

Initial Outcome Proposal to the East Suffolk Community Partnership Board – FY2022/23

(Stage 1 Proposal)

1. Name of Project/activity that will deliver the outcome(s)

Demand Responsive Transport Mobile Application

2. Key outcome(s)

- Deliver a mobile application (App) for community transport providers to manage demand responsive transport services (DRT) in East Suffolk. The application will support East Suffolk community transport pilot schemes (DRT pilots with community transport providers BACT and CATS) and will be adaptable to meet the needs of other community transport providers in East Suffolk.
- Increase the use of DRT by all age groups, especially younger people, by providing a simple and attractive booking system that compliments existing phone/web-based systems.
- With the launch of "[Buzzabout](#)" DRT service together with the proposed launch of a new "Katch" pilot an app which is complementary to these services will provide a key enabling tool for data and collation of learning about the success of their operation.

3. How has the need been identified?

The Task Group have conducted an extensive project of research identifying transport needs and opportunities across East Suffolk. This project found that DRT services could be a solution to rural transport issues and social isolation due to the cost-effective way they can be delivered compared to traditional public transport.

Learnings from other DRT services indicated that having a mobile app associated with a service for bookings/information/payments etc. is key to engagement and success with respect to passenger numbers.

The recent Katch DRT pilot (operated by Suffolk County Council) highlighted that customer will use mobile applications for around 50% of bookings. There is also a clear indication that young people are more likely to book via an app, and perhaps see a community transport service working for them if it is more digitally supported. In addition to bookings, apps can be used to simplify payments, tracking of buses, and feedback.

Surveys have been conducted to support the development of DRT in two Community Partnership areas (Lowestoft and Northern Parishes, and Framlingham, Wickham Market and Villages). Each survey highlighted there is demand for app booking and cashless payments.

An inception workshop was held in December 2022 at the request of the Transport and Travel Task Group (Task Group). It was led by IJYI, a local company with experience of developing apps for public services. The workshop used interactive exercises to accelerate the gathering of the key information required to define and progress the software element of the App project.

4. Who will benefit from the outcomes?

Initially residents living in and around Framlingham, Wickham Market, Campsea Ashe, Snape, and the parishes north of Lowestoft. In particular those who:

- Do not have access to a car and need/want to access services and leisure activities.
- Require transport to and from Campsea Ashe or Lowestoft railway station to connect to an onward journey.
- Need to travel to school, college, training or employment.

If successful, then the app will be rolled out to benefit all DRT passenger in East Suffolk.

5. How will the outcomes(s) be sustained after the funding period (if appropriate)?

The Task Group has had an ambition to introduce technology for supporting DRT services since completing its initial data gathering stage. An initial market assessment indicated that established provider's costs would be too high, and it would be cheaper longer-term (and therefore more financially sustainable) to develop a bespoke app. However, bespoke app development has proved to be much more expensive than initially envisioned and there has also been a lot of developments in the DRT space, hugely reducing costs. Therefore, a new market assessment was undertaken in February 2023 resulting in a detailed comparison of three costed options for the delivery of an app to support DRT pilots/services in East Suffolk:

- Development of a bespoke Mobile Application from Scratch (IYJI Option)
- Procurement of a licence from Via, a market leader in DRT application technology (Via option)
- Procurement of a licence from Flexiroute, a lower cost DRT application provider (Flexiroute Option)

Recommendation to the Board is to procure the service of a tried and tested provider (Flexi Route) for 12 months, whilst simultaneously seeking external partnerships to develop an application for longer term use at a cost that makes it sustainable for DRT operators, dependent on success of pilots.

The 12-month short term contract with a tested provider enables:

- An environment to test the power of apps with DRT services
- An opportunity to test the longer-term costs of a commercial partner
- Time to develop partnerships with longer term ambitions in DRT transport
- Time to refine the bespoke application design.

If an app has been developed for the council and its partners, revenue can be collected for the use of the app (IP), eg. other councils using the app. The revenue collected could make the maintenance of the app financially viable longer term.

6. Brief description of the project / activity that will deliver the outcome(s).

Work with Flexiroute and CATS to introduce a DRT app solution on the new Katch service allowing passengers to self-register, request journeys, make payments and view live tracking of their journeys - making the whole experience easy and straightforward. By using native driver and passenger apps, everyone involved will have access to the information they need – as well as the ability to make bookings while out and about.

The app will work hand in hand with delivering a flexible transport solution to the whole community, which offers some of the convenience of a taxi service at a fraction of the cost.

Second phase will be to work with BACT to roll out the app alongside the Buzzabout service (up to 10 DRT buses across both organisations).

Start and End Dates: March 2023 to March 2024 initially. (Operational to meet Katch launch in April dependant on contract)

7. Who is involved?

Who is involved in developing this outcome proposal?

Who will deliver the project/activity?

Name of East Suffolk Community Partnerships Board Member supporting the project:

Norman Brooks

East Suffolk Council will be responsible for the service contract and have employed a Project Manager.

Suffolk County Council have agreed a MoU with East Suffolk Council and are providing technical and practical support to support delivery of a new Katch service.

EDF have been providing Programme Management for the Transport and Travel Programme.

Flexiroute will be contracted to deliver the app to support Katch initially, with the option to include Buzzabout after that.

CATS will deliver the KATCH service under contract with East Suffolk Council

8. Give information about match funding here:

Source of match funding:	Funding confirmed?	Amount (£)
Technical support from SCC Transport Team	Yes	value yet to be calculated
Programme management support from Sizewell C	Yes	value yet to be calculated

Total project / activity cost for 10 DRT buses (Excluding cost of staff time covered by ESC/EDF/SCC)	14,500
Total of confirmed match funding (not including pro bono support)	Nil
Total amount of Strategic funding required (*see note below)	14,500

9. Identify where the Community Partnership Board Strategic Budget will be spent:

Description of activity or item (by who and by when where appropriate)	Cost (£)
Development / set up	5,000.00
Support costs	5,000.00
Licence costs (375 per bus, £75 per driver app)	4,500.00
Total	14,500.00

*App development budget of £50,000 agreed by CP Board 6.09.21. This proposal is therefore NOT for additional funding from FY22-23 but instead shows an underspend of £35,500. It is recommended that the remaining amount could be available to fund the new Katch pilot included in a separate outcome proposal should the Board agree.

10. How will the project / activity be monitored, and outcomes reported (including project risks)?

The CP Board Transport and Travel Task Group will oversee the project as part of the overall Transport and travel Programme in the following way.

- Agree contract with Flexiroute with measurable outputs that will be subject to regular review by the project manager.
- Quarterly updates on progress to the Task Group
- End of pilot report the Board

Community Partnership Board Member Declaration:

I confirm that I support this proposal:

Name: Norman Brooks

Date: 6.3.2023