

# Community transport in Greater Manchester..



...making an **impact**  
*2010 update*

# CT in Greater Manchester

## About community transport

Often referred to by its acronym - CT - community transport began over three decades ago.

CT operators are community-based not-for-profit businesses providing transport services, particularly for individuals or groups who find public transport difficult to use.

Community transport was therefore fighting social exclusion twenty years before the term entered popular parlance.

The early focus, mainly using volunteers, was on providing transport for local people and groups who found it difficult or impossible to use public transport.

Since then, CT operations have grown and developed with the changing times. CT operators employ paid professional staff, as well as using volunteers, and are subject to the same rigorous licensing standards as public bus service operators.



## ASAP – accessible, safe, affordable professional

Although the days of volunteers ferrying passengers around in an old Transit are long gone, the core ethos remains - supporting and developing local communities, combating social exclusion and promoting economic regeneration by providing accessible (including for those using wheelchairs), safe, affordable and professional transport services for local people and community groups.

## Range of services

Often using minibuses, but also with vehicles both smaller (such as people carriers) and larger (such as coaches), local CTs deliver a range of services. These include door-to-door transport for individuals, trips for community groups and contracted services like Local Link. CTs take their passengers to a wide variety of destinations, including work, shopping, hospital and simply going out socially.

## The community transport difference

Broadly speaking, CT is about people, not profits. The CT sector aims to work cooperatively, not competitively. Peer support is an important element of the way the sector operates and distinguishes it from the commercial sector.

Despite this, CT is committed to professional standards and the efficient use of the funds it raises.

## Added value

Investing resources in community transport produces added social and economic value, which would not result from a comparative investment in commercial delivery options.

Any surplus generated by a CT operator undertaking, for example, a contract, will be ploughed back into the organisation, not distributed as a dividend to shareholders. This will enable the operator to concentrate on making its community-based services as affordable as possible.

# The impact of CT

Research shows that CT in Greater Manchester has a considerable impact. The sector provided nearly 800,00 trips to Greater Manchester residents in the year 2008-2009 and covered nearly three million kilometres in doing so. Group transport forms a significant element of CT activities in Greater Manchester – providing nearly 250,00 passenger trips.

## Economic impact

With a **turnover that rose by 30% £4.95 million** between 2007/8 and 2008/9, and an **increase of 31% in full time jobs to 134**, the GM CT sector has a considerable economic impact.

If volunteer hours were to be costed at the same rate as a casually-employed driver - £6.50 per hour – this would represent a **contribution by CT volunteers in excess of £225,000**.

During 2008-2009, the Greater Manchester CT sector contributed significantly to workforce skills, within a sector where there are acknowledged skills shortages. CT operators **trained over four hundred and fifty drivers** (both volunteers and paid employees) to nationally-recognised MiDAS standards, and there are over **one thousand drivers** registered and available across the metropolitan area.

## Social impact

Community transport in Greater Manchester has a considerable impact on access to the five key areas of activity identified as priorities both in national and local policies – 2008 figures estimated these as **Employment** (36% of individual trips), **Education** (32% of individual trips), **Healthcare** (20% of individual trips), **Social & Cultural** (54% of group trips) and **Education** (34% of group trips).

CT's community-based approach means regular drivers from the local area build up a rapport with passengers. This can build feelings of safety and security and help break down barriers of isolation. It can also act as an informal warning system – a call from a regular driver, "Mrs Jones isn't answering the door today – should I call for help?" can alert family or agencies to problems that may otherwise go unnoticed.



## Volunteering

Despite the national trend of decreasing volunteering, **volunteer input accounts for a considerable proportion (nearly 80%) of the driver resources** available to the Greater Manchester CT sector.

In addition to the economic contribution that volunteering makes to society, **volunteering also makes a valuable social contribution**. On an individual basis, it can also help to improve self-esteem and social skills and provide a route into, or a means of return to, employment. Anecdotal evidence suggests this is particularly the case with volunteer driving.

## Environmental impact

The CT sector made over half a million individual passenger journeys during 2007-2008. There are no current indicators available to determine how many of these journeys would have been made by car, had CT not been available. However, assuming a 75% loading factor (eight passengers, which may be conservative) for CT vehicles, compared with a 100% loading factor (four passengers, which may be optimistic) for a car, some rough calculations, in relation to group transport at least, can be made.

Every journey (comprising eight individual trips) in a CT vehicle could therefore result in a saving of at least one car journey. Using the indicative figures for 2007-2008 (252,398 group trips), it can be seen that **community transport could have saved over thirty one thousand car journeys in Greater Manchester**.

# How CT can make a difference

## Problem – economic disadvantage

People living on low incomes may not be able to afford to run a car, and are less likely to be able to afford taxis. This can severely limit their transport options.

Such problems are made worse if the people concerned live in an area not served well by main bus services.

People who find it difficult, through age or disability, to use public transport are likely to be living on extremely low incomes. They are therefore hit by a double disadvantage of poverty and disability.

## Problem – social exclusion

People who are young, able bodied or with access to a car often take transport for granted. In plain language:

- If you can't get to work, you can't earn money.
- If you can't get to school or college, you can't gain the qualifications that will enable you to get that first job or move on to a better one.
- If you can't get to the doctor, your health may suffer.
- If you can't get to the shops used by everybody else, both your health (lack of nutrition from fresh food) and your wallet (from paying higher prices) will suffer.
- If you can't get out to meet friends or family, or go out socially, you may start to feel trapped, shut in or depressed.



Lack of access to transport results in groups or individuals becoming marginalised and socially excluded.

Accessible, safe, affordable and professional transport helps prevent exclusion and marginalisation.

## Problem – passenger logistics & spiralling costs

Health and local authorities rely on their clients and patients being able to get to the services they provide. This often means providing transport, often at short notice and off main bus routes.



Many statutory authorities face seemingly uncontrollable rises in the cost of both bespoke and regular transport - it is not unheard of for a taxi journey of less than 20 miles to result in a three-figure charge.

Resources invested in such transport are lost to the authority and the unpredictable nature of the demand makes budgetary control very difficult.

## Solution – commission community transport

Practical experience in Greater Manchester demonstrates that community transport can provide solutions to these problems.

Community transport provides accessible safe, affordable and professional transport solutions designed to meet the needs of the user, not the operator.

Community transport operators can deliver the type of bespoke, passenger-focused service that other operators find difficult to deliver.

To discuss your organisation's transport needs, and how CT can help, please call David Campbell on 0161 277 1014. Alternatively, you can email

[info@gmctof.org.uk](mailto:info@gmctof.org.uk)

## Margaret's story

Perhaps the best way of describing the impact access to accessible, safe affordable and professional transport can have is to hear about how it might play a part in the life of one of its passengers.

For many of the people involved in providing or using it, CT is about so much more than just transport

Margaret is in her eighties, living in the house she moved into as a newly-wed in 1956. Her husband died three years ago, so she lives alone.

Margaret's as sharp as a pin, but like many women of her age, is not longer steady on her feet as she was. Her eyesight and hearing aren't so good any more either, so she's not as confident as she was about being out and about.

She used to walk to the bus stop, but now her arthritis is worse she can't, and even if she could she couldn't stand waiting if the bus was late. Truth be told, she'd be scared of standing waiting anyway – her friend had her bag stolen last year. She's also worried about going on the bus nowadays – last winter, she managed to get on but the driver pulled away before she could sit down and she fell over. She didn't hurt herself badly, but she knows she could easily have broken her hip as she has osteoporosis.

Margaret is fiercely independent, and wants to stay in her own home, despite her son's thinking she might be better in care, and can manage quite well with the support of Social Services and her family.

These days, Margaret uses Local Link to get to her hospital appointments – she can book her outward and return journey at the same time. The minibus arrives outside her house, and the driver comes to make sure she gets on to the bus safely; it's usually one of the regular drivers, and Margaret has got to know them all. There are all types of people on the bus; some going to hospital, some going into town, others going further afield. Sometimes there are disabled teenagers going to college. The front of the bus lowers right down so they can get their wheelchairs on straight from the kerb.



The bus comes back to pick her up from hospital outpatients after her appointment is finished, and takes her back home, dropping people on the way. .

For shopping, Margaret uses her local Dial A Ride. They pick her up from her door, and drop her at Sainsbury's. It's often full of other people going shopping too, so she has the chance for a natter in the coffee shop before the bus comes back an hour later.

Margaret's also a member of her local over 60s group; they organise trips out all year round. The minibus they use doesn't cost that much in the first place, and when it's split between ten the cost is very reasonable. Because it's got a tail lift, Margaret's friend Janet, who uses a wheelchair, can go on days out as well.

Margaret says that it's being able to get out and about, being able to do for herself, that keeps her going. She'd never want to go into a home, she'd go mad staring at the four walls.

All of the transport services Margaret uses are provided by her local community transport operator, sometimes in partnership with other providers. This accessible, safe and affordable transport enables her, and other people like her, to stay active, remain at home and maintain their independence longer.

*Margaret's story is based on interviews, conversations with, and the real-life experiences of CT users.*





## Partnership and innovation

Across Greater Manchester, there are examples of the CT sector's innovative and strategic approach to meeting transport needs. In Rochdale, for example, the Flexible Transport Group brings together partners from the CT, Voluntary & Community and statutory sectors to create a coordinated approach to the provision of social needs transport.

### DRT

In the City of Manchester, two operators work in partnership with Ring & Ride and Manchester City Council to deliver an innovative DRT scheme for GMPTE – the North Manchester Local Link service. CT operators now deliver 80% of Local Link services for GMPTE.

### Health

In Rochdale and Oldham, local CT operators have teamed up with Primary Care Trusts in innovative initiatives, improving transport to health facilities and helping to promote healthier lifestyles.

### More than just minibuses!

CT in Greater Manchester provides a wide range of services. These include a county-wide scheme that matches volunteer drivers to families with sick children who could not otherwise make the long journey to hospital appointments, and Oldham's Shopmobility service, which hires wheelchairs and powered scooters to disabled shoppers.

Two CTs also offer a furniture recycling facility, in which good-quality (and sometimes new) donated furniture and white goods are available at affordable prices to people on low incomes.

## More information

For more information about community transport in Greater Manchester.

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