Call for evidence – CPT response

This submission is made by CPT – the Confederation of Passenger Transport. CPT represents bus and coach operators throughout the UK, along with suppliers to the sector. The operators of around 90% of local bus services alongside a huge number of coach operators are amongst our circa 900 members. We are the voice of the bus and coach sector.

Our sector is crucial to enabling people to get around. 60% of all public transport journeys are taken by bus and they are the primary mode of access to city centres facilitating 29% of city centre expenditure, contributing £21bn to the economy each year. They also provide an essential service for job seekers, more than three quarters of whom do not have access to a car. This is on top of enabling access to education, workplaces and leisure activities.

The UK coach sector is the lifeblood of the local and longer-distance road passenger transport system, responsible for 600,000 daily home-to-school journeys along with services for holiday-makers, sports fans and low fare travellers. There are hundreds of operators, 81% of which are individually or family run.

1. How might planning and delivery of transport infrastructure and services be changed by greater sharing and use of transport data over the medium and long terms?

COVID-19 has had a major impact on ENCTS travel and greater sharing of data about concessionary pass-holders (including anonymised data about journeys made by individuals) would help operators to understand and address the problem.

We believe that improved sharing of traffic data and accurate roadworks data could help bus and coach operators plan better and provide more punctual services for passengers.

We very much support the principle behind BODS [https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/bus-open-data-service](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/bus-open-data-service%20) with data offering the potential to help the public plan and make journeys by bus, encouraging modal shift and supporting decarbonisation and emissions reduction objectives.

Operators have seen little return for their resource and investment in complying with BODS but CPT and a group of operator members are heavily involved with DfT, its consultants and other stakeholders to help overcome the enormous challenges and achieve the potential that BODS offers.

1. How might the travelling public, and local communities, experience the benefits of better use of transport data? What unintended consequences might there be?

Operators and local authorities armed with better data can help improve the punctuality of services and adapt networks to meet the needs of communities even better.

If the vision of BODS is delivered, the public will have better access to travel data including fares and be better able to make choices about their travel. This could help achieve modal shift from less sustainable modes to buses and coaches.

1. How will it benefit the freight sector and the supply chain?

No comments

1. What are the potential uses of data for understanding usage and condition of assets like roads, rail track, charging points, vehicles and the kerbside?

As bus and coach fleets migrate to zero emission, the importance of partnerships with other parties such as local authorities will increase and there will be a requirement for more sharing of charging or refuelling infrastructure. Data regarding the availability of that infrastructure will be vital to ensure its effective use.

We are already seeing technology that enables the transmission of vehicle fault data to an engineering facility, allowing assessment and planning of any rectification work. This can help minimise downtime and improve efficiency.

1. What privacy, ethical, security, resilience and intellectual property issues arise in relation to gathering and sharing transport data, including location-based data about journeys and data with commercial value? How should the Government seek to manage and regulate these?

We’re not aware of any particular issues. Operators should retain ownership of data relating to all aspects of the services that they provide commercially.

1. What are the biggest gaps in available data about transport networks and travel? What kinds of policy, planning or maintenance questions cannot currently be answered that we could answer with new, or more accessible, data?

Data about bus networks – routes, times and fares - are already publicly available through BODS so there is no real data provision gap in this area.

There is also the NAPTAN database <https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/ff93ffc1-6656-47d8-9155-85ea0b8f2251/national-public-transport-access-nodes-naptan> of bus stops and anywhere else you can get on or off public transport. Unfortunately, the biggest gap in data about transport networks is an accessibility register for infrastructure – we really need indicators added to NAPTAN or the national gazetteer showing the accessibility of bus stops/stations and the routes to them.

Roadworks data often isn’t accurate/real-time so this is a gap as it affects bus service provision. We believe that improved sharing of traffic data and accurate roadworks data could help bus and coach operators plan better and provide more punctual services for passengers.

1. How can the UK scale up from pilots, pockets of innovation and existing single-mode data sets towards an integrated, comprehensive landscape for transport data?

There are various Government initiatives to help achieve scaling up of data best practice but we don’t believe they have had sufficient impact in the road passenger transport sector.

1. How should data availability, and sharing by transport operators, suppliers and other bodies, be encouraged, facilitated and regulated?

BODS is the most significant project in the road passenger transport space and we believe there is already sufficient regulation in this area. It is important that this area is adequately resourced to support SMEs and resolve technical challenges. We have seen some good progress in this area in recent months but it is important that momentum is maintained.

1. What skills and capacity do operators, infrastructure providers and local transport authorities need in order to manage their own data well and get the most value out of available data? What help do they need to anticipate and cater for future requirements?

There is some existing support for operators in the key area of BODS but this is a very complex area, particularly for SMEs. CPT will continue to provide support, help operators connect with the right people, and work to find resolutions with DfT and other stakeholders.

1. Is the UK’s digital infrastructure sufficient to allow the greatest value to be derived from transport data?

Mobile data network blackspots are one of the many challenges facing BODS in relation to vehicle location.

1. How effectively does the Government use data in appraising and prioritising transport investment?
2. What milestones and ambitions should the Government set in this area? How effectively has the Government’s Transport Data Strategy identified barriers to sharing and getting value from transport data, and the actions needed to overcome those barriers?
3. What is the emerging best practice internationally, in terms both of developing standards and frameworks for sharing and using transport data, and supporting specific innovations? How does the UK compare, and how can it help to shape international standards

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