

## Annex 2: Oxfordshire County Council Bus Usage Data Consultation Report

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### 1. Summary

- 1.1 The County Council commissioned Community First Oxfordshire (formerly ORCC) to assess the comments submitted during the consultation on the additional bus usage data that had recently come to light. The consultation ran from the 14 March 2016 to 18 April 2016.
- 1.2 A very small number of responses (7) were received, 5 through the consultation portal and 2 emailed to Community First Oxfordshire. All 7 referred to the need to protect subsidised buses as part of the transport network because of limited access to cars, rural isolation and the need to access health services.
- 1.3 Of the 7 responses, only 3 referred to the additional bus usage data. One 'agreed' with the data, whereas the other 2 referred to the poor quality of the data as unacceptable or misleading. Bus Users UK Oxford have asked the County Council to compile and provide a full set of bus usage data between October 2015 and March 2016, before 20 July.
- 1.4 The extremely low response rate suggests the public do not have strong views on the usefulness or significance of the additional bus usage data.

### 2. Introduction

- 2.1 In June 2015, the County Council carried out a public consultation on subsidised bus and dial a ride services. The consultation document put forward two options: (1) to withdraw all subsidies or (2) to withdraw £2.3m of subsidies. The consultation received a high number of responses (just under 3,000). Because of financial pressures, the Cabinet decided to withdraw all bus subsidies from 20 July 2016.
- 2.3 During the consultation a number of individuals asked for bus usage data to be made available. Although not used in the methodology to analyse the "value for money" of each subsidised bus service, the limited patronage data available at the time was shared with the public in Annex Xb of the consultation documentation.
- 2.4 Nevertheless, in March this year, the County Council uncovered additional bus usage data of which it was unaware during the consultation the year before. It was this data on which the County Council has sought comments from the public. The online consultation on the new data ran from 14 March 2016 to 18 April 2016. All relevant documents, including the full spreadsheet of bus usage data, were made available to the public through the consultation portal.
- 2.5 The County Council commissioned Community First Oxfordshire to provide a report based on the responses to the online consultation on this bus usage data. In addition to this report, Community First Oxfordshire has also produced an independent

assessment of whether this additional bus usage data (had it been available) would have influenced the methodology for the 2015 subsidised bus service and dial a ride public consultation and the recommendations in the report that followed. It concluded that it would not have done.

### 3. Consultation responses

- 3.1 The consultation received a surprisingly small number of responses, 7 in total. The table below indicates who the responses were from;

Response 1 (online)	Oxfordshire resident
Response 2 (online)	Oxfordshire resident
Response 3 (online)	Oxfordshire resident
Response 4 (online)	Oxfordshire resident
Response 5 (online)	Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Parish Council
Response 6 (email)	Oxfordshire Councillor
Response 7 (email)	Bus Users UK Oxford

- 3.2 All 7 responses refer to the need for the subsidised bus services to continue. 4 of the 7 responses do not mention the new bus usage data but emphasise the need for subsidised bus services to continue. One respondent states that bus routes feeding into rural areas are a more sustainable transport solution than car usage and that closing bus routes is a false economy. Other respondents asked whether Section 106 funds could be used to help sustain some bus routes.
- 3.3 Of the 7 responses, only 3 referred to the bus usage data. One accepted the validity of the data, though it was concerned for the local community and the loss of subsidised bus service in the area. The 2 other responses felt that the bus usage data was either unacceptable and poor in quality or confusing. Bus Users UK Oxford, felt that the bus usage data did not provide an accurate sense of the seasonal variation of bus usage and asked for more details to help communities source solutions.
- 3.4 In addition, the Group enquired about the Government's transitional funds, its allocation to transport services in Oxfordshire and the role of bus services in the County Council's Total Transport strategy. Bus Users Oxford UK list four main areas of concern - Henley area, Banbury, Witney area and Bicester - and make suggestions for improvements, including sourcing Section 106 funds, continuing to subsidise some bus routes and looking into creating an integrated bus system with common ticketing.

### 4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The very low response rate suggests that the public in general did not feel that the additional, limited bus usage data warranted a change in view to that submitted during the 2015 consultation. All 7 respondents are concerned about the future of their subsidised bus services and access to other services when bus subsidies are withdrawn. Some respondents asked the County Council for support in producing

better data and working with the various bus operators to seek positive solutions before 20 July. Bus Users UK Oxford described the bus usage data as insufficient and have requested bus usage data for the period during October 2015 and March 2016, to be compiled and published before the bus subsidies are withdrawn on 20 July. Other respondents have asked for support from the County Council to work with the bus operators and identify practical ways of mitigating the loss in subsidy so that as many services as possible continue.

**Community First Oxfordshire**  
**April 2016**