



Community Transport Association
Promoting Excellence in Community Transport

Transport for Young People in Rural Areas



One of a series of Good Practice Guides produced by the
Community Transport Association as part of its
Rural Transport Initiative

Good Practice

This short guide forms part of a series of 'Good Practice' guides produced by the Community Transport Association, aimed at promoting good practice in rural community transport schemes. The work of the Rural Transport Partnerships throughout England is leading to a rapidly expanding rural community transport sector with new projects continually emerging.

Countryside Agency initiatives such as the Vital Villages, Market Towns and Wider Welcome schemes, along with the Parish Transport Grant, will further increase the opportunity for community transport development.

Increasing demands on available financial resources mean that managers and co-ordinators of community transport schemes are always looking for innovative ways of diversifying and developing services. However, at the same time it is important that the basics are not overlooked and that schemes continue to operate within the current legislation.

This series of guides will assist organisations in the development process, giving advice on making best use of available resources and, where appropriate, up to date information on current legislation.

A full list of publications available from the Community Transport Association will be found at the end of this guide.

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The format of these Good Practice Guides is designed to allow for easy revision and improvement – we should welcome suggestions for additional material which could be included. Please let us know, also, of any errors so that we may correct them.

Introduction

In any village on any evening you might well find a group of teenagers hanging around the bus shelter. They are not waiting for a bus – the next one of those is on Wednesday if you don't count the school bus – but the bus shelter seems to be the meeting place. They want to get out of the house, they are too young to go to the pub, they want to have a chat with their friends – where else is there to go? What else is there to do?

When they are nearly old enough to go to the pub they will also be old enough to ride a motor bike or drive a car – and therein lies freedom. Freedom to get an evening job stacking shelves in Tesco's, freedom to go to the pictures, freedom to go swimming, freedom to visit their school friends who live a long way away – freedom to choose.

Whether we like it or not, 'transport' in rural areas involves motor cars. Young people do walk and cycle considerable distances – which is not pleasant on a cold night in driving rain – and they do use public transport where it exists. However, a village which has a bus or train service in the evening is very fortunate – and fares on buses, in particular, can be prohibitively expensive. Transport by car often translates as 'transport in a parental car' – which is not independent transport for the young person and may well not be convenient for the parent. This also depends on the family having sufficient cars and drivers for the wishes of all the younger members to be met.

Which does not take into account families in which – for all sorts of reasons - there is no car at all.

What are young people's transport needs?

It depends on the age of young person. The introduction above implied that it was young teenagers who had the most problems – perhaps because they were being denied independence at the very age when they expected to be finding it. But young people of all ages in rural areas should be able to take part in a range of activities in just the same way as their peers in towns and cities – the difference being that travel over quite a long distance is likely to be involved. Admittedly, rural young people have opportunities for outdoor activities close at hand which an urban youngster would have to travel to – and many of the teenagers could well find casual farm work more amenable than supermarket shelf-stacking – but it would be good if the necessary transport were available to allow young people to enjoy choices. 'Social exclusion' is a well-worn expression now – but the fact of people being left out of whole facets

of life which most of us take for granted is none the less real for that. There is too much of society from which many young people in rural areas are left out.

As if exclusion from social activities – leading half a social life – were not disadvantage enough, in the upper teens exclusion from training and employment may be added to this. In particular, the rural youngster without transport faces a severe restriction in the variety of employment which it is practical to seek – yet again a loss of freedom to choose.

A good way of looking at the range of young people's transport needs would be to start with the range of activities they might wish to take part in – from informal play in the early years up to seeking full-time employment.

This is a suggested summary of this whole range of activities – with no illusions that the list is complete:

Typical activities in the 21st Century

Pre-school years – playschool, informal play with other children, birthday parties

Early primary years – school, play with other children outside school, uniformed organisations, visits to places of interest, parties

Upper primary – school, informal play, more formalised sporting activities, uniformed organisations, visits of a more educational nature, hobbies and interests, first sleepover without their parents, parties

Lower secondary (pre-teens) – school, after-school activities, sports (school teams or local teams), outdoor recreational activities other than team games, uniformed organisations, youth clubs, visiting friends made at school (new friends made at comprehensive school may well be in another village many miles on the other side of town), first paid employment (legally from age 12), longer residential activities with peer group, disco, youth club.

Upper secondary (mid-teens) – school, after-school activities, more serious sport, following own interests in outdoor activities, some general youth organisations or clubs still retaining appeal, more specialised organisations in line with their own interests, staying over with friends, a greater range of part-time employment, more serious partying

16 plus - further education in a less formal institution than school, apprenticeship, some in first full-time employment, able to ride a moped or drive a tractor on the road, serious partying, clubbing, dating, holidays without parents, full membership of sports/activity clubs/groups

18-plus – higher education/university, part-time and holiday employment to support this, more in full-time employment, pubbing, clubbing, more dating and marriage, whole range of activities/interests/entertainments.

Reasonable conclusions that could be drawn from this list include:

- an increasing need for transport as children get older
- an increasing need for transport as the activities they wish to take part in become more diverse
- an increasing need for transport as these activities involve a wider geographic area

The likelihood that these needs can be satisfied will depend first of all on

- the extent to which the activity is available locally
- whether the activity can be brought to the user (i.e. amenities in the village can be improved)

If, as is likely for many activities, nothing is available locally, then the chance that the needs can be satisfied will depend on:

- the availability of a car in the household and the availability of someone to drive it
- the availability of a lift from a car-driver outside the family
- bearing in mind the young person's age and the nature of the roads, whether walking/cycling is a reasonable option

- the availability and frequency of public transport services - and particularly evening and weekend services
- the availability of other openly available services – for instance community transport
- the availability of ‘closed’ transport – for example a staff bus for a place of employment or a sports team having its own minibus

If the aim is to improve the quality of life and, at an appropriate age, independence for young people, the moves set out in the later pages of this Guide could all make a difference.

A few more issues

- One point that is often forgotten is that a large area with long distances and small population often means a **network of transport** is needed – rather than just one link. Consider how a rural school can assemble 22 players for a game of football when it has a 750 square mile catchment-area – that is 15 miles in all directions.
- **Anonymity** in seeking information and advice for young people in small, rural settlements is also a big issue often overlooked.
- **Lack of choice** in gaining access to leisure & employment when relying on public transport.
- The **cost of bus fares** for those on low incomes
- **Personal safety issues**, including the fact that lots of young people walk or cycle regularly on rural roads.
- **Access to Leisure Centres** - leisure centres are nearly all located in towns and in some cases now attached to comprehensive schools. These have to be an opportunity for village-based community transport, in particular, to offer a service to rural young people. We have no statistics on the proportion of rural young people able to swim proficiently – just a suspicion that it may be lower than for urban youngsters.
- Young people in the more remote areas are seriously disadvantaged geographically and have **limited options for employment**, often as stark as stay at home and do low paid work or move away.

General Solutions

One general answer is

Parents' Car

The solution to meeting so many of young people's transport needs is parents' car – with all that that implies in terms of lack of independence and lack of choice in journeys made, quite apart from any environmental considerations.

However, more seriously - what happens if there is no car? The answer to this will differ between age-groups – but we need to bear in mind that, so often, the answer will be for the young person to go without.

Three further general answers, as soon as the young person is old enough, are

Walking and Cycling

The benefits of this in terms of young people's fitness and reduction of car-use have been well enough stated – it does just need to be borne in mind that recreational walking and cycling, when the young person can choose whether or not to go depending on the weather, is a very different matter from having to walk or cycle on a dark, wet winter's night to get home from work or an after-school activity. There is a safety aspect, too – and, despite the publicity generated by isolated incidents of crimes involving physical harm to young people, the greatest hazard is from motor traffic.

Public Transport

An injection of Government funding has led to considerable improvement in rural public transport – but there has, generally, been no deliberate policy to look at the needs of young people despite:

- those people under the legal age for riding a motor-bike or driving a car forming a substantial number of potential public transport users;
- the potential benefit of getting young people into the habit of using public transport so that they might continue to do so for some journeys even when they have got their own cars.

It is probably fair to state that most public transport operators do not, either, see any commercial benefit in the points above – particularly as the evening and weekend services which would be the most attractive to young people are usually the most difficult to staff.

Community Transport

Within the not-for-profit sector the present level of transport provision for young people is fairly sparse; without the benefit of any statistics, the feeling is that group travel is the main use of community-operated vehicles by young people. Other Community Transport services – such as dial-a-ride or local services provided by community buses – are either aimed at older people or, by default, have a clientele which is more elderly. The only substantial exception to this is provision for disabled young people.

However, there are many facilities which, while not being run by a Community Transport operator, are nevertheless community-inspired or organised by a community group – with a very high proportion of the work being done by volunteers. A number of initiatives aimed at young people are emerging from this work.

The present shortage of community services aimed at young people – or which young people would willingly use - does not mean that Community Transport sector has nothing to contribute. Far from it. There follows first of all a selection of notes on schemes – community and otherwise - which are working successfully and then some ideas for ways forward.

Some Specific Solutions – Ideas which are Working

The Playbus

The playbus is a good example of a concept designed to reduce individuals' need for transport by taking facilities out to the users. Playbuses took playschools out to isolated and 'hard to reach' communities - offering play and learning opportunities to very young children. However, with the vehicle and its timetable of regular calls in place, the range of services offered on the playbuses has been extended in many areas - to include advice and information centres, a base for projects such as health promotion or parent support, youth clubs, after-school clubs, holiday play schemes and much more.

As an example, in Northumberland, Rural Transport Partnership funding is about to be put towards replacement and refurbishing of the district's playbus to include provision for training and advice for young people and families. The playbus serves 30 villages and calls in each village once a fortnight.

'Walking bus'

The term is new but the concept is a development of the time-honoured crocodile – but this time with the crocodile of children growing as it gets nearer the school. It is a way of getting children to walk to school under supervision – they enjoy the exercise and, of course, it all reduces the traffic-problems associated with 'the school run'.

The 'walking bus' has a route – past or near the children's houses – and runs to a timetable. The 'walking bus' is supervised by volunteers, usually parents, and, of course, great attention is paid to safety-measures such as careful choice of route and use of high-visibility clothing. Bad weather is not a problem – modern waterproofs are good and, if they keep warm and dry, kids enjoy the rain.

Safe cycle-routes

In many places children are being discouraged from cycling to school – the main problems are perceived as being, danger from motor traffic and security of the bikes on the school premises. Neither of these problems, however, is insoluble – and at Haltwhistle (Northumberland) Middle School work is being done in conjunction with Sustrans to signpost safe cycle-routes and provide secure cycle-storage at the school. Hardly earth-shattering progress, one might say – but at least the problems are being faced and dealt with.

Special Services by Community Buses

In Cornwall the Tamar Valley and the St. Breward Community Buses both provide a service timed to take Scouts to and from their weekly meetings - with the obvious benefit of reduced car-use, but also supporting the Scout Group by making it easier for members to attend meetings regularly and allowing the Scouts themselves to feel more independent (which, again, supports one of the aims of the Scout Movement). If the Scout Group (parents or committee-members, perhaps, rather than leaders) can then support the Community Bus by providing volunteer drivers - who might then be willing to drive occasionally at other times And then if the Scouts need a minibus for a week-end camp

A simple idea can lead to a great deal of mutual support - which is what a community is all about.

Public Transport Initiatives

There are particular problems in providing affordable public transport at times when young people wish to travel – in an age when shift-work is not popular and at a time when bus drivers pay is subject to economic constraints, evenings and weekends are the hardest times for bus companies to staff services. However, there are successful public transport initiatives and sometimes just one extra journey is enough to make a difference.

For example, in Haydon Bridge (Northumberland) the Rural Bus Grant (see box on p.8) has supported a 6 pm bus from the High School on Tuesdays. This timing is in co-ordination with the school's own after-school programme and has been sufficiently successful that it is now in its second year.

Also in Northumberland is the extension of the Arriva company's 'teen card' to rural routes – giving under-18s a flat 50p fare after 6 and at weekends – and work with small rural operators to upgrade ticket machinery to accept these tickets.

Even simpler - and not at all in 'unsocial hours' - is the Dales to Darlington bus service launched in September 2001. This bus service provides transport from Wensleydale and Swaledale to Darlington College and town centre Monday to Friday with one bus to Darlington in the morning arriving at 8.50 and a return journey in the evening leaving 5.00. This service is well used by 16 to 18 year olds attending the college and they expect an increase in numbers in September 2002 as young people who are deciding what to do now are aware of the service. Average weekly passengers are 120 and increasing – and before there was nothing.

At the other end of the scale of sophistication is the 'Life in the Bus Lane' scheme in North Devon which embraces smartcard technology into a comprehensive scheme aimed at further education students. The smartcards are used as passes for the daily journeys to and from two colleges and can distinguish between entitlement to free travel or need to pay a half fare; in addition they give half-price bus travel in the evenings, at weekends and during college holidays. The scheme was a successful bidder to the Rural Bus Challenge – and covered the smartcard technology; a contribution to new low-floor buses and substantial improvements to services, some of them into very rural areas. One last bonus for the students is that the cards give entitlement to a good range of retail discounts – at the sort of shops they would choose to go to anyway.

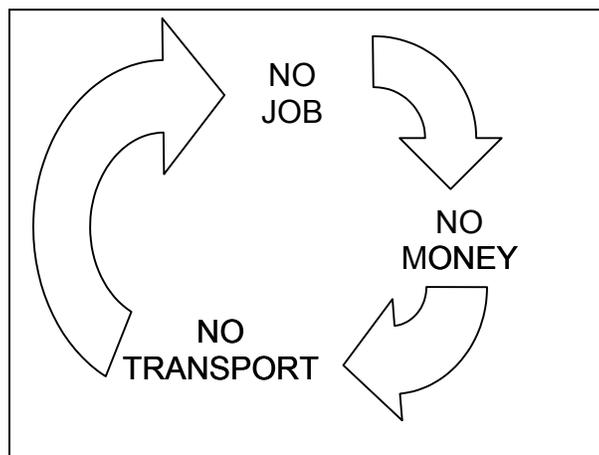
'The Village Bus' – use by groups of young people

In some villages a 'village bus' has been set up to provide transport for a wide variety of organisations within the village – on the basis that it would be wasteful for a number of groups each to have its own minibus which would probably lie unused for a good part of the week. An immediate bonus, of course, is that transport then becomes available for those groups who could never afford to have their own vehicle or whose need for transport is infrequent. This is a very straightforward form of community transport – and, one would hope, one which could involve youth groups (or, for that matter, the school) as much as organisations with adult membership.

A minibus able to be used by; the W.I., the football team, the senior citizens' lunch club, the Brownies, the band, the playgroup, the dramatic society and the primary school is probably working on the right lines.

Wheels to Work

This all began in south Shropshire/North Herefordshire, which is probably the most sparsely populated part of rural England if mountains and moorland are discounted. The problem to be tackled was the vicious circle of young people being unable to travel to jobs which were available in towns – because affordable transport was not available and because no form of transport was affordable without a job to produce the income to pay for it. Employers were preferring to take on people who lived in the towns because they felt, probably with some justification, that their attendance and punctuality was likely to be more reliable.



Wheels to Work was set up to break this circle by providing young people with transport – initially mopeds on loan but developing to include offering driving lessons and assistance with buying and running a first car.

The idea has now spread well beyond Herefordshire and Shropshire. For example:

(East Riding of Yorkshire) "This is a concept which has really taken off. In Selby we have a Wheels 2 Work scheme up and running for 17-24 year olds. We are currently expanding the scheme to 15 scooters and a folding bike! It is hoped the folding bike will help people cycle to bus corridors and then onward at the other end."

SHROPSHIRE'S WHEELS 2 WORK 2

A good account of this scheme – which explains the whole concept of Wheels-to-Work and the range of travel-opportunities which such a scheme can offer – is in the CA booklet *Great Ways to Go*. (See 'Further Reading' on page 14.)

(Hambleton & Richmondshire, North Yorkshire) "Wheels 2 Work launched in May 2001 with 12 mopeds. In the first 6 months we had 90 referrals. We are expanding to 18 mopeds from 1st April and also introducing bicycle loan, repair grants and driving lesson subsidies."

(Warwickshire) “Here we've also got the very successful wheels to work scheme. Projects already slated for development following on from the research include: subsidised driving lessons, coordinated by our wheels to work scheme.”

(Northumberland) “Wheels to Work - but with second-hand cars - hopefully run by ADAPT - we have talked them into becoming a more general CT group.”

The CHIP Van

The Community Health Improvement Project van takes primary healthcare and advice out to the community - and is aimed principally at young people and families. This bid to establish this has involved Tynedale Voluntary Action, Children North East, West Northumberland Primary Care Group, Leisure Tynedale and Tynedale Council as well as the Rural Transport Partnership – and one aspect this does highlight is that Best Practice is not just about the project itself - but also about how groups working together can avoid duplication and develop strong working partnerships.

Mobile Cybercafe

This has just been launched in the Vale of White Horse in Oxfordshire, based in Faringdon and visiting villages around. It is a converted double-decker bus and has a café with lap-tops downstairs and a comfortable lounge upstairs – a modern example of taking improved amenities out to villages rather than expecting young people to travel into town.

Work of Rural Transport Partnerships

Many of the ideas described above have been initiated through Rural Transport Partnerships – a very successful network of which has come out of the Government’s three-pronged rural transport initiative of 1998 (see box). The partners are likely to include a significant representation from the community and voluntary transport sector as well as relevant statutory organisations - any or all of local councils (County, District, Unitary, Parish), Primary Care Trusts, the Employment Service for example. Partners could also include Rural Community Councils and more local groups with an interest in improving transport.

Each RTP has a Rural Transport Partnership Officer who puts into effect an Action Plan establishing local transport needs and then putting into effect projects which can go towards meeting those needs.

The Partnership is funded jointly by the Countryside Agency and those partners in a position to contribute funds and it can recommend major projects to receive CA funding (up to 75% of costs). In addition, each Partnership has a delegated fund which can be used to support its own small grants scheme for a wide variety of inexpensive projects put forward by local groups.

**GOVERNMENT FUNDS
SPECIFICALLY FOR RURAL
TRANSPORT
(introduced in 1998)**

- 1. Rural Bus Subsidy** – local transport authorities (County/Unitary Councils or PTEs) invite tenders from bus operators for new or improved local bus services.
- 2. Rural Bus Challenge** – local transport authorities (as above) submit innovative schemes to the DTLR; those successful in the competition receive 100% funding.
- 3. Rural Transport Partnership** – as described here.

Many Partnerships are tackling the transport problems facing rural young people. For example, Cheshire RTP established that a significant number of young people in the Congleton area wished to have access to social and leisure facilities in nearby towns on Saturdays – without having to rely on their parents for transport. The young people also wanted to be able to travel independently in the evening but found existing public transport both infrequent and expensive – and some young people were not happy about waiting alone at rural bus stops. The solution was the ‘Microbus’ – using County Council vehicles at times when they would otherwise be lying idle, using Social Services drivers (who were thus both trained and Police-vetted), and with bookings made via the internet (with schools allowing use of their computers by those without internet access at home). The daytime service runs hourly between Congleton and Macclesfield, so users have just to book on to the journey they wish to use. The evening service, however, offers a choice of four destinations – and passengers using that service vote for the destination they wish to go to. There seems to be both consultation and democracy at work here!

Good Practice

From these examples it will be seen that a great deal of the work which is being done is community based – if not community transport as such, then transport which is being planned by communities for their own local needs. They are all examples of ‘good practice’ in that they are ways of addressing the underlying problem.

The other side of ‘good practice’ is the way in which transport planning and provision for young people are put into effect – thus:

Good Practice – Keeping it Legal

It is – obviously – important that community initiatives to improve transport for young people work within the law. Transgressions, as often as not, arise through ignorance rather than any deliberate flouting of the regulations – but ignorance of the law is not an admissible defence and some transgressions could have quite serious consequences.

There is plenty of advice freely available – starting with the CTA Advice Service and our Rural Transport Officers. Similarly there is a range of inexpensive – and also, in some cases, free – publications which will set out clearly how ‘the system’ works and how transport can be organised safely and legally.

Please refer to ...

“Further Reading” on page 17 of this leaflet

“Useful Contacts” on page 16

Good Practice – operating your own transport

The days of the need to perform grotesque contortions to avoid being seen to charge passengers to travel in your organisation’s minibus are long gone – purchase of a simple permit (costing, at the most, £8) makes use ‘for hire or reward’ legal. It does not entitle you to carry the general public – you are not running a public bus service – but, provided you are not a commercial concern, you can carry your own members and you may charge them a non-profit-making fare for their journey.

Again –
please refer to
‘Further Reading’ on p.17

To avoid the most common ‘transgressions’ committed by groups running their own minibuses:

- please make sure the disc which comes with your permit is displayed on the windscreen (permits are not vehicle-specific and, once you have got a disc, you could use it on a borrowed or self-drive hire minibus);
- please make sure your insurers are clear exactly what the minibus is being used for (they will be perfectly happy for you to use it ‘for hire or reward’ under a permit if you declare that that is what you intend to do);
- new minibuses will need their first MoT at the end of Year One, not after three years as is the case with a car;
- although a car driving-licence is usually adequate for a minibus up to 16 seats, it may not be if the driver passed his/her test after 1st Jan. 1997;
- dispensations on hire-or-reward (i.e. the permit system) and on driver-licensing which are granted in the UK do not apply if you wish to take your minibus abroad.

Please ask for advice on any of these points – CTA will be more than happy to help you get it right. Unfortunately, you cannot rely on a firm selling or hiring you a minibus to inform you of all that you need to know – and they may not be aware of such points as permit-legislation themselves.

Good Practice - Operating Community Transport

The concept of ‘the village bus’ and its relevance to young people’s needs has already been mentioned (page 7). The other common forms of community transport - the community car scheme, the demand-responsive service, dial-a-ride services and the ‘Community Bus’ providing a local bus service could all have a rôle in alleviating the problems of rural young people.

Community Car Scheme:

- these generally involve volunteer drivers giving lifts in their own cars in return for a refund of their costs calculated on the mileage covered;
- no legal difficulties provided the payment to the driver is below a level which could be deemed ‘profit-making’;
- would depend on volunteer drivers being willing to drive at the times of day likely to be asked for - e.g. an early start for a journey to work;
- there are no restrictions on the categories of passenger who may be carried on a voluntary car scheme – but it would be wise to avoid any suggestion of competition with taxi or private hire car services.

Demand-responsive Dial-a-ride Services:

- intending passengers ring a central co-ordinator to book a place on a bus; the route of the bus will depend on the whereabouts of the bookings;
- the type of permit (‘section 19’) under which these normally operate restrict the services to the classes of user specified on the permit - and ‘young people’ as such is not an admissible class. However ‘members of the body holding the permit’ and ‘persons whom the body (holding the permit) exists to help’ are - so a scheme intending to carry young people should make sure that such a service is compatible with its constitutional objectives. If operated under a section 19 permit these services may **not** carry the general public - so you would need to define ‘young people’. It would also be very sensible to have some form of registration for users – so that the law can be seen to be being complied with.

Community Bus:

- these are registered local bus services run with minibuses and using volunteer drivers;
- the type of permit (‘section 22’) under which these operate allows them to carry the general public, so the age of passengers is irrelevant;
- having said that, encouraging younger passengers to travel could be an active policy of benefit to the CT scheme as well as to the young people

A QUESTION OF IMAGE

Never mind shaking off the image that we cater only for elderly people so that we can attract younger passengers - would not our more elderly passengers themselves welcome a mix of ages on ‘their’ bus? They would then feel that they were still part of the wider community, not a group set apart by age and lessening agility.

There is a lot of progress to be made in establishing community transport as being a natural choice for young people to use - to help shake off the 'elderly and disabled' image which has the potential to be unnecessarily restricting in rural areas. We can look beyond feeling we are doing well by providing for young people who have no transport at all - we really are doing well if those same young people will continue to use our community transport services through choice even when they do have alternative transport of their own.

Good Practice – Opportunities Missed or Waste Avoided

A huge volume of transport potential is going to waste – you would not have to go too far to find a youth club desperate for transport while the school minibus spends the weekend locked up in the yard doing nothing. While formal schemes co-ordinating the use of existing transport do exist and are to be encouraged (see the companion Good Practice Guide on 'Brokerage'), often all that is needed is for a few people to get together and actually talk to each other.

Carrying young people could be an opportunity for attracting volunteers to a CT scheme. Provide a bus for the youth club – get volunteer youth leaders to drive it – might they help with some other driving from time to time?

One last thought – please try not to hide behind, often imaginary legal, obstacles to young people using transport which already exists but is lying unused. If the real problem is concerns about the possible poor behaviour of the passengers, then that is a completely separate issue which needs to be tackled (see below).

Good Practice – making your Community Bus 'young-person-friendly'

'Street cred' is not a purely urban phenomenon – it also applies in the village street. "I wouldn't be seen dead in that" is not a helpful reaction to the vehicle that a well-meaning group has provided to alleviate what they see as the problems facing local young people. It is not a necessary reaction either – and it could just be that making a minibus 'young person friendly' could make it friendlier for everyone else as well.

For a start –

- drivers welcoming young passengers rather than automatically branding them as destructive, noisy or otherwise obnoxious (if individuals are destructive and obnoxious, then that is a separate issue – see 'behaviour' below);
- getting away from the 'welfare' image – the town whose minibus proudly proclaims itself as "Xxxxxx Welfare Bus" in large letters on the side may remain nameless;
- following on from that, a snappy title for a scheme gives it good publicity in everyone's eyes;
- a little care in framing publicity so that the service appears attractive to all the age-groups entitled to use it (which, in the case of a Community Bus providing a registered local service, means all age-groups).

There is a lot of progress to be made in establishing community transport as being entirely appropriate for young people to use – to help shake off the 'elderly and disabled' image which is clearly unnecessarily restricting in rural areas.

Good Practice - making Public Transport 'young-person-friendly'

A question following on from the last paragraph – why does it seem not to be a good commercial proposition for mainstream bus operators to try to attract young people on to their services? If the service is run at the right time, on the right day and to the right destination young people will use it - and they will all be paying fares. However, setting those fares at the right level is important - young people will frequently club together and hire a taxi, so a bus fare which is more than a quarter of the taxi fare may be too high. The attitude of drivers is also critical.

Or perhaps this is our opportunity to get it right and show the way.

Good Practice – Planning for Improvements

It is always good practice to involve customers in planning transport services – and that includes young people. They know what they want – and can be very realistic in assessing what is possible against what they would like ideally.

Ways of doing this:

- The Cumbria PlusBus deliberately sought input from students at the local comprehensive school and this has been linked to an unexpectedly high level of use by young people – and for village-to-village journeys as much as for travel into town.
- Why not take this a stage further and involve the students in the actual service-planning. For a 'Leisure and Tourism' Vocational Studies group, for example, planning a transport service could be a ready-made project – and a really good one if the students saw what they had planned actually being put into effect.
- Again, designing publicity-material could be a project a school or college group could take up – and, again, it becomes an even better project if the design is used in the actual printed material which goes out (as was done for 'Life in the Bus Lane' described on page 6).
- Services designed to meet the needs of youth groups obviously need to be discussed with those youth groups – but it need not be just with the leaders.

Good Practice – Poor Behaviour

If poor behaviour is an issue, then it needs to be tackled. Poor behaviour rarely involves the whole of a group – and it would be wrong if the conduct of a few jeopardised provision of transport which would benefit many. Fear of poor behaviour – real or imagined – can be a real obstruction to full use being made of the transport which a community already has within its boundaries.

An interesting exercise undertaken in Ponteland (Northumberland) arose from bad behaviour on one particular school contract bus – which had the potential for being dangerous. The Rural Transport Partnership put money from its small grants fund towards making a video of a mock accident involving a double-decker school bus on which the driver has been distracted by the behaviour of his passengers – as a result of which the bus crashed. The video was made with the help of the Police, fire and ambulance services and shows the car the bus hit being cut up to rescue injured people. The video is now being used as part of a training programme in County Middle Schools.

Where behaviour is a problem on public transport, parents concerned about young people's safety, may well be more trusting of community transport. It is the writer's experience with a s.22 community bus that passenger-numbers on rural services do go up in the school holidays as small groups of youngsters go into town unaccompanied – probably younger than their parents would allow to travel alone on the more impersonal service provided by mainstream bus operators. For a start, they know that the driver will make sure they are on the bus home in the afternoon and that it will not go without them. The trust placed in the community service is one of its unsung assets – and one worth taking very great care to preserve.

If there are behaviour problems with a group on a community bus, an effective and fair solution should be to identify the individuals concerned at an early stage and to withdraw from them the privilege of riding on the bus – trying to nip the problem in the bud before it grows to the extent that a whole youth group, for example, is prevented from hiring the bus. Being excluded from something which your friends are enjoying is often a very good sanction.

Having said that, we are generally very fortunate in the CT sector in not having problems with passengers – and use of a small vehicle with a sympathetic driver can only help us to carry groups of young people without difficulty. And once the word gets around that allowing young people on to the minibus will not result in its being destroyed

Conclusion

The young person who comes off the farm to go to primary and secondary school, takes a minimal part in activities while at school and then, at the earliest leaving-age, disappears back on to the farm again is a statistic of one. One who commits no crime, does no damage, makes no impact – but, at least partly for lack of opportunity, leads only half a life in the formative years.

Even where there are social problems which do cause concern – and many of our market towns are becoming rougher – the statistical impact is small compared with some of our cities. This conceals very real disadvantage for individuals. Whether “it was never like this in my day – young people then didn’t need everything doing for them; they were able to usefully occupy themselves” is true or not is irrelevant – and unhelpful. If a whole sector of young people – those who live in rural areas – are unable to participate fully in the life of the 21st century and if we, with an interest and involvement in Community Transport, can help to remedy this, then we should certainly try to do so.

This leaflet depicts what is only a beginning. As we said at the outset, there is tremendous scope for improvement to transport-opportunities for young people in rural areas and there is a great deal that the community transport sector in particular can contribute. We hope that you have found this leaflet helpful – but we should welcome information on other schemes and ideas which we have not described and we should welcome suggestions for further aspects of good practice which we could feature. Thus subsequent editions can be more comprehensive than this – and, the important part, we shall have a continually improving tool to help increase the quality of life for our rural young people.

Thanks

Thanks for help with compiling the examples given to:

Cheshire Rural Transport Partnership
Devon County Council
Hambleton and Richmondshire Rural Transport Partnership
National Playbus Association
Oxfordshire Rural Community Council
Selby District Rural Transport Partnership
Tynedale Rural Transport Partnership

Useful Contacts

Community Transport Association

Rural Transport Officer – N. of England and East Midlands	0161-351 1475
Rural Transport Officer – S. of England and West Midlands	01579-342042
National Advice Line	0161-367 8780
	adviceuk@communitytransport.com

CTA will be happy to put you in touch with specialist organisations or with local Rural/Community Transport Officers or with Rural Transport Partnership Officers.

Countryside Agency

There is an officer concerned with rural transport in each of the CA regional offices:

North-West	0161-237 1061	North-East	0191-269 1600
Yorkshire & Humber	0113-246 9222	East Midlands	01949-876200
West Midlands	0121-233 9399	East of England	01223-354462
South-East (& London)	020-7340 2900	South-West	0117-973 9966

Further Reading

Although it is not aimed specifically at transport for young people, CTA's *Let's Get Going* does give a good overview of the current rural transport scene as a whole and sets out the difficulties which confront all rural dwellers, young and old. It then looks at Community Transport solutions to the problems and covers the main types of community transport in sufficient detail for the reader to be aware of what would be involved in setting up a scheme. There are also two chapters on the financial support which is currently available.

Going into greater depth is a series of much more detailed CTA handbooks on operating each type of community transport scheme and on the legal framework within which they may be set up.

Uniform with this guide, a whole series of brief *Good Practice Guides* is being prepared and certainly some of these will be relevant to meeting the needs of rural young people.

For further ideas the Countryside Agency's publication *Great Ways to Go* gives an account of seventeen new rural transport schemes – both community and commercial – some of which are relevant to the rural transport needs of young people or which could be adapted to be so.

General reading

Let's Get Going (Community Transport Association, second edition 2001, A4 100pp, £7.50)

Great Ways to Go (Countryside Agency, 2001, A4 68pp, foc)

Community Transport handbooks

Community Car Schemes (Community Transport Association, 2000, A4 48pp, £10)

Accessible Minibuses (Community Transport Association, 2000, A4 60pp, £10)

Minibuses and the Law (Community Transport Association, 2001, A4 88pp, £10)

Minibus Management (Community Transport Association, 2000, A4 112pp + CD, £25)

Community Buses (Community Transport Association, 1999, A4 64pp, £10)

Various sets of single copies of these CTA titles are available at a discounted price (10%); in addition CTA members receive a further 15% discount on either sets or single titles.

Good Practice Guides

Minibus Brokerage – Making it Work (CTA, 2002, A4 11pp, foc)

Training for Rural Community Transport Operators (CTA, 2002, A4 13pp, foc)

Further titles are in preparation

These guides are designed to be transmitted electronically on a 'print your own' basis – but paper copies can be provided if there is any problem with receiving the material electronically.

Please contact CTA if you would like to receive any of these publications.