



The East Surrey Rural Transport Partnership – progress update

21 May 2004

KEY ISSUE

To inform Members of the new projects being undertaken through the East Surrey Rural Transport Partnership.

SUMMARY

The East Surrey Rural Transport Partnership includes the County Council, Tandridge District Council, Mole Valley District Council, Reigate and Banstead Borough Council, Surrey Community Action and the PCT. Each member of the Partnership contributes funding to employ the Partnership Officer, and through his work, funds of £1,125,000 have been accessed from government sources (in addition £233,000 has been secured from local government, PCT and other organisations) for transport projects up to 2006/07 in the east of Surrey. This means that a number of new transport services are being set up to benefit people in Tandridge, especially those who live in the more rural parts of the district.

BACKGROUND

1. The East Surrey Rural Transport Partnership has now been in operation for over eighteen months, and a number of practical transport proposals are being taken forward in Tandridge. These include:

RURAL TRANSPORT PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS IN TANDRIDGE

Buses 4 U

2. The East Surrey Rural Transport Partnership put a bid into the Department for Transport's Rural Bus Challenge last October. The 'Buses 4 U' project was awarded £714,000 for demand responsive bus services in Tandridge and the northern part of Reigate & Banstead. The award is for a new 20 seat fully accessible bus with satellite tracking equipment, a spare vehicle and all the operating costs for three years.
3. The project will have a number of different components:
 - A commuter service will take shift workers from a part of Tandridge district to Gatwick Airport from 0400 until 0730.
 - From 0800 until 0900 the service will collect students from, most probably, Tatsfield and take them to Oxted School.
 - For the rest of the day until 2300 (with the exception of a return school journey from 1545 until 1700) the vehicle will be able to be booked by anyone in the Tandridge District area. In addition, a second vehicle will be available for residents of Reigate & Banstead borough in the area north of the M25 after 1900.
 - Both demand responsive transport (DRT) services will operate Monday to Saturday. An option to extend the DRT to the Reigate & Banstead Borough area mentioned above on Sundays is being investigated.
 - The DRT service is open to anyone and is booked on a first come first serve basis with as little as an hour's notice. Bookings will be taken by phone, text, email or fax by a dedicated call centre, and then communicated to the bus driver by satellite technology to a screen in the driver's cab.
 - It is intended that the service will be used by clients of the Social Services department who need to make individual journeys to work or leisure activities.
 - A Sunday leisure based service will operate from Oxted station on an hourly basis from 1000 until 1700. It will operate to a fixed route and will take passengers arriving by train (and others en route) to such places of interest as Chartwell and Hever Castle in Kent and will provide access for walkers to the North Downs.
4. It will be necessary to tender for both a vehicle and operator; therefore, it is likely that this service will start during the autumn.

Community Transport Information, Advice and Training Service

5. A Rural Transport Information and Training officer started in October last year, to provide information and advice on community transport. A website, www.eastsurreyrtp.org.uk has been produced for the East Surrey Rural Transport Partnership which contains information about community transport in east Surrey, the work of the Partnership and current project news. Additionally,

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an online community transport directory is available, allowing a search for transport schemes by district or borough.

6. The online is now also available as a paper version, and is being widely distributed throughout the east Surrey area to libraries, doctor's surgeries, council receptions and other public places. A quarterly newsletter is produced which has the latest information on RTP projects and news from the community transport sector in the east of Surrey.
7. An enquiry service is already available to the public to give information on transport to hospital/healthcare appointments. This will include a limited number of emergency taxi vouchers to enable a journey to be made if there are no other viable alternative modes.

Taxi vouchers for Young People in Tandridge

8. Funding from Connexions and the Countryside Agency has been provided for this project that will start in June 2004, to follow on from the pilot funded by the Tandridge Local Committee. It allows up to 40 young people books of vouchers valued at £154 for the year, to hire taxis from isolated rural areas in the district. The vouchers are given to eligible young people who have no transport alternative. The referral of these young people will be made by Tandridge detached youth workers. Currently 26 young people are in receipt of books of vouchers.

Moped Hire Scheme

9. A Co-ordinator started at the beginning of February for the East Surrey Wheels to Work Scheme. Funding comes from Surrey Connexions Ltd, Surrey County Council and the Countryside Agency.
10. The scheme has funding for up to 38 mopeds. It will be open to young people over 16 who are in employment, education or training in the Tandridge, Mole Valley and Reigate & Banstead areas. Eligible young people, who do not have ready access at the appropriate times to private or public transport, will be loaned a moped at a modest amount per week for up to six months, to allow them to travel to a place of work, education or training.
11. All applicants must have a provisional driving licence, all other training and protective equipment including helmet, is provided. Each person will pay £5 per week to hire a moped with a further £5 to be used to cover any insurance excess. If the money is not used, then it will be given back to the young person who may wish to use it as a nest egg for his or her own machine. The scheme started at Easter, with publicity and marketing work currently taking place.

Transport to Hospital Service

12. This project will help people who have been in hospital and now need to be assessed in their own accommodation to make sure that they will be able to cope on their own. The Intermediate Care Team at the East Surrey Hospital has previously used taxis for these journeys, but are now willing to divert that money into this hospital transport service. The requirement to take people home from hospital for assessment is not constant - there would be times during the day when the transport will be available to help people access medical/healthcare appointments either within the district or borough or at East Surrey Hospital.

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13. This project is for people who do not have access to their own private transport nor have a viable public transport option. In addition, the vehicle provides transport to/from a primary school south of Dorking, which helps to offset some of the costs of the service. The service will operate 5 days a week for 11 hours a day.

CONCLUSION

14. The lack of community and public transport in Tandridge is a real concern for many people. The projects described in this paper show that real progress is being made to progress a range of community transport, especially for people who are not able to access private cars or public transport.

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