Going nowhere fast
Impact of inaccessible public transport on wellbeing and social connectedness of older people in Great Britain
Executive summary

As people age they may no longer feel able to drive, for health or economic reasons. Many older people come to rely on public transport, especially buses and, to a lesser extent, community transport to access the community and this report focuses on these particular modes of transport. Transport is a crucial factor in determining older people’s ability to access vital amenities and problems with transport provision and the closure of local services reinforces social exclusion. Cuts to key sources of support for both local bus services and community transport have put pressure on fares and service provision for passengers across Great Britain. This will damage the ability of older people to access vital services and live the life they choose.

Concessionary bus travel schemes operate throughout Great Britain. Free bus travel is available for those aged over 60 in Wales and Scotland and in England eligibility is for residents and is tied to the pensionable age for women, currently around 62. These schemes all provide many social, economic and environmental benefits; however, the benefits of free bus travel are only applicable where there are buses to use. Where bus routes are cut or reduced, many older people find themselves disadvantaged. WRVS research has shown 14 per cent of older people in Great Britain have seen a reduction in the number of public transport services in their area. This report shows that public transport not only connects people to places but also links people to each other, and is a key factor in an inclusive society. WRVS research found that lack of suitable transport has a devastating effect on wellbeing; six per cent of older people feel lonely because they are unable to get out and about. This report reveals that older people face many barriers to accessing transport and that considerations of accessibility, safety and affordability are paramount.

WRVS recommends that public transport providers take an age-friendly approach when designing and delivering services to recognise the needs of older people, including training drivers to assist and support older people when they travel and ensuring that bus stops are close to destinations where older people would like to travel. WRVS recommends consulting with older people over planned changes and designs as part of producing an impact assessment.

Access to transport allows older people to remain independent and active in later life and helps people stay connected. Community transport can play a crucial role in helping older people access essential amenities by providing services where public transport cannot or does not, and can provide a vital lifeline for those most vulnerable to isolation and loneliness. WRVS encourages more local authorities to allow the use of the use of concessionary travel passes on community transport. WRVS provides community transport services which can fill the gaps in areas where public transport services are not easily accessible to all.
Methodology

The research was conducted in February 2013 by PCP. PCP conducted the interviews with 300 people aged 75 and over in England, 300 in Wales and 300 in Scotland and asked them about their experiences of using public and community transport.
Background

Over 4.8 million people in Great Britain are over 75 years old. The latest projections for Great Britain are that there will be 7.8 million people over the age of by 2030, a projected increase of over 3 million people. The ageing population means that there is a continued need to help older people to age well and attain a better quality of life. Longer life must be accompanied by continuing opportunities for health, participation and security. The World Health Organization (WHO) has adopted the term ‘active ageing’ to describe the process for achieving this vision (WHO, 2002).

Over time, some people may experience changes to their lifestyle. A number of factors, including health and impairment issues and a wide range of social, cultural and other barriers can impact upon general wellbeing and the ability of older people to leave their homes. Being able to get ‘out and about’ enables people to maintain their wellbeing through accessing goods and essential services, social networks and leisure activities. Social connectedness is considered an important element contributing towards successful ageing. There is evidence that involvement with societal activities has positive outcomes for people in older age; participation and engagement in society is associated with lower mortality, better physical health, fewer depressive symptoms, higher cognitive function and improved subjective wellbeing (Banks, Nazroo, Steptoe et al, 2012).

As people age, they become less likely to travel by private transport, and there is a particular decline in levels of car driving. Although in the UK, the number of people aged 70 and over that hold a licence has risen from 15 per cent in 1975 to nearly 60 per cent in 2010, just under a quarter of people aged 80 and over do not have access to a car (Baster, 2012). Throughout Great Britain many people find public transport unaffordable, inaccessible and inappropriate to their needs. Increasingly, as people get older they may no longer feel able to drive, for health or economic reasons. Travel as a car passenger, by bus and by taxi increases with age (Smith, Beckhelling, Ivaldi et al, 2006). In particular, many older people come to rely on public transport, especially buses and, to a lesser extent, community transport to access the community and so this report shall focus on these particular modes of transport. Recent research on wellbeing in older people undertaken as part of ‘Shaping our Age’, a Big Lottery funded project and partnership between WRVS, the Centre for Citizen Participation at Brunel University and the Centre for Social Action at De Montfort University reveals that reliable public and community transport can help overcome barriers to the involvement of excluded older people (Hoban, James, Pattrick, Beresford & Fleming, 2011: 21).

The role of transport as a means to access services is crucial and the ability to travel is a key factor in preventing social exclusion and fostering social connectedness amongst
older people. Increasingly, the loss of some local services, in particular local shops and Post Offices means more older people have to travel to access vital amenities (Sutton & Hill, 2010).

In response to rising costs the funding of bus services in England, Wales and Scotland has undergone significant change. In England the rate at which the Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) is paid has been cut by 20 per cent; 41 per cent of local authorities in England made cuts to bus services in 2012 and these cuts come on top of the major service reductions made in 2011/12, when one in five council-supported bus services were cut or cut back. In Wales a new bus funding regime will be in place from 1st April 2013. The new Regional Transport Services Grant (RTSG) is a £25m single funding scheme that will replace the former Bus Services’ Operators Grant (BSOG) and the Local Transport Services Grant (LTSG), which were sources of support to both local bus services and community transport. This is a new allocation which amounts to 25 per cent less funding than last year’s equivalent. In Scotland the rate at which Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) is paid has been cut by 20 per cent. Transport Scotland, which administers the National Concessionary Travel Scheme, faced a funding shortfall of nearly £13m in the 2012/13 financial year as demand from passengers claiming free trips exceeded the £187m funding available.

Being able to travel is vital to health and wellbeing, and contributes to prolonged independence and continued social inclusion. Transport is often a major problem, particularly in rural areas, impacting on the lives of older people in many ways. Research on older people’s experience and use of public and community transport has therefore become an important topic in sociological and demographic research as well as in the broader socio-political debate.

**Travel trends and behaviour**

Studies of older people’s travel, and trends in travel for older people have shown that travel declines with age, although older people are travelling more than they were a decade ago (Smith, Beckhelling, Ivaldi et al, 2006). Data from the National Travel Survey (2011) taking into account all modes of transport shows that people over the age of 70 make, in total 215 fewer trips per person per year, than the general population.

National Travel Survey (2011) data shows that people aged 70 and over make the most journeys a year proportionately, using local and non-local buses for 81 trips a year. This is in contrast to the total of 64 bus trips a year for all ages. WRVS research shows that across the sample, 61 per cent of older people use public transport to get out and about; this is the most popular mode of transport selected. This figure is lower for those aged over 85 where proportionately fewer people use public transport.
Background

A qualitative survey of the transport needs and requirements of older people in England and Wales (DfT, 2007) found that travel serves a number of functions for older people, including participation, independence, social interaction (cf. Sutton & Hill, 2010). National Travel Survey data from 2011 shows that people over 70 predominately travel for shopping, personal business, to visit friends or entertainment.

Barriers to travel

Many older people find problems with transport are a barrier to becoming engaged and involved in society and the world outside their home. Inaccessible transport can prevent people from forming social networks, accessing services and taking part in leisure opportunities; it can also prevent people from contributing to society through volunteering, for example. Barriers may be looked at thematically in terms of accessibility, safety and affordability.

Accessibility

Following bus deregulation in the 1980s public transport quality and efficiency has declined. The Transport Act 1985 abolished road service licensing in Great Britain, except in London. It replaced the licensing system with a system of registration and removed the duties of local authorities to coordinate public passenger transport in their area. This resulted in bus companies being able to register any service that it chose to operate on a commercial, i.e. unsupported, basis. The local authority could invite tenders for additional routes or journeys if it considered social needs were not met by the commercial services and on condition that it went out to open tender (Butcher, 2010).

There is no requirement in the 1985 Act or its consequent regulations for the commercial bus operator to consult before making changes to the timetable and the position of bus stops. The criteria for registration did not include any reference to public demand or to existing services, and objections could no longer be made by other operators or local authorities (Butcher, 2010). In a report on integrating transport planning and older user needs, the Strategic Promotion of Ageing Research Capacity (SPARC) (2008) states that difficulties and barriers older people face with public transport can be overcome through better communication and the involvement of older people.

In general the bus has a poor public image and is often seen as a poorer alternative to other modes of transport, in particular, the car; slower journey times, unreliability, infrequent services and poor quality of service are all often cited as reasons for not using a bus (JMP, 2009). A consequence of deregulation is that in certain cases, both urban and rural transport services have become fragmented and often services do not link up properly. Where bus routes are cut or reduced, many older people find themselves
disadvantaged. WRVS research shows over 14 per cent of older people have seen a reduction in the number of public transport services in their area.

In Gabriel and Bowling's (2004) examination of quality of life from the perspective of older people, poor public transport was said to have a negative impact on the quality of life of a number of older respondents; some of them said that it was more difficult to get out and about because of inadequate transport, and said that after a difficult journey they were not relaxed and could not enjoy themselves. The most frequently mentioned forgone activities concern family visits and meeting with friends. Transport difficulties were mentioned most often as the principle barrier to taking part in these activities by older people aged 80 and over. A number of transport difficulties were cited, including: transport is unreliable; transport service is not available/infrequent; and having to face a difficult journey. These findings demonstrate that many older people are not as active as they wish to be and they face restrictions in getting out and about. This can be seen to have a negative impact on wellbeing; Bannister and Bowling (2004) argue that there is a positive link between quality of life and the number of activities that individuals participate in (Su, 2007). WRVS research shows five per cent of those who are unable to get out and about as often due to lack of suitable transport feel frustrated and five per cent reported feeling isolated.

Recent years have seen growing recognition that access to transport is an important determinant of health. In its review on healthy transport, the British Medical Association (BMA) reports that public transport has a role in helping individuals achieve recommended levels of daily physical activity, and has health-related benefits. This is because ‘public transport typically incorporates physical activity as a component of the journey, increasing the likelihood that individuals will meet physical activity recommendations for walking’ (BMA, 2012). Transport is needed to ‘access health services; the goods necessary for health…and the social networks that foster a healthy life’ (Jones, Goodman, Roberts et al, 2012: 1). However, problems arise when people have difficulties accessing those services necessary for health and the Audit Commission, in its report ‘Going Places’, finds significant numbers of older people face difficulties in getting to health centres, dentists and hospitals (Audit Commission, 2001).

Physical health appears to be a dominant factor that affects transport choice and use. The DfT research into the travel needs, behaviour and aspirations of people in later life identified the most dominant factor affecting transport use is health status rather than age (DfT, 2007). The study revealed a range of conditions that were related to ageing and which affected respondents use and experience of transport and travel. A key health problem that impacted on people’s use of transport related to conditions affecting personal mobility; including arthritis, spinal injuries, knee and hip problems and circulatory conditions such as deep vein thrombosis. Increased tiredness and loss of stamina were also widely reported. Other health problems such as bowel conditions and incontinence were reported to also affect travel, because of the need to have access to toilet facilities, which also impacts upon use of public transport (DfT, 2007).
people with mobility problems may also feel less confident when travelling on public transport; particularly on overcrowded buses as they worry they may have to stand. Research carried out by Transport for London (TfL, 2009) reveals that a lack of seats on over-crowded buses may lead to physical discomfort, exhaustion and anxiety about falling and that in some cases older people have had falls which they attribute to ‘jerky movements that can cause them to lose balance’. In particular, participants mention that bus drivers sometimes start the bus moving before they have a chance to get a seat which has caused some to suffer falls. This is of great concern; WRVS research on falls in Great Britain has shown that 21 per cent of respondents who had suffered a fall in the last five years lost their confidence as a result, with 16 per cent saying nothing can help them regain it (WRVS 2012).

The presence of chronic illness and disability increases significantly with age. In Great Britain, 68 per cent of people aged over 75 report a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity (General Lifestyle Survey, 2011). For many this will result in a reduced ability to complete normal activities of daily living and a limited ability to shop (Jones, Duffy, Coull & Wilkinson, 2009). Difficulties arise not only in accessing transport, for example, where older people have difficulty or are unable to walk to the nearest bus stop but also in carrying heavy shopping bags from supermarket or shop, to the bus stop, onto the bus, and back home at the other end.

Safety

The Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR) (2000) focused on ensuring that all new bus and coach public transport vehicles must be physically accessible to disabled people, including wheelchair users. Specifically these rules related to the design and layout of buses to include slip-resistant floors designated disabled spaces and handrails. Buses are becoming more accessible, and modern low floor buses with ramps enable wheelchair users to board, although not all are wheelchair accessible yet. Various companies around the UK are utilising ‘talking bus’ technologies and some buses now also have audio visual information systems on board (DPTAC, 2012). However, despite these changes, WRVS research finds that public transport is often not very accessible to people with impairments or disability and 16 per cent of older people said that public transport is not accessible for their disabilities.

Data from the National Travel Survey (2011) shows a significant difference in trips between those with and those without mobility difficulties. Passengers with disabilities make fewer trips on average and the difference is greater the older one gets. Older passengers with mobility difficulties who find it hard to walk often experience problems accessing buses. Respondents in the DfT travel needs and behaviour research (2007) reported that walking, sometimes even a short distance, to a bus stop was extremely difficult and frequently painful. WRVS research shows that over 17 per cent
of respondents cannot manage the walk to / from the public transport service they want to use and nine per cent report that the nearest public transport service they want to use is too far away.

Community transport typically describes the provision of non-profit making transport for the many people who may live miles from the nearest bus route, are unable to afford taxi fares or are physically unable to use the public transport services provided. In England there are at least 2,000 community transport organisations of which nearly one-third of them are based in rural areas, which provide 15 million plus passenger journeys each year (CTA, 2012). In Wales the community transport sector provides over 1.2 million passenger journeys each year (CTA, 2010). In Scotland at least 100,000 people use community transport and the sector provides 3.5 million passenger journeys each year (CTA, 2012). Community transport operators range from small local organisations serving a specific community to larger social enterprises delivering commercial contracts such as bus routes, and health and social services transport, which help to sustain vital community transport services (CTA, 2010). Typically, community transport schemes are set up where communities have limited public transport options and people within those communities decided to set up services themselves to address local needs. Perhaps as a consequence, services vary considerably from area to area and differ according to need. They can include community bus schemes, community car schemes, minibuses and door-to-door (dial-a-ride) schemes.

The growing role of community transport should be recognised. Community transport schemes are of vital importance where the public transport system does not fully serve the needs of older people in the area. They not only connect people to essential services but they also provide a link to the community and enable people to foster social connections. WRVS research shows six per cent of older people use community transport as a means to get out and about and a further six per cent said that they would like to use community transport services but do not know anything about them.

Community and public transport schemes throughout Great Britain is a devolved issue and the schemes are funded in different ways; a brief overview of the key issues facing the community transport sector in each country is described below.

England

Throughout England community transport schemes are financed in different ways and depend on a number of different funding streams, including BSOG and local authority grants and discretionary grants made by parish, town and district councils. Many community transport organisations have been affected by the 20 per cent reduction in BSOG from April 2012. At the same time as BSOG reductions, community transport schemes have also been affected by spending cuts from local authorities and over 70 per cent of local authorities have moved rapidly to reduce funding for supported
bus services (House of Commons Transport Committee Review, 2011). In 2011, the DfT set up the Supporting Community Transport Fund; so far this fund has allocated £20 million to 76 local authorities outside London. This was accompanied by guidance to local authorities to help them ‘get the most out of community transport’ (DfT, 2012).

**Wales**

From 2005, The Community Transport Concessionary Fares Initiative enabled the use of concessionary fares on 15 community transport schemes in Wales. This initiative was piloted to enable severely disabled people who may be unable to access low floor bus services, and those who are socially disadvantaged to use specific community transport at no personal cost by using their concessionary bus pass. The aim of establishing the 15 demonstration projects was to test and evaluate the practicability, cost and relative value for money of community transport schemes providing limited access to free travel for this client group. The information gathered was intended to assist the Welsh Government in considering the potential for funding an expansion of such schemes on a more widespread basis in future. The Community Transport Concessionary Fares Initiative was due to end on 31 March 2012; however in February 2012 Welsh Ministers announced that they had agreed to maintain funding for the Community Transport Concessionary Fares Initiative to allow officials to carry out an evaluation of the 15 projects. The evaluation of the projects has now been completed. A decision was made not to roll the scheme out across Wales and funding for the initiative is scheduled to end on 12 April 2013.

**Scotland**

In 2009, the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) published a consultation document on their future strategy for the next three to five years. The document highlighted the need to develop the Patient Transport Service (PTS) to ensure that it is properly focused on meeting the clinical needs of patients as part of an integrated transport strategy across Scotland. SAS stated that its primary responsibility is to provide a service for patients with a medical care need or with limited mobility. However, while patients do not automatically qualify for ambulance transport because they have a hospital appointment, a lack of general awareness of available alternatives was seen to result in a higher dependency on the SAS. As a consequence of the consultation, SAS made the decision to focus on emergency transport, and away from patient transport (NHS Scotland, 2009). WRVS believes community transport can assist in various ways with maximising flexible and responsive care at home with support for carers, integrating health and social care and support for people in need and at risk and improving access to care for remote and rural populations.
Affordability

Concessionary bus travel schemes which provide bus travel for free for older people operate in England, Wales and Scotland. In England older people can travel off-peak on buses anywhere in England for free; age eligibility is tied to the current pensionable age for women and residence in England. The All Wales Concessionary Fare Scheme provides free all day local bus travel for older and disabled people aged 60 and over who are resident in Wales and similarly, the Scotland-Wide Free Bus Travel Scheme provides free all day travel on local registered bus services and scheduled long distance bus journeys for people aged 60 and resident in Scotland. Data from the ONS Omnibus Opinions Survey (2011) shows that since the introduction of the concessionary pass, 43 per cent of people aged 75 and over use the bus more often. The National Travel survey (2011) reveals that the take-up rate of the concessionary travel pass in Britain has increased year on year to 79 per cent in 2011 (82% of females and 76% of males).

England

The English National Concessionary Bus Travel Scheme is a national scheme by the Department for Transport in conjunction with Local Authorities across England. The scheme extended the provision of free bus travel within individual local authorities to allow travel throughout England from 1 April 2008. Since April 2010, the age of eligibility for concessionary travel in England has been tied to the pensionable age for women (Butcher, 2013). Older people and eligible disabled people are provided with free off-peak bus travel on weekdays and all day at weekends and Bank Holidays.

Some local authorities offer discretionary concessions over and above the statutory minimum. Examples of the types of discretionary concessions local authorities may offer include; companion passes for those who are unable to travel alone, free travel on other modes of transport where buses are limited or scarce, for example community transport, and an extension to the time restriction to allow travel in peak periods (DfT, 2012).

In 2011/12, there were around 9.8m older and disabled concessionary bus passes in England, with an average of 109 bus journeys per pass per year (DfT, 2012). Around 9.0m (92 per cent) passes in 2011/12 were for older people, corresponding to 80 passes per hundred eligible older persons.

The top objectives of the older and disabled national concessionary fares policy in England were to reduce social exclusion in older people and to ‘ensure that bus travel, in particular, remains within the means of those on limited incomes and those who have mobility difficulties’ (DfT, 2008; cited by Andrews, Parkhurst, Susilo & Shaw, 2012). The House of Commons Transport Committee Review report on ‘Bus services after the spending review’ (2011) found that the concessionary fares scheme is highly valued by users and that it provides a number of social, economic and environmental benefits.
Wales

The concessionary travel scheme, in operation in Wales since 2002, provides free local bus travel for older people aged 65 and over and disabled people resident in Wales. The concessionary bus pass can be used at any time of day. Welsh pass holders are able to use cross-border services if their bus journey starts or ends in Wales (Welsh Government, 2011).

The scheme has proved enormously popular in Wales, with local authorities managing in excess of 650,000 passes annually (Older People’s Commissioner for Wales, 2010). In a survey of bus pass use in Wales it was found that three quarters of the sample used their pass more than once a week. Frequency of use was higher among respondents interviewed in urban locations and among respondents who did not own a car. The total number of passes in circulation has increased by over 50 per cent between 2002-03 and 2010-11 (National Assembly for Wales, 2011).

Research by Sustrans has outlined what could be achieved for older people if priorities were readjusted. They have said that the restoration of Welsh transport grants to pre-cut levels would cost £9m (equivalent to the cost of building 0.5 miles of road), and would be of benefit to 1.5 million people (of which 660,000 are regular users). Meanwhile, the estimated cost of enabling elderly and disabled passengers to access concessionary fares on community transport (currently provided through the CTCFI) is approximately £3.9 million per year (equivalent to 323 metres of road) (Sustrans, 2012).

The Older People’s Commissioner’s review into the impact of the concessionary bus travel scheme on older people in Wales found that without the concessionary bus pass many older people would be housebound and denied access to essential facilities which enable them to maintain their independence, and that the scheme offers older people the opportunity to remain integrated in society (Older People’s Commissioner for Wales, 2010).

Scotland

A national minimum standard of free off-peak local bus travel for men over 65 and women over 60 and disabled people in Scotland was introduced on 30th September 2002 and then extended in April 2003 to include men aged between 60 and 64. The Scotland-wide free bus travel scheme for older and disabled people was introduced in April 2006 and provides free travel on local registered bus services and scheduled long distance bus journeys for people aged 60 or over and eligible disabled people who are resident in Scotland. With the National Entitlement Card Scottish residents aged 60 and over can travel for free on most local and national bus services in Scotland including the morning rush hour. The Scheme also provides two free return ferry journeys to the mainland for card holders living on Orkney, Shetland and the Western Islands.
Isles. Some card holders may also be entitled to free rail travel dependent on local authority (Transport Scotland).

The total number of bus journeys made under concessionary fare schemes has increased from about 103 million in 2001/02 to over 147 million in 2005/06 and increased further, following the introduction of free Scotland-wide bus travel (with no restriction at ‘peak’ times) for older and disabled people on 1st April 2006, to around 158 million in 2008-09 (Scottish Government, 2011). Data from the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) shows that 86 per cent of people aged 60 and over have a concessionary pass.

The top objectives of the older and disabled national concessionary fares policy in Scotland were to allow older and disabled people (especially those on low incomes) improved access to services, facilities and social networks by ‘free’ scheduled bus services; to promote social inclusion and to improve health by promoting a more active lifestyle (Scottish Government, 2009). The Scottish Government’s review of the Scotland-wide free bus travel scheme for older and disabled people broadly concluded that the scheme was meeting its objectives of social inclusion; in particular it found that the highest take-up of the scheme was in the most disadvantaged areas of the country and accessibility to services and social networks had increased (Scottish Government, 2009).

Discussion

This study has shown that Great Britain will see a dramatic demographic shift within the coming decades and there is a real need to examine how current and future older people can lead fuller, healthier lives. The ability to get out and about is a central component to quality of life, especially in maintaining connections with friends and families, and accessing health, shopping and leisure facilities.

In this report we see that older people with mobility problems feel less confident travelling on public transport. Issues mentioned include lack of seats on buses, overcrowding and inconsiderate drivers. Initial steps to make services more ‘age friendly’ could include ensuring that drivers are considerate and helpful and that buses are more frequent, thus reducing the issues of overcrowding and a shortage of seats and the problem of irregular services. Public transport providers and local authorities should understand the needs of older passengers, and bus services and design ought to be more inclusive by taking the needs of older people into account (Marsden, Cattan, Jopson and Woodward, 2008). WRVS recommends that older people be consulted and involved with over planned changes and design of public transport services as part of producing an impact assessment, as any changes will directly affect them and their travel choices. This will allow individuals to be seen as citizens and not just consumers, and provides a clear opportunity for older people to exercise choice and control in their
Background

lives; this is particularly important as 14 per cent of our sample do not feel able to make comments or complaints about local services.

The policy of free concessionary bus fares for older and disabled people has proved to be popular and this report finds that since the introduction of the scheme older people use the bus more often, and the take-up rate of the concessionary travel pass has increased year-on-year.
Summary and recommendations

*England*

WRVS believes that the national bus concession should remain in place, which is the Government policy of this Parliament. However, a policy of means testing the statutory concession, so that wealthier older people will not be eligible has been speculated on but at the time of the report, no-one has yet committed to such a policy.

Community transport can play a crucial role in helping older people access essential services by providing services where public transport cannot or does not; and can provide a vital lifeline for those most vulnerable to isolation and loneliness. At present not all older people who use community transport are able to use their concessionary travel passes. WRVS welcomes the DfT’s decision to allocate special funding to local authorities to encourage the growth of community transport in their area and agrees that it is a welcome admission of the need for targeted funding after the department withdrew several ring-fenced transport funds on the basis that local authorities should choose their own priorities.

- There should be a requirement on bus companies to carry out an impact assessment into the effect on older people (and their carers) of any changes to bus services. This would allow individuals to be seen as citizens and not just consumers and provides a clear opportunity for older people to exercise choice and control in their lives.

- Public transport needs to be accessible to older people e.g. number of steps etc – bus and public transport operators and local authorities need to work together to achieve an ‘age friendly’ integrated transport system which will take into account access and safety considerations.

- Ensure that bus stops are close to departure points and destinations where older people would like to travel from and travel to.

- Public transport providers should be obliged to provide training which takes into account older people’s requirement; to ensure drivers are friendly and helpful.

- Local authorities should provide additional financial support to community transport schemes to allow concessionary card holders to travel at no personal cost.

- More awareness and information should be provided by local authorities on community transport schemes.

- Universal concessionary travel is regarded as important in keeping people socially engaged and should be retained.

*Wales*

WRVS believes that the national bus concession should remain in place for all those who are currently eligible; a policy of means testing the statutory concession, so that
wealthier older people will not be eligible has been speculated but at the time of the report, no-one has yet committed to such a policy.

WRVS is concerned that the end of the Community Transport Fares Initiative will mean the end of vital services for older people and will leave them stranded. The Welsh Government should make community transport a priority and we believe that local authorities should provide financial support for community transport; this can be achieved through the extension to the grant to local authorities (previously the Local Transport Services Grant) which has to be spent on community transport.

• The Welsh Government should consider increasing the proportion of transport grants which must be spent on community transport schemes.

• Currently, the Public Transport Users’ Committee for Wales (PTUC) is one place to represent the interest of passengers with disabilities. We would call for the creation of an additional place on the Committee for an Older People’s Champion to ensure that age-friendly considerations (such as access and safety) are at the heart of transport planning. We would also like to see a similar position created at Passenger Focus so that older passengers have a UK-wide voice on transport issues.

• The Welsh Government should impose a requirement on bus companies in Wales to carry out an impact assessment into the effect on older people (and their carers) of any changes to bus services. This would allow individuals to be seen as citizens and not just consumers and provides a clear opportunity for older people to exercise choice and control in their lives.

Scotland

WRVS supports the concessionary bus travel scheme as a way to get older people out and about, but believes that it is important that eligibility is extended to include community transport services. Community transport can play a crucial role in helping older people access essential services by providing services where public transport cannot or does not; and can provide a vital lifeline for those most vulnerable to isolation and loneliness. The concessionary transport scheme should be further reviewed in light of the Scottish Ambulance Service’s move of focus to emergency transport, and away from patient transport. Community transport schemes will extend the benefits of concessionary transport to those unable to access public buses because of remoteness, rurality or restricted mobility.

• The Scottish Government should introduce a duty on transport providers to consult with older people when planning and designing services: this will allow individuals to be seen as citizens and not just consumers and provides a clear opportunity for older people to exercise choice and control in their lives- This should be imposed a pre-requisite for receipt of payments from the concessionary scheme.
Summary and recommendations

- Scottish Government should introduce a duty on public transport providers to ensure that bus stops are close to destinations where older people would like to travel. This should be imposed as a pre-requisite for receipt of payments from the concessionary scheme.

- Scottish Government should extend the eligibility for the concessionary travel scheme to community transport schemes to allow concessionary card holders to travel at no personal cost.

- Scottish Government should introduce a strategy to achieve an ‘age friendly’ transport system which will take into account access and safety considerations.

- Public transport providers should be obliged to provide training which takes into account older people’s requirements and to ensure drivers are friendly and helpful.
Conclusion

WRVS believes that transport plays a vital role in improving the lives of older people throughout Great Britain. This report has found that both public and community transport provide a vital service which allow people to remain active and independent as they age. We believe that the key to social connectedness and an active life is accessible transport to help people get out and about as they grow older.

WRVS provides community transport services where public transport system do not fully serve the needs of older people in the area. WRVS also provides services such as Good Neighbours and befriending schemes which can transport clients to and from their chosen destination, provide help with shopping, collecting prescriptions, going on outings or simply provide company at home.
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