

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure

DATE 7<sup>th</sup> September 2010

DIRECTOR Gordon McIntosh

TITLE OF REPORT Community Transport Scheme

REPORT NUMBER EPI/10/207

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress of the Community Transport Services within the City which launched on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:

- a) Notes the contents of this report
- b) To report back to future committees through the Committee bulletin

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Fixed costs for the fleet operation for Community Transport are met from existing budgets for school and social work transport services. The fares charged cover variable costs for the fuel and consumables required for delivering the community transport services. If patronage across all of the services does not meet the costs then the services and fare structures would be reviewed accordingly.

### 4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

A key aim of the Community Plan is to ensure that all citizens have access to a range of transport options that reflect differing needs of age, gender, disability and income. The Single Outcome Agreement also sets a priority of improving sustainable transport options for the City. Outcome 7 requires the delivery of Demand Responsive Transport schemes, such as Community Transport, to address social inequalities. Outcomes 10, 12 and 14 sets out actions for improving sustainable travel options through Demand Responsive Transport.

The Vibrant, Dynamic & Forward Looking document sets out a commitment to work to improve public transport in and to our city and to improve access.

## 5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

As the peak time work undertaken by the passenger fleet is to day centres, which are being reviewed, there will be a period of transition and disruption which may affect the operation of the community transport services once the peak time work transfers away from day centres towards school establishments.

## 6. REPORT

### **Background**

A previous report was submitted to the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2010 which discussed plans for introducing Community Transport schemes. The Committee resolved to approve those recommendations, to request that officer's report back within six months of the introduction of the scheme, and emphasised in particular the importance of smooth and transparent administrative arrangements.

The previous report set out the detail for implementation of five Community Transport services in Aberdeen operating between 10am and 2:30pm, Monday to Friday. The services introduced on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2010 provide door to door assisted transport for those who are unable to use conventional bus services.

### **Service Overview**

The service has grown from carrying 18 passengers in week one to 40 passengers in week 8. The service continues to increase in membership each week with currently 90 members.

Prior to the service commencing publicity materials were distributed to GP surgeries and other healthcare surgeries, community centres and sheltered housing complexes. We continue to receive almost daily requests for publicity material as news of the services spreads, with more healthcare surgeries asking for materials along with recent requests from voluntary organisations and the Citizens Advice Bureau.

### **High Level Overview**

The service is still in its "embryonic stages". All feedback to date has been positive. However people who are not currently using the service but wish to do so are asking for the service to operate during peak times. To date feedback has been logged through telephone calls from customers and potential customers. A full customer satisfaction survey will be conducted over the next six month period.

Teething problems have been limited. There have been 3 incidents where passengers were expecting transport and this was not provided. Apologies have been issued with offers of free transport or a reimbursement of their costs.

There have been no operating difficulties; delivery of the service with the exception of the above has been satisfactory. There have been two incidents of passengers identifying a late pick up.

Dealing with client groups over the telephone has presented some challenges, this is to be expected and officers make every attempt to resolve difficulties to the satisfaction of callers.

Key destinations include supermarkets and the City Centre.

### **Route by Route Analysis**

Route 1 - Kingswells / Hazlehead / Ashley Queens Cross / Airyhall / Broomhill / Garthdee

One third of journeys from Route 1 have been to destinations within the Route 1 boundary or to the City Centre, the remaining two thirds have been travel to the neighbouring Route 2. To date we have transported one person to the crematorium and have not transported any passengers from Kingswells. Over all routes this has had the lowest take up.

Route 2 - Northfield / Mastrick / Sheddocksley / Summerhill / ARI / Berryden / Midstocket / Rosemount

This has been the busiest route to date. 72% of journeys from Route 2 have been to destinations within the Route 2 boundary or to the City Centre. There has been little uptake of the service to travel to the ARI, although patronage levels are inflated due to one daily traveller, this can mislead if not taken into consideration. Travel to ARI has been from across the City, we have been flexible with the operating areas to allow and encourage this travel.

Route 3 - Dyce / Bucksburn / Woodside / Old Aberdeen / Tillydrone

65% of journeys from Route 3 have been to destinations within the Route 3 boundary or to the City Centre. ARMS in Dyce, a Multiple Sclerosis therapy centre is a destination a number of clients from across the city wish to attend, but given its location may become a problem in the future as the services become busier as many of the passengers who travel here are crossing over from other routes.

Route 4 - Bridge of Don / Danestone / Tillydrone / Seaton / Old Aberdeen

80% of journeys from Route 4 have been to destinations within the Route 4 boundary or to the City Centre. The service within this route is well used throughout and continues to see growth.

## Route 5 - Kincorth / Torry / Ferryhill

We have transported two passengers from Cove which is out with the Route 5 boundary but we have been able to accommodate this. This route has seen the highest level of cross city travel, with 65% of journeys being to destinations out with route 5 and the City Centre. It should be noted however that 40% of this relates to one passenger travelling daily to Woodend Hospital.

### **Service Feedback**

There has been a high level of positive feedback from service users. Much of the feedback has been to notify that users appreciate the service. Many have indicated that they would feel isolated without it, primarily due to the high costs of taxi services in Aberdeen, which some pointed out is a barrier to the inability to get out and about.

Service users have been highly praising of the driving team with a number requesting if specific drivers would be transporting on that day.

The only negative feedback received relates to the operating times of the service. A number of people have said the service would be more beneficial to them if it operated in peak times.

### **Further Growth**

The service as aforementioned continues to grow. Every week new members are travelling on the service. It has become clear that as services get busier it may become more difficult to accommodate all passengers. By the very nature of demand responsive transport we have to transport passengers to a variety of locations. The route system which we operate assists in this as passengers on each bus are within a local vicinity of each other so this does allow us to transport as many people as possible.

As the service continues to grow, more passengers will be declined whether due to time restrictions or due to capacity issues. To date we have only been unable to transport 4 passengers due to the services being too busy. We do, where possible, try to use buses from other routes if we can not accommodate a passenger on the bus within their route or suggest the customer travel on an alternate day if possible, however, as noted, this is becoming increasingly difficult as all routes are seeing growth. It would appear that in the near future there may be an increase in rejections to requests for transport as the services grow.

The other problem with regards to the capping of services is that due to the limited times of the service and the need to leave a lunch break for the driver, this results in the bus being busy and fully subscribed at key times, particularly between 10:00 – 11:00 and 13:00 – 14:30.

## **Views of the Community Transport Steering Group**

A meeting was held with the Community Transport Steering Group on the 4<sup>th</sup> June 2010. The group agreed that this is a positive scheme and the group were pleased with the progress of the scheme to date.

The group however believe it is important to notify members that its aspiration of the group would be to have a service operating in the peak times and if possible a service which operated at weekends.

The group also noted that more work should be done to assist disabled people to use conventional bus services and that this is something which should be actively pursued through future projects.

## **Views of the Disability Advisory Group**

The group agreed with the views of the Steering Group but were realistic that in recognising whilst the introduction of a peak time vehicle is an aspiration it would not be easily achieved.

## **Future of the scheme**

The service has been operating successfully to date and there is no reason to implement any changes at this stage. As the service grows more and patronage increases there may be a need to review the scheme in the future.

In the previous report to Committee it was noted that funding would be reviewed in 2010 to establish whether a community transport scheme would be more cost effective than the current arrangement with regards to bus service 93 (Peterculter/Garthdee/City Centre) which is supported by Aberdeen City Council, Asda and Sainsbury's (through development contributions at Garthdee) and serves the Lower Deeside area. This service has seen considerable growth with average patronage per day of 55 to 60. This is compared with an average patronage of 32 per day when the service was previously operated by First Aberdeen. On the basis that this service is performing well and continues to grow there would be little benefit of introducing a community transport scheme in its place which would be a less frequent service and would carry far fewer passengers.

## **7. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS**

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## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**