

TRANSPORTEAST

SHARED TRANSPORT

Existing Shared Transport Schemes
and potential for future schemes

JUNE 2026 **Executive Summary**



Project Background

Overview

Introduction

What is shared mobility? It is an umbrella term used to cover services such as car clubs, lift sharing, bike sharing, and demand-responsive services. Transport East is working to better understand how shared transport can support sustainable travel across the region. The region's transport needs are diverse and significant—spanning urban centres, market towns, and rural communities—and shared mobility offers real potential to reduce car dependency and improve connectivity between communities in a sustainable way.

Supported by CoMoUK (Collaborative Mobility UK), this study provides a clear evidence base to inform future transport planning, helping to expand sustainable travel choices, reduce single-occupancy car use, and support local communities across the East.

Why we did the study

Private car use remains dominant across the Transport East region, particularly in rural and coastal areas where public transport options are often infrequent or missing. Shared mobility has the potential to fill critical gaps in the network.

This study was commissioned to:

- Identify where shared transport services currently exist and where gaps remain.
- Understand the demographic and geographic conditions that support different shared transport modes.
- Explore how local authorities and employers can encourage and enable shared transport.
- Provide evidence to inform future investment, policy decisions, and procurement.

It also responds to wider trends, including a rising interest in car-free lifestyles, the growth of hybrid working, and the need for more sustainable and inclusive travel options across the region.

How we achieved this

The study combined robust data analysis with targeted engagement to build a comprehensive picture of shared transport across the region.

We analysed demographic data from the 2021 Census, alongside operator data and local authority sources, to map existing shared transport provision and model future demand. This included an analysis of population density, car ownership, commuting patterns, and cycling rates across the region.

We also contacted accredited operators across all shared transport modes to understand their appetite for expanding services in the region and the conditions needed for schemes to succeed.

Finally, CoMoUK's extensive national research and annual reports helped to contextualise findings from the Transport East region within the broader UK shared transport landscape.

Car Clubs

Overview

Car clubs give people access to cars without the costs or other obligations of owning or leasing a vehicle. They provide users and wider society with a range of social, environmental, and economic benefits.

CoMoUK has been conducting surveys of car club users in the UK for over a decade, leading to a wealth of evidence on their benefits.

Benefits of car clubs include:

- Offering a "car-light" lifestyle: Around one-fifth of car club users report that the number of cars in their household decreased after joining. CoMoUK's latest car club report found that each car club vehicle in the UK substituted the need for 27 privately owned vehicles on average. Outside London, the car reduction ratio is 20 private cars per single car club vehicle.
- Financial savings: Financial reasons are strong, 34% of car club members stated that saving

money was a primary reason for joining. Separate research indicates that using electric vehicles (EVs) through a car club can save around £5,600 per annum compared to owning an EV, given high purchasing costs and rapid vehicle depreciation.

- Encouraging active travel: Car club users in the UK are more likely to travel at other times by foot, bicycle, or public transport than the average population.

There are currently 69 car club vehicles across the region: 39 are located in Norfolk, 18 in Suffolk, and 12 in Essex. No car club vehicles are currently available in the unitary authorities of Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock.

Significant growth potential exists in urban areas including Southend-on-Sea, Ipswich, Colchester, Chelmsford, Brentwood, and Epping Forest, as well as smaller towns such as Saffron Walden, Newmarket, Bury St Edmunds, Lowestoft, Great Yarmouth, and King's Lynn



Lift Sharing

Overview

Lift sharing, or carpooling, occurs when two or more people share a car for the same journey. While 70% of adults engage in informal lift sharing among friends, colleagues, or family members, the practice can also be formalised through digital platforms that match drivers with potential passengers.

Across the UK, 10.1% of commuters share a lift to work, while 49.6% drive alone. While lift-sharing rates to work are slightly lower in the East of England overall (9.8%), they are higher in Thurrock (10.7%), Norfolk (10.7%), and Suffolk (10.3%).

Benefits of lift sharing include:

- an average user saves around £1,000 per year by sharing their commute.
- Digital platforms can build networks (“communities”) of users. These can support large employers to minimise staff commuting vehicles.
- Reduced carbon emissions. People occupancy in the UK has fallen from two people per car and per trip in the 1960s to 1.55 in 2024.

Local authorities can encourage lift sharing by partnering with large employers or leveraging their own positions as major employers.

Steps that employers can take to encourage uptake include making lift sharing visible with targeted internal communication, prioritising lift sharing with designated car parking spaces and

guaranteeing a ride home by covering the cost of alternative transport (such as a taxi) if a disruption occurs with the shared commute arrangement.



Shared Micromobility

Overview

Shared micromobility is an umbrella term used to jointly refer to bike-sharing and e-scooter-sharing schemes. These modes share overlapping user demographics and trip purposes. Typically, they are managed by the same operators, allowing users to access them via a single app at adjacent parking locations. Costs are generally time-dependent (charged by the minute or hour), with discounts or bundles available for frequent users and subscribers.

There are currently three bike-share and two e-scooter schemes operating in the Transport East region, located across Norwich, Colchester, Saffron Walden, Chelmsford, and Braintree.

Benefits of Shared Micromobility include:

- Shared micromobility actively encourages cycling habits: 69% of active users of shared bikes or e-scooters cycle more frequently since starting to use these services.

- These services also provide critical transport access for lower-income individuals. Within the <£10,000, £10,001–£20,000, and £20,001–£30,000 income brackets, between 62% and 65% of active users utilise shared e-scooters at least once a week.

Significant potential for growth exists by introducing services to areas currently lacking schemes. Micromobility services could be highly viable in King's Lynn, Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Ipswich, Southend-on-Sea, Basildon, and Harlow.

Further viable sites requiring additional support from local authorities and community groups are identified in the full report.



Digital Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT) and Community Transport (CT)

Overview

Digital Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT) is a shared transport mode utilising vehicles of various sizes, where routes and stops are dynamically determined by passenger demand via digital routing systems. Unlike traditional taxis, DDRT fares are charged per passenger rather than per vehicle.

Community Transport (CT) provides flexible, accessible, community-led solutions to meet unfilled local transport needs. Like DDRT, it uses a range of vehicles and is frequently demand-responsive, though a growing number of CT services operate as scheduled services along fixed routes where conventional buses are unavailable. CT differs from DDRT as it is often restricted to specific user groups, such as marginalised or isolated individuals, older adults, or people with disabilities.

In the Transport East region, many DDRT and CT schemes operate in areas with very high levels of car ownership; the majority of operational zones cover areas where fewer than 10% of households lack access to a car or van.

In these locations, DDRT and CT provide a vital lifeline for individuals who cannot or do not wish to drive.

Based on the analysis of existing bus services, demand for new DDRT schemes can be identified in two primary ways depending on the objective:

- Filling network gaps: Feeding into and supplementing an area with an already strong existing bus network.
- Replacing under-performing routes: Replacing inefficient, fixed-route bus services to allow for more flexible, demand-led operations.

To successfully implement future DDRT schemes, the report recommends:

- Securing long-term funding backed by a robust business case.
- Procuring DDRT services as part of a comprehensive package that integrates the bus operator, the software provider, and customer service provisions (such as a call centre).
- Increasing marketing efforts and post-launch support from local councils, operators, and technology providers.



Next steps and recommendations

The study provides actionable recommendations for expanding shared transport across the Transport East region. The next phase will focus on translating this evidence into practical application, addressing key systemic challenges across all modes.

These challenges include the urban skew of current provision that leaves rural communities underserved, a heavy reliance on public funding or employer support outside high-demand areas, and persistent behavioural barriers such as limited public awareness and trust.

Key priorities moving forward include:

Targeting high-potential locations:

Working with local authorities to identify specific opportunities for new car club, shared micromobility, and DDRT schemes in the locations highlighted by the study.

Streamlining procurement: Supporting councils to engage with accredited operators and develop appropriate, sustainable procurement approaches.

Engaging employers: Encouraging local authorities and large employers to actively promote lift sharing and integrate shared transport into workplace travel plans.

Developing mobility hubs: Exploring how shared transport can be seamlessly integrated with core public transport networks at key regional mobility hubs.

Addressing data gaps: Strengthening the evidence base on DDRT and community transport provision to precisely map and target gaps in existing service coverage.

