

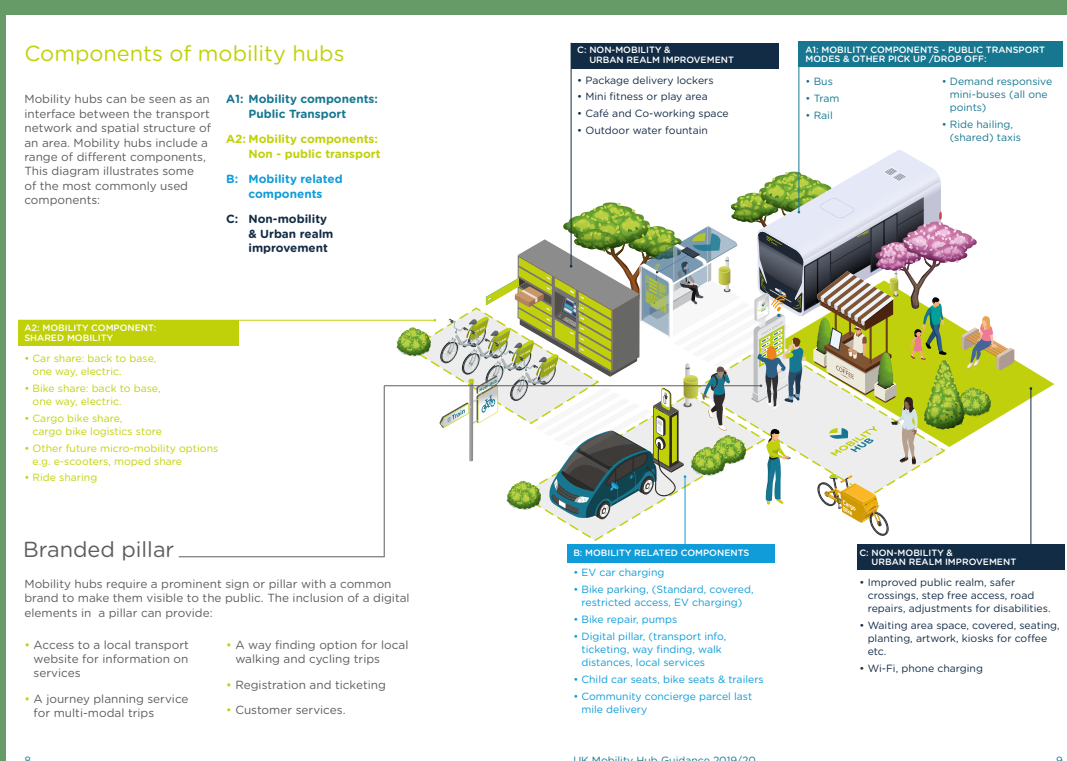
# MOBILITY HUBS

Introducing the concept



# WHAT IS A MOBILITY HUB?

At their core Mobility Hubs are a mix of co-located transport options, usually focussed around the interface between mass public transport and 'last-mile' mobility solutions. These inter-modal transfer stations are then supported by information resources and associated services, such as bike servicing and coffee shops - with the exact make-up depending on scale and local context. The cartoon below from CoMoUK's Mobility Hub Guide shows what the components of a current generation Mobility Hub might look like.



Taken from CoMoUK - Mobility Hub Guide

This is the first in a series of articles discussing some of the challenges (and solutions) to transport in an urban environment from a sustainability perspective, including the additional challenges that Covid-19 might bring. In particular, these articles will discuss concept of Mobility Hubs and how they can help solve the problem of transport in our cities.

# > WHAT'S THE BACKGROUND?

The development of sustainable transport strategies has been a mainstay of local, regional and national policies for a number of years now. They aim to mitigate a number of important issues faced by cities and towns, such as congestion and poor air quality, as well as addressing larger scale concerns such as climate change and public health. Their importance has only been increased by many countries' more recent commitment to the net-zero carbon agenda.

The introduction of sustainable transport policies has been heavily influenced by new mobility concepts such as Mobility as a Service (MaaS), micro-mobility and the increased uptake of Electric Vehicles (EVs). However, to date, the cornerstone

of most sustainable transport strategies has been mass transit. Unfortunately, the need for social distancing brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic has massively reduced the appeal of public transport. The default, most obvious, bio-secure means of transport then becomes the car. This is exactly what sustainable transport is trying to avoid.



Interchange mobility hub concept, Vienna, Austria



## HOW DO WE DELIVER A SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT SYSTEM WITH THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN MASS TRANSIT AND INDIVIDUAL VEHICLES?

A number of developments and ideas can help here, given the right incentives. There is a long term trend away from individual ownership to shared use models and an increasing interest in micro-mobility in cities. These, together with other active travel modes and viable, safe public transport options, offer the core components of a solution. To make this system work it needs to be convenient, simple and efficient to complete a journey, moving between different transport modes where and when needed. And all this needs to be underpinned by a viable commercial model. Hence the growing interest and focus on Mobility Hubs.

Mobility Hubs are not new. There have been several trials and real-world deployments over the past few years in places like Berlin, Amsterdam, Vienna and Brussels, and there are plans for trials and deployments in the

UK in Manchester, Newcastle, Southampton and Plymouth among others. The increasing need for sustainable city transport, together with the deployment of new mobility options, means that these hubs are now becoming an exciting lynchpin of the future urban transport ecosystem.

Most of the current trials are still at the design stage or operating at a small scale and are driven by local or public transport authorities. The aim is to provide alternative travel choices and reduce the barriers to multi-modal trips. These trials include large hubs at major interchanges, such as in [Vienna, Austria](#) that allows transit between bus, tram and metro as well as e-bikes, car sharing and MaaS options – all linked via [an app](#). On the other end of the scale is an expanding network (currently 42) of centralised and local hubs in Bremen, Germany that links trams with shared cars and bikes.



Suburban concept, Bremen, Germany



Understanding how best to design and operate these hubs is still at an early stage, so one of the key focus of early trials is to collect data on real-world operation and user preferences. It will be interesting to see what learning the current generation of trials can provide on the design and operation of different hub concepts.





## WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

The two fundamental challenges facing the widespread roll-out of Mobility Hubs are the constantly evolving technology and the development of commercially viable business models.

As in most sectors, technology in the mobility space is changing extremely fast. This means that Hubs needs to be designed and deployed that are able to respond to these changes. New types of charging technology; the launch of on-demand shared mobility services; the growth of new vehicle types, such as e-scooters; and the introduction of Connected and Autonomous Vehicles, can require rapid changes to any deployment.

Historically, trials of new mobility concepts have failed commercially once the initial public funding period ends. Many of the new trials are taking new approaches to partnership between public and private partners to balance risk and encourage innovation, including knowledge sharing, for example through the [Polis network](#), and innovative contracting to incentivise new operational models.

If Mobility Hubs are going to fulfil their potential to address real transport issues in cities, this close working between

infrastructure owners, mobility (and ancillary) service providers and consumers will be key to developing a technically adaptable, commercially viable model needed to ensure longevity of the Hubs concept.

The explosion in new mobility solutions combined with the need for new, more sustainable transport options make Mobility Hubs an exciting concept. Building the right eco-system of assets and services around these hubs is a huge opportunity to create something that can provide a solution to the pressing transport, logistic and social needs in our cities, and provide real returns to a broad range of private and public investors.

To make this happen we need to build on current thinking that underpins the first generation of hubs, and work to understand the impact of Covid-19 on the future of Mobility Hubs to deliver safer, more exciting and more effective ways of moving people and goods around our cities.



# ➤ START A CONVERSATION



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## ➤ OTHER PAPERS IN THIS SERIES (COMING SOON)

# 2 – Mobility Hubs – the next generation

# 3 – Connectivity not just mobility

# 4 – London as a place to experiment



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