



Association of Directors of
Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport

ADEPT President's Awards 2022

Entry form

Award category:	Category 2: Digital innovation/technology
Title:	MK Connect
Entrant:	Milton Keynes Council
Main contact name:	Adele Wearing
Email address:	Adele.wearing@milton-keynes.gov.uk
Partner/s (if applicable):	Via
Headline summary (<u>150 characters</u>, c. 20-25 words)	
MK Connect is a demand responsive solution, integrated with the commercial bus network. Providing a technology based solution for supported services.	

Please note we need **at least one supporting image** per award submission.
Supporting images should be attached separately as jpg or png files.

Please paste links to any supporting video evidence here

Link 1	DDRT as part of a fully integrated bus network - YouTube Presentation on MK Connect about 30mins in.
Link 2	

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500-word project outline

Milton Keynes Council (MKC) and Via, the leader in TransitTech, have to come together to deliver a first of its kind demand responsive bus service in the UK that will expand access to affordable, equitable, and efficient transport in the Borough.

The service, MK Connect, is powered by Via's technology platform, and has replaced 11 underused, subsidised fixed route bus services with a fleet of smaller, flexible vehicles. MK Connect offers Borough wide demand responsive transport (DRT) that is integrated with the wider commercial bus network. If the journey can be completed by a fixed bus route within reasonable parameters, Via's technology will direct them to the most efficient bus. Otherwise, riders will be offered a journey with the demand responsive bus service.

Via's technology efficiently matches multiple passengers into a single vehicle through a network of "virtual bus stops", routing passengers to a nearby corner for pickup and drop-off. This reduces unnecessary detours and added carbon emissions. The platform allows users in need of a wheelchair-accessible vehicle, and those with special mobility needs, to register for that specific mode of transport within the app, and to receive door-to-door service.

Residents of Milton Keynes who did not have regular access to affordable transport, or were extremely limited in where they could go, now have access to the whole Borough. The Via platform also fully integrates with Android and Apple accessibility features.

The service launched on 1 April 2021, and in the first year has delivered 279k trips for 9k unique users and directed many more to fixed bus routes.

The Council has full access to the dashboard allowing live monitoring and customer support, including phone booking.

MKC made the bold move to introduce a TransitTech solution with the vision to increase flexibility, equity, and sustainability in transport in the Borough. MK Connect expands access to employment centres and the Borough as a whole for residents and visitors, and allows operators to reconsider and better plan the core commercial bus network after more than a decade of running alongside a large subsidised network.

The service also has a focus on sustainability, with shared rides increasing vehicle capacity and featuring 50% electric vehicles in operation at any given time with a requirement to be scalable a first for any DRT service in the UK. It is also the first time DRT has been used in the UK as an integral part of an existing transport network, rather than a limited solution to, for example, rural transport.

We believe MK Connect has delivered substantial service transformation and is an innovative technical solution to a long term issue faced by Milton Keynes, that of increasing costs for supporting services with decreasing patronage and service levels. Now MK is delivering a better and more equitable service and has reduced brought the costs down operational costs, making the service a more sustainable option in the long term.

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