

Total Transport event - report

24th October 2012 – Local Government House, London

Background

On 24th October 2012, **pteg**, Local Government Association, ATCO and the Community Transport Association held the 'Total Transport' event in London, attended by around 50 delegates and speakers.

The event follows on from the publication of the **pteg** report, ['Total Transport: Working across sectors to achieve better outcomes'](#).

What is Total Transport?

The term 'Total Transport' describes the need to work across public policy divides to deliver better outcomes for communities and taxpayers through the sharing of resources and expertise.

One of the report's recommendations was to hold an event, focusing on the potential to pool vehicle fleets and budgets as a practical, tangible step towards a more joined-up, cross-sector approach to transport provision.

The partners worked together to deliver this event, intended as a practical, working session with plenty of opportunities to learn from, and network with, like-minded colleagues.

Format

The event was split into two main parts – the morning 'Explain and Exchange' session, and a choice of two afternoon surgeries.

The Explain and Exchange sessions used a 'World Café' style format, where delegates visited a series of four tables. Each table had a host, who explained their work on vehicle and budget pooling and gave people around the table the opportunity to share their experiences, ask questions and get advice. The table hosts were:

- Nick Roberts (Essex County Council) who has been involved in efforts to combine non-emergency ambulance and adult social care fleets.
- Danny Nicholls and Nigel Rowe (East Riding Council). The Council is involved in sharing SEN transport services to schools and delivering a joint call centre for community transport and the Yorkshire Ambulance Service.
- Ian White (Wiltshire Council) who manages the council's Integrated Passenger Transport Unit which brings together procurement and

management of transport for supported bus, mainstream and SEN education transport as well as client transport for social care teams.

- Doug Bennett (Norfolk County Council) is Adult Integrated Transport Manager at Transport Plus – an integrated transport partnership between the Council and the East of England Ambulance Service, the service has a combined section of Transport Planners who organise approximately one million health, social and wellbeing trips per year using a mixture of fleet, voluntary car drivers, private operators and CT schemes.

The afternoon surgeries enabled delegates to get advice on one of two topics:

- Getting started in vehicle and budget pooling – led by Steve Caunt of Peopletoo. Peopletoo work with the public sector to transform transport and deliver efficiencies, including through the creation of regional, cross-sector transport hubs.
- Developing systems to support vehicle and budget pooling – led by Lyn Costelloe of Little Red Bus. Little Red Bus draws on a network of providers in North Yorkshire to integrate bus services and reduce duplication backed by IT systems.

Key learning points

During the morning ‘Explain and Exchange’ session, delegates were asked to note down any key learning points they picked up as they moved between the tables. Post-it notes were provided for this purpose and over 150 learning points were recorded in this way. Analysis of these produced a number of common themes, many of which were also picked up in the afternoon surgery sessions.

You can think big – but start small

There is nothing wrong with having ambitious plans for Total Transport – however, successful projects often take a ‘softly, softly’ approach. They may have a big, long-term strategic vision, but they do not expect that this will be easy, or quick, to achieve. Instead, they aim for small pilots and easy wins initially to demonstrate savings and build trust and buy-in from partners or potential partners.

Think about what can be done, don’t fixate on what can’t

This relates to starting small and keeping things manageable. It is easy to become overwhelmed with the scale of the task and begin focusing on all the obstacles in your way. Instead, look at things that *can* be done – however small.

On the day, many delegates expressed their difficulties and frustrations in trying to get health sector stakeholders on board. The lack of health buy-in can become an excuse for inaction. Instead, focus on what can be done without them – take along those who are willing and start to build an evidence base that can be used to convince others to come on board later.

Start with the benefits for the user

Often making savings and efficiencies is among the key motivations for exploring Total Transport approaches. However, in focusing on this, the user experience can be forgotten. For example, would merging two services to a daycentre result in unacceptably long or circuitous journeys for the user? Users can ultimately make or break a project.

Get to know your stakeholders

By far the strongest message to come out of the Explain and Exchange session was the importance of putting in the preparatory work with stakeholders to gain their trust and buy-in. This takes at least six months, if not more. It means:

- Understanding who your stakeholders are – who are the ones who can really make a difference?
- Involving them from the outset in developing a shared vision.
- Being clear about aims, objectives and expectations.
- Ensuring each stakeholder is talking about the same thing – ‘integration’ for example will mean different things to different people.
- Spending time with them to understand their priorities and show how your plan can help them meet their goals. For the health sector, for example, transport may not be a major priority, but tackling ‘did not attends’ probably is.
- Being sensitive to the fact that each stakeholder will probably think they know best in terms of how to deliver transport to their clients. Value and find ways to retain their knowledge of client groups and the local area.
- Gaining a thorough understanding of collaborating transport organisation's terms and conditions, vehicle specifications and standards and looking for common ground.
- Being willing to share information on costs and demand.
- Recognising that compromises are sometimes necessary.

Ultimately, you will need to build trust and buy-in at every level – from CEO to user. Champions at the top in particular will help drive the project forward but it may take time and some pilots/early wins to build their trust.

Integration, coordination or something else?

There are many different models for ‘doing’ Total Transport. Some look to create a single managed provider, others encourage a plural market that is centrally coordinated. Others will find an alternative model works for them. All have their pros and cons. A fully integrated model, for example, can enable economies of scale, better buying power and a unified voice for transport. However, it could also alienate

smaller operators and risk losing the vital local knowledge that a more plural approach brings.

Ultimately, the model selected should work for the particular situation in your area and have the buy-in of local stakeholders.

Maintain dialogue with stakeholders as the project progresses

Moving towards delivery, successful projects maintain a close working relationship with their stakeholders.

A number of projects have found, for example, that from an operational perspective it helps if collaborating transport organisations work together in a joint team, ideally in the same offices. Norfolk, for example, found that a joint planning team promotes dialogue on a day-to-day basis and leads to better understanding of partner's services.

In taking such an approach, however, it is important to recognise differing staff cultures and possible tensions and have a strategy for dealing with this.

Take account of the wider policy landscape

Given the long timescales involved, a lot can change through the course of a Total Transport project. It is worth keeping an eye on the wider policy landscape and considering how it may impact on your project. Health reforms leading to restructuring in the NHS, for example, have hindered some projects as key contacts are lost, along with any relationship or trust that may have built up. Elsewhere, moves towards greater localism and personalisation are already making the provision of integrated transport services more complex.

Ways forward

During and after the surgery sessions, delegates were asked to suggest any tools, assistance, networking or resources that they would find useful in helping to develop their work towards Total Transport approaches. Ideas proposed included:

- Keep the networking going/set up on-going contact network (done)
- Bring together the experience of the day in the form of a briefing note summary (done)
- Research around urban examples/applications of Total Transport?
- Documenting good practice, identifying different models
- A more in-depth session on case studies
- Get together a smaller group of experienced people to work together on ways forward – possibly a working group approach?

- Anything we can do with Norman Baker MP who is taking a keen interest in cross-departmental collaboration, especially with health? It would be good to get him to register the work the sector is doing in this area.
- Update of TAS partnership model for 6 hour workshop session built around role play in respect of vehicle sharing including broadening of scope and possibly tailoring towards interaction with the health sector (Greater Manchester have expressed an interest in this, including as a host venue).
- Audit of what different local authorities do on Total Transport e.g. which ones join up schools/adult social care or health?

The immediate next step is for the event partners to hold a teleconference to discuss which of the above suggestions we could practically take forward and whether there are any other actions we can take. The partners will then report back to the Total Transport contact list.

In the meantime, further ideas, particularly from practitioners, are welcomed and should be sent to rebecca.fuller@pteg.net.