

Local Community Action on Transport

Improving transport infrastructure in their local area is a frequent aspiration of individuals, local communities, parish councils and town councils. But what is actually happening in local communities across Oxfordshire and what are they genuinely concerned about? How can we ensure that all people, including young people, are heard rather than issues being dominated by vocal minorities? How do we also meet our objectives of zero carbon, improved air quality and healthy place shaping?

As the Transport Authority, the Council is in the position to bid for funding to support different projects and schemes, usually on a one-off basis for particular modes of transport – current examples include dedicated funding opportunities for rail, bus and cycling and walking schemes. However we are in competition with other authorities for limited funding and opportunities are often connected to (and need to demonstrate as part of the assessment process) supporting future growth. They also often require match funding from partner organisations.

At the same time, we recognise our recent inability to fund many smaller scale local measures has been frustrating for communities who are looking to address local safety, amenity and accessibility e.g. access to bus stops. The council has devolved some schemes (e.g. grass cutting) to local parishes, and has asked for local communities to fund or part fund other measures like environmental weight limits. We have also maintained the Councillor Priority Fund which has been used for highways related issues like traffic calming, dropped kerbs and signage, with some Councillors getting together to fund larger schemes that affect multiple divisions.

Following the Council's recent budget, new funding of £3 million per year is being made available to improve local road safety and accessibility, including new pedestrian crossings, improved junctions and better bus stop facilities. These measures are designed to encourage walking and cycling as part of the council's commitment to improving air quality and active lifestyles. So we are keen to find out what local communities would want to progress, including any ideas where there may already be some funding in place to help pay for and enable Council funding to stretch further. Other topic papers set out some of these opportunities, e.g. Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and Air Quality Management Areas.

Opportunities

Grow the voluntary sector. Working closely in partnership across a whole range of voluntary and community organisations to explore and test ways to connect isolated communities to services using community transport, care sharing schemes, good neighbour schemes, and other, possibly new and innovative ideas.

Promote Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) in rural areas. DRT works well in areas without access to public transport, or where mobility is an issue getting to bus stops. The issue with DRT is that it is expensive and only commercially viable if the buses are close to full. One idea is to provide DRT to the main public transport corridors from where other services can be accessed, resulting in shorter journeys and consequently more frequent services.

Examples of Community Transport Schemes can be seen by following this link: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/public-transport/accessible-transport/community-transport>

Neighbourhood Plans. If a Neighbourhood Plan is being produced for a parish or town, policies and priorities for transport are often included and the Plan can identify aspirations for specific works. Aspirations should preferably identify sources of funding, for example the Parish or Town Council's portion of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), a proportion of which is allocated by the District Council in relation to development within that town or parish. The proportion increases from 15% to 25% where a Neighbourhood Plan is adopted. In addition, communities can ask for specific works or contributions through comments on individual planning applications. The District Council will consider all requests and can require obligations from development where they are necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms; directly related to the development; and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

OXTOG (Oxfordshire Together): Community led Highway and Transport Services. We recognise that Town and Parish Councils and Community Groups are at the heart of local communities and know their local priorities and needs best. Via a survey, we have been working with local groups, parish and town councils – individually or in clusters – to understand what their priorities are and how we can enable and support

better delivery of these. We appreciate each locality is different and not all want to be involved, but we have put together the following guidance to explain what may be possible for local communities to do or do more of directly and help empower communities to have greater control and influence over the work within their area. The responsibility of the county council and the services it delivers will not change, this is about providing opportunities for delivering differently, if there is interest in doing so, that better reflects local needs and enables more to be done.



Some local councils are focusing on their individual area, while others are working together with neighbouring places to form a cluster, spreading the work and the cost between them. If you are a small parish and want to do more talk to your neighbours, they may well be in the same position.

For transport, If you have identified a local transport need in your community, Oxfordshire County Council (with Oxfordshire First) have created a Local Transport Toolkit. This self-help guide can help to identify practical solutions and can be used to tackle local transport problems within your community.

Question 21

Local Community Action on Transport - What do you think?

What can you do for your community to make it a better/nicer/safer place to live? What type of small interventions would you see as a priority for funding? How might other organisations support you?

What would you find useful? Can we frame the issue in a way that will help you as a resident to engage and come up with your own sustainable solutions for your community?

Are there current schemes that need help expanding to benefit more of the community?

To respond please use the online consultation form.