

PRESS RELEASE from:

**The Association of Community Rail Partnerships
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A Bright Future for Community Rail Partnerships!

Ninety three per cent of passengers on our community rail partnership lines (CRPs) have expressed satisfaction with their local railways. CRPs also reduce car use and help support the UK's £85bn a year tourism industry.

Great value for money was the overriding message from the recent ACoRP led study into 'The Value of Community Rail Partnerships'. These were some of the findings unveiled at a special conference held in London on 10th July.

Sponsored by the Department for Transport, Passenger Focus, the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers and Northern Rail and undertaken by Transport Regeneration of Bury St Edmunds, the study looked at the added benefits Community Rail Partnerships bring local communities and businesses, train operators, local and national government and regional development agencies and other organisations.

"This report confirms what we've always suspected – that Community Rail Partnerships can make a real difference to the lives of the communities who rely on our rural and local rail services" said Neil Buxton, ACoRP's General Manager "the fact that a robust and accepted set of appraisal tools puts CRPs in the highest value for money category only strengthens our case" he added.

One of the principal findings of the study - the biggest to look at the value of Community Rail routes for more than 40 years, - showed that CRPs had the potential to give a benefit-to-cost ratio of 4.6:1 – putting them in the DfT's highest possible value for money category! Other re-assuring findings highlighted by the study included:

- Developing additional rail use and passenger fares revenue;
- Reducing car use;
- Contributing to regeneration strategies by encouraging tourism development and access to jobs and training;

- Helping to deliver satisfaction ratings above the national average

Heidi Mottram, Managing Director, Northern Rail, said: 'We're proud to support 17 community rail partnerships on the Northern Rail network, which have really helped increase the number of people travelling on our trains. This study confirms that community rail partnerships bring benefits not only to train operators but to communities as a whole.'

Ashwin Kumar, Passenger Director, Passenger Focus added, "We are delighted to be part-funding this research as Community Rail Partnerships make an important contribution to increasing usage of local and rural lines across Britain. Allowing local innovation and creativity to flourish has led to improvements in rail services for passengers in a number of areas. Passenger Focus welcomes the creativity shown in marketing these railway services to potential passengers and in providing services that take into account the passengers' end to end journey including connections to other modes of transport".

The study also demonstrated that CRPs:

- Developed the "third" or voluntary sector.
- Helped in the provision of improved security at and around stations through community involvement;
- Contributed to a healthier environment, through encouraging active travel;
- Supported environmental strategies by encouraging low carbon travel and other environmental innovations;
- Promoted and developed innovative practice.

CRPs add value as part of a more holistic approach to local transport, the report found, and delivered growth of rail use whilst still the Department for Transport's value for money criteria.

This research and evidence will now help to strengthen the case for continued funding of CRPs in the future, both from mainstream transport budgets and more diverse sources. In brief, more power to the collective Community Rail elbow!

Copies of the report are available on CD from the ACoRP office and cost £5 (postage and packaging included).

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Further details: Neil Buxton, General Manager on 01484 847790 or 0777 979 5671.

Note to editors:

- ACoRP is the national federation of community rail partnerships, with over 60 member groups across the UK. www.acorp.uk.com
- The report's Executive Summary can be found on the following pages 3 -6

The Value of Community Rail Partnerships

Association of Community Rail Partnerships

July 2008

Executive Summary

The Association of Community Rail Partnerships, in a joint project with Department for Transport and Passenger Focus, commissioned Transport Regeneration Limited to prepare this report. It aims to present an evidence base on the value of Community Rail Partnerships. The concept of “value” is intended to be comprehensive and wide ranging, across economic, social, environmental and any other aspects.

Community Rail Partnerships are grassroots organisations, which aim to link local railways more closely with the communities they serve. Community Rail Partnerships are typically funded by local authorities and train operators and supported by local volunteers. Nationally, they work together through ACoRP. Many Partnership routes also have special designation as part of the Department for Transport’s Community Rail Strategy. Being locally focussed, Community Rail Partnerships can find it difficult to tap into regional initiatives, which could limit future growth.

This study has entailed:

- Surveys of passengers on three Community Rail Partnership lines, consistent with the National Passenger Surveys
- Talking to stakeholders:
 - Community rail partnership officers
 - People and organisations they work with
 - Local authority transport policy officers and
 - Regional agency staff
- Exploring case study examples of good practice
- Analysis of data and other evidence from authoritative sources, including application of Department for Transport recommended appraisal techniques, as used by Regional Development Agencies and others as an appropriate way of evaluating transport investment.

The study includes reference to numerous examples of best practice under headings which reflect the objectives of a range of third party organisations – economic, social, environmental and other impacts. The wide range of best practice examples are important in order to demonstrate the scope for Community Rail Partnerships to add value and thereby secure funding.

Our study findings are that Community Rail Partnerships can:

- Lead to additional rail use and passenger fares revenue. We have undertaken detailed analysis of use of all stations in England and Wales (excluding London) between 2002/03 and 2005/06. By looking at growth on lines against the local and regional trend, we conclude that active and effective Community Rail Partnerships should reasonably expect to increase footfall and fares by an additional 7% over 3 years.
- Reduce car use. The Department for Transport appraisal models show that where a project leads to increased rail use, typically, 26% of the increase in passenger km has come from a reduction in car use. Reducing car use is valuable generally; it is particularly important in dealing with congested road corridors. Community Rail Partnerships could be an important tool for Regional Development and highway agencies in developing corridor strategies.
- Contribute to regeneration strategies. Community Rail Partnership activities facilitate regeneration through encouraging tourism development and contributing to access to jobs and training.
- Support people who depend on rail for access to jobs and training. Our surveys of passengers on Community Rail Partnership lines have shown that some people, including shift, part time and low paid workers, depend on rail. Even on Sunday, 12% of passengers surveyed on the Bittern Line were travelling for or to work. On the Tamar line, 44% of passengers were travelling to work, with a further 12% travelling to school or college. Many of these people had no other option for getting to work. Without their local railway, around one third of Tamar Valley passengers surveyed stated that they would face declining employment or education opportunities or have to move away from the area. Community Rail Partnerships support local railways through innovative ticketing schemes, interchange schemes and other improvements.
- Help develop the tourism industry. This is Britain's fifth biggest industry, worth £85bn a year. Within this industry, growing demands for sustainable practice are facilitating joint working with local rail and Community Rail Partnerships. South West Tourism's market research shows that around 10% of holidaymakers actively look to choose green options, with additional passive demand at around 55 - 65% of holidaymakers who will respond well if they come across but will not actively look for it. These holidaymakers are important groups for Community Rail Partnerships to target.
- Achieve high value for money. A simplified model, consistent with Department for Transport appraisal practice, has been developed for this study. It takes into account economic benefits of a shift from car to

rail and also regeneration benefits. A worked example found a ratio of benefits to costs of 4.6 to 1. This puts the scheme in the Department's highest possible value for money category.

- Help deliver passenger satisfaction ratings considerably above the national average. Our surveys on Community Rail Partnership lines showed that on average 93% of passengers were very or fairly satisfied. On Britain's regional routes, the corresponding figure was 84%, and for the national network overall the figure is 81%. These satisfaction figures are also higher than for national surveys of bus passengers and motorists.
- Contribute to government strategies to develop the "third" or voluntary sector. These strategies recognise that voluntary groups such as Community Rail Partnerships can:
 - provide a strong focus on the needs of service users,
 - have the knowledge and expertise to meet complex needs and tackle difficult social issues,
 - the ability to be flexible and offer joined-up service delivery and
 - the experience and independence to innovate.

Government is currently looking at incentives for local government to act in partnership with the third sector, which could benefit Community Rail Partnerships.

- Contribute to better security at and around stations, through station adoption, other community involvement measures and station improvement schemes. ACoRP's Community Stations project is an excellent example. A community based scheme at Northwich station led to a 70% drop in reported crime.
- Contribute to a healthier, less "obesogenic" environment, through encouraging active travel. The current limited research base finds that driving a car is associated with inactivity and obesity; public transport, walking and cycling are associated with better health. Also, that socially and economically disadvantaged people are most likely to be affected by inactivity and obesity. The Government estimates future obesity costs at £49.9bn per year by 2050, unless current trends change. This is a new policy area recognised to link strongly with climate change strategies. Active travel represents a new opportunity for Community Rail Partnerships, which are good at encouraging rail, also in combination with walking and cycling.
- Contribute to environmental strategies. Encouraging low carbon travel is the single important element of Community Rail Partnerships' contribution, but other environmental innovations can also be valuable in making the case for investment.
- Contribute to innovative practice. Examples include:
 - Setting up ticket carnet schemes, which benefit low paid regular but not daily commuters, such as on the Tamar Valley line
 - setting up and running ticket offices in stations which would otherwise be without this service, such as at Gobowen
 - interchange schemes, sometimes simply requiring small changes which benefit passengers, such as the Chirk bus diversion scheme

- working with local schools and education specialists to look at the most effective ways of linking local rail with the national curriculum, such as in Lancashire and
- sustainable practice schemes which address materials recovery, energy use and renewable energy, such as the North Norfolk carbon neutral stations scheme.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that Community Rail Partnerships can deliver growth of rail use and meet the Department for Transport's value for money criteria. This should be helpful for Community Rail Partnerships in seeking funding and support through mainstream transport budgets and programmes.

Community Rail Partnerships can also add value as part of a more holistic approach. Taking into account links with regeneration, access to employment, healthy living, environmental development and other wider issues can help a Community Rail Partnerships prepare a financial case for their projects.

Different objectives will be most appropriate for different Partnerships and in different areas. Some impacts can be quantified and valued, but it is not possible in all cases. Nonetheless, by identifying and capitalising on wider benefits, Community Rail Partnerships should attract a wide and diverse range of funding.