

Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment v2 - Head of service review

Reference: ECIA529013596

Submitted: 06 October 2023 14:44 PM

Executive summary

Title of policy / decision: Digitalising Passenger Transport

Policy / decision type: Cabinet Decision

Overview of policy / decision: This decision is for replacing Moovit, the current Travel Essex App supplier, when the current contract expires in early 2025. The Travel Essex app provides travel planning information for all public transport modes and the necessary functionality to enable DigiGo, the on-demand minibus service currently operating in the rural area south of Braintree. The new app will include enhanced travel planning and Digital Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT) functionality, with more functionality added and digitalisation of other flexible transport services as time progresses (Community Transport, Home to School, Adult Social Care).

We cannot extend the contract with Moovit beyond its current duration (2 + 1 years), therefore we need to go out in the market and procure a new app supplier. Travel Essex has been a resounding success, downloaded approximately 30,000 in 18 months, with DigiGo currently transporting around 3,000 passengers per month.

What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve?: Our research and experience confirms that the cognitive load required to switch from car to public transport is high in Essex. This procurement is part of a wider project to (a) improve access to travel information so that residents can easily make more sustainable travel choices and (b) to roll out more Digital Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT) schemes in the County like DigiGo, thus providing a new and attractive mode of public transport, which will encourage residents to leave their cars behind (particularly rural residents) and increase accessibility to a variety of destinations.

The Travel Essex app will remove a barrier to public transport by providing an easy-to-use, intuitive mobile phone app and enable residents to access a 'single source of truth' when it comes to public transport information and flexible transport services available in the County.

The new app will help ECC deliver commitments included in the Bus Services Improvement Plan and Enhanced Partnerships.

Executive Director responsible for policy / decision: Mark Ash (Climate, Environment and Customer Services)

Cabinet Member responsible for policy / decision: Lee Scott (Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport)

Is this a new policy / decision or a change to an existing one?: New policy / decision

How will the impact of the policy / decision be monitored and evaluated?: The decision impact can be monitored and evaluated by data generated by the app itself (for example, number of users/passengers) as well as by tracking changes to passenger numbers on various modes (bus in particular). The app also offers functionality where users can rate the app and leave comments, and passengers on DigiGo services can rate their journeys - combined, they provide an indicator around satisfaction with the service provided, which is another Key Performance Indicator for the project.

In addition, a detailed monitoring and evaluation strategy will be put in place after the app is deployed, in order to track behavioural change (for example, how and why car drivers are converted to public transport users).

We capture anecdotal feedback from social media (e.g. when we run a promotion) and from parishes and local people using the app. We speak to people directly and get their thoughts during various community meet ups where we attend to promote the service, for example at Parish Halls. In addition, there is a current consultation on proposed bus changes – that might fetch some extra feedback relevant to this. Overall, the feedback that we get is mostly positive; negative feedback sometimes stems from misperceptions, e.g. ‘what about people who are not tech savvy?’ – our answer to that is that we offer alternative formats.

We will be providing the option to book by phone for those not confident using technology. In addition, we will be producing detailed instructions on how to use the app and book flexible transport services using the app. These instructions will be produced in text, videos or visualisations – just like we do now for DigiGo and other services. The text in the guides will be accessible format, as we do now. Leaflets will be digital and printed. The videos/animations and digital versions of leaflets will be hosted on the TravelEssex website, which will be launched soon (separate project). We will also be hosting community events (e.g. at rural parishes) showing/teaching/demonstrating people how to use the app (we have done this for DigiGo in Braintree). As a team, we are well versed in promotion of public transport and how to use public transport and we have specialist expertise within our team to do this, including marketing and promotion of public transport at various community events.

The alternative routes to booking and information will be highlighted across all the aforementioned promotional materials, just like we do now (for example, include the telephone line number and website details on leaflets and promotional videos).

In addition, our plan is to train key specific people within communities on how to use the app in order to show others how to use it. Again, this is something we are already doing as a team for the DigiGo service. Key specific people include staff at GP practices, Parish clerks, school/college receptionists, etc.

Will this policy / decision impact on:

Service users: Yes

Employees: Yes

Wider community or groups of people: Yes

If the policy decision impacts on employees, provide details here and include potential impacts on identified groups later in the form: We are taking steps to promote the Travel Essex app to ECC staff, by highlighting the app in the Staff Travel section on the intranet. The app can help staff to travel more sustainably for work or leisure. In the long term, we might consider offering incentives/rewards ("gamification") to ECC staff through the Travel Essex app, to reward sustainable travel behaviour (e.g. instead of driving).

What strategic priorities will this policy / decision support?: Strong, Inclusive and Sustainable Economy, High Quality Environment, Health, Independence and Wellbeing for All Ages

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Economy?: Good jobs, Future growth and investment, Green growth, Levelling up the economy

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Environment: Net zero, Transport and built environment

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Health: Healthy lifestyles, Promoting independence, Place based working, Carers, Levelling up health

What geographical areas of Essex will the policy / decision affect?: All Essex

Digital accessibility

Is the new or revised policy linked to a digital service (website, system or application)?: Yes

What steps you have taken to meet the digital accessibility: In short, the app procured will have to meet WCAG 2.1 accessibility standard as a minimum.

Procurement will also include specifications about enhanced accessibility functionality for ambulatory/visual impairments, including talkback (app "speaks" to the user) and on-screen magnification of fonts and maps. The app will also be specified to offer functionality where a passengers sets off on a rail or bus journey, and the app will track the vehicle in real time and tell the passenger where to get off (through 'talkback' or vibration or other, device depending function).

As the app will be whitelabeled, any branding/graphics will be designed to be accessible.

Please note that the app will be accompanied by a customer support centre for those without access or cant use a smartphone; the centre will be available to resolve technical queries as well as take bookings/payments for DigiGo / flexible services.

Please see comments in the previous page – the customer support centre will be promoted as part of the overall marketing campaigns and details on how to contact the support centre (phone, email, in-app) will be included on all marketing assets (videos, animations, digital & printed leaflets, when attending community events, on banners etc)

How have you tested accessibility?: During procurement process, suppliers will be asked to confirm that they meet WCAG 2.1 standard in order to qualify.

After procurement, accessibility will be tested by TS staff specialised in accessibility, as soon as the platform is set up . The current Travel Essex supplied by Moovit, underwent various tests before launching, including various user groups and tech services colleagues.

How will you monitor and maintain accessibility once it has gone live?: During procurement, we will be specifying that the app must meet WCAG 2.1 Digital Accessibility Standard. After procurement and before launch, the app will be checked by ECC Tech Services (we have a specialist team that does this) that the app actually meets the standard and not take the supplier's word for it. IF something is found not be accessible, we will then force the supplier to fix it, but also include it in a Digital Accessibility Report that we will need to publish alongside the Privacy Policy and T&Cs of the App – the aim is to notify users of the components/functions that are not accessible.

Accessibility functionality is unlikely to change in the life span of the project, but the team managing the app will be monitoring accessibility and intervene if necessary.

Equalities - Groups with protected characteristics

Age

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Disability - learning disability

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Disability - mental health issues

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Disability - physical impairment

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Disability - sensory impairment

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Sex

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Gender reassignment

Nature of impact: None

Marriage / civil partnership

Nature of impact: None

Pregnancy / maternity

Nature of impact: None

Race

Nature of impact: None

Religion / belief

Nature of impact: None

Sexual orientation

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: IPTU have been directly managing the current Travel Essex app and operating the DigiGo service on a day to day basis, building up significant expertise and data generated by the app. All these valuable lessons learnt and data, have been applied to this assessment and will be applied in the re-procurement of the app. In addition, the above assessment has been carried out by qualified Transport Planning specialists, equipped with the latest research around mobility and protected characteristic groups. For example, different genders have different travel patterns - and the app will support the provision of information to make these travel patterns more sustainable.

For the groups with protected characteristics, the app will provide access to the latest transport information (thereby encouraging use of public transport), as well as access to DigiGo and other flexible transport services, which by their very nature (smaller vehicles, friendly drivers, almost door-to-door service) will make it safer and more inviting for some groups to use public transport. The app and DigiGo service will give a newly found level of confidence, safety and security to travel on public transport for all protected groups.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: There are no anticipated negative impacts for the above groups; any unanticipated impacts can be mitigated by a targeted marketing campaign to specific groups (for example promoting the accessibility functionality and how it can work for various people with disabilities).

The new app will also be supported by a Customer Support Centre providing advice (via telephone and email) on how to use the app for people who can't use a mobile phone to access the app, including taking bookings and fare payments over the phone.

How could you strengthen any positive impact(s)?: We will utilise the marketing campaign to highlight the benefits of using a travel planning app and DigiGo service, for example by creating and promoting 'user stories' from people with a protective characteristic background.

The app will collect data on Age & Disability; this will be done when a passenger creates an account/profile on the app. The Age setting will dictate the passenger profile (Adult, Student, OAP, Concessionary) and adjust fares accordingly. The Disability data will help us to dispatch the right vehicle to the passenger, for example a wheelchair accessible vehicle. The collection of Age & Disability data are needed in order to provide the service. In addition, please note that the platform will generate a lot of aggregated/anonymised data on travel demand, where the demand is located, where passengers want to travel to etc. These data will help with long term planning of public transport in the County. Leveraging this dataset, is one of the key reasons why we are doing this.

Levelling up - Priority areas & cohorts

Children and adults with SEND, learning disabilities or mental health conditions (taking an all-age approach)

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Children on Free School Meals

Nature of impact: None

Working families

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Young adults (16-25 who have not been in education, training or employment for around 6-12 months)

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Residents of Harlow

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Residents of Jaywick and Clacton

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Residents of Harwich

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Residents of Basildon (Town) housing estates

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Residents of Canvey Island

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Residents of Colchester (Town) - Housing Estates

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Residents of Rural North of the Braintree District

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: In general, all Essex residents and visitors will be positively impacted; all the the aforementioned priority areas and cohorts will benefit from having better access to travel information. In addition, residents who live within the catchment of flexible transport services, for example at Braintree District where DigiGo operates, will have a high positive impact, because of the on-demand, corner to corner aspect of the service.

For Young Adults and working families, the app and DigiGo service opens up new avenues of mobility and this is evident in the ever growing numbers of passengers from these groups on DigiGo service.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: There are no anticipated negative impacts for the above groups; any unanticipated impacts can be mitigated by a targeted marketing campaign to specific groups.

The new app will also be supported by a Customer Support Centre providing advice (via telephone and email) on how to use the app for people who cant use a mobile phone to access the app, including taking bookings and fare payments over the phone.

How could you strengthen any positive impact(s)?: We will utilise the marketing campaign to highlight the benefits of using a travel planning app and DigiGo service, for example by creating and promoting 'user stories' from people with a protective characteristic background.

Equalities - Inclusion health groups and other priority groups

Refugees / asylum seekers

Nature of impact: None

Homeless / rough sleepers

Nature of impact: None

People who experience drug and alcohol dependence

Nature of impact: None

Offenders / ex-offenders

Nature of impact: None

Victims of modern slavery

Nature of impact: None

Carers

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Looked after children / care leavers

Nature of impact: None

The armed forces community (serving personnel and their families, veterans, reservists and cadets)

Nature of impact: None

People who are unemployed / economically inactive

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

People on low income

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Sex workers

Nature of impact: None

Ethnic minorities

Nature of impact: None

Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities

Nature of impact: None

People with multiple complex needs or multi-morbidities

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: All of the above groups will benefit from having better access to public transport information and access to DigiGo or other flexible transport services where available. The Travel Essex app & DigiGo will increase (physical) accessibility to hospitals, GPs, workplaces, retail, leisure opportunities for all of the above groups, for example, providing commuting information to job seekers as well as an on-demand minibus service in the form of DigiGo in Braintree District. The current and future Travel Essex app and DigiGo service, have been carefully planned to maximise opportunities for these groups and encourage them to use public transport.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: There are no anticipated negative impacts for the above groups; any unanticipated impacts can be mitigated by a targeted marketing campaign to specific groups.

The new app will also be supported by a Customer Support Centre providing advice (via telephone and email) on how to use the app for people who can't use a mobile phone to access the app, including taking bookings and fare payments over the phone.

How could you strengthen any positive impact(s)?: We will utilise the marketing campaign to highlight the benefits of using a travel planning app and DigiGo service, for example by creating and promoting 'user stories' from people with a protective characteristic background.

Equalities - Geographical Groups

People living in areas of high deprivation

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

People living in rural or isolated areas

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

People living in coastal areas

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

People living in urban or over-populated areas

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: See previous comments; better provision of public transport information will generally have positive impact. The app will offer a 'single source of truth' for public transport information, in areas where residents might be unaware of the travel options available to them locally and beyond. In addition, the provision of DigiGo in rural Braintree (e.g. a new form of public transport) has been a game changer for local residents, evidenced in the continually growing number of passengers and high scores in passenger satisfaction.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: There are no anticipated negative impacts for the above groups; any unanticipated impacts can be mitigated by a targeted marketing campaign to specific groups.

The new app will also be supported by a Customer Support Centre providing advice (via telephone and email) on how to use the app for people who can't use a mobile phone to access the app, including taking bookings and fare payments over the phone.

How could you strengthen any positive impact(s)?: We will utilise the marketing campaign to highlight the benefits of using a travel planning app and DigiGo service, for example by creating and promoting 'user stories' from people with a protective characteristic background.

Families

Family formation (e.g. to become or live as a couple, the ability to live with or apart from children)

Nature of impact: None

Families going through key transitions e.g. becoming parents, getting married, fostering or adopting, bereavement, redundancy, new caring responsibilities, onset of a long-term health condition

Nature of impact: None

Family members' ability to play a full role in family life, including with respect to parenting and other caring responsibilities

Nature of impact: None

Families before, during and after couple separation

Nature of impact: None

Families most at risk of deterioration of relationship quality and breakdown

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: See previous comments; having better access to public transport options/information (and DigiGo) can lead to new more sustainable and family-orientated mobility. For example, many DigiGo passengers use the service to go see family or do family-orientated activities (e.g. grandparents taking grandchildren to the County Park using the DigiGo service), regardless of their physical/mental ability. As one resident put it, [DigiGo] 'has opened up my life' by giving new transport options where none existed previously.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: There are no anticipated negative impacts for the above groups; any unanticipated impacts can be mitigated by a targeted marketing campaign to specific groups.

The new app will also be supported by a Customer Support Centre providing advice (via telephone and email) on how to use the app for people who can't use a mobile phone to access the app, including taking bookings and fare payments over the phone.

Climate

Does your decision / policy involve development or re-development of buildings or infrastructure?: No

Does your decision / policy take place in, or make use of, existing buildings or infrastructure?: No

Does your decision / policy involve elements connected to transport, travel or vehicles? This includes travel needs / requirements of both service users and staff (including staff you're planning to recruit): Yes

Where are staff or service users coming from and how are they travelling?: This is the whole point of the Travel Essex app, to encourage sustainable travel for ECC staff, residents and visitors to Essex. In addition, the DigiGo service is operated using a fleet of electric minibuses (see question below).

In terms of day-to-day management and operation of the App and DigiGo, ECC staff will mostly work remotely, as currently.

If car travel is unavoidable, are you specifying electric cars and vehicles?: Yes

Are you undertaking a procurement exercise?: Yes

Please confirm for purchase over £100k that you have a carbon reduction plan as part of your procurement: N/A

Please list which climate TOMS (Themes, outcomes & measures) you have included in your procurement and the weighting these have been given: This has not been done yet; it will be completed later during the procurement process, with the aim of following corporate guidelines.

Does your decision / policy involve the purchase of goods or materials?: Yes

Have you considered making use of goods / materials that already exist in the organisation, or using second-hand equipment?: N/A

Will you purchase goods that are durable and long lasting, and can be easily maintained or repaired?: N/A

Will you source goods / materials from a local provider where possible?: N/A

Will you use goods or materials made with recycled content and / or recyclable at the end of their life?: N/A

Will any waste be generated by this decision? This includes waste from construction, waste generated by service users / staff, and waste generated by replacing existing products / materials with new: No

Nature of impact

Built Environment / Energy: Positive

Sustainable Transport / Travel: Positive

Waste: None

Extent of impact

Built Environment / Energy: Medium

Sustainable Transport / Travel: High

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: See previous comments; the whole point of the Travel Essex app is to encourage use of public transport, persuading people to leave their private cars behind. This directly contributes to high positive impact around "sustainable travel/transport" and a medium positive impact in 'Built Environment/Energy' from the decrease in private car journeys (less congestion and emissions).

Currently, DigiGo uses a fleet of electric minibuses and the intention is to continue that in future iterations of the service, thus contributing directly to ECC's Climate Change policy.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: The new app will be supported by a Customer Support Centre providing advice (via telephone and email) on how to use the app for people who cant use a mobile phone to access the app, including taking bookings and fare payments over the phone.

In addition, environmental costs will be mitigated through the use of Electric Minibuses for flexible transport services.

Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts

Does your ECIA indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more of the groups / areas identified?: No

Details of person completing the form

I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance: I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance

Date ECIA completed: 05/07/2023

Name of person completing the ECIA: Stelios Rodoulis

Email address of person completing the ECIA: stelios.rodoulis@essex.gov.uk

Your function: Climate, Environment and Customer Services

Your service area: Transport

Your team: Integrated Passenger Transport Unit (IPTU)

Are you submitting this ECIA on behalf of another function, service area or team?: No

Email address of Head of Service: helen.morris@essex.gov.uk