



Demand Responsive Transport: users' views of pre-booked community buses and shared taxis

Agenda

1. Introduction

- Project context, research objectives, overview of method and sample

2. Overview of findings

3. Introducing and communicating DRT

4. Key findings: case study DRT services

- Fixed pick up locations and departure times
Community Minibus Services in Worcestershire
- No fixed route, non-timetabled minibuses services
in Suffolk
- Fixed destination, timetabled taxi share services
in Hampshire

6. Conclusions

Introduction

Project Context

- Cuts to local authority budgets have made some reconsider their spending, including their public transport budgets. As a result, in some areas, local authorities have moved away from subsidising conventional bus services and instead invested in demand responsive transport (DRT).
- The mode of DRT introduced includes a greater reliance on community transport services, minibuses and taxis but varies across councils.
- Qualitative research was required on example DRT services to provide case studies on the impact of the introduction of different models of DRT on passengers and their views on the changes to public transport in their area.
- Note: this work is part of a wider study being undertaken by Transport Focus. Facts and information given are 'as reported' by passengers interviewed within the sample. Therefore, facts, findings and recommendations need to be considered in the context of the wider research report.

Overall research objectives

- **To understand the impact of recent changes to public transport provision on passengers**
- **To examine the different methods local authorities used with the cuts to their budgets from a passenger perspective**
- **To gather information about passengers' travel behaviour and usage patterns in rural and suburban areas**
- **To understand passengers' awareness, views and experience of changes following cuts to local public transport budgets to public transport services in their area**

Method and Sample Overview: 3 service types represented, each from a different location

DRT Type	Service	Location
Fixed pick-up locations and start time, Community Minibus	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Action Malvern Minibus to Gloucester and Cheltenham (crosses county boundary)• Community Bus CB6 to Kidderminster	Worcestershire
No fixed route, non-timetabled Minibus service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Suffolk Links Brecks• Suffolk Links Wilford	Suffolk
Timetabled Taxi Share	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fordingbridge Taxi Share 61 / 62• Southwick Taxi Share 38	Hampshire

Fieldwork conducted between 25 March and 16 April 2015

Detail of each DRT service 1

FIXED PICK-UP LOCATIONS AND DEPARTURE TIME MINIBUS

Worcestershire Community Transport Minibuses (both services)

- The two services run by different community transport organisations* in different locations
- Once a week service (Thursday – coincides with Kidderminster market)
- Fixed departure times
- Booking required - regular passengers can create an ongoing booking, informing the provider if they are not travelling
- Set pick up and drop off locations
- Discounted rate (not free) for concessionary pass holders
- Number of passengers varies and tends to be between 6 and 11

**Minibus to Gloucester and Cheltenham (crosses county boundary) run by Community Action Malvern. Community Bus CB6 to Kidderminster run by Tenbury Transport Trust*

Detail of each DRT service 2

NO FIXED ROUTE, NON-TIMETABLED MINIBUS **Suffolk Links** (both services)

- Runs 7am-7pm Monday to Saturday - no fixed timetable
- Booking required
- Pick up from home or nearby
- Drop off anywhere within the designated area
- Bookings can be made up to 7 days in advance
- Two return bookings can be held at a time
- Up to 6 bookings more than 7 days allowed per year
- Fares based on bus prices – free for concessionary pass holders
- Number of passengers varies and tends to be between 4 – 6 and due to non-timetabled model sometimes as low as one

Detail of each DRT Service 3

NO FIXED ROUTE, NON-TIMETABLED TAXI-SHARE

Hampshire Taxi-Share (both services)

- Destinations served vary by day
- Runs to a timetable on particular days of week
- Booking required - can be made as far in advance as the user wishes, then up to an hour before travel
- Pick up from either home or bus stops in set locations (varies by area):
 - Southwick – bus stop
 - Fordingbridge – home
- Set drop off locations
- Set fares – free for concessionary pass holders
- Typically only one passenger in each vehicle at a time

Method and sample overview

- Mixed methodology representing current and potential users

Mixed methodology	Totals	Per location	
		Current User	Potential User
Qualitative intercepts	45	2 to 5	8 to 15
Face to Face interviews*	11	3 to 4	0 to 1
Telephone Depth Interviews	25	1 to 3	0 to 2
Totals (across all locations)	81	49	12

- All face to face and telephone respondents asked to undertake a **pre-task** which helped participants prepare for interview, reflect on travel patterns and recall historic bus services
- Face to face and telephone respondents were recruited through a mix of list recruitment (current users), re-contact from intercept interviews (current and potential users) and free-find (potential users).

*Originally scheduled to be 4 per location, one face to face interview substituted with a telephone interview in Worcestershire as respondent did not arrive for interview

Sample detail 1

Sample profile		Worcestershire		Suffolk		Hampshire	
		CB6 Minibus to Kidderminster	Cheltenham & Gloucester Minibus	Suffolk Links Brecks	Suffolk Links Wilford	Fordingbridge Taxi Share	Southwick Taxi Share
User status	Current Users	3	4	3	3	3	3
	Potential Users	2	2	0	4	2	2
Gender	Male	1	2	0	3	3	0
	Female	4	4	3	4	2	5
Older person's bus pass holder	Yes	5	6	2	4	4	5
	No	0	0	1	3	1	0

Sample detail 2

- All resident in the designated area
- All users or previous users of public transport
- Potential DRT users:
 - None to reject using a bus / public transport (use at least sometimes, even if out of own location)
- Access to car:
 - A minimum of three respondents per location to not own or have access to a car

Additional Requirements (where possible):

- A spread of journey frequency amongst current DRT users
- All potential DRT users to have previously used the bus services, with a spread of previous journey frequency amongst potential DRT users.
- A spread of reason for travelling (e.g. leisure, health, commuting, shopping)
- A mix of women and men
- A spread of Socio-Economic Grade
- A spread of ages*

**Efforts were made to recruit a spread of ages; however, the profile of bus and DRT passengers seems to cluster in the 65+ age range therefore final sample reflected this. As a sample observation, income levels of respondents tended to be relatively low to limited.*

Key findings

Key findings 1

- **The different DRT solution types under consideration in this research are seen as having a mix of benefits and limitations which are fairly in line with expectations of public transport**
 - However, given the DRT solution has often replaced a failing or reducing bus service, it is often seen as an **improvement** on the previous service by users
 - With this in mind, users often focus on the benefits and work with the system as best they can
 - It is also not always seen as a result of cuts – but rather the development of a more cost-efficient service solution
- **Fares to use DRT services seem to be in line with or less than any previous bus services**
 - As such they were generally felt to be reasonable
 - Concessionary pass holders in Suffolk had paid to use the service before 9.30am and were happy to do so
 - Concessionary pass holders in Worcestershire were **paying a supplementary charge** and seem happy to do so in order to maintain access to a public transport service

Key findings 2

- **Overall, satisfaction amongst users of the different service types appears relatively high:**
 - Within their constraints, services are perceived to deliver relatively well and/or to have a range of perceived benefits
 - While service constraints hinder more frequent usage (that would be liked by some), tolerance is high, expectations are fairly low (given perceptions of the service it replaced) and many passengers seem fairly equipped with emergency back up options
- That said, there is some variation by area in terms of **overall satisfaction amongst users** and appeal to **potential users**
- Lower **overall satisfaction** stems from one of more of the following factors:
 - Ironically, a more extensive DRT service *setting higher expectations* which are then not delivered (e.g. Suffolk, Hampshire)
 - **Inadequate consultation and communications** at the time of change
 - In some cases, the service being offered not **meeting personal needs** (e.g. more mobility issues, not catering to spontaneous journeys)

Key findings 3

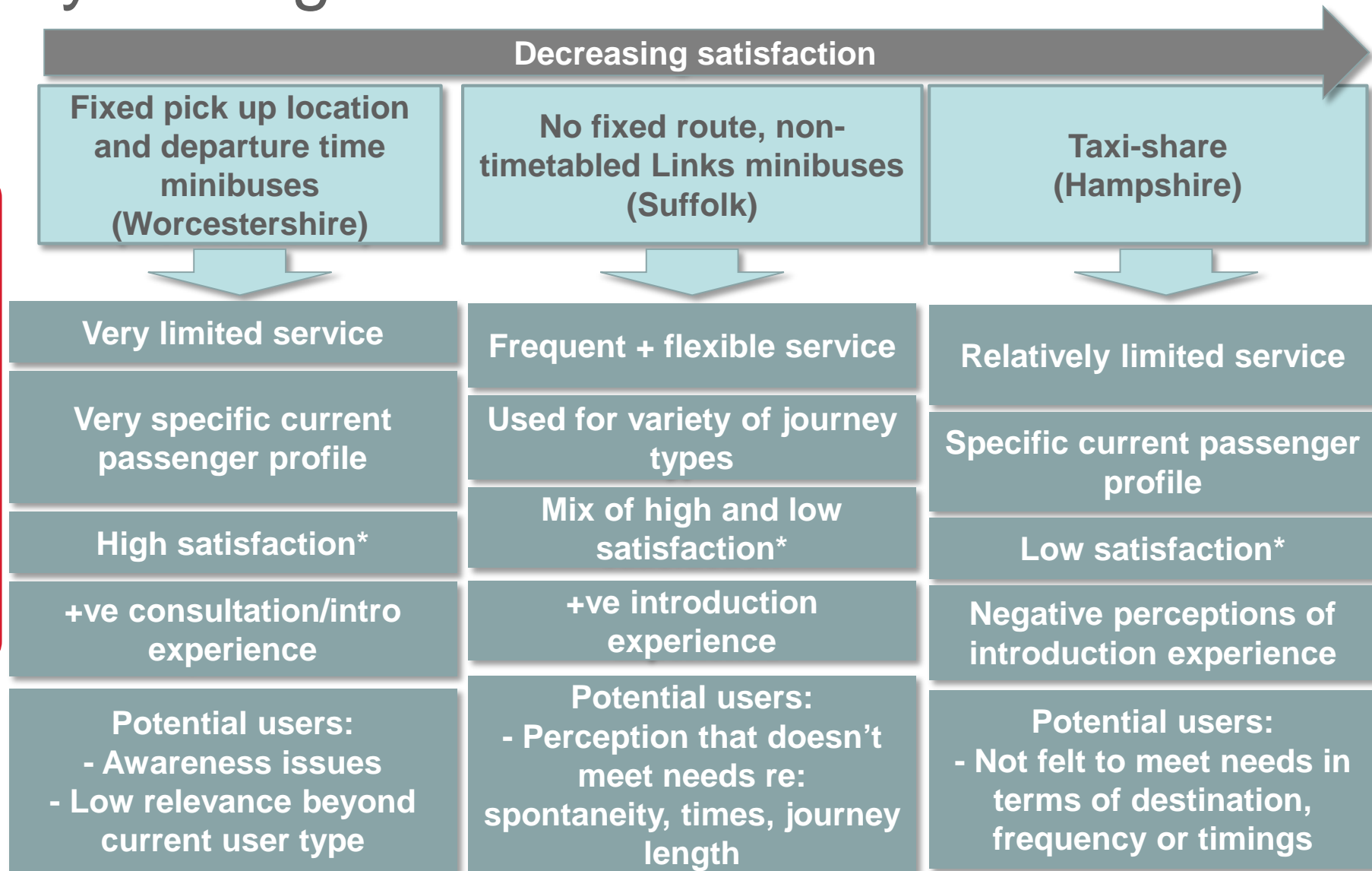
- **Travel purpose and user profile** is also relevant:
 - As the passenger profile in each area appears largely retired and has flexibility in lifestyle, needs from the DRT service are generally less extensive than other passenger groups
 - Workers do feature but they are in the minority → overall, services might need to evolve to better meet needs if they are a realistic potential market within a DRT area
- Appeal to **potential users** is affected by:
 - General awareness issues
 - Expectation that the service will be high effort to use (booking, restricted timing), especially if other transport options are available to them
 - Assumption that the service is targeted at other people/people not like me, which impacts on younger public transport users and workers
- With the above in mind, **a key learning is about the value of communication** in:
 - Setting *positive expectations* and *perceptions of relevance*
 - Establishing *initial* and *ongoing* awareness

Key findings 4

- At their core, the DRT services researched share some of the same **appropriate characteristics**
 - Booking in advance
 - More direct routes than conventional bus services
 - Personal service which can be tailored to passenger needs
- Overall it would seem that **the following may help DRT have a positive reception** when introduced:
 - Service being run on a minibus rather than a taxi – this seems to help maintain both the social element of travelling on a bus which is important to passengers and the expectation that the service provided will be in line with a bus.
 - Service offered by a community transport organisation – which seems to help passengers accept limitations on the service and create a positive relationship between passengers and drivers
 - Service introduced to passengers in a way which feels open, so passengers understand why the changes are being made and also feel that action is being taken to preserve their access to public transport

Key findings 5

- Some differences between service type



DRT overview

Several themes are apparent across the areas researched, irrespective of particular DRT solution ...

In general, bus services to rural communities are seen as a lifeline to those who need them



- However their inflexibility means they tend not to be used by those who have alternatives

Bus services tend to:

- Run infrequently – services varied from *1 service a day* to *1 service a week*
- Be perceived as *unreliable**
- Take relatively *long routes* – often becoming longer as services are merged
- Collect from a *central location which may be difficult to access*, especially for those with mobility issues

Given the restrictions and challenges of using a rural bus, those who can seem to drive. Passengers who do rely on the bus seem to have become accustomed to, and therefore have relatively high *tolerance* for, planning around the transport which is available to them

Overview: there are some ways in which DRT meets passenger needs better than a conventional bus service

Overarching benefits of DRT

Often **door to door or pick up / drop off locations much more convenient** - even if this service is not advertised drivers will pick / drop passengers at their door

Friendly and helpful drivers who help passengers on and off the service and with shopping

Services allow sufficient time at destination to complete regular activities e.g. shopping

Passengers are expected meaning they can't miss the service → potential to act as **unofficial social safety net**, checking on elderly and infirm passengers

Pleasant experience of using – scenic yet direct routes, passengers enjoy the sociability of using the service



Overview: however, there are also ways in which DRT falls short of passenger needs

- These appear to be particularly strong barriers to use amongst potential users

Overarching drawbacks to DRT

Having to book
removes possibility of making spontaneous journeys*

Introduction of DRT tends to result in **even less frequent services, shorter time at destination and restricted destinations.** This limits social and leisure activities of passengers dependent on the service

Service times don't always meet passenger needs

Variable journey length can make planning challenging

Services are run in smaller vehicles (e.g. Minibus, taxi) which can make accessibility challenging, act as a deterrent to use for those with buggies and can make it difficult to carry lots of shopping



Greater impact

Less impact

These common benefits and drawbacks across DRT solutions tend to mean that services are a better fit with needs of the retired than other transport users

Indeed, current DRT passengers seem to fit a fairly typical profile



- State pension age - entitled to *concessionary travel*
- Often no alternative mode of transport (either public or personal)
- Seeking to maintain independence
- Travelling for regular shopping and to stay active
- Some with mobility issues
- DRT also currently used by a passenger who is unable to work due to illness (aged 59) – needs and reasons for travelling very similar to older passengers

Due to their lifestyle, DRT passengers often have high levels of flexibility which means they are relatively able to accommodate changes to services, which contributes to tolerance and perceived ease of use

Despite some consistency in overall profile (60+), there is variation in their needs and attitudes



*More active – greater
desire for flexibility of
travel*

- Use the service for once a week shopping trips
 - Also keen to use for varied leisure travel requiring onward journeys/public transport connections - longer day trips, other social activities e.g. Theatre, meeting friends, lunch
 - Part-time workers using to go directly, or onward connection to, work
- Greater desire for flexible service and range of service times

*Less active – lower
desire for flexibility of
travel*

- Content with once a week trips for shopping
 - Limited desired to explore further afield
 - Concerned about being out for too long and becoming tired
- Little perceived need for flexible service, happy with limited service times

Attitude, rather than age, seems to play a key role in determining passenger activities and this strongly influences what they want from a public transport service. For those with more needs or higher lifestyle aspirations, DRT needs some flexibility to meet needs

Whilst most current users had bus passes, passengers across locations had experiences of paying to use the DRT service

Perception of fares

- Where respondents were aware of fares they typically felt they were reasonable
- Fares for DRT seem to be pitched at about the same price / lower than any historic bus fares

Perception of paying

- Respondents who have no alternative form of public transport seem to accept paying for DRT services as the alternative (a taxi) would be much more expensive
- Passengers who do have alternate transport feel that DRT is cheaper + more convenient than parking so also willing to pay
- Some anecdotal evidence that some passengers in Worcestershire were not using the DRT service as they would have to pay
- However, some feel that it is unfair that pensioners who live in rural areas could have to pay when those who live in urban / suburban areas can travel for free

There is evidence that some passengers eligible for free travel do seem willing to pay a supplementary charge to use DRT services when no other public transport is available – perhaps because the alternative (a taxi) would be even more expensive.

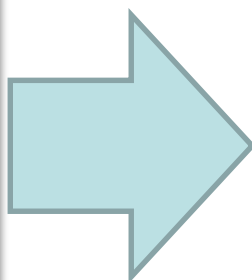
Introducing and communicating DRT services

How DRT is introduced and communicated impacts significantly on perceptions and awareness

How residents are finding out about DRT services 1

- **Word of mouth plays a very strong role in communicating DRT to passengers**

Community meeting:
Seems to be where decisions are made and service is announced



In areas where the introduction of DRT has received a positive reception residents seem more likely to believe their views were taken into account when designing / developing the service

They gave us a form to fill in to say how often we'd be using it. The lady came onto the bus the first time it ran and gave it to us.
[Current User, CB6 Minibus, Worcestershire]

We were given an invitation, inviting us to come down to the discussion. People spoke up about it, said it was a good service. They were trying to get other services as well. [Current User, CB6 Minibus, Worcestershire]

Ensuring that residents feel consulted and are engaged in any process of introducing a DRT service seems to help build support for, and encourage satisfaction with, the service. Variations in satisfaction by area to some extent reflected perceived variations in consultation.

How residents are finding out about DRT services 2

- **Word of mouth plays a very strong role in communicating DRT to other residents and on the whole other forms of communication seem low level**



Residents do feel that word of mouth has a strong role to play in village communications; however, there is a possibility for distortion of the message or loss of detail which can act as a deterrent to use by potential users.

How residents are finding out about DRT services 3

- Maintaining ongoing awareness of DRT seems to be a challenge faced amongst services researched

In each of the areas researched lack of awareness of DRT amongst potential users who had recently moved to the area seems to indicate that DRT is communicated at the point of introduction but there is little ongoing communication / information



When passengers are collected from home or a 'designated area' rather than a bus stop there tend to be few signifiers of a service that someone new to the area could pick up on e.g. Recognisable public transport bus, timetables on display

Word of mouth seems to be key to communicating DRT but social circles in rural communities can be small and limited to immediate neighbours, limiting opportunities for word to spread.

Ensuring that there is ongoing information about the service could help maintain demand for the service.

One of the locals told us when we first moved here... I can't remember a lot they just said there's a service but you have to ring up for it [Potential User, Minibus, Suffolk, Wilford]

I am not going to say they definitely haven't sent me anything but I do think that they could perhaps do a bit more. [Potential User, Fordingbridge Taxishare, Hampshire]

Needs for communicating DRT

- **The following approaches emerged as potential methods for communicating the introduction of DRT services**

- Door to door distribution of printed information leaflets → will reach most – some admit to throwing this type of mail away
- Receiving a letter from the council explaining the changes and how DRT works → felt to be personal approach, less likely to be instantly dismissed
- Leaflets in public places such as doctors, community centres, schools, libraries and post offices → where people are lingering and reading available information
- Notices / articles in local / village magazines
- Posters in village shops and/ or at bus stops

One of the most efficient ways to publicise it would be in shop windows, because everyone goes shopping and has a look at what's on display. [Potential User, Cheltenham and Gloucester Minibus, Worcestershire]

The best way, undoubtedly is word of mouth. That is how it works in the country but these pamphlets are fine. You could put one through every door in every village. You could communicate through the churches. You could communicate through schools, you could communicate through the community centres. [Current User, Suffolk Links Wilford, Suffolk]

For local authorities introducing DRT, using a range of communications channels will reach the widest range of residents and help create the sense that they are being open and transparent when making changes

Experiences and perceptions of minibus DRT in Worcestershire

Services Researched:

- CB6 Minibus to Kidderminster – Tenbury Transport Trust
- Minibus to Cheltenham & Gloucester – Community Action Malvern

Minibus DRT Services in Worcestershire

Sample Summary

	Tenbury Transport Trust CB6 Minibus to Kidderminster			Total
	F2F	Tele- depths	Intercept	
Current Users	1	1	/	2
Potential Users	0	2	/	2
Total	1	3	/	4

	Community Action Malvern Cheltenham & Gloucester Minibus			Total
	F2F	Tele- depths	Intercept	
Current Users	2	2	5	9
Potential Users	0	2	8	10
Total	2	4	13	19

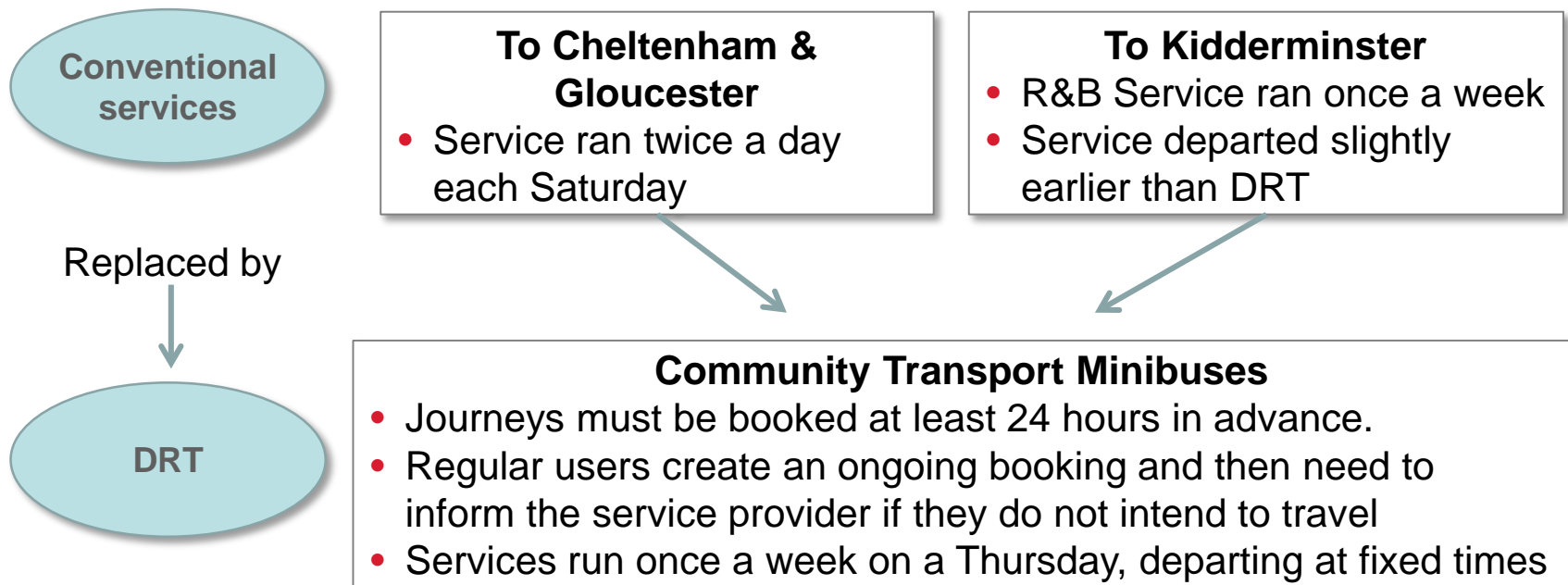
- **Intercept interviews were carried out in Malvern**
- **Current users were recruited through contacts from the service providers, one potential user was recruited through the intercept interviews and the remainder were free-find**

Timetabled Minibus DRT Services in Worcestershire – Overview of findings

- DRT Services researched in Worcestershire are perceived as being closest to a conventional bus service. Services have a pick up location and departure time. As most passengers are regulars, each service takes a similar route at about the same time each week giving the impression of a timetable. This is further reinforced by the ability of regular passengers to create an ongoing booking meaning that they can then turn up and go
- Prior to the introduction of the DRT services there was only one service a week along these routes so passengers feel that the replacement is adequate
- Passengers recognised that the previous services had not been busy enough and so accepted the need for change
- The DRT service is the only one which operates along this route so it provides a real lifeline for passengers who are incredibly grateful for it
- The service feels personal. Whilst passengers perceive that there are fixed collection / drop off points, drivers will collect and drop passengers to their door and are generally felt to create a pleasant atmosphere whilst travelling
- As there is only one service, once a week passengers have no flexibility of time at their destination – some passengers would like to have an option to return slightly later
- The main barrier to wider use of the service amongst those without a car seems to be lack of awareness. For some with a car the service is seen as being too inflexible to replace their car

Changes to availability of bus services

- The Minibus DRT services researched in Worcestershire are very close to the previous conventional bus service in terms of scheduling, route, and process of using the service which seems to have made transition easier for users



Timetabled Minibus DRT services in Worcestershire are slightly more restrictive (in terms of time passengers have at their destination and service frequency) replacements of the services which ran before

Public transport needs of passengers in Worcestershire determined by level of isolation and extent to which other options are available

DRT is only transport option

- Living in remote / isolated area ill-served by public transport
- Cannot drive/ do not have car
- No local family members who can help with transport

DRT is best transport option

- Passengers living on the edge of a town* where other bus services are a long walk away
- May have own car, often do not
- May also have limited access to transport through family members when necessary

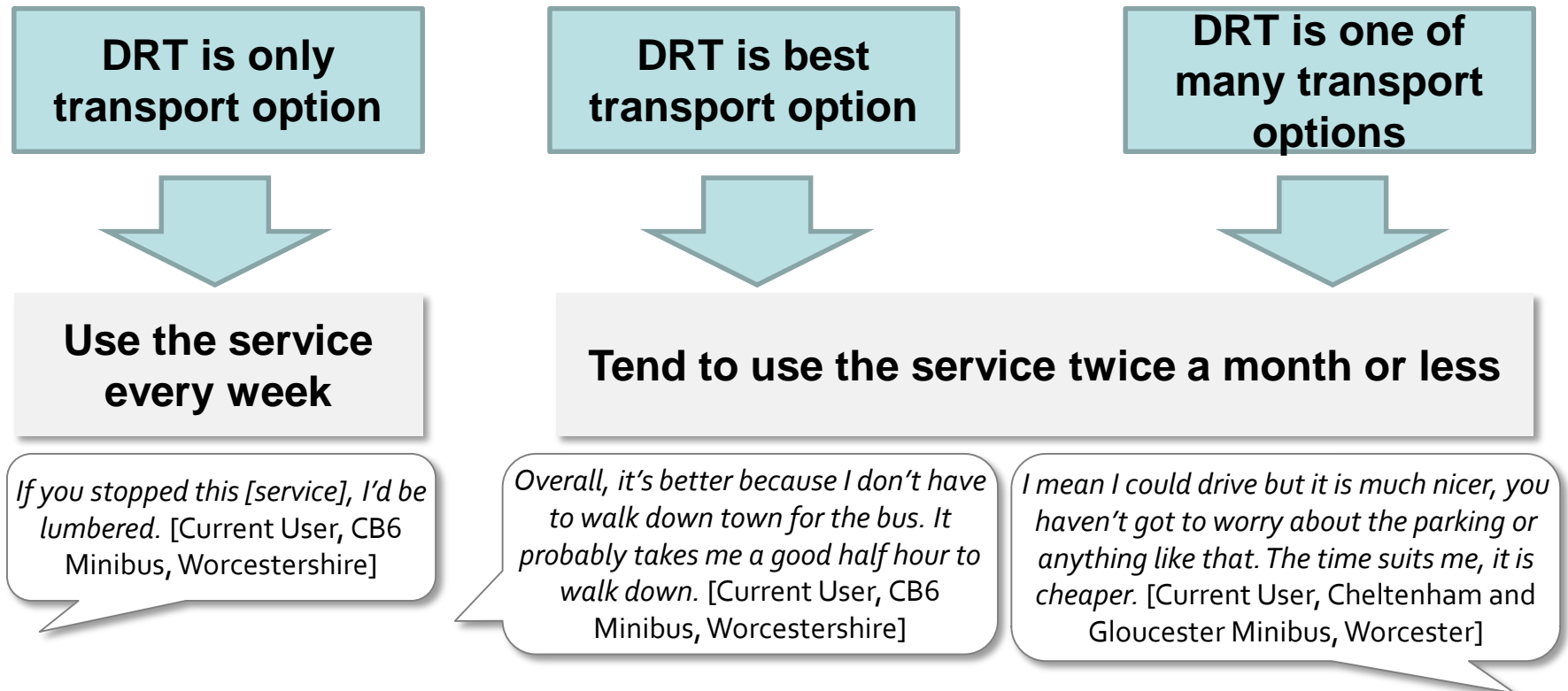
DRT is one of many transport options

- May have access to a car meaning DRT is a cheaper alternative to parking when it suits
- Living in a market town means that a wide range of buses are available, though DRT is only one going to a particular destination

For most current or potential respondents in Worcestershire, DRT was either their only or best transport option – these groups are the core DRT audience.
Limited public transport seems to be accepted as part of reality of living rurally (as a non-driver).

In light of this, public transport options tend to determine travel behaviour and patterns

- Respondents reported that DRT services in Worcester are meeting their needs for frequency



Many passengers interviewed were totally dependent on the DRT service for transportation.

Specific travel behaviour, patterns and needs

- **Service use seems to be for shopping trips as the service is too infrequent / irregular to be useful for other journey purposes**

DRT useful for

- **Essential weekly shopping trips** → passengers seem willing and able to plan these journeys in advance
- **Visiting a relative** in a nearby town

At one time you could get on that bus route and it would go Worcester and then the hospital. Then all of a sudden, with cutbacks, we lost the connection from Malvern to the hospital. [Current User, Cheltenham & Gloucester Minibus, Worcestershire]

DRT less useful for

- **Hospital / doctor / dentist appointments** → residents in areas served by weekly DRT service need to make alternate arrangements e.g. Hospital transport, taxi, lift from family / friends
- **Evening leisure activities** e.g. Theatre, dinner with friends → restricts frequency and ease of undertaking these activities

Whilst a weekly service cannot meet all passenger needs, passengers seemed able to make alternative arrangements where necessary and were focused on the positives of the service running, rather than any unmet needs.

Experience of using the services: Booking

- **Typical usage for weekly shopping trips fits well with booking as passengers are typically willing and able to plan their journey in advance**

Process

- Journeys can be booked up to a week in advance.
- Both services operate a system whereby regular passengers create an ongoing booking, then call if they are not travelling

Current User Perceptions

- Seen as easy, straightforward and low hassle
- Passenger lifestyles seem to fit with booking
- Weekly passengers inform service provider if they are not travelling
- Passengers feel that the service is never full meaning they do not seem to have any concerns about securing a seat

Potential User Perceptions

- Potential user who used CB6 Minibus found booking straightforward
- Potential passengers see booking as a benefit as it guarantees that the bus will arrive and there will be a seat for them

You just ring up Community Action and book a seat, it's very easy. I just ring and that's fine. [Current User, Cheltenham & Gloucester Minibus, Worcestershire]

Ringin up to book would be fine. [Potential User, Cheltenham and Gloucester Minibus, Worcestershire]

Having to book seems to have limited impact on these DRT passengers as regular passengers can create a regular booking, and those less regular passengers who do need to book find this easy.

Experience of using the services: Fares

- **Concessionary bus pass users do have to pay to use these DRT services, but this does not seem to act as a deterrent to use, even amongst those on a limited income**

Process

- CB6 Minibus costs £6 return
- C&G Minibus costs £2 return

Passenger Perceptions

- All respondents were concessionary bus pass holders
- Both current and potential users feel that the fare to use the service is reasonable and claim to be happy to pay the fare to use this service
- Some anecdotal evidence that some local residents who had used previous service were unwilling to use CB6 Minibus as they would have to pay

I would be more than prepared to pay, oh yes, I think everybody else would be. I think it is a general feeling. If there is a choice between no service and paying, we're prepared to pay. [Current User, Cheltenham and Gloucester Minibus, Worcester]

The price was incredibly reasonable at £2, I wouldn't even have batted an eyelid if it was a fiver for that journey. [Potential User, Cheltenham and Gloucester Minibus, Worcestershire]

Amongst respondents the concessionary bus pass seems to be viewed a privilege rather than a right, and so they were happy to pay a small additional fare to make these journeys.

Experience of using the services: travel to destination 1

- **The experience of using these DRT services seems to be more enjoyable than using a conventional bus**

Process

- Services depart (outbound and return) at fixed times
- Actual collection and journey times dependent on number of passengers

It's very easy [to use the service]. If [the driver] knows you're coming and you are not there, he will walk down and check or he will phone you. If it is late, they will phone me saying 'I am sorry I'm going be ten minutes late'. [Current User, Cheltenham and Gloucester Minibus, Worcester]

Passenger Perceptions

- Perception that service is more punctual than the previous bus service and when there are delays the office inform passengers
- As the same passengers typically travel each week pick up and drop off times are fairly consistent
- Pick up and drop off points are in very convenient places – closer than the regular bus service where this exists
- Passengers perceive that there are **fixed** pick up and drop off points, so pick up / drop off at front door (e.g. in bad weather) is felt to be an added extra benefit of service
- Passengers praised the friendliness and helpfulness of drivers on DRT services:
 - Helping passengers on and off the service
 - Helping load trolleys on to the bus.

It is a very good service, the drivers are volunteers, they do anything you want them to do, you know, drive out of their way... so that is very good. [Current User, Cheltenham and Gloucester Minibus, Worcester]

Experience of using the service: travel to destination 2

Route taken

- Routes are felt to be suitably direct - often more direct than current / previous conventional bus services
- Knowing which passengers will be getting on in advance allows drivers to alter route reducing journey time
- Passengers enjoy the scenery

It's handy and runs on time. It's quicker to Kidderminster [than the conventional bus service]. [Current User, CB6 Minibus, Worcestershire]

Social Experience

- Journey itself is an enjoyable social experience as there are often many familiar faces on the journey
- Some feel that the smaller physical space of the minibus vs. a larger bus encourages greater social interaction

Today there was 7 or 8 of us and we were all chatting away, the driver was happy and he was having a chat with a gentlemen. It was so nice. [Current User, Cheltenham & Gloucester Minibus, Worcestershire]

Passengers using these DRT services feel that they get a more personal service than on conventional bus services which makes the journey more enjoyable.

Experience of using the services: time at Destination

Fixed pick-up location
and departure time
minibus, Worcs

- **As there is one outward and one return service per week DRT users have only a fixed amount of time at their destination**

Process

- Services both allow about 3 hours at destination

Passenger Experience

- This time typically allows passengers to complete their shopping then head back to the bus for the return journey
- This is often sufficient time but some passengers would sometimes like more time in town or an option for a later return
- Limited time and inflexibility of return perceived by users to be a barrier to greater uptake of service
- This was reinforced by comments from potential users who could both see that they may want / need more time in town

I think 1:50pm is a little bit early to come back. That's not really enough time to walk around and do your shopping.
[Potential User, Cheltenham and Gloucester Minibus, Worcestershire]

Although the ideal would allow for more flexibility, the inflexibility of time that these services allow passengers to spend at their destination is generally accepted as the service is known to be run by volunteers.

Experience of using the services: return journey

- **The return journey is another instance where these DRT services can offer a more personal service than conventional buses**

Process

- Services are scheduled to depart at fixed times

Passenger Experience

- Knowing who is due to be getting back on the bus means drivers can set off early if they know everyone is back on the bus
- Drops passengers in a convenient location – bus drivers offer to drop passengers near their home where possible

It's supposed to [come back] at quarter past one, but if everyone's on the bus it comes back early anyway because they know how many are on the bus. We come back earlier usually.
[Current User, CB6 Minibus, Worcestershire]

We catch it up at the shops, but it will drop us back at our doors. [Current User, CB6 Minibus, Worcestershire]

Overall, passengers seem to find that their service fits well with their lifestyle and really enjoy the experience of using it.

Lack of awareness of the service seems to be the main barrier to use amongst potential users

- When introduced, the service seems appealing, though as in other areas booking could be a barrier to those with alternative transport options

Reason for not using	Perceptions of DRT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful service – only option servicing that location (Cheltenham / Kidderminster) • Pleasant, scenic route • Booking perceived to guarantee a seat and that service will turn up • Fares seen as reasonable • Potential user who made a journey felt that the experience of using the service was highly enjoyable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Booking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived to be a 'hassle' by some with alternative transport (car)

I didn't know there was a bus that ran that way. It sounds like a good service for anyone who wanted to go into Gloucester and Cheltenham...it's really a pleasant, pretty journey that way too. [Potential User, Cheltenham and Gloucester Minibus, Worcestershire]

I think [the service is] suitable for anyone who is 25 and over, and wants a day out without any car...I'd definitely recommend it. [Potential User, Cheltenham and Gloucester Minibus, Worcestershire]

It seems that when people know about the service it does hold appeal, so ensuring that DRT services are continually publicised could help to maintain demand for the service.

Finding out about changes and perceptions of process management

Fixed pick-up location
and departure time
minibus, Worcs

**Passengers using these
minibus services in
Worcestershire seem to have
understood and accepted the
rationale for changes to their
services**

- All seemed to recognise that their service had not been busy enough to be sustainable
- Changes to services do not seem to have come as a surprise

There were cutbacks at [the bus service]. The majority of people using the service were bus pass holders, so they weren't getting enough money, they said they were losing £50 every time they ran the service. [Current Passenger, CB6 Minibus]

This may have contributed to a broadly positive feeling amongst passengers about how the process was managed

- Passengers appeared to feel that they had sufficient notice about the removal of the old service (2 – 3 months)
- Whilst there was a period of uncertainty about what would happen to the service this seems to have been resolved quickly enough to prevent it from becoming a dominant issue
- Passengers felt that they were informed of the introduction any changes to their service within a reasonable timeframe (1 – 2 months)
- Across both services passengers appear to feel that there has been good continuity of service

Although a plan for DRT services seems not to have been in place when the bus service was withdrawn, new services were put in place quickly enough to make the transition feel seamless. This seems to have contributed to positive recollections of the transition period amongst passengers.

Awareness of changes – CB6 Community Bus Service to Kidderminster

Change process

- CB6 service replaced the 'R&B' bus – driver announced that service was ceasing
- Representative from Tenbury Transport Trust then came on board the bus to explore potential interest and take-up in replacement service
- CB6 runs on same day at similar time to previous service → near seamless transition
- Passengers register to use the service and provide details of bus pass
- Weekly passengers have booked themselves onto the bus as a regular passenger in advance and inform the service provider if they are not travelling

When the R&B finished, they...I think one of the ladies off the bus approached these people and they decided to put the bus on for us. It's the only bus she has. [Current User, CB6 Minibus, Worcestershire]

When I filled in the form to start with I said I'd be using it every week. I only let them know if I'm not going for the bus. [Current User, CB6 Minibus, Worcestershire]

The similarities between the services means that passengers do not seem to perceive there to be any substantial difference between the CB6 and 'conventional' bus service which ran previously

Awareness of changes – CA Malvern Minibus to Cheltenham & Gloucester

Change process

- Passengers heard from fellow passengers or bus driver that previous service to Cheltenham was ending
- Community meetings were held and local councillor lobbied for replacement service
- Passengers were made aware that replacing the service was more challenging as, when services cross county lines, issues are raised about which LA will subsidise the service. When towns are equidistant this can seem arbitrary and therefore frustrating.

Changes made vs previous bus

- Previous services ran on Wednesday and Saturday – DRT service now only runs on a Thursday as it is harder to find volunteer bus drivers on a weekend
- There is only 1 return service a day when there had been 2 previously – this had allowed for greater flexibility and more options e.g. Onward travel, spending longer in town which is now restricted
- Passengers are grateful for any service available

A [Saturday service] would be useful but I sort of altered my weekly life style, you know, to accommodate it. [Current User, Cheltenham and Gloucester Minibus, Worcester]

Services which cross county lines seem to be more challenging to co-ordinate, even when there is a clear passenger interest in doing so. Community transport organisations may provide a way of providing these services where local authorities can not.

Awareness of and views on Local Authority cuts

Fixed pick-up location
and departure time
minibus, Worcs

- **Passengers were generally aware that changes to their local public transport service was a result of cuts to local public spending**

Reasons for changes

- Passengers often seemed aware that their service had not been busy and/or had been losing money
- Whilst there is some frustration the service being restricted, passengers seemed understanding of the need to make changes to the service

Perceptions of DRT

- DRT is often seen as a positive change which reflects well on the local authority by current and potential users alike

Service distribution

- Some passengers do query transport strategy when services to some destinations run every 10 minutes and others are completely cut back
- Passengers on county borders felt that this leads to them having extremely limited service provision, with risk of no public transport at all

You can see buses leaving Worcester every few minutes... So it makes you think, why do they need so many buses when there are so few here?

[Potential User, Cheltenham and Gloucester Minibus, Worcestershire]

Current and potential passengers generally seem to believe that the DRT service is the best way the local authority could have handled restricted budget for local transport. Many feel that DRT is an improvement on previous bus services on the basis of the benefits outlined earlier which allow for a positive (albeit restricted) user experience.

Experiences and perceptions of non-timetabled minibus DRT in Suffolk

Services researched:

- Suffolk Links Wilford
- Suffolk Links Brecks

Non-timetabled minibus DRT Services in Suffolk - sample summary

	Suffolk Links Wilford			Total		Suffolk Links Brecks			Total
	F2F	Tele- depths	Intercepts			F2F	Tele- depths	Intercepts	
Current Users	1	2	2	3	Current Users	2	1	/	3
Potential Users	1	3	15	19	Potential Users	0	0	/	0
Total	2	5	17	22	Total	2	1	/	3

- Intercept interviews were carried out in Orford
- Current users were recruited through contacts from the service providers. 2 potential users were recruited through the intercept interviews and 2 using free-find recruitment methods

**Potential users of Suffolk Links Brecks were replaced with potential users of Suffolk Links Wilford due to challenges recruiting potential users within the project timescales.*

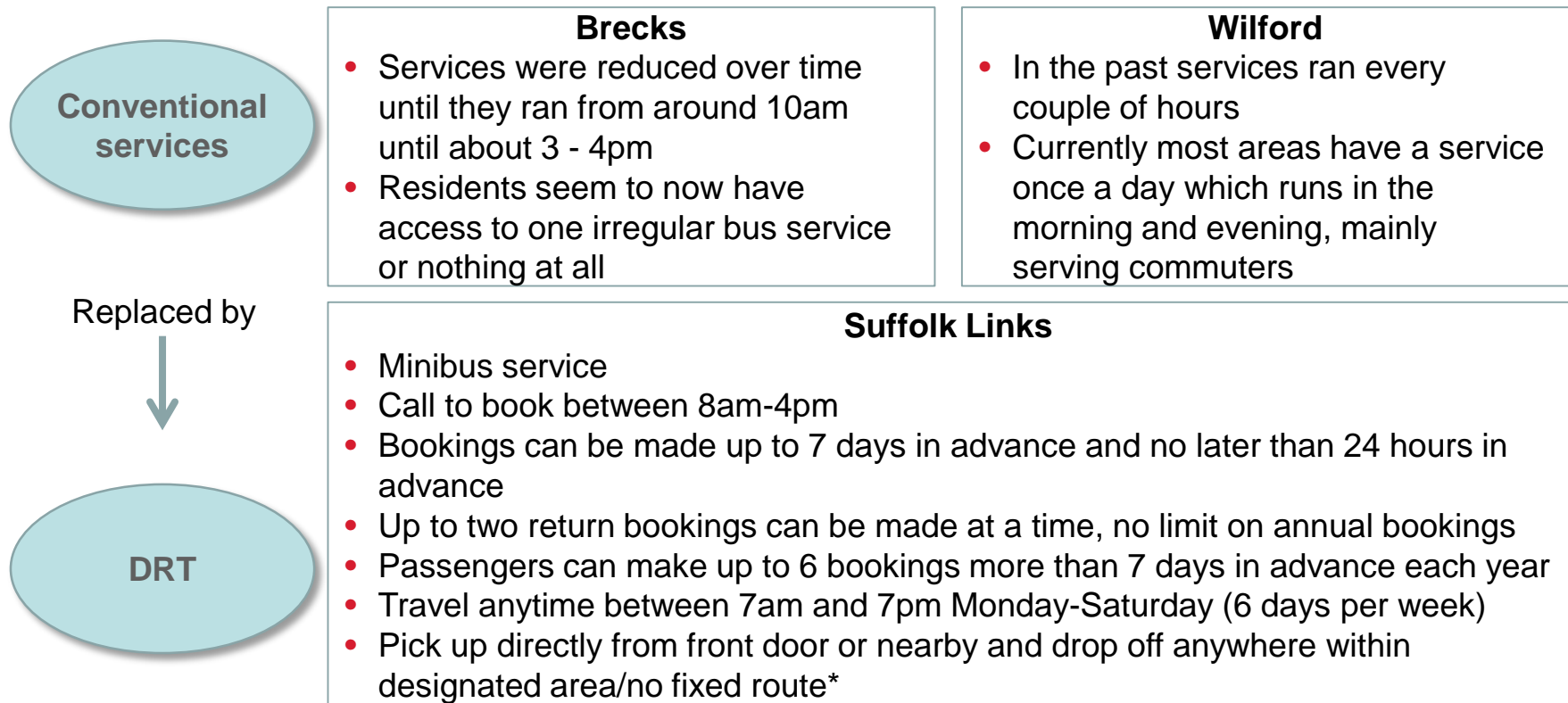
Non-timetabled Minibus DRT Services in Suffolk – Overview of Findings

- The Suffolk Links services are furthest from a conventional bus service and offer the most flexibility in terms of travel times for passengers. The service can feel more like, and has been compared to, a taxi. The Suffolk Links Brecks and Suffolk Links Wilford services appear to be perceived in very similar ways, and there are no clear differences in passenger experiences between the two services
- For many current passengers DRT is their only option of transport: they are very grateful for the service and therefore seem largely forgiving of any inconveniences, i.e. having to travel at a different time or take a detours for other passengers
- Most passengers are able to be extremely flexible with travel and journey times and even those with specific commitments such as work or appointments are often happy to travel earlier than needed
- However, for some passengers, having to plan in advance, not always being able to get the service time they require and varying journey lengths are felt to be drawbacks of the service.
- Amongst potential users these same features seem to be fairly significant barriers to use
- There seemed to be greater dissatisfaction with service availability and times in Suffolk than Worcestershire, even though the service offering is much greater flexibility this also results in lower predictability of service times and availability

It seems that by offering greater flexibility of service Suffolk Links may also have raised passenger expectations around service levels, yet cannot always meet these.

Changes to availability of bus services

- As in other areas researched, availability of conventional bus services in Suffolk areas has gradually reduced. Bus stops for services which do run are often quite far from people's homes making them inaccessible for the elderly and those with mobility issues



The introduction of Suffolk Links has overall *improved* accessibility and service frequency vs. previous or alternative forms of public transport.

Audience Needs and Mindset

- As in other areas Suffolk DRT services are used by a mix of passengers for whom the service is their only option and those for whom it the most convenient form of transport. It seems that in areas better served by other forms of public transport expectations about frequency of service are raised.

DRT is only transport option

- No other local bus service and those which do run can be 1 -2 miles away meaning they are inaccessible for the elderly and/ or disabled
- Have no one else to provide transport on a daily basis

The only way I can leave the house is with [DRT]. I can't walk to the bus stop, and the buses here are so few and far between. [Current User, Suffolk Links Brecks, Suffolk]

DRT is best transport option

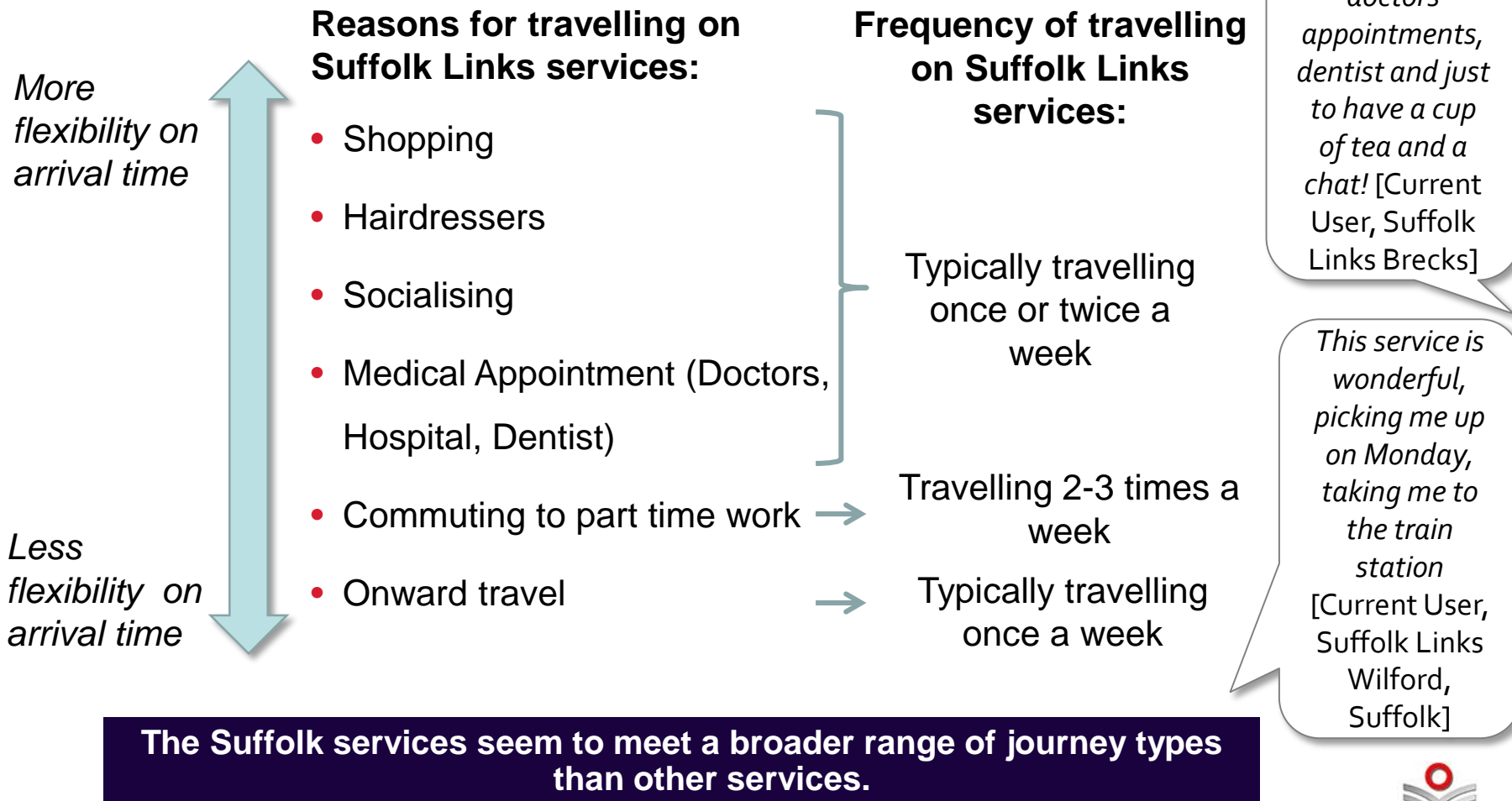
- Other services or transport is available but DRT is more convenient due to one / more of:
 - Cost
 - Service frequency – once a day service does not meet needs
 - Practicalities when making onward journeys

The Brecks is a better service because the Newmarket only goes out to Mildenhall and Newmarket whereas Brecks goes out to Thetford and all of that area [Current User, Minibus, Suffolk, Brecks]

As in other areas, those who have no alternative transport seem to be the primary audience for DRT services in Suffolk.

Specific Travel Behaviour and Patterns

- The greater flexibility of the Suffolk services open them up to much more mixed modes of use than seen in other areas



Experience of using the services:

Booking 1

No fixed
route/timetable
Minibus - Suffolk

- **Current passengers seem to have a positive experience of booking the Suffolk Links services**

Process

- Booking line is open from 8:00am to 4:00pm Monday to Friday
- Bookings can be made up to 7 days in advance
- Two return journey bookings can be held at any time
- Up to 6 journeys per year can be booked more than 7 days in advance

Current Passenger Perceptions

- Staff are friendly and try to accommodate passenger needs
- Booking process perceived to be very easy
- Booking line has long and convenient opening hours
- Easy to change/cancel to bookings

Potential Passenger Perceptions

- Potential passengers tended to feel that booking would be impractical and inhibit any spontaneity

I just ring the girls and they'll book me in any time I need, it's great! [Current User, Minibus, Suffolk, Brecks]

Booking is a nuisance, if I called for a doctor's appointment and they only had one time I wouldn't be able to go because I wouldn't get a bus [Potential User, Minibus, Suffolk, Wilford]

Overall, booking is felt to be easy. However both potential and current users do feel that having to book restricts their ability to make spontaneous journeys. This seems to be felt more strongly than in Worcestershire, indicating that the greater flexibility and frequency of the service could be raising passenger expectations.

Experience of using the services:

Booking 2

No fixed
route/timetable
Minibus - Suffolk

- There were mixed perceptions about the general availability of the service and convenience of service times

Process

- Passengers call to book and specify what time they would like to be - passenger journey times may be subject to change depending on later bookings

Positive Passenger Experiences

- Some passengers are very happy and find that it is rare that the time they require is unavailable

Negative Passenger Experiences

- Some passengers feel it can be difficult to get required times
- Passengers are being told the service is not available at a particular time if there is a conflicting booking rather than service being re-scheduled
- Booking staff are not always knowledgeable of the local area meaning they are sometimes perceived to give poor advice on service availability (booking staff may say a journey isn't possible but passengers feel it is)

All I have to do is telephone and they work out a route of everyone who wants to be picked up and then they tell them what time they can do it.

[Current User, Suffolk Links Wilford, Suffolk]

They say "we can't get you because the bus isn't there at that time", you can never have the time that you want.

[Current User, Suffolk Links Wilford, Suffolk]

Experience of using the services: Booking 3

No fixed
route/timetable
Minibus - Suffolk

Process

- Up to 2 bookings can be held at any time

More than 9 times out of 10 the service can do what I need them to do.

[Current User, Suffolk Links Wilford, Suffolk]

Positive Passenger Experiences

- Meets the needs of passengers who travel twice a week or less

They have this rule, who made it I don't know, you can't make more than 2 bookings at any once time per week, it's quite ridiculous for working people.

[Current User, Suffolk Links Wilford, Suffolk]

Negative Passenger Experiences

- Can be inconvenient e.g. For passengers who need to travel more frequently for work
- Some misunderstand the booking system and think they can only travel twice a week – this is not the case but 3rd booking onwards would need to be made at short notice

The only bug bear is that you can only do two bookings

[Current User, Suffolk Links Wilford, Suffolk]

Experience of using the services: Booking 4

No fixed
route/timetable
Minibus - Suffolk

Process

- Each passenger is permitted to make up to 6 bookings more than 7 days in advance each year

Positive Passenger Experiences

- Some feel that this allocation is sufficient to ensure the service will be available for important appointments

Negative Passenger Experiences

- However, others feel they need to 'save' pre-booking allocation in case of an unexpected appointment

It's very difficult with medical appointments because if you've used all of your pre-bookings up then you have to wait a week, by which time they are usually fully booked and you have to rearrange your medical appointment and hope that they can do a different day, and repeat the process. [Current User, Suffolk Links Brecks, Suffolk]

Whilst the greater flexibility offered by these services benefits passengers it also leads to greater unpredictability over availability of services at particular times and less understanding when services are not available.

Experience of using the services: Fares

No fixed
route/timetable
Minibus - Suffolk

- **Most passengers have a concessionary bus pass (which can be used on the service) and amongst those who are paying prices are considered reasonable**

Process

Journeys on Suffolk Links are charged in accordance with bus fares and fare for a particular journey is given at the point of booking.

Before 9.30, it's £3. I think it is totally reasonable. I don't think it should be less
[Current User, Suffolk Links Wilford, Suffolk]

Current Passenger Experience

- Large proportion of users are elderly and concessionary passes and are therefore unaware of the specific prices, however they perceive that the fares which are charged will be very reasonable
- Some 60+ have travelled before 9:30 am and therefore paid to use service
- All passengers who are aware of the specific pricing feel it is inexpensive and reasonable given the service they receive
- Fares for Suffolk Links services are seen as cheaper or at least the same as historic or alternative bus services

I think someone has found out what the prices were on the old bus service and made it so that they are the same. [Current User, Suffolk Links Wilford, Suffolk]

As fares are in line with and/or cheaper than historic / current bus services DRT in Suffolk is seen to be reasonably priced

Experience of using the services: Catching the service

No fixed
route/timetable
Minibus - Suffolk

- Many passengers using the Suffolk Links service are collected from their home

Process

- Passengers arrange to be collected within their closest designated pick up zone

Current Passenger Experience

- Services are never full and passengers are occasionally the only user on board
- Majority of passengers are picked up directly from their front door, others are picked up very nearby → Particularly beneficial to the large proportion of passengers who are elderly or have compromised mobility

Potential Passenger Perceptions

- Multiple pick ups/drop offs could lead to very long journeys
- Assumption that the DRT does not come into the village
- Not family friendly → no designated space for pushchairs or guidance on car seats

Picks me up right outside the front gate, they offer a door to door service [Current User, Minibus, Suffolk, Brecks]

If it's going to travel around the houses I don't know! I don't want to take 2 hours to make a 20 minute trip [Potential User, Minibus, Suffolk, Wilford]

Collecting passengers either from their door or close by ensures that the service is accessible to all and creates the sense of a personalised service

Experience of using the services:

Travel experience 1

No fixed
route/timetable
Minibus - Suffolk

- The journey time to destination seems to vary quite significantly depending on how many passengers are using the service – this is felt to have both benefits and drawbacks

Process

Service does not have a fixed route, rather makes its way to final booked destination via booked passengers

Current Passenger Experience

- Can be beneficial as on some bookings passengers who go directly to their destination without calling at any other stops
- This also means that the arrival time of the service can be variable as it depends on who has booked, making planning challenging
 - Older passengers tend to be more flexible and less time critical
 - For younger passengers and those who work this is more frustrating
- When there are multiple stops the route taken is felt to be logical and often more direct than a normal bus service
- Drop off location also determined by passengers within designated zones – these are felt to be conveniently situated and useful for making connecting journeys

If I start work at 9am, they might take me at 8am and I'll go for a coffee.
[Current User, Suffolk Links Wilford, Suffolk]

Even when a variable journey length can be in the passenger's favour the lack of ability to plan can be frustrating, so DRT services should endeavour to manage passengers expectations concerning this.

Experience of using the services:

Travel Experience 2

No fixed
route/timetable
Minibus - Suffolk

- As in other areas, the experience of using the DRT service is seen as being more personal and enjoyable than using a conventional bus

Current Passenger Experience

- Drivers are friendly which is felt to make journeys more personal/pleasant
- Regular passengers get to know each other and enjoy the social aspect of the journey itself
- Good accessibility for disabled passengers
 - Allocated area for wheelchairs and potential to remove seats to allow for more wheelchairs
 - Handrails to aid getting on and off the vehicle

Everyone is so lovely, friendly and cheerful! It kind of makes your day
[Current User, Minibus, Suffolk, Brecks]

It has a lift at the back so you can take a wheelchair on, a lot of the elderly are disabled. [Current User, Suffolk Links Wilford, Suffolk]

The drivers are brilliant, especially the man who does Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, he's so helpful! We tend to go shopping on a Thursday and he'll take the shopping off the bus and bring it inside for us, he'll help us on and off the bus, he doesn't just sit there. [Current User, Minibus, Suffolk, Brecks]

DRT services seem to excel in providing a friendly, passenger focused travel experience

Experience of using the services: Time at Destination & Return Journeys

No fixed
route/timetable
Minibus - Suffolk

Process

- Services do not run according to a timetable, passengers book a return journey at any time they require within service hours (7am-7pm) subject to availability

Current Passenger Experience

- Most passengers had not experienced any problems booking or making a return journey
- Most passengers are returned directly to their front door and helped inside by the driver if needed
- Dropped off at the door (even if this is 'off route')
- Help passengers on/off bus
- Help passengers with their shopping – putting it on this bus and taking it into the house
- One passenger had been unable to book a convenient return journey – this prevented her travelling on that day

It's mainly from the bus stop but the driver comes and picks me up from my door.
[Current User, Suffolk Links Wilford, Suffolk]

We go shopping on a Thursday and [the driver] will take the shopping off the bus and bring it inside for us, he'll help us on and off the bus.
[Current User, Minibus, Suffolk, Brecks]

The going out journey was fine, but I said I needed to be back in Orford for 2.30pm and they couldn't do it.
[Potential User, Suffolk Links Wilford, Suffolk]

This flexibility of return journey allows passengers in Suffolk much greater flexibility than DRT services elsewhere. However, without a convenient return time passengers may not be able to travel, suggesting again that the flexibility of this service can sometimes be to its detriment.

Potential Users: Barriers to use

- **As in other areas there was a lack of awareness of DRT amongst potential passengers, however the biggest barrier to use in Suffolk seems to be the lack of spontaneity inherent in the DRT service model**

Potential Passenger Perceptions

*You shouldn't have
to plan your
journey weeks in
advance just to get
the bus* [Potential
User, Suffolk Links
Wilford, Suffolk]

- Lack of awareness
- Service perceived as being for elderly
- Younger passengers claim that they would feel uncomfortable taking children and a pushchair on the service due to perceived lack of space
- Planning ahead and lack of spontaneity seen as being inconvenient
- Seen to be difficult/impossible to use in an emergency / at short notice
- Perception amongst some that the running hours are unsociable and limited
- Unpredictability due to variable journey length with no guarantee of arrival time
- Believe that journeys will be long and make many stops
- Assumed that the service will be busy with limited availability
- Booking makes service difficult for visitors to use

DRT is unlikely to be suited to everyone, however services which are open to all users should emphasise this to help overcome perceptions that it is solely for the elderly.

Overview: Finding out about changes and perceptions of process management

Passengers in Suffolk appear to understand rationale for changes to services

- Passengers in Suffolk seem to recognise that the bus services were not busy enough to be sustainable

This is the only thing they could have done with public transport. The buses were mainly empty but with the [DRT], if there was nobody on it, it wouldn't be running. [Current User, Suffolk Links Wilford, Suffolk]

I was over the moon when I found out about it, because when the other service went it was very worrying! I thought how am I going to get anywhere? [Current User, Minibus, Suffolk, Brecks]

Extensive communications about the changes may have contributed to a sense that the changes were being well managed

- Passengers heard about the changes in a variety of ways:
 - Posters in bus stops
 - Information stand in local town (Woodbridge)
 - Leaflets through door
 - Information from local councillors
 - Word of mouth
- Passengers feel that they were given sufficient notice of the changes (about a month)
- Good continuity of service

A combination of understanding the rationale for changes and a smooth transition to the new services seem to have contributed to a positive reception in Suffolk

Awareness of and views on Local Authority Cuts 1

No fixed
route/timetable
Minibus - Suffolk

- **Passengers generally assumed that Suffolk Links had been introduced as conventional bus services in their areas had been underused, with few directly attributing the changes to cuts**

Reasons for changes

- Most assume that DRT is a result of living in a remote area where conventional public transport may not be viable – recognised that buses in the past were not used enough and so were losing money
- Also recognised that high proportion of elderly passengers on bus services reduce fare revenues

Perceptions of DRT

- The vast majority feel that given the circumstances DRT is the best thing that could be done and for many it is felt to be better than previous bus services
- When situated in the context of cuts passengers are even more grateful for the DRT service. However, some are concerned about losing this service as well.

It must be a hard job dealing with reduced money, but they've done the best they can! It's across the board with lots of things isn't it. It's lucky that the changes have been for the better! [Current User, Suffolk Links Brecks]

Passengers in Suffolk seem to feel that the introduction of DRT has led to an improvement in their public transport service, reflecting well on the local authority.

Awareness of and views on Local Authority Cuts 2

No fixed
route/timetable
Minibus - Suffolk

- However, as might be expected some respondents did have a negative view of both the cuts and the way the service changes had been managed

Response to changes

- As seen in other areas, the balance between services which are cut and those which are maintained does not always feel intuitive
- Some feel that their area has borne the brunt of reductions to public transport and they are paying the price of maintaining services in other areas
- Where a conventional bus service runs particularly near to a community there can be a lack of understanding about why they cannot be included on the route

I have read things about [nearest city] getting a lot more buses and things, and I thought 'well that's because they're cutting them down round here!' [Current User, Suffolk Links Brecks, Suffolk]

Explaining the benefits of, and reasons for introducing, DRT clearly could help bring more passengers see the changes as positive.

Experiences and perceptions of fixed destination, timetabled taxi-share DRT in Hampshire

Services Researched:

- Southwick Taxi Share 38
- Fordingbridge Taxi Share 61/62

Fixed destination, Timetabled Taxi-Share DRT Services in Hampshire - Sample Summary

	Fordingbridge Taxi Share			Total		Southwick Taxi Share			Total
	F2F	Tele-depth	Intercepts			F2F	Telephone	Intercepts	
Current Users	0	3	4	7	Current Users	3	0	/	3
Potential Users	0	2	9	11	Potential Users	1	1	/	2
Total	0	5	13	18	Total	4	1	/	5

- **Intercept interviews were carried out in Woodgreen**
- **Current users were recruited through contacts from the service providers and intercepts. Potential users were recruited through the intercept interviews and free-find recruitment.**

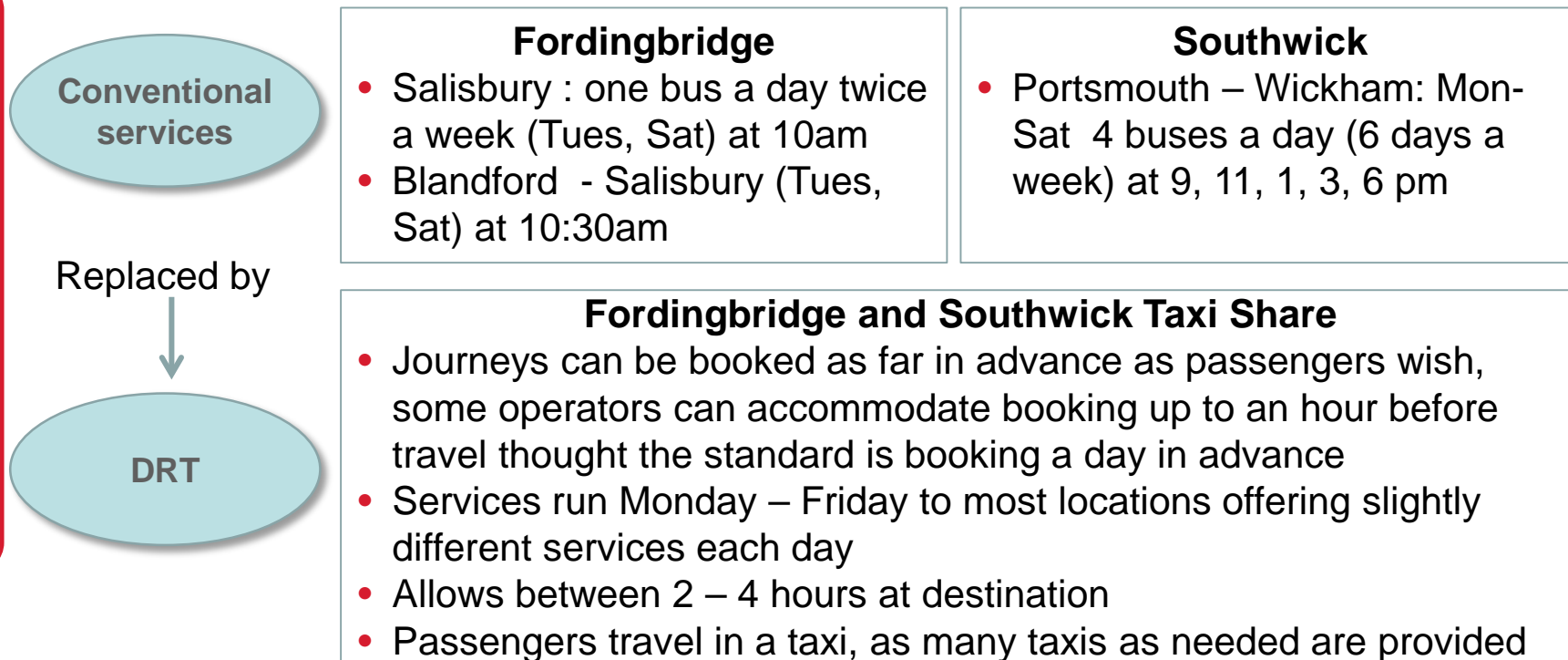
Fixed destination, Timetabled Taxi-Share DRT Services in Hampshire – overview of findings

- Within this research, there seemed to be greatest levels of dissatisfaction with the introduction of the taxi-share service model, for a variety of reasons:
- Dissatisfaction seems to be partly down to the way the service was introduced – passengers in the Southwick area in particular felt that they had not been consulted on the changes by the local authority
- As these services are operated by a taxi rather than a minibus, this has led to some accessibility issues, as passengers find it harder to get in and out of a car and also worry about bringing their shopping on the service as they do not feel there is enough space
- In contrast to minibus services in other areas, passengers feel that the sociability they used to enjoy on their former bus service is no longer present on the DRT service
- Potential users tend to see the service as being for old and infirm people with mobility issues
- There is also a possible detrimental effect from other negative associations with taxis, for instance being seen as a costly form of transport and a private company
- In addition to dissatisfaction with the DRT model used, residents also feel that the changes to the timetable have curtailed the way in which they can use the service and has caused at least one former bus passenger to stop using public transport and use their car instead
- Further, destinations offered by the previous public transport service (Salisbury, Southampton) have now been removed

Taxi share DRT services researched in Hampshire seem not to meet passenger needs as well as in other areas. Overall, there seem to be fewer perceived positives with this type of service for passengers to offset against its limitations.

Changes to availability of bus services

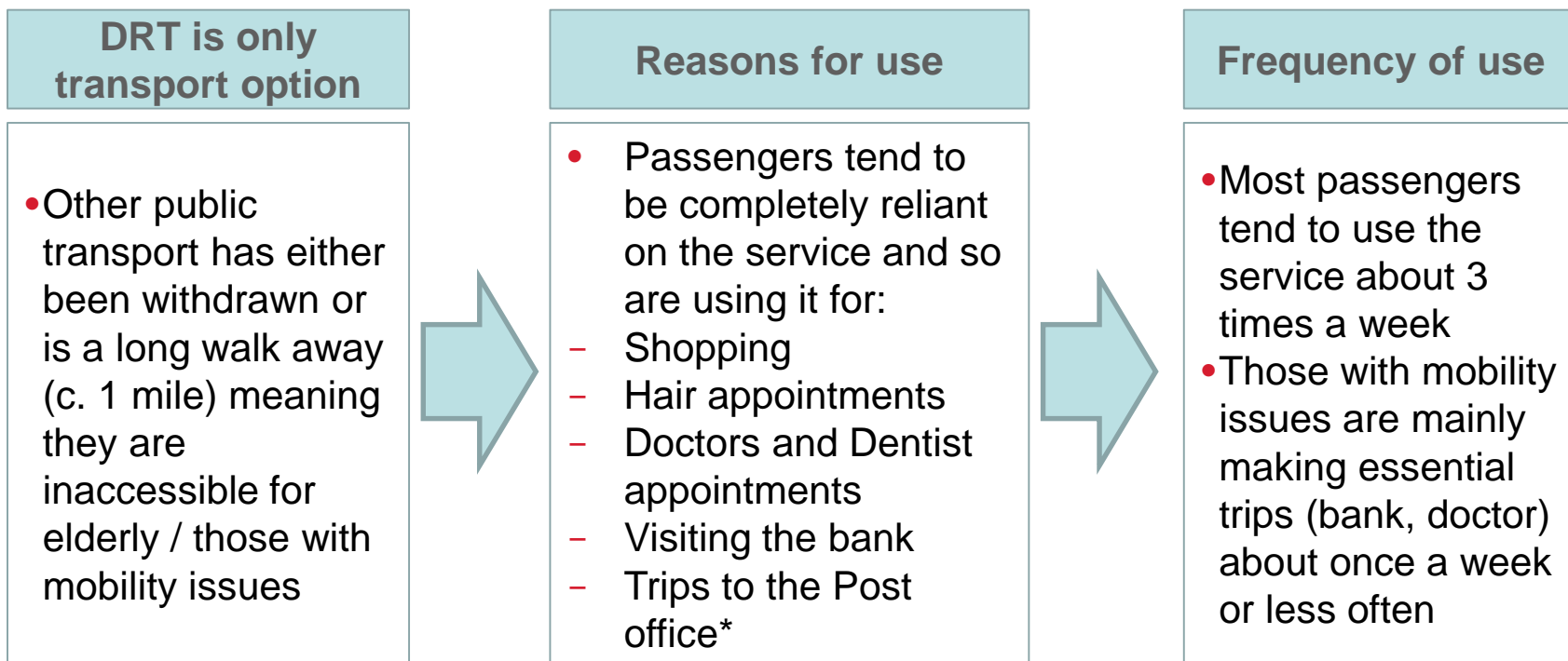
- The changes to public transport serving the **Fordingbridge** and **Southwick** areas have led to restrictions in the destinations served by public transport



As residents cannot now easily travel to Salisbury or Southampton by public transport they feel that the changes to public transport have restricted their options. Passengers now travel where the service goes rather than where they want to go.

Audience Needs – Current Users

- **Current users of these services tend to be those for whom DRT is the only transport option as those who have alternative transport feel it is not flexible enough to meet their needs**



As intended by Hampshire CC, DRT services in Hampshire provide a public transport function for those who have no other option.

Experience of using the services: Service Times

Process

- Outward and return journey times vary depending on the day of the week and allow 2 -3 hours at their destination

Passenger Experience

- As the DRT service is less frequent than the previous bus service, there is less flexibility of journey times
- For some passengers the time allowed is sufficient but others feel that they have had to curtail their social and leisure activities
- Passengers sometimes find that they need to pay for a private taxi home if the service does not run at a convenient time for them to return

Potential User Perceptions

- Journey times do not meet needs - service starts too late to be useful for school run, and there is felt to be either too long or not enough time between arrival and departure

You're limited for time. if you went to Wickham and got a bus on to Winchester, you don't have any time to do any shopping or anything in Winchester before you've got to be back for the Taxi Share. [Current User, Southwick Taxi Share, Hampshire]

DRT services run less frequently than the bus and current passengers do not feel their needs are being met. Amongst potential passengers service times appear to be a barrier to use.

Experience of using the services: Booking

- Of all the services researched, booking seemed to be received most poorly by these users

Process

Southwick:

- Services should be booked by 4pm the day before travel. On the day bookings may be possible

Fordingbridge:

- Original leaflet stated that services should be booked an hour before travel and as far ahead in advance as passengers wish

You can't do anything on the spur of the moment

[Current User, Southwick Taxi Share, Hampshire]

You ring up the day before to say you want picking up at gam, and they say they can't do it or they can.

[Current User, Fordingbridge Taxi Share, Hampshire]

Current User Perceptions

- Mixed reception to booking – some do not mind but some find it restricts their spontaneity
- Although the original leaflet stated that on the day bookings could be made passengers did not find this to be possible
- For Southwick users this makes arranging doctors appointments particularly tricky as often only same day appointments are available
- The booking line is a local geographic number yet passengers feel it is expensive to call, perhaps reflecting broader dissatisfaction with the process

Potential User Perceptions

- Not felt to be particularly convenient if needing to travel the same day but for planned journeys would be suitable

Changes to the contractor providing the Fordingbridge service mean that it is not possible to offer a same day booking service as originally advertised in the service leaflet. Whilst this was communicated to passengers via a letter, passengers were generally unaware of this. This discrepancy between expectation and reality may have contributed to dissatisfaction with the service.

Experience of using the services:

Cost of fares

- All current passengers interviewed were concessionary pass holders

Process

- Fares vary according to destination:
- Southwick Taxi Share costs between £2.20 - £6.50
- Fordingbridge Taxi Share costs between £2-£4
- Concessionary bus passes are valid

Passenger Perceptions

- Whilst many passengers are able to use this service for free they sometimes find that they have to pay for a taxi home due to inconvenient service times overall increasing their personal costs
- To reach a preferred destination passengers sometimes pay the taxi driver an additional sum (£2) to take them on to Fareham

Potential Passenger Perceptions

- For potential passengers who would have to pay to use the service fares seem reasonable as the service is cheaper than the local bus – however the service is less flexible

It's quite good because it's only supposed to go as far as Wickham, but if you give them a few extra quid they'll take you to Fareham which is nice of them.
[Current User, Southwick Taxi Share, Hampshire]

The prices are good but it needs to be more frequent.
[Potential User, Fordingbridge Taxi Share, Hampshire]

Whilst the fare to use the service is felt to be reasonable or not applicable, overall the change to DRT does seem to have increased the costs passengers face.

Experience of using the service:

Making a journey 1

- In contrast to other areas the DRT service seems to be feel less personal and enjoyable to use than the local bus which ran previously

Process

Southwick:

- Passengers are collected at the bus stop in their village

Fordingbridge:

- Passengers are collected from their home

Route taken

- Routes are felt to be too direct meaning journeys feel more purposeful with less opportunity to enjoy the scenery and experience
- For older passengers in rural areas part of the pleasure of making trips seems to be the experience of seeing different places as much as arriving at the destination

[Previous bus service] was a picturesque route. [Potential User, Southwick Taxi Share, Hampshire]

The best part is that they pick you up at the door and bring you back to your door. [Current User, Fordingbridge Taxi Share, Hampshire]

Experience of using the service:

Making a journey 2

Social Experience and Personal connection

- Journey feels less social than previous bus service
- As the service is provided by taxis there is no guarantee that you will see the same person each week even if you are making a journey at the same time – this means passengers feel that they miss seeing their friends
- No regular driver and there seems to be variation in the friendliness and helpfulness of drivers

It was quite chatty that bus [previous bus service], we saw people that we knew. [Potential User, Southwick Taxi Share, Hampshire]

I know that when it changed, nobody liked it at all. We used to have some super bus drivers, you get to know them and they'd drop you off anywhere you like. The taxi share is fine, it does a job. [Current User, Southwick Taxi Share, Hampshire]

The introduction of DRT has changed how people in the area travel as they are now making solely purposeful journeys rather than travelling for leisure. Using taxis to provide the service seems to contribute to this feeling.

Experience of using the services:

Accessibility

- **Passengers do not feel that taxis meet their accessibility needs in a number of ways**

Process

- Accessible vehicles are available – passengers should specify that they need an accessible vehicle when registering.
- Folding wheelchairs and pushchairs can always be accommodated.

I like to use buses more than taxis, I struggle to get into taxis. [Current User, Southwick Taxi Share, Hampshire]

Passenger Experience

- Although the services both state that wheelchairs and pushchairs can be accommodate passengers do not feel comfortable about this and feel that the use of a taxi restricts accessibility
- For elderly passengers cars are less accessible than buses / minibuses as the seats are lower down and this can be a harder movement to make
- Passengers also feel restricted in the amount of shopping they can bring on the service as the space available feels limited

They'd get on the taxi with a shopping cart but not with a wheelchair or pram. [Current User, Southwick Taxi Share, Hampshire]

In contrast to other DRT services which use a minibus and are seen to improve accessibility for passengers the taxi-share service is seen to limit accessibility. There is a stigma attached to having to request an accessible vehicle rather than one being provided as standard.

Potential Users

- There seems to be limited awareness of the DRT service, and they also seem to have low appeal

Perceptions of DRT

- Door to door collection → Service is for elderly / infirm – able bodied feel a seat would be ‘wasted’ on them
- Limited destinations and times are not felt to meet needs
- Concern about having to stand if service is too busy
- Being run by a taxi firm seems to create a perception amongst some that the service will operate on demand like a taxi rather than like a bus service with fixed times

The people benefitting are OAPs who want to do a bit of shopping or go to a cup of tea place or club in the morning. It may benefit mothers who haven't got transport but it's very limited. [Potential User, Fordingbridge Taxi Share, Hampshire]

I wouldn't try and book again. For work, I'd want an earlier taxi and it seems a long time stranded in Fordingbridge if I only need to be there an hour or so. [Potential User, Fordingbridge Taxi Share, Hampshire]

It seems that using a taxi service as an alternative to a bus may influence expectations of what the service can provide and who it is for.

Overview: Finding out about changes and perceptions of process management

There were mixed views on the rationale for changing the service

- Passengers in Fordingbridge did perceive that their service was underutilised with a high proportion of concessionary pass holders
- However in Southwick, passengers felt their service was not frequent enough

Changes were communicated in a similar way across both services

- Letters sent from the council to bus pass holders
- Notices on bus stops, in the village green and other public areas
- Small ad in local newspaper
- Whilst changes were discussed at village meeting in Southwick, passengers seem have low confidence in local Councillors to have secured the best deal for local transport
- Passengers were give 4 – 6 weeks notice of the change

The changes seem to have been more positively received in Fordingbridge as the rationale for making changes to the service was better understood.

Awareness of changes – Southwick Area 1

- **Bus passengers in Southwick feel that the changes to their local transport service have been handled and there seems to be some anger locally about this**

Change Process

- People came on the bus surveying the number of passengers and asking passengers about their use of the service
- There seems to have been a generally negative perception amongst passengers of how this process was carried out, potentially amplified by negative hearsay and word of mouth
- Respondents believed that the notice announcing the changes in the local paper was 'very small'

They did it underhanded, they had people doing surveys on the buses, if you asked them if the buses were going to stop they'd say oh no. We all said that was the end. [Current User, Southwick Taxi Share, Hampshire]

They called a meeting in the village hall, this was pointless because it was already a done deal by then. [Current User, Southwick Taxi Share, Hampshire]

The survey people put down that there were 4 people on the bus when actually there were 12. There were more people on that bus. The survey people were never there on Mondays, which is market day, the busiest. I think they were looking for things to cover it up. [Current User, Southwick Taxi Share, Hampshire]

Some passengers feel that there has been a lack of transparency about the changes. It seems to be that negative perceptions of the introduction of a service can colour how passengers feel about it in the long term.

Awareness of changes – Southwick Area 2

- **Local residents do not feel that their voices have been heard during the change process which seems to have contributed to the levels of dissatisfaction with the service**

Response to changes

- Respondents have protested and complained about the changes but to no avail
- Feel that they have been 'completely cut off'
- Respondents feel that villages where County Councillors live get a much better bus service than they do
- Respondents also resent that there is one bus which comes through the village but does not stop, and one which comes very nearby
- Respondents feel that buses in Winchester have been preserved at the cost of rural bus services

Quite a few councillors live in Denmead and funnily enough their bus service didn't get cut. [Potential User, Southwick Taxishare, Hampshire]

There is a bus service from the next village, they could divert and pick us up in Southwick. They've cut our village out completely. [Potential User, Southwick Taxi Share, Hampshire]

As seen in other areas, the proximity of another conventional bus service to an area now served solely by DRT seems to lead to some dissatisfaction with DRT.

Awareness of changes – Fordingbridge Area

- **Passengers seem to have mainly found out about the changes through informal channels**

Change process	Response to change
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Passengers heard through word of mouth• Some also received a leaflet notifying them of the changes to the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some low level dissatisfaction with how changes were communicated – felt that there was no opportunity for residents / passengers to discuss changes• Drivers and booking line staff have been found to be helpful and friendly which has helped overcome some initial uncertainties

Word of mouth is alright to a certain extent, but I think a printed notice that comes to your house would be good. Then it's up to you to file it so you know you've got it. [Current User, Fordingbridge Taxi Share, Hampshire]

It would have been nice if they'd have said, "meet us outside the village hall at this time and we can talk it through" and they could've answered any questions. But it just faded away and we were left high and dry. [Current User, Fordingbridge Taxi Share, Hampshire]

In contrast to other areas passengers in Hampshire feel that the introduction of DRT has significantly reduced the service that they receive and this seems to have resulted in a negative response to the changes.

Awareness of and views on Local Authority cuts

- Residents in these areas feel that they pay quite a lot of council tax but that this money is diverted to other areas

Reasons for changes

- Unlike other areas, passengers felt that their bus was sufficiently busy and actually wanted more services not fewer – as such they find it hard to support the decision to remove the service

Perceptions of DRT

- Whilst using a taxi service may be cheaper than a bus for the LA to provide, the perception amongst passengers is that using a taxi service to replace a bus is a costly approach and means that their council tax is going to a private taxi firm

Service distribution

- Residents feel generally that whilst they pay high council tax rates services to their area are cut whilst services in other areas are prioritised
- Residents do not understand why a service can come through / close to their village and not stop

Our taxes are subsidising the taxi companies rather than going into the pot to provide us a decent bus service. [Potential User, Southwick Taxi Share, Hampshire]

We come under Winchester and pay as much council tax but we get nothing. We don't get anything for our money whereas in Winchester they've got buses and trains. [Current User, Southwick Taxi Share, Hampshire]

It seems that in Hampshire the local authority has been less successful in taking passengers with them as the service has been altered.

Conclusions

Conclusions

Overall, it seems clear that Demand Responsive Transport has great potential to offer a strong alternative to conventional bus services – by successfully meeting passenger needs and, in some ways, even exceeding the service offered by conventional bus services.

- 1. Current DRT services seem to define their market and it is not possible to tell from this study if changing the service would broaden it**
 - Given the rural nature of the areas where DRT services have most relevance, those who can, seem to drive.
 - Regular DRT passengers tend to be older passengers who have no other transport options. As such they appear to have relatively high flexibility in terms of when they travel, which fits with the service that is offered.
 - It is not possible to tell from this particular study whether there is a wider potential market for DRT in each area (e.g. workers, others) but if so then DRT services may have to grow/evolve to better cater to *all* needs.

Conclusions

- 2. In terms of how well DRT services meet passenger needs, there are common themes across all areas with DRT outperforming in some ways and falling short in others**
- DRT services meet some needs which conventional buses cannot:
 - Offering a door to door service is highly beneficial for passengers with mobility difficulties
 - There seems to be a pleasant, sociable environment on the service
 - Booking is seen to guarantee there will be a seat for the passenger and that the service will arrive. Further this has potential to act as a social safety net to an extent e.g. If a passenger books but does not turn up, or a regular passenger does not book
 - However, the DRT services researched were also less successful in meeting passenger needs in several ways:
 - Booking can mean passengers feel their opportunities for spontaneity are limited
 - Variable journey lengths can make planning challenging
 - Times and destinations tend to be limited meaning they cannot meet passenger needs and so life choices and preferences can be curtailed
 - For some there are perceptions of a lack of accessibility, e.g. For wheelchairs or pushchairs, or those who cannot sit on low down seats in cars

Conclusions

3. Findings highlight several factors that positively influence satisfaction with the DRT services in their area

- Perception of consultation or (at minimum) engagement in decision making process
- Good continuity of service
- Ongoing communication to ensure continuity of awareness

Conclusions

4. Specific efforts and activities to communicate around DRT create a positive local environment

- In areas where DRT had received the most positive reception passengers were aware of the need for change
 - Priming passengers to any potential changes in service seems to help ease the introduction of DRT as the rationale for doing so is better understood
- Passengers travelling on smaller rural routes are often totally dependent on them and as such are often concerned that they will be removed completely. Appearing to make changes *without telling* passengers can cause concern
- **Most important is open communication about change to keep passengers in the loop and reassured as openness and transparency during the decision-making process can also contribute to a positive environment for the introduction of DRT**
 - Reassuring passengers that an alternative service is being considered as soon as possible after the withdrawal of the bus service (and ideally before) could help reduce concern, ease the transition and possibly create a more positive environment for the launch of DRT
 - Providing rationale for why some services are continuing and other are not



Conclusions

- Consulting with the community and passengers of a service to be replaced also seems to help improve reception of the introduction of a DRT service.
 - This helps passengers feel that their needs are being considered and also introduces them to the challenges of running a service, and the considerations and compromises which need to be made.
- The context of bus services which have gone before and proximity of other conventional bus services also influences how well a service will be received
 - When a DRT service is seen as offering a very similar service to the conventional bus service it seems likely to be better received than when it is seen as a drastic reduction in the service on offer
 - In some instances, the introduction of DRT can lead to perceptions amongst passengers that the DRT service is an improvement rather than a reduction in service.

Conclusions

5. Smooth transitioning of the new service also helps

- Ensuring that there is good continuity of service is important in ensuring that passengers can continue to travel

6. Ongoing communication is likely to help ensure there is ongoing demand for the service as current passenger base changes

- It seems that DRT is well publicised at the time of introduction, however there is little ongoing publicity.
 - Ensuring that DRT services are continually publicised could help ensuring there is ongoing demand for the service
- Currently, passengers and local residents are likely to hear about changes to their service / the introduction of a new service through word of mouth.
 - However, leaflets and / or a letter from the local authority can help ensure that residents living along the route have accurate information.
 - Leaflets delivered through the door or displayed in GPs surgeries, libraries and local shops were all felt to be appropriate channels for communicating with local residents about DRT

Conclusions

7. Finally, the research highlighted components that might be key to a more 'ideal' DRT Service

- Transport model:
 - Using a minibus rather than a taxi seems to result in a better reception as there is a strong link to the bus experiences, and generally more positives which are easier to offset against the overall limitations of the DRT experience
- Booking:
 - Overall passengers were open to booking as it fits with their lifestyle
 - On the day booking service should only be advertised in communications if it can be made available to passengers
 - Any ability to book on the day e.g. If passengers call on the morning the booking team could inform them what time the service will be in their area and they could get on would increase the flexibility of the services which seems to be a huge benefit to passengers
- 'Timetable' vs. flexible pick up:
 - It seems that **fixed** departure times (i.e. Bus leaves at 10am on Tuesdays) better manage passenger expectations that the service offered will be similar to a bus service than those which offer flexible journey times. A more flexible approach (buses leave / arrive at any time) seems to create an expectation that the service will be closer to a taxi and can make it challenging for all passenger needs to be met.

Conclusions

- Fares:
 - Fares on current services seem to be in line with or cheaper than previous conventional bus services, as such they are perceived to reasonable.
 - There does seem to be some tolerance amongst concessionary bus pass holders for paying to use DRT services where necessary.
- Route:
 - DRT passengers seem to have a fairly high tolerance for, and in some cases even a desire for journeys which take a scenic route.
 - Often DRT routes are felt to strike a good balance between routes which are pleasant yet direct.