

ANNEX 2 – Summary of DRT options

A420/A4074 Corridor Links

1. Thames Travel and Stagecoach have expressed a desire to work in partnership with the Council on two corridor feeder service solutions. The first on the A420 partnering with Stagecoach and the second on the A4074 partnering with Thames Travel. They have provided an outline of their proposals which are summarised below.
2. Both the A420 and A4074 corridors support high-frequency inter-urban bus services at frequencies of up to every 20 minutes. On the A420, Stagecoach operate between Swindon, Farringdon and Oxford; on the A4074, Thames Travel operate services between Oxford, Wallingford and Reading, with an hourly service via Henley-on-Thames.
3. These routes have shown exceptionally strong growth over the last 10 years. However, population density beyond the immediate corridors is sparse and low-frequency traditional scheduled bus services have not proved to be sustainable.
4. The pilots propose local “last mile” DRT feeders into up to two local hubs at rural service centres: Farringdon and Shrivenham on the A420, and Benson and Wallingford on the A4074, which would feed into the existing service on the corridors between Monday and Saturday. Each service would offer integrated ticketing and tariffs with the existing bus service.
5. It is considered that should these services be successful, they could be a model for similar interchange services across the county. Estimated costs for the two combined considerably exceed the £1.5 million and therefore it is recommended to take the option of the A4074 forward through an EoI.
6. It has also been suggested by the bus operators that a non-complaint EoI could be submitted as an appendix to an EoI for this option. This would be for a higher cost and would signal an ambition to develop a series of pocket Park & Rides along these corridors. This would be consistent with emerging thinking on the future development of Park & Ride as part of the emerging Local Transport & Connectivity Plan currently under development.

DRT serving South Oxfordshire Chiltern villages

7. A number of small villages in the very south of Oxfordshire, just north of Reading, lost public transport connectivity in 2016 following the withdrawal of bus subsidies. Some, such as Stoke Row and Checkendon, have had limited services to/from Henley restored by a community transport operator, but the remainder, such as Kidmore End, have not.
8. These villages lie within the Chilterns AONB. A new DRT scheme could provide links to main commercial bus services which pass through the area on the A4074 and B480 corridors at Cane End and Sonning Common

respectively. Villages in the area could include Checkendon, Stoke Row, Kidmore End, Gallowstree Common, Highmoor Cross and Rotherfield Peppard.

9. However, these areas are relatively sparsely populated, with 3,324 residents (Census 2011). Overall, it is not considered that this area has sufficient population to form a viable solution on its own, but this option could be incorporated into the A420/A4074 Corridor Links option outlined above. It is recommended that this is further considered in developing the EoI for the A420/A4074 Corridor Links.

DRT serving villages on the periphery of Oxford

Oxford Bus Company's existing 'PickMeUp' service provides a DRT solution in the urban area of Oxford City. Unfortunately, this is due to be shut down in June 2020 due to it becoming uncommercially viable.

10. Learning from this venture Oxford Bus Company have proposed an alternative solution which encompasses the wider suburban and rural surrounding Oxford and in partnership with the Oxford Strategic Transport Forum have developed a vision of 'Rural Mobility Hubs'
11. The proposal suggests using land adjacent to existing bus stops on key inter-urban corridors incorporating a small number of parking places (pocket park and ride) as well as additional cycling parking infrastructure and waiting facilities to encourage residents of nearby rural areas to use the hubs between transport modes.
12. For rural communities located closer to Oxford city, not on or near existing inter-urban bus corridors the existing network of Park & Ride sites are well placed to act as "mobility hubs" to serve these communities.
13. The proposal is to operate 5 zones within a 'doughnut' zone as detailed below.
 - Summertown zone – includes connections to the mobility hub at Oxford Parkway and serves the suburban area of Cutteslowe and village of Water Eaton, which do not currently have any local bus services. Includes the attractor of Summertown shops.
 - Seacourt zone – includes connections to the mobility hub at Seacourt Park & Ride and includes the villages of Godstow, Wytham, North Hinksey, Binsey and the suburban area of Botley, including the attractors of the new Westway development, Minns Industrial Estate and Botley Road area retail parks.
 - Redbridge zone – includes connections to the mobility hub at Redbridge Park & Ride and covers the villages of Sunningwell, Bayworth, Boars' Hill and South Hinksey as well as the suburban areas of Kennington and

Grandpont. Other attractors in this zone are the Sainsburys supermarket, Said Business School Egrove Park site and the HSBC Business School at Boars' Hill.

- Cowley zone – includes connections to the mobility hub at Cowley Centre (Templars' Square) and the villages of Horspath, Garsington, Nuneham Courtenay, the Baldons, Cuddesdon, Littleworth and Wheatley, plus the suburban areas of Blackbird Leys, Littlemore and Sandford. Includes the attractors of the Oxford Science Park, Oxford Business Park, Unipart and BMW sites, Kassam stadium leisure park, and Tesco, Lidl and Aldi supermarkets.
- Headington zone – includes connections to the mobility hub at Thornhill Park & Ride, and serves the villages of Elsfield, Woodperry, Stanton St John and Forest Hill, as well as the suburban areas of Marston and Barton. Includes the attractors of John Radcliffe Hospital and Headington shops.

14. As part of the initial consultation a number of responses from councillors indicated a desire to expand the PickMeUp service southwest of Oxford as this would serve a wide range of currently poorly served villages.

15. The anticipated costs significantly exceed the £1.5million outlined by the DfT, however, they have indicated that they would consider submissions exceeding this figure. There are concerns with the level of subsidies that have been identified over the three years; and how this might be managed once DfT funding is no longer available. Further work is being undertaken to see how this can be managed and a verbal report will be presented to the Cabinet.

DRT serving the Miltons & Haseleys

15. The villages of Great Milton, Little Milton, Great Haseley and Little Haseley were served by route 103 until its withdrawal in 2016. The villages remained unserved until February 2020, when service 275 was diverted once per day to serve Great Milton.

16. The population of the four villages combined is very low and it is unlikely that there would be sufficient usage to make a DRT solely based in this area commercially viable.

17. However, it may be possible to include this within the DRT serving villages to the south and east of Oxford, as detailed above.

Expansion and automation of voluntary service currently running in Freeland and Hanborough

18. The area to the north of Eynsham was served by Stagecoach route 11 prior to its withdrawal in May 2019. It had been operating on a reduced timetable since the withdrawal of bus subsidies in 2016. The service provided a

connection between North Leigh, Long Hanborough and Freeland to Eynsham and Oxford.

19. Freeland is located away from the A4095 corridor which is well served by buses during the daytime and was therefore more disadvantaged by the withdrawal of route 11 than other villages. A community bus service operates on Thursdays to Witney, supplemented by a Comet minibus which operates on Mondays and Fridays.
20. The community bus has 12 volunteers, using a minibus provided by a Scout group to provide the Thursday journeys. The volunteers are seeking funding to purchase a 16-seater electric bus to serve the local area of approximately 4,250 residents to expand their service and enable an increased number of trips to the local GP surgery, Hanborough railway station and include school-time journeys for college students.
21. The Garden Village development north of Eynsham may change bus service provision in the area for the better, but this is unknown at this time. It may be possible to dovetail provision of a DRT service to this area which is continued to be run by volunteers for the Lower Windrush, with a common interchange point at Eynsham.
22. In view of the ongoing commitment from the local Parish and volunteers it is recommended to work with the Parish Council to develop and submit an EoI to expand their service, provide a wheelchair accessible vehicle(s) and a phone/automated system to book a trip.

DRT serving the Lower Windrush Valley

23. The Lower Windrush incorporates a number of villages including Stanton Harcourt, Northmoor and Sutton which have not been served by bus since 2016. These communities were previously served by route 18 between Clanfield and Oxford, which was the County Council's most expensive subsidy contract.
24. The County Council's 'Comet' bookable community transport service served the Lower Windrush for a short period after the withdrawal of bus subsidies. However, it was withdrawn due to a lack of use. A car-sharing scheme is now in operation for the villages in the area.
25. With the possible exception of Stanton Harcourt, where development has recently taken place, the remaining area is relatively sparsely populated which presents challenges for a sustainable long-term operation.
26. Due to a previous 'Community Transport' scheme being unsuccessful and existing car sharing scheme being in operation it is not recommended to submit an EoI for this option in isolation. However, it could be considered in conjunction with the option for Freeland and Hanborough, as detailed above.

DRT serving villages surrounding Bicester

27. Bicester is experiencing high levels of growth, with improved rail links to Oxford and London, a new Park & Ride serving Bicester Village shopping outlet and Oxford, expansion of the Bicester Heritage site, the Pioneer Square shopping centre, proposals to centralise health provision and ambitious levels of housing and commercial development.
28. Whilst public transport connections within the town are generally good, bus links from surrounding villages were lost in 2016 making access to Bicester and beyond significantly more difficult.
29. The area around Bicester is one of the largest hinterlands of any town in Oxfordshire with poor bus service coverage. A number of villages to the north and north-west of the town, including Bucknell and Ardley, and to the south-west, such as Wendlebury, Weston-on-the-Green and Chesterton, do not have any useable bus services at all.
30. Consequently, there is an opportunity to significantly improve rural connectivity in this area through provision of a DRT scheme feeding into Bicester town centre and the two railway stations.
31. A potential partner for this scheme has not been identified, but Stagecoach are the most significant operator in the town and there are also a number of independent operators.
32. Subject to obtaining a suitable partner this is a viable option, however, it is a very similar type of proposal to that set out for Didcot below. Consequently, an assessment of both schemes has identified a number of areas where the Didcot area would be a more beneficial scheme.

DRT serving villages south of Didcot

33. Didcot is another of Oxfordshire's county towns where significant growth is taking place. Located on the main line railway between Oxford or Swindon and London, major new housing and commercial developments have taken place and are proposed for the future. A significant expansion of the Orchard Centre shopping area, new leisure facilities such as a cinema and close proximity to major employment centres at Harwell, Milton Park and Culham have made the town more attractive as a location to live and work.
34. A number of substantial communities exist to the south of Didcot and leading up to the North Wessex Downs AONB. Some of these are served by existing Thames Travel route 94, which is currently funded using limited Section 106 money from developments. This funding will expire in 2022, with limited options for continuation of the service.
35. The area has a population of 5,278 (2011 Census) which would be a significant area to be underserved by public transport. A DRT solution for this

discrete area may be appropriate to maintain connectivity to the significant education, employment, retail and leisure facilities in Didcot.

36. A potential partner has not been identified for this service, but Thames Travel are the main operator and there are a small number of other independent and community transport providers in the area.
37. Subject to obtaining a suitable partner this is a viable option. Having compared this scheme with the Bicester option, it is considered that this is a more suitable prospect for the following reasons:
 - The population is greater and less dispersed;
 - It will be a replacement for a non-commercial service which will otherwise be withdrawn;
 - There is a base of demand which will arise from this, whereas in the Bicester area there are no public transport services to most villages;
 - There are a number of employment locations (Milton Park, Harwell) which can be served and the link to Didcot Parkway; and
 - School and commuter movements can be catered for, as well as leisure and retail-based travel, ensuring a wider scope of passengers.

A4260 (S4) Feeder Service

38. The S4 Stagecoach service runs between Banbury and Oxford via Adderbury, Deddington, Steeple Aston, Tackley and Kidlington. This runs seven days per week at a frequency of up to hourly. However, a number of villages surrounding the A4260 have relatively poor public transport links to the existing services.
39. Feeder services to the S4 (then the X59) service have been attempted before with a Government grant, but these were withdrawn in 2005 on the expiry of the available funds.
40. The area south and west of Deddington, including the villages of Middle Barton and Duns Tew, is now served by the OurBus Bartons community bus service. In particular these offer connections to service S4 at times suitable for workers, students and shoppers already and would in all likelihood be superseded by a proposed scheme. It is considered that this service could be extended to other villages.
41. OurBus Bartons have not been approached about this option but it is considered that it should only go ahead if there is support from them to do so, due to the potential knock-on effects of a regular income reduction on their wider network.