

BRIEFING: WHAT IS COMMUNITY TRANSPORT?

The traditional view is that ‘community transport’ has a strong community base, involving users in the design and delivery of its services, with an independent voluntary management committee. Today, however, there are many ways in which the term ‘community transport’ is now used: some key approaches are set out in the Table below.

Table A: ‘Community Transport’ – possible structures and objectives

- **Transport operated by voluntary sector organisations that have transport operation for others as a key purpose**
This excludes voluntary groups that only operate transport to meet their own needs.
- **Transport operated by transport organisations that:**
 - **are non-statutory (i.e. not required by law)**
 - **are democratic**
 - **are locally-based**
 - **involve users in decision-making**
 - **are not-for-profit***This describes the way the transport is organised, rather than the transport itself.*
- **Transport designed to meet the needs that conventional transport operators leave unmet**
This definition is reactive i.e. the area of ground occupied by community transport is that which commercial, statutory and private transport does not cover. This implies that if another transport operator develops a service that community transport is currently operating, the community transport project will cease to provide it. It also implies that community transport will not compete for work with commercial operators.
- **Unconventional transport**
This definition makes no reference to the process, nor the objectives, but is concerned about the operating mode or legal basis i.e. registered local bus services using buses are conventional; taxibuses, taxi-sharing, car schemes, s.19 Permit services, dial-a-rides are unconventional.
- **Non-commercial collective transport**
This definition includes subsidised bus services, statutory services and voluntary organisations operating for their own purposes.

Community transport development is usually driven by observed or experienced need, rather than a desire to provide transport or to run a commercial transport business. This has stimulated unconventional approaches and has also created strong links between the CT sector and the government’s social inclusion agenda. Thus there are community-based transport services relating to a wide variety of groups of people and a huge range of needs.

In summary, when thinking about ‘community transport’ it is important not to be constrained by predetermined models of how it should be done. It is helpful to look at other projects to learn from their experience, but there is no single ‘best model’. Whatever develops in South Westminster has to be appropriate to the local circumstances and needs. The way to achieve this is to focus on what is needed and then to establish a structure that will meet these needs.

Figure A : Who benefits from ‘community transport’? And how is the service delivered?

Legal Basis	Operation	Open to:	Frequent Targets:	For:
s.19 Minibuses	Fixed Route	General Public	Anyone Without a Car	Any Journey
Community Buses	Semi-Scheduled	Restricted Group (Open)	Anyone in an Isolated Area	Emergency / Urgent
Large buses (s.19)	Fully Demand Responsive	Restricted Group (Closed)	Disabled People	Health Related
Car Sharing	Group Travel	Restricted Group (Closed)	Older People	Any but Health
PSV Operation	Brokerage	<p>PICK ‘N’ MIX! This is a general template for CT showing different legal bases, service types, passenger groups and target journeys. Many different combinations from the different columns exist.</p>	Young People	Work / Training
Taxi / Private Hire	Car Clubs		People with Restricted Means	Recreation
Self-Drive Hire	Bus Clubs		Women	To / from School
	Shopmobility		People from Ethnic Minorities	To / from Group
	Wheels to Work			