

Written evidence submitted by Aberdeen City Council (MAS0057)

Q1- Development of MaaS Aberdeen would be used to improve efficiency of urban freight transport. How would this work in practice?

Aberdeen City Council is participating in a Horizon 2020 project called 'CIVITAS PORTIS'. The project has a number of aims with one being to shape more integrated transport infrastructure and mobility systems. As part of this project we are looking at the development of a smart journey planning app for citizens and longer term look at how this may develop into a MaaS solution.

Freight is one of the sectors not generally discussed when talking about MaaS as we are talking about users, however the movement of goods efficiently is critical to our economy and is another mode dependant on moving around our road network. As part of the Civitas PORTIS project we are currently engaging with the freight industry to understand how we can work with them to deliver data services to improve efficiency of their operations and in turn how that can consider any impacts of MaaS to them an industry. We are looking to provide real time data to improve the movement of goods and potential for industry to share data back to us to improve our network. This is very similar to a data ecosystem required as part of MaaS. There is some potential for small goods/package to be included in MaaS. A theoretical example would be a private hire vehicle also doubling as a delivery service, but this needs a lot of work with industry and research to understand the potential of this.

-Are you aware of any other MaaS initiatives aimed at improving freight transport? Is freight being neglected in the development of MaaS?

No response

-Why have you focussed on cooperation at EU Level? What additional benefits will cooperation with other countries or the EU bring?

We are currently progressing with a Horizon 2020 funded project called CIVITAS PORTIS which looks at sustainable urban mobility in port cities. As such, we are progressing with a scheme to provide a journey planning tool which is focussed on our citizens needs not just within Aberdeen City, but partnering with our neighbouring authority to ensure we take account of rural to urban and inter-rural trips. EU funding, where 100% grant funded, can unlock the ability of Local Authorities to deliver aspirational projects that align with transport objectives. In the absence of EU funding, the potential to deliver or consider emerging concepts such as MaaS would be difficult.

As with any European funded project, there is partnership working and sharing of best practice and knowledge across the partner cities. Within CIVITAS PORTIS Aberdeen is in a consortium with four other port cities which include Antwerp (Belgium), Trieste (Italy), Constanta (Romania) and Klaipeda (Lithuania). Antwerp have worked on their 'Smart Ways to Antwerp' and are similar to Aberdeen in their ambitions for a smart journey planning app, which will develop to a MaaS solution. This has offered the cities to share knowledge and lessons learnt, something we would not have done had it not been for the European funding or CIVITAS PORTIS.

-Are you concerned about the implications of Brexit for continued cooperation on MaaS projects?

The timeline for the EU project we are involved with terminates in 2020 and we understand that Brexit will have no direct impact on this project as the Grant Agreement has been signed, and will therefore be honoured.

Aberdeen City Council is aware of the on-going discussions about continued access to EU funding post Brexit. The Council is not led by external funding, but rather access funding to support implementation of our strategies in the local area. This will continue beyond Brexit. We will use the existing strategies as the basis to inform Government and lobbying bodies as to the types of funding that we are looking to access. This will be done at EU, National and regional level, to ensure that we make positive input to all discussions on future funding.

-Should MaaS apps also include company cars and business fleets? Do you have any plans to bring them in to your pilot schemes?

We believe this is an area that should be explored. Changing the incentives around company cars to a MaaS package would have much better impacts than the current mechanisms. Also, the potential for including company fleets into the wider MaaS platform would be something worthwhile or great benefit to reduce car ownership. It is not in our immediate plans to explore but we'd be keen to engage with our own fleet teams and other private sector companies to understand it's potential.

2. Is there enough research funding in the UK to support the development of MaaS?

The potential issue on current funding MaaS is there is going to need to be an understanding that trial and error pilots will need to take place in order to find a successful model for each city. This will require funds not just to create an innovative model that could underpin MaaS in the UK, but to create a model for each city for its individual needs. Although initially it would be good to get some trials carried out to explore the benefits of MaaS, for the UK to deploy and lead on MaaS more funding will be required at both a national and local level.

We understand that there can be funding through Innovate UK, as well as potential support through the Transport System Catapult. However this funding can be very competitive and can sometimes be difficult for cities of different scale to secure. To support the development of MaaS this really does need more deployments of various models of MaaS to research and explore how the commercials will work in practice. It's easy to see the benefits to the user but it is not so easy to see how individual operators benefit financially. In theory the MaaS operator would be trying to open up a larger market place which could enable increased use of services. It would be good to structure funds in a way that enabled trials but not only for a successful city, but potentially a consortiums of cities, where a lead city can co-ordinate the project with small to medium size cities, similar to the structure on some EU projects.

Longer term, it would be good to look at how subsidy is currently provided and understand how it can interact with MaaS to ensure where profit may be more difficult, services are still provided for the lower user demands such as rural areas.

-What benefits has cooperation with other EU countries brought?

In Aberdeen we have been learning from our CIVITAS PORTIS partner the city of Antwerp, who have deployed and are still deploying their 'Smart Ways to Antwerp' model. This has been a learning tool for Aberdeen and the cities are keen to continue to share best practice. They also have an interest in MaaS and are building a mobility marketplace and data ecosystem for the city to potential act as a contributor or even an enabler for MaaS, which is similar to our thinking for a city of our size. A specific focus between our two cities is on freight and both cities have agreed to try and work more closely together, especially on data standardisation and share our results on trial and work to ensure we don't duplicate any trials where possible.

Aberdeen has also been learning from other UK cities that have deployed a journey app and we ensure to incorporate any lessons learnt into our own smart journey planning app.

-Are you concerned about the implications of Brexit for continued cooperation on, and for, MaaS projects?

The benefits of EU cooperation could be lost, or at least made far more difficult to access if we are unable to secure EU funding post Brexit. More pressure would be put onto national funding if there is no access to EU funds.

3. What data standards and data regulation frameworks are needed for managing data within a MaaS system?

Data is fundamental to MaaS. The ability to share data between transport operators, public sector and our users is critical to the MaaS ecosystem. This relationship of data sharing can be difficult in the private model as this is typically a closed system, which may offer a smaller MaaS offering but to ensure the ecosystem works, an open system where public sector is involved will enable a better use of data for the provision of the user.

It requires data from the supply side, operators, Local Authorities and also from the demand side. Such data must be accurate and updated static data from transport operators and local authority such as timetables, service locations etc. Live data, dynamically updating the users and their choice to ensure as conditions change, adaptations can be made to minimise delays (and keep them away from the issues). A lot of this provision can come from the data local authorities hold to manage the road network, however just as important is the transport operator's data around their operations (which feeds back into the local authority to tailor services and road network provision).

Although a national platform for data would have merit, central government are probably better placed to set the standards for data sharing and then the local authorities could potentially broker the agreements of data sharing with MaaS partners. This way, it ensures the citizen remain at the focus of the provision as each city has its own unique challenges, but enable inter-operability across the country.

Transport is currently regulated by mode, however central government should look to regulate MaaS as a new category to direct the process of MaaS operating. Then if a city-based approach is to be adopted then adoption of centralised or even global standards for data to enable MaaS on a national scale will be required. This will allow interoperability between MaaS provision so that the users can potentially remain with the one MaaS operator regardless on moving between cities and regions. Users don't care who operates what road and data should be borderless – we just need standards that enables that to happen constantly across the UK.

Regulation of MaaS operators, similar to that of any current transport operator that's regulated with specific concern around;

- Looking at data and how its use is regulated. Which may look at;
- Data Security and Privacy – set requirements
- Rights to use and make money from the data

4. How important is smart ticketing to a MaaS system?

Though smart ticketing forms part of MaaS it is not necessarily something that has to be conquered before MaaS enters a city. Going back to MaaS offerings as either Pay as you Go schemes or as a subscription, these all need to integrate individual transport provision into a single fare option. We have an example of an integrated ticket that spans two authorities, ours and our neighbouring authority, with multiple bus operators both large and small. The scheme is operator led and what has been seen from that scheme is that for the basic fare in a zone, the ticket price is slightly higher; however users still purchase the integrated ticket for ease of use, so they can board any service that comes along. This shows that users are willing to pay for convenience if the offering is good enough. This is integrated with the major operators smart ticketing systems, a smart card and paper ticket is also available to ensure access to all and for ease of use across all operators. This in itself is similar to MaaS where multiple operators offer a single payment option.

The complexities in smart ticketing are getting the operators to align on acceptance of provision of a ticket and agree the commercials on how it works in practice. Provision of the ticket or bundle after that via a smartphone or smartcard is more an engineering issue that can be overcome, but the difficulty is how to also provide for users without a bank account or smartphone.

5. Have you encountered any challenges integrated smart ticketing into a MaaS system?

Aberdeen has not yet deployed a MaaS system therefore cannot comment any problems encountered. We are aware of other MaaS pilot projects and are very much interested in the results and lessons from those projects and how any issues were overcome.

6. Can Government Regulation guarantee a level playing field to ensure potential MaaS providers are not blocked from entering the market, due to the dominance of existing MaaS providers?

We believe that central government need to set standards for data sharing, whether that be in a private model or a public model, to try and minimise the data sets being monopolised and devaluing the potential of MaaS in respect to policy objectives. This could include some form of requirement for data sharing for any MaaS provider that operates in a given city, which will require a definition of a MaaS operator to enable licencing. If the data is provided and shared equally, then the key to monopolising MaaS in minimised further. There can be a risk associated with the push to open data for authorities as, although opening up data sets can have advantages for stimulating economic growth, data has no physical boundaries and once datasets are open, companies can provide a service that may not necessarily provide an direct benefit to the UK economy.

7. What are the top 3 things the DfT should be doing to facilitate the development of MaaS?

- It is important central government look at how to regulate MaaS, especially around the data element, such as how to get operators to provide their data equally to that of others in the MaaS eco-system with shared outcomes for partners. This also includes defining MaaS as an operator and working on potential licencing of such an operator in a city, similar to that of private hires.
- MaaS lends itself well to operate in urban environments in a private context but unlikely to in rural areas. MaaS could be an enabler for a focus on more Demand Responsive Transport, particularly for rural areas, however understanding how that fit into the business models would need to be researched. This may be where user subsidy could play a major role in changing from a transport operator focused subsidy to a more user focussed subsidy.
- The way we charge for our roads needs to be considered and consideration needs to be made into the current models being fit for the future which incorporates MaaS.

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