annual Community Transport Operators Forum meetings (Feb '11, Aug '11)</p> <p>Share recognised good practice across CT Operators (Feb '11, Aug '11)</p> <p>Promote CT services through press releases and articles (at least three per year)</p> <p>Monitor Equalities Impact Assessment</p>	<p>Bi-annual Community Transport Operators Forum meetings (Feb '12, Aug '12)</p> <p>Share recognised good practice across CT Operators (Feb '12, Aug '12)</p> <p>Promote CT services through press releases and articles (at least three per year)</p> <p>Monitor & update Equalities Impact</p>	<p>Bi-annual Community Transport Operators Forum meetings (Feb '13, Aug '13)</p> <p>Share recognised good practice across CT Operators (Feb '13, Aug '13)</p> <p>Promote CT services through press releases and articles (at least three per year)</p> <p>Monitor & update Equalities Impact Assessment</p>	<p>Bi-annual Community Transport Operators Forum meetings (Feb '14, Aug '14)</p> <p>Share recognised good practice across CT Operators (Feb '14, Aug '14)</p> <p>Promote CT services through press releases and articles (at least three per year)</p> <p>Monitor & update Equalities Impact Assessment</p>	<p>Bi-annual Community Transport Operators Forum meetings (Feb '15, Aug '15)</p> <p>Share recognised good practice across CT Operators (Feb '15, Aug '15)</p> <p>Promote CT services through press releases and articles (at least three per year)</p> <p>Monitor & update Equalities Impact Assessment</p>	ESCC, CT Operators, District Councils

Outputs	Actions and Targets						Responsibility / Partners
	First year by 31 March 2011	Second year by 31 March 2012 (first year of LTP3)	Third year by 31 March 2013	Fourth year by 31 March 2014	Fifth year by 31 March 2015	Sixth year by 31 March 2016 (fifth year of LTP3)	
			Assessment				
3. New community transport schemes commence operation	<p>Consult on the CT Strategy and include for adoption within LTP3.</p> <p>Conduct community group workshops and invite bids for grant funding</p> <p>Review submitted grant funding applications (ongoing – completed by March '11)</p> <p>Implementation of development area CT schemes (ongoing – completed by</p>	<p>Provide support and advice to community groups whilst identifying need and solution options (ongoing)</p> <p>Develop strong partnership links with key stakeholders (ongoing)</p>	<p>Provide support and advice to community groups whilst identifying need and solution options (ongoing)</p> <p>Develop strong partnership links with key stakeholders (ongoing)</p>	<p>Provide support and advice to community groups whilst identifying need and solution options (ongoing)</p> <p>Develop strong partnership links with key stakeholders (ongoing)</p>	<p>Provide support and advice to community groups whilst identifying need and solution options (ongoing)</p> <p>Develop strong partnership links with key stakeholders (ongoing)</p>	<p>Adapt the CT Strategy to include lessons learnt and best practice.</p> <p>Provide support and advice to community groups whilst identifying need and solution options (ongoing)</p> <p>Develop strong partnership links with key stakeholders (ongoing)</p>	ESCC, CT Operators, local communities, Parish & District Councils, PCT, AiRS

Outputs	Actions and Targets						Responsibility / Partners
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