

CoMoUK (BUS0031)

CoMoUK is a registered charity, dedicated to evidencing and communicating the social, economic and environmental benefits of shared transport. We want transport to be cleaner, safer, healthier, greener, cheaper, more convenient, and more inclusive. We work closely with local, regional, transport and national authorities in the UK to develop shared transport schemes and mobility hubs, which we accredit, and we conduct unique research into the sector. We welcome the opportunity to feed into the inquiry on the National Bus Strategy, focussing on these areas:

- *Innovation in the sector, including examples of new methods that have been trialled successfully*
- *Decarbonisation of the sector and modal shift from other forms of transport*

We were happy to find Digitally Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT) referenced favorably throughout the National Bus Strategy and are keen to re-emphasise the benefits of such schemes and show them as a natural complement to existing and future bus services in the hope that they will continue to receive attention and support.

Digitally Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT) is not to be confused with the older 'Dial-a-Bus' mode of transportation. Generally, on-demand trips can be booked via a smartphone app, over the phone or, in some cases, through a website, to arrive within 30 minutes of booking and within 400m of your starting location. Smart technology is used to connect passengers with the closest or most appropriate service and automatically reroute buses, updating their timetables. This is possible without compromising passengers' desired arrival times and can positively contribute to several items on the policy agenda – carbon reduction, reducing social exclusion etc.

DDRT has obvious social, economic and environmental benefits, some of which are detailed below:

- Social: increased flexibility and convenience, helps to connect people and place, reduces social isolation.

- *Economic*: opportunity to replace subsidized bus services – read about the estimated £1 million savings in subsidized service spending as a result of DRT in Milton Keynes [here](#).
- *Environmental*: Reduced reliance on private cars, fewer empty passenger bus miles, possibility of using EV or zero emission fleets, contributes to 20-minute neighbourhoods.

In summary, DDRT offers a service that is not constrained by pre existing public transport – everyone can be on a bus route potentially with DDRT – that does not require a driving licence, ownership of any transport asset such as a car or bike and is showing evidence of mode shift away from the private car and to including new users who have not used bus before.

The Fflecsi service in Wales, for example, has found 73% of users driving less. This fits directly with our evidence in car club, with consistent mileage reductions (the last time we measured this in 2018 we found that England and Welsh car club members outside London had a net annual per person mileage reduction of 793 miles; in London this was 620 miles).

The Fflecsi service is also attracting 9% of users who had not used the bus before at all. Again, this fits with other forms of shared transport and their ability to attract new or lapsed users. See for example bike and ebike share where in our latest (2021) report we have found that fully 50% of bike share users said the scheme was their catalyst to cycling again after a period away from cycling.

As well as contributing to policy objectives, DDRT and other modes of shared transport, such as Car Clubs and Bike Share, effectively respond to the cultural shift whereby consumers now expect/desire products and services to be truly on-demand.

We are currently developing UK-wide DDRT research so cannot speak to its direct link with modal shift or multi-modality. However, other shared transport research demonstrates their contribution to modal shift. For example, 34% of E-bike users used them to replace car or taxi trips of over 5 miles. Further, considering car sales and refrained purchases, an estimated 18.5 cars are removed from the road per car club vehicle. Additionally, research from our recent [car club report](#) shows that 30% of users cycled three times a week. In the 2021 CoMoUK annual

bike/ebikeshare report, we found that 39% of users stated they used a bus and as part of their overall journey with bike share.

Similarly, our most recent [bike share report](#) found that bike share users were more likely to combine cycling with other sustainable shared modes on their journeys (70% combine bike share with bus and/or train).

DDRT has been successfully implemented in Hertfordshire with funding from the DfT's Rural Mobility Fund. The [HertsLynx](#) scheme allows passengers within the area to travel between 250 virtual bus stops as well as to and from 6 'Key Hub Towns' which offer major transport hubs, hospitals and shopping centres, and thus reduces the need for private car ownership amongst those in hard-to-reach areas. The West Midlands, 'Bus on Demand' scheme is another success story with around 3,000 trips taken in the first 6-months – read more about the scheme [here](#).

Crucially, DDRT does not take a singular, static form. This means that there are several alternative use cases, including first/last mile, rural transport, Non-Emergency Medical Transport (NEMT), employee or student shuttles. There is a particularly interesting role for forms of DDRT in employee transport, which in turn can sit alongside other approaches such as use of active travel and public transport for employees, workplace parking levies, other car parking restrictions and shared transport operators taking over the running of employers' fleets (the pool fleet) and potentially also providing shared vehicles for employees when travelling for work (the grey fleet). See our [employer action kit](#) for more detail and a number of striking case studies

This flexibility of DDRT models means that schemes can work with and around existing public transport services to meet the needs of the communities they serve more effectively and in a way that traditional bus services cannot do alone.

It is important to note that innovative and high-tech DDRT schemes have emerged across the UK and are seeing strong uptake. We have recently undertaken a mapping exercise of UK DDRT schemes and have produced the following graphic (map) which displays the locations of active schemes as well as those in development. To our knowledge, it is the only one of its kind.

'Bus Back Better' was clear in its support for demand responsive bus services: the Rural Mobility Fund is supporting 17 pilot projects, and it is important that development of DDRT continues to be supported and encouraged. On-demand bus services are part of the trend of changing transport needs in the same way that on-demand has changed other aspects of modern life such as television viewing or other forms of shared transport (all of which are at all-time highs in terms of number of schemes and users). As the strategy acknowledges, DDRT can provide services to rural areas in particular without the cost involved in establishing regular fixed route services.

While there are therefore welcome intentions being set out by Government, we do see a risk that with the recent scaling-back of previously announced new funding streams for bus, the existing status quo of bus services is entrenched with little to no room left for innovative approaches such as DDRT.

We would be more than happy to discuss any of these points.

April 2022

