

Review of rural transport in South Oxfordshire

South Oxfordshire Partnership Transport Review Group

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Introduction

Why have we reviewed this topic?

1. The South Oxfordshire Partnership (SOP) – the local strategic partnership for the area - identified rural transport as a key issue in its community strategy¹: an independent review of SOP recommended that it focus on a couple of top priorities at a time (from its list of seven objectives). It selected rural transport as one of these since provision is split between so many organisations and could be better co-ordinated.
2. In addition, SOP recognised that the availability of transport is often more limited in rural areas than urban areas because of a number of factors including small pockets of need, dispersed communities and the centralisation of services in urban areas.

Members of the review group

3. SOP set up a time-limited review group to undertake the review. The group consisted of representatives from the following organisations:
 - Oxfordshire Rural Transport Partnership (ORTP)*
 - Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action (OCVA)*
 - Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC)*
 - Network of Parish Transport Representatives (PTRs)*
 - Oxfordshire County Council (OCC)*
 - South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC)*
 - Age Concern Oxfordshire
 - John Radcliffe Hospital

The review group agreed the scope of the review and for seven of its members to undertake the review to keep the size of the group manageable. The organisations marked with an “*” above formed the smaller review group.

4. Tony Williamson, Chair of South East Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust (until September 2006) and a SOP member chaired the review group. SODC provided officer support..

Definition of ‘rural’

5. For the purposes of this review, ‘rural’ is understood to mean settlements of under 10,000 inhabitants.

Review scope

6. The review group agreed the following scope for the piece of work:
 - to identify relevant research on transport needs in South Oxfordshire and draw together key needs/issues affecting people in the district
 - to identify current transport services operating in the district which help to address the key needs/issues
 - to identify any major gaps in transport provision/information on transport services
 - to identify how SOP can help to address any of the gaps identified

¹ South Oxfordshire Partnership (2004) Our place, our future; community strategy for South Oxfordshire

7. The review group recognised that rural transport and access is a large topic and in order for the piece of work to remain manageable and timely, the review concentrated on the local bus and community transport networks. It also recognised that a major concern of rural communities is about the limited coverage and frequency of public bus services. However, the review group agreed not to look at this specifically because they felt that there was very narrow scope for increasing provision or for SOP to influence this (bearing in mind the level of funding available for subsidies from the County Council and the problem of establishing sustainable bus services in less populated areas).
8. The aim of the review was to identify general issues or needs relating to rural transport in the district. Therefore, it did not look in detail at the transport needs of individual geographical communities or individuals.
9. The review group was aware that as part of the review, it may identify areas of future work that SOP would need to investigate further.

Methodology

10. The review group helped to provide detailed research and information about rural transport services and needs in South Oxfordshire. They also identified the key issues/gaps in the provision of transport in rural parts of the district. The Corporate Projects Officer (South Oxfordshire District Council) drew the information together to form this report.
11. The main stages of the review were:
 - identifying the current position regarding rural transport services in South Oxfordshire
 - gathering existing information from group members about information/research on current transport issues
 - identifying unmet transport needs in rural parts of the district and considering possible partnership based solutions
 - drawing together findings and writing a report
 - putting forward recommendations to SOP
12. Whilst the review was carried out, the Public and Patient Involvement Forum commissioned a survey to help explore access to healthcare. The survey results are expected in mid September which, unfortunately, has been too late to feed into this review. However, SOP may wish to receive a presentation of the survey results at a future meeting.

Key documents relevant to this review

13. During this review, the group has been mindful of the following documents in order to avoid duplication and maximise the usefulness of their findings:
 - Oxfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan 2006 - 2011¹
 - Oxfordshire Community Partnership's rural transport strategies¹

¹ Oxfordshire County Council (2006), Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 2006-2011

14. In particular, the review group has identified actions which contribute towards the achievement of the goals of the Oxfordshire Community Partnership's (the Oxfordshire local strategic partnership) rural transport strategies, wherever possible.

Current situation in South Oxfordshire

LEVELS OF PRIVATE CAR OWNERSHIP

15. Levels of car ownership in the district are higher than the regional average: 87% of households in South Oxfordshire have one or more vehicles, compared with 81% across the South East (according to Census 2001 data).

16. The review group felt that it would be particularly useful to know whether certain age groups over 16 years old were less likely to own cars. A breakdown of the Census 2001 data by age and car ownership is not available at a local or national level. However, the District Council's Citizens' Panel is representative of the local population and when the 1170 members were recruited in 2003, they were asked if their household owned a car. Table one contains the results which shows that panel members aged 65 or over are most likely not to have a car in their household, followed by people aged between 16 and 24.

Table 1: SODC citizens panel car ownership by age group

Age (yrs)	No. of respondents in age group	Car(s) in their household - % YES	Car(s) in their household - NO
16 – 24	120	88	12
25 – 34	187	98	2
35 – 44	218	96	4
45 – 54	281	96	4
55 – 59	84	96	4
60 – 64	69	94	6
65+	205	83	17

NETWORK OF RURAL BUS SERVICES

17. Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), in consultation with local bus operators, has developed the following hierarchy of local bus services (as outlined in the county's Bus Strategy²):

- **Premium Routes**, running without subsidy at "Turn up and go" frequencies with high quality infrastructure
- **Hourly services**, some running commercially and some with subsidy, with selected infrastructure enhancements to improve attractiveness and viability. It is an ambition that settlements of over 1,000 inhabitants will be served by an hourly (or more frequent) bus service
- **Local services**, provided in a variety of ways to serve the lightly populated areas off main routes.

¹ Oxfordshire Community Partnership, Oxfordshire Rural Transport Partnership and Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (2005), Rural Transport Strategy

² Oxfordshire County Council (2006) Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 – Bus Strategy

18. This hierarchy forms the network of public bus services in the county and these are run in two different ways:

COMMERCIAL SERVICES

19. These are provided by bus operators on a private, commercial basis and are regulated by the Area Traffic Commissioner. Companies decide where they want to run these services, tending to focus on urban or inter-urban routes where concentrations of passengers are higher.

SUBSIDISED SERVICES

20. These are financially supported by Oxfordshire County Council (and by other local transport authorities for some cross border services) because although they are seen as socially necessary services, bus operators are not willing to run them commercially. Whole services are subsidised as well as 'add-ons' to commercial services. Subsidised services tend to operate in less populated areas and are most common in rural areas. In addition,

21. The County Council reviews each service it subsidises every four years, on a rolling programme. To achieve this, the county is split into eight areas and the subsidised services in two areas are reviewed per year. The purpose of these reviews is to consider the need for and use of services and to tender them accordingly. Box one shows the review process.

22. With budget pressures resulting from limited funding and increasing tender prices, the County Council's Public Transport Team faces a challenge in managing expectations regarding coverage, particularly in rural areas where usage of public bus services tends to be low.

23. From a total of 86 parishes in South Oxfordshire:

- 45 parishes have at least a one bus per hour service, 6 days per week (22 of which are served 7 days per week)
- 29 parishes have a service five days per week (Mon-Fri) of a minimum of at least one journey each way
- 8 parishes have only a market day type service on one or two days per week
- 4 parishes are not served (Little Wittenham, Harpsden, Berrick Salome and Adwell)

Appendix one provides further details about bus coverage in the district.

Box 1: County Council subsidised bus service review process

OCC's Public Transport Team identifies the relevant bus services and parishes/towns which will be covered by the review. They then pass this information onto the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC)



ORCC contacts the relevant parish/town councils to offer help in carrying out a local transport needs survey. The aim of carrying out these surveys is to help inform the parish/town councils of any unmet transport needs which should feed into the OCC bus review



Parish/town councils complete surveys on a voluntary basis



OCC consults key stakeholders (e.g. parish, town and district councils) with regards to service usage of those bus services covered by the review. Results of local transport needs surveys fed back to OCC



OCC considers feedback and data (including the results of their own service usage surveys and accessibility planning results) and draws up service tenders



Tendering process takes place



Bids received from bus operators



OCC evaluates bids (based on value for money and service quality factors)



OCC awards 4 year contracts

ACCESSIBILITY PLANNING

24. The Social Exclusion Unit's report 'Making the Connections'¹ introduced the concept of accessibility planning. The Department for Transport then incorporated it in the second round of Local Transport Plans 2006-2011. The objective of Accessibility Planning is to ensure people have access to services and in particular work, education, healthcare and food shopping. It is intended that this is achieved by Government Departments and other agencies working together to overcome existing problems and deficiencies in the location and accessibility of the services. The solution is not necessarily transport but may include relocation of services, mobile services or other solutions.

25. As the Local Transport Authority OCC has developed a strategy² which will look at particular issues at the time of the bus services reviews. In South Oxfordshire reviews are scheduled for:

- Abingdon and Oxford (including Berinsfield area) - June 2006 and 2010
- Thame and Wheatley - June 2007 and 2011
- Didcot, Henley and Wallingford - June 2008

26. During the Berinsfield review access to hospitals was considered to be a problem; whilst there were adequate bus services these involved a change of vehicle in Oxford City. There were also concerns at the level of public knowledge of the services.

¹ Social Exclusion Unit (2003) Making the Connections

² Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 - Accessibility Strategy

COMMUNITY TRANSPORT SCHEMES

27. There are 23 community transport schemes operating in South Oxfordshire (making up 33% of the total number in Oxfordshire). The majority of these are voluntary car schemes although there is an increasing number of community based minibus schemes running in the district.
28. Community transport schemes are designed to fill gaps in the local transport network and play a particularly important role in improving access for people living in rural areas. Communities take the lead in setting them up and running them (usually using volunteers). In some cases, communities find it more viable to use a local transport operator to help them provide a service.
29. The sustainability of the community transport sector is heavily dependent on having access to a large pool of local volunteers to help drive vehicles and manage and administer the schemes. In Oxfordshire (and many other parts of the country), schemes are having greater difficulty in recruiting new volunteers and this is having a detrimental effect on their operation. In addition, community transport schemes also struggle to find funding to pay for insurance costs and Criminal Record Bureau checks. Some larger schemes also find it difficult to cover their administration costs. However, support is available from the following sources:

RURAL COMMUNITY TRANSPORT ADVISER (RCTA)

30. ORCC employs a Rural Community Transport Adviser to help communities and groups identify the need for a community transport scheme. If a need exists, the RCTA will help provide advice and support about setting up, running and managing a scheme. Another key role of the RCTA is to promote the needs and benefits of the community transport sector across the county, including South Oxfordshire. A key tool to help achieve this is the community transport guide which the RCTA produces on an annual basis. It contains information about schemes and other alternative transport services including accessible taxi operators and shopmobility schemes. OCC provides 50% of the funding for the RCTA post, with the remaining 50% being split equally between the four rural district councils.

THE OXFORDSHIRE RURAL TRANSPORT PARTNERSHIP (ORTP)

31. The ORTP was established in 1999 under a Countryside Agency initiative to help improve rural transport by bringing together relevant organisations to improve the co-ordination and strategic direction of effort, projects and funding. With funding from central government, OCC and the four rural district councils, the partnership is managed by a full time officer. They oversee a budget which is used to support new or innovative rural transport projects. In South Oxfordshire, the ORTP has been successful in:
- helping to set up and fund the 'Swyncombe Lifeline' taxibus service which provides a weekly shopping service from a number of villages into Henley-on-Thames
 - funding a new minibus for a long running community transport scheme in Sonning Common
 - scoping, establishing and funding the X15 bus service (Wallingford – Abingdon – Witney route). This was an innovative service, linking together market towns across three districts and providing transport for college students and other local residents. It pulled together funding from a range of organisations and businesses.

32. In 2005/6, SODC contributed £8,000 to the ORTP (to support officer costs and match fund projects). In the same year, £15,489 was spent on projects in the district, using match funding from the South East of England Development Agency and OCC.
33. Following the Haskins review¹, responsibility for the RTP scheme passed to SEEDA. Whilst the national scheme ended in 2006 SEEDA agreed continuation until the end of March 2007. From that time SEEDA are proposing to introduce a new programme, Rural Access to Services Programme (RASP). The precise nature of this programme is not known at this time but ORCC as lead partner of the ORTP has submitted its response to consultation broadly welcoming the RASP and submitting ideas for how it would work in Oxfordshire.

DIAL-A-RIDE SERVICES

34. Dial-a-ride services provide door-to-door transport for people who are unable to use, or find it difficult to use, public transport such as older people or people with disabilities. The vehicles used are fully accessible and tend to be minibuses, driven by fully trained drivers.
35. Dial-a-ride schemes operate in Cherwell, West Oxfordshire, Oxford City and the Vale of White Horse (appendix two contains usage figures). South Oxfordshire does not have its own scheme but the southern fringes are served by Readibus – a dial-a-ride service operating from Reading.
36. In 2005, OCC set up a pilot dial-a-ride service in South Oxfordshire as part of another transport initiative in the Lewknor area. SODAR (South Oxfordshire dial-a-ride) provided door-to-door accessible transport for people with mobility problems during off peak times. The service was trialled for 12 months, using funding from central government. At the end of the pilot, OCC investigated alternative funding sources and asked SODC if it was able to contribute 50 percent towards the running of the service. After consideration of the levels of usage against the potential cost, SODC was concerned that the service was not cost effective due to the low number of users (appendix three). As the pilot service was operating during off-peak hours only SODC also considered the user figures in the other areas which run a dial-a-ride. SODC considered it would be a better use of resources to assist new ones to be set up rather than set up a district-wide dial-a-ride scheme. SODC now allows community minibus schemes providing a regular service to accept bus passes for free local travel and has committed an ongoing grant to continue to fund the work of ORTP and ORCC in supporting community transport.
37. Some members of the review group raised concerns since that dial-a-ride services were operating in the whole county except South Oxfordshire. The end of the pilot SODAR service identified gaps in the rural transport network. Local communities, with support from the ORTP and ORCC are addressing some of these e.g. Swyncombe has set up its own self help community transport scheme called the Lifeline Taxibus (as mentioned in paragraph 29 of this report) and a similar service is going to be trialled in Goring.

¹ Haskins Review (2003)

CONCESSIONARY FARES

38. In Oxfordshire, concessionary fare schemes are managed by the five district councils as this is their statutory duty. Since April 2006, all local authorities have been issuing bus passes to residents over 60 or those with a disability, entitling them to free travel on local bus services. In implementing the free bus pass scheme, officers from all of the district councils worked together to ensure that as far as possible that a consistent approach was followed. There is concern that bus passes have limited benefit in rural areas where there are fewer bus services and some councils have looked to help address this by offering travel tokens as an alternative to the passes.
39. In South Oxfordshire, the district council issues the free bus passes and has made arrangements to go beyond the minimum statutory requirements by allowing residents to use them on bus services to a range of towns outside of the district and to use the pass after 9am (instead of the statutory 9.30am). The Council also offers bus passes to people who accompany disabled people in order to help them use public bus services. SODC offers £20 worth of travel tokens as an alternative to the free bus pass for people over 70 years old and disabled people of any age.
40. As mentioned earlier, the scheme also allows residents to use their free bus passes on certain community minibus services (those which run in a similar way to public bus services). Travel tokens can be used to help pay for taxi journeys and journeys made using voluntary car schemes.
41. For comparison the following is a summary of schemes in the other districts in Oxfordshire:
- City - travel within the City boundaries only. No travel tokens offered.
 - Cherwell - travel within the district and for journeys into adjoining districts providing the journey starts or finishes in Cherwell. Additionally journeys into Oxford City allow for a change of bus to the Headington hospitals. As an alternative to the pass anyone eligible can receive £31.00 of travel tokens subject to a £1.00 administration charge.
 - Vale - pass is similar to SODC with specified out of district journeys allowed. No travel tokens are offered.
 - West - allows travel within district and for journeys into adjoining districts and counties providing the journey starts or finishes in West Oxfordshire. Travel tokens (£31.00) or a Senior Citizens Railcard are offered as options to all eligible people.
42. The Department for Transport is currently reviewing how concessionary fare schemes may be delivered in the future although it has not yet given any indication as to whether district councils will remain responsible or whether it will pass to a national, regional or county level.

NON EMERGENCY HOSPITAL TRANSPORT

43. All hospitals provide transport for patients who need to attend non emergency appointments but cannot get to the hospital due to transport difficulties. The demand for this service is high so in order to direct resources where they are most needed, the Oxford hospitals apply the following eligibility criteria:

"You will only be able to use the service if you fall into one of the following categories:

- Patients who require continuous oxygen
- Patients who are unable to stand or walk more than a few steps and who cannot use public transport or for example, a family car
- Patients who require a stretcher
- Patients with a disability or a genuine reason as to why they are unable to travel by private or public transport"¹

44. Patients book this service via a call centre. The service is not tailored to individual appointment times and therefore patients may have to remain at the hospital longer than necessary, in order to get home. The hospital may refer non eligible patients to a local community transport scheme for help with transport to the hospital. The hospital will also provide information about suitable public transport services they could use.

45. This transport scheme does not cover access to GP surgeries or community hospitals.

¹ NHS Funded Non-Emergency Transport *For out-patient appointments only* - Your guide to using this transport and alternative ways to get to hospital. Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals NHS Trust

Key issues identified

46. Box two outlines the key issues the review group identified relating to rural transport provision in South Oxfordshire. The following sections explain each of these in further detail and make recommendations to address them. The recommended actions are set out in the report action plan which details the lead agency, timescales and resource implications.

Box 2: key issues identified during the review

- Lack of awareness of community and public transport services and concessionary fares scheme
- Gaps in community transport provision
- Problems with access to the Oxford hospitals
- Limited information or understanding about the transport needs and travel patterns of older people
- Young people have unmet transport needs

LACK OF AWARENESS OF TRANSPORT SERVICES AND CONCESSIONARY FARES

BACKGROUND

47. The review group identified that OCC's public transport team is aware that the provision and accessibility of information about bus services is crucial in encouraging greater use of public transport. Although it has have produced an information strategy to help address this problem, getting the information out into local communities in an effective way is a challenge. In 2003/04, OCC asked local residents how satisfied they were with the local provision of public transport information. The survey results showed that 49% of respondents were satisfied. This ranks Oxfordshire 12th out of 32 counties in England for having the highest satisfaction rates although it still remains that 51% of respondents were not satisfied. In addition, the local transport needs surveys supported by ORCC regularly highlight a lack of awareness by communities of local bus services.

48. The review group also identified that there is a limited awareness of local residents about community transport services. SODC's Citizens' Panel survey (August 2005) identified that none of the 669 respondents used community transport schemes and although the survey results do not identify why none of the respondents used community transport, it is likely that a lack of awareness about the services was a contributory factor. Both ORCC and SODC have anecdotal evidence of residents with transport needs who were not aware of local community transport schemes that could help them.

49. ORCC and the ORTP have limited resources to promote the community transport sector in the district. Parish and town councils, OCC, SODC and other local organisations all have an important role to play in helping to raise awareness of existing car schemes and minibuses amongst local communities.

50. The review group identified that the network of Parish Transport Representatives (PTRs) are able to disseminate transport information at a local level. There are 46 PTRs in South Oxfordshire (170 across Oxfordshire) so not all parishes and towns in the district have their own PTR.
51. The review identified an example of good practice in Woodstock regarding the dissemination of local transport information, where bus timetables and other relevant transport information will be displayed in an innovative way to help people plan their journeys within the district, county and further a field.
52. The details of South Oxfordshire District Council's concessionary fares scheme are outlined in paragraphs 36-40. Recent consultation with local residents and stakeholders on disability equality highlighted that there was a general lack of awareness amongst disabled people about the scheme, particularly that disabled people were eligible to receive travel tokens. In addition, recent monitoring of the take up of concessionary bus passes has identified that 50% of eligible people in the district have not applied for a bus pass. This indicates that some residents may not realise that they are eligible for a free bus pass.

KEY REVIEWS FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

53. **Existing community transport schemes need to be promoted more widely** and to help achieve this, the review group recommends that:
- Parish Transport Representatives (PTRs) play a lead role in raising awareness about local community transport schemes
 - The transport information project in Woodstock is evaluated once it has been implemented to identify whether it should be trialled in South Oxfordshire
 - Sources of local bus service information are promoted to local communities through Outlook (SODCs newsletter for residents) and village newsletters and, where appropriate, through new and innovative ways.
 - The informal community vehicle brokerage scheme (run by OCVA) is more widely promoted to encourage greater use of existing community minibuses
54. **General awareness of the concessionary fares scheme could be raised by better promotion of the scheme at a local level** and to help achieve this, the review group recommends that:
- The concessionary fares scheme is more widely promoted to the general public
55. **Residents with a disability in particular would benefit from knowing more about the concessionary fares scheme (particularly about the tokens element)** and to help achieve this, the review group recommends that:
- local organisations and groups who support older people and/or people with disabilities are targeted to provide them with information about the concessionary fares scheme in the district

GAPS IN COMMUNITY TRANSPORT PROVISION

BACKGROUND

56. As well as considering how parishes and towns should be supported to help meet their own transport needs through community led initiatives, the review group also identified that the community transport sector itself needs additional support. As outlined in paragraph 27, the sustainability of community transport schemes is heavily dependent of the availability of local volunteers.

57. The limited availability of funding also affects the sustainability of schemes. The review group did identify that some funding is available to support the community transport sector:

- the ORTP helps to fund new community transport initiatives (as outlined in paragraph 30)
- OCC also provides funding for a small number of larger community transport schemes to help cover some running costs
- some parish councils provide funding for schemes

58. However, through their close work with the community transport sector, ORCC and the ORTP have identified that there are still significant gaps in relation to capital and revenue funding for schemes. Voluntary car schemes and the majority of community minibus schemes are not allowed to generate profit and therefore are not always able to cover the costs associated with the following:

- Carrying out criminal record bureau checks for staff/volunteers
- Having public liability insurance cover
- Administration costs (phone bills, stationary costs, photocopying charges etc)
- Promoting their service to local residents
- Buying replacement minibuses

59. The review group considered that more could be done to encourage local communities to consider ways in which they can help to enhance the transport network by organising their own community led transport initiatives (including setting up schemes and carrying out transport needs surveys). It also highlighted that Councillors also have a role to play in encouraging communities to take the lead in improving local transport and putting forward the transport needs of their constituents during the relevant OCC area reviews.

KEY REVIEWS FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

60. **Community transport schemes need help in trying to recruit new volunteers** and to help achieve this, the review group recommends that:

- An article on volunteering is included in Outlook and circulated to village newsletter editors, to help encourage more residents to set up/help run community transport schemes
- Community transport groups are encouraged to register their volunteering opportunities with appropriate volunteer link-up facilities

61. **Community minibus schemes need more financial support to pay for replacement vehicles** and to help achieve this, the review group recommends that:

- SODC reviews its grants policy regarding funding for replacement community minibuses

62. Voluntary car schemes (and also some community minibus schemes) often struggle to cover small overhead costs and find it difficult to find suitable sources of financial support and to help address this, the review group recommends that:

- A budget is made available to help schemes cover some revenue costs (eligibility criteria to be agreed by those providing the budget and some match funding required locally). This could be dealt with through the ORTP.

63. More proactive involvement by communities and members is needed in helping to shape local transport services and to help achieve this, the review group recommends that:

- PTRs are provided with suitable training about their role, including how they can support the community transport sector and disseminate local transport information effectively.
- The ORCC supported transport surveys are promoted to local communities to help empower them to identify their own transport needs and consider how they could be solved by community led solutions
- Councillors play an active role in OCC area reviews of subsidised bus services
- a conference is held with local organisations (including parish and town councils, GP surgeries) to encourage communities and local councils to enhance transport provision by community transport or other schemes
- The transport gaps identified by OCVA since the withdrawal of the SODAR service are investigated further with the aim of setting up community led transport solutions

64. In addition, the group recommends that in order to help continue to strengthen the community transport sector in South Oxfordshire, SODC should continue to fund new community transport projects through the ORTP.

ACCESS TO HOSPITALS

BACKGROUND

65. The review group identified that for many residents in South Oxfordshire, the journey to hospitals in Oxford is difficult. Annex three contains SODCs citizens panel results and shows that the most difficult journey for people is to hospital.

66. The review group was aware that access to hospitals is a very large topic and therefore could not address it fully in this review. However, it did focus on the difficulties experienced by eligible patients in accessing the hospital's travel costs reimbursement scheme.

67. Patients in receipt of specific benefits are allowed to reclaim travel costs from the hospital attended on production of documentary evidence (appendix nine shows the eligibility criteria are included in Appendix 9). This is limited to the cost of public transport or community car scheme charges. Some evidence considered by the group (gathered by SODC during its disability equality focus group discussions with residents – appendix seven) highlighted that patients with disabilities found it difficult to reclaim travel expenses because they were unable reach the office and some found the paperwork confusing. These barriers prevented them from reclaiming their travel costs.

68. The review group also discovered that eligible patients using community car schemes to access non emergency hospital appointments are often unable to reclaim the total cost of their journeys. The ORTP identified this issue following discussions with numerous voluntary car scheme groups. This is because hospitals do not always accept that schemes should be reimbursed in full, only reimbursing the cost of the journey from the patients' home rather than the drivers (despite the fact that NHS guidance specifically states that such charges should be paid in full).

KEY REVIEWS FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

69. **Patients eligible to have their travel costs reimbursed by the Oxford hospitals are often deterred from reclaiming their costs because they find the process inaccessible** and to address this, the review group recommends that:

- Discussions with the Oxfords Radcliffe Hospitals Trust are held to address
 - the issue of improving the accessibility of their travel costs reimbursement scheme for eligible patients
 - how eligible patients who use a voluntary car scheme to travel to hospital need to be reimbursed for the full cost of their journey (covering mileage from the volunteer car driver's home to the patient's home)
- The Patient and Public Involvement Forum is asked to look into these issues and feed back to SOP
- The results of these discussions are fed back to the voluntary car schemes

UNDERSTANDING OLDER PEOPLE'S TRAVEL NEEDS

BACKGROUND

70. According to the 2001 census, 23,519 people aged over 60 live in South Oxfordshire (this accounts for just over 20% of the total population of the district). The review group recognised that older people tend to be less mobile because they are more likely to experience physical or mental impairments which limit their transport options. They often have to give up driving and adjust from having the flexibility and convenience of owning their own car to being dependent on others in order to travel around. Their transport needs become more acute if they live in rural areas where the public transport network is more limited and there are greater distances involved in travelling to services.

71. This general observation is supported by national research¹ but the review group identified that there was extremely limited information about the transport needs and patterns of older people in South Oxfordshire. Without this level of detail, the group was unable to recommend actions to help improve transport provision for older people in the district.

KEY REVIEWS FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

72. **Before service improvements can be identified, research needs to be carried out within South Oxfordshire to map the unmet travel needs and wants of older people.** To help achieve this, the review group recommends that:

- consultants are commissioned to carry out a pilot piece of research in one community and will report back to ORTP on the findings

¹ Department for Transport (2001) Older people: Their transport needs and requirements

YOUNG PEOPLE'S TRANSPORT NEEDS

BACKGROUND

73. There are almost 15,500 young people (aged between 10 and 19 years old) living in South Oxfordshire (according to the 2001 Census). The majority live in rural communities (63%).
74. During recent consultation on SODCs draft youth strategy, transport was identified as a key issue for young people, both by organisations working with young people and young people themselves. As part of the consultation, SODC held workshops with three youth councils in the district (appendix eight). The key issues arising were:
- confusing and inaccessible bus service information and concession information
 - infrequent local bus services, particularly to/from villages in the evening
 - expensive bus fares.
75. The review group could not identify any transport schemes in South Oxfordshire which cater specifically for young people in rural areas. The group did find out that Cherwell District Council has tried to set up a minibus service to take young people from surrounding villages into Banbury during school holidays but it was not successful. This was due to young people opting to take lifts from parents rather than use the bus service. There was also concern about the target age range of service users, as the transport needs of a 12 year old vary greatly from those of an 18 year old. This example highlights that bus services dedicated to young people may not be the most suitable or cost effective means of meeting their transport needs. It may be better to look at how existing services could be improved to better meet their needs.
76. Concessionary fares for travel by young people in South Oxfordshire (and the rest of the Country) are provided by operators but there is little or no consistency in the application or concession. Discounts and age ranges vary both between operators and on different routes within a single operator's network of services. In conjunction with the Youth Parliament, the Commission for Rural Communities has reported to Government on the need for a consistent national scheme to provide concessions for young people and as a minimum suggest this should be made available to those in full time education or vocational training. Whilst no response has been given to the proposal a number of authorities have introduced concessionary schemes for young people:
- Derbyshire b_line card offers half fare bus and rail travel alongside discounts from retailers. It is held to have increased journeys by young people by 14% since 2000.
 - Suffolk Xcape gives half fares on local buses
 - Devon Smartrider gives half fare travel after 18:00 and all day at weekends and also gives discounted fares for journeys between home and college.

KEY REVIEWS FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

77. **Young people often find bus fares too expensive** and to help address this, the review group recommends that:
- the availability of existing concessions for young people on local bus services are mapped and if necessary, the feasibility of establishing a standard level of travel concessions offered by operators across the district is investigated
 - travel concessions to young people are promoted in the district, once the mapping has been carried out

- concessionary fare schemes for young people run by local authorities are researched to help identify if it would be feasible to extend the district council's bus pass scheme to cover 16-18 year olds in full time education or vocational training
78. **A key deterrent preventing young people from using local bus services is the poor availability and accessibility of bus service information** and to help address this, the review group recommends that:
- The issue of improving bus service information to better meet the needs of young people is raised through the countywide 'Positive Activities for Young People' project
 - web based sources of public transport information are promoted to young people in South Oxfordshire to encourage them to use local bus or train services

RESOURCES TO IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

79. The action plan contains details of any additional resources which the review group has identified as being necessary to help with the implementation of their recommendations have been outlined in the attached action plan. The majority of actions recommended by the review group can be achieved within existing resources by feeding into the plans of partner organisations and by organisations working together to share expertise, knowledge and resources.

Conclusions

80. The review group undertook the review on behalf of SOP using evidence and consultation results relating to rural transport. The review identified five key issues which relating to rural transport provision. Importantly these issues were ones which the group felt SOP had the ability to influence and improve; the sixth issue was bus service provision which SOP has little opportunity to inform.

81. The review group used the partners' knowledge and research from other areas to inform it recommendations. The group prepared an action plan to achieve the recommendations specifying lead organisations, timescales and milestones.

Next steps

82. Since SOP set up the review group to be time-limited, it will no longer meet but it recognises that there needs to be a provision to monitor and drive forward the action plan. The group recommends that SOP seek formal agreement (this has been informally agreed through the review group) from the lead organisations on their contribution to the action plan and that SODC/ORCC prepares six monthly progress reports so that SOP can hold the delivery organisations to account. The reports would show progress towards the actions and highlight any areas of underperformance

Action plan

Ref no	Action	Outputs	Lead organisation	Completion date	Resource implications
Lack of awareness of services and concessionary fares					
1	Produce a letter and promotional material for parish/town councils without PTRs to encourage them to introduce one	Letter and promotional material are produced and sent to relevant parish/town councils	ORCC with OALC	June 07	
2	Produce an evaluation report on the transport information project in Woodstock for ORTP to use when considering whether it should be trialled in South Oxfordshire	Evaluation report is produced and presented to ORTP	ORTP	tbc	None
3	Promote sources of local bus service information and concessionary fares to local communities through Outlook (SODCs newsletter for residents) and village newsletters and, where appropriate, through new and innovative ways	Article is included in Outlook Article is sent to village newsletter editors	SODC with OCC and SOP members	June 07 and annually thereafter	None
4	Promote the informal community vehicle brokerage scheme (run by OCVA) to encourage greater use of existing community minibuses	Letter and promotional material are produced and sent to community groups in South	OCVA with SOP members	September 07	

Ref no	Action	Outputs	Lead organisation	Completion date	Resource implications
		Oxfordshire and information on website with links from SODC, OCC and ORCC			
Gaps in Community Transport provision					
5	Provide PTRs with suitable training about their role, including how they can disseminate local transport information effectively	One training event is delivered	ORCC with OCC and OALC	tba	Costs for venue, refreshments etc and training materials (ORTP to fund)
6	Promote the ORCC supported transport surveys directly to local communities to help empower them to identify their own transport needs and consider how they could be solved by community led solutions	For each area review in the district, an article is sent to relevant village newsletter editors (in addition to the existing targeted promotion to parish/town councils)	ORCC	During each area review in South Oxfordshire	
7	Provide information for Councillors on the OCC area reviews of subsidised bus services in the district and how they can get involved	For each area review in the district, an article is included in SODCs weekly information sheet. Direct contact is made with each councillor to discuss any	SODC	During each area review in South Oxfordshire	

Ref no	Action	Outputs	Lead organisation	Completion date	Resource implications
		support they need.			
8	Hold a conference with local organisations (including parish and town councils, GP surgeries) to encourage communities and local councils to enhance transport provision by community transport or other schemes	Conference held and report produced	ORTP with partners	March 08	Costs for venue, refreshments etc
9	Seek to address gaps highlighted by pilot dial-a-ride: a) Provide ORCC with information on those communities with transport gaps in the district b) Contact relevant communities to offer support and help in investigating community transport options to address the identified transport gaps	a) - Report identifying transport gaps is produced b) – Outcomes of contact are recorded and shared with SOP	a) - OCVA b) - ORCC	a) March 07 b) Dec 07	
10	Include an article on volunteering in Outlook and for village newsletter editors, to help encourage more residents to set up/help run community transport schemes	Article is included in Outlook and sent to village newsletter editors	SODC with ORCC and SOP members	December 07	
11	Encourage community transport groups to register their volunteering opportunities with appropriate volunteer link-up facilities	Issue included on the agenda of a community transport scheme meeting	OCVA with ORCC	December 07	

Ref no	Action	Outputs	Lead organisation	Completion date	Resource implications
12	Review South Oxfordshire District Council's grants policy regarding funding for replacement community minibuses	Grants policy is reviewed and amended as necessary	SODC	December 07	
13	Promote the concessionary fares scheme more widely to the general public	Article in Outlook and press releases about the 2008 national concessionary fares scheme	SODC with SOP members	End of March 08	
14	Target local organisations and groups who support older people and/or people with disabilities and provide them with information about the concessionary fares scheme	Information sheet is sent to relevant groups	SODC with Age Concern, Oxfordshire Council of Disabled People and other interested organisations covering South Oxfordshire	Will be picked up in the service's equality impact assessment (2007/08)	
Access to hospitals					
15	Seek to hold discussions with the Oxforde Radcliffe Hospitals Trust (ORHT) to address: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the issue of improving the accessibility of their travel costs reimbursement scheme for eligible patients how eligible patients who use a voluntary car scheme to travel to hospital need to be reimbursed for the full cost of their journey 	SOP letter to ORHT requesting meeting Subject to response to letter discussions are held and outcomes are reported to SOP	SODC with SOP partners	April 2007 June 07	None

Ref no	Action	Outputs	Lead organisation	Completion date	Resource implications
	(covering mileage from the volunteer car driver's home to the patient's home)				
16	Ask the Patient and Public Involvement Forum (PPIF) to look into the issues relating to the ORHT's travel costs reimbursement scheme and feed back to SOP	Letter is written and sent to the PPIF	SODC with SOP partners	April 07	
17	Feed the results of the discussions with the ORHT and PPIF back to the voluntary car schemes	1 article in ORCC/ORTP's community transport newsletter Results are included on the agenda of a community transport scheme meeting	ORTP with ORCC	Dec 07 (but dependent on result of above two actions)	
Understanding older people's travel needs					
18	Commission consultants to carry out a piece of research on the transport needs and wants of older people in the district	Research is carried out and the findings are reported back to ORTP	ORTP	March 08	Funding to pay for consultants (ORTP budget)
Young people's transport needs					
19	Map the availability of existing concessions for young people	Report of the mapping work is	ORTP	March 08	ORTP staff time

Ref no	Action	Outputs	Lead organisation	Completion date	Resource implications
	on local bus services If necessary, investigate the feasibility of establishing a standard level of travel concessions offered by operators across the district	produced and next steps agreed		Dependent on next steps	
20	Promote travel concessions to young people in the district once the mapping has been carried out	Information is produced and distributed to school councils in the district	SODC with SOP members	July 08	
21	Research concessionary fare schemes for young people which are run by local authorities to help identify if it would be feasible to extend the district council's bus pass scheme to cover 16-18 year olds in full time education or vocational training	Research is carried out	SODC	March 08	Depth of research dependent on resources available Possible funding from SODC (tbc late Feb 07)
22	Help to improve bus service information for young people by raising the issue through the countywide 'Positive Activities for Young People' project	Issue raised at a meeting of the project's steering group	SODC	May 07	
23	Promote web based sources of public transport information to young people in South Oxfordshire to encourage them to use local bus or train	Links to relevant public transport information websites are added to SODC's	SODC with SOP members	tba, in accordance with the youth strategy	

Ref no	Action	Outputs	Lead organisation	Completion date	Resource implications
	services.	website for young people when it is developed			

Appendix 1 – current bus services

There are some 60 bus routes wholly or partly within South Oxfordshire District 15 are provided either commercially by the operators or are wholly funded externally (generally by adjoining local authorities). 45 are funded by OCC

Town/Parish	Minimum hourly service Mon- Sat	At least one jny per day Mon-Fri	Only certain days per week	No service
Adwell				Not served
Aston Rowant		M1, 231, 275	X32 Sats	
Aston Tirrold		95	131 Fri	
Aston Upthorpe		95	131 Fri	
Baldons			49 Wed & Fri 49A Tues	
Beckley & Stowood		14, 108		
Benson	X39 Daily 132/X40 Daily	105, 125, X15	126 Fri	
Berinsfield	X39 Daily 105/106,138 X15	91 107	46 Fri 49 Wed & Fri 49A Tues	
Berrick Salome				Not served
Binfield Heath	329 Daily			
Bix & Assendon	139, X39 daily		124 Thur / Sat	
Brightwell Baldwin			126 Fri	
Brightwell cum Sotwell	130		131 Fri	
Britwell Salome		125		
Chalgrove	X39	.	102 F/Sat, 111 Tues 126 Fri	
Checkendon		142, 145		
Chinnor	231/232	320, 331	X32 Sat 15 Wed/Fri	
Cholsey	105	135		
Clifton Hampden	X15	91, 107	46 Mon/Fri	
Crowell		231	X32 Sats	
Crowmarsh	139/X39 daily 132, X40 daily	125, 105, X15	126 Fri, 133 Fri	
Cuddesdon & Dunton		104		
Culham	X15, 32/33		46 Mon/Fri	
Cuxham with Easington	X39		102 Fri/Sat 126 Fri	
Didcot	35A/B Daily 32/33, 94/95, 130	91-93, 107 6/9		
Dorchester	138 X39 (on by-pass-daily)	91, 105, X15		

Drayton St Leonards			46 Fri 49A Tues	
East Hagbourne	94/95		131 Fri	
Elsfield	14			
Ewelme	132/X40 Daily	125		
Eye & Dunsden	329 daily			
Forest Hill with Shotover	280 daily U1/U5 daily	108, 261		
Garsington	X39	102, 104		
Goring Heath		142		
Goring	132/135		99	
Great Haseley		TB103	111 Tues	
Great Milton	TB103, 104		111 Tues	
Harpsden				Not served
Henley on Thames	139, X39 Daily 328/329 Daily 151-154	145 239 357	124 Thur / Sat	
Highmoor		M1		
Holton	280 daily U1/U5 daily	108, 261, 275		
Horspath	103		102 Fri/Sat	
Ipsden	X40 daily		133 Fri	
Kidmore End		M1		
Lewknor	Tube – daily	M1, 275	124 Tues/Sat	
Little Milton		TB103	111 Tues	
Little Wittenham				Not served
Long Wittenham		107	46 Mon/Fri	
Mapledurham	X40 daily			
Moulsford		135		
Nettlebed	139,X39 daily	M1		
Newington			126 Fri	
North Moreton		95		
Nuffield	139, X39 daily			
Nuneham Courtenay	X39 Daily 105/106	107	49 Wed/Fri 49A Tues	
Pishill with Stonor			124 Thur/Sat	
Pyrton		M1, Taxibus	122 Tues 124 Tues/Sat	
Rotherfield Greys		145		
Rotherfield Peppard	137	M1, 145		
Sandford on Thames	105/106			
Shiplake	329 Daily			
Shirburn		M1, Taxibus	124 Tues/Sat	
Sonning Common	137/138	M1, 145		
South Moreton		95	131 Fri	
South Stoke		132		
Stadhampton	X39	TB 103	102 Fri/Sat 111 Tues	

			126 Fri	
Stanton St. John		108		
Stoke Row		145		
Stoke Talmage			122 Tues	
Swyncombe		M1		
Sydenham	232/232		X32 Sat	
Tetsworth		275	122 Tues 124 Tues / Sats	
Thame	280 daily 231/232	11,12, 14 260, 261	13 Tues 122 Tues, 124 Tues/Sats, X32 Sats	
Tiddington with Albury	280 daily			
Towersey		231		
Wallingford	X39 daily, X40 daily 130, 138, 139	X15, 105, 132, 135	126 Fri, 131 Fri, 133 Fri	
Warborough	X39 daily 138	105, X15	126 Fri	
Waterperry with Thomley		108, 261		
Waterstock	280 daily	275		
Watlington	X39	M1 Taxibus	102 Fri/Sat 122 Tues, 124 Tues/Sat	
West Hagbourne		94	131 Fri	
Wheatfield			122 Tues	
Wheatley	280 daily U1/U5 daily 103	TB103, 104, 108, 261, 275		
Whitchurch on Thames		145		
Woodcote	X40 daily	142, 145		
Woodeaton			93 Fri	

45 Parishes have at least a one bus per hour service, 6 days per week (22 of which are served daily). 29 Parishes have a service five days per week (Mon-Fri) of a minimum of at least one journey each way. 8 Parishes have only a market day type service on one or two days per week. 4 Parishes are not served

Please note that this table refers to parishes, rather than villages.

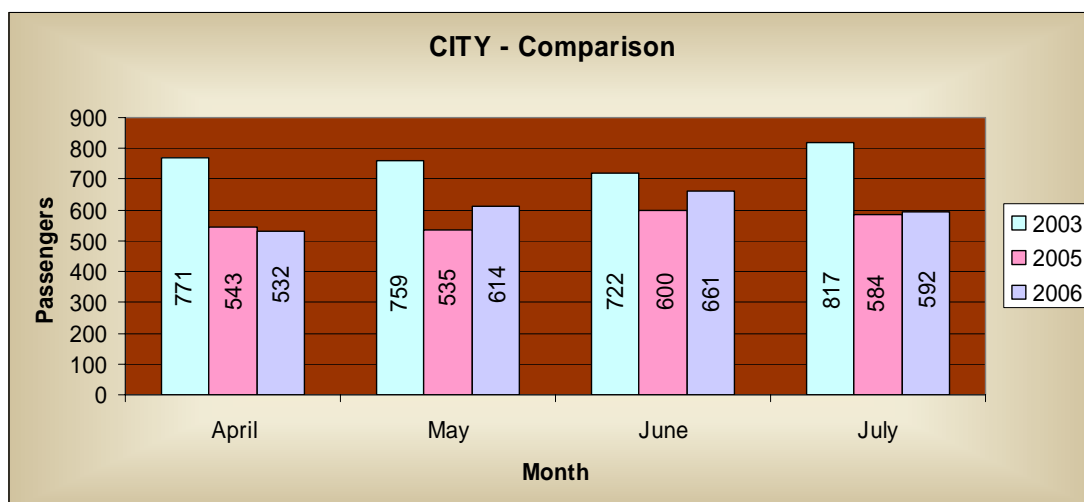
Appendix 2 - dial-a-ride usage

Octabus Dial-a-Ride Report July 2006

The purpose of this report is to record single passenger journey numbers in each district and draw comparisons with the first year of operation. Where figures are available comparison is also made with the previous operators passenger numbers.

City

In addition to last year only figures for 2003 are available

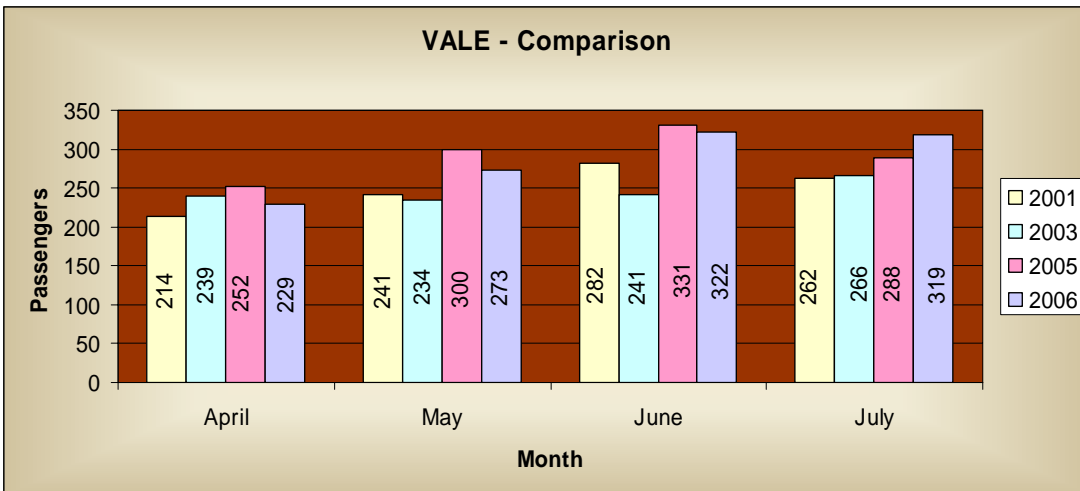


Year to date passengers have totalled 2,439 compared with 2,262 in 2005 and 3,069 in 2003. This is an increase of 7.8% on 2005 and a reduction of 20.5% on 2003.

The reduction on 2003 may be as a result of the shorter time the service is available (09:00 to 17:00 compared with 08:00 to 18:30 – a reduction of 23.8% in available time) and the ever increasing levels of traffic and congestion in the area of operation.

Vale

In addition to last year figures for 2001 and 2003 are available



Year to date passengers total 1,143 compared with

999 in 2001 – an increase of 14.4%

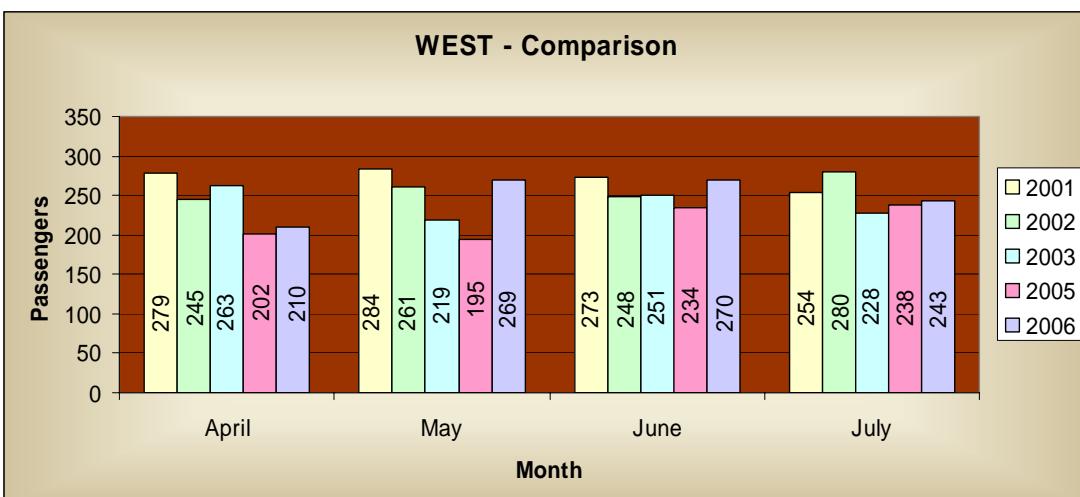
980 in 2003 – an increase of 16.6%

1,171 in 2005 – a reduction of 2.4%

The comparison with 2005 is disappointing with reduced passengers in the first three months being responsible. The current month shows an increase of 10.8% on last year and the position will require close monitoring in the coming months to ensure this improvement is maintained.

West

Figures for 2001, 2002 and 2003 are available alongside 2005



Year to date passengers total 992 compared with

1,090 in 2001 – a reduction of 9.0%

1,034 in 2002 – a reduction of 4.1%

961 in 2003 – an increase of 3.2%

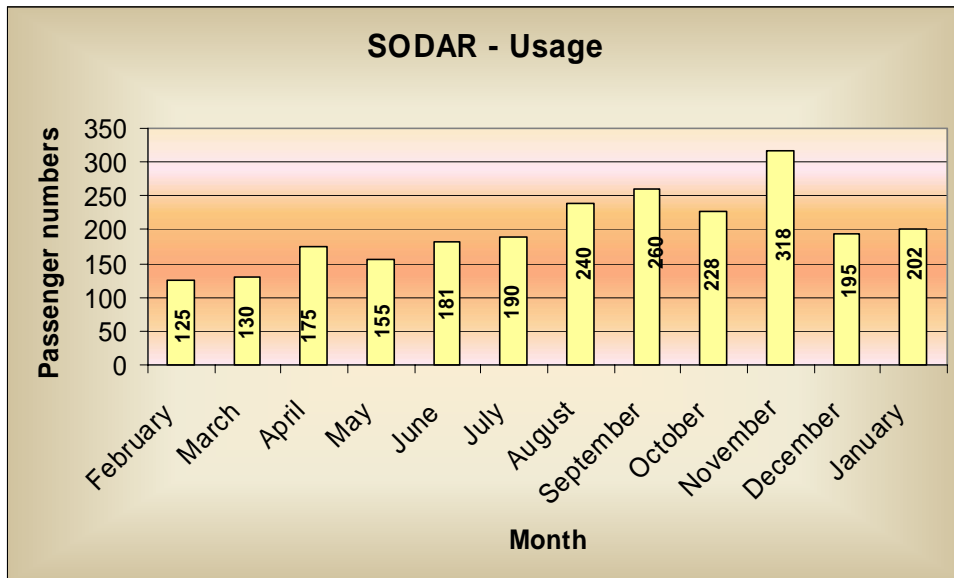
869 in 2005 – an increase of 14.2%

The passenger numbers from 2001 to 2003 suggest usage was declining and it is unfortunate that no figures are available for 2004 to see if this continued. If the decline did continue then 2005 may have been the turning point with the launch of Octabus. Alternatively the decline may have been arrested in 2004 which could cast a shadow on the 2005 performance. The improvement each month in 2006 to date is an encouraging feature.

Information about usage of the Cherwell Dial-a-Ride service:

In 2005/06 the DaR in Cherwell operated by Banburyshire Community Transport Association carried 51,858 passengers.

Appendix 3 - South Oxfordshire pilot dial-a-ride usage



Appendix 4 - SODC citizens panel survey

Results overview

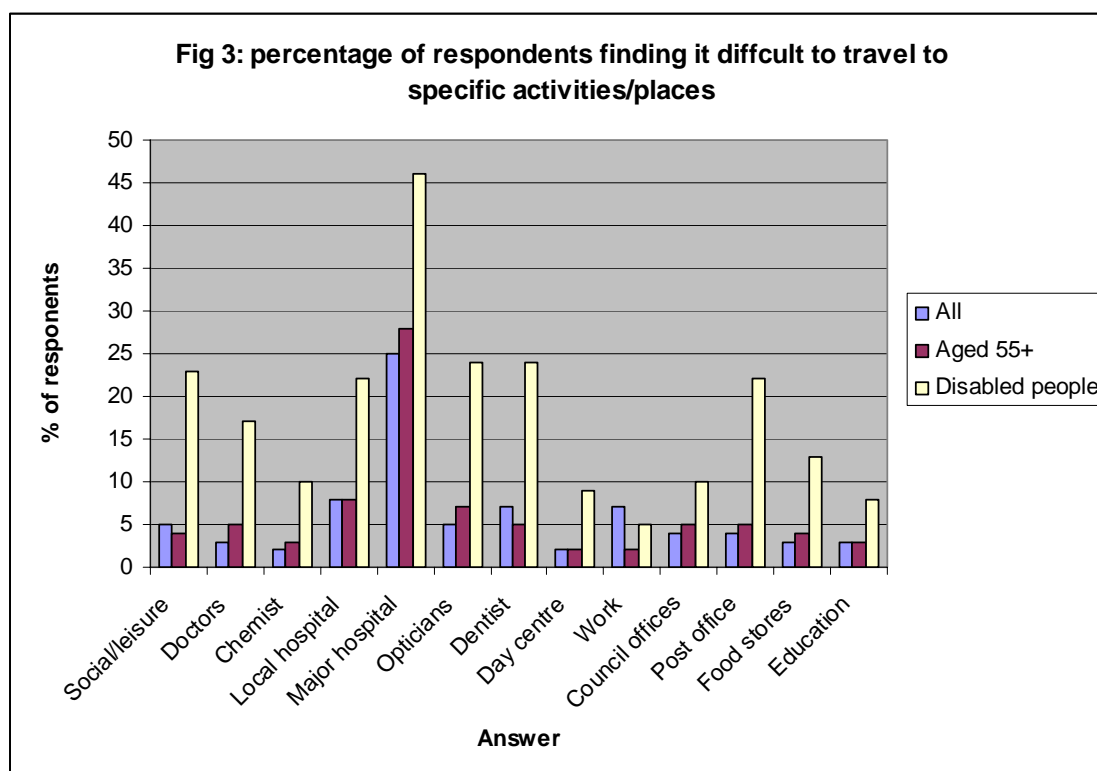
669 people responded to the survey (289 males and 377 females) in August 2005. The results are weighted to match the demographic profile of the district.

Modes of travel for residents in the district

Panel members were provided with a list of places that they may travel to and a list of forms of travel and then asked to state the way that they travel to these places. The results are shown below.

Figure 22 (next page) shows that panel members drive to most places across the district with the exception of the post office, where they generally walk. Very few panel members use public transport or community transport.

Respondents were asked how easy they find it to travel to the places listed in box one. Generally respondents find it easy to travel. Figure three below shows the percentage of respondents stating that they found it difficult or very difficult to travel. The main difficulty people face is travel to major hospitals. Noticeably disabled people¹ have the main problems getting around the area.



¹ The sample base and therefore the reliability of the data for disabled people is relatively small so the answers should be seen as indicative rather than representative.

Figure 22

	Drive myself	Driven by family or friend	Public transport	Community transport	Walk	Taxi	Other	Don't go there	Not provided
	%								
Social/ leisure activities	74	6	1	0	8	2	2	3	4
Doctors/ health centre	56	5	1	*	33	1	3	*	1
Chemist/ dispensary	52	3	1	0	38	*	2	1	2
Local community hospital	62	6	3	*	3	*	1	16	7
Major hospitals	75	10	6	*	0	1	1	5	3
Opticians	65	3	5	0	17	1	2	5	2
Dentists	67	2	2	0	19	1	2	3	3
Day centres	17	*	*	*	4	*	1	59	19
Place of work	55	*	5	0	9	*	4	16	10
Council offices/ one stop shops	47	1	1	*	13	*	1	27	9
Post office	40	2	1	*	51	*	3	2	2
Food stores	74	4	1	0	16	*	1	2	1
Place of education/ training	33	1	3	0	6	*	1	44	13
UNWEIGH SAMPLE BASE	669								

Appendix 5 - satisfaction with provision of transport information

Area	% of all respondents satisfied with local provision of public transport information (BVPI 2003-2004)
Worcestershire County Council	24%
Surrey County Council	30%
Northamptonshire County Council	33%
Bedfordshire County Council	34%
West Sussex County Council	35%
Cornwall County Council	36%
Staffordshire County Council	37%
Hertfordshire County Council	39%
Hampshire County Council	43%
Essex County Council	44%
Gloucestershire County Council	44%
Norfolk County Council	44%
Lancashire County Council	45%
Lincolnshire County Council	45%
Northumberland County Council	45%
Warwickshire County Council	46%
Somerset County Council	47%
Leicestershire County Council	48%
Cheshire County Council	49%
Oxfordshire County Council	49%
Shropshire County Council	49%
Cumbria County Council	52%
East Sussex County Council	52%
North Yorkshire County Council	52%
Nottinghamshire County Council	52%
Buckinghamshire County Council	55%
Devon County Council	57%
Dorset County Council	57%
Derbyshire County Council	59%
Wiltshire County Council	59%
Cambridgeshire County Council	67%
Kent County Council	67%
Durham County Council	-
Suffolk County Council	-

Appendix 6 - community transport schemes meeting minutes

Extracts of Summary Report of Community Transport in Oxfordshire Meeting – 25 April 2006

Discussion on Funding

It was noted that a great deal of funding was only for projects and not for ongoing costs. There are a huge variety of schemes – some very small and rural and some much larger. Small schemes may raise funds through pub contributions or through – for example - annual midsummer balls, which gets that whole village involved.

Some smaller schemes find that their only large expense is public liability insurance or administration costs, such as telephone bills (if the client, for example, pays the volunteer driver directly). It was noted that district council funding was becoming increasingly bureaucratic and the schemes were being asked to keep records that they did not normally keep. .

Minibus schemes were finding funding from a range of sources (such as day centres for whom they were driving) and fares. Again, a range of fundraising events have been used to raise funds, including fun runs, balls and quiz nights. Self-drive hire could also help to raise funds, although schemes covered by local authority insurance could have difficulties in doing this. Some schemes also obtained funds through legacies and annual covenants.

One minibus scheme noted that they had made savings by registering for VAT.

Finally Philip Newbould recommended that schemes contact him with funding needs as the Rural Transport Partnership may be able to help with both capital and ongoing costs. Gwyn Huish also mentioned that groups could use Funder Finder at Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action which is a computer programme which can be used to find funding possibilities in a scientific, rather than random, way.

Managing Volunteers and Resources

An interesting suggestion from a smaller rural scheme was that, instead of having just one volunteer coordinator, they had a mobile phone (pay as you go), which was the number publicised for the scheme. The phone is then passed from one volunteer to another, each month, and the co-ordinating burden is therefore spread amongst all those involved with the scheme. Instead of paying a per-mile rate, this scheme also simply splits the donations between the drivers every 6 months – another administration-saver.

There was discussion on the insurance companies used by schemes, and whether car schemes insured drivers so that their excesses would be recoverable if they were to have an accident whilst driving for the scheme.

Appendix 7 - SODC disability equality focus group

The focus groups were held on 3 and 10 of July 2006 and consisted of members of the Citizens' Panel with direct experience of disability. They were asked to give feedback on the accessibility of Council services for disabled people.

The following transport issues were raised by the groups:

Concessionary fares

- The Council needs to give out a clearer message regarding eligibility and disability. Some disabled people don't know that they can have the travel tokens if they're under 70.

Access to the Oxford Hospitals

- Reclaiming travel expenses or parking tickets at the Oxford hospitals is a real hassle for disabled people as the office is hard to reach and the process is too drawn out so in the end, people don't bother getting the money they're owed

Appendix 8 - SODC youth strategy consultation

Three workshops were organised to give young people the opportunity to tell the Council about their issues and what they thought about its draft youth strategy. They were held Spring 2006 and the feedback relating to transport is detailed below:

Workshop with members of the Southern Area Youth Forum (7 March 2006)

Better transport links was a priority for the group- it was felt that later bus links to other places was a particular concern with Cholsey to Wallingford being the most popular route. Later bus links to Henley from Sonning Common was also discussed as an area for improvement. Bus links to the smaller villages around the towns was also discussed for young people to get in and out of the town.

The price of transport also came up as an issue, it was felt unfair that older people get concessions but young people have to pay full price. The way buses are priced was said to be disproportionate in relation to the distance travelled- Didcot was said to be expensive to get to.

Workshop with members of the Didcot Girls' School Council (20 March 2006)

Need for clearer and more accessible bus service information:

- could bus timetable information be disseminated in schools (flyers?)
- bus service information needs to be available at bus stop outside the school
- bus timetable information shouldn't be in 24hr clock for young people as it makes it more difficult to understand
- bus service information should include fares

More frequent transport to the train station and leisure centre

Workshop with members of the Lord William's School Council (21 March 2006)

Make it easier for young people to get around:

- better transport links are needed from Chinnor – Thame
- one student tries to walk to places but finds the roads too busy and dangerous
- local Arriva bus services are very unreliable
- bus drivers can be extremely rude
- more transport is needed to Oxford and Aylesbury
- more buses need to serve the smaller villages

Buses are expensive to use:

- need cheaper bus fares
- a half single from Haddenham to Thame has gone up 30p in the last two years

Appendix 9 - extract Hospital Travel Costs Scheme Guidance

Patients entitled to reimbursement of hospital travel costs

Patients in receipt of Income Support, Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance, Pension Credit, Guarantee Credit, Working Tax Credit and/or Child Tax Credit

Under the Hospital Travel Costs Scheme, the following patients (and, where considered medically necessary, their escort) are automatically entitled to full reimbursement of travel costs to hospital.

- **Income Support**

Patients who get Income Support should be able to present either an order book or form FF260 or FF260A covering the day they attend the hospital. Or they should ask their local Jobcentre Plus office for a letter confirming receipt of Income Support for the purpose of refunds for travelling expenses and NHS charges;

- **Income Based Jobseekers Allowance**

Patients who get income based Jobseeker's Allowance are not likely to have evidence and they should ask their local Jobcentre Plus office confirming receipt of this benefit for the purpose of refunds for travelling expenses and NHS charges;

- **Tax Credits**

Patients who get Working Tax Credit (WTC) or Child Tax Credit (CTC). Patients are entitled to a refund if they meet the following conditions:

- their income is £14,200 or less (the income limit will increase from 6 April 2005 to £15,050) – this is the amount shown on the Tax Credit award; and
- they get WTC and CTC, or
- they get WTC with a disability element – shown on the award, or
- they get CTC and are not eligible for WTC.

They will be sent a NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate showing they are entitled to help with health costs. Information about the new Tax Credit arrangements is in leaflet HC11, order from 08701 555 455. This leaflet should be made available to patients.

- **Pension Credits**

From 6 October 2003, Pension Credit replaced Minimum Income Guarantee (Income Support for people aged 60 or over). Pension Credit consists of two elements - Guarantee Credit and Savings Credit. Guarantee Credit (paid on its own or with Savings Credit) entitles the recipient and their partner to a full reimbursement of Hospital Travel Costs.

If payment of the Pension Credit is by order book, the exemption certificate is in the order book. Those who receive their Pension Credit directly into their bank will have to produce a separate award notice. (Please see examples below). Please note that the award notice includes personal information and if the patient would prefer not to show this, they could fold up the letter just to show item 5.

Those in receipt of Savings Credit on its own are not entitled under the Hospital Travel Cost Scheme. Although they may be entitled to full or partial help under the

NHS Low Income Scheme and as such should be advised to complete a HC1 form, available by calling 08701 555 455.

- **Dependants**

Patients who are dependants in a family that gets Income Support, Income Based Jobseekers Allowance, Working Tax Credit or Child Tax Credit, should be able to present the evidence of entitlement outlined above.