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Evaluation Study of Demand Responsive Transport Services in Wiltshire

Client: Wiltshire County Council

17 July 2006
Final Report

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Wiltshire has one of the most established DRT networks in Britain with the first ‘Wigglybus’ scheme being introduced in 1998 under the first tranche of Rural Bus Challenge funding from the then Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions. Subsequently, the network has developed such that it now has eight routes made up of ‘Wigglybus’, ‘Hopper’ and taxi-based DRT services. Consequently the County is seen as being a leader in the field of DRT.

The Council is, however facing significant financial pressures. In particular, costs in the bus industry are rising at a rate significantly higher than inflation while the available sources of subsidy are either under threat due to a significant reduction in the County’s overall funding through the Annual Settlement Grant, or else disappearing altogether (e.g. Rural Bus Challenge, finance from NHS PCT Trusts).

As a result, in March 2006, Wiltshire County Council employed a research team from Loughborough University to evaluate Demand Responsive Transport services in the County and make recommendations as to how the County Council should proceed regarding its DRT services in the future.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of the study was to:

1. Review the performance of existing demand responsive transport services in Wiltshire, including comparisons with similar services elsewhere in the UK.

2. Assess the extent to which demand responsive transport services can provide a cost-effective way of achieving rural transport and access objectives within Wiltshire, and to identify the future role that demand responsive transport should play in the Council’s transport and access strategies.

More specifically, the study objectives were to:

a) Evaluate the performance of existing Wiltshire DRT services against WCC objectives;

b) Compare the performance of Wiltshire DRT services with existing schemes in the UK;

c) Compare the performance of Wiltshire DRT services with non DRT services; and

d) Examine the future role of DRT in Wiltshire.

Research Method

The study comprised the following elements:

1. State-of-the-art review: to explore how local authorities across England in a similar situation to Wiltshire have coped with the ending of RBC monies and how the schemes have addressed longer term policy, operational and financial situations;

2. In-depth study of policy, operational, and financial data relating to the current performance of DRT in the County;

3. Face to face interviews: to obtain an understanding of the situation in Wiltshire and how DRT fits into that picture;
4. A focus group: to discuss issues raised, and questions not fully answered in the face to face interviews.

Evidence from each of these sources was then analysed and a ‘toolbox’ developed – from which the following conclusions and recommendations are drawn.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

**Contextual**

- Rural public transport in Wiltshire is vulnerable due to imminent budget cuts facing the Passenger Transport Unit directly and the Council as a whole. This is coupled with a history of increased spending on buses in recent years delivering little obvious additional benefit (as bus industry costs continue to rise at a rate significantly higher than inflation).

- Lack of integration of DRT within the wider policy context.

- Notwithstanding this, public transport can play a key role in meeting a range of policy objectives.

- Specific funds for DRT services are now coming to an end, primarily from Central Government through the Rural Bus Challenge grants.

- Bus tender costs have increased at above inflation rates for a number of years meaning that parts of the core network are now becoming increasingly expensive to subsidise with consequent knock-on effects on the ‘less deserving’ services.

- There is a lack of taxi and Community Transport operators available and/or willing to tender for DRT contracts in the County.

**Scheme design**

- DRT in Wiltshire would appear to be ad hoc and opportunistic in development.

- Marketing and branding are unsystematic and in certain respects confused.

- There was an initial failure to consider the future funding situation.

- There have been some significant moves towards delivering service integration with education transport, but so far no real progress with other council (or external) agencies.

- A shift to increase operational efficiency through integrating public transport service delivery has led to overly complex route patterns and timetables.

- The fare structure is overly complex.

- In terms of vehicle size – 16 seat is too small for school traffic (24 seat similar cost) but more expensive than taxi (8 seats).

- Booking arrangements and use of routing software is rather randomly organised.

- Current format of Advisory Groups could work more effectively.

- There is a need to explore the development of Social Enterprise Community Transport.
Scheme performance

- The majority of WCC DRT schemes perform well in cost per passenger and usage terms.
- General usage and cost per passenger of all DRT schemes are improving (with quite a significant improvement in the Boomerang services in particular for April and May 2006).

Recommendations

Accordingly, the following recommendations are made.

Strategic recommendations

- Explore additional sources of funding, such as increased fares and look to improve efficiencies and/or cut costs where possible (see later for further details);
- Rural public transport (and DRT in particular) needs to be more explicitly integrated within wider policy areas in order to more accurately reflect its importance as a delivery tool;
- DRT needs to be developed in a more systematic way. This should be based on a ‘toolbox’ approach, whereby the travel needs identified can be met by the most appropriate public transport tool available;
- Seek to standardise DRT ‘types’ across the county, whereby Wigglybus means one thing, Boomerang or ‘Wigglytaxi’ something else;
- Investigate the possibility of further integration of DRT service provision with special educational needs, social care, and NHS non-emergency transport. Care should be taken however, to ensure that the DRT ‘product’ is not unduly compromised. Thus, area-wide on-demand services e.g. the Hopper may be able to incorporate additional high care needs or high value to agency trips, while there would be rather less scope for fixed or semi-flexible and scheduled Wigglybus operations;
- Simplify, if at all possible, routes and timetables;
- Seek to simplify the fare structures;
- Consider the use of either eight seater taxis or 24 seat vehicles where possible;
- Explore the feasibility of rationalising booking functions based on a single call centre;
- It is suggested that a strategic review of the role of the Advisory Groups be undertaken;
- Consider working with CT operators to encourage them to develop as Social Enterprise organisations such that they may be able to bid for DRT contracts in the future at lower costs
- WCC, in conjunction with other local authorities should lobby Central Government regarding the restrictive nature of the legislation.

Scheme specific recommendations

Pewsey Vale Wigglybus
• Redesign the service from scratch based on a 2/3 bus resource instead of 4 buses;
• Possibly use 24 seat bus on hourly Devizes-based route, and a 16 seat bus to provide alternate hourly services to Pewsey;
• Examine scope for raising fares;
• Simplify fare structure to single trip tickets, multi-trip ticket and concessionary fare passes only.

**Calne Wigglybus**
• Switch from DRT operation to fixed route operation with 2/3 on-demand detour stops;
• Examine scope for raising fares;
• Replace 16 seat vehicle with 24 seat vehicle;
• Simplify fare structure on similar lines to above.

**Mere Wigglybus**
• Unless the current situation improves, DRT service should be discontinued on cessation of RBC funding;
• Diversions from existing bus routes and/or taxibus services should be considered instead;
• Bookings could be redirected to a common call centre in the short term in order to increase efficiency.

**RUH Hopper**
• RUH Hopper is likely to always require a relatively high subsidy/trip;
• Examine scope for raising fares and for sponsorship;
• Consider potential for adopting InterConnect approach and linking services with trunk route commercial bus services direct to RUH at interchanges in West Wiltshire.

**Bradenstoke and Wootton Bassett Boomerang**
• Not much scope for services to be rationalised by limiting destinations and choice of travel times, but these options need to be considered. Users tend to be captive and so most would likely switch to an alternative time of travel if service levels reduced.

**Malmesbury Boomerang**
• Needs to be rationalised by limiting destinations and choice of travel times;
• Increase service monitoring to ensure new rules followed.
1. Introduction

1.1 Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) in the UK

Increasingly, conventional bus services do not meet the needs of a large section of the population. This is due to increasing incomes and car ownership levels and the resulting dispersal of activity centres and trip patterns. One possible solution is public transport systems that can operate effectively with lower and more dispersed patterns of demand than the bus, i.e. Demand Responsive Transport (DRT).

DRT first came to prominence in the UK during the 1970s when a number of high profile schemes were first developed to try and address the problems described above. For various reasons, most notably high cost per passenger trip and technological problems, by the mid 1980s the DRT market was very much a niche operation, typically operating on a small scale as Community Transport schemes or occasionally as a replacement for local authority tendered services (under the new ‘deregulated’ regime).

By the late 1990s however the DRT concept once more gained popularity as a potential solution to an increasingly hostile bus operating environment among a new generation of public transport planners. In particular, concerns about poor access to facilities by non-car owners in rural areas resulted in the creation of the Rural Bus Challenge in 1998, whereby local authorities were invited to bid for money to deliver additional and innovative public transport services. This brief was interpreted in many councils as meaning they should look at DRT services, and by the time the Urban Bus Challenge fund was launched in 2000 DRT schemes formed a sizeable number of the schemes funded. Partially as a consequence, DRT also featured in a number of UK Government reports from various agencies (e.g. the Social Exclusion Unit and the Countryside Agency as well as the Department for Transport) suggesting it could be used to tackle a number of policy objectives. Thus, by the time the last Challenge funds were being administered in 2003, the future of DRT schemes in the UK seemed assured.

1.2 Problems with DRT

Unfortunately, since then it would seem that this fairly optimistic position has begun to change. This section draws on a ‘PESTLE’ framework of ‘external factors’ to examine some reasons for this.

1.2.1 Political

Politically, as already noted DRT schemes were firmly embedded in the consciousness of several Government agencies since the late 1990s, but while local politicians still see DRT as being a potential vote winner, the interest of the DfT in particular has begun to shift towards other areas with the ending of the Rural and Urban Bus Challenge programmes.

1.2.2 Economic

One key problem with DRT schemes has been due to high per passenger trip costs (typically subsidy is around double that paid to conventional tendered bus services) threatening their financial viability. This is because:

- Firstly, income from DRT services tends to be relatively low:

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1 Bakker (1999) defines paratransit [DRT] as describing “transportation options that fall between private car and conventional public bus services. It is usually considered to be an option only for less developed countries and for niches like elderly and disabled people.”
Partly because the number of users is relatively low.

- People often do not understand how to access the new type of service or do not believe they are eligible to use it due to inadequate marketing.

- Services were designed to serve particular market niches that simply did not exist because the competitive tendering process (for Challenge funding grants) discouraged in-depth planning.

- Services must compete with a whole range of well-established transport services namely: commercial bus, tendered bus, Community Transport, education transport, social service transport, and non-emergency patient transport.

- By its nature, DRT is designed to 'fill in' where the market is too small to run larger buses.

And partly because fares are often kept at artificially low levels for public policy reasons.

Secondly, costs are relatively high:

- Staff costs remain at the same level as for larger bus operations.

- While small buses nominally cost less than large buses, many vehicles were ordered in very small batches and needed substantial modification before being suitable for service. Moreover, the lifetime of smaller buses is generally significantly less than for larger buses.

- Many schemes adopted complicated and therefore expensive state-of-the-art high-tech communication, navigation and route-optimisation equipment that was tailor made for the specific operations, again to satisfy the requirement to be innovative.

Such an imbalance was manageable when Central Government finance was supporting the services\(^2\), but as this funding comes to an end there are real problems with continued scheme viability.

1.2.3 Social

In some cases, DRT schemes have suffered very much from an image problem, in that people see the minibuses as a form of social service transport that is only there to serve ‘other people’ e.g. poor, elderly, mobility impaired people, rather than the general public. This is fostered by the fact that most of the users often are poor, elderly and mobility impaired people (who are often more aware of this type of travel option), combined with the use of CT-like vehicles, the insistence on membership schemes (required if a DRT service is to be eligible for Bus Service Operating Grant) and poor marketing.

1.2.4 Technological

One area where the RBC and UBC funding did prove a success was in solving a whole range of technological and operational problems (e.g. to do with communications, navigation, route optimisation, and vehicle design) that had dogged earlier attempts at DRT and this was

\(^2\) For instance, the 2005 summary of the ‘Kickstart’ initiative awards which succeeded the ‘Challenge’ funds does not explicitly allocate any of the available £20m to DRT schemes (although DRT may form an element in some of those described).
largely due to the criterion in the funding application that stressed ‘innovation’ as being important. Unfortunately, given the small-scale nature of many of the scheme proposals (often only two or three vehicles) such high-tech specifications were probably not necessary and indeed may well have been a key reason for the very high per passenger subsidy levels often recorded.

1.2.5 Legal

An extremely important barrier to the development of DRT has been the institutional framework, which until the regulations were altered in 2004 actually theoretically prevented several existing schemes from operating in their existing form. However, while such tweaks to the framework were obviously a necessary action in the short term, in the longer term they had the unfortunate effect of making an already far too complex situation even more complicated.

In short, DRT is ‘neither fish nor fowl’, neither bus, nor minicab, nor taxi, nor CT, and yet it is all of those. Thus, an operator looking to devise a shared taxi or DRT scheme potentially must deal with a range of incredibly complex bureaucracies because minicab, taxi, bus, Community Transport, education transport, social service transport, and non-emergency patient transport services are all governed by different institutions and sets of regulations. This has significant day-to-day implications for driver licensing, operator licensing, route licensing, tax, VAT, eligibility for public subsidy and insurance. For instance, a taxi firm looking to set up a shared taxi service under Section 12 of the 1985 Transport Act would be eligible for Bus Service Operating Grant, but would need to register with the regional Traffic Commissioner (in addition to the local taxi licensing authority). Moreover, if the vehicle had more than nine seats it would be liable for VAT.

1.2.6 Environmental

Environmental factors do not really apply in this case.

1.3 The Wiltshire Case

Overall, it is known that several DRT schemes have recently been discontinued (e.g. schemes in Cornwall, Northamptonshire and Hampshire), while other authorities, such as Lancashire County Council, are in the process of rationalising their DRT services as the Challenge funding periods come to an end. Moreover, other existing DRT schemes in 2005 are facing several serious threats to their continued viability of which the most serious are to do with financial considerations, while new schemes are no longer being developed due to the complexity and inflexibility of the legal and institutional regime, the decline in political (and economic) support available from Central Government, and the perceived greater commercial risk of running a mode that is still largely unproven. However, while the general issues are broadly understood, rather less is known about exactly what has happened on the ground. One local authority now facing several of these issues is Wiltshire County Council.

Wiltshire has one of the most established DRT networks in Britain with the first ‘Wigglybus’ scheme being introduced in 1998 under the first tranche of Rural Bus Challenge funding from the then Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions. Subsequently, the County has also developed one of the most extensive DRT networks in the country and now has eight routes made up of ‘Wigglybus’, ‘Hopper’ and taxi-based DRT services. Consequently the County is seen as being a leader in the field.

However, it is now facing significant financial pressures. In particular, costs in the bus industry are rising at a rate significantly higher than inflation while the available sources of subsidy are either under threat due to a significant reduction in the County’s overall funding through the Annual Settlement Grant, or else disappearing altogether (e.g. Rural Bus Challenge, finance from NHS PCT Trusts).
1.4 Aims and objectives of this Report

As a result, WCC commissioned the following study in order to determine the future role of DRT in the County, the aims of which are:

1) To review the performance of existing demand responsive transport services in Wiltshire, including comparisons with similar services elsewhere in the UK.

2) To assess the extent to which demand responsive transport services can provide a cost-effective way of achieving rural transport and access objectives within Wiltshire, and to identify the future role that demand responsive transport should play in the Council’s transport and access strategies.

More specifically, the study objectives are to:

a) Evaluate the performance of existing Wiltshire DRT services against WCC objectives;

b) Compare the performance of Wiltshire DRT services with existing schemes in the UK;

c) Compare the performance of Wiltshire DRT services with non DRT services; and

d) Examine the future role of DRT in Wiltshire.

1.5 Structure of the Report

In undertaking this work, the Report is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 reports the findings of a State-of-the-Art Review. Specifically, this looks at existing articles and reports detailing the design, operation and performance of various types of DRT scheme, in part based on the experiences of members of the research team in terms of DRT and then examines five selected UK DRT networks in more detail.

The research methodology is then described in Chapter 3, while Chapter 4 provides an in-depth analysis of the existing status of DRT schemes within Wiltshire drawing on documentary evidence and operational data.

Chapter 5 then reports the findings of a whole series of in-depth interviews and of a focus group held with key stakeholders involved in the Wiltshire DRT systems.

Chapter 6 draws together the results of the preceding three chapters in order to provide a framework to inform the study conclusions and recommendations which are then presented in Chapter 7.
2. State-of-the-Art Review

The purpose of this state-of-the-art review is broadly to explore how local authorities across England in a similar situation to Wiltshire have coped with the ending of Rural and Urban Bus Challenge monies. Specifically, it seeks to outline how the schemes have addressed (and are addressing) longer term policy, operational and financial situations.

The evidence on which this is based is taken from a mixture of sources including existing reviews, technical reports and email, telephone and face to face communications with experts, scheme operators and local authority officers. These results are first presented as descriptive vignettes on a case by case basis, before the lessons are drawn together and general observations made.

2.1 Introduction

Increasingly, conventional bus services do not meet the needs of a large section of the population due to increasing incomes and car ownership levels and the resulting dispersal of activity centres and trip patterns. One solution is public transport systems that can operate effectively with lower and more dispersed patterns of demand than the bus, i.e. Demand Responsive Transport. Brake et al (2004) suggests that ‘a typical working definition of DRT is an intermediate form of public transport, somewhere between a regular service route that uses small low floor buses and variably routed, highly personalised transport services offered by taxis’. Talley and Anderson (1986) is slightly more specific noting that ‘demand-responsive paratransit services are those that are flexible in time or are non-scheduled. They may be either non-scheduled, variable-route services such as dial-a-ride or non-scheduled, fixed route services such as the jitney. Commuter paratransit services are forms such as vanpool, which follow a fixed time schedule but a variable route’.

In brief, ‘informal’ DRT services such as jitneys have operated across the world ever since the early twentieth century. But more institutional service types such as ‘dial-a-ride’ only really took off in the 1970s before dying away again for all but the most specialist trips due to the labour-intensiveness of the system, high labour costs and inefficiencies such as many service vehicles travelling without or with few passengers. Another reason for low performance was that the systems were not attractive to consumers (Khattack and Yim, 2004). However, with advances in software, computers, digital maps, expert systems, remote communications, in-vehicle computers and GPS, DRT suddenly became technologically viable during the late 1990s (Duffell, 2003). In Britain, the presence of this new technology combined with a sudden influx of Government funding aimed at overcoming social exclusion from 1998, led to an extremely rapid growth in the take up of DRT, primarily by local authorities, but also by Community Transport operations, commercial public transport operators and even employers (Enoch et al, 2004).

Thus far, research on DRT has tended to focus mostly on the technical aspects of how to assign vehicles as efficiently as possible. Relatively little has been conducted on which markets can best be served by DRT and by what mechanism.

2.2 Contextual Factors

In considering public transport from an operational perspective, the first step is to identify the likely demand levels i.e. the potential market. Here, a report for the Scottish Executive determines four possible markets for DRT systems (DHC et al, 2006). These are:

- High care needs – a quite diverse sector that caters for people with disabilities such as Dial-a-Ride and some non-emergency patient transport, social services transport, and community transport.

- Best value DRT solutions for low demand public transport – where greater flexibility in the locations for picking up and dropping off passengers can ensure better value
services and wider network coverage. Rural DRT services, sometimes called Ring-and-Ride, are examples of this.

- Premium value services – defined by the need to reduce travel times, receive a higher degree of customer care and are often door-to-door. These have grown significantly for niche markets such as airport transfer services.
- High value to agency services – where services are tailored to the needs of public agencies e.g. patient transport, education transport, joblink services.

Of these, the premium services tend to be relatively simple and low tech with a high per passenger revenue (and are hence operated by the private sector), while the high care and high value to agency schemes tend to represent fairly high tech and expensive schemes to operate, but should have access to external specialist budgets to contribute to their operation. Lastly, experience so far suggests that those DRT schemes targeted at the best value for low demand niche have tended to be fairly high tech and high cost yet with low per passenger revenues in areas that are historically already difficult to serve by public transport and hence are financially vulnerable.

Meanwhile the *Intermode* study examines more than 70 DRT schemes from around the world, and attempts to determine where, how and why DRT schemes operate successfully. In particular, it reports that there appear to be three general market niches where DRT can be seen to work well (Enoch et al, 2004). First, low tech, low quality, small scale simple DRT systems can be applied in areas where captive users are happy to use any form of public transport but are only willing (or able) to pay low fares. Second, there are niches (e.g. employer shuttles, airport shuttles) where commercial operators can target choice users with small scale simple to operate systems who appreciate luxury and are prepared to pay a premium for a service that is as far away from a bus or a minicab as possible. Finally, large scale, complex network DRT systems require high tech equipment if they are to operate efficiently. As a result they will be relatively expensive to operate. However, providing that savings can be made (usually by substituting even more expensive specialist transport trips) there is scope for these services to be cost effective – assuming the benefiting bodies actually pay for those benefits. It is also advisable that services should be of high quality and that fares be raised above those of a comparable bus service as it will be important to attract a proportion of choice users. Unfortunately, a majority of schemes seem to fit into a fourth category, whereby costs are high and revenues are nowhere near high enough to meet them. Many of these schemes are consequently financially unsustainable in the medium term.

This breaks down the market niche into two types of user – the choice and the captive – who generally seek quite different things from a DRT service. For instance, choice users generally are more prepared to pay higher fares for a quality service; prefer services that are as quick, punctual and direct as possible; and are prearranged and routine. Comfort and image are also important. Their typical journey purpose is commuting. By contrast, captive users are far more price sensitive but less quality conscious. Typical journey purposes here are shopping, leisure and access to health. In general, DRT schemes that target choice users are likely to meet modal shift policy objectives, while those that aim to serve captive users will meet social inclusion objectives. Crucially, although it is possible to address both goals (perhaps at different times of day), in rural areas it is probably more sensible to focus on improving social inclusion for the captive users.
One other marketing dimension to consider concerns the times and the type of place where DRT or DRT/conventional bus blends could be appropriate (Table 2.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>City Radial</th>
<th>Town Radial</th>
<th>City Cross-suburb</th>
<th>Fringe Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday–Friday, 06.00–19.00</td>
<td>Conventional bus.</td>
<td>Conventional bus</td>
<td>Conventional bus/DRT</td>
<td>Conventional bus/DRT</td>
<td>DRT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday–Friday, 19.00–23.00</td>
<td>Conventional bus</td>
<td>Conventional bus/DRT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday–Friday, 23.00–06.00</td>
<td>Conventional bus/DRT</td>
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<td>Sundays</td>
<td>Conventional bus</td>
<td>Conventional bus/DRT</td>
<td>DRT</td>
<td>DRT</td>
<td>DRT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: Times and Places for DRT

Looking beyond the market niche to other contextual factors there is a whole range of influences that determine the type of DRT operation. The ‘shaper’ factors considered by Enoch et al (2004) included policy context (financial situation and regulatory and ownership structure) and area factors (population of area served, land use pattern and trip destination and attractiveness). In addition, it could be argued that supply factors need to be considered.

### 2.3 Scheme Design

To try and understand why many of the schemes investigated did not fit in any of the three more suitable market niches, further, as yet unpublished work by the principal investigator of this report based on the findings of the Intermode study applies marketing theory to the DRT sector to provide a suitable analysis framework. Essentially, service marketing theory (see Palmer, 2000) suggests that seven ‘P’s be used, namely:

- **Product** – the means to satisfy consumer needs;
- **Pricing** – which determines the revenue generated;
- **Promotion** – how organisations communicate the benefits of the products to the target markets;
- **Place** – based on compromise between where is most convenient for the product to be produced and where the best place is for customers to access it;
- **People** – particularly important in service industries where staff have a high level of contact with customers e.g. as with public transport;
- **Process** – how product is delivered i.e. is the service fast, reliable, friendly, easy to use etc, again important for services such as public transport;
- **Physical evidence** – intangible nature of a service means that potential consumers are unable to judge a service before it is consumed, and therefore tangible evidence of the promised service delivery may be required e.g. smartly dressed staff, clean vehicles etc.

Secondly, it is necessary to recognise those attributes of a bus service that are important to the passenger. These are derived from a report by the trade body of bus and light rail operators, the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT, 2002), which reports the results of a survey into the attributes of travel by bus used by operator First. These are presented in order of importance in Table 2.2, together with how these attributes might be mapped onto the seven ‘P’s.
### Table 2.2: Bus attributes and the classic services marketing approach (CPT, 2002; Palmer, 2000).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute elements</th>
<th>Primary marketing ‘P’</th>
<th>Secondary marketing ‘P’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reliability</strong></td>
<td>Proportion of the time the DRT service is ‘delivered’</td>
<td>Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
<td>Level of service, hours of operation, booking issues, membership schemes</td>
<td>Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vehicles</strong></td>
<td>Image and comfort, easily accessible to those with heavy shopping, prams and pushchairs, and wheelchairs</td>
<td>Physical evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Drivers</strong></td>
<td>Friendly and helpful staff,</td>
<td>People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Routes</strong></td>
<td>Easy to understand routes/network, pleasant waiting environment, branding</td>
<td>Place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fares</strong></td>
<td>Value for money, easy to understand, ticketing requirements</td>
<td>Price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information</strong></td>
<td>Easy to understand routes/network</td>
<td>Product</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It then sets out the operational and marketing (user) requirements for each of the various service attributes facing DRT scheme designers (see Table 2.3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operational Requirement</th>
<th>Marketing Requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Degree of pre-booking</strong></td>
<td>Advance bookings enable more efficient operations and reduce need for costly and complex technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flexibility of service (temporal)</strong></td>
<td>Suits operators to have arrival ‘windows’ as wide as possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flexibility of service (spatial)</strong></td>
<td>Checkpoint to checkpoint more efficient than door-to-door</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Membership clubs</strong></td>
<td>Membership data allows operators to more effectively meet demand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Timetable</strong></td>
<td>Operators aim to minimise number of vehicles and maximise use of those vehicles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Branding</strong></td>
<td>Generic branding across the vehicle fleet(s) allows operational flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vehicle</strong></td>
<td>Vehicles able to serve as many markets (e.g. school children, disabled, shoppers etc) allow more operational flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interchange</strong></td>
<td>Interchanging services increase travel opportunities of users while allowing operators to maintain simple networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ticketing</strong></td>
<td>In a deregulated public transport environment, operators dislike integrated ticketing schemes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pricing</strong></td>
<td>Operationally, differential fares for shorter/longer trips, peak/off peak trips, advance booking or block booking discounts, etc may work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operational Requirement</th>
<th>Marketing Requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Users prefer to book as close to departure time as possible</strong></td>
<td>The more uncertain the arrival time, the less the users like it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Door-to-door more attractive than checkpoint-to-checkpoint to user</strong></td>
<td>Membership requirement can put off occasional users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Users prefer ‘clock face’ departure times</strong></td>
<td>Users respond best to branding tied to the target market/route</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Users respond best to vehicle tied to the target market/route</strong></td>
<td>Users respond best to branding tied to the target market/route</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Users dislike interchanging</strong></td>
<td>Users dislike interchanging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Users appreciate buying a single ticket for their trip, no matter how many times they change</strong></td>
<td>Users respond best to vehicle tied to the target market/route</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>For the user, simple fare structures are preferred. But from a marketing perspective, differential fares are desirable – the key is to promote them in as clear a way as possible</strong></td>
<td>Users respond best to vehicle tied to the target market/route</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3: DRT characteristics and the differing marketing and operational requirements

From this, it can be seen that in many cases the best ways forward can significantly differ depending on whether an operational or a marketing perspective is adopted. The key is to try and ensure a balance is achieved between the two, probably with the marketing viewpoint being seen as the ideal and the operational viewpoint being seen as the more realistic or ‘constraining’ element. However in reality, UK bus practice tends to be heavily dominated by
the operational perspective, a position that often results in the services not properly 'connecting' with the user.

At this point it is necessary to focus on a few DRT specific elements that it is important to consider when developing the DRT Toolbox in the Discussion Section of this report. First, Tables 2.4 and 2.5 set out the key characteristics to do with operator/vehicle choice and route/scheduling choice respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operator/Vehicle Type</th>
<th>Key considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bus companies</td>
<td>Particularly suitable for large scale operations. Services are usually subsidised on a fixed cost basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxi operators</td>
<td>Ideal for small scale low tech schemes and can build from their existing skills providing demand responsive operations. Operations are usually subsidised on a mileage or per passenger basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT operators</td>
<td>Where there is a strong local community sector able to tender for contracts they should be encouraged to do so. Key parameters that need to be considered are: The recognised need to support the CT sector to build capacity. Potentially best value given the lower cost base and overheads. Often higher risks of failure in the sector mean that management capability will be a key issue. Few CT groups are able to manage large scale DRT operations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public agency</td>
<td>Procurement efficiencies may be possible by linking with existing DRT provision such as social services or patient transfer services.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.4: DRT Vehicle/Operator Characteristics (Adapted from DHC et al, 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Route/Schedule Type</th>
<th>Key considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fixed routes</td>
<td>Service journey departing from an end point (terminal) either at prescribed times (e.g. regular bus routes) or on-demand (e.g. Jitneys).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-fixed routes</td>
<td>Departs from an end stopping point (terminal) at prescribed times. Stops at any fixed intermediate points at prescribed times. Deviations to other stopping points upon request.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible routes</td>
<td>Departs from an end stopping point (terminal) at prescribed times. The vehicle only calls at stopping points upon request.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area-wide</td>
<td>No fixed end or intermediate stopping points. No scheduled departure times from any stopping point. Limited by operational hours and area limit. Only calls upon request.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.5: DRT Route/Scheduling Characteristics (Adapted from DHC et al, 2006)

### 2.4 Scheme Performance

The final piece in the application of marketing theory to the Intermode analysis, was to draw on the financial performance criteria suggested, namely:

1) **Commercially Viable DRT.** These are services that are either profitable, or operate within a commercial context (e.g. temporary losses are accepted as a service is built up or a loss-making service is compensated by its positive financial effects on a service network as a whole).

2) **Acceptable Subsidy DRT.** This is where DRT requires only the same (or less) subsidy than other comparable tendered services (a subsidy of £2 per trip or less appears to be the crucial threshold).

3) **Justifiable Higher Subsidy DRT.** This is where a subsidy above that comparable to tendered services can be justified. This may be due to the operational area (e.g. deep rural areas cost more anyway), that DRT is replacing inherently even more expensive transport or it is yielding significant cross-sector benefits.

4) **Financially Unsustainable DRT.** These may be demonstration and trial projects or other services whose losses remain very high.
The following Table maps the characteristics of each of these categories in order to try and determine a pattern that may explain the concentration of schemes to be found in the high cost, low revenue market niche.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example schemes</th>
<th>Typical Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commercially Viable</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxi-Train, Mauritius; Bicester Taxibus, Oxfordshire, UK; Paddington Shared Taxi Scheme, London, UK; Public Light Bus, Hong Kong; Black Cabs, Belfast, UK; Jitneys, Atlantic City NJ, USA; Dolmus, Istanbul, Turkey; Vodafone Shuttle, Oxfordshire, UK; Supershuttle, Los Angeles International Airport CA, USA; Yellow Taxibus, Fife; UK.</td>
<td>Motivations/Drivers - Usually commercially driven. Either make money directly by meeting niche need – e.g. airport passengers, specific neighbourhoods etc; or else by indirectly supporting wider commercial objectives – e.g. employer shuttles to out-of-the-way business parks, feeder shuttles to rail services etc. Operations - Tend to be very simple (one-to-one; one-to many), low cost, and low-tech. Users - High-value ‘choice’ consumers use airport shuttles, rail feeder services and some employer shuttles. High quality vehicles important where this is the case. Low value ‘captive’ customers accept lower quality vehicles – e.g. Belfast Black Cabs use end-of-the-line ex-London Taxis. Simplicity of services makes them easy for users to understand and easy for operators to sell. Finance - Simplicity of operations means technology costs can be low. High value consumers are prepared to pay premium fares thus covering the extra money spent on quality vehicles. Low quality operations depend on serving high volumes to cover costs. Reliability – Generally extremely good due to simplicity of operations. With high volume operations (e.g. Dolmus, PLB) vehicles tend not to be missed. With specialist small-scale operations, taxis can be used as replacements as soon as any problems are identified. Frequency – Extremely high where high volume systems in operations. For specialist services, frequency is on-demand. Vehicles – Quality is matched to the fare paid by the user. Drivers – Quality is matched to the fare paid by the user. Routes – Generally very simple for high volume services and well known to majority of users. For low volume operations, element of door-to-door provides reassurance. Fares – Market-driven and designed to cover costs of operation. Price linked to quality of service provided. Information – Simple routes require minimal information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acceptable Subsidy</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deeside Shuttle, Flintshire, UK; Telford MaxiTaxis, Shropshire, UK; Shared night taxi, Linz, Austria; Lovedean Carshare, Hampshire, UK; St Budeaux Taxibus, Devon, UK; Langage DRT, Devon, UK; Taxi Collectifs, Reunion, France;</td>
<td>Motivations/Drivers – Predominantly driven by public policy, especially increasing social inclusion, although some (e.g. Taxi Collectifs, Language Shuttle and St Budeaux Taxibus) were originally commercially driven. A number of public policy driven schemes stimulated in recent years in the UK by provision of significant subsidy payments. Operations – Majority of schemes relatively targeted, simple and low-tech. No really large scale, high volume schemes. Users – Majority of schemes targeted at low income captive users. Finance – Costs of operation relatively low. Reliability – Not usually a problem after initial teething problems sorted out. Frequency – Tends to be relatively low. Vehicles – Vehicles usually of a reasonable quality. Drivers – Not generally a key reason for failure unless drivers failing to turn up for work is contributing to unreliability. Routes – Generally relatively simple (one-to-one, many-to-one). Fares – Usually low (i.e. below market rate) due to markets served. Information – Simple routes require minimal information.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Justifiable Subsidy

InterConnect, Lincolnshire, UK; LAVTA DART, Bay Area CA, USA; VillageLink, Gloucestershire, UK; Nexus UCall, Newcastle, UK; Cango, Hampshire, UK; Farecar, Devon, UK; Wigglybus, Wiltshire, UK

Motivations/Drivers - Driven by public policy, especially increasing social inclusion, and stimulated (in recent years in the UK) by provision of significant subsidy payments from National Government.

Operations – Predominantly high quality, high-tech (routeing software, communications equipment etc), highly complicated (many-to-many), fairly small-scale systems. Often serve a range of separate markets (e.g. education, social service, hospital patient transport, commuter, dial-a-ride) as well as the general public. Fairly high proportion of schemes serve low density rural populations that are difficult (and expensive) to serve by conventional bus and taxi services.

Users – Typically low income captive users.

Finance – Fares often low due to market served and public policy objectives. Some efforts made (e.g. Cango) to attract cross subsidy from education, hospital patient transport, and social service transport budgets.

Reliability – Overly-complicated technology (e.g. vehicle, communications and routing software) can cause problems.

Frequency – Usually sacrificed in favour of offering wider spatial coverage. Some problems with service regularity where range of markets served.

Vehicles – Vehicles usually of a high quality thanks to availability of subsidy.

Drivers – Not generally a key reason for failure unless drivers failing to turn up for work is contributing to unreliability.

Routes – Generally designed to provide as many people as possible in a given area with some level of DRT service as possible. Fares – Need to be kept low if they are to meet the public policy objectives the schemes were established to meet.

Information – Can often be very difficult to understand due to complex nature of services offered.

Financially Unsustainable

Regiotaxi KAN, Arnhem, NL; Truro PlusBus, Cornwall, UK; Corlink, Cornwall, UK; DRT, Northants, UK;

Motivations/Drivers - Predominantly driven by public policy, but some commercially driven exceptions (e.g. Truro PlusBus).

Operations - Tend to be complex (many-to-many), high cost, and high-tech.

Users - In the UK, users are often socially excluded and are on low incomes. Many are put off by the perceived complex nature of the services provided (services are often irregular, do not follow set routes) and by the need for them to become members and to book ahead.

Finance - Complexity of operations means technology costs can be extremely high. Low income consumers are not prepared to pay premium fares and volumes are generally extremely low. Thus, systems are in danger of failing.

Reliability – Often poor due to complexity of system.

Frequency – Often irregular and too low to offer an attractive easy to use service. Tends to be sacrificed in favour of offering a more spatially comprehensive network.

Vehicles – Revenue collected often not sufficient to cover cost service quality.

Drivers – Not generally a key reason for failure unless drivers failing to turn up for work is contributing to unreliability.

Routes – Generally far too complicated to operate effectively.

Fares – Revenue collected often nowhere near sufficient to cover costs of operation. Price often set unrealistically low, and yet volumes remain too low to fill the gap.

Information – One major issue is that high-tech many-to-many services are extremely difficult to explain to users. This is a major barrier to new users.

Table 2.6: The operational and marketing features of DRT schemes graded by financial performance

Now that some of the more general points of how DRT systems operate successfully have been addressed, the next stage presents a series of vignettes of specific DRT operations.
2.5 Cango and Carshare, Hampshire

2.5.1 Context

Hampshire is a large county both with large urban areas (e.g. Portsmouth, Southampton) and large rural areas. In DRT terms, Hampshire County Council, like Wiltshire, is seen as being a pathfinder and is apparently currently facing similar problems.

Currently, DRT in Hampshire comprises of three levels that operate under the conventional bus service network. These are:

- Ten Dial-a-Ride schemes that provide door to door service for elderly and disabled people;
- Two Call and Go services in Hart and in Havant for people who meet the criteria for using it (e.g. elderly and disabled users) and for people who do not have access to a conventional bus services (i.e. live more than 400m from a stop);
- Six Cango DRT services for the general public; operated by commercial bus operators.

In addition, 11 ‘taxi share’ schemes operate in areas where demand is low and a fixed route regular bus service is not sustainable – typically in deep rural areas such as Lovedean (see later).

Meanwhile the objectives of these schemes as set out in the County’s current LTP are:

- To increase accessibility;
- To widen travel choice;
- To support wider quality of life objectives;
- To encourage value for money and efficient asset management.

2.5.2 Scheme design - Cango

The Cango flexible bus service has been in operation since July 2002, and partly complements and partly replaces existing poorly patronised bus services. Services tend to operate in so-called ‘Roam Zones’ that link rural areas with district centres and sometimes railway stations.

For example, in the Andover area, there are seven Cango routes numbered C1 to C7. The C1 connects a roam zone to the north west of Andover with Andover railway station, and provides two commuter services in the morning and two in the evening. The C2 links commuters from an area to the north east of Andover with Whitchurch station three times in the morning and evening. This was an instant hit, because there are regular services into London and there are parking issues at the station. However, commuter trips were disturbed because of unreliable trains in the evening, which over one period were often later than the 15 minute window allowed, and this put off some users. The five remaining services operate after the commuter and school runs in the morning, until the school and commuter services begin again in the late afternoon, serving roam zones mainly to the north and east of Andover. These services offer a choice of drop off points, largely for shopping and health.

Cango services also operate in Alton, Burghclere, Fordingbridge, and Romsey.

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3 Based on HCC (2002); HCC (2003a); HCC (2003b); HCC (2005), Armstrong (2003) and Armstrong (2006).
2.5.3 Scheme performance - Cango

In terms of performance, the Andover scheme’s RBC funding ceased in late 2004 and the service is now paid for from County baseline funding. Two vehicles operate the services and in April 2006 these carried 3100 passengers (significantly up on the previous month due to the launch of free concessionary fares) and 506 schools contract users. Subsidy per passenger trip ranges between £4.50 and £5.50 ‘depending on the weather’.

The second scheme serves Newbury from Burghclere and here a single vehicle carried 1650 passengers plus 380 school pupils in April 2006 at a subsidy of less than £5 per passenger trip. This scheme has always been jointly funded by the County and the District.

The RBC money for the Alton Cango is due to expire in 2007. Here it is likely that the scheme will be rationalised from three vehicles to two. This, it is hoped, will reduce subsidy per passenger trip from around £7.50 to around £5.50 (which is seen as being about the maximum reasonable level for DRT). Patronage on this service is normally between 1500 and 1600 a month, but in April 2006 this rose to 2300 – again probably the result of the free concessionary fares arrangement.

The two other existing schemes began operating in August 2005 and results are not available. Taxibus schemes are, however, already being considered for when the funding ends.

Finally, one other scheme in Havant funded by Urban Bus Challenge monies failed fairly quickly due to a number of factors (see Enoch et al, 2004). Here, permission was obtained from the DfT for the vehicles to be transferred and the service was converted into a Call and Go service.

2.5.4 Scheme design – Lovedean

The Lovedean Carshare service allows registered users living in Lovedean and Cowplain who previously used the number 36 Emsworth and District bus service to access facilities in Cowplain and Waterlooville. Fares range from 40p to £1.20. The service features fixed start and end points, and if no bookings are received, the service does not operate. This reduces the subsidy – a full taxi requires virtually no subsidy – and does not need to be registered as a bus service as it only runs on demand.

The taxi operator – a local firm called Cowplain Cars – quotes for the cost of a journey minus the fare, which reduces its risk exposure. Claims made for trips are verified by cross-checking with users to confirm invoices – drivers must log user details each time they operate the service. However, in spite of the no-risk income it has proved difficult to stimulate interest from taxi operators. Initially forty tender documents were sent out but none were returned, and the council had to chase up operators by telephone to persuade them to bid.

2.5.5 Scheme performance - Lovedean

According to council figures for 2003, the Lovedean service operates between three and five trips a day and carries an average of roughly two-and-a-half to three passengers per trip. Average subsidy costs per month range from £370 to £490 a month, while average monthly fare revenues are between £140 and £175 – i.e. a revenue cost ratio of between 35% and 40%. There are between 240 and 300 trips made per month and in May 2003 there were 58 registered members. Subsidies come out at roughly £1 per passenger trip.

2.5.6. Future options

Until now, the number of DRT schemes has steadily grown thanks to the existence of external funding – in particular Challenge funding – and due to support from local councillors. However, with the reduction in these external sources of money, and with the increasing costs of conventional bus services Hampshire is currently reviewing public transport provision on a district by district basis. It has also launched a consultation exercise about the role of DRT in
Spring 2006. Specifically, the consultation report interprets the LTP2 on community and DRT strategy that aims:

- To reduce unnecessary duplication of transport services, replace lightly used bus services by Dial-a-Ride service;
- To improve utilisation of existing vehicle fleets;
- To invest community and DRT services in areas where deprivation have been identified.

It is, however, likely that areas without existing bus user ethos will not be targeted as it is seen as being too difficult to change behaviour and encourage bus use from a zero base. The report adds that in general terms HCC will seek to support DRT services by:

- Maximising the value of the funding by seeking contributions from other partners and exploring external funding opportunities;
- Allocating funding for schemes in the longer term in order to encourage operators’ investment;
- Working in a partnership with the community transport sector and other potential partners;
- Promoting coordination with other sectors like social services and county-side groups.
- Increasing awareness;
- Developing a funding approach for Cango to pursue financial sustainability through other opportunities and enhancing cost effectiveness;
- Developing an effective monitoring and evaluation system;
- Ensuring value for money and improving service quality.

From a financial perspective, it seems that cutting costs is the dominant mechanism rather than increasing revenues. Therefore, some DRT services look set to be rationalised in terms of the number of vehicles operated while there are also suggestions that some conventional buses may be replaced by Community Transport services (although there are no moves as yet to amend or replace the grant awarding system with a more contract/performance based regime). In addition, it is possible that some DRT services (e.g. the Cango schemes in Fordingbridge and Romsey) may be replaced by shared taxi services depending on their performance between now and the end of the RBC funding period.

More strategically, Hampshire is conducting a district by district review of passenger transport provision, which is looking at providing tailor made solutions to particular areas. These solutions range from bus, to Cango, Call and Ride, CT, and shared taxi. Interestingly though, while Cango services have been built around school contracts since the start, there is no real move towards further integration with social service, special educational needs or patient transport services at the moment.
2.6 Slinky, Somerset

2.6.1 Context

Somerset is predominantly rural in character with a dispersed population of 498,100 (Census, 2001) across a number of medium sized town centres. Pockets of deprivation exist, especially within rural areas, where accessibility to essential services is poor. In terms of transport funding, pro rata spend on transport is fairly low in Somerset and this has limited the scope for developing new services. Despite this, the County is committed to increasing levels of accessibility, and for using DRT to achieve this (see Table 2.7 below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Baseline Data</th>
<th>Targets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bus patronage</td>
<td>6,356,664 in 2003/4</td>
<td>7.5% increase including DRT by 2010/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of parishes covered by DRT</td>
<td>51% in 2003/4</td>
<td>58% by 2009/2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of passenger journeys using DRT</td>
<td>7,095 in 2005</td>
<td>87,481 by 2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.7: Key targets relating to accessibility

2.6.2 Scheme design

Overall, the system is based on an Integrated Passenger Transport Unit (IPTU) (soon to be known as Transporting Somerset) which was set up in 2003 in order to improve services, increase efficiency and work towards an integrated approach to transport provision.

The IPTU combines the supply of transport from agencies such as social service (now social care) transport, education transport, tendered bus services, Community Transport, special education transport etc into a single integrated planning unit. It then allocates these vehicles – which often comprise of a single type of vehicle branded as the ‘Slinky’ (Somerset Links) - for use by a number of partner user groups – e.g. Job Centre, Residential Care Homes, Local Education Authority, FE colleges and district councils. Some of the user groups can offer funds – grants, concessionary fare income, statutory education money etc – to ‘buy’ certain trips, while other users then piggyback on these trips if space is available on the vehicle.

Financially, budgets remain separated but available for use, and this enables a number of cross sector benefits and increased purchasing power. In addition, all taxibus and night DRT budgets have been added recently, and these vehicle fleets too can be fed into existing services. Budgeting and operations more generally are being made more efficient thanks to the use of Trapeze Software which was bought in October 2005. Somerset did win a number of Rural Bus Challenge funded projects, however, the County kept the schemes at arms length and awarded contracts to CT operators on a pilot basis. Thus, when the funding stopped, all but the two most ‘successful’ ceased operating with relatively little political fallout. Funding is now gradually being scaled back as elsewhere and moves to a more social enterprise-based model are proceeding. Slinky is seen as being “a long term project funded through short term arrangements”.

At the scheme level the County operates taxibuses, CT and Slinky services, all of which are available to anyone who does not have alternative transport available for a journey. Users must register for their first trip (as they make their first booking), and all journeys are pre-booked.

Slinky services overlap bus routes but they do not compete. Thus, if a journey can be made by bus, then that is the option the user should take. Trips are very much prioritised according to funding and Government/SCC objectives e.g. employment, education and health. For non

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appointment journeys (e.g. shopping), passengers are ‘guided’ to times more suitable for the operator.

Organisationally, SCC ‘owns’ the elements of the Slinky system – i.e. vehicles, data and database – and leases these facilities to the operator so that the County can withdraw from the contract if necessary. Also, the operator is the registered operator of the service but this too switches back to SCC on termination of a contract. Currently, all Slinky services are accessible to the mobility impaired but this may change as more vehicles are taken on – and accessible vehicles would then be used only when needed. SCC keeps tight control of Slinky services through contracts, which incorporate a three month ‘get out clause’. Terms as to the share of risk vary from operator to operator so that sometimes SCC takes all revenue risk and, pays for fuel, and sometimes the risk is shared.

2.6.3 Scheme performance

So far the new IPTU system has led to efficiency savings through staff savings and the more efficient use of vehicles. However, there is a feeling that the County would have a far better return if a few more people were employed to manage the process properly.

As noted earlier, Somerset currently uses taxibuses, CT and Slinky DRT vehicles. As regards taxibuses, six routes currently operate in West Somerset. Four of these cost £140k a year and operate for part of the day, six days a week. SCC has had taxibuses for 4/5 years but is now looking to replace them with the Slinky approach. This is mainly because one Slinky vehicle could in theory operate the four taxibus routes cited for £75k a year, while having the vehicle running for far more of the time – with potentially increased travel opportunities. On the other hand, taxibus services are far easier to set up and manage than Slinky.

In terms of route performance, the preliminary results are as follows:

- Passenger numbers for Taunton/Wellington have increased from 180 trips a month when the service started in September 2005 to a peak of nearly 1,300 trips in March 2006 (projected annual is 15,200), of which around a quarter are education services. Currently per passenger trip subsidies range between £5 and £7.50 but these are expected to drop over time.

- Meanwhile in Wincanton - South Somerset patronage has remained steady at between 500 and 700 a month (annual projection 6800), of which roughly 300 a month are education trips. The public subsidy per passenger carried here is £8.50, although this is expected to drop to around £6-£7 in time.

- Less successfully, for the North Sedgemoor scheme the numbers have been far less impressive, with only 2800 journeys (including college contracts) between September 2005 and April 2006 (projected 3920 for the year). Here, subsidies are far higher and detailed inquiries are being made to see why demand is so low and how it can be increased.

For health trips, the Hospital Trust in Somerset currently pays around £6m to the West Country Ambulance Service for emergency and non emergency (with paramedic, accessible vehicle and VACs voluntary car) services. Here, SCC claims that half of accessible vehicle and all of the voluntary car trips could be done far cheaper by Slinky. For instance, the Ambulance service continues to struggle with manual booking services, and there is a significant problem with voluntary car services (VACs) as there are not enough volunteers so that 40p per mile to a voluntary driver becomes four/five times that when taxis cover the trips instead (which because the Trust does not take this into account means that four times less passenger trips are being made than are paid for). Also, the policing of eligibility is a problem. So for example, a person rings up Patient Transport Services and speaks for 20 minutes to discuss their case, then is rejected as not meeting the criteria. S/he then asks a local CT scheme to help, but this operator is not interested in a 50 mile trip to hospital. Consequently, the distraught patient rings PTS and this time gets a trip because of their distress at not being able to reach the hospital.
2.6.4 Future options

For the future, SCC aims to continue to support demand responsive bus services and is looking to roll out an additional four more Slinky’s over the next five years in areas identified as most in need, through the accessibility planning process. These include Chard and West Somerset. Ultimately, the vision is to eventually have some form of Slinky covering the whole County, with a consistent brand used. In addition, SCC is recovering a fleet of council vehicles (education, residential homes and social care) from an ambulance service contract in the near future and so there is further scope there to integrate transport delivery further. In addition, for many years SCC has tried unsuccessfully to engage with the local health trusts. But, recent research for the Devon and Cornwall Health Authority recommended that for non medical intervention trips then a system of user subsidies should be used instead, so that CT, voluntary car schemes, taxis or whatever should be used where appropriate and so the Somerset Health Authority is now considering this option.

The role and performance of voluntary transport is also being looked at by SCC. Thus, while previously Somerset funded a number of CT schemes (now renamed Accessible Transport) almost automatically, there has recently been a shift towards rewarding enhanced service quality. So, where CT schemes continue to operate only in the morning, after 5pm, or at weekends, there will be far less money available. Instead, attractive social enterprise contracts will be awarded to CT groups in return for an enhanced standard of service. Similarly, CVS (community car share schemes with volunteer drivers) have been arranged into two partnerships so that they are easier to deal with (for the County) and so the drivers can benefit from services such as a single insurance policy, Criminal Record Bureau checks etc. In essence, CT/CVS funding now needs to be applied for, and is to be set up for three years with gradually diminishing income over that period – social enterprise improvements are expected to make up the difference. Extra contracts are also to be made available. Eventually SCC expects some CT operators to expand (with four possibly available for bidding for Slinky contracts in the end, while others less interested in bidding for new contracts will become less viable.

Two other possible future directions are that Slinky services may begin to replace some tendered bus network services if funds decline still further, while one other option may be for SCC to operate public transport services itself rather than tendering as this is thought to offer better value in the current climate of rising bus tender costs.

To summarise, the Somerset model is to provide a comprehensive network of almost secondary public transport that is designed to fill any gaps that cannot be met by the conventional bus system. This is offered through a single unit in order to achieve increasing levels of efficiency/scale benefits. Funding so far has been secured by attracting money from a whole range of sources (many of which are sustainable) and through the aforementioned efficiency savings. Further cost savings are likely be made by cutting the conventional bus network and then substituting the cheaper (in absolute terms) Slinky service in its place.

2.7 InterConnect, Lincolnshire

2.7.1 Context

Lincolnshire is a large and very rural county dominated by market towns that serve the wider rural communities for health, banking, retail, etc. Prior to 1998, public transport access to and from rural areas to the market towns was poor and consequently the County Council sought to address this through funds provided by the first round of Rural Bus Challenge bids.

5 Based on Cross (2003); LCC (2006); MVA (2005) and Cross (2006).
2.7.2 Scheme Description

The InterConnect network is a suite of rural transport services based on a core commercial primary bus network with a minimum hourly service (7am to 7pm Monday-Saturday) coupled with a series of interchange points located in market towns into which feeder services channel users from wider rural areas.

Currently there are seven InterConnect corridors fed by 13 CallConnect and CallConnect Plus services (10 fully flexible and three semi-flexible services). All but one of the fully flexible service vehicles has eight seats, while the remaining vehicle and the semi-flexible vehicles have 12-15 seats. Interestingly, the fully flexible services are seen as being the ‘core’ service for serving socially excluded people, while the semi flexible services are considered to be ‘support’ services. This forms the largest DRT operation in Britain. Users of the CallConnect services must pre-book through the Matrix call centre – which also handles calls from the 14 dial-a-ride operations of the Lincolnshire Dial-a-Ride Partnership.

InterConnect has so far been funded to the tune of £6.1m by grants – in particular the Rural Bus Challenge. In addition, evening and Sunday interurban services are funded through base County Council funds while the flexible feeders are funded through the Rural Bus Subsidy Grant from Government. Total revenue support amounted to £494,000 in 2004/5. Capital expense to LCC has so far amounted to £1.9m. For 2005/6, a further three CallConnect services are to be established with a capital budget of £150,000 and a revenue budget of £150,000 which will be paid for from the LTP’s Integrated Transport block.

Looking more widely at transport provision in the County, school, SEN and social service transport is procured through an integrated unit responsible for the procurement of passenger and fleet transport. As in Wiltshire, this money to a large extent helps underpin the local bus network and helps sustain higher levels of service than would be viable otherwise. In addition, full coverage of dial-a-ride services across Lincolnshire was achieved during the first LTP period by the County Council and District Councils as part of the Lincolnshire Dial-a-Ride Partnership.

2.7.3 Scheme Performance

The level of ridership is low on each vehicle because of the nature of the services. However, before the launch of the 12th fully flexible service in Spring 2006, the annual number of passengers on the fully flexible routes was around 78,000 (which crudely works out at approximately 600 passengers per service per month). The capacity is determined by the time of the service (needing to be at the interchange point five minutes before and after the main line service) and not the number of seats available. The current daytime interurban service is already commercially sustainable. The evening and Sunday services will require subsidy, as will all feeder operations in future, which implies increased rural bus grant.

As of April 2006, the overall cost of operating each fully flexible feeder service on a gross cost contract basis is around £30,000-£50,000 per annum, while the cost of the semi-flexible services is around £60,000. This is considered to be economical in absolute terms. The cost differential between the fully and semi flexible operations is because eight seat vehicles are charged out at far less for contracts than the 12-15 seat vehicles – drivers of eight seat vehicles do not require PCV licences. Overall the average subsidy (e.g. Horncastle route) was around £4 per passenger in 2003, although this was expected to fall to £3 once DRT services were eligible for BSOG (as they were from February 2004). But, very rough calculations suggest a figure of around £5.50 per passenger trip – possibly reflecting the increase in tendering costs and the fact that ever more rural areas are now being served.

In terms of addressing social exclusion, the service has been considered a success. Using the DfT national indicators, including access to an hourly service, it is also successful. Consultant Steer Gleave Davis, measured ‘unmet travel needs’ using the Sonata package, and found that at the macro level ‘unmet need’ fell from 18% to 12%.
Interestingly, there has been very little interest from private hire and taxi companies in providing DRT services, and where bids have been received these have tended to be high. This may partly be due to the level of education and social service work already carried out for the County Council which seemingly limits capacity available at particular times for providing other services.

While overall the service has been considered a success, the scheme is now reaching a point where things are becoming more difficult. In particular, the number of bus operators available to work in partnership with the County is dwindling, and bus costs are now starting to increase dramatically as elsewhere. Cuts are therefore possible, most probably to subsidised evening and Sunday services on the main bus corridors. The priority will be to continue to support the integrated network.

2.7.4 Future Options

During the current LTP funding period the aim is to increase the number of InterConnect corridors to ten. One is to be funded in part by EU Objective 2 Transition funds, and two by Department for Transport Kickstart monies awarded in 2005. Opportunities for CallConnect services to replace existing subsidised services at a cheaper rate are also to be explored (and have happened in some cases – e.g. to the north of Louth).

Lincolnshire is also seeking to further integrate DRT and Community Transport provision to save money where possible and to further increase journey opportunities for all and not just the frail and disabled. For Community Transport, funding has now ceased from the two Rural Transport Partnerships (with the transfer of powers from the Countryside Agency) and alternative revenue streams are being explored.

So far, the InterConnect concept continues to expand in spite of the increasing cost pressures in the bus industry. This is partly because the scheme is continuing to attract significant sources of external funding, although the County notes that expansion would occur anyway, albeit rather more slowly, through internal resources and RSBG. There are also very limited savings made from efficiency gains via the integration of education, SEN and social service transport. And some previously subsidised interurban services have now become commercial (during the day at least) following the InterConnect treatment - increased service quality (better vehicles, higher frequencies, improved waiting environments and information, increased choice of destinations through feeders etc).

Important too, are the political factors. First, InterConnect enjoys a high level of brand recognition across the county and crucially the service is seen as being a success. Second, the InterConnect vision has been strongly integrated into the County’s economic and social policies making it a key instrument and so it continues to attract political backing.

Finally, while the network began as a single pilot scheme, the intention was always to role out the concept across the County – in other words, there has always been a strong strategic vision behind what the County was aiming to do and this has allowed network benefits to be generated in terms of learning from good practice, efficiency gains (regarding purchasing power, use of the call centre and routing software etc) and the high level of brand recognition already mentioned.

2.8 Door to Dorset, Dorset

2.8.1 Context

Dorset is very different to Wiltshire. It is a small county after the separation of Poole/Bournemouth and can be described as being a nucleated rural county. Dorset receives the smallest annual settlement in the country.

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6 Based on DCC (2005) and Dawkins (2006).
Dorset County Council states in its Provisional LTP that “the priority for Dorset County Council’s 2005/06 Corporate Plan in relation to accessibility is to improve transport services in Dorset. The County Council believes that the most effective measure will be to increase the level of demand responsive transport (DRT) available to Dorset’s rural communities. This will be achieved through replacement of existing conventional bus services with DRT solutions where appropriate as existing service tenders expire”… “The provision of DRT is a key element of this DPLTP on Accessibility”.

Overall, DCC aims to increase the percentage of households with access to a DRT bus service from 5% in 2001/02 to 60% by 2011. It further aims to increase the number of journeys on community and demand responsive services by 15% per year from 2004/05. Another Accessibility Indicator in relation to DRT is “% of rural households with access to a DRT bus service on at least one day per week”.

This public transport network review is occurring because politically there is a strong focus on improving access in rural areas. This is because while everywhere is near to a market town, the bulk of council tax payers are rural. In the short term public transport is depended upon to achieve this while land use changes will become more important in the longer term.

A second issue is that Dorset has suffered badly from retrenchment of the bus companies who are focusing increasingly on urban corridors rather than rural networks, such that in the last 12 months the budget costs have increased by 27%. However, this cost increase has reinforced rather than stimulated the policy review of modernising the service network, and every tendered bus service will probably be reviewed over the next two years. This cost rise therefore may have been a message from the operators – but in practice this has speeded up the process. At least six new schemes are planned for the next year.

Therefore, Dorset has bid to the Government for Review Element Funding (previously LPSA) whereby councils are rewarded if they exceed performance targets (e.g. on affordable housing). This time Dorset is aiming to improve rural accessibility. Dorset is stretching LTP2 targets and using reserves to borrow £450k upfront (so as to help meet the target rather like a mortgage).

2.8.2 Scheme design

A core area of Dorset’s Accessibility Strategy is to work closely in partnership with public transport providers. Specific actions include:

- Linking more local bus services and school bus services: for example, replacing large school buses with smaller vehicles which can be used for local bus services;
- Assisting small bus operators to enter the contract market;
- Placing DCC owned vehicles within contracts;
- Working with other providers.

Accordingly, DCC has invested in a ‘Mobisoft’ DRT booking system and Door to Dorset is now the brand name for all DRT and taxibuses, as well as related timetables and pre-booked services. To implement this, the approach is to be a toolkit, rather than a one size fits all as in Somerset, and the right scheme for the service will largely be based on research and on trial and error. Currently there are two DRT bus services in place. There are no taxibuses at the moment.

The research element is important as Dorset CC has a strong research team and has for many years mapped demand and transport need and accessibility levels. Accession software has helped this process significantly. Information from this is used to target where levels of greatest unmet need exist and areas with greatest potential for modernising rural bus services. Successes are needed early on in the process.
Interestingly, the huge increase in bus contract costs means it has proved cheaper to buy a bus for £90k, keep ownership of it and lease it to the operator. Quality too is vastly improved (low floor, new seats etc). Four such vehicles are in place so far, and three more have just arrived. This arrangement exposes how much operators charge for vehicles and how much for staff. Contract specifications have been based on flexible registration, and there is a caveat that services are subject to change and development. It is likely that such flexible registrations will become the norm in future months as service alterations can be made very easily compared with the current fixed route system so long as fixed timing points remain in place.

One other shift is the concept of bundling education transport in with standard public transport services. Previously each bus company did this itself to its own requirements, whereas now the Council is doing it.

With social care transport, this still falls in a separate directorate. Certainly there are opportunities here but imminent Government reorganisation means lots of additional work – a big internal shake up would be required for this level of integration and with the current service reviews already ongoing the timing is not yet right. However, there are some ad hoc moves occurring in this direction – e.g. one social care minibus is liveried as a DRT bus so it can be used as spare capacity.

Some innovative development work has also occurred with CT. NORDCAT was a DCC in house initiative that was subsequently externalised so that it was funded from the Council and elsewhere. In 2005 it started to follow the social enterprise route whereby it is separated into a commercial funding arm/charity. NORDCAT is now tendering for DCC contracts. Profits from this go to the charity therefore reducing reliance on grants (which can be volatile).

Finally, it is important to note that Dorset did not win RBC money, and has felt that time limited money is always difficult to use effectively. Instead, the programme has drawn on LTP capital and base funding.

2.8.3 Scheme performance

So far DCC suggests it is still too early to comment on results, but initial indications suggest that savings have been made on two quite different contracts.

1. Small service. Commercial operator used a vehicle leased from DCC. DCC has saved 15% compared with a conventional service, while patronage increased by 11% in a year. Also, the new arrangement has opened large portions of the day (a 3 hour block) where the vehicle is available at no extra cost so there is further scope for new services.

2. Service of three times the value. NORDCAT CT operation won this and again the cost is 15% lower than for a conventional service. Anecdotally, the number of passengers is up but the service has not been running very long. This contract used a larger bus and carried more people, for longer distances.

In both cases the developmental risk remains with DCC. DCC requires daily feedback and therefore needs to guarantee the operator that it will not lose money. There is an ‘attitudinal thing’, in that DCC does not let a contract if the operator is not prepared to cooperate and be flexible. Unlike Somerset, DCC does not see itself as being ‘asset management led’. Instead, DCC aims to make its contracts work and so there are no easy escape clauses.

Dorset has tried ‘on demand services’ (no timetables) only twice, and while these seemed to work for smaller services they did not for larger services. While such conversions show up the actual demand very well (one knows how much elements that are put back will be used), there were roughly 50% of people who were annoyed by such a switch and so such a demand monitoring exercise would not be conducted again by choice.
One other issue is that not all movements need to be DRT – there are lots of steady trips too – and there is almost a need for a split of timetable and pre-booking elements so that there is a single product to the passenger. However, Government regulations constrain mixing hail and ride and pre-booking on the same service as would be ideal. This does not make sense and puts some people off using the service. It needs to be resolved with the Traffic Commissioner, as the services have had to leave people behind at a stop on a number of occasions.

2.8.4 Future options

For the future, DCC would run a bus contract if no suitable operator tendered and maybe it would be cheaper. Indeed, DCC still has a depot and has recently taken back education transport. But, operationally it would be a lot of work and given the spectre of reorganisation there would be some concerns if the mapping exercises identify a significant gap in transport provision however, then DCC is prepared to serve notice on existing contracts to switch resources appropriately.

Overall the key lesson from the Dorset case seems to be that a strong political desire to improve the accessibility of rural areas combined with cost pressures forced on the county have meant that the whole bus network has been (and is to continue to be) re-evaluated. Here, the one size fits all approach has been rejected and a more empirical version is being applied on an area by area basis. Moreover the integration of services, while on the agenda, is by no means as dominant a feature in Dorset as in the InterConnect model used in Lincolnshire, or in Somerset’s rationalised service planning model. Yet despite this, the review is seeking to maintain a fully strategic outlook – branding is consistent across the County and services are being implemented based on trying to match service levels with the need for that service.

From the all important financial perspective meanwhile, financial sustainability is seen as being crucial. Once again, DCC is following a two track approach of rationalising services to be more efficient, e.g. by substituting the most appropriate DRT option for the conventional tendered services where sensible, and by trying to raise more income (mainly from other council budgets).

2.9 An urban case – Local Link, Greater Manchester

In addition to information from directly relevant cases, data from other schemes was also obtained to provide a more comprehensive picture.

For instance, Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive (GMPTE) established six Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services branded ‘Local Link’ in Greater Manchester in 2002 within Salford, Hulme, Gorton, Wythenshawe, Hattersley and Uppermill and Mossley. The objective of the Local Link schemes is to “provide access to key facilities affecting life chances (learning, employment, healthcare and fresh food) for people without access to a car and where such access cannot be provided in a financially sustainable way for fixed route services”. While most of these schemes are urban rather than rural, they are still of interest given that they form a significant part of Greater Manchester’s public transport network. Moreover, GMPTE is one of the few authorities that has conducted significant amounts of research into its DRT strategy.

Philosophically, GMPTE has never considered DRT to be commercially viable, especially many-to-many services. DRT is though, seen as being cost effective for filling difficult to solve gaps in the network. It is not good at mass transit movements due to the resources required. Therefore GMPTE has tended to use RBC and UBC to get subsidy to affordable levels over that initial funding period. Consequently, GMPTE adopts a fairly ad hoc ‘horses for courses’ approach (although a DRT strategy – in parallel with a CT strategy and integrated social needs strategy - is currently in preparation).

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7 Based on Wurr (2006) and JMP (2005)
Typically, GMPTE tends to allow DRT schemes with subsidy per passenger levels of less than £6 (£8 if operator runs call centre, vehicles etc) to continue and considers other options – i.e. cut back or replace - if costs are more than that. Thus, currently one DRT scheme (a very early morning service taking workers to Manchester Airport) operates at far more than £10 per trip, but these journeys are seen as being justifiable against social inclusion and economic criteria, while the maximum otherwise is £8.50. Decisions on whether the service continues or not are also based on passenger trends and cost per passenger trends, whereby a strongly growing service will not be cut even if it is expensive at that particular time.

In general, replacing bus routes that have become too expensive with shared taxis has worked well so far although the recent concessionary fare revision may create problems in some areas. In most cases, the overall cost falls significantly but the cost per passenger increases. A further benefit is that shared taxi services do not tend to abstract passengers from major bus routes as much as tendered bus services. In one case where a bus service costing £120,000 a year was replaced by a shared taxi costing £40,000, the new service carried more passengers. In another case (this time a DRT service), there was an offer from the operator to run extra services at no extra cost to GMPTE should the service be continued.

With CT, GMPTE has apparently neglected this in recent years and has pushed Ring and Ride services instead. However, two CT schemes have recently been developed using external money to run DRT services.

For the future, there may well be scope for resource savings through integrating services more effectively, although this promises ‘to be a nightmare to deliver’. Therefore, with education transport for example, roughly half of all eligible school children will probably be carried by conventional bus services and half by specialist school buses – a policy largely dictated by how bus services are currently operated.

2.10 Scheme summaries

Table 2.8 provides a brief summary of the cases described.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme Context</th>
<th>Cango and Carshare Hampshire</th>
<th>Slinky Somerset</th>
<th>Door to Dorset Dorset</th>
<th>InterConnect Lincolnshire</th>
<th>Local Link GMPTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Area type</td>
<td>Large county, deep rural areas.</td>
<td>Medium sized rural county.</td>
<td>Small, compact county.</td>
<td>Large county, deep rural areas.</td>
<td>Large metropolitan area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Push to use DRT to enhance accessibility to facilities driven by DfT funding.</td>
<td>Push to use DRT to enhance accessibility.</td>
<td>Push to use DRT to enhance accessibility to facilities and a desire to mitigate rapidly rising bus costs.</td>
<td>Push to use DRT to enhance accessibility to facilities driven by DfT funding.</td>
<td>Push to use DRT to enhance accessibility to facilities driven by DfT funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Target markets</td>
<td>Cango: Available for any member of the public in the operating areas. Mainly for commuter, school, shopping and health. Carshare: Generally previous bus users.</td>
<td>Slinky: For people who cannot access public transport, where public transport is not available and for those without their own transport.</td>
<td>Taxibus: Available to all residents of the areas named by the scheme. Provide services across designated areas of the county for the same cost as a bus fare. Passenger must register into the scheme; Somerset Travelpass holder can use this service; customers of hotels and B&amp;Bs can also use this service.</td>
<td>Feeder services channel users from wider rural areas to market towns.</td>
<td>No car households, unemployed people, economically inactive people, lone pensioner households, people with a limiting long-term illness, people in social classes D&amp;E, ethnic minority households, people aged 14-19 years. Target destinations include jobs, health care, learning (education and training) and fresh food shops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Resources</td>
<td>Cango: RBC (already ceased); HCC baseline funding; district council funding; RBSG.</td>
<td>SCC, district councils, Countryside Agency and LTP funding.</td>
<td>DCC LTP capital and base funding; regional development agency.</td>
<td>RBC; European and LCC funding; RBSG.</td>
<td>GMPTE funding; UBC; RBC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheme Design</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Type of services (timetable)</strong></td>
<td>Cango and Carshare Hampshire</td>
<td>Slinky Somerset</td>
<td>Door to Dorset Dorset</td>
<td>InterConnect Lincolnshire</td>
<td>Local Link GMPTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HCC, local bus and taxi operators.</td>
<td>Integrated Passenger Transport Unit (Transporting Somerset); SCC 'owns' the Slinky system and operators lease from SCC.</td>
<td>DCC, local bus and taxi operators, DART (Dorset Accessible &amp; Responsive Transport)</td>
<td>LCC, local bus operators.</td>
<td>GMPTE, local bus and taxi operators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of services (route)</strong></td>
<td>Fixed start and end points, the service does not operate if there are no bookings.</td>
<td>Slinky: Fully flexible demand responsive services. Taxibus: Collect passenger from door and take them to the designated drop off points. 15 routes in total.</td>
<td>Fixed route + flexible routes.</td>
<td>Semi-flexible and fully flexible</td>
<td>Salford: two separate zones; Hulme: one fixed point, starting and ending at ASDA (unsuccessful, redeployed), another one flexible: any two points in Hulme; Gorton: Fixed start and end point; Wythenshawe: 4 zones; Hattersley: to anywhere within the Hattersley estate and also to some other key locations in the area. Uppermill &amp; Mossley: three zones.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Type of operations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cango and Carshare Hampshire</th>
<th>Slinky Somerset</th>
<th>Door to Dorset Dorset</th>
<th>InterConnect Lincolnshire</th>
<th>Local Link GMPTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shared taxi, CT, Call and Go, Cango and bus.</td>
<td>Taxibus, CT and DRT bus</td>
<td>Shared taxi, CT, DRT bus.</td>
<td>DRT bus.</td>
<td>DRT bus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cango and Carshare Hampshire</td>
<td>Slinky Somerset</td>
<td>Door to Dorset Dorset</td>
<td>InterConnect Lincolnshire</td>
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<td>------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Number of services</strong></td>
<td>Cango: Alton (5 services), Andover (7 services), Burghclere (3 services), Fordingbridge (2 services), New Forest (1 service), Romsey (4 services).</td>
<td>3 Slinky bus services, Wincanton, Taunton &amp; Wellington Slinky, North Sedgemoor Slinky; 15 Taxibus services.</td>
<td>10 fully flexible (CallConnect Plus); 3 semi-flexible (CallConnect).</td>
<td>6 in Salford, Hulme, Gorton, Wythenshawe, Hattersley, Uppermill &amp; Mossley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of vehicles</strong></td>
<td>Cango: 2 in Andover area 1 in Newbury area 3 in Alton.</td>
<td>Slinky: 4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1 per service Salford: 2; Hulme: 2; Gorton: 1; Wythenshawe: 4; Hattersley: 6 Uppermill &amp; Mossley: 2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Service frequencies</strong></td>
<td>Carshare: 3-5 trips a day.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Flexible</td>
<td>Hourly;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Booking options</strong></td>
<td>Cango: Phone booking; Online booking if registered.</td>
<td>Phone booking; Online registration.</td>
<td>Online or phone booking.</td>
<td>Phone booking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Required pre-booking time</strong></td>
<td>Cango: No requirement, all bookings can even be made after the bus has set off. This allows people to just turn up at the fixed stops without booking.</td>
<td>Slinky: 24 hours in advance; Taxibus: 4 hours before.</td>
<td>At least one hour before; Regular passenger can book journeys up to two weeks in advance; Wheelchair user need to book the service one day before traveling.</td>
<td>At least 2 hours before up to 7 days in advance for both CallConnect and CallConnect Plus.. 1 hours before up to 7 days in advance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Software used</strong></td>
<td>Mobisoft, Taxi operator.</td>
<td>Trapeze</td>
<td>Mobisoft</td>
<td>Mobisoft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hours of operation</strong></td>
<td>Time range: Alton: 6:35am-7:27pm Mon-Fri;</td>
<td>Wincanton Slinky: Mon-Fri 8:30am-6:45pm &amp; Sat 8:00am-3:00pm (no)</td>
<td>7:am-6:30pm</td>
<td>Time ranges from 7:00am-6:25pm Mon-Sat, Salford: 6:00am-4:45pm Mon-Fri, Hulme:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cango and Carshare Hampshire</td>
<td>Slinky Somerset</td>
<td>Door to Dorset Dorset</td>
<td>InterConnect Lincolnshire</td>
<td>Local Link GMPTE</td>
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<td>----------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andover: 6:45am-7:38pm Mon-Fri; Burghclere: 6:53am-7:11pm Mon-Fri; Fordingbridge: 8:15am-4:50pm Mon-Sat; New Forest: 9:30am-5:57pm Mon-Sat; Romsey: 7:10am-6:20pm Mon-Sat</td>
<td>public or bank holiday services; Taunton &amp; Wellington Slinky: Mon-Fri 6:00am - 11:00pm, Sat 7:00am - 11:00pm (no public or bank holiday services); North Sedgemoor Slinky: Mon-Fri during the day up to 7:15pm, Sat 9:00am-2:00pm (no public or bank holiday services)</td>
<td>One between 9:00am-6:00am Mon-Fri (unsuccessful, redeployed), another between 7:00am-9:30pm Mon-Sat; Gorton: 6:30am-10:00pm daily; Wythenshawe: 5:30am-11:15pm; Hattersley: 6:00am-10:30pm Mon-Fri, 7:30am-10:30pm Sat, 10:30am-10:30pm Sun; Uppermill &amp; Mossley: three zones with different level of service: Time range 6:30am-10:30pm Mon-Sat, 9:30am-10:30pm Sun and holidays</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• **Call centre**

  Cango: Between 8:00am-6:00pm Mon to Fri and 8:00am-4:30pm on Sat

  Booking lines are open: Wincanton Slinky: 9:30-12:30 Mon-Fri; Taunton & Wellington Slinky: Mon-Thu 9:00am-4:00pm, Fri 9:00am-3:00pm, North Sedgemoor Slinky: Mon-Fri 10:00am-1:00pm

  8:30am to 5:00pm Mon to Sat.

  Matrix Call Centre (also handles bookings from the 14 dial-a-ride operations in Lincolnshire) Lines open Mon: 9:00am-4:30pm, Sat: 9:00am-3:30pm

  Funded by UBC; Located in Manchester and shared with the Greater Manchester Accessible Transport (GMATL); Open 7:30am-10:00pm Mon-Sun Uppermill & Mossley has its own call centre run by the taxi operator

• **Fare structure**

  Cango: Single range from £0.50 to £3.20; return range from £0.85 to

  Wincanton Slinky: Adult single: £2.00-£5.50, Adult return: £3.00

  Adult single: £0.90-£2.20; Adult return: £1.50-£3.20; £0.50/£0.75 for
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cango and Carshare Hampshire</th>
<th>Slinky Somerset</th>
<th>Door to Dorset Dorset</th>
<th>InterConnect Lincolnshire</th>
<th>Local Link GMPTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>£5.30; concessions accepted; 50% discount for people under 16s.</td>
<td>£8.00; Taunton &amp; Wellington Slinky: Adult single: £1.00-£3.00, Adult return: £2.00-£5.00, 25% discount for child and free for concessionary (Somerset Travelpass holder) travel; North Sedgemoor Slinky: Adult single: £2.00-£4.00, Adult return: £3.00-£6.00, No discount for child and free for concessionary (Somerset Travelpass holder) travel;</td>
<td></td>
<td>50% discount for child and concessionary travel</td>
<td>concessionary travel; Hulme: Adult single: £1.50, Adult return: £2.50, £0.60/£1.10 for concessionary travel; Gorton: Adult single: £1.50, Adult return: £2.50, £0.60/£1.10 for concessionary travel; Wythenshawe: Adult single: £1.50, Adult return: £2.50, £0.60/£1.10 for concessionary travel; Hattersley: Within Hattersley: £1.00 or £0.50 for concession travels, Outside Hattersley: £1.50 single, £2.50 return or £0.80/£1.10 for concession travels; Uppermill &amp; Mossley: Zonal fare system, Within a county boundary: Adult single: £1.50, Adult return: £2.50, £0.60/£1.10 for concessionary travel; Cross boundary: Adult single: £2.00, Adult return: £3.00, £0.80/£1.20 for concessionary travel;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cango and Carshare Hampshire</td>
<td>Slinky Somerset</td>
<td>Door to Dorset Dorset</td>
<td>InterConnect Lincolnshire</td>
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<td>-----------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Patronage</strong></td>
<td>Cango:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fully flexible: 680 pax per service per month (May 06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Andover: 3100 + 506 school contract users (Apr 06)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Semi-flexible: 1,000 pax per service per month (May 06)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Newbury: 1650 + 380 pupils (Apr 06)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Alton: normally 1500-1600 a month (2300 in Apr 06)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carshare: 228-456 pax per month</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Revenues</strong></td>
<td>Carshare:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Revenue support:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average fare revenue: £140-£175</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>£494,000 (2004/5)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Costs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fully flexible: £3,300 per service per month (May 06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Semi-flexible: £5,400 per service per month (May 06)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Revenue/cost ratio</strong></td>
<td>Carshare:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cango and Carshare Hampshire</td>
<td>Slinky Somerset</td>
<td>Door to Dorset Dorset</td>
<td>InterConnect Lincolnshire</td>
<td>Local Link GMPTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subsidy per passenger = Total subsidy/number of passengers</strong></td>
<td>Cango: Andover: £4.50-£5.50 per pax trip; Newbury: less than £5.00 per pax trip; Alton: £7.50 per pax trip. Carshare: Roughly £1.00 per pax</td>
<td>Taunton/Wellington: range between £5.00-£7.50 per pax trip; Wincanton: £8.50 per pax;</td>
<td>Overall average £5.50 per pax trip</td>
<td>Salford: £8.80; Hulme: £46.47; Gorton: £5.47; Wythenshawe: £3.34; Hattersley: - Uppermill &amp; Mossley: £11.52. Tends to allow DRT schemes with subsidy per pax levels of less than £6.00 (£8.00 if operator runs call centre, vehicles etc.), maximum £8.50. Otherwise will consider service cut or replace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Running costs per passenger = Running costs/number of passengers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Salford: £9.67; Hulme: £88.09; Gorton: £7.24; Wythenshawe: £4.69; Uppermill &amp; Mossley: £13.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Future Options**
### Table 2.8: DRT scheme summaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cango and Carshare Hampshire</th>
<th>Slinky Somerset</th>
<th>Door to Dorset Dorset</th>
<th>InterConnect Lincolnshire</th>
<th>Local Link GMPTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Future Strategy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ad hoc strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District by district</td>
<td>Slinky concept</td>
<td>Route audit</td>
<td>Service concept to be</td>
<td>currently based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>review identifying</td>
<td>to be</td>
<td>underlying.</td>
<td>be expanded as far as</td>
<td>on toolbox approach. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>need to replace ad</td>
<td>expanded as</td>
<td>Services to be</td>
<td>possible using new</td>
<td>vision as yet but DRT,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hoc decision making.</td>
<td>far as possible</td>
<td>based on need.</td>
<td>external (DfT and EU)</td>
<td>CT and integrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailor made solutions</td>
<td>through</td>
<td>Likely all buses re-</td>
<td>sources of funding.</td>
<td>social transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>applied from toolbox.</td>
<td>maximising</td>
<td>registered as flexible</td>
<td></td>
<td>strategies reviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationalisation –</td>
<td>efficiency</td>
<td>services soon.</td>
<td></td>
<td>underway.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>service cuts,</td>
<td>gains through</td>
<td>Some efficiency</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fairly minimal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>substitution of bus and</td>
<td>IPTU system,</td>
<td>gains through</td>
<td></td>
<td>efficiency gains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRT by shared taxi</td>
<td>through</td>
<td>integration of</td>
<td></td>
<td>through integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>possible in some cases.</td>
<td>encouraging</td>
<td>education and social</td>
<td></td>
<td>of education and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No real shift to</td>
<td>CT to bid for</td>
<td>service transport etc</td>
<td></td>
<td>other transport in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT or further</td>
<td>contracts and</td>
<td>possible in medium</td>
<td></td>
<td>the short term.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>integration forecast as</td>
<td>through some</td>
<td>term. Vision sees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yet.</td>
<td>substitution</td>
<td>DRT as vital for</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of bus routes.</td>
<td>meeting policy goals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integrated</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>scheme where</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ultimately</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slinky DRT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>services cover</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>county and</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>take all trips</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>not able to</td>
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<td></td>
<td>be carried by</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bus.</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.8: DRT scheme summaries
### Table 2.9: DRT scheme evaluation summaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schemes</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Scheme design concept</th>
<th>Scheme performance</th>
<th>Future strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cango, Hampshire</td>
<td>Large county, deep rural areas. Push to use DRT to enhance accessibility to facilities driven by DfT funding. Very strong political support.</td>
<td>Ad hoc scheme by scheme development based on area need. Toolbox sees shared taxi, CT, Call and Go, Cango and bus.</td>
<td>DRT cost per passenger trip from £4.50 to £7.50. DRT monthly passenger numbers range from 1500 to 2300. Car share cost per passenger trip ~£1. Car share monthly passenger numbers range from 240-300.</td>
<td>District by district review identifying need to replace ad hoc decision making. Tailor made solutions applied from toolbox. Rationalisation – service cuts, substitution of bus and DRT by shared taxi possible in some cases. No real shift to CT or further integration forecast as yet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slinky, Somerset</td>
<td>Medium sized rural county. Push to use DRT to enhance accessibility. Very strong political support.</td>
<td>Integrated scheme where ultimately Slinky DRT services cover county and take all trips not able to be carried by bus.</td>
<td>DRT cost per passenger trip from £5 to £8.50 (to 'far more'). DRT monthly passenger numbers range from 300 to 1300.</td>
<td>Slinky concept to be expanded as far as possible through maximising efficiency gains through IPTU system, through encouraging CT to bid for contracts and through some substitution of bus routes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door to Dorset, Dorset</td>
<td>Compact county. Push to use DRT to enhance accessibility to facilities driven by very strong political support and desire to mitigate rapidly rising bus costs.</td>
<td>Ad hoc scheme by scheme development based on area need (strong research basis). Toolbox sees shared taxi, CT, DRT and bus.</td>
<td>No figures available yet.</td>
<td>Route audit underway. Services to be based on need. Likely all buses re-registered as flexible services soon. Some efficiency gains through integration of education and social service transport etc possible in medium term. Vision sees DRT as vital for meeting policy goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>InterConnect, Lincolnshire</td>
<td>Large county, deep rural areas. Push to use DRT to enhance accessibility to facilities driven by DfT funding. Very strong political support.</td>
<td>Very integrated corridor based scheme, whereby appropriate DRT variants (semi or fully flexible) interconnect with commercial bus network at interchange points.</td>
<td>DRT cost per passenger trip ~£5.50. DRT monthly passenger numbers per route ~600.</td>
<td>Service concept to be expanded as far as possible using new external (DfT and EU) sources of funding. Some efficiency gains through integration of education transport. Driven by a very strong vision where public transport is a vital cog in delivering Council objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Link, GMPTE</td>
<td>Large metropolitan area. Push to use DRT to enhance accessibility to facilities driven by DfT funding. Quite strong political support.</td>
<td>Ad hoc scheme by scheme development based on area need. Toolbox sees shared taxi, CT, Ring and Ride, DRT and bus.</td>
<td>DRT cost per passenger trip from £5 to £8.50 (to 'far more than £10' in one special case).</td>
<td>Ad hoc strategy currently based on toolbox approach. No vision as yet but DRT, CT and integrated social transport strategies review underway. Fairly minimal efficiency gains through integration of education and other transport in the short term.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.11 Common threads

2.11.1 Context

All the schemes are targeted at meeting predominantly social inclusion goals through enhanced access to services via public transport. But, while two of the rural schemes were initially developed in response to the availability of Central Government funding, and the RBC in particular (Hampshire and Lincolnshire), the Somerset and Dorset schemes emerged a few years later using baseline funding in order to deliver such accessibility more effectively than it had been before. As a consequence, while the two RBC supported operations could now be described as being ‘mature’, the others are both fairly new (having being launched only in Summer/Autumn 2005).

Geographically, three of the rural counties are fairly large (Hampshire, Somerset and Lincolnshire), and one far more compact (Dorset).

2.11.2 Scheme design

In terms of scheme design at the strategic or County level, Lincolnshire, Dorset and Somerset have all set out established visions at the outset. Of these, Lincolnshire and Somerset have effectively opted for a fully integrated ‘one size fits all’ approach using small minibuses – although in Lincolnshire the integration idea is that the DRT feeds users to a bus, whereas in Somerset the integration occurs at the vehicle allocation stage thanks to the Integrated Passenger Transport Unit. Thus, the DRT bus travels door to door and is only to be used if there is no other option available to the user at that time. In Dorset, the vision has been to look at the entire public transport network using a more empirical and research based approach in order to best match the type of public transport (be it bus, minibus DRT or taxi-based DRT) to each area across the County. One other point here is consistency of branding. Lincolnshire, Dorset and Somerset all apply consistent branding across their service provision and this is certainly felt to be important in each case.

By contrast, Hampshire is only now considering a county-wide approach following the decision to review its bus and other public transport services on a district by district basis. Perhaps unsurprisingly therefore, Hampshire now has a wide range of services operating from taxibus, to CT, Call and Go, Cango DRT minibuses and buses. Similarly, in Greater Manchester the approach has tended to be ad hoc and empirical – indeed, GMPTE is almost a DRT laboratory in terms of the wide range of operational, booking and software models it is using!

At the operational level, the first thing to consider is vehicles. Here there is recognition that taxibus offer an inexpensive service that often suits a low demand area – but that service quality is correspondingly low. Hence, Lincolnshire has no taxibus systems, Hampshire has 11 (but sees them very much as a last resort), Somerset has six or so (but is looking to replace them in order to cut costs and increase service levels) and Dorset currently has none (although this may change as the review continues). The next level meanwhile is the high-spec, high quality fully accessible 12-16 seat vehicle operated as a bus; then the high-spec, high quality, fully accessible 12-16 seat vehicle operated as a bus; and then the 25-35 seat bus. This is interesting because bus operators do not believe that money can be made from a bus smaller than 25-35 seats, but that at least with eight seats the costs can be low enough to partly offset this. The 12-16 seat vehicle on the other hand, costs as much to operate as a larger bus, and yet is not flexible enough to be used on other non-DRT services. Despite this, 12-16 seat vehicles are used for Slinky services, for a few of the InterConnect and CallConnect services and for some of the Cango services in Hampshire.

Another point concerns call centres. Lincolnshire, Somerset and Hampshire operate their own and the aim is to maximise their usage. Thus, all three serve not only their DRT schemes, but also other council (and external) transport functions. Similarly with routing software, where significant efficiency savings can be made by making full use of a single integrated system.
In general the position has been for Councils to invest in ‘gold plated’ systems with high quality vehicles and technology (especially because Challenge funding seemed to require this), but then not to take full advantage of it. Interestingly, while each of the councils studied seems to have followed this path regarding vehicles, with the call centres and software at least the lessons have been heeded.

2.11.3 Scheme performance

In terms of DRT scheme performance, each of the cases exhibits fairly similar results. Subsidy costs between £4.50 and £8.50 per passenger trip for minibus DRT appear to be standard, while passenger numbers per month per vehicle seem to be in the order of 200-800. Taxibus subsidies per trip seem to range from £1 in Lovedean upwards, while usage can be as high as 300 trips per month. From this, it should be possible to determine where these services become viable – basically, taxibuses become increasingly expensive as patronage rises whereas bus-based contracts tend to be fixed price.

More difficult factors of which to gain credible information, are those variables that aim to determine whether policy objectives have been met. Further research would be necessary to achieve this.

2.12 Model ways forward

There are a number of issues that arise when looking at model ways forward.

First, the above schemes seem to demonstrate that if a scheme is to continue running it needs to be supported politically. In Lincolnshire, Somerset, Dorset and Hampshire, public transport is seen to be core to a whole raft of policy outcomes with DRT services seen as integral to delivering social inclusion, environmental and economic goals – and so are less vulnerable to cuts than otherwise.

Related to this, several of the examples exhibited a strong overall strategic vision illustrating how the public transport network was to be developed and showing the role of DRT, as well as bus, taxis and so on. And, when implementing such a vision, the choice of ‘case by case’ or ‘one size fits all’ solution needs to be looked at.

Focusing on finance, fundamentally there are two approaches to the key problem of addressing significant budget cuts. One is to increase revenues (through attracting more users, increasing fares, or drawing in more budget from other sources); and the other is to reduce costs (through cutting service levels, or by efficiency savings). From the examples considered above, most schemes have obviously done elements of both.

That said, only in Lincolnshire has the major strand been to draw on external funding to develop the network as far as possible across the County, while none of the schemes seem to have significantly raised fares (likely due to political sensitivities given that the schemes are designed to address social inclusion). Elsewhere, the focus has predominantly been on rationalising services through cuts in service levels and/or through substitution by less expensive modes. Further efficiency savings have also been sought (particularly in Somerset) through the Integrated Passenger Transport Unit approach of maximising vehicle efficiency with a brokerage system.

2.13 Conclusion

In conclusion, the above examples show that DRT can perform an effective role in providing public transport access to UK rural (and urban) areas even after the withdrawal of external financial support. However, it also shows that while ad hoc scheme by scheme decision making can work in the short to medium term, far more effective an approach is to develop a solid strategic plan that effectively integrates the passenger transport system within the wider policy framework thus securing rather deeper political support in the process.
2.14 References


Hampshire County Council (2003a) Low cost taxi service and carshare information sheets, Hampshire County Council, Winchester.


3. Research Methodology

The research has been carried out using a number of methodologies. Initially literature has been gathered on Demand Responsive Transport services throughout the UK and abroad and this data has been collated along with the researcher’s significant knowledge of DRT services to form the literature review section of this Report.

Data specific to public transport and DRT operations in Wiltshire has also been gathered in order to obtain a picture of the situation in Wiltshire and how DRT fits into that picture. This activity has facilitated the formation of the questions used in the face to face interviews detailed below. Furthermore operational and performance data provided by Wiltshire County Council has allowed performance analysis of the schemes to be undertaken.

Finally a focus group has taken place with the key DRT scheme stakeholders to discuss issues raised and questions not fully answered in the face to face interviews.

**Face to face interviews.**

Face to face interviews were conducted with a number of key players in the DRT schemes in Wiltshire between 3rd April and 23rd May 2006. The people interviewed, and their roles, are detailed in Table 3.1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Brewin</td>
<td>PVTAG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keith Buchan</td>
<td>MTRU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg Cobb</td>
<td>A &amp; G Minibuses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cllr Fleur de Rhe-Phillipe</td>
<td>Wiltshire County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mick Druett</td>
<td>Bradies Private Hire Taxis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate Freeman</td>
<td>Kennet Passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne Henshaw</td>
<td>Calne Area Transport</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stephen Holt</td>
<td>Royal United Hospital</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alan Legg</td>
<td>APL Travel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ian Long</td>
<td>Dorset County Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Craig Manton</td>
<td>Mouchel Parkman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andy Mathews and Derek Harley</td>
<td>Hatts Coaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tim Reynolds</td>
<td>Wigglybus manager, WCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roy Sims</td>
<td>Mere Representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleanor Stirling, Commissioning Manager</td>
<td>Kennet &amp; North Wilts PCT and West Wilts PCT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cllr John Thomson</td>
<td>Wiltshire County Council</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Interviewees

Each interview lasted between one and two hours and the questions were based around the interviewee's area of expertise. The questions were set out under four main headings derived from the literature review:

- **Scheme Context** - to ascertain the involvement of the interviewees in the scheme and to obtain information on the factors surrounding the development of each scheme.

- **Scheme Description** - to provide additional data as to how each of the schemes is designed to operate in practice.

- **Scheme Performance** – to determine the success of each scheme in meeting its operational and policy objectives.
The Future – to investigate views as to how the schemes should develop.

In addition, a series of face to face and telephone interviews were conducted with council officers responsible for DRT operations in the five SOTA council areas examined.

Focus Groups

The focus group took place on the 2nd May 2006 at the County Hall in Trowbridge. It was attended by thirteen people from the Wiltshire DRT stakeholder group. The participants were split into two groups each of which was facilitated by two members of the research team. The session lasted approximately 1¼ hours comprising a fifteen minute introduction, discussion of three questions for 45 minutes and a 15 minute reporting back session.

The focus group discussions centred around three questions that covered issues raised in the interviews. It was hoped that the discursive nature of a focus group would obtain more detailed answers to these questions. The questions are listed below:

1. What challenges do you see facing rural public transport in Wiltshire over the next five years?

2. In an ideal world, what would your vision be for the contribution of DRT to public transport provision in Wiltshire over the same period be?

3. How would you suggest public transport be organised to address this vision given the constraints?

Overall the Focus Groups provided some useful information to assist in developing the future options section of the report.
4. Wiltshire Study

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this work package report is to develop an understanding as to the role of road-based public transport – and of Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) type systems in particular – in Wiltshire. This is presented in two parts. The first draws on secondary information from the County Council and other sources. The second reports the findings of in-depth structured interviews with key stakeholders involved with DRT in Wiltshire, that were conducted during April and May 2006.

4.2 The Wiltshire Context

This section aims to paint a picture of the geographical, demographic, social and political factors that potentially influence the public transport situation in Wiltshire. It will then look at the current transport network in Wiltshire before focusing specifically on public transport generally and the various Demand Responsive Transport systems in particular.

Wiltshire is a county situated in the south west of England and has borders with Hampshire, Gloucestershire, Somerset, Berkshire and Dorset. The county town is Trowbridge which is situated in the west of the county. Wiltshire is a predominantly rural county and approximately two thirds of it lies on chalk down lands, the largest area of chalk being the sparsely populated Salisbury Plain (Wikipedia, 2006). The 2001 Census records Wiltshire having a population of 613,024, the population density is fairly low at 178 people/km². The population of the administrative county of Wiltshire, excluding Swindon which is a Unitary Authority, is 445,000 of which nearly 60% live in urban areas with a population in excess of 5000 (WCC, 2006b). The largest settlements in Wiltshire, in descending order are Salisbury, Trowbridge and Chippenham (WCC, 2006b).

Of the population in Wiltshire in 2001, 42.6% were in the age bracket 30 – 59 (23.08% 30 – 44, 19.48% 45 – 59). A further 21.5% of the population was over the age of 60. (WSIN, 2006). According to the County Council ‘the majority of the predicted population growth is forecasted to be in the middle age and elderly age groups, with a decline in the 30 – 45 and the under 20 age groups’ (WCC, 2006b).

Parts of Wiltshire sit just in the London commuter belt and there is also good access from Wiltshire to the cities of Bristol, Bath, Swindon and Salisbury meaning that residents can commute to some major employment centres. ‘Wiltshire also benefits from the M4 corridor effect enjoying a close relationship with the larger economic centres just outside its boundary’ (WCC, 2006b). In 2001 58% of the Wiltshire population between the ages of 16 and 74 were economically active. Only 2% of the population classed themselves as unemployed (Wiltshire and Swindon Intelligence Network, 2006). This contributes to relatively high house prices in Wiltshire. For example in 2005 the average house price for a property ranged from £125,731 for a flat / maisonette to £309,928 for a detached property (Wiltshire and Swindon Intelligence Network, 2006). The average house price across the whole of the county in 2006 was £209,024 compared with a UK average of £184,924 (BBC News, 2006).

In 2001 only 16% of households in Wiltshire were without a car, 7% of households had three cars and 2% had four or more cars (Wiltshire and Swindon Intelligence Network, 2006). Across England 26% of households do not have a car (WSIN, 2006). However Wiltshire is a very rural area therefore in some parts a car is essential to maintain access to shops, services and employment.

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8 Percentages are based on the geographical county of Wiltshire including Swindon due to availability of data unless otherwise stated.
Politically, Wiltshire is divided into five districts – Salisbury, North Wiltshire, West Wiltshire, Kennet and Swindon (Unitary). As of May 2006 the Council is made up of twenty eight Conservative, sixteen Liberal Democrats, three Labour and two independent councillors, while at a national level Wiltshire is represented by four Conservative MP’s and two Labour MP’s (Swindon area) (WCC, 2006a).

4.3 Wider local policy aims and the role of transport

As mentioned earlier, Wiltshire is a deeply rural county with an aging population. These factors inherently cause problems relating to accessibility and social exclusion which the Council are very keen to counter. This is evidenced by the Wiltshire County Council’s ‘Wiltshire 2009 Corporate Plan’ that states ‘By 2009, the Council will help to make the County of Wiltshire a place where people of all ages lead active and independent lives’. The document goes on to state that ‘By 2009, our target will be to achieve excellent and improving services that are accessible to everyone who lives and works in Wiltshire – accessibility is a particular issue in a rural county, where people can be socially excluded by their location. The Council’s services should reflect the diversity in our population, promote the principle of equity and give people a voice’ (WCC, 2005a).

In order to meet these aims it is necessary to mobilise goods, services and people in Wiltshire, albeit in a cost effective manner. Providing a good transport infrastructure, particularly public transport services, has been held in high esteem as a viable way of tackling problems of poor accessibility and transport related social exclusion (SEU, 2003). This has been recognised by Wilshire County Council which has been successful on a number of occasions in obtaining Rural Bus Challenge monies in order to implement innovative rural transport services to attempt to tackle rural accessibility and exclusion issues.

As elsewhere in England, the strategic direction of transport policy in Wiltshire is framed by the 1998 White Paper A new deal for transport: Better for everyone (DETR, 1998), and delivered through the county’s Local Transport Plan – the second of which (LTP2) was published in March 2006. A key theme that runs through the LTP2 is that of improving accessibility, the Council’s accessibility vision is ‘to improve access to goods, services and employment opportunities for all sections of the community, particularly those living in rural areas or without access to a car’. The council states in the LPT2 the importance and relative success of using Demand Responsive services in rural areas but also acknowledges that provision of public transport in this way incurs significant costs. However the LPT2 also recognises the benefits Demand Responsive services can offer and plans to find ways in which the costs can be reduced.

The Council’s priorities for supporting bus services are set out in the LTP2 and the second highest priority (H2) is ‘on other routes, maintaining at least daily (weekday) access to a local centre with a range of food and other shops, bank or building society, post office, library and doctors surgery, and with strategic network services to a larger town’. In addition to this the funding support criteria state that services can be funded up to £3.50 per passenger trip and exceptions may be made for experimental services.

If the Council is to meet its aims set out in the Corporate Plan and fulfil the LTP2 it is vital they consider the wider benefits of Demand Responsive services in the county and look at the cross sector benefits they provide. It would seem that transport is an inherent factor in fulfilling these aims and thus the funding availability to the relevant departments is of utmost importance.

4.4 Transport provision in Wiltshire

The main road routes through Wiltshire are the M4 motorway in the north of the county and the A 303 in the south, while a network of ‘A’ roads links together the other main settlements. However some of the main highways in the county are finding it difficult to cope with the volume of traffic leading to ‘local congestion, relatively low inter urban speeds and journey time unreliability issues’ which threaten to ‘devalue the quality of life and act as a major
inhibitor to walking and cycling through increased and perceived dangers, and to public transport by increasing journey times on services’ (WCC, 2006b).

There are also a number of rail links across the county providing access to out of county urban centres such as Bristol, Southampton and London (WCC, 2006b). Wiltshire benefits from a rail link between Bristol and London Paddington that serves Chippenham; a link between the South West and London Paddington that serves Westbury and Pewsey; and a link between London Waterloo and Exeter that serves Salisbury and Tisbury (WCC, 2006b). In addition there are number of local services throughout the county.

Bus services in Wiltshire are operated by around 40 different operators throughout the county. Of these bus services, the majority i.e. in the towns and on the so-called strategic inter-urban network or ‘Key Bus Route Network’ (typically during the daytime, Monday to Saturday) are run on a commercial basis, while around a third are subsidised by the County Council9 (WCC, 2006b). In addition, it should be noted that taxis and minicabs, as well as LINK voluntary driver and Community Transport schemes also contribute towards enhancing people’s accessibility. However, it is also the case that in Wiltshire there are relatively few operators of these services that are currently interested in tendering for council supported DRT services.

Up until now, the revenue support given to these services does allow Wiltshire to maintain an impressive level of rural accessibility with ‘around 89% of the rural population in Wiltshire having access to a daily or better bus service, and 61% having an hourly or better service’ (WCC 2006b). One key element behind this level of accessibility has been the use of various forms of Demand Responsive Transport.

4.5 DRT in Wiltshire

As of June 2006 there are three types of DRT system currently operating in Wiltshire – three semi-flexibly routed ‘Wigglybus’ service zones in Pewsey Vale, Calne and Mere; a fully flexibly-routed ‘Hopper’ service serving the Royal United Hospital in Bath from parts of West and North Wiltshire; and three shared taxi ‘Boomerang’ services in Wootton Bassett, Bradenstoke and Malmesbury. In addition, the roles of Community Transport and LINK services – which are also demand responsive - need to be recognised (although these will not be discussed further).

4.6 Wigglybus

The Wigglybus concept was borne out of a need to serve a deeply rural area that lacked any public transport provision and was geographically unsuitable for a conventional public transport service. This, combined with the opportunity to apply for funding10 from the Central Government Rural Bus Challenge (RBC) in 1998 made the Wigglybus in Pewsey Vale a viable proposal. In the 1998 RBC bid the beneficiaries of the scheme would ‘experience a major step change in public transport provision. For those with cars there will be a new alternative that offers comfort, close to home convenience, frequency, for users without cars, many non-car journeys will move from the “not possible” category to “attractive”’ (WCC, 1998). Funding was achieved on the strength of this bid in 1998 and this funding was further supplemented by another successful bid in 2001 that led to the expansion of the Pewsey Vale scheme and the commencement of the Calne and Mere Wigglybus schemes. The stated objectives of the Wigglybus schemes are to promote social inclusion, sustainable transport, community marketing and community involvement. The schemes are reported to be meeting

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9 County Councils are legally required to provide transport for children entitled to free travel to school which is paid for through an Education Transport budget. Consequently, in Wiltshire these services are used as the basis for much of the tendered revenue supported network which is then added to where necessary by funding from the Public Transport budget.

10 Initially, a less ambitious Wigglybus scheme for Pewsey Vale was to have been funded through a grant from Kennet District Council. This money was later included as part of the RBC bid.
these objectives to varying extents, although in doing so they are encountering some significant cost barriers. All the schemes are branded in the same way to develop the Wigglybus concept across the service areas and increase patronage. There is a Wigglybus Advisory panel (“WAP”) that has evolved from a Management Group set up at the inception of the Pewsey Vale Wigglybus which still meets regularly to discuss issues concerning the Wigglybus services. It is chaired by County Cllr John Thompson and attended by interested parties and groups from all the Wigglybus areas.

4.6.1 Pewsey Vale Wigglybus

The Pewsey Vale Wigglybus operates in the deeply rural Pewsey Vale in Wiltshire, and is focused on the market town of Devizes and Pewsey (see Map 4.1). It began operating in May 1999. Initial finance drew 50% from RBC funding, fares 20%, education transport (15%), Wiltshire County Council passenger transport (10%) and Kennet District Council (5%). The RBC money will end in March 2007. The scheme currently uses two Rohill Harriers, three Evobus low floor Mercedes Sprinters and a Mercedes Benz 413 CDI Sprinter (not accessible). However only four of these buses are in use at any one time. The service is operated by Hatts Coaches based in Foxham, Wiltshire and the call centre for the service is Telephone Information Masters which is based in Exeter, Devon.

Map 4.1: Map of Pewsey Vale Wigglybus (Image courtesy of WCC)

The service operates between 6.40am and 11.30pm Monday to Saturday, with the daytime services operating between 6.40am and 7.00pm and the night bus operating on a fully flexible basis from 6.00pm to 11.00pm, although it is restricted to times at which it is scheduled to leave and arrive at Devizes or Pewsey. It is necessary to make a local call to book the service at least 20 minutes before the service required departs from Pewsey or Devizes. This enables the call centre in Exeter to input the data into the MobiSoft software that then makes the driver aware of the booking and plans the route for the bus. It is also possible to use a free phone in the Co-op in Pewsey or the Tourist Information Centre in Devizes to book the bus. The call centre is open from 6.00am to 11.00pm.
The fares for the service currently range between £0.45 and £1.80 depending on passenger type and journey length and at present the service has approximately 1,200 regular users. A number of methods have been employed to market the service including leaflets, posters, local press, website, television, radio and word of mouth, with local press being ranked as the most effective. Additionally all the Wigglybuses are branded with full Wigglybus livery that makes them very identifiable as they travel throughout the Pewsey Vale. A website has recently been launched that will soon offer online booking for the Wigglybus service. There are a number of community partners with an interest in this service including Pewsey Vale Transport Appraisal Group (“PVTAG”) and Kennet Passengers.

4.6.2 Calne Wigglybus

The Calne Wigglybus commenced serving the villages surrounding Calne town in North Wiltshire in August 2003 (see Map 4.2). This service was initially funded from RBC money (50%), fares (30%) and Wiltshire County Council education funding (20%). The RBC money is due to cease in March 2007.

Map 4.2: Map of Calne Wigglybus (Image courtesy of WCC)

The service is operated using one Rohill Harrier that seats 13 people and is fully accessible. The Calne service is operated by Hatts Coaches and the call centre is provided by Telephone Information Masters in Exeter, Devon. The service operates between 7.20am and 7.45pm Monday to Friday, finishing at 6.45pm on a Saturday on three different routes around Calne.

It is necessary to book a journey at least 20 minutes before the service is scheduled to leave Calne so that the journeys can be inputted into the Mobisoft booking software and the journey details and route plans sent to the bus. The fares for the Calne Wigglybus are between £0.30 and £1.40 dependent on journey length and passenger type and there are approximately 400 regular users of the service at present.
The service has been promoted in a number of ways, to varying degrees of success. These methods include leaflet, poster, local press, website, radio and word of mouth, with local press being the most successful. Calne Area Transport ("CAT") is a community partner in the Calne Wigglybus scheme and also contributes to the marketing of the Calne Wigglybus. CAT runs stands in the local supermarkets and attends local village fares to promote local transport especially the Wigglybus. It has also been involved in the production of the Calne Wigglybus leaflet. One other interesting CAT initiative, is the Go-between Project. This Project is aimed at an exchange of transport information with households in the Calne area and involves volunteers delivering a transport information pack which is carefully explained (Freeman, 2005). The Go-between Project seeks to raise public transport awareness with the intention of increasing patronage.

4.6.3 Mere Wigglybus

The Mere Wigglybus serves the rural areas around Mere in the south of Wiltshire (see Map 4.3). It began operating in September 2004. The Mere Wigglybus is funded by RBC grant (50%), fares (15%), WCC educational budgets (20%) and Wiltshire County Council (15%). The RBC funding is set to end in March 2007.

Map 4.3: Map of Mere Wigglybus (Image courtesy of WCC)

The Mere Wigglybus uses one fully accessible VDL Kusters Mercedes Benz low floor sprinter with 15 seats. It is operated by Hatts Coaches of Foxham although the vehicle is kept near Mere and the drivers are local to the area. Hatts operates the call centre for the Mere Wigglybus.

The service is operated between 7.00am and 6.30pm Monday to Friday and 8.00am to 10.30pm on Saturday. A night service is also operated on a Wednesday to serve Mere and its youth club and Gillingham swimming pool. It is necessary to book at least 40 minutes before the journey commences and return journeys can be booked with the driver. It is also possible to book a journey using the free phone in Mere Co-op. Fares for the Mere Wigglybus range between £0.25 and £3.50 and are dependent on journey length, journey time, passenger type and journey area. There are approximately 300 users of the service at present.
The Mere Wigglybus has been promoted in number of ways to varying degrees of success. These include leaflets, posters, local press, website, radio, word of mouth and the local Co-op store. The Co-op in Mere is helpful in marketing the Wigglybus having a phone in the store for booking and advertising on the Wigglybus. It has also run various promotions such as spend £10 and get money off Wigglybus fares to encourage usage. There is a representative from Mere who sits on the Wigglybus Advisory Panel.

4.6.4 Wigglybus Line 43 and Line 44

One other Wigglybus branded service concept that operates in the County is Lines 43 and 44. This was a fixed route operation until January 2006 (and hence is not examined in great detail by this report) but with the exception of the first two morning journeys from Avebury to Marlborough, the service must now be pre-booked from any point other than the origin. Specifically, Line 43 operates between Marlborough and Avebury with connections to Calne, Devizes, Swindon and Trowbridge, whilst Line 44 operates between Malborough, Kennet Valley and Devizes with connections of alternate services (on Thursdays and Saturdays only) (see Map 4.4). Different fares apply in three zones from £0.75 to £1.30 for single and from £1.00 to £2.00 for return.

Map 4.4: Map of Wigglybus Line 43 and Line 44 (Image courtesy of WCC)

4.7 Royal United Hospital Hopper (“RUH Hopper”)

The RUH Hopper was set up in July 2001 using Rural Bus Challenge (“RBC”) funding supplemented by funding from West Wiltshire and Kennet and North Wiltshire Primary Care Trusts. However the PCT funding has since ceased and the RBC grant is due to end in summer 2006. No further funding has been sourced for this service at present. The RUH Hopper was set up to provide transport from many areas of West Wiltshire to the Royal United Hospital in Bath (see Map 4.5). The service was deemed necessary due to the deeply rural nature of much of West Wiltshire and the lack of direct services from West Wiltshire to 11 Based on WCC (2006g)
Bath. This problem is exacerbated by the location of the Royal United Hospital to the west of Bath. ‘There are no direct bus services from Wiltshire to the hospital. Many rural residents faced inconvenient connections often involving two changes of buses. Parking is also difficult at the hospital’ (CA, 2004). There is a perception that the problem of access to healthcare is only going to worsen as the PCTs centralise their services over the next few years. The other major hospitals in Wiltshire are Salisbury District Hospital in the south of the county and the Great Western Hospital in Swindon in the north of the county.

Map 4.5: Map of RUH Hopper (AVO, 2006)

A survey was carried out in 2003 by consultant Mouchel Parkman to investigate passenger perception. The results of this indicated that 50% of passengers would have made the journey to the hospital ‘with some difficulty’ while a further 42% would have found the journey ‘very difficult’ (Mouchel Parkman, 2003). Furthermore ‘public reaction has been overwhelmingly positive, and the only complaints have been from places not in the operating area who demand the Hopper should serve them too’ (WCC, 2003).

The Hopper service operates between 7.30am and 5.30pm Monday to Friday offering an hourly arrival at the hospital from 8.20am to 5.20pm and an hourly departure from the hospital between 8.30am and 5.30pm. The service offered is a door to door service from home to the hospital and back and the journey should not take longer than an hour. Since April 2006 the cost of the service charged is between £6 - £12 for an adult return, £4 - £8 for a child return with a flat fare of £5 for a Wiltshire Bus Pass concession return – a 50% increase on the level charged beforehand and previously unchanged since the service began in 2001.

The Hopper service is only available on a pre booked basis and it must be booked two days before departure to allow time for the service to be effectively scheduled. The buses can be shared by up to eight people and all are wheelchair accessible.

At present the service is carrying between 600 and 1,000 people a month using seven Renault Master buses leased to the operator of the service, A and G Minibuses in Warminster, by Wiltshire County Council. The buses are now nearly seven years old and would cost approximately £28,000 each to replace. A and G Minibuses is paid by Wiltshire County Council on a live and dead mileage basis, i.e. it is only paid for the passenger carrying miles.

Wiltshire County Council has always been responsible for the promotion and marketing of the service. Leaflets and posters have been distributed to doctors and dental surgeries in the area and complete postcode leaflet drops have also been carried out. Furthermore articles
have been written in the local newspapers, for example when the Hopper carried its 5,000th passenger. The branded buses are also regularly seen about the county and the drivers will explain the service and hand out leaflets if requested.

These promotional methods are reported as being as successful as can be expected, mainly because people only go to the hospital if they have to and therefore the service cannot build up a regular clientele in the same way a shopping service can. Furthermore word of mouth is still reported as being the most successful method of promotion. Leaflets are still distributed and supplies of information restocked in the usual outlets although no proactive publicity has been undertaken recently. This is to be understood given the uncertainty surrounding the future of the service. In addition WCC has been studying the feasibility of extending the area served and as such, they didn’t want to reprint the leaflet until this had been decided. Clearly, if more promotion takes place potentially patronage increases and given the current situation the fact that every trip on the Hopper costs the council additional money would not be ideal.

4.8 Boomerang Shared Taxi Services

The Boomerang services are demand responsive shared taxi services that operate in the north of the county in very rural areas that lack traditional public transport services. The primary objectives are to link to core bus networks in the main towns, utilise existing taxi capacity in the area and use it more efficiently, provide access to employment and services, provide low cost access from rural areas using taxi provision, reduce rural isolation and to provide choice and equality of opportunity to key groups. It is reported that the Bassett and Bradenstoke Boomerangs are well on the way to fulfilling these objectives. It is not possible to comment on the Malmesbury Boomerang since it only commenced in January 2006. Bassett Boomerang

4.8.1 Bassett Boomerang

The Bassett Boomerang serves villages to the south and west of Wootton Bassett and began operating in November 2004 (see Map 4.6). It was 50% funded by RBC, with fares and Wiltshire County Council budgets making up the rest. The RBC funding is set to end in March 2007.
The service is operated using a VW Transporter that carries eight people. It is operated by Hatts coaches which also runs the call centre. The service runs between 7.30am and 6.00pm arriving in Wootton Bassett at 7.45am, 8.45am, 9.55am and 11.55am (all to be booked the day before), 1.25pm, 2.15pm, 3.15pm (all to be book at least two hours before). It departs from Wootton Bassett at 11.10am (to be booked the day before), 12.10pm, 2.30pm, 3.15pm, 4.15pm and 5.45pm (all to be booked at least two hours before). If the service has not got any bookings it does not run.

The service costs between £0.60 and £1.00 dependent on passenger type and there are approximately 25 users. It has been promoted in a number of ways including leaflet, local press, website, radio, Jobcentre Plus and word of mouth with local press being the most successful.

4.8.2 Bradenstoke Boomerang

The Bradenstoke Boomerang provides a flexible shared taxi service from and between Dauntsey St James, Dauntsey Lock and Bradenstoke to Lyneham Green and back (see Map 4.7). It started running in September 2003 and is funded by fares and Wiltshire County Council.

It is operated using a VW Sharan with six seats and a Renault Master with eight seats by Bradies Taxi's in Dauntsey who also operate the call centre. It is available between 7.00am and 6.30pm Monday to Saturday and offers a door to door service. There are a number of scheduled journeys that meet bus services in Lynham Green and outside those times the service operates on demand. Journeys before 12 noon must be booked by 4.00pm the day before travel; journeys after 12.00pm must be booked at least two hours before travel.

The service has a flat fare of £1.00 due to the length of journey being so short. There are approximately 15 users of the service at present.

The service has been marketed in a number of ways including leaflet, local press, website, radio and word of mouth, with leaflet and local press being the most successful.
4.8.3 Malmesbury Boomerang

The Malmesbury Boomerang provides a flexible, evening only, shared taxi service for the villages around Malmesbury in North Wiltshire (see Map 4.8). As with the Wootton Bassett scheme, it was initially 50% funded by RBC, with fares and Wiltshire County Council making up the difference. The RBC funding is due to end in March 2007.

The service is operated using a VW Transporter that seats seven people by Hatts Coaches which also runs the call centre. It is available on a fully flexible basis between the hours of 6.00pm and 10.30pm and journeys must be booked no later than 12.00pm on the day of travel. Journeys are available from any location within the Boomerang operating zone to anywhere within the Boomerang operating zone, to or from Kemble station or to one of the towns shown on Map 4.8 around the Boomerang operating zone (Chippenham Bus Station, Wootton Bassett High Street and Flemming Way).

While the service fares are kept as near as possible to bus fares, the passengers are expected to pay a premium due to the specialist nature of the service. An adult single costs £2 and a return £3, child single costs £1.50 and a return £2; concessionary passes are not accepted on the service.

The service has been promoted using leaflets, local press, website, radio and word of mouth to varying degrees of success, with local press the most successful at attracting passengers.

4.9 Scheme summaries

Table 4.1 provides a brief summary of the cases described.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme Context</th>
<th>Wigglybus, Pewsey Vale</th>
<th>Wigglybus, Calne</th>
<th>Wigglybus, Mere</th>
<th>RUH Hopper</th>
<th>Boomerang Shared Taxi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Area type</strong></td>
<td>Rural area</td>
<td>Rural villages in North Wiltshire</td>
<td>Deep rural areas in South Wiltshire</td>
<td>Deep rural area in west Wiltshire</td>
<td>Very rural areas that lack traditional PT in North Wiltshire.</td>
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<td><strong>Objectives</strong></td>
<td>To promote social inclusion, sustainable transport, community marketing and community involvement.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Access to healthcare.</td>
<td>Link to core bus networks in the main towns, utilise existing taxi capacity more efficiently, provide access to employment and services, reduce rural isolation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target markets</strong></td>
<td>Focus on the market towns of Devizes and Pewsey.</td>
<td>Villages surrounding Calne.</td>
<td>Within Mere and the rural area surrounding Mere.</td>
<td>Serving the Royal United Hospital in Bath from parts of West and North Wiltshire (anybody living in West Wiltshire who does not need medical assistance while travelling).</td>
<td>Bassett: Serving villages to the south and west of Wootton Bassett; Bradenstoke: from and between Dauntsey St James, Dauntsey Lock and Bradenstoke to Lyneham Green and back; Malmesbury: villages around Malmesbury.</td>
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<td><strong>Service start dates</strong></td>
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<td>August 2003</td>
<td>September 2004</td>
<td>July 2001</td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>Financial</strong></td>
<td>RBC funding (50%) (due to end in Mar 07); the rest are from WCC and school transport funding (50%).</td>
<td>RBC funding (50%) (due to end in Mar 07); WCC educational funding (30%) and WCC (20%)</td>
<td>RBC funding (50%) (due to end in Mar 07); the rest are from WCC and educational funding</td>
<td>RBC (due to end in summer 06); West Wiltshire and Kennet funding; North Wiltshire Primary Care Trusts (PCT) (PCT has ceased).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Organisations involved
- Wigglybus, Pewsey Vale: Operated by Hatts Coaches based in Foxham; promoted by WCC; Pewsey Vale Transport Appraisal Group (PV/TAG) and Kennet Passengers are involved.
- Wigglybus, Calne: Operated by Hatts Coaches based in Foxham; promoted by WCC and Calne Area Transport (CAT).
- Wigglybus, Mere: Operated by Hatts Coaches based in Foxham; Promoted by WCC.
- RUH Hopper: Promoted by WCC.
- Boomerang Shared Taxi: Operated by Hatts Coaches (Bassett and Malmesbury) and Bradies Taxi’s (Bradenstoke).

### Scheme Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of services (timetable)</th>
<th>Semi-flexible</th>
<th>Semi-flexible</th>
<th>Semi-flexible</th>
<th>Fully flexible</th>
<th>Bassett: flexible; Bradenstoke: flexible (also provide a number of scheduled services); Malmesbury: flexible evening.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of services (route)</td>
<td>Semi-flexible routed</td>
<td>Semi-flexible routed</td>
<td>Semi-flexible routed</td>
<td>Fully flexible routed</td>
<td>Bassett: flexible; Bradenstoke: flexible door to door; Malmesbury: flexible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of operations</td>
<td>DRT bus</td>
<td>DRT bus</td>
<td>DRT bus</td>
<td>DRT bus</td>
<td>Shared taxi Bassett: 1; Bradenstoke: 2; Malmesbury: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of vehicles</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bassett: 7 times a day (if the service has no bookings, it does not run).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service frequencies</td>
<td>Predominantly hourly</td>
<td>2 hourly</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Hourly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Booking options</td>
<td>Phone booking; Freephone available in Pewsey Co-op or the Tourist Information Centre in Devizes.</td>
<td>Phone booking</td>
<td>Phone booking; Return journey can be booked with the driver; Freephone available in Mere Co-op.</td>
<td>Phone booking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wigglybus, Pewsey Vale</td>
<td>Wigglybus, Calne</td>
<td>Wigglybus, Mere</td>
<td>RUH Hopper</td>
<td>Boomerang Shared Taxi</td>
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<td>------------------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Required pre-booking time</strong></td>
<td>At least 20 minutes before</td>
<td>At least 20 minutes before</td>
<td>At least 40 minutes before</td>
<td>2 days before</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Software used</strong></td>
<td>Mobisoft Mon-Sat: 6:40am-11:30pm</td>
<td>Mobisoft Mon-Fri: 7:20am-7:45pm; Sat: 7:20am-6:45pm</td>
<td>None Mon-Fri: 7:00am-6:30pm; Sat: 8:00am-10:30pm</td>
<td>None Mon-Fri: 7:30am-5:30pm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hours of operation</strong></td>
<td>Mon-Sat: 6:40am-11:30pm</td>
<td>Mon-Fri: 7:20am-7:45pm; Sat: 7:20am-6:45pm</td>
<td>Mon-Fri: 7:00am-6:30pm; Sat: 8:00am-10:30pm</td>
<td>Bassett: 7:30am-6:00pm; Bradenstoke: Mon-Sat 7:00am-6:30pm; Malmesbury: 6:00pm-10:30pm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Call centre</strong></td>
<td>Telephone Information Masters in Exeter, Devon open 6:00am-11:00pm.</td>
<td>Telephone Information Masters in Exeter, Devon.</td>
<td>Call centre + bus driver</td>
<td>Taxi operator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fare structure</strong></td>
<td>£0.45-£1.80</td>
<td>£0.30-£1.40</td>
<td>Mere town (single): £0.50 adult, £0.20 young person and £0.25 concession Mere &amp; district (single): £1 adult, £0.5 young person and concession.</td>
<td>£6-£12 for an adult return; £4-£8 for a child return; £5 for a Wiltshire Bus Pass concession return.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scheme Performance**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Wigglybus, Pewsey Vale</th>
<th>Wigglybus, Calne</th>
<th>Wigglybus, Mere</th>
<th>RUH Hopper</th>
<th>Boomerang Shared Taxi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Patronage</td>
<td>6,850 per month</td>
<td>1,670 per month</td>
<td>870 per month</td>
<td>1,400 per month</td>
<td>Bassett: 226 per month</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bradenstoke: 86 per month</td>
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<td>Malmesbury: 101 per month</td>
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<td>Bassett: 2725 per month</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bradenstoke: 313 per month</td>
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<td>Malmesbury: 507 per month</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Costs</td>
<td>Total: £32,700 per month</td>
<td>Total: £8,100 per month</td>
<td>Total: £8,000 per month</td>
<td>Total: £10,090 per month</td>
<td>Bassett: £2,522 per month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Call centre: £3,200</td>
<td>Call centre: £790</td>
<td>Call centre: £1,400</td>
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<td>Bradenstoke: £282 per month</td>
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<td>Malmesbury: £344 per month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Revenues</td>
<td>Total: £9,600 per month</td>
<td>Total: £1,900 per month</td>
<td>Total: £2,500 per month</td>
<td>Fares: £4,440 per month including fares and concessions</td>
<td>Bassett: Total £203 per month; fare £171 per month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fare: £4,200 per month</td>
<td>Fare: £990 per month</td>
<td>Fare: £280 per month</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bradenstoke: Total £36 per month; fare £2 per month</td>
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<td>Malmesbury: Total £163 per month; fare £163 per month</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Subsidy required = total costs-total revenues</td>
<td>£23,100 per month</td>
<td>£6,200 per month</td>
<td>£5,500 per month</td>
<td>£5,650 per month</td>
<td>Bassett: £2,522 per month</td>
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<td>Bradenstoke: £282 per month</td>
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<td>Malmesbury: £344 per month</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Revenue/cost ratio</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>Bassett: 0.07</td>
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<td>Bradenstoke: 0.23</td>
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<td>Malmesbury: 0.32</td>
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<td>Bassett: £11.16</td>
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<td>Bradenstoke: £3.28</td>
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<td>Malmesbury: £3.40</td>
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<td>Bassett: £12.06</td>
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<td>Bradenstoke: £4.28</td>
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<td>Malmesbury: £5.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Subsidy per passenger = total subsidy/number of passengers</td>
<td>£3.37</td>
<td>£3.71</td>
<td>£6.32</td>
<td>£4.04</td>
<td>Bassett: £0.77</td>
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<td>Bradenstoke: 0.23</td>
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<td>Malmesbury: 0.32</td>
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<td>Bassett: £11.16</td>
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<td>Bradenstoke: £3.28</td>
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<td>Malmesbury: £3.40</td>
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<td>Bassett: £12.06</td>
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<td>Bradenstoke: £4.28</td>
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<td>Malmesbury: £5.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Running costs per passenger = running costs/number of passengers</td>
<td>£4.77</td>
<td>£4.85</td>
<td>£9.20</td>
<td>£7.21</td>
<td>Bassett: £0.77</td>
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<td>Bradenstoke: 0.23</td>
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<td>Malmesbury: 0.32</td>
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<td>Bassett: £11.16</td>
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<td>Bradenstoke: £3.28</td>
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<td>Malmesbury: £3.40</td>
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<td>Bassett: £12.06</td>
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<td>Bradenstoke: £4.28</td>
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<td>Malmesbury: £5.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Call centre costs per passenger = call centre costs/number of passengers</td>
<td>£0.47</td>
<td>£0.47</td>
<td>£1.61</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Bassett: £0.77</td>
</tr>
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<td>Bradenstoke: 0.23</td>
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<td>Malmesbury: 0.32</td>
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<td>Bassett: £11.16</td>
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<td>Bradenstoke: £3.28</td>
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<td>Malmesbury: £3.40</td>
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<td>Bassett: £12.06</td>
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<td>Bradenstoke: £4.28</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Malmesbury: £5.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Average fare per passenger = Fare revenue/number of passengers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Wigglybus, Pewsey Vale</th>
<th>Wigglybus, Calne</th>
<th>Wigglybus, Mere</th>
<th>RUH Hopper</th>
<th>Boomerang Shared Taxi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£0.61</td>
<td>£0.59</td>
<td>£0.32</td>
<td>£3.17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bassett</td>
<td>£0.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bradenstoke</td>
<td>£1.00</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malmesbury</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>£1.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
Data between April 2005-January 2006
Boomerang data for April 2006 (except Bradenstoke May 2006). It should also be noted that fare data for the Bradenstoke Boomerang is predominantly made up of concessionary fares income (£84 from £86).
RUH Hopper data between April 2005-March 2006

Table 4.1: DRT scheme summaries
4.10 Rural Transport Performance Analysis

Figure 4.1 illustrates the patronage profile of the DRT schemes in Wiltshire between September 2003 and April 2006 (where data is available). From this, with the exception of the RUH Hopper which dipped significantly in April 2005 due to a sharp fare rise coupled with uncertainty over its future, it can be seen that patronage levels on all of the schemes are growing (albeit slowly). In addition, as seen in Table 4.13 subsidy per passenger levels are also gradually improving in general. However, as noted earlier the problem is that financial pressures generally are impacting on the resources available to the Passenger Transport Unit and forcing it to compare the value it receives from rural passenger transport services with that of subsidised bus services In the towns and on the Key Bus Route Network which form the public transport priority services.

![Wiltshire DRT Patronage](image)

**Figure 4.1: Wiltshire DRT Patronage**

4.10.1 Performance Comparison of DRT and Conventional Bus in Wiltshire

One important element to consider, is how DRT services compare with regular bus services. In Wiltshire, there are a number of routes that can be analysed for an indication as to how each service type performs. Consequently, Table 4.2 draws on data provided by WCC to compare costs between conventional fixed route rural bus services currently operating with the various types of DRT operated in the County.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>No. of veh</th>
<th>Patronage</th>
<th>Passengers per bus journey</th>
<th>Fare revenues</th>
<th>Total gross operating costs</th>
<th>Total subsidy</th>
<th>Subsidy per passenger trip</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bedwyn Link (Service 20)</td>
<td>11 journeys per day</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Annual: 55,826 (including 28,200 education trips) Monthly ave: 4,652</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>£40,558</td>
<td>£206,260</td>
<td>£165,702 (€91,109 ed. payments)</td>
<td>£2.97 (incl. ed) £2.70 (fare paying)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungerford - Marlborough via Bedwyn</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Daily ave: 182</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chippenham rural (Services 35+99)</td>
<td>Average 11 journeys per day</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Annual: 15,524 (no data on education trips) Monthly ave: 1,294 Daily ave: 51</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>£13,605</td>
<td>£67,572</td>
<td>£53,967 (€23,206 ed. payments)</td>
<td>n/a (incl. ed) £1.98 (fare paying)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chippenham to Kington St. Michael and Castle Combe</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warminster – Frome (Service 53)</td>
<td>12 journeys per day</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Annual: 38,494 (including 0 education trips) Monthly ave: 3,208 Daily ave: 126</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>£31,766</td>
<td>£64,598</td>
<td>£32,832 (€0 ed. payments)</td>
<td>£0.84 (incl. ed) £0.84 (fare paying)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Via Corsley</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melksham – Corsham (Service 72)</td>
<td>4 journeys per day</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Annual: 19,742 (no data on education trips) Monthly ave: 1,645 Daily ave: 64</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>£8,256</td>
<td>£55,248</td>
<td>£46,992 (€17,100 ed. payments)</td>
<td>n/a (incl. ed) £1.51 (fare paying)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Via Whiteley</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conventional Rural Bus Services</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melksham – Corsham (Service 72)</td>
<td>Predominantly hourly; Average 8 return journeys per day</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Annual (early 2005): 12,900 (incl. 5700 ed. trips) Monthly ave: 1075 Daily ave: 42</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>£5,500</td>
<td>£88,578</td>
<td>£63,078</td>
<td>£2.06 (fare paying) £4.89 (incl ed.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Melksham – Corsham (Service 72)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wigglybus 43 &amp; 44</td>
<td>Predominantly hourly; Average 8 return journeys per day</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Annual (early 2005): 12,900 (incl. 5700 ed. trips) Monthly ave: 1075 Daily ave: 42</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>£5,500</td>
<td>£88,578</td>
<td>£63,078</td>
<td>£2.06 (fare paying) £4.89 (incl ed.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 43 Marlborough to Avebury with connections to Calne, Swindon, Trowbridge and Devizes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>NOTE: No data available for Line 44 which operates Thursday and Saturday, 3 return journeys per day from Marlborough and Kennet Valley to Devizes. Note also that no data was available since the service switched to being demand responsive in January 2006.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pewsey Vale Wigglybus</td>
<td>Hourly; Average 11 journeys per day</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Annual: 24,002 Monthly ave: 2000 Daily ave: 78</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Line 1 Non-fixed route starting and ending in Devizes. Loop service (anti-clockwise and clockwise journeys) covers the area east of Devizes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Line 2 Non-fixed route starting and ending in Pewsey. Service covers the area west of Pewsey.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Line 3 Non-fixed route starting and ending in Pewsey. Service covers the area east of Pewsey including Burbage.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>No. of veh</td>
<td>Patronage</td>
<td>Passengers per bus journey</td>
<td>Fare revenues</td>
<td>Total gross operating costs</td>
<td>Total subsidy</td>
<td>Subsidy per passenger journey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Line 8</td>
<td>Predominantly hourly; Average 8 journeys per day</td>
<td>9 months: 1,596 (booked pax only) (1/4/05-31/12/05) Annual est: 3,064 Monthly ave: 255 Daily ave: 10</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1/4/05-31/12/05)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Line 10</td>
<td>Approximately hourly; Average 6 journeys per day</td>
<td>9 months: 3,503 (booked pax only) (1/4/05-31/12/05) Annual est: 6,548 Monthly ave: 546 Daily ave: 21</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1/4/05-31/12/05)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Line 11</td>
<td>Predominantly hourly; Average 4 journeys per day</td>
<td>Annual: 6,042 Monthly ave: 504 Daily ave: 20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1 + spare</td>
<td>Annual (early 2005): 15,000 (incl. 300 ed. trips) Annual: 19,925 (Apr 05-Mar 06)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>£7,680</td>
<td>£93,480</td>
<td>£85,800 (£10,800 ed. payments)</td>
<td>£5.72 (incl. ed) £5.10 (fare paying)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 1</td>
<td>Non-fixed route serving the area west of Calne.</td>
<td>Predominantly two hourly; Average 4 journeys per day</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Annual: 5,157 Monthly ave: 430 Daily ave: 17</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 2</td>
<td>Non-fixed route serving the area south of Calne.</td>
<td>Two hourly; Average 3 journeys per day</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9 months: 915 (booked pax only) (1/4/05-31/12/05)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Annual est: 3,596 Monthly ave: 300 Daily ave: 12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 3</td>
<td>Non-fixed route serving the area north of Calne.</td>
<td>Predominantly hourly; Average 4 journeys per day</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Annual: 421 Monthly ave: 35 Daily ave: 1.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 4</td>
<td>Peak service across the Calne Wigglybus operating area. Operates only on demand.</td>
<td>Predominantly hourly; 4 journeys per day</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9 months: 2,723 (booked pax only) (1/4/05-31/12/05)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Annual est: 10,752 Monthly ave: 896 Daily ave: 35</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mere Wigglybus</td>
<td>Predominantly hourly; Average 4 journeys per day</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>£1,800</td>
<td>£76,072</td>
<td>£74,272 (£8,772 ed. payments)</td>
<td>£8.24 (inc. ed) £14.56 (fare paying)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RUH Hopper</td>
<td>Hourly; 10 journeys per day</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>£53,308</td>
<td>£121,052</td>
<td>£67,744</td>
<td>£4.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wootton Bassett Boomerang</td>
<td>Serving villages south of Wootton Bassett. Operates only on demand.</td>
<td>7 journeys per day</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>£2,517</td>
<td>£31,056</td>
<td>£28,538</td>
<td>£13.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>No. of veh</td>
<td>Patronage</td>
<td>Passengers per bus journey</td>
<td>Fare revenues</td>
<td>Total gross operating costs</td>
<td>Total subsidy</td>
<td>Subsidy per passenger trip</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bradenstoke Boomerang</td>
<td>Non-fixed route 3 return journeys per day; Fixed route 1 return journeys per day</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Annual: 497 Monthly ave: 41 Daily ave: 1.6</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>£304</td>
<td>£3,934</td>
<td>£3,630</td>
<td>£7.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serving Bradenstoke and its surrounding villages to Lyneham Green (LG) for bus services to Chippenham, Wotton Bassett and Swindon. Operates only on demand.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malmesbury Evening TaxiLink</td>
<td>Operates on demand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3 months: 345 Monthly ave: 112 Annual est: 1,344 Daily ave: 1.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>£599 (3 months)</td>
<td>£2,418 (3 months)</td>
<td>£1,819 (3 months)</td>
<td>£5.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serving villages and towns in the North West part of Wiltshire. Operates only on demand.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:

1. Frequency:
   - Conventional bus services: derived from WCC (2005b and 2006e);
   - Wigglybus services: Pewsey Vale - WCC data analysis (2006f); Calne - WCC data analysis (2006f); Mere - timetable;
   - RUH Hopper services: timetable;
   - Boomerang taxi services: timetable.

2. Patronage:
   - Conventional bus services: early 2005; annual figures including fare paying passenger trips and education trips!
   - Pewsey Vale Wigglybus services: figures vary from early 2005 to 1 April 2005 - 31 March 2006; It is also the case that the full total includes passengers not carried on Lines 1, 2, 3, 8, 10 and 11 – i.e. some education trips were formerly Wigglybus passengers but now travel by coach. However, the users, and hence the revenues, are categorised as being Wigglybus users and revenues.
   - Calne Wigglybus services: figures vary from early 2005 to 1/4/05 - 31/3/06;
   - Mere Wigglybus services: early 2005;
   - Wigglybus Line 43 and 44 services: figures vary from early 2005 to 1/4/05-31/3/06;
   - RUH Hopper services: data between Apr 2005 - Mar 2006;
   - Boomerang taxi services: data between Apr 20 05 - Mar 2006 (except Malmesbury, Jan 2006 - Apr 2006).

3. Conventional rural bus services / Pewsey Vale Wigglybus / Calne Wigglybus / Mere Wigglybus: including subsidy from public transport budget and education payments;

4. Operating days – inferred 307 days from WCC’s data analysis (WCC, 2006f),

68
Table 4.2 illustrates a number of key points. Firstly, it shows that deep rural services require relatively high levels of subsidy per passenger (over £1.50), whether operated by conventional fixed route bus services or by some form of DRT. Significantly though, the fixed route services that have strong trip generating/attracting origins and destinations have far higher vehicle loadings (and consequently lower per passenger subsidy levels) than those that do not (services 35 and 99).

The second point to note is that the least well performing conventional bus route still has a per passenger subsidy of around two-thirds that of the Pewsey Vale Wigglybus average despite both having similar passenger loads per vehicle trip. This almost certainly reflects the more dispersed nature of the trip patterns as well as the need to additionally finance the call centre and dynamic route planning and scheduling capability. Further, despite the smaller vehicles there are no real savings with regard to other costs (labour, maintenance, fuel, insurance) because these are almost as high for a 16 seat vehicle as for a 24 seat or larger bus.

Related to this, it can be seen that vehicle loadings for the Boomerang shared taxi services exhibit extremely low vehicle loadings (one passenger per trip being the highest), although of course the services do not run if they are not booked. Even so, per passenger subsidies for the Wiltshire examples remain high when compared to the fixed route services and other DRT modes. Once again, this is due mainly to low level and even more dispersed demand. And, although taxis tend to be cheaper to operate than buses in most cases this is not always true – especially in areas where there are few taxi operators interested in tendering for shared taxi service work as is the case in much of the County.

Looking only at the DRT Wigglybus routes in more detail, it is also clear that some routes perform much better than others. In particular, the vehicle loads carried by one of the Calne Wigglybus services in particular does not appear to be sustainable Line 3 – 0.35 passengers per trip), while the figures for Lines 1 and 2 of around 4.0-4.3 are more reasonable but still relatively low. For the Pewsey Vale services, the Devizes-based service (Line 1) has a very healthy ridership on average (10 passengers per trip), while the Pewsey-based Lines 2 and 3 are less so, (albeit reasonable) with 6.2 and 4.3 users respectively. More vulnerable are Lines 8 and 10 (1.33 and 3.5 passengers per trip). Finally, while the Mere scheme exhibits an almost respectable passenger per trip figure (3.7) it is still expensive on a subsidy per passenger basis.

As for the RUH Hopper, here the revenue cost ratio is close to the top performing conventional bus example but the service is so specialised (with no specialised additional budget) and still so expensive in absolute terms that it remains vulnerable.

One other useful example to consider is the case of the Bassett Boomerang shared taxi, which substituted a conventional bus route (Number 56) that operated between Wootton Bassett and Chippenham in November 2004. Here, service 56 cost £1,900 a month (£1,837 subsidy and £63 income) to operate on average (April 2003-March 2004) compared with £2,640 (£2,430 subsidy and £210 income) for the Boomerang (April 2005-March 2005). However, usage of the Boomerang was double that of the Service 56 (180 compared with 90), while the opportunity to travel was three times higher (six return trips a day on the Boomerang compared with two with Service 56). In terms of subsidy per passenger, the Boomerang figure was £13.57 and Service 56 was £20.37. Moreover, figures for the Bassett Boomerang during April and May 2006 have improved further with usage at 226 a month and per passenger subsidy at £11.16. To summarise, it is clear from the evidence presented that both Wigglybus and shared taxi modes are more expensive than conventional bus services on a subsidy per passenger trip basis, but that they also serve areas that would be impractical to serve by any other means. Moreover, the performance of the majority of the DRT schemes is slowly improving. However, it is also clear that there are parts of the service that are simply not performing well enough, and these would appear to be the areas that some form of rationalisation may be achieved.
Indeed, given the captive nature of many of the users of the schemes it could well be that a reduction in operating availability for the Boomerang shared taxi services might cut costs by shifting most people onto fewer journeys. Similarly, rationalising the Pewsey Vale Wigglybus network would most likely have a similar effect. For Calne, the replacement of the flexible services with a more rigid service pattern may be worth exploring, while for Mere a much cheaper service delivering only a slightly reduced level of service might potentially be offered either through a new shared taxi arrangement or by diverting an existing bus route.

4.11 Where next?

Looking to the future of DRT services in Wiltshire (and the knock on implications for public transport more generally), it is clear that there are some serious financial challenges to be faced in the near future.

Firstly, a change to using the Relative Needs Formula by Central Government in how it awards local authorities money has led to a reduction in the Annual Settlement Grant to WCC as a whole. Indications for what this may mean for Passenger Transport from the Council’s Budget Book for 2006-07 for example (WCC, 2006d), suggest that spending may fall from £13.4m in 2005-06 to £12.8m in 2006-07, although no firm decisions have yet been taken. This threat is reinforced because WCC has increased the public transport budget in recent years to cover cost inflation of bus operations but has seen little obvious additional benefit in terms of enhanced service delivery. Specifically, revenue spending on buses (the majority of which is spent on rural services) in the County from the LTP has steadily increased, as has money from the Department for Transport through the Rural Bus Subsidy Grant (see Table 4.3). Taken together these represent an increase in revenue spend of 85% over only six years. Moreover, these figures do not include the additional money provided to the various DRT schemes by the Government through the Rural Bus Challenge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WCC Budget</th>
<th>RBSSG Budget</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000/01</td>
<td>£1.384m</td>
<td>£0.786m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/02</td>
<td>£1.56m</td>
<td>£1.004m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002/03</td>
<td>£1.865m</td>
<td>£1.149m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003/04</td>
<td>£2.273m</td>
<td>£1.173m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004/05</td>
<td>£2.516m</td>
<td>£1.228m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/06</td>
<td>£2.746m</td>
<td>£1.275m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: Public transport budgets in Wiltshire 2000/01-2005/06 (WCC, 2006c).

But, such investment has not seen a corresponding increase in terms of service delivery. Thus, the percentage of rural households within 800 metres of a bus stop with an hourly or better bus service during weekday daytimes (where rural areas exclude settlements of more than 3000 population) increased only marginally from 62% in 2000/01 to 65% in 2005/06. Similarly, the percentage of rural households within 800 metres of a bus stop with at least a daily weekday bus service rose from 86% to 90% over the same period. Meanwhile bus patronage figures increased from around 9.3m in 2002/03 to 9.7m in 2005/06 – an increase of 4.8% - which the Council attributes to increases on commercial services boosted by their investment in the Key Bus Route Network and operator investment in new vehicles; the introduction of Park & Ride services in Salisbury; and growth in the number of Wigglybus DRT passengers. However, it should be noted that these figures are less relevant as around two thirds of passengers are carried on commercial services meaning that trends on these services will be more significant than the impact of changes in revenue support. This is largely the case because of a significant increase in bus tender costs over a number of years meaning that parts of the core network are now becoming increasingly expensive to subsidise with consequent knock on effects on the ‘less deserving’ services. Indeed, a survey conducted for the Confederation of Passenger Transport reports a 9.6% increase in costs in the south west of England for 2005 – the highest regional increase in the UK (CPT, 2006).

Second, specific funds for DRT services are now ending, not only from Central Government through the Rural Bus Challenge grants, but also from NHS Primary Care Trust sources. In addition, Kennet District Council is considering the future of its funding provision for the
Pewsey Vale Wigglybus services. And, a recent decision by the Social Services department within WCC to cut spending on its transport provision could have significant implications for public transport budgets more generally.

In addition to the (dominant) financial issues, there are also a number of other factors to be considered. One is the effect of the aging population; others include the rural nature of the area and the continuing centralisation of local services.

It is in seeking a response to these issues that a whole range of stake holders involved in planning, providing and using public transport in Wiltshire were interviewed. The findings from these in-depth interviews are presented in the following section.

References


Wiltshire County Council (2006b) *Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2006/7 – 2010/11*. Wiltshire County Council Environmental services Department, Trowbridge.

Wiltshire County Council (2006c) Public transport statistics, Public Transport Unit, Wiltshire County Council, Trowbridge, March.


5. Interview findings

This section of the Report details the Findings from the range of interviews. These will first consider comments made about the individual DRT schemes, and then draw out the more general points.

5.0.1 Pewsey Vale Wigglybus

Pewsey Vale was seen to be suitable for a DRT service. It was stated that ‘the principle objective was to address social exclusion, and the secondary objective, albeit a close second, was to try and get some of the wealthy out of their cars’. It was also seen as a scheme so that ‘people could go to work for the first time.’ As such, ‘the main point for the Wigglybus is to still provide independent living for people so they can get to places themselves.’ Financially, the scheme was expected to cost only as much as a conventional subsidised bus service by the end of the RBC period (although in this it was thwarted by above inflation cost rises and technology problems).

The scheme was designed from the start as a ‘new concept’ that would be marketed and promoted with its own image and as such, it was deliberately intended not to look like the rest of the bus network. It was intended however, to feed people into the towns of Devizes, Pewsey, and later Calne, where it would provide connections to main bus routes to larger destinations. This has been achieved. In addition, it was also integrated with ‘mainstream’ school transport so as to provide a larger percentage of the service income.

It was not clear from the interviews as to what the target passengers were intended to be. One interviewee stated ‘everyone, and then more specifically certainly older people, providing access for the vulnerable and less mobile.’ Another interviewee stated that ‘we didn’t think much of the kids and teenagers to start with, that came later, a year or 18 months after the start up with the introduction of the night service but then that became an essential sector.’

In terms of the level of service provision a widely held view was that ‘Pewsey [people] have been spoilt having three vehicles running in and out.’ One interviewee went even further by stating that ‘we’re stuck in the situation at the moment where there is one too many buses in Pewsey.’ Supporting this view, one comment was that ‘we are providing a Rolls Royce service for a Morris Minor fare’ and that ‘it’s an [operationally] efficient service but financially its not [sustainable].’ As such, ‘you wouldn’t run it on a commercial basis’ and ‘traditional buses would never take it on because there is no regular demand. Although it is getting busier now you couldn’t get a traditional bus to do what a Wigglybus does.’

Clearly having established a service as with Wigglybus in Pewsey Vale a level of expectation has been created, which was not in evidence prior to the scheme being established. ‘There wasn’t a bus service in the Vale 15–20 years prior to Wigglybus.’

Views on patronage levels were that the service was ‘slow to take off in the beginning … carrying 300 people per month on one vehicle but now I think its up around 7,000.’ Subsequently, it was felt that ‘we have probably reached, not a maximum number of numbers on the bus but we’re not going to get many more.’ One reason for this view was voiced by one of the operators in that ‘we’ve been doing it long enough now for the council to know where most of the passengers are being picked up at different times of the day.’

Booking the service was seen as a difficulty, at least in the early days, with particularly the elderly unsure as to how the system operated. On the other hand ‘because the children use it they know how the system works because their on there and its not something different for them, so you quite often get school children booking it for themselves.’

Marketing the service was mentioned as a requirement but at a price: ‘clearly you have to cut costs and you can increase fares, but if you want to increase ridership more you have to spend a lot on marketing. At the moment the marketing budget is tiny.’ Word of mouth was
viewed as all important in terms of promoting the service: ‘word of mouth is the best publicity but then in rural areas you could be the only one getting on in a village and there is no one else to tell.’

Shared taxis were put forward as one possible solution for this type of area. ‘The use of taxis would involve getting the balance right, getting the operating hours right and if you could get them to come off the rank then it could work.’

Alternatively, it was proposed that there should be a ‘reduced frequency, but allowance for the overlap so that people could still travel across the area.’ This option was actually raised a number of times, but a number qualified it noting that ‘you could reduce the frequency of buses as long as it didn’t lead to a massive reduction in ridership.’ The impact of such a move is unclear. It could be that ‘if you went to a two bus two hourly service five days a week you would probably lose 500 passengers per month and the other 6,500 adapted you would be quids in.’ It was also stated that ‘you could argue that you don’t need a bus service during the day, only at peak periods because it’s the old 80/20 rule. ‘You only make money 20% of the time. The other 80% is costing you money. But then that kills the social exclusion thing’.

In terms of an increase in fares it was reported that ‘if you lose passengers what are they going to do? The only alternative is to buy a car or get a taxi. They might object to it but they have no alternative unfortunately.’ There was a view that ‘people have got to get more realistic about the fares they pay.’ One subtle variation on raising fares was to increase the price of the phone call when booking the service, since at the present time ‘it’s just a local call.’

Looking at marketing the service more effectively, one option was to advertise in railway stations at Pewsey and Great Bedwyn. And, the development of a website involving internet booking was also seen as an important marketing tool and way forward. To date however it is unclear as to what the take-up will be. Clearly there are financial savings to be made by such a service since ‘the more people we get booking on the web in the future we can look at potentially lowering the call centre costs.’ In the short term, it may only be younger people and ‘silver surfers’ who use the facility. One benefit of this would be that the call centre opening hours could be reduced from 6am-11pm to 6am-7pm, with the night bus booked on the internet. This would lead to a cost saving.

5.0.2 Calne Wigglybus

Calne would appear to be ideally placed to run a DRT scheme in that ‘it’s an easy geographical area because there is Calne and a group of villages very close to Calne.’ A view was voiced that the level of service could be adjusted, such that ‘you must put buses into rural areas but I don’t know that they need the amount that they currently put in. Clearly, we’ve got some very busy early runs and some reasonably busy lunchtime runs and then we are all finished.’

Overall it was stated that the service is operated as efficiently as it could be: ‘I think it as efficient as it could be in that the passenger rings up and we get it there within a couple of minutes of when it should be.’

In terms of scheme revenue and costs it was stated: ‘our running costs are £200 a day, (forget the fixed costs, just the running costs), and these buses are bringing in £20 a day’ And, ‘if it brings in £200 pounds a week, it’s doing well. The vehicle will cost £40k a year to operate with a driver, and it is bringing in £10k, but that would be the same if it wasn’t demand responsive, if it was a normal bus.’

From this, it was argued that the level of fares is currently too low: ‘they are not in line with what the current bus fares are. The adult fare on the Wigglybus would now be less that we were charging three years ago’. And ‘I think [the fare] is in fact probably too low’. ‘It is undervalued and I think people would pay more.’
Regarding the Call Centre ‘the ringing up and booking system works fine.’ But, it remains an area where efficiency savings could be made. ‘I think the call centre is a luxury in Calne. If you wanted to make cost savings this is one area you could look closely at.’ Indeed, one interviewee went as far as to say that the Calne public transport doesn’t really need to be operated on a Wigglybus basis: ‘It doesn’t even need to be a Wigglybus. If you had to go down and cut some bits out of it you could just have it as a fixed bus service with maybe four isolated villages ringing the operator a day before travel.’

Marketing was seen as all important and Calne sports an active marketing group: ‘we realised that we had to market this service if it was going to be a success.’ As such, a number of promotional activities have been undertaken, such as: ‘We have a stall and we go to the two supermarkets in the town on a fairly regular basis. We put inserts in the village magazines. Last year they [the town] had a carnival, so we had a stall. Overall, ‘there is an active programme of trying to make our presence known.’

Scheme performance is in part a function of the legislative framework under which they operate. For example, an incident was recounted with respect to the Calne service and specifically to tourists in the area who were told that they could not get on the bus at a particular location having failed to book the service beforehand. This is a situation which is not unique to the Calne region and clearly indicates the need for a rethink in terms of the operating arrangements. In fact it was stated that ‘the biggest problem with demand responsive transport is that they [the users] have to book it first.’

Even though the service is actively marketed there was however a view that it could be marketed more effectively. ‘I think we could market it much more effectively than WCC because we understand the problems on the ground, we understand the geography and we understand the people.’

It may also be sensible to consider replacing the DRT-style of operation with the fixed route option as suggested.

5.0.3 Mere Wigglybus

An obvious but important point to make about any DRT scheme is that local residents come to rely upon it – in other words its providing a social service and aiding in addressing social exclusion. This is certainly the case in terms of the Mere Wigglybus. Here, ‘two users who are both 80 plus were thinking of moving because he was losing his sight and couldn’t drive anymore, so when I said to him about the Wigglybus they started using it and they’re not going to move now.’ According to one interviewee, public transport, and DRT in particular, are an integral aspect of rural life: ‘we have got to show that it is a worthwhile, an essential part of the jigsaw puzzle of rural living.’ In such areas though, transport needs to be as flexible as possible in order to meet the need - ‘flexibility I think is the prime word. It has to be flexible.’

There is also a need to sell the idea on a continual basis - ‘I think the concept is superb, the downside is getting people to use it. Like most people I suppose I have been a car owner and driver all my working life and you are so used to getting into your car you never think about it [the Wigglybus].’

Whilst the Mere Wigglybus is currently seen as providing a useful social service, there are concerns about the future. ‘It only has until October next year [2007] and if it hasn’t done the business it’s going to go which is a great shame given the amount of work that has been put into it.’

In terms of the scheme’s objective, one view was that ‘it was to provide good public transport for the people who don’t have transport.’ As with other DRT schemes within Wiltshire it was not exactly clear who the target audience is. However the ‘prime user of the service is 60 or 65 plus.’

The Mere Wigglybus service is operated without the use of a Call Centre or Mobisoft: ‘a pen and paper and a driver having a mobile phone is fine.’ Once regular booking are taken then
they tend to book on the bus: 'They have a diary on the bus and the passengers will get on and book. So we are finding the bus is taking half the bookings and the call centre is taking half the bookings.' There is thus no future requirement for the Call Centre utilised as part of the wider Wigglybus provision.

As with the other DRT schemes within Wiltshire the Mere scheme benefits from the Wigglybus drivers: 'we have got two good drivers out there and really good public spirit.'

Promotion of the service takes a number of forms: 'we have got branded bus stops, and the drivers who really know what’s going on.'

For the future, one interviewee suggested that 'Mere could operate with an eight seater taxi, you don’t need a big bus', and hence costs could be saved.

In addition to the older patronage it was stated that there is a potential youth market: ‘They all congregate around the square of an evening and if I am ever out there I ask them “do you use the Wigglybus” and they all laugh at me. So I say “well where do you want to go” and they say “well we want to go to Gillingham”’ There is therefore a market which could be taken advantage of.

There was also a feeling that while elsewhere the use of the internet was frequently mentioned, in Mere ‘a lot of these people [passengers] wouldn’t know what we were talking about … as well as not having a computer.’

More tactically, there was a request for ‘a bus stop outside the Co-op and do a Co-op run like a Tesco or Asda.’

5.0.4 Royal United Hospital Hopper

As with the other DRT schemes within Wiltshire, the Hopper scheme was set up in response to the availability of Government funding: ‘Well I guess initially they [the County] had some money to spend on rural transport – they had quite a few initiatives and this was one of the ones they had to work on.’

More specifically, the background to the launch of the Hopper service is that ‘West Wiltshire is very heavily populated (if you take the population of the five market towns in the area they have a higher population than Swindon) [but it is spread over a wide area]. So you have a very widely spread population and a very awkwardly placed hospital with poor parking.’ Other comments were: ‘Bath is a city it’s not easy to drive to or get to - the parking at RUH is difficult and expensive.’ More succinctly, ‘the RUH is a complete nightmare to get to.’

Finally, ‘[conventional] buses are often cancelled at short notice, are irregular, expensive, indirect and time consuming’.

Consequently, the objectives for the Hopper service appeared to be clear and well understood, namely: ‘it was [to improve] access to Bath and the RUH.’ In other words, ‘what this was supposed to be, was [a service] to aid a lot of people who couldn’t get out, and couldn’t get to a bus stop.’ This is a key feature of the service. ‘All of the buses are capable of carrying wheelchair passengers.’

According to those interviewed, the Hopper offers a service which is both user friendly and responsive to the needs of the customers. ‘We always try and look at what has happened and try and make it work better next time.’ In addition, it apparently offers a customised, flexible service, with positive feedback with respect to reliability and punctuality. Comments supporting this included: ‘we have coped with whatever numbers we have had booked in’. 'There has generally been positive feedback regarding reliability and punctuality.' ‘I haven’t ever heard of anybody ever feeling its unreliable.’ ‘The drivers go to extraordinary length sometimes to help the passengers on to the bus, help them off and some of the driver take tapes and CDs and play them in the bus.’ ‘We get a number of people who write to us afterwards to say thank you.’
Looking at ridership figures, ‘we’ve been moving between 600 and 1000 people a month bearing in mind our buses are only eight seaters.’ As might be expected ‘the majority of the travellers are in the higher age group 50 to 80 for example who either have no car or live in rural, hard to reach, areas, who have no main bus service to get them from their home to the Hospital.’ This is confirmed by the statement ‘most users are elderly, disabled and do not have access to a car or to a relative or a friend’s car’, and emphasised further with the comment that ‘before the Hopper, I suspect many patients never got to hospital’. In addition ‘the other group of passengers that have benefited are those who are visiting people and the staff who actually work at the hospital.’ In terms of attracting RUH staff to use the service however there is the issue of shift-working and this can create a difficulty. Meanwhile in terms of the area served by the Hopper service it was stated that ‘we have had some people getting buses from Chippenham to the edge of the RUH Hopper area so they can catch it.’

The Hopper is, however a service which is resource intensive: ‘a bus can do anything up to 210 miles a day’, although the ‘level of subsidy per passenger trip has been reduced dramatically.’ This may partly be because the price of using the Hopper has risen recently by 50 per cent, the first time in six years that fares have been increased. To justify this move, it was noted that ‘if no Hopper service were offered it would involve taxi fares in order of £20-£25 each way.’ Consequently, one perception was that there is in fact the ‘potential to charge a bit more for the service,’ although another perspective was that a fare of £12 was about right for a ‘premium service targeting one destination only.’ Thus far it is too early to say what effect the increase in fares will have on patronage although it was said that ‘that there is a downturn in bookings at the moment - it’s the initial shock of having to pay that much more. If it had been phased in people wouldn’t have noticed so much. As a result, it is probably fair to say that ‘with hindsight it should have been put every year, but its easy to say that after the event.’

One area which on the face of it may impact on user friendliness is the requirement to ‘usually book 48 hours ahead of the journey’ But it was stated that ‘we have gone to extreme efforts when people phone in late and say ‘can you get me on tomorrow’ we look at our scheduling to see if it will fit.’

What is clear is that a great deal of work has gone into promoting the Hopper service. This is evident from comments such as: ‘I think it is fairly well known in other areas of the county.’ All important in spreading the Hopper message has been local doctor’s surgeries - ‘the major lead comes through the doctor’s surgery, because if you personally have a problem your first port of call is your GP and your GP’s surgery is full of posters and leaflets.’ ‘Word of mouth’ has also been important. In saying this there are probably a few additional areas where promotional activity could be explored. It’s ‘just a question of getting buy in from RUH – the way may be to put together a campaign to show how the RUH has benefited from the Hopper.’

It is also seen as being a well supported service. ‘It’s very popular with everyone in Wiltshire - very well supported.’ ‘Depending on which way you look at it, it’s a massive success.’ ‘In fact, if this is possible, it’s been far too successful for its own good.’ As such, given the publicity the Hopper had received in terms of it possibly being discontinued, surprise was expressed that ‘there hasn’t been a public outcry to the proposed axing of the Hopper.’

In summary, the Hopper service would appear to provide a classic example of how public transport can be utilised in order to address the issue of social exclusion. ‘Even if we do not carry it on, I feel this service should continue because it gives specific help it gives a tremendous amount of customers who can’t get in [to the RUH].’

For the future, there is an argument that ‘with the local hospitals being closed down and reduced it really just strengthens the case for schemes like the RUH Hopper’

Regarding the future operational area, ‘as a health organisation we would like it to cover the area of people going to the RUH. It covers very little of North Wiltshire and there are a lot of people from North Wilts and Devizes going to the RUH.’ Moreover, interest was expressed by
an operator in incorporating ‘the eastern side [of the County], Devizes, Calne and Chippenham.’

In terms of potential efficiency savings it was mentioned that ‘perhaps larger buses could be more efficient, although the trade off would be longer journey times which may put people off using the service.’ And, given that the Hopper service runs via an in-house call centre, unlike several of the other DRT schemes operating within Wiltshire) there may be potential here too for saving money.

There may also appear to be some benefit in a more serious dialogue between WCC and the RUH in terms of service provision. One other additional cost which impacts on all the Wiltshire DRT schemes, not simply the Hopper service is the impending need to replace vehicles, since ‘the other issue that does need to be looked at if we are going to keep running it is the renewing of the vehicles.’

The issue of sponsorship as a new income source was raised as a way forward in terms of finance: ‘the obvious one is Virgin mobile based in Trowbridge. There might be some potential for that [in terms of sponsorship].’ On similar lines, the idea of using the Hopper to replace certain courier service trips (of mail, samples etc) between health sites was also put forward (although here the flexible nature of the route and the lack of a timetable limited the scope somewhat). Nevertheless, this may be an area which requires revisiting and thorough investigation as to whether there is any possibility of operating this additional service. Finally, ‘various people like the Friends of Trowbridge Hospital and Friends of various other hospitals are trying to put together funding packages so that they can all chip in here and there. There [is] a lot of interest in keeping it going’

5.0.5 Boomerang shared taxis

One opinion voiced a few times was that Wiltshire residents make important decisions on the basis of the level of DRT provision. For example, one of the Boomerang operator’s noted that ‘the mere fact that somebody has sold their car [on the basis of the Boomerang service provision], that’s a big step. However, it was also stated that ‘going out and picking people up in the evening and bringing them from Kemble to Chippenham and Swindon for £2! We get paid about £X per run every time we go out. The taxi needs to be full nearly every trip for the council to break even.’

The interviewees reported that the Boomerang services are used by a range of residents: ‘It’s used a great deal by elderly people but we have also had youngsters starting to use it’. ‘Boomerang seems to be used by everyone from old to young people going to some circus club in Malmesbury or pub and skittle teams.’ Having said that, clearly this position will vary from scheme to scheme. For example, Bradenstoke ‘is primarily an elderly village.

In a certain extent the scheme has not developed as it was assumed it would. For example, ‘the idea we thought was to bring people in to Malmesbury from these villages around here not to [take them to] Swindon.’

And, on certain services the uptake has been rather small. In this respect it was stated that ‘on an average week we are now carrying collectively about 12 – 13 people with totals for the month varying between 30 and 50.’ Studying efficiency, it was pointed out that ‘at the moment the level of efficiencies envisaged have not materialised.’

Opinion as to the level of fares charged varied. One view is that ‘the price is right for what’s there. If you want to get people to travel on buses or trains you have to give them some incentives to do it with.’ An alternative opinion was that ‘if you think about it they [the Council] have got a cheap service because all they are paying for is a vehicle when it is used. They are not paying for a vehicle to run empty all day.’

One further comment was that ‘we are getting the operators and passengers saying that fares should be higher for out of catchment areas – Swindon, Bassett and Chippenham. Here at least, ‘there would appear to be scope for an increase in fares in this area.’
5.1 Overall view of DRT

The purpose of this section is to report some of the more generalised comments about DRT during the interview phase. First, it is useful to look at what are seen to be advantages and disadvantages of DRT schemes.

Advantages:

- ‘I think the demand responsive part is its selling point. It should of course respond to what it was set up to do – to provide access to those who don’t have it.’
- ‘it is absolutely that sort of a service [the Wigglybus] really does deliver.’
- ‘a lot of it is reliant on the driver – here we have a fantastic driver.’
- ‘it means we can sling the net a lot wider at the same sort of cost just by saying everywhere in that area is flexible, doing it on a first come first served basis.’

Disadvantages:

- ‘it can very very quickly become very resource heavy.’
- ‘whilst I believe that the future for rural transport is demand responsive, I believe so much money can be chucked at it that is a total waste of money.’
- ‘The biggest problem with demand responsive I think, is that they [users] have to book first.’
- ‘it was difficult to get people to understand how they should use DRT – the concept of ringing up wasn’t an easy one to get across.’
- ‘there was a lot of problems at the start. There was such a problem in the Gloucester call centre. The problem was that the call centre had no visual map of the area.’
- ‘one of the big difficulties is the change of patterns in booking people in at the RUH and they start booking people in really early in the morning sometimes outside the hours of the Hopper.’
- ‘Having to think in advance can be a bit of a barrier to some people, but then people are using it.’
- ‘the disadvantage of the Hopper is having to prepare and plan your journey and also the limits [on] the times people can get there. I would have thought a more immediate service would be better in that respect.’
- ‘you couldn’t find a less efficient way of running a bus service if you tried to invent it to be honest because of the amount of time and effort that goes into it and the meetings and arguments over things like a leaflet.’

5.2 General points on Wiltshire DRT

There are two key elements that can be derived from the interviews relating to the Context. First, is the importance of the political goal of improving access to facilities; and second is the crucial role of Government funding – particularly Rural Bus Challenge funding.

In the interviews there was an appreciation of the role played by DRT within Wiltshire. This view was typified by the statement ‘public transport is essential in rural areas, even more so today because of the closure of the local pub, the local post office and the local bakers.’
There is a ‘big sense of frustration here because we realised that that bus would actually answer a lot of the difficulties we have.’ Clearly, ‘in a county like Wiltshire you can’t [economically] provide conventional public transport.

In terms of the overall objectives for DRT within Wiltshire it was suggested that ‘essentially the objectives are still [improving] rural accessibility and [delivering] modal shift [from the car].’

Looking at the role of ‘one off’ Government grants, one interviewee said that ‘we have been very successful here in going after money that’s available under the [Rural Bus] Challenges for innovative types of transport which is great. All the initiatives start with a big fanfare of trumpets, and here you are, we’ve got all this money for three years and then it all stops. [Then] everyone looks at each other and says what are we going to do now, how are we going to keep this working? That’s the problem. It’s down to money’.

This short-term nature of Central Government funding arrangements was seen to have ramifications in terms of public transport provision. In fact one view was voiced questioning the wisdom of embarking on a policy of DRT in the first place: ‘You get these services and then when you have to cut them down to an affordable state …. There is an element sometime at the end when you think why did we get into this and it is a problem and it needs to be a longer term thought out process of how it is going to be sustainable.’

More typical, was the sentiment that ‘you can come up with lots of ideas but you need funding. It’s no good the Government giving us funding for three years and then saying you can run it yourself’. In a similar vein, ‘we have been caught in the trap of RBC. [You] go out there and do something shiny and new and yes it works it works for three years and then they [Government] change their mind and go for Kickstart and leave you high and dry’. Similarly, ‘there is some difficulty with these things [DRT] where the Government provides you with money that you bid for, but five years later you’ve got a problem. Because if we discontinue it we [County Council] will get the blame, but on the other hand compared with other subsidised services it is expensive.’ There would appear to have been an assumption, perhaps somewhat optimistic with hindsight, that the DfT genuinely wanted to test out new ideas in terms of rural transport. It was also assumed that at some point their success would be evaluated and a means provided whereby the most successful schemes could continue and indeed be rolled out more widely. DRT was widely seen as a potential way of improving rural services at an affordable cost although this has not materialised, with a change in the political and financial climate.

Overall, it would seem that there has been a lack of foresight in terms of what contingencies there are for post the RBC. It was reported that: ‘DRT is] a heck of a good idea if its got the right backing behind it but it does need a lot of financial resources long term, but its just three years at a time with RBC.’ And a lament: ‘If we knew we had five years for something like Mere then you could have a five year development plan. then you could probably be alright but at the moment it is difficult.’

Thus, DRT is seen as expensive and yet at the same time is a reasonably effective way of meeting various policy goals. As such the question is what do the interviewees view as the way forward: ‘what will we be able to maintain of it? Lastly on this, economic viability and social provision are not mutually exclusive but as reported by one interviewee: ‘It depends whether you want to go for economic efficiency or for a public service. The two never go together – if you are doing something as a public service it is never cost efficient. You’ve got to work out at what cost [the scheme becomes worthwhile].’

Relatively little material related to scheme design emerged from the interviews but these were important.

From the strategic angle, one respondent argued that ‘it’s just about getting the right mix: the right vehicle, right place and right time. I don’t think we are quite getting that in Wiltshire. Its right more by default in Pewsey Vale because I think the network of roads just suggests that sort of thing. But as soon as you try to role out the same model in a different place its just not quite right. It’s viable if you can get it right.’ Another view meanwhile was that DRT in Wiltshire is just ‘so fragmented, if only we could get it all in one piece…’.
Looking at how to deliver public transport across the county, there was no universal view. For example, one perspective was that ‘we have to get away from buses. Everybody has a fixation with running buses around the countryside. Why aren’t we doing more to put them into people carriers?’ Whilst there is a logic in this there is clearly the issue with respect to transporting school children (for which people carriers are not ideal), the education revenue, and the fact that there is still a need to pay the driver.

Another view was ‘I don’t know about the taxis. They were only ever an experiment and again they are quite cost heavy at the moment, so its an uncertain long term, but I think it is a very good idea.’

On a related topic, a common view which was expressed by a number of interviewees related to how the service should be operated. One solution suggested was that a ‘community approach is necessary in terms of vehicle usage’. This was seen as attractive: ‘[DRT] could be more effective I suppose if there was a social enterprise running it.’

Considering more detailed design issues, one response to the current financial situation was to carefully consider the fare structure. ‘I think to be honest there is no other way than for the fares to go up to fund some of these services’ and ‘I think it has to stand on its own feet. It’s like any other business and if its incomings don’t match its outgoings it should be discontinued. I think we have to be realistic because some of the transport has been under priced.’ Whilst the authors can appreciate this point rural transport will never be financially viable in its own right.

As regards the fare charged to use the service then more than one respondent noted that it is ‘still too cheap’, although one did add ‘but then people are having to pay for the phone call to book the service.’ On the question of ‘by how much should fares be raised to have the desired effect’ it was noted that: ‘putting the fares up 20p does nothing. If you picked up four extra people it does nothing. If you picked up 40 extra people it does nothing. If you filled that bus up every trip it still wouldn’t break-even, and that’s the problem with rural public transport.’

On a more general point, but no less important, it was stated that the ‘legislation should be changed a bit in order to make it a little bit more flexible.’ This relates primarily to potential passengers utilising the service without a prior booking although it is an issue which WCC has no direct control over. It should however continue to voice the difficulties such a policy creates in terms of DRT patronage.

5.3 Implications for the Future

There are a number of key implications for the future that arise from the interviews. Most crucially, these relate to funding. Once again, as in the literature review, there are two groupings here – either one can raise additional income, or one can cut costs.

5.3.1 Securing additional income

Raising income can be done in a number of ways – attracting more users, raising fare income or discovering another source of money.

In seeking to attract more users there are significant issues to do with the complexity of the DRT product. In short, while the original vision for Wigglybus was for a very simple operational structure requiring the user simply to look at a single leaflet the user must now consult a hefty timetable guide. While there may be sound operational reasons for these developments, from a marketing (and hence a passenger) perspective, both these features are far from ideal and in the long term will probably have negative impact on the number of users. Similarly, the fare structure too has gradually become increasingly complicated – a process described as being ‘like watching something horrible growing’ - with a whole range of options available. Ultimately this is self defeating. Instead, the service would perform much better with a significantly streamlined choice of tickets.
Another clear message is that the fare levels on all services need to be revisited. Here the evidence seems to suggest that fares need to be raised across the board.

Securing additional sources of money is in some ways the simplest option. Sponsorship from Virgin, passengers from Social Services, or carrying parcels for the local NHS facilities are possibilities, although care would need to be taken to ensure that the core service would not be compromised too severely. Unfortunately, where this option has been taken (i.e. money from the Education Transport budget), there was a feeling that the service was rather less ‘pure’ as a result.

5.3.2 Reducing costs

Cutting costs tends to mean either achieving efficiency savings and/or reducing service levels.

In this case the more palatable option is probably to make efficiency savings and there would appear to be some (albeit limited) scope.

One problem with the Wiltshire DRT suite is that no two schemes are alike. Thus, there are at least three different call centre arrangements, the flexibility of the services vary, the fare structures are not the same, some rely on Mobisoft and others don’t, some are taxi based and some bus based. On the one hand, this suggests a tailor made approach, but in this case it comes across as being somewhat accidental. To a certain extent this approach is because the strategy has been an experiment with DRT to find a cost effective way of meeting rural access needs more effectively. As such, new approaches have been undertaken where the opportunity presents. However, for the future this would be one area where some form of rationalisation would seem appropriate.

There have also been issues to do with the type of vehicles and their specification. For instance, the new complexity of the Wigglybus routes means that all the buses now have expensive LED message boards on the front and by the door (~£1000 each) – yet initially this was unnecessary because the bus operated within a zone. Then the fact that the vehicles have 16 seats means they are not small enough to be driven by taxi drivers (and therefore save some money) but not large enough to carry many school children and therefore recover their costs. Then there is the need for DPTAC vehicles – perhaps only some of the fleet needs to be so designated?

Another problem is that the DRT schemes seem to take up a disproportionatley large amount of officer time. In particular, the role of the user groups needs to be questioned. One of several comments supporting this was ‘there are loads of little things they [the user group] want to argue about: colour of the seat covers and whether the chap was doing 45mph in a 40mph limit. What you’ve got to worry about however is if we will have any money at the end of it to have a Wigglybus at all.’ Another described the user group as being a ‘completely toothless talking shop’. Specifically, it is recommended that a strategic review of the role of the Advisory Groups is undertaken.

A further move to consider would be to encourage the local Community Transport operators to become Social Enterprises thus providing additional competition for commercial bus companies. In saying this, CT operators in Wiltshire are generally localised with a focus on specific client groups, and it will take get effort in order to develop most of them to the point where they can take on social enterprise DRT contracts.

Finally, cutting services – by far the most difficult decision. Here it was clearly understood by everyone interviewed that there were liable to be cut backs from the current number of vehicles. There was however an attempt to prioritise the DRT services. For example it was stated that ‘I understand that the Wigglybus centred on Devizes is the most well used, that’s the Pewsey Vale, so that should be the last to go.’ Accordingly, the Mere scheme would probably be dropped (unless its performance improved significantly before the funding ran out) and replaced by a taxibus-type scheme, while the Calne scheme may be more efficiently served by a fixed route service plus shared taxi ‘add ons’ where necessary. The Pewsey Vale scheme would likely be kept, but the suggestion would be to re-design the service from
scratch according to the available resource, rather than to cut the existing service into something unrecognisable.

5.4 Summary

In summary, given the financial situation within WCC and the ending of the RBC funding then as noted above it is likely that DRT will be subject to significant rationalisation within Wiltshire. There is however a need to carefully consider the social implications of DRT in that there are ‘dozens of services which must be totally uneconomically and unviable but they have to run because otherwise you get social exclusion.’

5.5. Focus Group Findings

The Focus Groups encouraged wider discussion of the challenges to, vision for and implementation of public transport throughout Wiltshire in the future and the discussion was facilitated via three questions relating to challenges, vision and implementation.

What challenges do you see facing rural public transport in Wiltshire over the next five years?

One of the main challenges facing public transport which all the participants agreed on was the lack of funding available. For example ‘money is the big thing, if there is more money there will be more service’ and ‘the challenge is finance, or lack of finance’. Money was not however seen to be the only challenge. Connectivity was also raised by both groups as an issue. It was thought that some services are poorly planned and do not link to other services, ‘some passengers cannot connect to other bus services using DRT services’. Furthermore a perceived problem was the fact that public transport is a ‘compromise’ for those who have cars. This was illustrated with comments such as ‘young people tend to have motor cars, they are not financially challenged’ and ‘public transport needs to be made more attractive to users’.

The participants in the focus group were asked to list the main challenges facing rural public transport in Wiltshire over the next five years, in descending order of importance. The lists of challenges they produced are as follows:

Group One
1. Lack of funding and sources of future funding;
2. Long term sustainability problems;
3. Integration of timetables;
4. Rural nature of Wiltshire;
5. Changing lifestyles (e.g. More home based leisure activities);
6. Public transport does not provide the same benefits as a car;
7. Legislation.

Group Two
1. Lack of funding;
2. Unattractive image of public transport;
3. Creating geographical connectivity;
4. Providing access to increasingly centralised local services;
5. Identifying demand;
6. Increasing number of car users.

What would your vision for public transport in Wiltshire over the next five years be and how would DRT fit into this?

Both Groups agreed that in the future public transport should ‘enable people to access facilities and maintain quality of life’. In order to achieve this the Groups felt that public transport should provide more access to leisure activities.
DRT fitted into both groups vision for the future by providing a means to ‘fill gaps in the network’ but it was thought that ‘DRT should be kept as simple as possible and as local as possible’. The priorities for the vision of the future are listed below.

**Group One:**
1. Conventional bus services should provide transport between market towns;
2. DRT services for the outskirts of market towns and villages;
3. Target areas that generate demand such as cinemas, hospitals and pubs and involve them in the planning and provision of public transport;
4. Capture local imagination with innovative marketing.

**Group Two:**
1. Ensure public transport serves more leisure activities;
2. Provide public transport that offers something near to the convenience of a car;
3. Have a good transport infrastructure centred on connectivity;
4. Use DRT to fill the gaps.

**What would you suggest the main priorities be for public transport to address this?**

The Groups had some different views as to how to implement their visions for the future. One common theme was that major settlements should feature more as transport hubs. Additionally both groups came up with ways to reduce costs and increase income, for example, ‘replace a 32 seater bus with an eight seater where that size vehicle is all that is needed’.

In terms of implementing the vision the two Groups stated the following:

**Group one:**
1. Use more MPV’s to transport people;
2. Keep DRT as simple as possible;
3. Increase fares on buses;
4. Improve dissemination of service information (e.g. Bus timetables);
5. Have market town transport interchange hubs.

**Group two:**
1. Look into marketing to improve promotion of services;
2. Utilise innovative technologies, for example real time information, to make public transport easier for people to use;
3. Make operator contracts tighter to ensure the operators follow timetables and provide a satisfactory service.

**5.6 Summary**

It is apparent from the discussion that took place with the Focus Group that Wiltshire has issues to consider in terms of public transport provision. In part this can be attributed to the fact that the County is deeply rural in nature. These problems are exacerbated by the impact on demand caused by increased car ownership. However it was felt that it is still highly important to provide public transport to serve those without cars and to provide financial support for those services by encouraging car users to take advantage of them. It was suggested that in order to do this the Council need to ensure they take a long term strategic approach to the planning and implementation of services thereby creating a user friendly sustainable public transport network.
6. Discussion

The purpose of this relatively short section is to pull together the results of the literature review with the operational data for the Wiltshire DRT schemes and the findings from the interviews in order to draw out some useful comparisons. This will be done in two key parts:

1. Generic points will be made for the County situation as a whole.

2. Results will be used to generate a form of ‘toolbox’ whereby the ‘tools’ will be forms of public transport suitable for rural areas.

6.0.1 Contextual

The rural nature of the County makes public transport generally and DRT specifically an important means of accessing retail, education, health and leisure facilities. This is particularly so given the demographic forecasts whereby the majority of the predicted population is forecast to be in the middle and elderly age groups. As such, WCC needs to plan (and has been planning) for this eventuality.

On a fiscal level, Wiltshire County Council is facing significant pressures to reduce costs, not least because of a large reduction in Government money received through the Annual Settlement Grant. On top of this, the position of public transport is particularly critical for a number of reasons, namely:

- Specific funds for DRT services are now ending, primarily from Central Government through the Rural Bus Challenge grants.

- Bus tender costs have increased at above inflation rates for a number of years meaning that parts of the core network are now becoming increasingly expensive to subsidise with consequent knock on effects on the ‘less deserving’ services.

Moreover, WCC has increased the public transport budget in recent years in order to cover the cost inflation but has seen little obvious additional benefit in terms of enhanced service delivery.

In policy terms, DRT features as part of the LTP2 ‘to improve access to goods, services and employment opportunities for all sections of the community, particularly those living in rural areas or without access to a car’. It does not appear however to have been thoroughly integrated into the various strategies directing the work of the Council outside the transport area. For instance, DRT would appear to be central to WCC’s Corporate Plan of providing a place where people of all ages can lead active and independent lives, but as yet there is no explicit link to DRT as a policy tool. This perceived lack of integration with wider policies perhaps makes DRT more vulnerable to cuts than would be the case otherwise. By contrast in Dorset, Somerset and Lincolnshire for example, DRT has been very deliberately ‘sold’ to Councillors as an important mechanism in meeting a whole range of policy goals, thus trying to consolidate its position as a core service.

- Rural public transport in Wiltshire is vulnerable due to imminent budget cuts facing the transport department directly and the Council as a whole coupled with a history of increased spending on buses in recent years delivering little obvious additional benefit (as bus industry costs continue to rise at a rate significantly higher than inflation).

- Lack of integration of DRT within the wider policy context.

- Notwithstanding this public transport can play a key role in meeting a range of policy objectives.
Finally, supply constraints are clearly influential in Wiltshire too. Overall there is a shortage of taxi operators that are prepared to tender for DRT work in the County. Similarly, the Community Transport sector is as yet fairly underdeveloped. It would therefore appear that there is little scope for cost savings from this direction in the short term unlike in Somerset, Dorset and Hampshire for example.

- There is a lack of taxi and Community Transport operators available and/or willing to tender for DRT contracts in the County.

6.0.2 Scheme design

In terms of scheme design, the interviews suggest that the schemes have developed organically through almost an opportunistic bottom up approach on a fairly ad hoc basis. In saying this, WCC’s LTP1 strategy was to deliberately use the RBC as a means of testing alternative ways of providing a higher level of service in rural areas. As such, the approach taken could be seen as one of initially testing the concept. Thus, when compared with schemes in Lincolnshire and Somerset, the Wiltshire schemes seem to have developed without a strategic vision of how these DRT schemes integrate with each other or (with the notable exception of education transport) with other forms of transport - e.g. buses, Community Transport, voluntary car schemes, social service transport, and patient transport. This has contributed to the perception that there is an overprovision of DRT services in certain areas and under provision in others. It has also resulted in a position where five different types of DRT scheme have as many different arrangements concerning call centres, vehicle routeing methods and fare structures. This is not ideal from an efficiency perspective nor from a marketing/branding/publicity viewpoint. Indeed, while from a user perspective it could be argued that different branding (or the same branding applying to a very differently operating service) is not a problem, from a Council perspective a consistently applied brand makes a ‘product’ much easier to sell at a political, marketing and operational level.

Related to this lack of a clear development strategy for DRT, there has been an apparent failure to consider the future of the schemes once the initial funding was due to cease. Such a finding is in common with many schemes around the country, and given that the Wigglybus scheme was one of the first such projects to be funded under the Challenge Funding arrangement and the fact that there was no suggestion from Government that the programme would be cut is understandable. In addition, there were also a number of operational problems – e.g. difficulties with the call centre arrangements early on and significant cost increases from tendering bus companies – that reduced the chances of the scheme meeting its objective of operating within the standard bus subsidy per passenger limit.

- DRT in Wiltshire would appear to be ad hoc and opportunistic in development.

- Marketing and branding unsystematic and in certain respects confused

- There was an initial failure to consider future funding situation.

Wiltshire County Council already substantially integrates subsidised public transport with education transport, but so far has had only limited success at moves towards further integration with social care transport, or indeed with other external agencies such as the NHS. This situation may however change in the near future as other Council budgets come under pressure (e.g. Social Services), while NHS Trusts (e.g. Cornwall) are beginning to consider efficiency savings generated by cooperating with their local public transport authorities.

One aspect of the shift to service integration with education transport, has been that the design of the DRT schemes has thus been levered away from a user oriented approach towards a more operationally driven approach. Thus, for example schedules in Pewsey Vale are now designed around the requirement to carry education trips.

The timetable is extremely complex for users to understand as is the fare structure, which, while motivated as a response to perceived passenger need has actually made the product
far more difficult to understand and use. The complexity is due to a desire to retain or attract passengers through the use of discounts aimed at particular market groups.

Further on fares, it is also the case that fare levels have not been increased year on year with the result that the market would appear to be able to bear fare increases, with the only significant effect being a short term fall in passengers using the service. It is surmised that the demand for such services is inelastic given that the users have no other transport option within the same or similar price range. This is likely to become more so given the local and regional centralisation of services. This is an area which requires further research however.

- Some significant moves towards delivering service integration with education transport, but so far no real progress with other council (or external) agencies.
- Shift to increase operational efficiency through integrating public transport service delivery has led to overly complex route patterns and timetables.
- Fare structure is overly complex.

Directly related to cost is the size and specification of the vehicles used. It would seem that the 16 seat vehicles currently used on the Wigglybus services are almost a ‘worst of all worlds’. Eight seat taxis offer cheaper services (in absolute terms) while larger buses are more suited to carrying peak loads (e.g. education transport) for little additional extra cost. Moreover, the current vehicles are built to a high specification e.g. fully accessible, expensive destination indicators, and this may not be strictly necessary in all cases. However, it would appear that the Wigglybus vehicles were deliberately high spec as part of the original philosophy of providing a high quality service as a means of attracting more passengers, including those with access to cars. This was seen as a way of contributing to the environmental and sustainable transport objectives and also to boost income, thus making the service more financially viable.

- Vehicle size – 16 seat too small for school traffic (24 seat similar cost) but more expensive than taxi (8 seats).

As noted earlier, trip booking arrangements are organised on a scheme by scheme basis, whereby Wigglybus users in Pewsey Vale and Calne contact a call centre in Exeter; users of the Mere scheme and users of the taxi based services contact the relevant operator directly. Such an arrangement could be rationalised but for logistical reasons may not be possible because for taxis the national taxi/PHV legislation requires that bookings made to a taxi operator must be taken at an address registered in the district where the taxi is licensed. Thus, it would seem that only the Mere bookings could be switched to the Exeter call centre. Ideally though from an operational perspective, there would be a single County-wide number where all DRT (and other) public transport service bookings and enquiries could be made.

- Booking arrangements and use of routing software rather randomly organised.

One area that came in for repeated comment was the role of the Advisory Groups. A common view expressed was that they are ineffective in their current form.

- Current format of Advisory Groups could work more effectively.

It would appear that minimal use has been made to date of the Community Transport sector in Wiltshire. This is not the case in surrounding counties which have sought to develop CT through letting service contracts and through various Social Enterprise models. In terms of the role of CT there is a need to explore how far Wiltshire CT Groups have the capacity to take on regular daily public service operations.

- There is a need to explore the development of Social Enterprise Community Transport.
6.0.3 Scheme performance

Overall, the evidence suggests that several of the Wiltshire schemes compare favourably with the benchmarked DRT schemes from elsewhere in the country in terms of patronage levels and subsidy per passenger. And, even where schemes are not currently performing as well, the trends are generally progressing (albeit slowly) in the right direction. One exception to this slow progress is for the Bradenstoke Boomerang, which in May 2006 has seen patronage increase to 86 from a monthly average of 41 for April 2005-March 2006, and per passenger subsidy fall from £7.44 to only £3.28 – a result explained by the introduction of free fares for senior citizens and low floor buses on Service 55, to which the taxibus connects.

In addition, there is widespread recognition that the services were meeting a need in providing transport opportunities for people who may otherwise not have been able to travel. Having said this, it was also reported that there could be scope for some savings e.g. where the service levels are perceived to be higher than necessary and with regard to the call centre arrangement, while fares were seen as being too low. However, given the adverse financial climate currently facing the County Council, it is also clear that some kind of rationalisation is inevitable. The DRT services would appear vulnerable not least since the services in Salisbury and on the Key Bus Route Network have a higher patronage and are more cost effective than the Wigglybus, Hopper and Boomerang services ever could be due to the nature of DRT operations.

- The majority of WCC DRT schemes perform well in cost per passenger and usage terms.
- General usage and cost per passenger of all DRT schemes are improving (with quite a significant improvement in the Boomerang services in particular for April and May 2006).

6.1 Towards a toolbox

In order to develop this toolbox, it was decided that the most appropriate format was to consider the four market categories identified in DHC et al (2006) – high care needs DRT, best value DRT, premium service DRT and high value to agency DRT. These are then considered in terms of the context, the scheme design and the scheme performance.

From Table 2.5, it would seem that Wiltshire’s DRT schemes tend to exhibit the characteristics of the Acceptable Subsidy and Justifiable Subsidy classifications. This section aims to provide some general points as to which areas need to be improved if the operational and financial performance is to be enhanced further. How this is done, will depend on which of the market niches is to be targeted.

6.2 Contextual factors

Table 6.1 provides some typical contextual factors that would be in place for each of the four types of market niche discussed earlier.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivations/Drivers</th>
<th>High Care Needs DRT</th>
<th>Best Value DRT</th>
<th>Premium Value DRT Services</th>
<th>High Value to Agency DRT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Users</td>
<td>Public policy</td>
<td>Public policy</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>Public policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population density</td>
<td>High, medium, low</td>
<td>Medium, low</td>
<td>High, medium, low</td>
<td>High, medium, low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area type</td>
<td>Urban, urban</td>
<td>Rural, urban</td>
<td>Urban, urban</td>
<td>Rural, urban fringe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road layout</td>
<td>Grid, irregular,</td>
<td>Radial/corridor</td>
<td>Grid, irregular, radial/corridor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>radial/corridor</td>
<td>grid, irregular</td>
<td>radial/corridor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land use distribution</td>
<td>Polycentric</td>
<td>Linear, polycentric</td>
<td>Polycentric</td>
<td>Linear, polycentric</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1: Typical contextual characteristics for each Market Niche
From the contextual viewpoint, Table 6.1 shows that those niches driven by public policy goals target captive users, whereas the commercially driven niche is aimed at choice users. In terms of area factors, the high care needs, premium value and high value to agency DRT schemes probably work best in densely populated urban areas with grid-based or irregular road networks and polycentric land use patterns. This is because higher populations mean more potential users per timeframe — a good thing because the markets are relatively small in each case — while the grid-based/irregular road networks and polycentric distribution of activity centres provide options for the services to bypass congestion. By contrast, the optimal best value DRT area factors would be a medium to low population level in rural or urban fringe locations along a radial route. Here, the pool of potential users is much larger meaning that the bus would be the logical choice of mode in highly populated urban areas with the DRT only becoming viable where buses became uneconomical. As with the bus though, radial or corridor routes of linear development are the most efficient — the more diversions, the more time wasted.

Applying the model to the Wiltshire schemes (see Table 6.2 for a summary), it would seem that while modal shift is mentioned as a policy goal for all but one of the DRT schemes (the RUH Hopper), the dominant target is to address social inclusion and hence captive as opposed to choice users. This seemingly rules out the so called ‘premium value’ niche (as set out in DHC et al, 2006), although ironically the one scheme that may benefit from such an approach might be the RUH Hopper service, which in several ways operates rather like an Airport Shuttle (albeit with predominantly captive instead of choice users). The other WCC schemes meanwhile fall into two groups. The Boomerang shared taxis focus only on the best value DRT niche, while the Wigglybus services seemingly blend the ‘high value to agency’ (predominantly through education transport) and ‘best value DRT’ niches but with insufficient capacity on the vehicles at peak times.

All the schemes serve predominantly rural areas with low population densities dispersed in various ways. The road network types meanwhile are generally some form of irregular grid which offer either many or few route options for each of the services, although the Bradenstoke Boomerang is afforded a more linear pattern of operation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pewsey Vale Wigglybus</th>
<th>Calne Wigglybus</th>
<th>Mere Wigglybus</th>
<th>Bassett Boomerang</th>
<th>B’stoke Boomerang</th>
<th>Malmesbury Boomerang</th>
<th>RUH Hopper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Users</strong></td>
<td>Captive</td>
<td>Captive</td>
<td>Captive</td>
<td>Captive</td>
<td>Captive</td>
<td>Captive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population density</strong></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Area type</strong></td>
<td>Large rural zone</td>
<td>Medium sized rural zone</td>
<td>Small rural zone</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Small rural zone</td>
<td>Large mixed urban and rural area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Road layout</strong></td>
<td>Irregular grid – many route options</td>
<td>Irregular grid – few route options</td>
<td>Irregular grid – many route options</td>
<td>Corridor – limited route options</td>
<td>Irregular grid – many route options</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Land use distribution</strong></td>
<td>Polycentric</td>
<td>Relatively centralised</td>
<td>Relatively centralised</td>
<td>Polycentric</td>
<td>Polycentric</td>
<td>Polycentric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Market Niche</strong></td>
<td>Best Value, High Value to Agency</td>
<td>Best Value, High Value to Agency</td>
<td>Best Value, High Value to Agency</td>
<td>Best Value</td>
<td>Best Value</td>
<td>Could be any of the four</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2: Contextual characteristics by DRT scheme and resultant Market Niche

6.3 **Scheme design factors**
Table 6.3: Optimal design characteristics for each Market Niche

With scheme design, finance is probably the crucial element. For high care needs and high value to agency, external budgets are key. Thus, in Somerset the Slinky is subsidised by Joblink and in Hampshire the Cango is partially supported by education transport. Fare income is crucial for premium service DRT and for best value schemes, but less so for high value to agency and high care needs DRT, while general passenger transport subsidy is important particularly for best value and high value to agency schemes.

Next, scale of operation, route structure, schedule arrangements, booking arrangements and level of technology are all strongly connected. Broadly, the more high-tech the operation, the higher the fixed cost but the less the marginal cost per trip due to the efficiency savings generated, and the more complex the routing, scheduling and booking arrangements that can be supported. This means that large scale and complicated operations should consider adopting complex call centre, routing and vehicle allocation arrangements while smaller operations should probably remain manually based. Typically, this means that high care needs and high value to agency services (as more complicated and often larger schemes) would more often adopt a high-cost, high-tech approach, whereas the best value and premium value services tend to remain as low-tech and low-cost as possible. Consequently, the best value and premium service schemes tend to focus on fixed route, semi-flexible or one to many service patterns in order to maintain simplicity and avoid the need for high tech equipment.

In terms of fare levels, only the premium value services tend to charge fares at a level designed to recover costs and make a profit while the public policy driven schemes are often hamstrung by the nature of their ‘social inclusion’ background. Ideally, fare structures need to be kept relatively simple.

Looking at vehicle types, minibuses tend to be favoured by the high care needs and high value to agency niches, although CT, taxis and agency vehicles can also work well. For premium value services, taxis probably work best as they convey comfort and the small vehicles can offer a rather more direct and tailored service. Taxis can also be appropriate for best value schemes – particularly as taxibuses.

With the Wiltshire schemes, the RUH Hopper would fall under the small-scale high quality, low tech operation. However, where market-led schemes charge ‘premium’ fares to cover costs this is not the case for the Hopper (although fares are now higher than previously). Thus a (significant) subsidy is still required.

The Boomerang schemes are classic examples of the shared taxi arrangements whereby fares are relatively low the subsidies are minimised due to the small scale, low tech and ‘low quality’ schemes.
As currently designed the Wigglybus schemes meanwhile fall under the undesirable high cost, high quality, high tech segment, that finds it difficult to recover costs through high enough fares (due to social inclusion objectives). In particular, the Wigglybus scheme suffers from not being large enough to spread the call centre and software costs more widely and from only being cross subsidised through education transport.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pewsey Vale Wigglybus</th>
<th>Calne Wigglybus</th>
<th>Mere Wigglybus</th>
<th>Bassett B’rang</th>
<th>B’stoke B’rang</th>
<th>M’bury B’rang</th>
<th>RUH Hopper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finance</strong></td>
<td>Fares, subsidy, education budget</td>
<td>Fares, subsidy, education budget</td>
<td>Fares, subsidy, education budget</td>
<td>Fares, subsidy, education budget</td>
<td>Fares, mostly concession ary, subsidy</td>
<td>Fares, subsidy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scale of operation</strong></td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technology</strong></td>
<td>High, scheduled, diverts when booked</td>
<td>High, scheduled, diverts when booked</td>
<td>Low, scheduled, diverts when booked</td>
<td>Low, scheduled, but runs only if booked</td>
<td>Low, scheduled, but runs only if booked</td>
<td>Low, scheduled, but runs only if booked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Schedule arrangements</strong></td>
<td>Telephone, hail and ride</td>
<td>Telephone, hail and ride</td>
<td>Telephone, hail and ride</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Route structure (1)</strong></td>
<td>Semi flexible</td>
<td>Semi flexible</td>
<td>Flexible/semi flexible</td>
<td>Flexible</td>
<td>Flexible</td>
<td>Flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Route structure (2)</strong></td>
<td>Many to many Bus</td>
<td>Many to many Bus</td>
<td>Many to many Bus</td>
<td>Many to one Bus</td>
<td>Many to one Bus</td>
<td>Many to one Bus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fare levels</strong></td>
<td>Between bus and taxi</td>
<td>Between bus and taxi</td>
<td>Zonal</td>
<td>Zonal Taxi</td>
<td>Zonal Taxi</td>
<td>Zonal Taxi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fare structure</strong></td>
<td>Zonal Minibus</td>
<td>Zonal Minibus</td>
<td>Zonal Minibus</td>
<td>Zonal Taxi</td>
<td>Zonal Taxi</td>
<td>Zonal Taxi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vehicle/operator</strong></td>
<td>Minibus</td>
<td>Minibus</td>
<td>Minibus</td>
<td>Taxi</td>
<td>Taxi</td>
<td>Taxi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.4: DRT scheme design characteristics and resultant Market Niches

### 6.4 Scheme performance factors

| Subsidy per user | High Care Needs DRT (£5-£10 (typical dial-a-ride, LA social work, education services)). | Best Value DRT (£1-£10 (typical shared taxi-based bus replacement)). | Premium Value DRT Services (Up to £2 (subsidy of Fife Yellow Taxibus before withdrawal in November 2005)). | High Value to Agency DRT (£10-£20 (Joblink, non-emergency Patient Transport Services)). |

Table 6.5: Typical performance characteristics for each Market Niche (adapted from DHC et al, 2006)

As noted throughout this report, the more established DRT schemes in Pewsey Vale and Calne perform well both on a passenger use and on a subsidy per passenger basis. For instance, whereas the Lincolnshire services carry roughly 600 passengers a month per vehicle, the four Pewsey Vale Wigglybus services carry nearly 7,000 and the single Calne service more than 1,600 passengers a month. And, while the Hampshire Cango per passenger subsidy is between £4.50 and £7.50; Lincolnshire InterConnect is £5.50; and the Somerset Slinky £5-£8.50, the Wigglybus services range between £3.30 and £6.50.

12 It should be noted that Table 6.5 does not show patronage data for each of the categories due to the difficulty in obtaining comparable figures.
In addition, the trends for the Mere Wigglybus and the Boomerang shared taxi schemes, as well as for the other already well performing Wigglybus schemes, show continued (albeit gradual) improvements as they mature.

However, given the critical financial position this is still not sufficient in itself. In short, more money needs to be raised and savings need to be made.

In particular, the Pewsey Vale and Calne Wigglybus services both seem to fit in the small-scale, high tech, medium cost, medium quality market segment. Therefore, savings could be made perhaps by making more use of the high tech elements (call centre and routeing software) so as to lower the marginal cost of using this equipment through adding social service, special educational needs transport and CT. One other option would be to re-design the current network. The services should have simpler route structures (possibly by returning to fixed routes in Calne for example and by cutting the number of vehicles in Pewsey Vale from four to two or three), timetables and fare structures which would therefore be easier for the user to understand and less expensive to provide. Fare levels too need to be reconsidered if a greater share of the costs is to be recovered.

The Mere Wigglybus meanwhile performs less well, probably because the equipment presently used is not heavily used enough to justify the cost of the operation. Therefore, it may be worth the Council exploring less expensive alternative means of providing public transport here.

For the Boomerang shared taxis, it would seem that reducing the trip time opportunities and perhaps the range of destinations served might contribute towards increasing occupancies and thus efficiency savings. Otherwise, the small-scale, low tech and (relatively) low quality approach is almost certainly the most suitable for this best value type of public transport service in these situations.

Lastly, the RUH Hopper service is financially unsustainable in its current form. While further fare rises should be explored, it is unlikely that this action would address the issues on its own. Instead, the possibility for perhaps adopting a form of InterConnect approach may be explored, whereby the trunk section of the route from West Wiltshire to the RUH could be covered by existing commercial services thus allowing the Hopper to focus on the DRT elements. However, it is recognised that there are significant institutional barriers to such a plan in the current regulatory environment. The Hopper service may also benefit from a broadening of its user base away from serving only the hospital towards other high value to agency type trips – e.g. other healthcare, job centre plus, social service – providing those agencies are prepared to contribute towards the costs of operation (as they do elsewhere).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pewsey Vale Wigglybus</th>
<th>Calne Wigglybus</th>
<th>Mere Wigglybus</th>
<th>Bassett B’rang</th>
<th>B’stoke B’rang</th>
<th>M’bury B’rang</th>
<th>RUH Hopper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subsidy per user</td>
<td>£3.37</td>
<td>£3.71</td>
<td>£6.32</td>
<td>£11.16</td>
<td>£3.28</td>
<td>£3.40</td>
<td>£4.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Comment on Performance

**Generally performs well in patronage and subsidy per passenger terms.** But, too small to benefit from high cost, high tech equipment. Fares too low to recover costs. Overly complex services.

**Least well performing Wiltshire DRT bus-based scheme.** Fares too low to recover costs. Overly complex services.

**Subsidy cost per passenger far too high in current guise.** Fares not sufficient to cover costs. Overly generous trip opportunities limit potential for sharing and hence reduce efficiency and generate higher than necessary subsidy costs per passenger.

**Subsidy per passenger lately becoming more reasonable.** Still, fares not sufficient to cover costs. Overly generous trip opportunities limit potential for sharing and hence reduce efficiency and generate higher than necessary subsidy costs per passenger.

**Small very niche market.** Demand highly dispersed. DRT not efficient for RUH trunk run. Financially unsustainable.

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggested solutions</th>
<th>Re-design service on lower resource level. Simplify route and fare structure. Explore high value to agency options that provide new income but not if simplicity compromised.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Look at converting DRT route to fixed route with deviations. Simplify fare structure. Explore high value to agency options that provide new income but not if simplicity compromised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consider replacing with taxi bus or bus diversion. Consider limiting trip opportunities and destinations to increase occupancies and hence efficiency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consider limiting trip opportunities and destinations to increase occupancies and hence efficiency. Consider limiting trip opportunities and destinations to increase occupancies and hence efficiency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Broaden niche to other high value to agency markets and hence attract extra money. Focus on DRT element – link to commercial service for trunk element to RUH. Look at raising fares again.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Generally performs well in Wiltshire DRT bus-based scheme.** Fares too low to recover costs. Overly complex services. |
| **Subsidy per passenger lately becoming more reasonable.** Still, fares not sufficient to cover costs. Overly generous trip opportunities limit potential for sharing and hence reduce efficiency and generate higher than necessary subsidy costs per passenger. |
| **Subsidy per passenger lately becoming more reasonable (though still too high).** Fares not sufficient to cover costs. Overly generous trip opportunities limit potential for sharing and hence reduce efficiency and generate higher than necessary subsidy costs per passenger. |

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**6.5 Summary**

To summarise, this discussion chapter has pulled together the earlier findings from the literature review, the case study of the position of DRT in Wiltshire and the in-depth interviews and focus group to develop a basis on which to develop some overall conclusions and recommendations.
7. Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

The research has revealed a number of core recommendations which need to be considered if Wiltshire County Council is to ensure a sustainable DRT network capable of meeting the needs of Wiltshire residents over the next few years. The following key conclusions and recommendations have been developed in response to the issues emerging from the available literature, expert knowledge of members of the research team, with respect to other schemes in existence throughout the UK, and the interview and focus group respondents, drawing upon good practice wherever possible. Together, these key conclusions and recommendations should form a set of practicable actions for WCC.

It is important to stress that the recommendations have not been designed to be an ‘all or nothing’ solution to the issues currently facing Wiltshire in terms of DRT, but a set of recommendations from which WCC can selectively draw, according to their particular needs.

Notwithstanding the points made above, it is clear through both the analysis and discussion of the principle findings, that many of the issues confronting Wiltshire in terms of DRT are interrelated. As such, the recommendations are mutually supportive and provide the necessary infrastructure for the implementation of the package of initiatives suggested.

The research undertaken has suggested individual recommendations and follow-up actions. Table 7.1 details the issues and the recommendations suggested to address them. The majority of the recommendations can be approached by WCC, whereas others require change at governmental level. In this respect lobbying of government is seen as crucially important. The recommendations are based on three core areas namely, strategic, tactical and scheme specific which underpin the suggestions for addressing the needs of DRT within WCC.

The research team has experienced considerable goodwill from those contacted in Wiltshire, particularly in terms of commitment of time and resources involved in taking part in the interviews and focus groups. If this is indicative of DRT in Wiltshire in general then the signs are positive in terms of achieving change for the better within the County, given the current financial constraints.

7.2 Conclusions

Arising from the literature review findings, performance data and interview findings the main conclusions arising from the research are as follows:

7.2.1 Contextual

- Rural public transport in Wiltshire is vulnerable due to imminent budget cuts facing the Passenger Transport Unit directly and the Council as a whole coupled with a history of increased spending on buses in recent years delivering little obvious additional benefit (as bus industry costs continue to rise at a rate significantly higher than inflation).

- Lack of integration of DRT within the wider policy context.

- Notwithstanding this public transport can play a key role in meeting a range of policy objectives.

- Specific funds for DRT services are now ending, primarily from Central Government through the Rural Bus Challenge grants.
• Bus tender costs have increased at above inflation rates for a number of years meaning that parts of the core network are now becoming increasingly expensive to subsidise with consequent knock on effects on the ‘less deserving’ services.

• There is a lack of taxi and Community Transport operators available and/or willing to tender for DRT contracts in the County.

7.2.2 Scheme design

• DRT in Wiltshire would appear to be ad hoc and opportunistic in development.

• Marketing and branding unsystematic and in certain respects confused

• There was an initial failure to consider future funding situation.

• There have been some significant moves towards delivering service integration with education transport, but so far no real progress with other council (or external) agencies.

• A shift to increase operational efficiency through integrating public transport service delivery has led to overly complex route patterns and timetables.

• The fare structure is overly complex.

• In terms of vehicle size – 16 seat too small for school traffic (24 seat similar cost) but more expensive than taxi (8 seats).

• Booking arrangements and use of routing software is rather randomly organised.

• Current format of Advisory Groups could work more effectively.

• There is a need to explore the development of Social Enterprise Community Transport.

7.2.3 Scheme performance

• The majority of WCC DRT schemes perform well in cost per passenger and usage terms.

• General usage and cost per passenger of all DRT schemes are improving (with quite a significant improvement in the Boomerang services in particular for April and May 2006).

7.3 Recommendations

Accordingly, the following recommendations are made (see Table 1). In particular, it should be noted that the scheme specific recommendations are predicated on the assumption that there will be insufficient funding available in order to keep the services at their current level, but that a reduced level of service will still be required in order to meet high priority access needs. As such, the following are made based on our analysis of service performance and the comments made in the stakeholder consultations.
Table 7.1: Recommendations and Future Actions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Core recommendations</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Sources from which recommendations have been derived</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>STRATEGIC</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vulnerability of general public transport funding, cessation of specific funding sources and increasing bus industry costs</td>
<td>Explore additional sources of funding, such as increased fares and look to improve efficiencies and/or cut costs where possible (see later for further details).</td>
<td>See introduction to the report.</td>
<td>2.1, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, 5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of integration with wider policies</td>
<td>Rural public transport (and DRT in particular) needs to be more explicitly integrated within wider policy areas in order to more accurately reflect its importance as a delivery tool.</td>
<td>Rural public transport is vulnerable not least since its contribution to meeting wider economic, social inclusion and environmental policy objectives is more underplayed in Wiltshire County Council policy statements than elsewhere (e.g. Dorset, Lincolnshire and Somerset).</td>
<td>2.5, 2.6, 2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRT development has been ad hoc, bottom up and opportunistic</td>
<td>DRT needs to be developed in a more systematic way. This should be based on a ‘toolbox’ approach, whereby the travel needs identified can be met by the most appropriate public transport tool available.</td>
<td>The idea of a toolbox is used in Dorset. Transport needs are identified through a review process and a suitable mode (be it DRT, bus, CT or taxibus) is developed to try and best meet that need, as and when as resources allow.</td>
<td>2.6, 2.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marketing and branding unsystematic and confused</td>
<td>Seek to standardise DRT ‘types’ across the county, whereby Wigglybus means one thing, Boomerang or ‘Wigglytaxi’ something else.</td>
<td>Wigglybus services operate differently in each part of the County meaning that there can be confusion when operating/marketing/publicising/monitoring them. Moreover, the Wigglybus brand bears no resemblance to the Boomerang or conventional bus services making the whole system appear disjointed and disparate.</td>
<td>2.6, 2.7, 2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited progress made towards integration of DRT services with transport of other agencies</td>
<td>Investigate the possibility of further integration of DRT service provision with special educational needs, social care, and NHS non-emergency transport. However,</td>
<td>Significant progress has been made regarding integrating public transport with education transport, but there could be further scope with social care and NHS patient transport.</td>
<td>2.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
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<td>Overly complex routes and timetables</td>
<td>Simplify if at all possible routes and timetables.</td>
<td>The latest Wigglybus timetable booklet in Pewsey Vale is 24 pages long, while the one for Mere (operated by a single vehicle) is 18 pages long.</td>
<td>2.8, 5.3, 5.5, 6.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overly complex fare structure</td>
<td>Seek to simplify the fare structures.</td>
<td>Fares too are extremely complicated for passengers and drivers to understand, with single, return, and various period and multi-trip options available on some services.</td>
<td>2.3, 5.2, 6.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Inappropriate’ vehicle sizes</td>
<td>Consider the use of either eight seater taxis or 24 seat vehicles where possible.</td>
<td>The current 16 seat vehicles offer neither the benefits of being able to cope with peak period loadings (caused by market days or school children) and available at a similar cost to the Council as a 24 seat vehicle, nor the cost savings afforded by being able to hire taxi drivers instead of PSV licence holders.</td>
<td>1.2, 2.3, 4.10</td>
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<td>Randomised booking arrangements</td>
<td>Explore the feasibility of rationalising booking functions based on a single call centre.</td>
<td>Currently bookings are taken in a variety of ways. Elsewhere, they are taken by a single call centre in order to generate efficiency savings.</td>
<td>2.3, 5.0, 5.1, 5.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Role of the Advisory Group</td>
<td>It is suggested that a strategic review of the role of the Advisory Groups be undertaken.</td>
<td>There is a perception that the Advisory Groups are not functioning effectively.</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited progress on CT development</td>
<td>Consider working with CT operators to encourage them to develop as Social Enterprise organisations such that they may be able to bid for DRT contracts in the future at Both Dorset and Somerset have sought to expand the role of Social Enterprise CT in order to cut the cost of bus service contracts with some success.</td>
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<td>2.4, 2.6, 2.6, 2.6, 2.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legislation</td>
<td>lower costs.</td>
<td>Restrictions on bus boarding where pre-booking has not taken place. Call centre restrictions re: taxis, given that bookings made to a taxi operator must be taken within the local authority licensing district area.</td>
<td>5.0, 6.0</td>
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<td></td>
<td>WCC, in conjunction with other local authorities should lobby Central Government regarding the nature of the restrictive legislation.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>SCHEME SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS</strong></td>
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<td>Pewsey Vale Wigglybus</td>
<td>Redesign the service from scratch based on a 2/3 bus resource instead of 4 buses.</td>
<td>The Wigglybus in Pewsey Vale is a strong performing DRT scheme on both cost and usage criteria. However, there was a common perception that the service could be provided utilising 2 buses. It may also be possible that a third bus (funded through the education transport budget) could provide additional services in between morning and evening school services in the area, although for simplicity this may best be marketed separately. Thus, it is suggested the service focus on the better used Devizes-based route with an hourly service (24 seat bus). For Pewsey Vale, it was suggested one bus (16 seat) would be able to operate two loops on an alternate hourly basis. Both buses would require an hour gap in service during the middle of the day.</td>
<td>1.2, 2.3, 4.10, 5.0, 5.2, 6.3</td>
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<td>Possibly use 24 seat bus on hourly Devizes-based route, and a 16 seat bus to provide alternate hourly services to Pewsey.</td>
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<td>Examine scope for raising fares.</td>
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<td>Simplify fare structure to single trip tickets, multi-trip ticket and concessionary fare passes only.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wigglybus Calne</td>
<td>Switch from DRT operation to fixed route operation with 2/3 on-demand detour stops.</td>
<td>While the Calne Wigglybus actually performs fairly well for a DRT scheme in operational terms, there was a general consensus that the Calne Wigglybus would perform even better as a conventional fixed route bus (24 seat) that was able to divert should one of 2/3 on-demand stops be activated.</td>
<td>2.3, 4.10, 5.0, 5.2, 6.3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Examine scope for raising fares.</td>
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<td>Replace 16 seat vehicle with 24 seat vehicle.</td>
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<td>Simplify fare structure on similar lines to above.</td>
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<td>Wigglybus Mere</td>
<td>Unless the current situation improves, DRT service should be discontinued on cessation of RBC funding.</td>
<td>Mere is already served by buses to the south, and although DRT patronage levels are rising and per passenger subsidy is falling (albeit rather slowly), of all the services investigated its case for continued support is the</td>
<td>2.11</td>
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<tr>
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<td>RUH Hopper</td>
<td>Diversions from existing bus routes and/or taxibus services should be considered instead. Bookings could be redirected to a common call centre in the short term in order to increase efficiency. RUH Hopper is likely to always require a relatively high subsidy/trip. Examine scope for raising fares and for sponsorship. Consider potential for adopting InterConnect approach and linking services with trunk route commercial bus services direct to RUH at interchanges in West Wiltshire.</td>
<td>The Hopper is a well regarded service that makes socially necessary trips with increasing usage and falling costs per passenger but is financially unsustainable. Either revenues need to be increased – by further fare rises, new revenue streams (e.g. sponsorship, Government grants, some other organisational budget), new markets (doctors surgeries, NHS patient transfer). Or, costs need to be reduced (e.g. by linking into ‘tweaked’ existing commercial bus services direct to RUH if possible).</td>
<td>2.3, 2.7, 5.2, 6.3</td>
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<td>Bradenstoke and Wootton Bassett Boomerang shared taxis.</td>
<td>Not much scope for services to be rationalised by limiting destinations and choice of travel times, but these options need to be considered. Users tend to be captive and so most would likely switch to an alternative time of departure if service levels reduced.</td>
<td>Boomerang services now beginning to be more widely used and per passenger subsidy costs have fallen since free travel for seniors and low floor bus services (e.g. Service 55) have been introduced. However, while subsidy per passenger levels have dropped on the Bradenstoke service to ~£3.50 (May 2006), the figure for the Wootton Bassett service is still high at over £11.</td>
<td>6.0</td>
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<td>Malmesbury Boomerang shared taxis.</td>
<td>Needs to be rationalised by limiting destinations and choice of travel times. Increase service monitoring to ensure new rules followed.</td>
<td>New service beginning to be more widely used and per passenger subsidy costs are falling, but some users would appear to be ‘abusing’ the service by stretching the rules. A clarification and/or tightening of the rules should further reduce subsidies and make them more cost effective (and hence financially viable).</td>
<td>2.5, 2.6</td>
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