



Transport & Social Inclusion:
Have we made the connections in our cities?





pteg represents the six Passenger Transport Executives (PTEs) which between them serve more than eleven million people in Greater Manchester (GMPTE), Merseyside (Merseytravel), South Yorkshire (SYPTe), Tyne and Wear (Nexus), the West Midlands (Centro) and West Yorkshire (Metro). Leicester City Council, Nottingham City Council, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) and Transport for London (TfL) are associate members. The PTEs plan, procure, provide and promote public transport in some of Britain's largest city regions, with the aim of providing integrated public transport networks accessible to all.

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Executive summary

To be socially excluded is to be unable to access the opportunities in life that most of UK society takes for granted. Public transport can promote social inclusion by connecting people to jobs, social networks, education and leisure activities.

This report provides a 'stock-take' of progress on using transport to promote social inclusion, seven years on from publication of the influential 'Making the Connections' report on this subject by the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU)¹.

Promoting equality of opportunity now forms one of DfT's five goals for transport, but the Department lacks an overarching plan for how this goal might be achieved – this report could offer a foundation for such a plan.

For DfT, a public transport network that promotes social inclusion is one that is available, accessible, affordable and acceptable. This report considers the achievements, challenges and ways forward in each of these areas.

Availability

- ✓ Most households within easy reach of a basic bus service and key amenities.
- ✓ Improvements to information provision nationally and locally mean people are more aware of their public transport options.
- ✓ Innovation from Passenger Transport Executives (PTEs) in response to service cuts from operators to ensure people can continue to get to the places they want to go.
- ✗ The amenities people can reach by public transport are not necessarily the best services or those they would choose to use.
- ✗ Too often, bus operators have been slow to respond to the needs of passengers and frequently cut lifeline services.
- ✗ There is a sense of lost momentum in the implementation of accessibility planning.
- A restatement of the value, or otherwise, of accessibility planning.
- Brokerage schemes offer potential to improve availability without the need for large investment in new vehicles – a larger scale pilot is needed.
- Make the most of opportunities presented by the Local Transport Act to improve availability.

Accessibility

- ✓ A legal framework for accessibility and progress in meeting its requirements.
- ✓ PTE-led innovations to improve accessibility above and beyond the legal requirements.
- ✓ The Valuing People agenda has drawn attention to the issues people with learning disabilities face in using public transport.
- ✗ Inaccessibility of routes to and from transport hubs.
- ✗ Vehicle accessibility features may not be fully utilised in practice.
- ✗ Disabled people still face uncertainty around whether every stage of their journey will be accessible.
- New national policy to address accessibility of the public realm.
- Greater sense of direction from DfT on what they would like to see achieved, accompanied by tools to support improvements.
- Monitoring of the extent to which disabled people are using the network.

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Affordability

- ✓ National Concessionary Travel Scheme (NCTS), plus PTE enhancements to this.
- ✓ Oyster card in London has shown the potential of smartcard technology to bring social inclusion benefits.
- ✓ PTE initiatives to make transport more affordable for children and young people and unemployed people. WorkWise schemes have proved particularly successful.
- ✗ Spiralling bus fares since the deregulation of the bus industry have hit low income families hard.
- ✗ The complexity and range of tickets on offer outside London make it hard to find the best value deal.
- ✗ Uncertainty about future funding of NCTS.
- DfT and PTEs to work together to make public transport more affordable for low income families.
- NCTS should continue to be adequately funded nationally and administered locally via Integrated Transport Authorities (ITAs).
- DWP to match fund WorkWise schemes that help connect people to jobs.

Acceptability

- ✓ Successful partnerships between PTEs, operators and local authorities have resulted in high quality packages of vehicles, shelters and highway improvements.
- ✓ Real Time Information and bus priority measures are helping to remove uncertainty for passengers and reduce waiting time.
- ✓ High levels of bus passenger satisfaction with safety and security in PTE areas.
- ✗ Satisfaction with bus reliability is lower in PTE areas than elsewhere.
- ✗ Some groups are still more likely to feel unsafe on public transport.
- ✗ Negative perceptions of public transport still prevent some passengers from making as many journeys as they would like.
- Make the most of opportunities presented by the Local Transport Act to improve acceptability of public transport.
- Continue to monitor and address the safety concerns of passengers.

Introduction

Background

In February 2003, the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) produced Making the Connections² a report on transport and social exclusion. The influential report set out to examine the links between social exclusion, transport and the location of services, focusing particularly on access to the opportunities that have the most impact on life chances (such as work, learning and healthcare). Some seven years on from the original report (which still provides a key reference point for the sector) now seems a good time to take stock of progress, highlight any continuing difficulties and point to ways forward.

This assessment comes at a time when social inclusion is very much on the agenda of the Department for Transport (DfT) with the goal to 'promote greater equality of opportunity for all citizens, with the desired outcome of achieving a fairer society' forming one of five priorities at the centre of Delivering a Sustainable Transport System³ - the Department's long-term strategy for transport planning. There is recognition from them that 'public transport is as much a means for delivering social inclusion as it is a way of getting from A to B'⁴.

Furthermore, the Local Transport Act, passed in late 2008, has meant that Passenger Transport Executives (PTEs) and Integrated Transport Authorities (ITAs) have gained 'wellbeing powers' which allow them to act in ways which contribute to the wellbeing of the areas they serve. This gives PTEs and ITAs further scope to develop interventions which support social inclusion, allowing them to strengthen and build on their existing activities in this respect.

Additional duties for ITAs are also being introduced, including a duty requiring them to tackle socio-economic inequality (concerned with narrowing the gaps in outcomes for people from different backgrounds) under the Equality Act 2010 and a duty to help end child poverty under the Child Poverty Act 2010.

Despite this increasing prominence for social inclusion issues (in particular, the presence of equality of opportunity as one of DfT's five goals for transport) the Department lacks an overarching strategy for delivering on this agenda. Indeed, there has been a loss of momentum on this issue since the Social Exclusion Unit report was published in 2003. We hope that this report will prove useful in highlighting some of the achievements, challenges and ways forward that could provide a foundation for a future strategy from the Department.

What is social inclusion?

Social inclusion is perhaps best explained in terms of its opposite – social exclusion. To be socially excluded is to be unable to access the opportunities in life that most of UK society takes for granted. Public transport has a key role to play in tackling social exclusion by providing people with the means to get to the jobs, services and social networks to which everyone should be entitled. Of course, provision of transport alone cannot solve the complex pattern of circumstances that lead to social exclusion, however, it is a vital tool in ensuring people have the means to be connected to the wider world and the opportunities it has to offer.

These issues can also be considered in terms of social mobility. Social mobility describes the movement, or opportunities for movement, between different social groups and the advantages and disadvantages that go with this in terms of income, security of employment, opportunities for advancement and so on⁵. As mentioned above, ITAs will now be required to work to narrow the gap in outcomes between people from different social groups under the new socio-economic inequality duty (also known as the 'social mobility duty').

How can transport help promote social inclusion?

Transport can help in terms of getting people to the jobs, education and activities that help them to move 'onwards and upwards' and improve their long-term prospects.

As highlighted in Delivering a Sustainable Transport System, in promoting equality of opportunity through transport, 'we need to keep in mind the need for transport to be accessible, affordable, available and acceptable to transport users.'⁶

2 Social Exclusion Unit (2003) Making the Connections: Final Report on Transport and Social Exclusion.

3 DfT (2008) Delivering a Sustainable Transport System, p.7.

4 Sadiq Khan MP, speech to Local Transport Act conference, London 12th January 2010.

5 HM Government (2009) New opportunities – Fair chances for the future.

6 DfT (2008) Delivering a Sustainable Transport System, p. 16.

So to successfully connect people to opportunities, public transport should ideally fulfil these four criteria:

1 It must be **available** – the public transport network should be within easy reach of where people live and take them to and from the places they want to go at times and frequencies that correspond to patterns of social and working life. People also need to be kept informed of the services that are available.

2 It must be **accessible** – vehicles, stops and interchanges, and the walking routes to and from these, must be designed in such a way that, as far as possible, everyone is able to use them without unreasonable difficulty.

3 It must be **affordable** – people should not be ‘priced out’ of using public transport because of high fares and should be able to easily find the right ticket for them.

4 It must be **acceptable** – people should feel that public transport is something that is equipped to meet their needs as well as comfortable, safe and convenient.

A lack of public transport which fulfils these four criteria can leave people stranded and cut off from opportunities and therefore vulnerable to social exclusion. Groups of people at particular risk of being excluded in this way include:

- People without a car – a quarter of all households do not have access to a car⁷ and must rely primarily on public transport to get around.
- People on a low income - over half of households on the lowest real income quintile do not have access to a car⁸ and are therefore more likely to rely on public transport where fares can be prohibitively high.
- People living on isolated housing estates or in deprived areas where it is not profitable for bus operators to run services.

- People with physical or sensory impairments, chronic health conditions, mental health support needs or learning disabilities who may need extra support or design features to be able to use public transport effectively.
- Older people who may no longer be fit, or feel able, to drive or be able to afford to run a car.
- Children and young people for whom public transport is a prime means of getting around independently, particularly where the journey is not suitable for walking or cycling.
- People living in remote rural areas without access to a car.⁹

It should be noted that there is a considerable degree of overlap between the groups (with many individuals falling into more than one category) and in the issues they face in accessing public transport – interventions can therefore benefit multiple groups simultaneously.

Both DfT and the PTEs are committed to ensuring that, as far as possible, nobody is left excluded from society because of a lack of available, accessible, affordable and acceptable public transport. This paper sets out what has been achieved in improving these aspects of public transport, outlines the challenges that remain and seeks to promote debate about how these challenges might best be tackled.

The linkages between transport and social inclusion, and the available policy responses, are complex and multi-faceted. This report is by no means intended to be an exhaustive account or an attempt to set out definitive conclusions on many of the areas covered. Instead it provides an overview of some of the key issues for transport and social inclusion, sets out the areas that need to be addressed before further progress can be made and suggests ways in which the DfT might provide a clearer framework for partners like the PTEs in pursuit of what is now one of the five drivers of national transport policy.

⁷ DfT National Travel Survey 2008

⁸ DfT National Travel Survey 2008

⁹ Whilst recognising the acute accessibility problems that this group face, this report is focused on connectivity within cities. For more information on the transport issues faced by people living in rural areas see, for example, Commission for Rural Communities (2007) Report of the Rural Advocate 2007.

1 Availability



The first feature of a socially inclusive public transport system is that it should be within easy reach of where people live, and take them to and from the places they want to go, at times and frequencies that correspond to patterns of social and working life. People also need to be aware that these services are available for them to use.

As this chapter highlights, all too often operators have been slow to respond to the needs of passengers and frequently cut the lifeline services that connect people to opportunities. Here, PTEs and other agencies must step in to ensure that vulnerable communities are not left isolated. In doing so they face budgetary challenges which require them to consider innovative methods of delivery, such as brokerage schemes, discussed in more detail below.

Accessibility planning promised to deliver a more systematic approach to ensuring communities were connected to jobs and key services, but there is a sense of lost momentum in its implementation. This chapter argues that there is now a need for DfT to provide a clear steer on the value and future role for this approach.

Do people live within easy reach of the public transport network and key amenities?

As it is not possible, or affordable, to place a railway station or tram stop in every community, this typically translates as being in easy reach of a bus stop. For the majority of households, this is now the case.

In 2008, 90 per cent of households in England were within 13 minutes walk of a bus stop with at least an hourly service, up from 88 per cent in 1998. In Metropolitan areas, this rises to 98 per cent of households, with availability largely unchanged since 1998¹⁰.

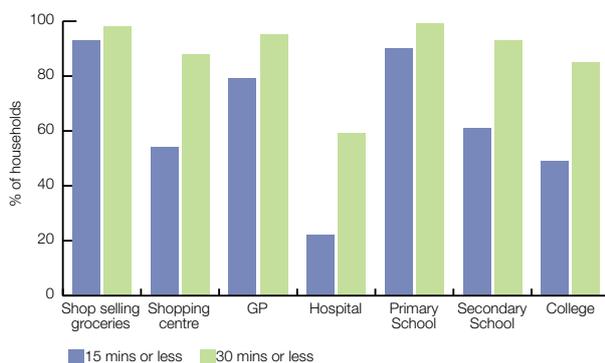
The majority of people are now within easy reach of a bus stop.



However, being within easy reach of a bus stop is of little value from a social inclusion perspective if the service on offer does not connect people to key amenities such as shops, doctor's surgeries and schools. Figure 1 shows a relatively positive picture in this respect too. The majority of households live within 15 minutes walk or public transport journey of a shop selling groceries, a shopping centre, a GP surgery, a primary school and a secondary school. Fewer households are within 15 minutes journey of a hospital or college, but most can get to these facilities within 30 minutes.

Figure 1 - Shortest travel time to local facilities on foot or by public transport 2007

Source: DfT National Travel Survey 2007



Perhaps the key development in this area has been the introduction of accessibility planning – the cornerstone of the 2003 SEU report¹¹. It provides an opportunity for local partners to develop a systematic approach to improving people's access to key services and employment sites.

Key policy development – Accessibility planning

Local Authorities are now required to undertake accessibility planning to ensure that there is a more systematic approach to identifying and tackling the barriers that people face in getting to jobs and key services, focusing particularly on disadvantaged groups, or areas with poor access to key services.

In practice, accessibility planning means conducting 'mapping audits' using data on the local transport network, and the location of services, disadvantaged areas and groups, to identify particular accessibility problems as well as reviewing other evidence held by transport authorities and other relevant agencies (such as Primary Care Trusts).

The emphasis of accessibility planning is on partnership working to implement both transport and non-transport solutions to problems, recognising that changes to the way key services are delivered can be as important as the provision of transport in improving accessibility.

The results can then be used to create action plans to tackle identified barriers which may influence, for example, decisions about where services are located or what public transport connections need to be in place. Actions could also include measures crossing into other areas dealt with in this report, such as making improvements to safety and security.

Six years on from the initial SEU report, accessibility planning software is in widespread use among transport authorities. However, questions remain as to the extent to which it is being used methodically to drive key local transport authority plans. A number of factors may lie behind this:

- Weaknesses in the software's ability to reproduce the sophistication of real-life travel patterns and the policy choices that flow from them.
- Lack of consideration by other sectors (e.g. health) of how people will reach services and reluctance to accept, or fund, both transport and non-transport options to extend access.
- Reluctance by policy makers in transport authorities to follow through on the conclusions of accessibility planning as they could lead to fundamental shifts in transport strategies, policies and spending programmes.
- The feeling that accessibility planning is not being given as much priority by DfT as was initially intended.

There is a sense that a clear steer is now needed from DfT on what role they see for accessibility planning.

DfT are currently undertaking a timely review of accessibility planning, aimed at making it more effective. Once the research is complete, a statement of the value, or otherwise, of the approach would be welcome. If accessibility planning is deemed to be of continuing value, there should also be a reemphasis, across departments, of the need for a partnership approach to ensure it works effectively. To underline this, all relevant government departments should issue or re-issue their own accessibility planning guidance.

If accessibility planning were used effectively, it could help to ensure that disadvantaged groups are able to access key services and employment sites, whether through improved availability of public transport or via other non-transport solutions, such as land-use planning and changes to the way services are delivered.

Does public transport take people to where they want to go?

Ensuring people can access their nearest local facilities only tells part of the story – the facilities that are closest are not necessarily the best ones or those that people would choose to use. For example, the nearest shop selling groceries might be an expensive corner shop lacking in healthy foodstuffs. The statistics do not reveal whether public transport is available to take people to the places they want to go or to the places likely to lead to the best social inclusion outcomes.

PTEs run buses to local supermarkets to ensure people can access affordable food.

PTEs are frequently involved in projects designed to ensure people can access the best in local services, such as the Gem Centre in Wolverhampton.

Centro, Wolverhampton Primary Care Trust and Wolverhampton Community Transport – Journey to the Gem Centre

This partnership has developed a unique scheme to ensure socially isolated families in Wolverhampton's priority neighbourhoods are able to access the city's Gem Centre, thereby reducing 'did not attend' rates.

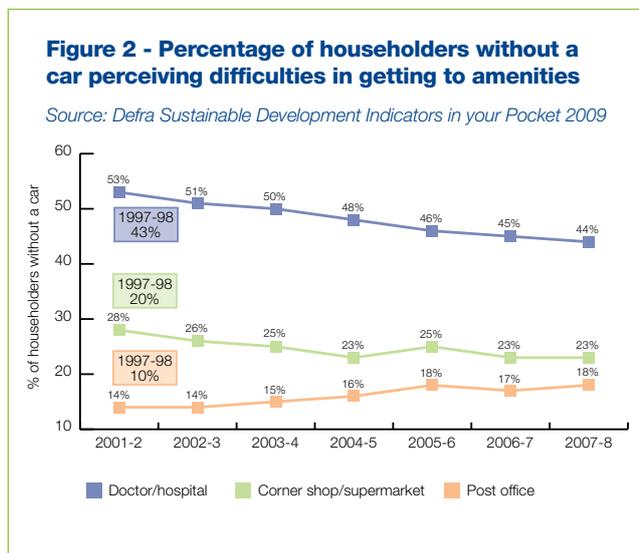
The flagship Gem Centre provides a wide range of services for children and young people who may have special needs and/or disabilities. Many families were struggling to access these specialist services due to the centre's location and limited bus service provision.

To tackle this, a transport support service was designed to ensure children and their families could access the Gem Centre. The project was a great success and reduced levels of non-attendance at the centre clinics by 60%.



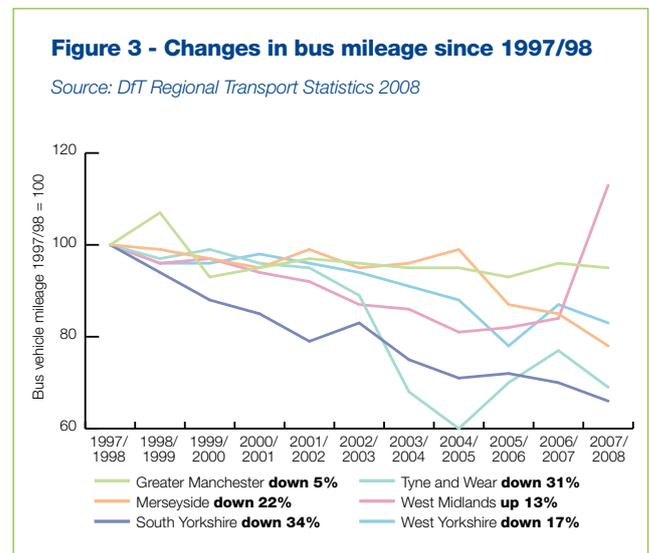
Work such as this is vital as evidence suggests that people still perceive difficulties in getting to local amenities without a car, even if technically most people are within easy reach of basic facilities by bus or on foot. This may suggest that the amenities that are accessible by bus or walking are not the ones that people would necessarily choose to use or the ones they need.

Figure 2, for example, shows that whilst the proportion of households without a car finding it difficult to get to medical facilities or shops has reduced in recent years, levels are still above those reported in 1997/98, suggesting little long-term improvement.



One explanation for these continuing difficulties might be the ongoing cuts to bus routes and services in the deregulated market outside of London. Bus companies continue to pull out of off-peak and 'lifeline' estate services to focus on more profitable major corridors and lucrative commuter routes. People on a low income are particularly hard hit, often having no alternative to travelling by bus.

Figure 3 shows changes in bus mileage over the course of ten years (using 1997/98 as a base year). Here the extent of cuts to services in individual PTE areas is clear. It shows that, by 2007/08 bus mileage had fallen well below 1997/98 levels in all but the West Midlands although, even here, the increase in mileage during 2007/08 is set against a pattern of decline in the preceding years. Elsewhere, dramatic and ongoing cuts to bus mileage can be observed. In South Yorkshire, for example, vehicle kilometres shrunk 34 per cent between 1997/98 and 2007/08. Meanwhile vehicle mileage in the regulated bus market in London leapt up by almost the same proportion (31 per cent) over the period¹².



When a bus company pulls out of running a particular route, the PTE has to decide whether or not to step in and subsidise a service. Part of the remit of the PTEs is to plan and fund 'socially necessary' bus routes which keep communities connected to the opportunities and services they need.

Budgetary constraints and rising tender prices mean that PTEs must carefully target resources at those communities most at risk of exclusion or groups with particular needs (such as linking jobseekers to employment sites). In practice this can sometimes mean some form of flexibly-routed Demand Responsive Transport, facilitated by regulatory changes that were made in 2004.

Key policy development – facilitating flexibly routed bus services

In 2004, the Government amended regulations¹³ to allow bus operators, for the first time, to provide – and receive the Bus Service Operators Grant for – door-to-door services to the general public to meet the needs of individual passengers.

The changes encouraged the development of three new types of commercial or subsidised bus service:

Many to one – transporting individual passengers from locations specified by them to a single, fixed destination (such as a supermarket).

One to many – picking up passengers from fixed boarding points to various, specified destinations, on demand.

Many to many – taking passengers from various locations, on demand, to disparate destinations (within a defined geographical area) on demand.

All PTEs run some combination of flexibly routed bus services to help ensure people can get to the places they want to go.

GMPTE – Local Link

GMPTE run 30 Local Link services across the metropolitan area. Local Link is a ‘many-to-many’ service - residents in the areas where the service has been introduced can use Local Link to travel from door-to-door to and from any point within a defined geographical area.

The services provide a vital lifeline for many people and enjoy high levels of passenger satisfaction. Research into just one of the Local Link services, for example, found that a quarter of passengers would have been unable to make their journey if the service ceased, a worrying statistic given some 65 per cent of journeys made using the Local Link were to key health facilities, fresh food shopping and employment.¹⁴

Another example of demand responsive transport is the MetroLocal service in West Yorkshire which, as well as offering a flexible service to passengers, represents an efficient use of limited resources, key in the context of budgetary constraints and rising tender prices.

Metro – MetroLocal

MetroLocal is a hopper bus, providing access to shops and facilities in areas not served by mainstream bus services. It operates along a fixed route to connect communities with local amenities but has no set stops – it can be hailed anywhere along the route, providing it is safe for the driver to stop. This means that, for example, people do not have to struggle with heavy shopping to the nearest bus stop. The service is fully accessible and affordable – free for concessionary pass holders, half fare for children and young people and a simple £1 flat fare for everybody else.

MetroLocal makes efficient use of limited resources. The same fleet of vehicles is also used to operate home-to-school transport for children with Special Educational Needs. The buses are used to take the children to school between 7.30 and 9.30. After 9.30, the vehicles are used to run MetroLocal services. At 14.30, the buses revert back to school transport, returning children home from school.

¹³ Public Service Vehicles (Regulation of Local Services) (Amendment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2004 and The Bus Service Operators Grant (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2004.

¹⁴ GMITA Press Release, Green light for Hattersley's vital door-to-door transport', 7th August 2009.

Services like MetroLocal keep communities connected when there are no mainstream bus services.



MetroLocal can be classed as a form of brokerage scheme, where vehicles from a range of sources (e.g. school buses, taxis, healthcare and social services vehicles) are pooled together to be put to best use in the community throughout the day, avoiding the situation of having vehicle fleets sitting unused for large chunks of the day whilst travel needs go unmet. PTEs have operated a number of small projects along these lines, for example, Nexus's North Tyneside Shopper Service.

Nexus – shopper service

Nexus, in partnership with North Tyneside Council, fund weekly shopper services for five residential homes for the elderly in North Tyneside, helping residents get out and about in the community and retain their independence. It takes residents direct from their homes to local shopping centres, picking them up later in the day. The service utilises school transport vehicles that would otherwise remain unused during the day. Nexus and partners now provide more than 30,000 journeys a year for elderly people using community bus services¹⁵.

These schemes have real potential to improve the availability of transport. Instead of requiring large investment in new vehicles to service particular routes, brokerage schemes use the resources that are already there, pooling together vehicles that otherwise would remain dormant for large parts of the day. Efficiency is improved still further where these services are able to adapt to demand, running where and when they are needed rather than according to a fixed route or timetable that may not suit the needs of local people.

Brokerage schemes are not entirely straightforward to deliver. There can be administrative difficulties in working across sectors, for example, with healthcare and education transport run by different organisations, working to different budgets. As a recent report from DfT¹⁶ recognises; 'Jointly operated transport brokerage will involve issues around potential harmonisation of working conditions, staff relocation and coordination of support systems.' A key recommendation of the report is that respective government departments need to be aware of this and actively encourage and support cross-sector partnerships with pump-priming funding where necessary.

At present, brokerage schemes already operate on a small scale within PTE areas. We would like to see DfT support for a larger scale pilot of the approach in order to drive up the quality and quantity of these valuable schemes, work through administrative challenges and provide a foundation for nationwide application.

We are not alone in suggesting this. The Commission for Integrated Transport (CfIT) have also called for a large scale demonstration pilot of 'TaxiPlus' – another form of brokerage scheme. TaxiPlus¹⁷ would provide a bookable shared taxi service to the general public and to special services such as schools transport, transport to healthcare and special needs transport. The system would be administered via a single coordinated agency that would ensure utilisation of the available pool of vehicles is maximised. Similar schemes already run successfully elsewhere in Europe, such as in the Netherlands. CfIT's call has also been backed by the Sustainable Development Commission as a means to increase vehicle utilisation and promote sustainable mobility¹⁸.

Whilst CfIT have suggested that brokerage is something that could work effectively in rural areas, the small scale initiatives run by PTEs have shown that such an approach is also a valuable way of enhancing availability and efficiency of public transport in urban contexts.

¹⁵ Nexus Press Release Shopper bus boost for North Tyneside's elderly residents, 05/03/09

¹⁶ DfT (2009) Providing Transport in Partnership – a guide for health agencies and local authorities.

¹⁷ Commission for Integrated Transport (2008) A New Approach to Rural Public Transport.

¹⁸ Sustainable Development Commission (2010) Smarter Moves: How information communications technology can promote sustainable mobility.

Does the available public transport run at times and frequencies that suit patterns of life and work?

Having endeavoured to ensure that people are within easy reach of the public transport network, and that the buses that are available take people to the places that they want to go, the next step is to ensure that the services that are available run at times and frequencies to suit patterns of life and work.

Increasingly working patterns do not correspond to traditional nine-to-five hours, something that bus operators have been slow to respond to as they continue to cut off-peak services. They also tend not to run services late into the night or in the early hours of the morning. These services are vital, however, in areas where shift working is common.

In such areas, PTEs, where possible, provide services to enable people to access employment opportunities that are outside of traditional hours, the Airport Local Night Link in Greater Manchester is an example of this.

GMITA – Airport Local Night Link

A key employer for the residents of Wythenshawe in Manchester is Manchester Airport. Many of the jobs available are across unconventional working hours and it is vital that people in this deprived area are able to take up these employment opportunities. GMITA stepped in to provide the Airport Local Night Link which runs from 3am to 5.30am making it ideal for airport workers on early shifts or night workers returning home. The service takes people from door-to-door and must be booked in advance – users can do this using the convenient booking service which allows them to book all their journeys for the week in one phone call.

Services like Route 19 in Tyne and Wear ensure people can reach remote employment sites, such as Royal Quays in North Tyneside.



Where putting on a dedicated bus service is not possible, PTEs have often developed innovative solutions, such as scooter commuter schemes, to ensure that people are still able to take up employment opportunities which are outside of normal hours or located on far-flung employment sites.

Merseyside Local Transport Plan (LTP) Partnership – Scooter commuter scheme

Merseytravel are a key partner in the LTP Partnership's WorkWise programme which includes a 'scooter commuter' scheme providing discounted scooter hire to connect people with jobs. It helps people to take up employment or training opportunities at times or in locations where no public transport is available.

Between July 2007 and December 2008, some 200 Merseyside residents became scooter commuters through the scheme. A further 100 benefited from 'WorkWise Wheels' a similar scheme which offers discounted bicycle hire for six months.

Initial funding for the scheme was provided by ERDF Objective One as part of the Lets Get Moving programme managed by Merseytravel's Community Links Team with continuation funding secured from ESF by matching Merseytravel mainstream budgets for supported bus services.

The Local Transport Act may prove a useful tool in helping to ensure that buses run at times and frequencies that correspond to local needs.

Key policy development – The Local Transport Act 2008

As a result of the Local Transport Act, Quality Partnership Schemes (QPSs) agreed between local authorities and bus operators can now include requirements about service frequencies and timings which operators must conform to in return for using improved facilities provided by the council along a particular corridor, such as bus shelters and highway improvements. Frequencies and timings were previously excluded from the scope of QPSs.

The Act also makes Quality Contracts (QCs) a more realistic option for local authorities by removing the old requirement for the local authority to show that a QC was the ‘only practicable way’ to deliver its objectives as well as the requirement for schemes to be approved by the Secretary of State. A QC involves replacing the existing deregulated market with a system of contracts – as currently operates in London. Under a QC, the local authority specifies the bus services that are to be provided in the area of the scheme. This could include specifying frequencies and timings of services.

PTEs and transport authorities throughout the country now need to make the most of the opportunities offered by the Local Transport Act to create bus services that more accurately match the patterns of life and work in their communities.

Are people aware of the public transport services that are available?

The final piece of the puzzle is to ensure that people are aware of available public transport services – a bus service that can connect a community to a hospital, for example, is of little use if no-one knows about it. A key tool for passengers nationally is Transport Direct.

Key policy development – Transport Direct

The concept of Transport Direct – a multi-modal travel information service – was first announced in the Government’s ten year plan for transport in 2000. The web-based service was formally launched in December 2004 and two years on had recorded over 10 million user sessions¹⁹. Funded by DfT, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Scottish Government, it is the only website offering door-to-door travel information for both public transport and car journeys to enable users to select the mode that best meets their needs.

Whilst Transport Direct provides a valuable service, from a social inclusion perspective it is important that PTEs continue to provide more locally tailored information in a range of formats, such as over the phone through local Traveline services, face-to-face at travel centres or via paper-based information.

The latter can include information that is easier to understand for everyone, such as maps and guides that relate public transport services to the location of key destinations (such as hospitals and employment sites) and the routes from stops and stations to get to those destinations.

GMPTE – Hospital route maps

GMPTE produces guides to accessing each of Greater Manchester’s hospital sites. The guides include details of key stops along the bus routes calling at the hospital with approximate travelling times between each key stop and the hospital. Each guide also contains a detailed map of the hospital site with departments, as well as bus stops, highlighted.

The guides allow passengers to see how many minutes from the hospital each bus stop is, helping them to ensure that they do not miss their appointment.

Merseyside Local Transport Plan Partnership – How to get there guides

Merseyside Local Transport Plan Partnership, which includes Merseytravel, produces 'How to get there' guides as part of its WorkWise scheme (for more information on WorkWise, see Affordability chapter). These full colour guides help jobseekers and new employees understand how to get to key employment sites in Merseyside and raise awareness that public transport to these sites is available and easy to use. Each guide contains bus timetables, train options and a map of the site with key employers, bus stops, stations and cycle routes marked on. Each also contains details of car sharing options for those working outside normal hours. Similar guides are also produced for selected training centres, Jobcentre Plus offices and employment agencies.

Funding for the guides was secured by using Merseytravel mainstream budgets as match to lever in ESF funding to support delivery of shared targets as part of the Let's Get Moving Programme managed by Merseytravel's Community Links Team.

PTEs may also impart this information on a one-to-one basis, for example, working with jobseekers to help them understand what employment opportunities they can access using public transport so that they do not unnecessarily rule out certain options because of concerns over location or hours on offer. This service is typically offered as part of PTE-led WorkWise schemes, described in more detail in the Affordability section of this report.

Conclusions and next steps

This chapter has illustrated the flexibility of PTEs to respond to the needs of passengers and improve the availability of public transport. Where bus operators are cutting unprofitable services and routes and failing to adapt to changing patterns of life and work, PTEs are working to ensure that people can still reach, not just key amenities, but the places they actually want to travel to at times to suit them.

Budgetary constraints and rising tender prices have been a challenge to these kinds of demand responsive service but PTEs are demonstrating innovative ways of making best use of available vehicles throughout the day via brokerage schemes. These demonstrate great potential for wider application, something which should be investigated through a large scale pilot of the approach.

This chapter has also highlighted some of the issues around accessibility planning which, if used effectively, can help to ensure that everyone is within easy reach of key amenities and employment sites. Question marks remain as to the extent to which accessibility planning is being used to its full potential to plan in partnership and it is hoped that the current review of the approach will provide some answers and lead to a clear statement of intent at national level.

In the meantime, the Local Transport Act offers PTEs a real opportunity to shape the availability of local bus services to better meet the needs of communities and should be fully utilised.

In summary, our key recommendations for improving the availability of public transport are as follows:

- A clearer steer from DfT is needed on what role it now sees for accessibility planning. Following the current review, it would be helpful to have a statement from DfT of the value, or otherwise, of accessibility planning.
- If accessibility planning is deemed valuable, departments across government should get behind it and encourage a cross sector, partnership approach to ensure it works effectively. This should include the issuing or re-issuing of guidance on accessibility planning across relevant departments.
- DfT should support a larger scale pilot of the brokerage approach to drive up the quality and quantity of schemes, work through administrative challenges and provide a foundation for nationwide application.
- PTEs and transport authorities should make full use of the opportunities presented by the Local Transport Act to create bus services that more accurately match the patterns of life and work in their communities.

2 Accessibility



The second feature of a socially inclusive public transport network is that it must be accessible – vehicles, stops and interchanges, and the walking routes to and from them, must be designed in such a way that, as far as possible, everyone is able to use them without unreasonable difficulty. Great progress has been made in this respect, not least the establishment of a legal framework for accessibility.

Key policy development – a legal framework for accessibility

One of the key achievements in recent years has been the establishment of a legal framework for progressively improving the accessibility of public transport in the form of the DDA 1995 (amended 2005) and the regulations that followed it, in particular the Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations 1998 (for light rail), the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations 2000 (for buses and coaches) and the European standards for heavy rail vehicle accessibility set out in the Technical Specification of Interoperability for Persons with Reduced Mobility 2008.

An accessible network makes travelling easier for everyone.



Whilst a legal framework for accessibility is a very positive development, this focus on the 'legalistic' elements of accessibility has meant that discussion of the benefits and remaining challenges around accessibility has been somewhat neglected. Now that the legal framework is in place, focus needs to shift towards these issues and to developing guidance for local authority officers on the best approach to take.

Are accessible routes available to bus/tram stops, interchanges and stations?

In recent years, the focus of accessibility improvements has been on upgrading vehicles and infrastructure, in line with legal requirements. Perhaps not enough attention has been paid to the accessibility of the pathways and pavements people use to reach interchanges and stops. These footpaths need to be equipped with appropriate measures such as dropped kerbs, tactile paving, rest seating areas and DDA compliant signalised junctions in order to facilitate access for all.

However, with the elimination of the BV165 performance measure and no replacement national indicator for public realm measures, it could be difficult to ensure that local authorities conform to an acceptable standard in this respect. This poses a problem as there is little use in ensuring vehicles, interchanges and stations are accessible if the people who could benefit from these cannot reach them in the first place.

A new national policy, backed with funding, is needed to ensure local authorities address the accessibility of the public realm. This should be designed to encourage councils to make a concerted effort, through 'walking audits', to determine how accessible key routes to and from transport hubs are for different groups. Work of this kind is already underway in London, where the Docklands Light Railway has commissioned walking audits of routes to and from its stations. These audits look at the accessibility as well as the acceptability of the walking routes (e.g. do they feel safe, is lighting adequate etc.), identifying and tackling problem areas. A wider application of this approach could be of value to ensure that routes to and from transport hubs do not represent a weak link preventing people from accessing the wider public transport network.

When people reach the bus/tram stops, interchanges and stations are they equipped to meet their needs?

Accessible vehicles must connect to accessible interchanges that allow people to continue their journey without obstacles.



It is now enshrined in legislation that providers of railway stations, bus stations and stops have a duty not to discriminate against disabled people and to make 'reasonable adjustments' to make their services accessible to all. DfT has acted to help providers implement these adjustments, for example, through the Access for All programme.

Key policy development – Access for All

The Access for All programme was the centrepiece of the Railways for All Strategy²⁰, launched in 2006 to address the issues faced by disabled passengers using railway stations in Great Britain. Over 100 stations have been selected to receive financial support from the programme to provide obstacle free, accessible routes to and between platforms. Access for All will provide £35 million of ring-fenced funding for accessibility improvements each year until 2015.

²⁰ DfT (2006) Railways for All Strategy.

PTEs are working hard to ensure that the infrastructure that they are responsible for, including railway stations but also bus and tram interchanges and stops, are accessible to all. Measures include:

- Tactile paving and use of contrasting colours to help with way-finding for people with visual impairments
- Level access onto buses from the kerb
- Induction loops for people using hearing aids
- Extra seating and rest areas
- Variable height ticket counters
- Ensuring a highly visible presence of trained staff able to provide assistance.

Liverpool South Parkway provides an example of these improvements in action.

Merseytravel – Liverpool South Parkway

Liverpool South Parkway is a new station on the Merseyrail Electrics network designed by Jefferson Sheard Architects. Like all new Merseytravel buildings, it includes a range of features that facilitate access for all including; wide, easy access automatic doors; variable height ticket counter; induction loop; lifts and level access; help points on all platforms and highly visible staff presence; colour contrast features; high visibility signage and fully accessible toilets.

The station includes high visibility signage and variable height ticket counters.



Effort is also taken by PTEs to ensure that information provided at bus stops and in interchanges is accessible. To support visually impaired passengers, for example, many PTEs use tactile and/or talking signs (the latter can also be helpful for people with learning disabilities).

Nexus – Talking signs

In early 2009, Newcastle City Council became one of only twelve local authorities to introduce the React system of talking signs. Using technology created by the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB), the signs assist blind and partially sighted people to get around. Speakers mounted to signs, lampposts or walls contain recorded messages that, when activated by an electronic fob in range, tell the person carrying the fob their location and what is to their left and right.

Twenty of these units have been installed at two of the busiest stations on the Metro system – Haymarket and Monument. Located in the heart of Newcastle City Centre, they are used by more than 16 million passengers annually. These are complemented by a further 17 units on city centre streets. Funding for the signs is from Nexus, Newcastle City Council and the European Social Fund.

Centro – Tactile plans

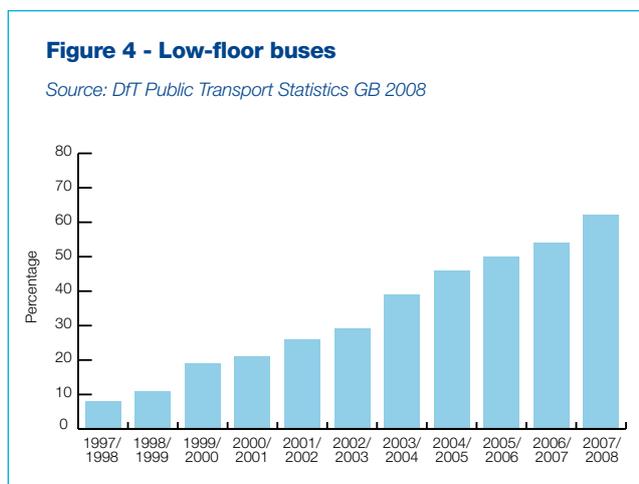
Together with RNIB, Centro are producing innovative hand-held tactile plans of their interchanges which are read by touch instead of sight. Customers can use the plans whilst at transport interchanges or at home to become familiar with the layouts. So far the plans are available for St Paul's Bus Station in Walsall and West Bromwich Bus Station and Central Metro Stop.

Are people able to board public transport vehicles with relative ease?

Requirements for the accessibility of public transport vehicles are now firmly established in legislation and clear deadlines have been set for full fleet accessibility, as set out below.

- All new **buses and coaches** which carry more than 22 passengers and provide a local or scheduled service must be accessible. The entire fleet of buses which carry more than 22 passengers must be accessible by 2017. DfT are currently looking at how the DDA might apply to smaller buses.
- All **light rail vehicles** brought into use from 1999 must be accessible. DfT has recently consulted on setting an end date of 31 December 2010 for all light rail and metro vehicles to be accessible.
- All **rail vehicles** must be accessible by 2020.

With regard to buses, Figure 4 shows the steady increase in low floor, wheelchair/pushchair accessible full-size buses. By 2007/08 some 62 per cent of buses were low floor, up 16 per cent on the previous year thanks to an influx of new vehicles. It should also be noted that these figures could be skewed by the London bus fleet, which makes up a sizable portion of the total fleet and where all buses are low floor wheelchair accessible. Nonetheless, the figures represent a considerable improvement considering that ten years previously, just 8 per cent of the fleet was accessible.



Low floor buses make boarding easier for all.



Whilst these figures represent excellent progress, there are still concerns around the ability of the bus industry to meet deadlines for full fleet accessibility. We understand that the DfT is liaising with bus operators and manufacturers to ensure that all buses are accessible by the stated deadlines and is seeking more evidence from the industry that it can meet dates for compliance²¹.

Meanwhile, light rail systems in the PTE areas are already fully accessible for wheelchair users and people travelling with pushchairs.

Accessibility of rail vehicles is a matter largely for train operating companies, however, in the one area where a PTE does run a train service (the Merseyrail network) all trains have already been refurbished with a wide central aisle to make room for wheelchair users, buggies and passengers moving through with baggage. Currently around 46 per cent of all heavy rail vehicles meet DfT standards for accessibility and we understand that DfT is confident that the deadline for all trains to be accessible by 2020 will be met²².

Wide aisles aboard Merseyrail services mean buggies (and wheelchairs) can be comfortably accommodated.



Despite what has been achieved so far, we need to avoid complacency about the physical accessibility of vehicles. Even if a vehicle comes out of the factory fully accessible, the way it is used in practice may limit its accessibility, for example, wheelchair spaces may be routinely obstructed or audio visual announcements (which can be very useful in alerting people with sensory impairments to when they have reached their destination) may be switched off or be running in reverse order. We believe it is important that operators ensure accessible vehicles are delivered in conjunction with staff training on how to use them effectively.

Staff on board should also be trained to recognise and assist those with less visible disabilities, such as people with hearing impairments or people with learning disabilities, as they board the vehicle. A lack of understanding on the part of staff at this point can be a blow to passenger confidence and a source of frustration. PTEs have developed tools that can help.

Centro – Bus Hailer

Blind or partially sighted people can sometimes have difficulty distinguishing a bus from a van or a car. In a UK first, Centro has produced an A5 flip pad with large, black, tactile numbers with Braille on a bright yellow background to enable users at bus stops to show the service number they want to catch. Upon seeing the high visibility flip pad, the bus driver can stop and pick up the passenger.

Passengers with high visibility Bus Hailers.



Nexus – Bridge card

The Bridge Card is a way of showing public transport staff that the cardholder needs extra help during a journey whether because of age, disability, illness or simply lack of confidence. It is credit card sized and offers a discrete way to alert public transport staff that the bearer may need more time to find a seat or may have difficulty remembering where to get off. Staff are trained to recognise the card and offer support.

Centro – ‘Tickets please’ pad

Centro created a notepad to help people with communication difficulties buy bus and rail tickets. The pads contain 50 tear-off slips stating that the bearer may have a speech and/or hearing impairment and with space for the passenger to fill in details of the tickets they require.

Do people perceive public transport to be accessible?

As set out above, it is clear that there has been considerable progress in making vehicles, infrastructure and information more accessible for all. What is not clear is whether or not these improvements have translated into patronage increases on the mainstream network, particularly increases in disabled passengers. It is important that this evidence gap is addressed on an ongoing basis and that findings are used to identify any further measures that may encourage more disabled people to use public transport.

We hope that the new, longitudinal ‘Life Opportunity Survey’, from the Office for Disability Issues (ODI) will provide some answers in this respect. We understand that it will include data on public transport usage, access to services and barriers faced by disabled people and will help track changes in transport behaviour over time. The survey seems to offer the potential to gauge the impact of ongoing efforts to improve accessibility. Top-line findings from the survey are due in late 2010.

Until the ODI survey is published, we must rely on smaller scale, more qualitative research for an indication of whether disabled people are making more use of public transport since accessibility improvements have been made. DfT, for example, commissioned in-depth interviews with a sample of 45 disabled people between October 2007 and February 2008²³.

People with sensory impairments interviewed as part of the study were positive about the changes in the design of stations, buses and trains and the provision of accessible information. However, the research also found that those with physical impairments or chronic health conditions tended to use a car, often as a driver, as their primary mode of transport due to continuing barriers to using public

transport. They perceived difficulties in journey planning, physical accessibility and in the approach of transport staff.

Furthermore, a recent report by Trailblazers highlighted the continuing difficulties and inconvenience people with disabilities face in using public transport²⁴. There is still much to be done before we can confidently say that the public transport network is 100 per cent accessible and a service that disabled people can consistently rely upon.

Until that time, there will always be the risk that disabled people will come across difficulties at some point in their journey. The PTEs have taken the view that ‘forewarned is forearmed’ and seek to provide disabled people with honest information which allows them to make their own decision as to whether or not to travel on a particular route or use a particular service.

Many PTEs, for example, publish Access Guides to their networks containing detailed information about the accessibility of vehicles and infrastructure.

Centro – Access guide

Centro produce the ‘Getting Around Access Guide’²⁵ – a comprehensive guide to accessible public transport in the West Midlands, now in its 15th edition. Passengers can find a wealth of information in the guide from which railway platforms have tactile paving to where wheelchair spaces are likely to be found on the bus, how to board safely and even where the handrails are likely to be.

Nexus – Metro Access guide

Nexus produce an accessibility guide for the Metro light rail system²⁶. It contains diagrams of the layout of each Metro Station, marking on key features such as ramps, platforms and travel centres accompanied by text describing access outside the station, access to the ticketing area, accessibility of the ticketing area itself, access to platforms, accessibility of the platforms themselves, access between the platforms and other information such as advice on more accessible alternatives where necessary.

More recently, there has been an effort at national level to improve journey planning information for disabled people in the form of ‘Stations Made Easy’.

23 Penfold, C., Cleghorn, N., Creegan, C., Neil, H. and Webster, S. (2008) Travel behaviour, experiences and aspirations of disabled people, London: DfT.

24 Trailblazers (2009) End of the Line: The Trailblazers’ Transport Report.

25 Available from <http://www.networkwestmidlands.com/mobility34/mobility.aspx>

26 Available from <http://www.nexus.org.uk/metro/accessibility>

Key policy development – Stations Made Easy

In December 2009, DfT, in partnership with the Association of Train Operating Companies, launched a new journey planning service called Stations Made Easy. Stations Made Easy allows users to view floor plans, step free access routes and photos of stations before they travel. The service enables people to plan their route around a station and check whether it meets their accessibility requirements. It will be an important tool in reducing some of the uncertainty that disabled people may face when arriving at an unfamiliar station. The service is integrated into the National Rail Enquiries website under 'Stations and Destinations' (http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations_destinations/) where users can search for their station and then click the Stations Made Easy logo to access accessibility information.

Metro and SYPTTE, meanwhile are using their Real Time Information (RTI) system, 'yournextbus', to inform passengers of when the next low floor bus is due to arrive.

Metro and SYPTTE – yournextbus

Together, Metro and SYPTTE provide yournextbus, a bus departure times service allowing passengers to find out the scheduled or real-time departure time for any bus, at any stop via text message or the web.

For each bus, yournextbus identifies whether it is low floor (using the initials LF) and therefore more accessible to people who may have difficulties stepping up onto the bus or people with pushchairs.

yournextbus is the most used bus real-time information system in the country, handling 3,400 text messages every day plus 1,400 visits to web and WAP sites²⁷.

The approach taken by Metro and SYPTTE offers great potential to improve information for disabled passengers and remove the uncertainty that many face as they wonder whether they will be able to board the next bus that arrives at their stop. We believe that the use of RTI to identify low floor buses should be rolled out more widely as more and more vehicles become equipped with the necessary technology.

What happens when the conventional public transport network is not perceived to be a practical option?

With progressive improvements to vehicle accessibility, mainstream, conventional public transport should be a viable option for more and more people. This suggests that there may, in future, be a move away from providing specialist transport services for older and disabled people. To encourage this shift, people will need to be equipped with the information they need to be confident that their journey is possible on mainstream transport (as outlined above). In some cases, more hands-on confidence building and travel training may be required to reassure people that mainstream services are for them and that these are easier to use and better equipped than their past experiences may suggest.

The increasing accessibility of mainstream public transport starts to raise issues about the need to run parallel, specialist bus services for particular groups, providing partial coverage of the network. However, in our view, there is still a place for these specialist services. For some, their disabilities may be such that they require extra, more specialist, assistance with boarding and exiting the vehicle. Others may not be able to make the journey from their home to the nearest bus stop, and require more of a door-to-door service. We also should not underestimate the social aspect of travel on specialist bus services. They often have a base of regular passengers who get to know each other and enjoy the social experience of travelling together regularly. The small-scale nature of the services also frequently means that the passengers get to know the drivers and that they become people that passengers feel safe and comfortable with. These social aspects are of value in terms of reducing isolation and must be taken into account. For all of the reasons outlined, there will always be a role for specialist services.

All PTEs provide specialist services to ensure that individuals who cannot use conventional public transport are not left without an independent means of getting around. These usually take the form of door-to-door accessible transport services.

Metro – AccessBus

Metro provide the AccessBus services for people who are unable to easily use conventional buses. Passengers on these door-to-door services make 550,000 journeys each year, usually to local supermarkets or shopping centres but also to other locations such as community centres and churches.

Metro have recently invested almost £2m in renewing the fleet. All new AccessBuses ‘kneel’ and have ramps for quick and easy boarding, extra space to accommodate shopping and are narrower and shorter to enable them to get down residential streets to pick-up and drop-off passengers as near to their door as possible.

Metro’s AccessBus takes passengers right to the door of their local supermarket.



Services such as the AccessBus are vital in ensuring that people with disabilities that prevent them from easily using mainstream public transport, and older people, are still able to get to key amenities. However, whilst these services afford considerable flexibility, they may not, for example, run during night-time hours when a person needs to be picked up after an evening out. At these times, people with disabilities may have to rely on carers to escort them home (who again may be limited in the hours they can be on call) or have to call a taxi. The difficulty with the latter option is the uncertainty as to whether or not the taxi that arrives will be equipped to carry them, not to mention the cost. Nexus have developed the TaxiCard as a way to overcome these difficulties and enable maximum flexibility and spontaneity for disabled travellers whilst also improving affordability.

Nexus - TaxiCard

In late 2008, Nexus introduced TaxiCard – a smartcard for people with disabilities that enables users to book with approved, fully accessible taxi operators direct for immediate travel. It comes pre-loaded with £100 of taxi fares. Users pay the first £1.50 of any journey themselves, the next £2.50 is deducted from the card (using an onboard smartcard reader) and any remaining fare is met by the user and their travel companions. Given that the vast majority of trips are of 2 miles or less, Nexus anticipate that very few journeys will cost the user more than £1.50.

This not only helps with the cost of travel by taxi but also offers reassurance that the taxi that arrives will be equipped to carry them. Furthermore, it enables people with mobility problems to book for immediate travel at any hour of the day with the same flexibility and spontaneity enjoyed by people without disabilities.

Is public transport accessible for people with learning disabilities?

Much of the focus of efforts to improve the accessibility of public transport in recent years has been on making vehicles and infrastructure more accessible for people with physical disabilities. Improving accessibility for people with learning disabilities has received less attention despite the fact that this group can face just as many barriers in using public transport. We believe that accessibility improvements for people with learning disabilities should be pursued with equal vigour to that demonstrated in improving physical accessibility.

Mencap state that most people with learning disabilities cannot drive and so have no alternative but to use public transport if they are to access work, friends and family and amenities²⁸. This issue, and the importance of tackling it, is recognised in the Valuing People agenda.

Key policy development – Valuing People

The Department of Health recently published 'Valuing People Now: a new three-year strategy for people with learning disabilities²⁹', a follow-up to the 2001 publication, 'Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disability in the 21st Century.' Valuing People Now takes stock of progress for people with learning disabilities since then, looks at the remaining challenges and recommends ways forward.

On transport, the vision of Valuing People Now is that by 2011, people with learning disabilities will be able to use public transport safely and easily and will feel confident about doing so. It recognises that, previously, attention has focused primarily on ensuring physical access and that the additional barriers faced by people with learning disabilities (such as lack of accessible information, staff attitudes and harassment) must be tackled.

As indicated in Valuing People, people with learning disabilities continue to have difficulties in getting accessible information about public transport. According to Mencap, the biggest problem people with a learning disability have is in understanding timetables. Signage and finding out where a bus stops can also be a challenge.

Talking signs and audio visual announcements can assist, as described earlier in this chapter, as can maps and guides that relate public transport services to the location of key destinations, as outlined in the Availability chapter. Many people however, both with and without learning disabilities, find timetables difficult to understand and further work is needed to make these more accessible to all. We understand that the bus operator Stagecoach is currently working on developing more accessible timetables and look forward to seeing the outcomes of this research.

Alongside accessible information, training both for staff and for people with learning disabilities can also be useful. Through pioneering travel training initiatives, PTEs are actively taking steps to help ensure that people with learning disabilities can use their networks safely and easily and will feel confident about doing so.

Travel training may cover a range of areas, depending on the needs of individual learners but could include topics like reading a timetable, handling money and keeping safe. Travel training has been found to be particularly valuable for people with learning disabilities, described in DfT research as 'a key enabler for people with learning disabilities to make journeys independently'³⁰. One example of a travel training scheme involving a PTE is Towards Independent Travel.

Nexus and Gateshead Council – Towards Independent Travel

This partnership project aims to enable people with learning disabilities to develop the skills, confidence, choice and control to travel safely. It offers a range of approaches including a volunteer Buddy Service – providing training and one-to-one support until the person feels able to travel independently – and a Travel Safe Booklet containing accessible information on how to travel safely. The project won the Success in Partnership Working Award at the 2008 NHS Health and Social Care Awards.

Other PTEs, including Centro and GMPTe, have passed on their expertise in these areas by publishing travel training good practice guides to assist other organisations to set up their own schemes³¹.

28 Mencap (2008) Transport Policy Paper.

29 Department of Health (2009) Valuing People Now: a new three-year strategy for people with learning disabilities.

30 DfT (2008) Travel behaviour, experiences and aspirations of disabled people, p.36

31 Centro (2008) Travel Training Manual available from http://www.networkwestmidlands.com/web/FILES/travel_training_main_doc.pdf. To download GMPTe's Travel Training Guides, visit http://www.gmpte.com/accessible_transport/travel_training.cfm

Conclusions and next steps

The establishment of a legal framework for progressively improving the physical accessibility of public transport has been an important achievement in recent years. The emphasis on establishing this framework has, however, drawn focus away from discussion of the benefits that improved accessibility brings, the challenges that still remain and how these should be addressed.

This chapter has sought to highlight some of the benefits and good practice in this area, which are sometimes lost in the backlash against the costs and challenges of implementing legislation and regulations.

We have seen how PTEs have embraced the challenge, putting in place innovative design features and practical tools to facilitate access for all, as well as provide alternatives when conventional public transport is not a practical option.

We cannot, however, afford to rest on our laurels. Disabled people still perceive and experience difficulties in travelling by public transport and it is important that we continue to provide the honest information they need to plan accessible journeys as we strive to make further accessibility improvements. We also need to turn our attention towards neglected areas such as the accessibility of the door-to-door journey and the accessibility of the network for people with learning disabilities.

What is needed now is direction from DfT in terms of setting out what they see as the benefits of improved accessibility and what they would like to see achieved in building accessibility still further. There is a role for them in ensuring that local authority officers are aware of the task that faces them, why it is important and the advice and guidance that is available to support their work. It is also important to ensure that officers have access to examples of good practice that demonstrate what can be achieved.

The profusion of regulations, good practice and guidance that is available could be better signposted, allowing officers access to a straightforward online 'one-stop-shop' which provides an up-to-date set of all the relevant accessibility legislation that they need to be aware of and any tools that they need to implement it to a high standard, including examples of good practice.

It would also be valuable, on a regular basis, to bring together practitioners on accessibility measures from across the sector to share knowledge and good practice

and ensure people are 'up to speed'. There is a possible role for the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC), which has had a much lower profile of late, in coordinating this.

In summary, our key recommendations for improving the accessibility of public transport are as follows:

- DfT should develop a new national policy, backed with funding, to ensure local authorities address the accessibility of the public realm. The policy should be designed to encourage councils to make a concerted effort, through walking audits, to determine the accessibility of key routes to and from transport hubs for different groups.
- Operators should ensure that accessible vehicles are delivered in conjunction with staff training on how to use them effectively.
- Continue to address evidence gaps regarding the extent to which disabled people are using public transport and use the findings to identify further measures that may be required.
- The use of RTI to identify low floor buses should be rolled out more widely as more and more vehicles become equipped with the necessary technology.
- Pursue improved access for people with learning disabilities to public transport with equal vigour to that demonstrated in improving physical accessibility.
- DfT should clearly articulate the benefits of improving accessibility and set out what they would like to see achieved in this area.
- DfT should ensure that local authority officers are aware of the task that faces them in improving accessibility, why it is important and the advice, guidance and good practice that is available to support their work.
- DfT to provide better signposting to accessibility legislation and the tools needed to implement it, including good practice examples, via an online one-stop-shop.
- DPTAC should bring together accessibility practitioners on a regular basis to share good practice.

3 Affordability



The third key requirement for a public transport system that is socially inclusive is that people should not be 'priced out' of using public transport because of high fares. It should also be easy for people to find the ticket option that meets their needs and offers the best value.

Considerable progress has been made in the form of the National Concessionary Travel scheme which means that older and disabled people can travel off-peak for free. However, for other groups, particularly low income families, spiralling bus fares are undermining efforts to promote social inclusion.

Are fares affordable?

According to DfT's National Travel Survey 2008, people in the highest income group made 24 per cent more trips than those in the lowest income group and travelled two and a half times further. One of the reasons for this might be the often prohibitively high cost of travelling by public transport.

In the deregulated bus market outside London, bus operators are free to charge whatever they like to passengers. Until very recently there has been little that PTEs could do to influence fare levels, which have been spiralling upwards.

Figure 5 shows the extent to which bus fares have increased in real terms since deregulation. As illustrated, PTE areas have been hardest hit with bus fares increasing by close to 100 per cent between deregulation in 1986 and 2009.

Figure 5 - Percentage change in bus fares (real terms) between 1985/86 and 2008/09

Source: DfT Public Transport Statistics GB 2002-2009 editions



These fare rises hit low income households the hardest as these are the families for whom bus travel is frequently the only option. The results of the DfT National Travel Survey 2008, for example, show that respondents in the lowest income group were the least likely to own a car and the most likely to travel frequently by bus. People on the lowest real income made on average 107 trips by bus and coach each year – almost double the number of bus trips made by people in the middle income bracket (55 trips a year) and triple the number of bus trips made by those in the highest income bracket (35 trips a year).

Even seemingly small hikes in fares can make a big difference to families on a low income. For example, when child concessionary fares had to rise by 20p in Greater Manchester to cover the cost of free travel for older and disabled people, 65 per cent of parents said the increase had had an impact on their disposable income and 16 per cent said it affected their ability to pay for essentials. Over 75 per cent of parents found cost to be a barrier to their children using public transport³².

The Local Transport Act, which was passed in November 2008 could be used to help make bus fares more affordable.

Key policy development – Local Transport Act

As a result of the Local Transport Act, Quality Partnership Schemes (QPSs) agreed between local authorities and bus operators can now specify maximum fares that operators can charge if they wish to use improved facilities provided by the local transport authority along the particular corridor covered by the QPS, such as bus shelters and highway improvements. Fares were previously excluded from the scope of QPSs.

The Act also makes Quality Contracts (QCs), where the local authority specifies the bus services that are to be provided in the area of the scheme, a more realistic option for local authorities. A QC allows the authority to set the fares that will be charged to passengers in the area covered by the scheme.

Alongside making the most of the tools the Local Transport Act has to offer, PTEs are keen to work with Government to see what can be done to take some of the pressure off the budgets of low income households. A simpler, more consistent approach to child fares may be one option and is discussed later in this chapter.

PTEs are keen to work with Government to improve the affordability of public transport for families.



Is it easy to understand how to get the best value fare?

Compounding the issue of high fares on bus services is the complexity and range of tickets on offer, making it difficult to find the best value product. Often, people on a low income receive a particularly raw deal for both bus and rail tickets as they may not be able to afford the lump sum payments necessary to purchase season tickets and multi-modal travel cards which can offer the greatest savings.

The free market for bus provision outside of London means it is not easy to reach agreement on easy to understand, competitively priced, multi-modal tickets like London's Oyster card. The Oyster card means that passengers do not have to worry about paying over the odds or working out which is the best value ticket – Oyster is equipped with daily price capping, automatically calculating the cheapest fare for all the journeys made in a day. Furthermore, there is no large upfront charge (just £3 deposit) and passengers are able to pay-as-they-go – topping up their card with the amount they can afford. Further enhancements have also been added to Oyster to support low income groups. Unemployed people on the New Deal scheme, for example, can use Oyster pay-as-you-go at 50 per cent of the adult Oyster rate³³.

Key policy development – Smart and Integrated Ticketing Strategy³⁴

DfT recently published a strategy designed to revolutionise ticketing for the public and allow seamless travel across the country. It recognises the benefits that Oyster has brought to London and seeks to unlock these throughout England. The immediate goal that the strategy sets is for integrated, multi-modal smart ticketing to be in operation in the major urban areas in England by 2015, forming the basis for further expansion covering most, if not all, of the country by 2020.

We very much welcome the drive to take smart ticketing forwards. Integrated, Oyster style ticketing would make it far easier for passengers to get the best value fares. The technology also offers additional social inclusion benefits which should be fully explored and exploited. Smartcards could be loaded with differentiated offers for different target groups in a discrete, non-stigmatising way, as with the Oyster discount for New Deal customers. A smartcard for a jobseeker, for example, could provide discounted travel for them without looking any different from a standard card. Furthermore, smartcards can be loaded with discounts for shops and services, providing further money saving opportunities for low income groups.

Smartcards, like Oyster, can be discretely loaded with additional discounts.



In implementing such a system, it will be important, as recognised in the ticketing strategy, to focus on the needs of the passenger first, ensuring the right balance is struck between choice and complexity. Ways of ensuring take-up among people at risk of social exclusion will also need to be considered, for example, running events giving away the cards for free or preloaded with credit.

What concessions are available?

Whilst PTEs have traditionally been able to do little to cap the fares that bus operators charge, they are able to target concessions at groups who can least afford to meet the rising costs of travel – older people, disabled people, children and young people and jobseekers.

³³ For more information on the New Deal discount, see <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tickets/faresandtickets/1024.aspx>. For details of other discounts offered by TfL see <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tickets/faresandtickets/10629.aspx>.

³⁴ DfT (2009) Smart and Integrated Ticketing Strategy.

Older people and disabled people

Free travel enables older people to retain their independence.



Older people and disabled people are more likely than the general population to live on a low income and often do not have access to, or can no longer drive, a car. Free nationwide, off-peak bus travel enables them to retain independence, access shops and services and visit friends and family without having to be concerned about, or restricted by, the cost of getting there. This freedom is essential for both physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Key policy development – National Concessionary Travel Scheme

Perhaps the single biggest step forward in making public transport more affordable for groups at risk of social exclusion has been the National Concessionary Travel Scheme. Since April 2008, everybody resident in England who is aged 60 or over or has an eligible disability has been entitled to free, off-peak travel on local buses anywhere in England. Prior to this, free bus travel was only available within a person's local area.

All of the PTEs have embraced and enhanced the standard national concessionary offer with their own additions, which are summarised in the table below.

Figure 6 - Concessionary travel arrangements across the PTEs

Source: PTE websites, correct as of 14.08.09

PTE area	Free travel start time	All-day travel for some groups?	Extension of free travel to other modes?			
			Ferry	Train	Tram/light rail	Other
Greater Manchester	From 9.30	For some disabled passholders.	N/A	✓	✓	..
Merseyside	From 9.30	For disabled passholders.	✓	✓	N/A	Some may be entitled to free travel through Mersey Tunnels
South Yorkshire	From 9.00	For disabled passholders.	N/A	✓	✓	..
Tyne and Wear	From 9.30	For disabled passholders in work or full-time education for 15 hours per week or more. Free travel before 9.30 for hospital appointments.	✗	If a Metro Gold Card is purchased (£12 a year)	If a Metro Gold Card is purchased (£12 a year)	..
West Yorkshire	From 9.30	For blind passholders.	N/A	✓ (For blind pass holders, others pay 35p)	N/A	..
West Midlands	From 9.30	No.	N/A	✓	✓	Free travel on Ring and Ride

In a few years time, the deals in place to help pay for the National Concessionary Travel Scheme will expire, and, with demand rising fast, PTE finances could be squeezed as they attempt to continue to meet the costs. Further disruption could be caused if the Government decides to remove the special grant to ITAs for supporting and administering the scheme, re-channelling it instead through district councils.

Removing the special grant to ITAs would cause major uncertainties for ITA budgets and risk destabilising the effective way in which the national scheme has been managed so far. It could also mean difficult decisions need to be made about the extent to which discounts for groups such as children and young people, such as those outlined below, can be funded.

It is therefore important that the National Concessionary Travel Scheme should continue to be adequately funded at national level and administered locally via the special grant allocated direct to ITAs.

Children and young people

Affordable travel for children and young people has considerable social inclusion benefits, enabling them to get out and about to see friends, access further education, participate in sports and attend attainment boosting after school activities, for example. Cheaper travel also leaves families with more cash in their pockets.

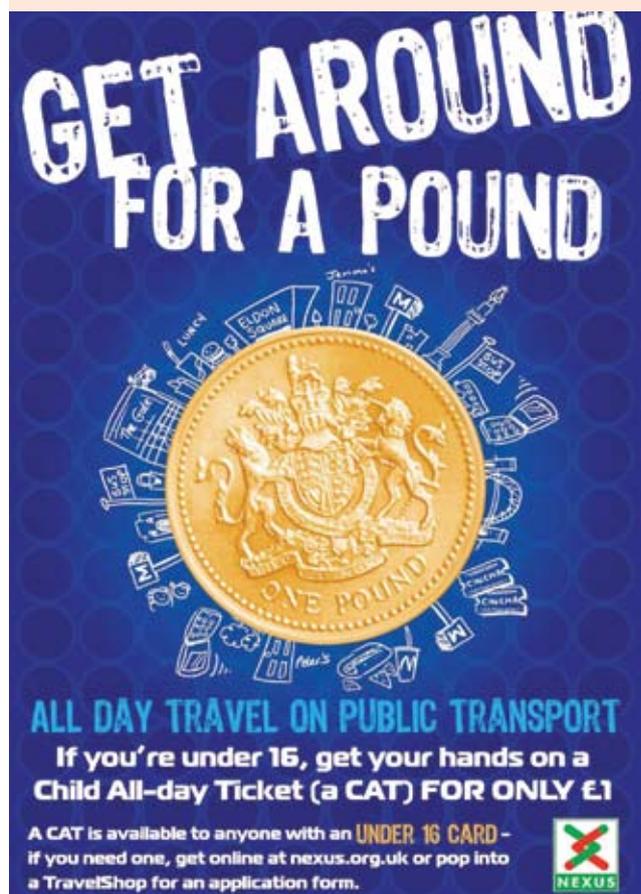
There is currently no national free or discounted fares scheme for children and young people, however, all PTEs offer some form of discount or benefit for this group. A particularly successful example of this comes from Nexus who have simplified their discounted fares for children and young people and experienced a corresponding jump in patronage.

Nexus – Child All-day Ticket (CAT)

The Nexus CAT has simplified fares for children and young people in Tyne and Wear, offering flat fares of £1 for an all-day ticket (allowing unlimited journeys), and 50p for a single. This represents a significant saving, given that commercial fares for this group can be as much as 80p one-way.

The scheme has been a great success – children under 16 made almost a million extra journeys on bus and Tyne and Wear Metro in the first six months alone³⁵. This represents an 11% increase in child patronage – a considerable achievement given that it reverses the steady decline in child public transport use over the last 20 years.

CAT promotional poster



Whatever fare level is set for children and young people it is important that the offer is both simple and consistent. Such an offer is easily communicated and promoted, thereby increasing the likelihood that children and young people will make full use of public transport without having to worry that fares will have suddenly gone up because they have been pegged at a certain fraction of adult fares. PTEs are keen to work with DfT to look at ways of developing a simple and more consistent fare offer for children and young people.

PTEs have sought to capitalise still further on the potential of simple and affordable fares to promote social inclusion, explicitly linking their discounts to positive activities such as swimming.

Metro – Metro Active

In time for the 2009 summer holidays, Metro - in partnership with local bus operators - introduced Metro Active - a special £1 a day ticket allowing off-peak travel throughout West Yorkshire for under 19s during the month of August. The marketing campaign was focused around encouraging pursuit of positive activities and the accompanying website contained a wealth of inspiring ideas for activities available locally from 'a bit of culture' to free swimming at local pools.

Young people demonstrate a range of activity ideas to make the most of Metro Active.



SYPTE – Barnsley Mi Card

SYPTE worked in partnership with Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council and Barnsley Premier Leisure to develop the Barnsley Mi Card. It offers free off-peak bus travel in the borough as well as free swimming. It also acts as a library card. Almost three-quarters of young people in Barnsley now have a Mi Card³⁶.

These projects are very much in line with wider strategies to promote positive activities.

Key policy development – Positive activities

The 2005 Youth Matters Green Paper³⁷ introduced a range of positive activities that young people should be able to access in their free time, such as two hours per week of sport. Legislative backing came in the form of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 which introduced a new duty on local authorities to secure access for young people aged 13-19 to sufficient positive activities.

In respect of transport, the statutory guidance states that transport planners should take account of plans locally for a 'positive activities offer' and consider the need to address gaps in accessibility and information to enable young people to reach these activities.

For children and young people, fares not only have to be simple and affordable, they must also form part of a wider offer that encourages this group to make full use of public transport. This could include promoting potential to access fun positive activities via public transport but also improving service quality, dealt with later in this report, so that young people actually want to get on board buses, trains and trams.

³⁶ 'Cheap fares could break the bank says Kent', Local Transport Today, Issue 537, 22nd January – 4th February 2010.

³⁷ HM Government (2005) Youth Matters. Green Paper.

Unemployed people

With unemployment high on the agenda, PTEs are continuing to help jobseekers meet the cost of travelling to interviews and new jobs. All PTEs offer some form of support for jobseekers, frequently in the form of a 'WorkWise' type scheme. Delivered by PTE-led partnerships, often via Jobcentre Plus offices, WorkWise helps unemployed people into work by providing free or discounted tickets for travel to interviews and to meet the costs of travelling to a new job in the weeks before the first pay packet arrives.

This financial support is complemented by PTE expertise in providing personalised journey planning and travel advice to help jobseekers broaden their travel horizons and their job search net. The schemes have been very successful, achieving excellent outcomes for clients and attracting numerous awards and accolades. Some key results from WorkWise schemes across the PTE areas are highlighted in the box below.

Various PTEs – WorkWise schemes

All of the PTEs have monitored and evaluated outcomes from their WorkWise schemes. Results show that WorkWise:

- Enables people to access interviews and employment – over the course of 4 years, WorkWise in the West Midlands has supported 6,300 journeys to interviews and issued over 8,400 monthly passes for people to travel to a new job. More than 80 per cent of customers said they would have struggled to get to these opportunities without the travel passes provided.
- Saves people money – 74 per cent of employed former customers of the West Yorkshire scheme now save money by purchasing tickets in advance and the same proportion of all customers report having a better understanding of the tickets and passes that are available.
- Helps people sustain employment – in the West Midlands, 80 per cent of beneficiaries were still in work after 13 weeks and in Tyne and Wear 92 per cent sustained employment.

These examples give a flavour of the success that PTE-led WorkWise schemes have achieved across the Metropolitan areas. Lack of affordable transport and restricted travel horizons can severely constrain job search activity and the number of vacancies jobseekers can consider. WorkWise is helping people to overcome these barriers and enter employment.

The schemes provide excellent value for money, costing as little as £250 to support a person into work. They are, however, frequently left in an unstable position, relying on short-term funding which often leads to PTEs paying a disproportionate share of the costs or to schemes being suspended whilst alternative funding is sought.

A secure financial future for WorkWise would ensure that jobseekers continue to receive help with transport costs when they need it most. With this in mind, we would like to see the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) pledge to partner any local authority wishing to offer a WorkWise type scheme and put in 50 per cent of the funding. The remainder of the funding would then be matched by local partnerships.

We believe that the DWP is the best choice for funding WorkWise given the benefits these schemes bring in returning people to work and therefore meeting DWP objectives.

The schemes also benefit DWP by complementing existing provision. Unlike standard Jobcentre Plus provision, WorkWise schemes generally:

- Benefit from PTE expertise in offering personalised journey planning to broaden horizons and advice on finding the best value ticket or pass.
- Offer free travel across all modes.
- Provide support with travel costs from day one of unemployment.
- Provide tickets and passes upfront for the first few weeks of a new job, to help make ends meet until the first pay packet arrives.
- Are highly adaptable, meaning additional elements, such as cheap bike hire, can be offered depending on personal or local need.

A secure future for WorkWise would ensure that jobseekers continue to receive help with transport costs when they need it most.



Conclusions and next steps

As discussed above, the National Concessionary Travel Scheme represented a great leap forward in making transport more affordable for older and disabled people. These groups have benefited greatly from the scheme, which PTEs have augmented with extra benefits to improve and extend the offer. It is important that PTEs are able to continue to administer the national scheme and retain the tools and funding that mean they can offer valuable extensions to it, as well as discounts for other groups.

Whilst off-peak bus fares for older and disabled people have largely disappeared, we have also seen fares for other passengers sky rocket far beyond the rate of inflation, hitting low income households the hardest. Ways of softening the blow must be explored, including making full use of the powers offered in the Local Transport Act to specify fares, exploring the potential of smart ticketing technology and options for developing simpler, more consistent fares for children and young people. PTEs have shown that such offers for children and young people can work and that social inclusion outcomes can be further enhanced by linking these offers to positive activities.

This chapter has also looked at the support PTEs offer for jobseekers, primarily through WorkWise type schemes. WorkWise has proved highly successful in breaking down transport barriers to employment and provides excellent value for money. The time has come to secure the future of these valuable schemes through financial backing from the Department for Work and Pensions, which stands to benefit most from their continuation.

In summary, our key recommendations for improving the affordability of public transport are as follows:

- Make the most of the tools the Local Transport Act has to offer in specifying bus fares.
- DfT and PTEs to work together to look at ways in which the costs of travel for low income families can be tackled, including via a better, simpler and more consistent offer on child fares.
- Fully explore and exploit the potential of smartcard technology to support social inclusion.
- As smartcards are rolled out, ensure measures are in place to encourage take-up among people at risk of social exclusion.
- The National Concessionary Travel Scheme should continue to be adequately funded at national level and administered locally via the special grant allocated direct to ITAs.
- Where a local authority wish to offer a WorkWise type scheme, the Department for Work and Pensions should pledge to partner it and put in 50 per cent of the funding. The remainder of the funding would then be provided by local partnerships.

4 Acceptability



Recent research on behalf of DfT³⁸ found that the most significant factor influencing people's orientation to public transport is the perceived quality of the system. More specifically, positive attitudes to public transport were associated with the feeling that it was accessible, regular, reliable and affordable. Negative attitudes were associated with public transport being seen as 'dirty', 'smelly', unreliable, expensive and difficult to use. People were also concerned about their personal safety.

Negative perceptions such as these restrict people's mobility, particularly where they have no access to a car, meaning they are put off using public transport and do not make the trips that they would ideally like to make. Furthermore, even where these perceptions do not stop people from travelling as much as they would like, there is no reason why people who need or choose to use public transport should feel like 'second class citizens' compared to car users.

This chapter focuses on efforts to boost the acceptability of public transport by improving perceptions of its quality, reliability and safety.

High quality interchanges make for happier passengers.



38 Taylor, J., Barnard, M., Neil, H. and Creegan, C. (2009) The Travel Choices and Needs of Low Income Households: the Role of the Car, Prepared by the National Centre for Social Research for DfT.

Are public transport vehicles and infrastructure of a high standard?

Thanks to investment by transport operators and PTEs, the quality of both public transport vehicles and infrastructure is improving all the time. This is particularly the case for buses and interchanges.

Across the Metropolitan areas, PTEs have provided high quality shelters and interchanges in return for highway improvements from local authorities and high quality buses from operators. An example is the Quality Bus Corridor programme in Greater Manchester.

GMPTE – Quality Bus Corridor (QBC) programme

In Greater Manchester, more than £88 million has been invested in a QBC programme, delivering a 172 mile bus priority network including nearly 1,900 high quality bus stops across 24 routes.

The QBC has helped make bus journeys in Greater Manchester quicker and more reliable (QBC services are 50% more punctual overall than services on the non-QBC network³⁹) and has provided improvements to waiting environments and public safety. Patronage on QBC routes has increased by 18.6% between 2003/04 and 2007/08⁴⁰.

The programme is the result of a Quality Partnership agreement between GMPTE, district councils and operators.

PTEs have also invested in award-winning, state-of-the-art interchanges that help to make travel by public transport a pleasure rather than an ordeal. An excellent example is Barnsley Interchange.

SYLTE – Barnsley Interchange

Opened in 2007, Barnsley Interchange was designed by Jefferson Sheard Architects to provide convenience and an engaging environment for passengers. Full of colour, bright and inviting, the building makes maximum use of sustainable and recyclable materials as well as natural daylight and ventilation. The interchange comes complete with retail areas and cafés as well as a new covered bridge offering seamless transition to the nearby railway station. The design marks a real departure from the colourless, characterless architecture it replaces and received the Institution of Civil Engineers' 'Gold Medal' as overall 2008 award winner in Yorkshire and Humber.

Barnsley Interchange is bright and welcoming.



As discussed throughout this report, the Local Transport Act 2008 gives operators and local transport authorities a whole new toolbox of powers and options for improving local bus services and should be used to its full potential to drive up quality still further. **pteg** are working with the Confederation of Passenger Transport to help operators and local transport authorities make the best use of the opportunities the Act offers⁴¹.

³⁹ Report by GMPTE on QBCs to Manchester City Council Employment and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 04/02/09.

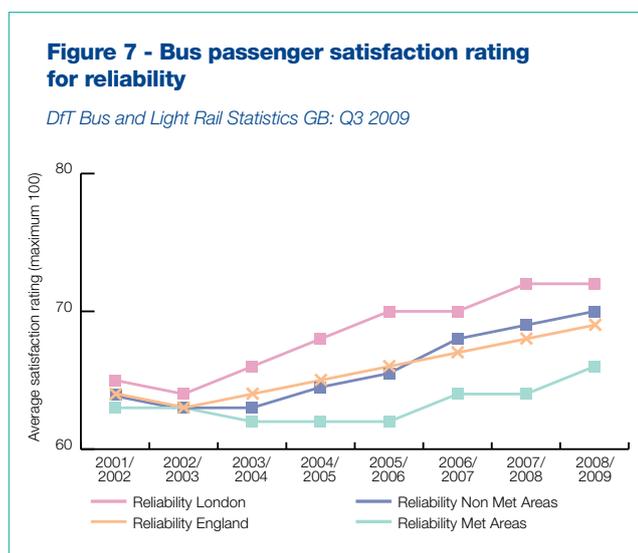
⁴⁰ Report by GMPTE on QBCs to Manchester City Council Employment and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 04/02/09.

⁴¹ See www.buspartnership.com for more information.

Is public transport viewed as regular and reliable?

If people feel that they can rely on public transport and trust that it will get them to where they need to be on time, they are more likely to use it. They are more likely, for example, to feel able to accept a job that is a bus journey away, feeling confident that they will be able to get there on time.

The figure below shows that, for bus travel, passenger satisfaction with reliability (although increasing in recent years) is slightly lower in Metropolitan areas than elsewhere, particularly in London.



Outside of London, ensuring reliability of bus services is largely the responsibility of bus operators. PTEs have taken steps, however, to ensure passengers are kept informed of any delays on buses and other modes through, for example, the installation of Real Time Information (RTI) screens at stops, stations and interchanges or transmission of RTI via text message or the web. RTI allows people to gauge how far away their service is and what time they can expect it to arrive. This reduces uncertainty and, to some extent, frustration for passengers. It also means people can check when their bus is due using their mobile phone or the internet whilst still at home or work, avoiding any unnecessary waiting time at the bus stop. The Government is keen to encourage more widespread use of RTI through their reforms of the Bus Service Operators Grant.

Key policy development – reform of Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG)

The 2008 Pre-Budget Report⁴² announced that, following consultations, reforms to the Bus Operators Grant would introduce incentives to bus operators in return for fitting global positioning systems to improve punctuality and RTI. These can in turn be linked to display RTI at bus stops as well as via internet and phone applications, helping to improve passenger experience of bus travel.

Alongside RTI, PTEs have also worked with local authorities and bus operators to directly improve the reliability of bus services through bus priority measures, such as the Greater Manchester Quality Bus Corridor programme, mentioned above. Schemes like this implement measures to reduce the likelihood that buses become stuck in traffic. Measures may include, for example, dedicated bus lanes, changes to traffic signals and preventing people from parking in bus lanes. As noted above, the experience in Greater Manchester has been that bus services on the QBC network are 50% more punctual overall than services on the non-QBC network⁴³.

Bus priority measures help improve the reliability of public transport.

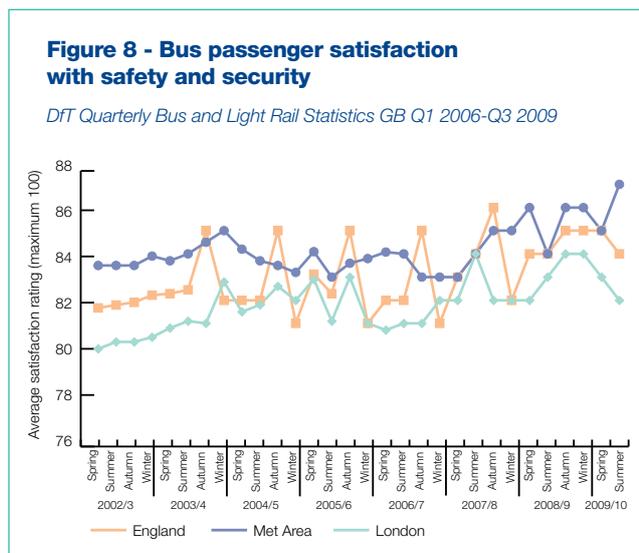


⁴² HM Treasury (2008) Pre-Budget Report 2008.

⁴³ Report by GMPTE on QBCs to Manchester City Council Employment and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 04/02/09.

Do people feel safe on public transport?

As the figure below shows, PTE areas have consistently matched, or more frequently, outperformed both the England and London average for bus passenger satisfaction with safety and security since 2002/03.



There is, however, no room for complacency and PTEs are continually striving to ensure that fear of crime does not deter people from using public transport or mean that people make less journeys than they would ideally like to.

Nexus – safety on the Metro

Nexus have taken a number of steps to improve passenger safety on the Metro system. All stations are monitored 24 hours a day by digital CCTV. Over 550 cameras cover the entire network including platforms, station approaches, railways and car parks. Nexus are now investing £0.25m to extend digital CCTV to all Metro trains. The CCTV is complemented by the presence of dedicated Travel Support Officers who patrol the network as well as a blanket ban on alcohol to reduce disorder, in place since 2004⁴⁴. Nexus report that the expansions to CCTV have given them, and the police, detection rates above the force averages for Northumbria Police and the British Transport Police who, together cover, the Metro system.

GMPTTE – Patrol and Response Unit (PRU)

The PRU was set up in Autumn 2006 as part of a crackdown on troublemakers. The PRU security officers responded to more than 260 incidents in their first nine months on patrol, board close to 100 buses per week and spend more than 50 hours a week patrolling bus stations. Evidence suggests that the intervention has had an effect. GMPTTE bus station staff reported 101 incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour between 11 September and 31 October 2007 – almost half the number of incidents during the same period in 2006⁴⁵.

Merseytravel – Secure Station accreditation

In January 2009, Merseyrail Electrics (run by Merseytravel) became the first fully secure rail network in the UK. All 66 stations on the network were awarded ‘secure station’ status after visits by the British Transport Police (BTP). The Secure Station Scheme is directed by DfT and the BTP and sets strict criteria for station design and management to prevent crime. To gain accreditation, crime statistics need to show that crime is being managed at the station and a survey of users must reveal that, on the whole, passengers feel secure using the station.

Whilst actions such as those listed above have contributed to improved overall passenger satisfaction with the safety of public transport, perceptions do vary between groups of people. A recent survey⁴⁶ found that:

- Women were more likely to feel unsafe using public transport than men (18 per cent of women felt unsafe compared to 13 per cent of men).
- Non-white respondents were more likely to feel unsafe using public transport than white respondents (19 per cent of non-white respondents felt unsafe compared to 15 per cent of white respondents).
- People with limiting long-standing physical or mental health conditions were more likely to feel unsafe using public transport compared to people with no long-standing physical or mental health conditions (26 per cent of people with limiting long-standing conditions felt unsafe compared to 14 per cent of those without long-standing conditions).

44 See www.nexus.org.uk/metro/safety-and-security for more information.
 45 GMITA Press Release, Bus station crime cut by over 50 per cent, 10 January 2008.
 46 NatCen Omnibus January-May 2008.

All of the above findings are cause for concern, but the last point is the most striking as it shows that people with limiting long-standing physical or mental health conditions were almost twice as likely to feel unsafe on public transport compared to those without such conditions. This is an issue that PTEs are aware of and are seeking to tackle through travel training initiatives and information provision that builds confidence to travel independently.

GMITA/United Response – UR On Board

GMITA funded learning disability charity United Response to run UR On Board – a project to raise awareness among young people about the impact of bullying on people with learning disabilities. United Response developed the project after hearing that people with learning disabilities were being harassed while travelling.

The funding from GMITA paid for eight people with learning disabilities to deliver training sessions to 300 pupils in 4 secondary schools in Trafford between June 2007 and June 2008.

The project led to many unexpected, but welcome, additional outcomes. For example, the police were made aware that people with learning disabilities often did not report incidents to them because they felt they were not taken seriously or they were put off by complex reporting processes. As a result, a series of hate crime reporting units have been set up, offering simplified forms to encourage people with learning disabilities to report incidents⁴⁷.

UR On Board is part of a much wider workstream which sees GMPTE working in partnership with the Anti Bullying Alliance, Crown Prosecution Service, Police and other agencies.

This is just one example of the work that PTEs and their partners do to engage other agencies (such as schools), as well as Community Safety Partnerships, to play their part in improving personal security across the whole journey for passengers. It is important that all partners continue to monitor and address the safety concerns experienced by different groups to ensure that everyone can feel comfortable and secure using our networks.

Perceptions of safety on public transport should be continually monitored and addressed.



Conclusions and next steps

This section has looked at progress made in improving the image (and the experience) of using public transport. This is vital, even for what might be seen as the ‘captive’ audience for public transport, those with little choice but to use it. If this group do not view public transport as acceptable they may make fewer journeys than they would ideally like, meaning they may become excluded from participating in all the activities that they would like to do – for example, an evening class that requires travel after dark may be turned down because of safety concerns.

The work PTEs and partners have done in improving the quality, reliability and safety of public transport is, therefore, very valuable and, using the new powers under the Local Transport Act, still more can be achieved in working with operators to deliver further improvements to service quality, including around vehicle specification and reliability.

In summary, our key recommendations for improving the acceptability of public transport are as follows:

- Ensure new powers under the Local Transport Act are fully utilised to secure further improvements to service quality.
- Continue to monitor and address safety concerns of passengers using our networks.

This report has sought to take stock of progress since the publication of the 2003 Social Exclusion Unit report into transport and social exclusion – ‘Making the Connections’.

Much has been achieved in the last seven years, and in many respects we are beginning to ‘make the connections’ in our urban areas which mean people are able to reach the opportunities that enable them to move forwards in their lives. However, there are still a number of challenges to tackle – some easy to put right, others more difficult – and these should not be underestimated. This report has identified some of the possible ways in which PTEs, DfT and other partners might to begin to address these issues.

The key findings of this report are that:

PTEs have been at the forefront of developing and implementing a broad range of successful and innovative transport interventions, specifically targeted at tackling social exclusion.

This paper has given just a flavour of this work. What is needed, now that many of these interventions have been operating for some time, is a more systematic review of their strengths and weaknesses, value for money, the impact they have on the people they support and the benefits they bring for other sectors, such as health and employment.

Such research would help government at national and local level to understand what results can be expected from different types of activity and identify where resources should be focused to achieve the greatest social inclusion impacts.

With a legal framework in place, good progress has been made in improving the physical accessibility of the public transport network.

We are, however, a long way from providing a network that disabled people can consistently rely upon to be accessible - efforts to address ‘weak links’ in journey chains must continue. Furthermore, in tackling physical accessibility it is important not to neglect the travel barriers faced by other groups, such as people with learning disabilities.

Changes to mainstream public transport provision – in particular spiralling bus fares coupled with service reductions – are undermining wider social inclusion goals.

Low income families in particular face being cut off from the best local facilities and opportunities because of unaffordable fares and cuts to bus routes. Ways of reducing the impact of these changes on those who rely most on public transport must be found.

There has been a loss of momentum on this agenda since 2003 – a clearer sense of direction from DfT is needed.

Despite equality of opportunity forming one of DfT’s five goals for transport, there is no overarching plan for how this will be achieved or any clear sense of the Department’s core priorities for social inclusion. Indeed, the SEU report was the last clear articulation of where efforts on this agenda should be focused.

DfT must now provide leadership on this issue and communicate the role that PTEs and other partners can play in promoting social inclusion through public transport. A new, overarching strategy is needed to provide direction for this agenda, informed by the experiences of PTEs and other partners.

It is hoped that this report will provide a foundation for such a strategy, setting out how we might take forward the development of an available, accessible, affordable and acceptable public transport network which promotes greater equality of opportunity for all.

A summary of this report’s recommendations can be found overleaf.

Recommendations



Availability



Accessibility



Affordability



Acceptability

In summary, our key recommendations for a socially inclusive transport network are as follows:

Improving availability...

- A clearer steer from DfT is needed on what role it now sees for accessibility planning. Following the current review, it would be helpful to have a statement from DfT of the value, or otherwise of accessibility planning.
- If accessibility planning is deemed valuable, departments across government should get behind it and encourage a cross sector, partnership approach to ensure it works effectively. This should include the issuing or re-issuing of guidance on accessibility planning across relevant departments.
- DfT should support a larger scale pilot of the brokerage approach to drive up the quality and quantity of schemes, work through administrative challenges and provide a foundation for nationwide application.
- PTEs and transport authorities should make full use of the opportunities presented by the Local Transport Act to create bus services that more accurately match the patterns of life and work in their communities.

Improving accessibility...

- DfT should develop a new national policy, backed with funding, to ensure local authorities address the accessibility of the public realm. The policy should be designed to encourage councils to make a concerted effort, through walking audits, to determine the accessibility of key routes to and from transport hubs for different groups.
- Operators should ensure that accessible vehicles are delivered in conjunction with staff training on how to use them effectively.
- Continue to address the evidence gaps regarding the extent to which disabled people are using public transport and use the findings to identify further measures that may be required,
- The use of RTI to identify low floor buses should be rolled out more widely as more and more vehicles become equipped with the necessary technology.
- Pursue improved access for people with learning disabilities to public transport with equal vigour to that demonstrated in improving physical accessibility.

- DfT should clearly articulate the benefits of improving accessibility and set out what they would like to see achieved in this area.
- DfT should ensure that local authority officers are aware of the task that faces them in improving accessibility, why it is important and the advice, guidance and good practice that is available to support their work.
- DfT to provide better signposting to accessibility legislation and the tools needed to implement it, including good practice examples, via an online one-stop-shop.
- DPTAC should bring together accessibility practitioners on a regular basis to share good practice.

Improving affordability...

- Make the most of the tools the Local Transport Act has to offer in specifying bus fares.
- DfT and PTEs to work together to look at ways in which the costs of travel for low income families can be tackled, including via a better, simpler and more consistent offer on child fares.
- Fully explore and exploit the potential of smartcard technology to support social inclusion.
- As smartcards are rolled out, ensure measures are in place to encourage take-up among people at risk of social exclusion.
- The National Concessionary Travel Scheme should continue to be adequately funded at national level and administered locally via the special grant allocated direct to ITAs.
- Where a local authority wish to offer a WorkWise type scheme, the Department for Work and Pensions should pledge to partner it and put in 50 per cent of the funding. The remainder of the funding would then be provided by local partnerships.

Improving acceptability...

- Ensure new powers under the Local Transport Act are fully utilised to secure further improvements to service quality.
- Continue to monitor and address safety concerns of passengers using our networks.

Further analysis...

- Conduct a detailed review of the relative efficacy of different transport interventions aimed at promoting social inclusion. The review should include assessment of strengths and weaknesses, value for money, impact on people supported and benefits for other sectors.

A new direction...

- DfT to provide renewed leadership and momentum for the transport and social inclusion agenda and communicate the role that PTEs and other partners can play. A new, overarching strategy is needed to provide direction, informed by the experiences of PTEs and other partners.



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