

# Appendix D - Stakeholder Engagement Summary

This appendix summarises stakeholder engagement undertaken to inform development of the Full Business Case. It records the principal messages received, identifies areas of agreement and challenge, and explains how feedback has influenced the emerging integrated transport programme.

## 1. Scope and approach

Engagement was undertaken after completion of the Outline Business Case to test and refine the emerging direction, draw on operational and community expertise, identify risks and dependencies, and support development of a realistic intervention package. The engagement evidence should be considered alongside the policy review, evidence synthesis, financial analysis and technical work contained elsewhere in the Full Business Case.

Table 1 – Engagement Events

| Engagement activity                    | Date               | Primary purpose                                                                                                                          | Participants / perspective                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Options Appraisal Development Workshop | 13 August 2026     | Test and refine emerging options; identify opportunities, constraints, dependencies and deliverability issues.                           | Transport, Adult Social Care, community/public transport and related service perspectives.                                          |
| Children's Services follow-up          | 24 August 2026     | Capture the Children's Services perspective following non-attendance at the main workshop and explore emerging SEND reform implications. | Children's Services, programme and transport representatives.                                                                       |
| Transport Action Group feedback        | 18 August 2026     | Identify local priorities, practical measures, the future role of TAGs and matters that should not be overlooked.                        | Western Area; Weymouth, Portland and Chickerell; Purbeck; Sherborne and Dorchester TAG responses available at the time of drafting. |
| Community Transport Roundtable         | 17 August 2026     | Understand provider experience, capacity, sustainability, healthcare demand and opportunities for closer integration.                    | Community transport providers and relevant partners.                                                                                |
| Post-workshop prioritisation           | 18 -25 August 2026 | Obtain structured participant views on which interventions should progress, require further development or be parked.                    | Workshop participants. Insert results when complete.                                                                                |

## 2. Options Appraisal Development Workshop

The workshop was designed to move discussion from a long list of ideas towards an emerging, deliverable package. Discussion was organised around prevention and reshaping demand, system integration, flexible supply, and funding and deliverability.

### Prevention, independence and demand management

- Support for independent travel training and travel confidence, particularly for secondary and post-16 learners.
- Interest in Personal Travel Budgets, including clearer understanding of current Children's and Adults' arrangements and potential alignment.
- Support for appropriate use of mainstream, shared and community transport while retaining specialist transport where individual needs require it.
- Recognition that policy, behaviour change, accessibility and family confidence are important dependencies.

### System integration

- Support for improved coordination between public transport, community transport, Home to School Transport, Adult Social Care and health-related transport.
- Opportunities identified around shared scheduling, better use of existing fleets, improved information sharing and more integrated commissioning.
- Recognition that systems, governance, eligibility, licensing and organisational capacity can constrain integration.
- Need to distinguish foundational enabling activity from longer-term transformation.

### Flexible supply

- Support for a stronger and more reliable core route network, including better frequency, weekend/evening provision, affordability and information.
- Community transport was viewed as a critical part of the future system, requiring stronger capacity, sustainable funding, workforce support, consistent standards and strategic coordination.
- Demand responsive transport was viewed as potentially useful for targeted rural connectivity and links to main centres, but not as a universal or automatically affordable solution.
- Public, community and flexible services should perform complementary roles and connect as a coherent system.

### Funding and deliverability

- Affordability, recurring revenue requirements and provider capacity were recurring concerns.
- Participants highlighted safeguarding, suitability, licensing, workforce, data and technology dependencies.
- The workshop reinforced the need to differentiate actions that can start quickly from those requiring further evidence, policy change, partnership agreement or long-term transformation.

- Formal prioritisation was moved to a post-workshop MS Forms exercise to allow considered individual responses.

### 3. Children's Services follow-up

A targeted follow-up was held because Children's Services could not attend the main workshop. The discussion broadly supported the workshop direction while adding important qualifications on individual need, parental confidence, operational delivery and the future impact of SEND reform.

#### Independent Travel Training

Children's Services expressed strong support for re-establishing and scaling an Independent Travel Training offer. Independent travel was identified as an important life skill and a practical enabler of preparation for adulthood, post-16 participation, employment and volunteering. There was considered to be substantial appetite among settings and the parent-carer community.

#### Personal Travel Budgets

Personal Travel Budgets were recognised as a useful option where families can make appropriate arrangements and as a potential interim response where commissioned transport cannot be mobilised quickly. Further work is required to understand scope for alignment across Children's and Adult Services.

#### Mainstream and shared travel

Greater use of mainstream or shared travel was supported where safe and suitable, but Children's Services stressed that parental confidence, individual needs, the behaviour of other passengers, safeguarding and availability of viable routes must be taken into account. Specialist provision cannot be assumed to be replaceable for all cohorts.

#### Joint working and systems

Coordination between Children's Services and transport was reported to have improved, including transport input to placement decisions and consideration of journey cost and distance. Further opportunities include joint training and improved information sharing. Current use of different systems, reliance on spreadsheets, high caseloads and reduced business support were identified as practical constraints.

#### Fleet use and transitional timetables

Transitional or reduced timetables can create difficult, non-standard journey requirements. There may be opportunities to use available vehicles at other times of day, but licensing, driver hours, staffing and individual needs require detailed assessment.

#### SEND reform

The expected direction of change is towards fewer Education, Health and Care Plans and more needs being met closer to home, with changes anticipated from the 2028/29 academic year through a phased approach. The Dorset implications remain uncertain. Children's Services advised that demand associated with the most specialist cohorts may change little, meaning the FBC should not assume an immediate or uniform reduction in specialist transport demand.

### *Children's Services priorities*

The two clearest priorities stated were: (1) develop a substantial Independent Travel Training offer; and (2) improve the speed with which effective transport arrangements can be put in place for children and young people.

## 4. Transport Action Group feedback

TAGs were asked four common questions. The summary below synthesises responses received from Western Area TAG, Weymouth, Portland and Chickerell TAG, Purbeck TAG, Sherborne TAG and Dorchester TAG.

| Question                                           | Summary of feedback                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1. Biggest improvements wanted</b>              | A stronger core bus network; better integration between bus, rail, community transport and active travel; improved services aligned with housing growth; a wider range of rural mobility options; better first/last-mile access; and continued progress towards fleet decarbonisation.                                                                         |
| <b>2. Practical measures with greatest benefit</b> | More frequent, reliable and longer-operating bus services; affordable and integrated ticketing; improved passenger facilities and real-time information; safe walking, cycling and wheeling routes to transport hubs; and early provision of bus services and infrastructure in new developments, supported where appropriate through developer contributions. |
| <b>3. How TAGs can help</b>                        | Provide local knowledge and a two-way link with communities; communicate and promote new services; gather informal and localised feedback through meetings, events, digital channels and surveys; and support community understanding and take-up. Respondents sought earlier and more consistent involvement in transport decisions.                          |
| <b>4. What must not be overlooked</b>              | Whole-system integration; meaningful user consultation and evidence that feedback is acted upon; rural accessibility and first/last-mile links; and keeping future mobility innovations under consideration where conventional services are unlikely to meet all needs.                                                                                        |

## Overall TAG message

The strongest recurring message was that Dorset should plan transport as an integrated hierarchy of travel options rather than as separate modes or services. TAGs also consistently emphasised a dependable core bus network, connections with rail and active travel, accessible rural options, transport provision alongside housing growth, and an ongoing role for local communities and users in service design and review.

## 5. Community Transport provider perspective

Community transport engagement reinforced the sector's role as both transport provision and local social infrastructure. Providers described growing demand, particularly for healthcare journeys, alongside material capacity and sustainability pressures.

- Community transport supports healthcare access, shopping, social participation and essential journeys where fixed-route services are absent or unsuitable.
- Healthcare-related demand is increasing and, for some providers, represents a substantial share of activity. Concerns were raised that changes in patient transport eligibility can transfer demand to community schemes.
- Volunteer driver recruitment, an ageing volunteer base, succession planning and pressure on a small number of coordinators create resilience risks.
- Insurance, fuel, maintenance, administration, DBS checks, volunteer reimbursement and vehicle replacement create financial pressures.
- Potential support includes more sustainable funding, shared support services, training, technology, volunteer recruitment and stronger strategic coordination.
- Providers sought closer engagement with health partners and recognition of community transport within wider health, care and transport planning.

## 6. Cross-cutting findings

| No. | Finding                                                                 | Implication                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | <b>Integration is supported, but must be designed around outcomes</b>   | Stakeholders broadly supported closer coordination of services, assets, information and commissioning. Integration was not viewed as an end in itself and should improve access, user experience, service resilience or value for money. |
| 2   | <b>The core public transport network remains fundamental</b>            | Community and flexible services were generally viewed as complements to a stronger bus and rail network, not substitutes for reliable core services.                                                                                     |
| 3   | <b>Independence requires both skills and viable services</b>            | Independent Travel Training and travel confidence can support better outcomes, but depend on safe, reliable and accessible journeys and appropriate individual assessment.                                                               |
| 4   | <b>Specialist provision will remain necessary</b>                       | Mainstreaming and sharing should be pursued only where safe, suitable and consistent with statutory and individual needs.                                                                                                                |
| 5   | <b>Community transport needs capacity, not simply additional demand</b> | A larger role for the sector requires attention to coordination, workforce, governance, funding, digital capability and organisational resilience.                                                                                       |
| 6   | <b>Rural solutions must be targeted</b>                                 | DRT, car sharing and other flexible models may help address particular gaps, but require evidence of demand, a defined role in the wider network and a sustainable funding approach.                                                     |
| 7   | <b>Governance and delivery capacity are material dependencies</b>       | Cross-service and cross-organisational proposals require clear ownership, shared objectives, appropriate authority, sustained commitment and dedicated capacity.                                                                         |
| 8   | <b>Users and communities should remain involved</b>                     | Feedback should continue through design, implementation and performance review, with the council demonstrating how views have influenced decisions.                                                                                      |

## 7. Influence on the Full Business Case

Stakeholder engagement has informed the FBC in the following ways:

- The preferred direction is framed as an integrated programme combining demand management, system integration and a stronger mix of public, community and flexible supply.
- Independent Travel Training has been strengthened as a substantive intervention linked to preparation for adulthood, employment, volunteering and reduced long-term dependency for appropriate participants.
- The FBC recognises that specialist transport must remain available where mainstream or shared provision is unsafe, unsuitable or unable to meet statutory and individual needs.
- SEND reform is treated as a material uncertainty requiring scenario testing rather than as a guaranteed source of demand reduction or financial saving.
- Community transport proposals need to address organisational capacity, workforce, governance, technology and sustainable funding, not only service expansion.
- DRT and flexible transport are treated as targeted components of the wider network, particularly for rural and first/last-mile gaps, rather than universal replacements for fixed routes.
- The case for integration includes governance, systems, data, joint working and delivery capacity as well as operational transport changes.
- Benefits and service requirements reflect access, independence, community participation, user experience, rural inclusion and economic opportunity alongside financial and operational outcomes.

## 8. Outstanding actions and evidence gaps

| Area                               | Required follow-up                                                                                                                                                                                    | Status / owner |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>SEND reform</b>                 | Obtain and review the current public/shareable SEND Reform Plan; align transport assumptions with the approved or latest iteration; maintain liaison with the SEND reform lead and programme support. | Insert         |
| <b>Independent Travel Training</b> | Define the Dorset cohort, delivery model, staffing/commissioning requirement, viable journey assumptions, implementation cost and benefits methodology.                                               | Insert         |
| <b>Personal Travel Budgets</b>     | Document current Children's and Adults' approaches and assess whether alignment or a shared operating arrangement is beneficial and lawful.                                                           | Insert         |
| <b>Community transport</b>         | Complete provider engagement synthesis and define the support, commissioning, funding, technology and governance model required for any expanded role.                                                | Insert         |
| <b>Health integration</b>          | Clarify scope, appetite and governance for NHS/NEPTS collaboration and whether this is a core intervention, dependency or future phase.                                                               | Insert         |
| <b>Post-workshop survey</b>        | Insert the RAG and priority results, response rate, analysis method and how results influenced the preferred package.                                                                                 | Insert         |
| <b>User involvement</b>            | Define how users, TAGs and communities will be engaged during detailed design, pilots, implementation and benefits review.                                                                            | Insert         |

## 9. Limitations and interpretation

- The engagement activities were designed to inform option development and were not a statistically representative public consultation.
- Participant groups had different levels of technical knowledge and direct experience; responses should therefore be interpreted alongside quantitative, policy, legal, equality, financial and operational evidence.
- Support for a broad intervention does not remove the need to define its scope, costs, delivery model, beneficiaries, risks and dependencies before implementation.
- The summary records recurring messages and material challenges. Detailed source notes should be retained as the audit trail.
- Where policy and programme details remain under development, particularly SEND reform, the FBC should state uncertainty explicitly and use scenario testing and review points.

## 10. Source material

- Community & Public Transport – Options Appraisal Development Workshop notes, 13 August 2026.
- TMO Transport Review – Children’s agenda, notes and transcript, 24 August 2026.
- Transport Action Group responses from Weymouth, Portland and Chickerell TAG, Purbeck TAG and Dorchester TAG, August 2026.
- Dorset Community Transport Roundtable evidence and notes
- Post-workshop MS Forms prioritisation results