

Transport Innovation Fund consultation

Report on findings and formal consultation response by the Transport Resource Unit at the Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation

Voluntary and community sector views of the Transport Innovation Fund proposals

Key recommendations

R1 Future consultation must continue to involve the voluntary and community sector at the earliest possible opportunity, both before the referendum and before the implementation of any of the TIF proposals, including the congestion charge. This will help to ensure that information can be accessed by communities and individuals not easily reached by mainstream media.

R2 Further detail should be released on how the proposed improvements to the bus network and the development of the Greater Manchester 'travel smartcard' will be realised, in advance of the referendum. This should include information on how standards will be maintained and how the network will encompass the whole of the conurbation, not just the priority corridors.

R3 Any future changes to the scheme should be independently scrutinised, not just financially but also in terms of potential negative impacts on communities and vulnerable groups.

R4 The proposed exemptions should be amended in light of the consultation and a revised version, giving sufficient detail, should be available before the referendum takes place.

R5 AGMA/GMPTA should take measures to protect VCS organisations that are most vulnerable to increased costs as a result of the congestion charge. This could take the form of a discount/exemption for volunteers or a ringfenced fund to help organisations offset their costs if they are unable to alter volunteering patterns due to the nature of their work.

R6 The behavioural change programme should include help and information for voluntary sector employees and volunteers. This could be supported by awareness raising by the Transport Resource Unit, working in partnership with local VCS infrastructure organisations.

R7 AGMA/GMPTA should work in partnership with the Greater Manchester Community Transport Operators' Forum to develop the most appropriate system of exemption or reimbursement for medical journeys which takes into account the journeys provided by voluntary sector transport organisations.



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Introduction

The Department for Transport's (DfT) announcement in June of Greater Manchester's provisional entry into the Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) programme led to much discussion and interest across all sectors and communities, including the voluntary and community sector (VCS). As a result, VCS organisations began to approach the Transport Resource Unit (TRU) with questions, concerns and to give comment.

TRU has welcomed the opportunity to research the potential impacts of the proposals on the sector. The work itself has taken TRU across all districts of Greater Manchester, and across all sub-sectors of the voluntary sector itself. We have talked to both small groups and large organisations, from those that are entirely volunteer-run, to organisations with many paid staff. Understandably, the views expressed have been many and varied but some definite trends have emerged and it is these that have led to clear recommendations, which we hope can be taken forward.

To put things into some perspective, there are estimated to be around 11,000 VCS organisations operating in the Greater Manchester sub-region, with a total annual income of £1.2bn. Around 283,000 un-paid volunteers help these organisations to provide the valuable services that they offer; working to reduce disadvantage and social exclusion. The VCS contributes to individual people's health and wellbeing and reaches out to some of the most hard to reach groups in society. It also plays an important role in the economy of the Greater Manchester subregion - for example by resolving people's financial problems, enabling people back into employment and helping them to make a greater contribution to their local communities. It is clear that any far reaching proposals, such as those presented in the TIF bid, must pay due regard to any possible impact on the sector.

The recommendations in this response are based on the key issues which were raised by VCS organisations then communicated to TRU during the consultation period. Following on from the recommendations are a set of appendixes giving further detail on some of the issues raised. The very last appendixes tell the story of five different VCS organisations, and their perceptions of how the proposals may impact on them.

Background

The voluntary and community sector (the VCS or 'Third Sector') has an important role to play in local transport, whether as users of transport, contributors to policy development, representatives of community groups or in delivering community and public transport schemes. The Transport Resource Unit (TRU) is part of the Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation (GMCVO) and has the specific remit of focusing on transport issues as experienced by the Voluntary Sector.

TRU has links with voluntary and community organisations throughout the Greater Manchester sub-region, and supports the Greater Manchester Community Transport Operators' Forum. It is from this vantage point that that TRU offers comments and recommendations on the Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) proposals.

Consultation methodology

During the TIF consultation phase, TRU canvassed the views of VCS organisations in a variety of ways:

- An online survey
- Open meetings held in Manchester, Wigan, Tameside, Stockport and Bolton (these meetings were open to organisations from all districts)
- Meetings and interviews with providers of community transport and volunteer car schemes
- Five semi-structured interviews with a range of VCS organisations
- Ad hoc contact with other groups and organisations at meetings or by e-mail/phone

In total, it is estimated that TRU made direct contact with over 100 different VCS organisations during this consultation phase.

Given the wide range of views expressed during the consultation, and the forthcoming public referendum in December, this response does not seek to either approve or reject the TIF proposals outright. Instead, the response makes comment on the key issues raised and makes recommendations, should the proposals be approved.

Findings and recommendations

1 Awareness and understanding of the proposals

It is appropriate to begin by considering the level of awareness and understanding of the proposals which organisations demonstrated. Where awareness was low, organisations tended to either believe that the proposals had already been finalised and therefore that there was no point in being involved in the consultation, or that the impact on their organisation would be greater than is perhaps actually likely, e.g.; by being charged for every journey they make. In contrast, organisations with a higher level of understanding appeared more willing to feed their views into the consultation.

Initial awareness of the detail in the proposals was relatively low. Organisations commonly referred to the proposals simply as 'the congestion charge' and quoted incorrect figures such as £5 to cross each ring.

In addition, some organisations reported that they were being asked questions by their service users which they were keen to answer but did not feel that they adequately understood the proposals in order to be able to do so. As VCS organisations tend to work with some of the more marginalised groups in society, this underlines the need for full involvement of the sector at an early stage in any consultation process.

There were some initial concerns that some service users had not been able to participate fully in the consultation, for example people with learning disabilities. The summer timetable compounded this as many voluntary groups do not meet during the summer months (due to volunteers and service users being on holiday). However, as the consultation progressed into September, there was a marked increase in the level of understanding, indicating that some of the publicity around the proposals was

starting to have an effect. Organisations welcomed the involvement of TRU and the engagement of the VCS in the consultation period.

Recommendation

R1 Future consultation must continue to involve the voluntary and community sector at the earliest possible opportunity, both before the referendum and before the implementation of any of the TIF proposals, including the congestion charge. This will help to ensure that information can be accessed by communities and individuals not easily reached by mainstream media.

2 General impressions

Broadly speaking, there is a recognition that 'something needs to be done' about public transport in Greater Manchester and that any solution will take considerable investment.

Opinions differ on whether TIF is the right route to pursue - it is clear that some VCS organisations see this as a prime opportunity for Greater Manchester to invest in the future while at the same time others feel that much of this investment should have been provided years ago, when it was originally promised, without strings attached.

The public transport improvements are warmly received, without exception. Metrolink is generally considered the most accessible form of public transport for people with disabilities, so the extension to the network is particularly welcomed.

The 'travel smartcard' idea is welcomed as a way of simplifying the current ticketing arrangements and reducing the barriers to public transport use increasing.

The bus and rail improvements are also welcomed but more detail is needed from the proposals, particularly in terms of how the improvements to bus services will be realised. Bus services universally drew the largest comment from the open meetings, with recurring themes of poor accessibility, driver attitudes, limited routes and timetabling issues. Many concluded that this was a direct result of deregulation in the 1980s.

Similarly, there is concern that the proposed bus improvements will focus on the profitable routes and would therefore make little improvement to areas which are currently poorly served by buses and public transport generally.

Recommendation

R2 Further detail should be released on how the proposed improvements to the bus network and the development of the Greater Manchester 'travel smartcard' will be realised, in advance of the referendum. This should include information on how standards will be maintained and how the network will encompass the whole of the conurbation, not just the priority corridors.

Opinions on the congestion charge element are divided but there is consensus that the regime needs to be strictly regulated to ensure that charges do not creep up above the rate of inflation or that the rings are widened to encompass a larger area.

Recommendation

R3 Any future changes to the scheme should be independently scrutinised, not just financially but also in terms of potential negative impacts on communities and vulnerable groups.

There was little comment on the alternate proposals for the location of the inner ring, or of the placement of the outer ring. In general, people feel that the inner

ring should be as close to the city centre as possible but that the final location of the rings must be decided in consultation with local communities.

The proposed discounts/exemptions are generally felt to be an appropriate fit for the scheme. Some suggestions were made as to how these could be strengthened.

It was suggested that the exemption for Blue Badge holders be compared with the criteria used for issuing concessionary bus travel because of disability, to ensure the most appropriate criteria are used.

The exemption for medical appointments was welcomed but further clarity on this is requested, as the current wording of the proposals is felt to be unclear.

Perhaps surprisingly, there appears to be a general consensus that the proposed discount for low income workers is unhelpful, in its current form at least. Several reasons were given for this, not least that it would be difficult to administer and would disincentivise the use of public transport. Comment was made that if there is a discount for people on a low income then it should also include people on 'no income' i.e.; workless people who need to travel to attend interviews, training, education, to volunteer and so on.

Recommendation

R4 The proposed exemptions should be amended in light of the consultation and a revised version, giving sufficient detail, should be available before the referendum takes place.

3 Issues specific to the voluntary and community sector

A number of issues were raised by organisations during the consultation period which set VCS organisations apart from the business community. It was interesting to note that the same issues were raised time and time again, by different groups in different parts of Greater Manchester, allowing definite conclusions to be drawn.

The VCS is built on the ethos of voluntary action. Many organisations employ paid staff but volunteers also make up a significant part of the work force. The results from the online survey illustrate this well - some organisations were entirely volunteers run and the vast majority had more volunteers than paid staff - some numbering in the hundreds.

The use of volunteers enables organisations to stretch limited resources and offer wider services than they would otherwise be able to. The VSNW report on The Contribution of the VCS to the Economy of the North West observes that the total wages bill for the North West's VCS is in the region of £890m per annum but that including the contribution provided by volunteers and trustees the total becomes £3.9bn.

VCS organisations tend to work with the more marginalised sections of communities, and offer a range of services to reduce social exclusion and deprivation, and through this make a significant contribution to the local economy. This contribution is wide-ranging; for example, training schemes that help women to gain work-related skills, local regeneration initiatives, support for disabled people to move into employment, advice services which aid financial inclusion, provision of childcare to enable parents to hold down employment and transport schemes which enable people to access healthcare, education, fresh food and employment.

Volunteers are not 'free'. It is widely considered best practice to reimburse volunteers for expenses incurred as part of their role. This prevents people on low incomes from being excluded from volunteering and can help to increase a volunteer's sense of being a part of the organisation. Some volunteers will readily donate their expenses back to the organisation, if they can afford to do so.

Volunteers also incur a cost to organisations through their training and ongoing management. Having said this, volunteering is clearly a cost-effective way of running organisations.

The majority of survey respondents feel that staff and/or volunteers frequently have to travel to work by car in order to then be able to make other work-related journeys as part of their role. Most organisations feel that these journeys could involve crossing the charging rings during charging hours. Further detail of this was drawn out during the interviews and meetings that were held, for example volunteer car drivers taking people to hospital, social care providers visiting vulnerable people in their own homes and volunteers attending meetings held after work but travelling away from Manchester and therefore crossing the inner ring during the afternoon peak.

Some volunteers work shifts which make the use of public transport difficult due to safety and/or accessibility. For example, Childline operates a shift pattern with 7.30am starts and 1am finishes. The improvements to the start and finish times of public transport was welcomed in this respect, although this would not address safety concerns (currently volunteers are offered a taxi if their shift finished after dark).

It should also be noted that some volunteers work patterns very similar to a normal working day, for example volunteers at local CABs would be expected to work full days, typically starting at 10am and finishing at 4pm.

Research has been carried out into the profile of volunteers, in particular the study *Helping Out: A national survey of volunteering and charitable giving* prepared by the National Centre for Social Research and the Institute for Volunteering Research. This research shows that slightly more volunteers tend to be in employment rather than out of work. However the study also shows high levels of volunteering among people whom are not working because they are looking after the home or looking for work (rather than because of illness or disability) and among the retired. This was reflected in the comments from organisations which TRU interviewed. It should be noted that these groups do not qualify for an exemption or discount from the charges under the current proposals.

At the same time, it was acknowledged that some volunteers currently use public transport and that improvements to the network will make organisations more accessible, not only to volunteers but also to staff and service users.

Recommendation

R5 AGMA / GMPTA should take measures to protect VCS organisations that are most vulnerable to increased costs as a result of the congestion charge. This could take the form of a discount/exemption for volunteers or a ringfenced fund to help organisations offset their costs if they are unable to alter volunteering patterns due to the nature of their work.

Such measures would protect VCS organisations that may be disproportionately affected by the charge (for the reasons given above) and would also support recent initiatives to encouraging more people to volunteer. These measures should be complemented with advice to VCS organisations on how they can best enable their volunteers to use public transport, or avoid driving at peak times.

The potential impact on staffing within the sector was also raised. Some organisations expressed concerns that recruitment may become more difficult, particularly those organisations that are just within the charging rings. Given the fact that salaries in the VCS are already quite low, it could be argued that staff having to pay the congestion charge might be disproportionately affected compared to professionals in other sectors.

Recommendation

R6 The behavioural change programme should include help and information for voluntary sector employees and volunteers. This could be supported by awareness raising by the Transport Resource Unit, working in partnership with local VCS infrastructure organisations.

Some organisations had very specific concerns about how the proposals may impact on their core business, for example organisations that rely on income from meeting rooms and in particular community transport operators and volunteer car schemes.

The main concern raised was that the proposed exemption for hospital appointments is still very unclear at this stage. Ideally, this exemption should be extended to apply to volunteer car schemes that transport people to medical appointments, although further consideration needs to be given to the exact way in which this will work so as not to create an unmanageable burden on organisations.

Recommendation

R7 AGMA / GMPTA should work in partnership with the Greater Manchester Community Transport Operators' Forum to develop the most appropriate system of exemption or reimbursement for medical journeys which takes into account the journeys provided by voluntary sector transport organisations.

4 Conclusion

To conclude, there is no clear consensus within the sector as to whether the TIF proposals should be approved or rejected at this stage. There is however, a very clear steer that more information about the finer details of the proposals is needed at this time.

Greater Manchester's VCS is substantial and significantly larger than many other regions. It is estimated to be responsible for 67,000 jobs and contributes around £3.85billion to the Greater Manchester economy. Like the business sector, the VCS welcomes any improvement to the public transport network but has concerns about how the proposals may impact on staff and customers (service users). However unlike businesses, VCS organisations also have an extra liability to consider in terms of how volunteer costs and recruitment may be affected, and how this could affect services provided to the end user - often some of the most disadvantaged and hardest to reach members of society.

TRU believes that these concerns can be addressed through continued dialogue with the sector and with the implementation of measures to offset possible negative impacts, such as travel planning support, funding and ultimately an exemption from charging for the most necessary journeys that cannot be made by other means.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Summary analysis of survey responses

1. Introduction

TRU conducted a survey among VCS organisations in Greater Manchester during the months of August and September 2008. The survey was conducted using Survey Monkey, an online survey tool, and was disseminated using email, coverage in newsletters accessed by the VCS, and consultation events held in each of the districts. TRU sent the link to the survey by email to over approximately 300 organisations. 55 organisations filled the survey in. Although this response rate is clearly far from being representative, the responses still shed light on issues that VCS organisations face with regard to the congestion charge. To obtain some more in-depth insight, TRU conducted five in-person interviews with a cross-section of organisations. The results of these interviews are attached as appendixes

2. Analysis

2.1. Respondent Demographics

There was a broad spread of responses from across Greater Manchester, with a few responses from organisations that are based outside of Greater Manchester but that work in Greater Manchester (5). The largest category of respondents being based in Manchester (21), followed by those organisations that maintain offices in all of the Greater Manchester districts (7).

Whilst some organisations maintain offices in all ten districts, the overwhelming majority of organisations working at the Greater Manchester level (15) have an office base in one borough only. This suggests that there are a sizeable number of organisations whose work is always going to comprise travel across Greater Manchester in some shape or form, either by staff and volunteers or by clients. Organisations

who feel their work-related travel could be affected by the congestion charge include organisations from all boroughs, with the exception of Wigan and Rochdale.

Only two respondent organisations do not employ any volunteers. On the other hand, there are ten organisations that are entirely volunteer-run. The remaining 40 organisations all use volunteers to some extent. It is noteworthy, however, that 26 of them involve at least twice as many volunteers as they have staff, with 9 involving as many as ten times the number of volunteers that they have in paid staff. In a few organisations (9) the volunteer count ranges in the hundreds, in others (8) it reaches 50 or above. This shows the significance of volunteers to the contribution the VCS makes in Greater Manchester.

2.2. How organisations would be affected

Organisations felt they could be affected in two ways by the congestion charge. Firstly, they could be affected because their staff and/or volunteers might have to pay the congestion charge on the way to and from work. Secondly, they could be affected because their staff and/or volunteers have to travel by car to carry out the business of the organisation and might have to cross charging rings at charging hours as a result. One organisation was also concerned that one of its main services - room hire - would be adversely affected. We suspect that this is an issue that might affect a number of VCS organisations that have meeting facilities and are located in the city centre.

2.2.2. Journeys to Work

More than half of the organisations (32) are aware of their staff, volunteers or service users having trouble accessing them by public transport. Over two thirds thought that some or most of their staff and volunteers would be affected by the congestion charge on their journey to and from work, while ten organisations did not see this as a problem. Only a few of those whose staff currently have problems using public transport and would be subject to the congestion

charge believe that access to their organisation would become better as a result of the proposed improvements to public transport.

When being given room for additional comments, a few respondents expressed concerns that staff and volunteer recruitment might become more difficult in light of the congestion charge. As noted above, some organisations are heavily dependent on the input of volunteers and would therefore see their costs rising as a result of volunteers claiming back congestion charge expenses as part of their overall travel expenses. If volunteers were expected to pick up their own expenses, it is likely that this would adversely affect volunteers' willingness to give their time.

2.2.3. Journeys for Work

The survey results suggest that some staff and volunteers might not have the choice to use public transport due to the nature of the business of the organisation. 44 respondents said that staff and/or volunteers frequently have to travel by car in order to carry out the business of the organisation. In other words, they would have to travel to work by car in order to then be able to make other work-related journeys. All but 11 organisations, thought these work-related journeys would be likely to involve crossing the charging rings during charging hours. Comments suggest that a number of organisations are anticipating that they might have to refrain from expanding their service at best or scale down their existing service at worst.

2.2.3.1. Public Transport as an Alternative?

We asked the organisations whose staff and/or volunteers frequently have to travel for work if it would be possible to travel by alternative means. Only one organisation said yes, and three organisations did not know. 32 organisations said that it was not possible. The survey then invited respondents to select reasons for this and/or comment on why it was impossible. From the comments it was clear that our sample

includes organisations that offer home visits to their clients, either because the clients have a hard time leaving their home, or because the organisation does not have enough office space to see clients on-site. Because of serving hard to reach audiences, VCS organisations are likely to encounter constraints with regard to safety and/or accessibility when it comes to contemplating the use of public transport. It is also quite typical for VCS staff to have to attend multiple appointments in any given work day, making the use of public transport a planning challenge, even with the proposed improvements offered within the TIF proposals. This is reflected in the responses below.

Reason why public transport is not an option	Response Count
Public transport would take too long	26
Public transport does not go to the right places	23
Staff/volunteers frequently carry equipment	17
Staff/volunteers would find travel by alternative means too unsafe	11
Staff/volunteers cannot access public transport because of a disability	10
Our service is a community transport/volunteer driver scheme	9
Our service includes moving heavy objects	5
Staff/volunteers would be unwilling to seek out alternative methods of transport	3

These results suggest that, for the foreseeable future, car travel appears to be an essential fact of life for many VCS organisations.

2.2.3.2. Avoiding Charging Times

The survey asked respondents whether it would be possible to move their work-related travel to times that are not subject to the charge. 29 organisations said that it would be unrealistic to avoid the charging by organising travel accordingly. The main reason given was that the organisation runs a service where the client's needs determine the time of travel (27), such as taking clients to hospital appointments, and that, generally speaking, the organisation does not have any control over the times of work-related meetings (18). In addition, organisations found it hard or impossible to plan in the face of unpredictability of travel needs.

2.2.3.3. Inner Charging Ring Location

Only six organisations expressed a preference and the common theme appears to be, the closer to Manchester City Centre, the better.

2.2.3.4. Exemptions

It appears that there is still much confusion around the applicability of certain exemptions to the situation of VCS organisations and their staff. 22 of our respondents said they didn't know which ones would apply to their organisation. Out of those that did respond, many thought that the medical appointments discount (10), the low income worker discount (8), the Blue Badge discount (8) or the Registered Community Transport discount (7) would apply to them. If organisations assessed their eligibility for these discounts accurately, there is reason to believe that at least some of the respondents in our sample would be able to ease the impact of the congestion charge on their organisations by benefiting from one of the discounts.

Respondents to our survey also commented on the fact that policymakers should consider instituting an exemption for charities and/or volunteers, but also questioned how such exemptions would be administered and how much of an administrative

burden that would create for organisations or their volunteers, with its concomitant repercussions on capacity and/or volunteer recruitment.

2.3. The Referendum

We asked respondents how they would vote in the AGMA referendum in November if they could vote on behalf of their organisation. Only ten would vote in favour of the proposal. 19 organisations would vote against the proposal and 9 were still unsure. Additionally, 17 did not respond to this question.

Not surprisingly, among those that are opposed to the charge, the percentage of organisations whose work-related travel is likely to cross charging rings at charging hours is higher than the one among supporters of the charge. Similarly the percentage of those whose staff would be affected on their journey to and from work is higher among the group of organisations that oppose the charge than among those supporting the charge.

3. Conclusion

It appears from the results of our survey that many VCS organisations in Greater Manchester would be affected by the congestion charge because their work necessitates travel that crosses charging rings and the timing of travel is largely outside their control. This of course has to be weighed against the envisaged benefits of the congestion charge in terms of an increase in public transport investment would accrue to some organisations by making them more accessible to their staff, volunteers and clients.

The additional cost of reimbursing staff and volunteers for the congestion charge on top of their other work related travel expenses could be considerable. With regard to journeys to and from work, for which employees typically would not be reimbursed, VCS organisations would also see their cost rising, as volunteers would need to be reimbursed. This is one aspect that clearly sets VCS organisations apart from

other businesses and raises the question whether it would be appropriate to exempt volunteer journeys from the congestion charge. Such an exemption seems appropriate not only in light of central government's interest in encouraging people to volunteer, but to the extent that rising costs to VCS organisations would put their ability to operate cost-effectively at risk, it would also ensure that the VCS can continue to offer much-needed services.

Appendix 2 - Summary of issues raised at meetings

Consultation process

Some concerns were raised in relation to the consultation process itself, chiefly:

- Consultation period has been too brief and has taken place over the summer, a time when it is very difficult to arrange meetings, especially for VCS
- Consultation materials were not made readily available in an easy-read format
- Lack of detail on some issues, e.g.; bus network improvements, exemptions
- Late engagement with neighbouring areas, e.g.; High Peak area

Public Transport Improvements

- Improvements to the network were felt to be very much welcome, although some areas questioned how much they would gain from the package, e.g. Stockport.
- The extensions to Metrolink were particularly welcomed as an accessible mode of transport for people with disabilities.
- Priority bus corridors/rapid transfer bus - again these were welcomed, with the caveat that these should be easily accessible to nearby communities, e.g.; parts of Wigan with currently very poor network coverage should be able to reach the Leigh Guided Busway through feeder services.

- Some people questioned how the bus network improvements would work in practice - more detail should be provided on this

Congestion Charge

This proposed charging generated mixed feelings. The principle of only charging for peak use was welcomed but concerns were raised over the complexity of the plans.

Discounts/exemptions

- Medical appointments - this was supported but it was felt that it needed strengthening - concerns were raised around the classification of 'specialist health facilities' e.g.; whether people with Learning Disabilities being taken to day centres would be exempt from paying the charge. Clarification on how volunteer car schemes would be reimbursed under this exemption was also requested.
- Blue Badge holders / disability - suggestions were made that that same criteria used to determine eligibility for a concessionary travel pass could be used to ascertain who is entitled to a 100% discount.
- Low income workers - it was noted that this excludes people on benefits who may be looking for work and may need to attend interviews, training, education or voluntary work experience placements etc... Generally this discount was felt to be unhelpful, could discourage people from using public transport alternative (unless a similar discount also applied to public transport use) and would add an unnecessary extra layer of complexity to the scheme.

Volunteering

Many VCS organisations rely heavily on volunteers, and as it is protocol for organisations to reimburse volunteer's costs. There was overwhelming feeling that the congestion charge could potentially create both a financial and administrative burden for these organisations and some way of mitigating against this needs to be considered.

Appendix 3 - List of groups and organisations represented at meetings

Leigh Lions Club
Wigan & Leigh Disability Forum
Heritage Network
Over 50's Forum
Active Living Team Wigan Leisure & Culture
Wigan POPP
Leigh Township Forum
Nugent Care
Gin Pit Residents Association
Boroughwide Community Network
Arts Exchange
Wigan Rotary Club
BME Network
Bolton Community Network
BADGE
Darcy Lever Residents Association
Bolton & District Over 50's Federation
Bolton Society for Blind People
Bolton Hospice
Bolton CVS
Stockport Advocacy
Stockport CVS
Stockport Mencap
Stockport MBC
Signpost
Heatons Communicare
Heaton Mersey Village Conservation
Volunteer Centre Tameside
Tameside 3rd Sector Coalition
Khushamdid
Carmel Church, Denton
Tameside Elders Association
Tameside MBC
Hattersley Neighbourhood Partnership
Dukinfield Forum Really Important Questions Group
New Charter Housing Trust
Tameside Blind Association
Transport for Sick Children
Easygo Stockport Community Transport
Heywood New Heart Community Transport
Buxton & District Volunteer Centre
Wigan & District Community Transport
Manchester Community Transport
Transport for Communities
Ramblers Association
Bury, Rochdale, Heywood & Manchester Pensioners
NSPCC
Worsley & Boothstown Transportation Task Group
Greater Manchester Youth Network
Action for Sustainable Living
Saddleworth Parish Council
Manchester Environmental Group of Blind & Partially
Sighted People
Royal School for the Deaf & Communication Disorders
Greater Manchester Clubs for Young People
Transport Pool
Cancer Aid & Listening Line
Manchester People First
Goyt Valley Rail Users Association
Victim Support
Urostomy Association
Voluntary & Community Action Trafford
Manchester Action for Street Health
Action for Blind People
MCCR
The Alzheimers Society
Stockport College
The Stroke Association
African & Caribbean Mental Health Services

Appendix 4 - Interview summary: 4CT, Manchester

4CT Limited, a company limited by guarantee formed by a merger of three community groups, manages the Grange Community Resource Centre in East Manchester. The centre is located right on the inner ring road.

The Grange's role as a meeting venue is likely to be affected by the congestion charge. At the moment, the community centre hosts regular meetings by the PCT and the LA and 4CT obtains half of its income from this source. In order to improve the Grange as a meeting venue, 4CT has made a considerable investment out of its own reserves into parking facilities and can now accommodate 100 cars. Particularly on the days of the PCT meetings the car park is overflowing, because attendees arrive from across the city and include PCT staff that are used to travel by car and do so as part of their job, for example nurses, midwives, etc. The timing of the meetings is often from 8 or 9 in the morning, making it likely that attendees will have to pay the congestion charge on their way in. 4CT are afraid that its location on the inner ring will diminish the community centre's attraction as a meeting venue and possibly result in those meetings being moved to a different location.

4CT's business concept currently relies on income from meeting hire to sustain other activities at the centre. Typical activities available to the community at the centre include adult education courses, exercise and leisure activities, and support groups. If the Grange could no longer serve as a meeting venue, it would be difficult to replace the lost income from another source. Converting the meeting facilities into office space to recoup losses would change the nature of the Grange as a community centre. Therefore, the congestion charge would indirectly impact other activities taking place at the Grange.

It is not clear whether access of users of the community centre would be positively affected by the proposed public transport improvements. Although the Grange is reasonably close to major bus routes in and out of the city centre and although the majority of its users originate from the neighbourhood, it appears that for various reasons car travel is currently the method of choice. A recent move by 4CT from a location less than a mile away in Openshaw to the current one at the Grange already resulted in a reduction in the numbers of users from Openshaw, because the centre, whilst fairly close to public transport, is visually hidden and footpaths leading directly to a bus stop on Ashton New Road are not clearly marked and not always accessible. In an area like East Manchester, with high crime rates, whether or not public transport is a feasible option boils down to safety concerns, particularly for older people. It is unclear if the improvements scheduled in connection with bringing in the congestion charge would address these concerns.

Appendix 5 - Interview summary: NSPCC Childline, Manchester

NSPCC's ChildLine service operates from eleven counselling centres nationally, one of which is based in Manchester city centre. The service relies on recruiting volunteer counsellors to take calls from children who have called the helpline and to support other functions, such as administration, switchboard, fundraising and outreach. Based on the assessment that one out of three calls remains unanswered, ChildLine is currently engaged in a bid to increase its volunteer numbers. The Manchester office is due to expand its operation from currently 160 to 300 volunteers.

The majority of ChildLine's volunteers live outside of the inner ring and travel to the city centre offices for a weekly three to four-hour shift. Depending on the time of their shift, volunteers may incur the congestion charge. According to a ChildLine analysis, 12 shifts

per week would be affected by the congestion charge if it were to be brought in today, but as many as 20 shifts might be affected by the time the charge is scheduled to take effect. Whilst changing the shift patterns to avoid the charging would be an option in theory, as a national helpline, any changes would affect the entire organisation and would therefore be unfeasible. ChildLine has also considered moving all of its operations to Salford Quays, where the organisation has another office, in order to avoid some of the costs the congestion charge might bring. However, when ChildLine consulted with its volunteers, they did not support this move. Instead, staff and volunteers working at the Salford Quays office will relocate to the city centre location.

Volunteers tend to travel by car, which might be encouraged by an arrangement ChildLine has with the Arndale car park for a certain number of free parking spaces. Therefore, it is highly likely that ChildLine will be faced with an increase of costs per volunteer as a result of the congestion charge. At the moment, many volunteers refrain from claiming reimbursement for their travel expenses altogether, because they do not want to be a burden to the organisation. It is anticipated, however, that once costs incurred by volunteers on account of the congestion charge increase travel expenses, more volunteers will begin to claim their expenses. It appears unlikely that any of the proposed discounts would affect volunteers, because many of them are either students, unemployed people trying to get back into work, or pensioners.

It is interesting to note that volunteers that do not have a car are discouraged from using public transport late at night, due to safety concerns (taxi fares are refunded). Even with the proposed improvements to bus services, it is unlikely that this situation would change. Having said that, ChildLine does see the proposed improvements to public transport as potentially having a positive effect on

its ability to recruit volunteers from across Greater Manchester, particularly for early morning shifts and from more remote places that are not as well connected to the city centre. Reportedly, bad public transport is the main barrier to volunteering. Therefore, the scheduled improvements might positively affect ChildLine's ability to recruit some volunteers whilst the congestion charge might result in the organisation losing others.

Appendix 6 - Interview summary: Volunteer Centre Tameside, Ashton-under-Lyne

Volunteer Centre Tameside is a charity working to promote volunteering in Tameside by developing volunteering opportunities and supporting organisations in volunteer involvement. The Volunteer Centre feels very positive about public transport in Tameside, citing that most current volunteers use public transport to get around and do not see this as a barrier to volunteering (in comparison driving is seen to be a more difficult option due the lack of long-stay parking in Tameside and high parking rates).

The organisation also operates Miles of Smiles, a volunteer car scheme, on behalf of the PCT to help patients who are not eligible for transport by ambulance but cannot use public transport meet their medical appointments. Miles of Smiles recruits volunteers who use their own vehicles to take patients to and from their medical appointments from each of Tameside's townships. Patients pay out of pocket expenses of 40p/mile directly to the volunteer driver.

Due to the fact that the scheme responds to patient requests, it would not be possible to plan journeys in order to avoid the congestion charge. Journeys to Manchester-based hospitals would be affected by the congestion charge, and possibly some journeys

to Tameside General Hospital as well. Whilst the Volunteer Centre has reason to believe that the medical exemption would apply to this service, it is unclear whether different legs of the journey would be considered different in this regard. For example, depending on the location of the volunteer driver and the location of the patient to be picked up, the congestion charge might be incurred before the actual journey to the medical facility has even started.

If the part of the journey during which only the volunteer driver is in the car were not exempt, Volunteer Centre Tameside would have to reimburse volunteers for their extra expense due to the congestion charge. It is feared that the extra effort of asking for a refund might put volunteers off and result in a loss of volunteers. Moreover, if the cost of incurring the congestion charge had to be factored into the cost per mile, a resulting rise in cost might discourage patients from using the service and thus damage the overall aim of the project.

As for the actual journey to and from the medical appointment it is thought that it would be likely to fall under the medical exemption. However, there is insufficient information available about how exemptions would be administered and how much of a burden would fall on Volunteer Centre Tameside. Currently, the staff member who is administering the project is working at capacity, meaning that any additional burden would have to be either funded or absorbed by other Volunteer Centre staff. There is also a lack of clarity on the medical exemption itself. Guidance currently refers to regular medical appointments within the M60 and the question remains what 'regular' means.

Appendix 7 - Interview summary: Bury District Citizens Advice Bureau, Radcliffe

The Bury District Citizens Advice Bureau maintains offices in Bury, Prestwich and Radcliffe. In addition to providing face-to-face advice at its offices, it also operates a home visiting service, mostly to homes located in the northern part of Bury borough.

Both staff and volunteers working for the CAB office in Prestwich will be affected by the congestion charge. Staff would probably be expected to pick up the charge themselves, whereas volunteers would be reimbursed for it. Considering that staff in the Bury and Radcliffe offices would not be faced with paying the congestion charge, the Prestwich office might become a less attractive place to work in and, in effect, Prestwich office employees would have to tolerate a pay cut compared to their Radcliffe and Bury colleagues.

The Prestwich office is currently open for three days per week but the future aim is to increase the service to five days per week. Because volunteers would claim back costs incurred through the congestion charge as part of their travel expenses, the CAB's cost per volunteer would rise and, considering that services are heavily reliant on volunteers (60 volunteers to 23 staff), this could mean that the level of service offered by the CAB might actually have to decrease. The increase in cost could be considerable in light of the fact that on any given day 10 volunteers are required to staff the Prestwich office. Also, volunteer advisors typically work during normal business hours (10am-4pm), meaning that those coming from locations north of the outer charging ring would incur the charge on their journey into and out of work. It is estimated that currently most volunteers live north of the M60 and would therefore incur a charge. For some of those, using public transport to get to the Prestwich office is not a viable alternative because they do outreach work by car and thus need to travel

in by car. For others, the Metrolink is an option but is felt to be prohibitively expensive.

Due to the commitment expected of them, volunteers are typically either retired or unemployed and seeking a route back into paid employment. As it stands, this would mean that they would not be eligible for an exemption from the charge. Bury CAB feels that an exemption for volunteers would not only ease the burden on their organisation but could act as an incentive to volunteering as a whole.

Relocating the office from Prestwich to somewhere outside of the charging ring would be impossible, in light of the fact that Prestwich feels a bit isolated from Bury anyway and because the CAB needs to maintain the service in this rather deprived area. Therefore, there seems to be no alternative for the CAB to avoid the additional cost which will be accrued through the congestion charge. In terms of public transport improvements, the charity views the benefits to Bury borough as quite marginal, considering that the borough already has a Metrolink connection.

Appendix 8 - Interview summary: Cancer Aid and Listening Line (CALL)

CALL is a local charity providing emotional support and home-based practical help to people living with cancer, their carers and families. Three main strands of support are offered - home support (such as respite sitting and help with shopping), a car scheme (largely for hospital trips) and a helpline. CALL currently has offices in North and South Manchester, Salford, Stockport and Trafford but hopes to expand into the other districts of Greater Manchester within the next few years. In total, CALL has approximately 200 volunteers, of which roughly 70 are drivers.

The organisation would be able to operate the home support service flexibly to avoid the congestion charge. Likewise the helpline is provided 'virtually' by the district offices during the daytimes and volunteers

in their own homes during the evenings so this would also incur no charge. In contrast, there is little flexibility with the car scheme as this is dependent on the clients' needs and booked appointment times.

Clients are often vulnerable and may need assistance from their home to the car, and then into the hospital itself. Clients who are more independent may choose to use the service because they have no car or are unable to drive after treatment. Public transport may not be a feasible option because of the length of journeys and the time that it would take, particularly after receiving intensive treatment. The cost of taxis is prohibitive for regular journeys.

Most journeys which take place under this scheme are to The Christie, Manchester Royal Infirmary (MRI) or Hope Hospital in Salford. The Christie and Hope Hospital are just outside of the proposed inner ring, the MRI is within the inner ring. Some appointments currently take place during the morning peak time and many all day appointments will finish during the afternoon peak time. Volunteers and clients come from throughout the districts in which CALL operates and therefore it is difficult to estimate the number of crossings that would incur a charge, but it is likely that a significant number of charges would be incurred. It is difficult for CALL to match journeys to the nearest volunteer driver as such a large area is covered and volunteers may only be available at certain times or on certain days.

CALL hope that these journeys will be exempt by their medical nature but have concerns that the current proposals only indicate that 'regular' appointments will qualify for exemption, without a clear explanation of what this means. There is also concern about how the exemption would be administered - CALL currently has only one part-time administrator working across all five sites and therefore a complex system of reimbursement could cause problems for the organisation.