

ABOUT TOWNS



**HOW TRANSPORT
CAN HELP TOWNS THRIVE**





The Urban Transport Group

represents the seven strategic transport bodies which between them serve more than twenty million people in Greater Manchester (Transport for Greater Manchester), Liverpool City Region (Merseytravel), London (Transport for London), Sheffield City Region (South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive), Tyne and Wear (Nexus), West Midlands (Transport for West Midlands) and West Yorkshire (West Yorkshire Combined Authority). The Urban Transport Group is also a wider professional network with associate members in Strathclyde, Bristol and the West of England, Tees Valley and Nottingham.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As major drivers of the UK economy it is cities that have been the focus of much of the debate about urban (and urban transport) policy.

However, there is a growing recognition that the debate about the future of our economy cannot just focus on our largest cities, as important as they are. If the wider city regions that cities are part of, and the UK as a whole, are to make further and faster progress on inclusive growth then it is time for more consideration to be given to towns and how transport can help them to thrive.

Post-industrial towns – with which this report is mostly concerned – have many strengths, from their rich heritage and local identities to their lower costs for housing and businesses.

Their accessibility, sense of community and access to green space make them attractive to families, older people and young professionals alike. Many are characterised by a history of innovation and graft, leaving behind an exceptional architectural legacy.

At the same time, post-industrial towns face significant challenges when the industries around which they were built fall into decline. The hollowing out of their high streets and the concentration of jobs in urban fringes and city centres pose significant problems that affect their vibrancy and ability to fully reach their potential.

The challenge for towns is how to capitalise on their strengths whilst responding pro-actively to today's economic and social realities.

KEY FINDING

Transport has always been critical to the success of towns. It was the canals and railways that first allowed towns to develop their local industries and export their goods far and wide.

Now, in a post industrial age, transport has a key role to play in putting these towns back on the map. After all, it is transport that can plug towns into larger city regions and national economies, and in doing so widen labour markets; meet housing demand; draw in investment; and open up access to opportunity.

Transport can also shape the way towns look, and the way they feel about themselves, through creating better and healthier streets; through the sector's employment, procurement and community involvement practices, and through the quality of new or transformed transport infrastructure.

However, one-off investments in capital projects on transport are unlikely to be enough in themselves for towns to thrive. These need to be part of wider and coordinated packages of transport measures which in turn are integrated with cross-sector initiatives in areas like education, housing and economic development (such as locating new colleges alongside public transport hubs and ensuring public transport is affordable for young people).

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

- Transport improvements must be part of a bigger plan to stimulate activity, optimism and investment in towns, whilst giving their communities greater access to the possibilities that arise from being part of a well-connected, sustainable and forward thinking city region or sub-region.
- Long term leadership, vision and planning is also needed if transformation is the goal. However, top-down planning needs to also make space for bottom-up community initiatives.
- The restoration of the best of historic transport infrastructure and the building of new high quality interchanges in towns can provide destinations in their own right. These can instil a renewed sense of civic pride, provide an engine for wider regeneration, become a welcoming gateway for visitors and investors, as well as celebrate the history and heritage towns have to offer.
- The transport sector is a major employer in towns and can be both an anchor institution (which reinvests in local businesses) and an exemplary employer (by investing in skills and people, and paying decent wages).
- Hard and soft transport measures can play a vital role in widening access to employment, education and skills for people in towns, as well as enhancing quality of life for the full diversity of residents by widening horizons and enabling access to leisure, recreation and physical activity.
- Transport is key to opening up new sites for housing and commercial development in and around towns.

The report identifies ten key areas for particular focus, illustrated with case studies from the UK and the wider world. These are:

1. Vision, leadership and governance
2. Gateways, specialisms, identity and civic pride
3. Transport as a local anchor institution and exemplary employer
4. Access to jobs
5. Access to skills
6. Access to wider opportunities
7. Opening up investment
8. Transport's role in helping meet housing demand
9. Healthy towns
10. Optimising capital investment in steel and concrete with supporting measures

The report also provides a checklist of ideas and questions for those working on transport and wider policy for towns based on the ten themes set out above.

INTRODUCTION

Cities are very much in vogue in policy thinking and for good reason, given their key role in the UK economy. As the Urban Transport Group, we have focused strongly on cities – most recently in our report “Banks, bytes and bikes: The transport needs of the new economy”¹.

Yet as the UK looks to its future, it is clear that more must be done to realise the great potential of all its people and its regional economies. The towns of our city regions have a critical role to play. The move to city region-wide Mayors and the outcome of the EU referendum have given greater attention to places which, rightly or wrongly, feel left behind and left out. It is time for towns to be given their share of the policy spotlight.

Britain’s towns vary from prosperous market towns in rural hinterlands to post-industrial towns that form part of urban conurbations. As the Urban Transport Group, this report mainly focuses on the latter group. However, in doing so we resist too rigid a definition given that some smaller cities can have similar characteristics to larger towns and what works for stand-alone towns can also work for towns which are part of wider continuous built up areas. In using the term post-industrial there is also the qualification that the UK still has a significant manufacturing capacity – some of which is based in towns.

Towns have many strengths. Post-industrial towns frequently have a proud history of innovation and graft which led to them pioneering or specialising in particular industries, such as towns in West Yorkshire and the North West that invented new forms of textiles or production processes, and boomed as a result.

The exceptional quality of the built environment that has survived is testament to those achievements and the wealth that was generated. Depending on the place, the strengths of towns include:

- Strong local identity and community.
- Outstanding built environment reflecting former and existing industrial specialisms and the wealth and civic pride that this generated.
- Lower housing costs and a good quality of life with easy access to the great outdoors.
- Lower costs for existing and new businesses of all types.
- Independent shops, cafés, pubs and restaurants.
- Green space.
- Family friendly features including parks, schools and libraries.
- Walkable, with shops and services in easy reach.

However post-industrial towns can also face some significant challenges around:

- A decline in traditional manufacturing including the disappearance of specific industries which were core to local employment and identities.
- The expansion of out-of-town retail and the growth in internet shopping, hollowing out high streets and leaving town centres struggling to compete.
- Commercial and office activity moving to the urban fringe or to city centres.



It is important to stress that transport interventions in isolation cannot be expected to overcome these challenges. Indeed, one of the main messages of this report is the need to move away from a 'silver bullet' approach based on a single transport intervention and instead move towards packages of transport measures combined with wider cross-sector initiatives which could encompass initiatives on housing, employment and education.

The following pages highlight examples from the UK and the wider world on how transport can make a positive contribution to making the next chapter in the proud story of our post-industrial towns an exciting one.

The report is informed by a series of stakeholder interviews and questionnaires. Urban Transport Group would like to thank all those who contributed their thoughts and perspectives.

THE CHALLENGE OF PROMOTING INCLUSIVE GROWTH IN POST-INDUSTRIAL TOWNS

The future of the UK's towns is increasingly under the spotlight. There is a particular focus on encouraging inclusive growth and enabling towns to 'punch above their weight' in contributing to the national economy.

WHAT IS INCLUSIVE GROWTH?

The RSA (Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce) Inclusive Growth Commission summarises inclusive growth as: *"Broad-based growth that enables the widest range of people and places to both contribute to and benefit from economic success. Its purpose is to achieve more prosperity alongside greater equity in opportunities and outcomes"*.

This covers two aspects:

Social: *"Benefitting people across the labour market spectrum, including groups that face particularly high barriers to high quality employment"*.

Place-based: *"Addressing inequalities in opportunities between different parts of the country and within economic geographies"*.

The principles of inclusive growth are reflected in the Government's Industrial Strategy³ which aims to "create an economy that boosts productivity and earning power throughout the UK." It emphasises that it is not enough to see growth overall in the national economy if local economies are shrinking.

It sets out five foundations for a transformed economy:

- Ideas: the world's most innovative economy
- People: good jobs and greater earning power for all
- Infrastructure: a major upgrade to the UK's infrastructure
- Business environment: the best place to start and grow a business
- Places: prosperous communities across the UK

The fifth foundation 'Places' is of particular interest for this report. The strategy recognises that *'Our cities, towns and rural areas have competitive advantages that will be essential to shaping our economic future'* but that many places are not yet realising their full potential.

KEY CHALLENGES

Many post-industrial towns are characterised by productivity lower than the national average, places where populations are ageing, skill levels are relatively low and whose centres have faced long term decline and falling retail turnover⁴. Key challenges include:

- **Low wages and in-work poverty:** 55 of the 100 most deprived neighbourhoods in England are within towns (non-city urban District authority areas)⁵
- **Unemployment and lack of resilience in local economies:** Of the ten English local authority areas with the lowest employment rate, five are non-city urban District authority areas⁶
- **Low educational achievement and skill levels:** Of the ten English local authority areas with the lowest percentage of working age people with NVQ4 and above qualifications, nine are non-city urban District authority areas⁷
- **Low productivity** (particularly in low pay sectors)
- **Difficulties in attracting new enterprises**
- **Perception of being left-behind:** Among town-dwellers, 69% feel their towns are being left-behind, 68% believe politicians do not care about their towns. The corresponding figures in cities are much lower at 56 and 54%⁸
- **Hollowing out of high streets:** Customers are doing an increasing amount of their shopping online, potentially taking trade away from local high streets. The value of internet sales as a proportion of total retail sales has risen from 2.7% in January 2007 to 17.1% in January 2018⁹
- **Under-investment in infrastructure and housing stock**
- **Ageing populations:** Since 1981, Britain's towns and villages have lost more than a million people aged under 25, while gaining more than 2m over-65s. In contrast, major cities have seen net inflows of more than 300,000 under-25s and net outflows of 200,000 over 65s¹⁰

TRANSPORT HAS AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY IN TACKLING THESE CHALLENGES

- **Low wages and in-work poverty**
 - Opening up access to employment and training opportunities.
 - Offering affordable fares.
 - Being an exemplary employer offering high quality job opportunities with career progression and paying the living wage.
- **Unemployment and lack of resilience in local economies**

As above, plus:

 - Offering personalised journey planning and advice to broaden travel horizons and help people widen their job search net.
 - Providing free or discounted travel tickets for jobseekers.
 - Investing in transport infrastructure to attract inward investment and jobs.
- **Low educational attainment and skill levels**
 - Opening up access to education and training opportunities.
 - Offering affordable fares to reach these opportunities.
 - Being an exemplary employer offering jobs with training.
- **Low productivity**
 - Encouraging agglomeration economies.
 - Providing access to customers and qualified staff.
 - Infrastructure spending – research shows that there is at least a 0.14% increase in productivity for every 1% increase in public infrastructure spending⁴¹.
- Enabling opportunities to make productive use of journey to work by working on the bus or train.
- Promoting healthy lifestyles through walking, cycling and using public transport, with the potential to reduce sick days and improve productivity.
- **Difficulties in attracting new enterprises and perception of being left behind**
 - Creating attractive places for investment in retail, services and entertainment.
 - Changing perceptions of towns and promoting civic pride with high quality transport infrastructure and services.
 - Investing in transport infrastructure to demonstrate commitment to towns, offering confidence to communities and investors.
- **Hollowing out of high streets**
 - Connecting people to local high streets – more people access the high street by bus than by any other mode. 40% of shoppers access the high street by bus, compared to 30% by car⁴².
 - Cutting congestion in towns through public transport, walking and cycling, making them more attractive places to be.
 - Forming part of a coordinated package of urban realm improvements including attractive infrastructure for walking and cycling and the creation of places that people want to spend time in.



- **Under investment in infrastructure and housing stock**

- Investing in high quality transport infrastructure that becomes a gateway to the town and an attractive destination in itself, doubling as a community hub.
- Widening the catchment area of towns, making more land available for house building and making those developments attractive to potential residents by keeping them in easy reach of the amenities of the town centre.

- **Ageing populations**

- Providing the transport links that enable older people to play an active part in the community.
- Acting as a catalyst for inward investment and job creation within towns.
- Providing efficient access from towns to other employment and education hubs, encouraging young people and young professionals to stay in the area.

Transport's potential contribution to maximising the strengths of towns, and addressing their challenges, is explored in more detail in the remainder of this report.

VISION, LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

1



A critical theme of this report is the need for transport strategy to combine effectively with other strategies for inclusive growth. Towns that have transformed their fortunes have not done so overnight, rather through a series of measures taken in an overall approach over years or decades. The role that transport can play in this, when joined up with economic development, spatial planning, and the health and skills sectors, is a fundamental one. Whilst not always easy to quantify and evaluate, its contribution to fostering civic pride and confidence to invest in our towns is significant.

All this requires effective governance structures and leadership. A clear, agreed vision can act as a compass to guide the strategy and the measures needed to fulfil it. Capital and revenue investment, commensurate to the challenges faced, can then be pursued. Transport investment is an important building block of such integrated strategies and can act as a catalyst to get wider developments up and running.

High level vision and strategies are crucial but top down planning also needs to leave space for bottom up initiatives rooted in local communities, something which we explore further on page 16.

CASE STUDIES

London's Town Centre Network

Where towns are part of an urban conurbation, they can form part of, and benefit from, wider coordinated planning of transport, land use and economic development for the entire area.

Governance structures in the capital ensure that the Mayor is responsible for a joined up 'holy trinity' of strategies covering transport, spatial development and economic development¹³.

Such a combination provides a powerful basis for promoting inclusive growth across all of London, including its town centres and enables one coherent plan to support and direct growth.

The London Plan, led by the Mayor, includes the city's strategy for its town centres which it visualises as part of a Town Centre Network comprising different categories of town centre; international centres; metropolitan centres; major centres; district centres; and neighbourhood and more local centres. Each classification of town has its own key defining features in terms of size; spread; amount of retail leisure and service floorspace; proportion of high-value retail to convenience retail; connectivity; and employment opportunities.

The Plan pledges that the Mayor will, and boroughs and other stakeholders should, coordinate the development of the network so that town centres provide:

- a) a focus beyond central London for commercial development and intensification, including residential development
- b) the structure for sustaining and improving a competitive choice of goods and services conveniently accessible to all Londoners, particularly by public transport, cycling and walking
- c) together with local neighbourhoods, the main focus for most Londoners' sense of place and local identity within the capital.

In setting these objectives, the Plan provides a clear vision for the vital and unique role that town centres play as part of the development of London as a whole.



Street Market in Brixton

The Lille-Roubaix sub-region – joint working for post-industrial revival

The regeneration of Roubaix in the Lille Metropolitan area of France has been based on strong city-region governance with long term political cooperation.

Roubaix was once called “the town of a thousand chimneys” due to its cotton industry. De-industrialisation in the seventies gave rise to severe economic problems for which a long term regeneration strategy was devised by the metropolitan authority Lille Metropole Communauté Urbaine (LMCU). Old mills are now used by large mail order clothing companies and factory retail outlets as part of an integrated regeneration approach. This has included provision of a metro line and a tram line to Lille, alongside Bus Rapid Transit (“Liane”) lines to neighbouring centres, urban restoration improvements and new cultural facilities.

The LMCU instigated coherent regeneration and growth across the metropolitan area from 1989 onwards. The main centres are Lille and Roubaix, but the metropolitan area also includes smaller towns such as Tourcoing. Although decision-making within the LMCU has not always been easy, there has been a broad degree of consensus on the overall approach to improve the positioning of the Lille-Roubaix conurbation in Europe.

A key event was the early 1990s ‘metropolitan compromise’ (compromis métropolitain). This was expressed clearly by Michel David (Head of Regeneration at Roubaix City Council, personal communication): ‘It is in the interest of Lille to save Roubaix’... and for the first time ‘Roubaix has accepted that Lille is the capital of the city region’¹⁵.

There were and still are historic rivalries between Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing in the metropolitan area. However, consensus was achieved on the basis that there is a need for a strong core city (Lille), whilst at the same time there needs to be a strong will from the metropolitan authority to tackle the unbalanced development of the city-region, help deprived areas and avoid a core-periphery situation which in the long-term would be detrimental to the overall prosperity of the city-region. There is still competition, but within a context of cooperation and search for complementary roles.

This consensus led to a strategic trade-off: Roubaix and Tourcoing supported massive public investment in Euralille (on what was then the planned Eurostar High Speed Rail line) as a flagship project of central importance for the city region as a whole, whilst the LMCU put significant resources into extending the metro to Roubaix and Tourcoing plus funding city centre renewal and housing investment in both towns. At the same time there has been a strong emphasis on the polycentric development of the city-region through a wide network of public transport and the planning of major flagship projects in various locations with each major city specialising in certain types of activity¹⁶.

Greater Manchester – ‘our people, our place’

In 2017, a new growth strategy for Greater Manchester was launched¹⁷. This puts transport strategy within a wider, overall development strategy for the city region.

The 10 priority areas in the strategy are summarised in the diagram below from Greater Manchester Combined Authority¹⁸. Towns have a key role to play in this integrated approach.

The Strategy includes an ambition to make Greater Manchester’s town centres ‘quality places where people choose to live and work’¹⁹ through ‘transformational development’ with inclusive growth – and transport – at its heart.

The Strategy describes a vision for towns that balance ‘new higher-density residential development with quality cultural facilities, public spaces, a good environment for walking and cycling, public services, retail, entertainment, and employment offers, as well as key access points to an integrated transport network. Achieving those ambitions is a crucial element of our brownfield first priority and our place-making approach to deliver an inclusive economy’²⁰.



Image source: Greater Manchester Combined Authority

GATEWAYS, SPECIALISMS, IDENTITY AND CIVIC PRIDE

2

Post-industrial towns are often characterised by a history of innovation and graft which led to them pioneering or specialising in particular trades or industries– such as towns in West Yorkshire and the North West that invented new forms of textiles, or new production processes, and then boomed as a result. The exceptional quality of some of the built environment that has survived is testament to those achievements and the wealth that was generated. There is often a strong sense of local identity and pride in towns that more anonymous, transient suburbs and larger cities can sometimes lack.

A challenge for towns is how to reflect and capitalise on local identity, and the built environment that its unique past has bequeathed, but in a way that reflects today's economic and social realities. A starting point is for public, private and community stakeholders to consider collectively what is it about their town which could draw people in: what is its offer, its uniqueness and its interest?

Transport can help to address this challenge, particularly in the roles that new and reinvigorated stations and public transport interchanges can play in terms of:

- their role as gateways to the town for visitors and therefore in making a positive first impression due to the quality of their modern or historic buildings, as well as for ease of access from the station or interchange to town centre facilities;
- their potential wider use for community purposes or for unique local enterprises and small shops;
- the way in which they reflect, bolster and reinforce local identity either as local landmarks in themselves or as symbols of a town's industrial past or its future aspirations.

A trip by rail between the cities of Leeds and Manchester reveals a glimpse of the personalities and identities of towns along the way – signs proclaiming the proud homes of local sports teams; handmade fabric flowers nestled among colourful floral planters at Batley; a high quality cycle hub at Dewsbury; a sighting of the famous Felix the station cat at Huddersfield; inviting, unique pubs at every stop. Viewed from the train window, these are the kinds of things that draw people in, make them want to explore and learn more.

The transport industry, local authorities, businesses and communities all play their part in making a great first impression, making best use of distinctive local assets and sources of pride. When this happens, interesting local retailers, community activities and well-kept environments flourish.

Community Rail Partnerships, station friends and station adoption groups, for example, have been important in reinvigorating town railway stations across the country. Communities work alongside local, regional and national partners to support the development of their local railway, bring dilapidated station buildings back into use and ensure stations are welcoming and productive hubs for their community²¹. Taking a bottom-up approach ensures that the results reflect the priorities and personality of the communities served, boosting civic pride and identity.

High quality transport hubs, like railway stations, become attractors and anchors for local development. As well as providing connectivity, vibrant and well-cared for transport infrastructure instils a sense of confidence and permanence, making them natural hubs for housing and business development to spring from.

Of course, not all visitors will access a town centre by bus or by rail. Many residents and visitors alike will enter by car, making town centre parking policy a key consideration. The provision, pricing and location of town centre parking must be considered carefully as part of an integrated transport strategy. If the demands of the car create problems of congestion and poor air quality then parking policy should seek to manage this as part of a joined up approach to secure modal shift to public transport, cycling and walking.

It is important to note that, as the Association of Town and City Management highlights, much research and real life experience has shown that *'town centres capable of maximising accessibility via alternative methods to the car can attract, rather than lose spend²².*'

This leads on to a further function of transport in promoting local identity and civic pride: creating a high quality public realm which encourages walking and cycling and is 'sticky' – in that it encourages people to spend more time (and money) in a place. Using high quality materials and design that reflects the local environment adds to a unique sense of place.

CASE STUDIES

Kilmarnock – more than just a station

The station at Kilmarnock, a town in Ayrshire, Scotland, has transformed into a vibrant hub for the community through the work of the Kilmarnock Station Heritage Trust²³. The Trust brings together individuals and community organisations and was set up to refurbish and revitalise the station.



Kilmarnock Station before restoration.
Image source: Kilmarnock Station Heritage Trust

The trust secured £500,000 funding from a number of sources and bought seven station rooms back into use. The station rooms now host a gift shop; coffee shop – 'Storm in a Teacup'; bookshop – 'The Killie Browser', which doubles as an event space; workspaces; meeting rooms; and offices for community groups.



Kilmarnock Station after redevelopment as the Killie Browser bookshop and event space. Image source: Kilmarnock Station Heritage Trust



Kilmarnock Station before restoration.
Image source: Kilmarnock Station Heritage Trust



Kilmarnock Station after redevelopment as 'Storm in a Teacup' Cafe.
Image source: Kilmarnock Station Heritage Trust



Kilmarnock station subway artwork
Image source: Wave Particle: portfolio.waveparticle.co.uk

The redevelopment reflects the identity of the town it serves – improvements to the station's subway involved artwork based on community, school and college workshops, which encouraged people to bring a drawing, story or anecdote that connects to, or says something about Kilmarnock²⁴.

There is a focus on providing space for community and rehabilitation projects, involving media, music and active travel.

There is evidence that the initiative has led to passenger growth, increasing the viability of further lets²⁵.

ScotRail has been integral to making the station fit with wider regeneration plans for the local area. This has included better local links (via the refurbished subway) to the new Ayrshire College campus (which is on the site of a former whisky bottling plant).

South Shields – new interchange at heart of wider town centre vision

The South Shields 365 Town Centre Vision is a £100m initiative by South Tyneside Council and public and private sector partners to revitalise South Shields.

This integrated plan is made up of several elements: “The Word”: the National Centre for the Written Word, incorporating a new central library; improvements to the Market Place; a new 40 space car park on vacant land; construction of a new transport interchange linking the Tyne and Wear Metro and local bus services; and a new railway skills academy.

The transport interchange and skills academy are being developed by Nexus, the Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive on behalf of the North East Combined Authority alongside South Tyneside Council and developer, Muse Developments. The new, consolidated transport hub will be a high quality, vibrant gateway to the town, reflecting the scale of the town’s ambitions.

Future environmental and local transport enhancements will be delivered to further improve South Shields’ retail and leisure offer²⁶.



Image source: Nexus

Altrincham – modern interchange, modern market town

In 2010, Altrincham in Trafford, Greater Manchester, had the largest number of vacant units in a medium size town in the UK. “Altrincham Forward” was set up in response to this. This was a partnership of Trafford Council, businesses and community groups whose aim was to revitalise the town centre and make Altrincham “the Modern Market Town”.

The action plan agreed by this public–private partnership informed a series of public realm improvements in the town, alongside £50m of investment in major developments including

£19m on a new multi-modal transport interchange, £1m on the revitalising the market and £17m for a new hospital in the town centre with redevelopment on the previous site.

This investment has led to a 19% increase in town centre footfall from Q3 2014/15 to Q3 2016/17, a reduction in vacancy rates from 20.3% in July 2012 to 10.2% in December 2012 and 31 new business openings in 2016 compared to 21 in 2013²⁷.

TRANSPORT AS A LOCAL ANCHOR INSTITUTION AND EXEMPLARY EMPLOYER

3

As well as acting as a catalyst for inclusive growth in towns, the transport sector is an important local employer through public transport, logistics, planning and construction activities. Transport organisations can also act as “anchor institutions”, using their purchasing power to procure goods and services from local suppliers.

As a large component of the UK economy, the transport sector has an important role to play as an exemplary employer, with decent pay and working conditions for all its workforces, for example by being accredited Living Wage Foundation employers. For town residents – and employees – this translates into enhanced productivity and more money to spend locally.

The scale of the transport sector means that this role is significant in the UK: the logistics sector employs over 1.7m people²⁸, the UK rail industry directly employs approximately 93,000 people²⁹, whilst in England local bus operators provide 103,000 full time equivalent jobs³⁰. There are also 290,000 licensed taxis and private hire vehicles in England and Wales³¹.

The “anchor institution” concept originated in the United States and has become an integral part of US urban regeneration since the 2000’s. The characteristics of an “anchor institution” are³²:

- Strategic: plays a significant and recognised role in a local area by making a strategic contribution to the local economy.
- Fixed location: a university or school, for example, will have strong ties to its local area and will not readily move.

- Size: anchor institutions tend to be large employers and have significant purchasing power.
- Non-profit: anchor institutions tend to be (but not always) not-for-profit organisations. It is much simpler for private businesses to move, meaning there is no guarantee they will continue serving the local community in the long-term.

As the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) put it, *‘Anchor institutions bring wealth in the form of jobs and supply chains; they are rooted in place and as such are vital to the functioning of our local economies’*³³. In the UK, Preston is often quoted as an example where the “anchor institution” concept has been widely adopted.

In 2013, the council employed CLES to help identify 12 large institutions anchored to Preston, including the city and county council, the university, the police and the hospital. It looked at redirecting their spending power to local businesses. The £1.6m council food budget, for example, was broken into lots and awarded to farmers in the region³⁴. Preston City Council has since spent an additional £4m locally, from 14% of its budget in 2012 to 28% in 2016³⁵.

Towns could identify their own ‘anchor institutions’, which will often include the transport sector, and encourage them to ‘buy local’ and employ local people.

CASE STUDIES

Midlands Metro extension – serving the Black Country, made in the Black Country

In 2017, £207m of central Government funding was secured towards the Wednesbury – Dudley – Brierley Hill light rail extension of the West Midlands tram network (“the Metro”)³⁶.

This 11km line will add the last two of the West Midlands Metropolitan Area’s ten strategic centres without rail provision (the towns of Dudley and Brierley Hill) to its rail and rapid transit network, opening up access for residents to job opportunities across the conurbation.

Midland Metro Alliance, the scheme promoter, aims for 80% of the project’s supply chain procurement to be with local businesses, so fostering local inclusive growth. This involves events such as “meet the buyer” for local businesses interested in involvement with the project³⁷.



Paying the Living Wage

There are over 3,500 accredited Living Wage Foundation employers in the UK. These are employers who pay minimum rates set by the Foundation which are higher than the Government’s national minimum wage.

There are 40 Living Wage accredited transport companies in the UK. These include the following transport operators with employees in the city regions: Arriva Rail North, Cardiff Bus, Chariot, First Transpennine Express, National Express Bus, ScotRail, First Tram Operations, Shrewsbury Dial a Ride and Transport for London.

Local and city region authorities accredited in the city regions include Birmingham City Council, Calderdale Council, Cardiff City Council, East Dunbartonshire Council, Greater London Authority, Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Inverclyde Council, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, 16 London Borough Councils, North Ayrshire Council, North Lanarkshire Council, Renfrewshire Council, Salford City Council and South Lanarkshire Council³⁸.

HS2 – building skills and a supply chain in the Leeds City Region

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority, Leeds City Region HS2 Enterprise Partnership and Leeds City Council have produced an overall HS2 Growth Strategy to ensure that the strapline of High Speed Rail Two: “Engine for Growth” becomes a reality in West Yorkshire.

A set of “Inclusive Growth Corridors” bring together transport and regeneration initiatives such as the Trans-Pennine rail route upgrade and regeneration projects in Huddersfield and Dewsbury.

The corridor strategies also include wider social policy interventions to support productivity and inclusive growth³⁹.

The supporting Skills and Supply Chain work stream seeks to ensure that all residents of the Leeds City Region have the opportunity to access decent jobs through acquiring more skills, and by attracting more skilled jobs to the city region related to high speed rail. A new Institute of High Speed Rail and Systems Integration (IHSRSI) at the University of Leeds is an important part of this approach⁴⁰.



Image source: National College for High Speed Rail

...and in Doncaster

To provide specialist training, skills and qualifications required to build HS2 and future rail projects, the Government has established the National College for High Speed Rail. This Further Education College has a campus in the town of Doncaster, built in conjunction with the Sheffield City Region Combined Authority⁴¹. When fully operational, the College will cater for 1,200 students a year.

The decision to locate one of the college’s two campuses (the other is in Birmingham) in Doncaster was informed by the town’s rich railway history and its role at the forefront of

today’s UK rail network. It is home to more than 20 major rail companies specialising in traction, rolling stock, advanced manufacturing, infrastructure, and power supply and distribution⁴².

As well as a potential anchor institution, this is an example of maintaining and building upon a town’s heritage, something which has given Doncaster a unique edge in securing this prestigious development.

ACCESS TO JOBS

4

Transport is vital in enabling people to find and sustain employment both within and beyond towns. The challenge for transport provision is to provide access to local jobs (which may also be on the fringe of the urban area) as well as to the wider employment market across a wider city region. This also needs to be done in a way which does not exacerbate congestion and is affordable for both users and the transport authority.

One of the strengths of city regions is the ability to foster agglomeration of high density employment land use and high value clusters of jobs. High density employment land use, often in regional centres, requires mass transit to physically move the volumes of people needed to work in those jobs from wide city region labour markets, including adjacent towns.

Such mass transit also offers an alternative to the severance of high volumes of car traffic travelling through communities to access jobs in key urban centres.

Achieving this requires high quality rail and rapid transit networks, integrated with easy to understand and use town bus networks and related flexible services, provided as part of a comprehensive overall system. Walking and cycling to work should also be encouraged where distances allow.

An important aspect of better access to jobs is the need to ensure public transport services link residential areas with employment sites (which can often be located on the periphery of urban areas) at times when people need to get to and from work.



Image source: West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Ideally this should be considered and planned for at the earliest possible stage of any new major development likely to generate a large number of trips. Creating these links between residential areas and employment sites may involve a new rail or rapid transit line or station, a new commercial or subsidised bus service or more flexible “local link” type demand responsive provision.

Considering access by a range of modes is particularly important where employment opportunities are located in otherwise isolated out-of-town industrial or trading estates which can be difficult to access without a car. This is particularly true for lower skilled jobs – research by Centre for Cities has shown that these tend to be more dispersed and often remote from the communities who may wish to access them⁴³. A study by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation analysed three contrasting urban labour markets and potential candidates for low skilled vacancies. It found that 70 to 90% of unfilled vacancies were easily accessible by car, whereas only 35 to 55% could be reached within 30 minutes by public transport⁴⁴.

As well as improved public transport, local access to employment can be improved by a better walking and cycling offer in our towns. Evidence from the “Cycling Demonstration Towns” (CDT) programme shows that where investment in cycling in towns occurs, levels of cycling increase.

The towns involved in the CDT programme were Aylesbury, Brighton and Hove, Darlington, Derby, Exeter, and Lancaster with Morecambe. From automatic count data, there was an overall increase in cycling of 29% for these six towns in five and a half years, with increases ranging from 6% to 59%⁴⁵.

Better conditions for walking also have a role to play, especially where journeys to work are less than 1 mile in length. Currently 11% of commuting journeys are on foot⁴⁶.

As well as the physical means of getting to a job across a city region, there are also critical supporting softer measures needed to tie in with capital investment. Evidence from research in low income areas by Sheffield Hallam University shows that approaches need to be complemented “by targeted interventions that help ensure that people can overcome financial, informational, perceptual and emotional barriers to making trips to hitherto unfamiliar destinations, or to overcome stigmatised perceptions of their home area. Such interventions also need to be of sufficient scale and duration to have a significant effect”⁴⁷.

To help address these issues, Job Access Schemes (which provide information about how to get to job interviews as well as support for the cost of travelling to interviews and for the first weeks of a new job) have been put in place in a number of city regions (see case study below).

CASE STUDIES

Job access schemes in the city regions

City region authorities have recognised that connecting people to jobs requires more than infrastructure, it also needs to address job seekers’ need for information about how to get to interviews and new job opportunities, and to help cover the cost of those trips before the first pay-check comes in⁵⁰.

In the West Midlands, Workwise travel support gives jobseekers and apprentices half price public transport passes for up to three months⁵¹.

Discounted fares can be accessed when they start a new job or apprenticeship, or increase their hours to 16 or more per week if already employed.

Transport for Greater Manchester’s Travel Choices Scheme supports jobseekers back into work with free travel tickets, journey planning advice, recycled bikes and training for advisors at Jobcentre Plus and partner organisations. Free bus tickets are also provided for jobseekers in Bristol and the West of England⁵².

Plugging Northumberland towns back into the rail network

A 20 mile rail freight line currently links the former coal mining towns of Ashington and Blyth with Newcastle. Re-opening of this line to passenger services is proposed, requiring an upgrade of the line, which is currently in poor condition and has limited capacity. A passenger rail service would support regeneration of the towns of south east Northumberland by connecting areas of need with areas of opportunity.

A third of all new employment land within the Local Plan for the area is being allocated in the vicinity of the line, including an area designated as a Strategic Employment Zone.

A third of new homes in the Local Plan are also located in the settlements along the route. The proposed passenger rail service delivers direct rail access to the Newcastle city centre with the whole of the route being within a 40 minute journey time. Interchanges with Tyne and Wear Metro at stations on the line would provide further access to employment opportunities across Tyne and Wear⁵³.

Greater Manchester Local Link – flexible bus services to get people to work

Transport for Greater Manchester provides Local Link, a flexible transport service for local journeys where public transport services are limited. Using shared minibuses, Local Link gets customers to and from anywhere within each local service area, including a number of towns.

Work trips make up 51% of trip requests, with Local Link serving several industrial estates and business parks in Greater Manchester. For example, residents of Daubhill, on the outskirts of the town of Bolton are among those that can use Local Link to access Logistics North, a large out of town employment site.

The service is available at times which correspond to shift patterns when conventional public transport would not be running.



Image source: Transport for Greater Manchester

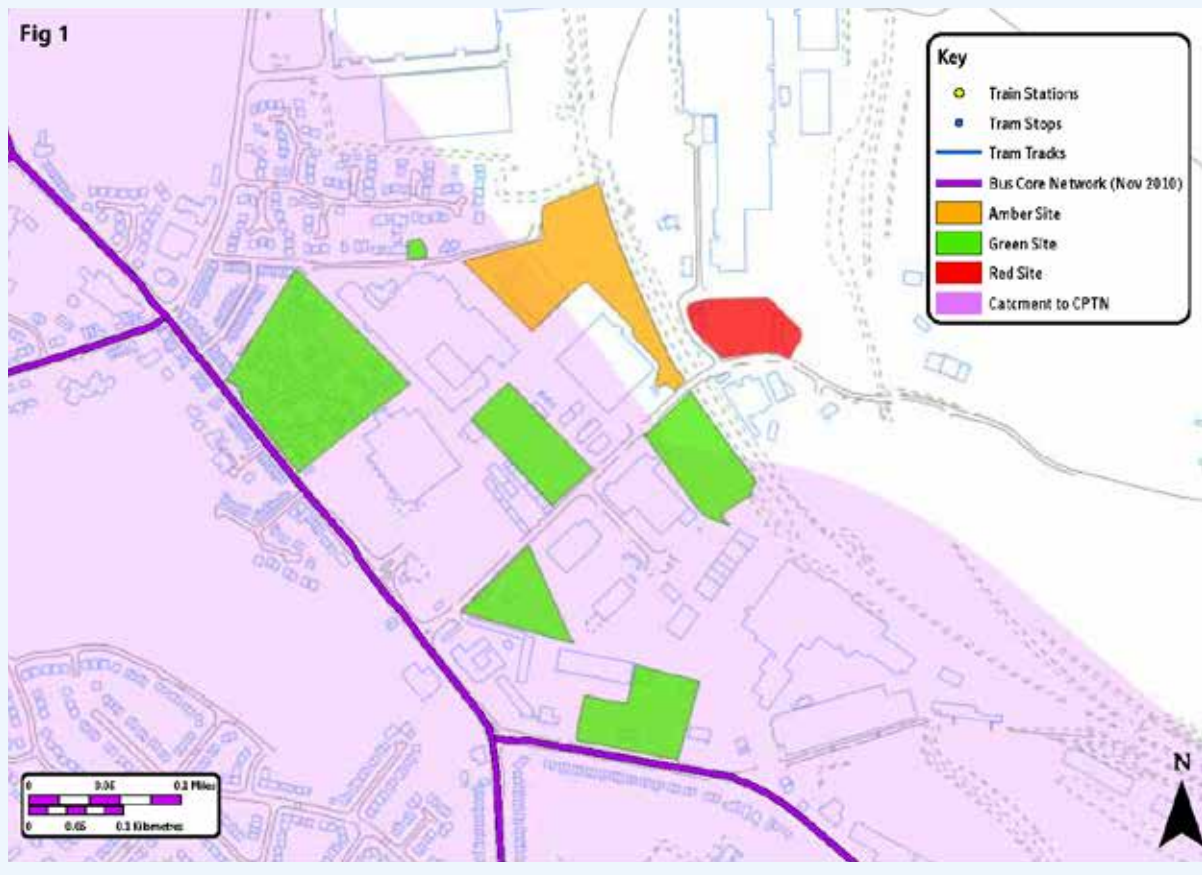
Local Link services run 7 days a week, however each service has its own operational hours, and trips can be booked online or through the Transport for Greater Manchester Customer Contact Centre. There are currently 22 Local Link services provided⁴⁹.

Joining the dots – South Yorkshire Land Use and Transport Integration

On behalf of the South Yorkshire Districts, South Yorkshire PTE undertake a recognised and consistent process of scoring future development sites based upon their accessibility and proximity to the core public transport network. This assessment and prioritisation process is known as LUTI (Land Use and Transport Integration). LUTI uses a red, amber, green scoring system to classify sites and indicate where intervention may be required⁵⁴.

The map below shows a LUTI output – sites marked in green would be best for development as they are sited within reach of the core bus network.

LUTI has helped to ensure new developments are prioritised around existing public transport corridors and that any new sites which are poorly connected are outlined as requiring developer contributions towards public transport services.



Interlock – how German regions match public transport networks to labour markets

German regions like the Rhine Ruhr conurbation have many similarities with British sub regions like the Scottish central belt, the North of England and the Midlands. They are post-industrial, polycentric (rather than revolving around one major world city), contain significant rural hinterlands and have complex overlapping transport, economic, political and cultural geographies. However, German regions and city regions have a different approach to transport provision to their UK comparators in that regionally devolved operations provide a tiered system of public transport provision with a high degree of integration of ticketing and services. So alongside inter-city services there will be a dense and interlocking network of:

- Regional Express rail (serving the main urban centres only)
- Regional rail (traditional heavy rail stopping trains)
- S-bahn (rapid high frequency suburban rail services)
- U-bahn (subways)
- Tram

These different forms of steel wheel services also connect with local bus services and are all covered by common ticketing and branding.

There is a high degree of devolution of responsibilities for sub-national rail services but one which recognises the complexities of overlapping transport and economic geographies by allowing for joint arrangements on tickets and services between transport authorities where it makes sense to do so. This helps expand the pool of labour for businesses in German towns and cities and gives workers a wider “reach”.

In line with this national approach, public transport serving the Ruhr is highly integrated. Co-ordination is ensured through the public transport association Verkehrsverbund Rhein-Ruhr covering an area with a population of 7.8 million. Supplementing the already extensive integrated network is the “Rhein-Ruhr Express” project. This has been referred as the North-Rhine Westphalia region’s “Project of the Century”⁵⁵. It is a €2 billion, six line new regional express service to markedly improve rail connectivity between the main centres and towns of the Ruhr conurbation. Centres served include Dortmund, Essen, Duisburg and Dusseldorf with connections to Cologne, Aachen and Munster. The core Dortmund – Dusseldorf – Cologne section will have a 15 minute frequency service. The project enhances the Ruhr’s comprehensive rail network further, to improve connectivity and so promote economic development of the Ruhr’s towns and cities.

ACCESS TO SKILLS

5

Transport connects people in towns to education and training opportunities. With increasing consolidation of smaller colleges and campuses into single, large sites, as well as the growing trend towards specialisation in particular subjects, transport options are more important than ever as students are likely to have to travel further to reach them.

Colleges surveyed by the Association of Colleges⁵⁶ estimate that some 72% of students take the bus to college. Affordable and available bus services mean that students have more choice about where to study and can base their decision primarily on the courses available, and the quality of the establishment, rather than the costs and practicalities of getting there.

Where the Further Education sector has located new facilities in town centres, it has helped breathe in new life and vibrancy whilst also making education highly accessible by local bus and other transport networks.

If the strategy for skills is based on a set of different specialist training centres across a city region, then excellent city region public transport is needed. This involves capital investment aligned to campus locations in town centres. For strategies to be successful it is also critical that access to education is supported by affordable ticketing and the provision of easily accessible information. Colleges can also act as anchor institutions given that their significant budgets could be used to support local enterprises and labour markets.

CASE STUDIES

Simpler and more affordable bus fares to access education, training and apprenticeships

In the Liverpool City Region, the transport authority Merseytravel and bus operators Arriva and Stagecoach have introduced a fares initiative which has led to a 142% increase in bus journeys by young people in the City Region from 2014 to 2017. 'MyTicket' allows unlimited travel for all young people aged 5 to under 19 across Merseyside and Halton for £2.20 a day⁵⁷.

This is particularly important in supporting young people post-16 who are generally not eligible for free home-to-school transport but who must now continue to take part in education or training up until the age of 18.

Elsewhere, Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire and the North East all offer half fare travel to under 19s. In the West Midlands, 16 to under 18 year olds in vocational training and apprenticeships, as well as in education, benefit from half price travel on buses and trams.

A University Centre in the heart of Rotherham

Town centres are the hubs of local bus networks and connecting rail and rapid transit links. They are therefore sound locations for further and higher education campuses. An excellent example of this is the new University Centre Rotherham, whose town centre campus is located approximately 500 metres from Rotherham Interchange. This £10.5m campus will open in autumn 2018 and offer a wide variety of degree courses accredited by Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Hull.

17.4% of the population in Rotherham and Bassetlaw have a Level 4 qualification or higher, compared to the national percentage of 27.4%. University Centre Rotherham will play a vital role in closing this gap, increasing access to higher-level skills⁵⁸.



Image source: University Centre Rotherham

ACCESS TO WIDER OPPORTUNITIES



Given that most journeys are for other purposes than work or education, transport provision is key to ensuring that people in towns can travel for social and leisure purposes. The National Travel Survey for England 2016 shows the following breakdown of journey types in the UK⁵⁹:

Shopping	19%
Personal Business	18%
Other Leisure	17%
Commuting	15%
Visiting Friends	15%
Education	12%
Business	3%

Facilitating access to these kinds of activity is vital for mental wellbeing as well as building a sense of community. By enabling access to these wider opportunities (as well as to work and study), public transport, walking and cycling are considered as important levers for improving wellbeing⁶⁰. Indeed, these modes all contribute to the ‘five steps to mental wellbeing’ developed by the New Economics Foundation⁶¹:

- 1. Connect with people around you:** public transport, walking and cycling help connect people to one another and to family and friends, whether during the journey or at the destination. Use of these modes adds to the vibrancy of a place and, by reducing congestion, help to create environments where it is easier for people to interact and play.
- 2. Be active:** walking and cycling for everyday journeys provide easy opportunities to meet recommended daily levels of physical activity. Public transport can also connect people to sports and leisure facilities which may be located outside of town as well as to the countryside and the great outdoors.
- 3. Keep learning:** as well as providing access to education and training, time spent on public transport can be used to read, learn and work.
- 4. Give to others:** Traversing the street on foot or by bike or using public transport is a communal experience, unlocking opportunities to give to others, whether it is giving up a seat for someone on the bus or helping carry a buggy down steep steps.
- 5. Take notice:** when we walk or cycle or use public transport we notice more. Freed from the responsibility of driving, it allows time to think, look out of the window, spot things on the street. This is good for wellbeing and good for towns themselves, as people have time to notice a new café on the high street or a poster advertising an evening class.

In promoting wellbeing through unlocking these opportunities, public transport, walking and cycling make towns more attractive places to live and visit – places that are vibrant, filled with life, activity and opportunity.

Public transport is also important for connecting people to opportunities outside of towns – linking residents to the countryside, the out-of-town cinema complex, or the museums and galleries of a nearby city. Good quality connections to these opportunities will help to prevent young people and young professionals feeling like they have to move out of town to the city to access them.

CASE STUDIES

Making a beeline for Greater Manchester

Chris Boardman, Greater Manchester's Cycling and Walking Commissioner together with the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Transport for Greater Manchester, have developed Beelines – a proposal for Greater Manchester to have the UK's largest joined up network for walking and cycling. The decade-long plan will connect every neighbourhood in the city region, including its constituent towns, starting with 1,000 miles of walking and cycling networks.

Beelines are signed routes that mark the most direct and pleasant way to navigate a neighbourhood on foot or by bike.



Image source: Transport for Greater Manchester

They have the potential to revolutionise the way people get around and beyond towns, opening up access to a wide range of opportunities for all ages. The routes will be fit for everyone from a competent 12-year-old on a bike to a person walking with a double buggy.

Exploring Irvine and Kilwinning on the New Town Trail



Irvine and Kilwinning New Town Trail⁶² is a 12 mile circular pedestrian and cycle route. The trail links the towns of Irvine and Kilwinning in Ayrshire, Scotland, taking in many local landmarks and areas of interest including castles, nature reserves and a Country Park as well as residential areas, local leisure facilities and work places. The image shows the pedestrianised town centre of Irvine.

Cycling and walking in Irvine and the wider area has received a further boost thanks to £2.5bn from a number of grants, including as part of proposals to make Irvine a Cycle Friendly Town⁶³.

Exploring the Great Exhibition of the North with Metro



Image source: Hufton+Crow

Tyne and Wear Metro has produced a guide to help people explore the North East and, in particular, the Great Exhibition of the North, using the Metro light rail system. The guide includes three trails to follow round the network centred on art, design and innovation. All three trails take in destinations within Tyne and Wear towns, thereby encouraging visitors in and providing opportunities for town residents to explore other local attractions.

Trail three, for example, called 'Get North Innovation', takes in the Discovery Museum in Newcastle, the Millennium Bridge in Gateshead, the Lightning Clock sculpture near the village of Percy Main, The Word, National Centre for the Written Word in the town of South Shields, and Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens.

Connecting towns to the Dales

DalesBus services connect a number of towns directly to the Yorkshire Dales, including Dewsbury, Darlington, Keighley, Burnley and Selby, via a series of bus routes. Many run throughout the year, supplemented by extra services during the summer period, operating on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

Dales Rover tickets offer unlimited travel on most DalesBus services on Sundays and Bank Holidays and each paying adult can take two children (up to 16) or young people (if holding a 16-18 PhotoCard) for free.

OPENING UP INVESTMENT

7

As well as investment in town centre environments, new economic development sites in towns need to be “open for business”, often including land reclamation and land assembly with other public sector bodies. Being “open for business” requires good local transport connections which are up and running from day one for relevant labour markets (including for residents of the town and the potential labour pool further afield) and supply chains.

These connections should provide effective local and national highway access with reliable journey times to allow business-to-business travel and the effective movement of raw materials, goods and services. They should also offer practical public transport options at times suited to business and shift patterns as well as good access for walking and cycling.

To encourage use of non-car modes among employees on new developments, employee ticketing, information and promotion packages should be a natural part of the process of any employer locating to a new site.

Research shows that periods of life transition – such as moving house or starting a new job – are the times at which people are most open to considering different transport options⁶⁴. The transport option selected at these times tends to stick and so incentivising public transport, walking and cycling could deliver long-term reductions in traffic in towns.

Public sector engagement with employers in towns will ensure common understanding of both business needs and transport challenges. As well as effective connectivity to staff, markets and suppliers, the need to create attractive places to locate and work must also be recognised, as discussed in Urban Transport Group’s recent report: “Banks, bytes and bikes: The transport needs of the new economy”⁶⁵.

CASE STUDIES

Kingsway Business Park, Rochdale

Kingsway is a 170 hectare business park adjacent to the M62 in Rochdale built by public bodies and the private sector in partnership to provide a regional scale economic development site which boosts local employment⁶⁶.

As well as access to the M62 at junction 21, a Metrolink stop was built to improve access to local labour markets, alongside a Local Link flexible bus service⁶⁷. These public transport improvements have been provided by Transport for Greater Manchester. Walking and cycling routes were also implemented for local access.

Ashford's 'Big 8'

Ashford in Kent, in common with many towns, had been faced with a hollowing out of its town centre, with many shops closing, including a third of those in the town's 1980s built Park Mall. In response, the council has moved decisively into buying property to regenerate its centre, including Park Mall. After three years in council hands, the Mall is virtually full thanks to incentives for independent retailers and a programme of family-friendly activities to attract shoppers⁶⁸.

It also reflects a new confidence and pride in the town thanks to its 'Big 8' – the collective name for eight major council led strategic projects designed to unlock investment⁶⁹. A number of these are centred around capitalising on, and improving, the town's transport connections, including:

- Commercial Quarter: a new main business hub for the town, located next to the domestic and international railway stations. The hub will include up to 590,000 square feet of office space plus 150 apartments. The first building on the site opened in June 2018 and is called Connect 38, reflecting the fact that it is just 38 minutes away from London St Pancras by train, thereby placing its public transport connectivity at the heart of its brand. Some 75% of the building is already let⁷⁰.
- Junction 10a of the M20: work is underway to boost capacity at the junction seen as a catalyst for economic and commercial development in the town.
- Designer Outlet expansion: situated just outside the town centre and seen as offering a complementary (rather than competing) retail offer, the expansion currently underway will create stronger links to the station at a site which is already well served by public transport. For example, Stagecoach's 'Little & Often' bus services run from the town centre every six minutes⁷¹.
- International College Campus: opened in September 2017, this new college is located in the heart of the town centre, adjacent to the railway stations and Commercial Quarter.
- International signalling: new signalling for Ashford International Station to ensure that the next generation of Eurostar trains can continue to stop at the station.



Aalborg – transition from “city of smoking chimneys” to exemplar sustainable city

Aalborg is a small city in Jutland, Denmark. With a population of 136,000, it is equivalent in size to a UK town like Huddersfield (population around 146,000). Its story is one of successful transition from what was known in the 1960s as the “city of smoking chimneys”, with half of its inhabitants working in industry or manufacturing, to an exemplar sustainable city which is home to “the Aalborg Charter”⁷² (the Charter of European Sustainable Cities and Towns Towards Sustainability, 1994). This Charter has gained over 3,000 signatories, making it the single most successful European effort in sustainable urban development.

Following adoption of the Charter in 1994, Aalborg has dedicated itself to sustainability. This approach has led to regeneration of the waterfront area and a long term commitment to transforming former industrial areas into culture and knowledge institutions, offices



and residential dwellings. Aalborg has been working on making the city a cycle friendly urban area for decades and is currently developing a new Bus Rapid Transit scheme “Plus Bus” linking the waterfront area, city centre and new University Hospital on an east-west route. Mode share of all journeys for the city is 42% car, 36% cycling, 11% walking and 10% public transport (2014).

Kirkstall Forge – opening up a former industrial site through a new station

Kirkstall Forge is a development in Leeds, transforming a brownfield site adjacent to an existing railway line. A new station has been opened at the site, and, on completion, the development will provide 1,050 new homes, 300,000 square feet of office space and 100,000 square feet of retail, leisure and community facilities, including a school⁷³. The public realm will support walking and cycling within the development and access to the nearby canal path for longer active travel trips⁷⁴. It is an excellent example of the value of getting the transport connections to a new development in place at an early stage to attract businesses and residents.

Kirkstall Forge railway station connects the site with Leeds (a six minute journey) and Bradford (15 minutes), as well as other local stops⁷⁵. Despite the fact that the development is not yet finished, the station exceeded projected demand of 20,200 passengers in the first year, achieving those numbers in the first five months of operation, prompting service frequencies to be increased⁷⁶.



Image source: West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Early investors include a new bar and restaurant serving the 1,000 employees within the first office development, rail users, visitors, as well as the future residential community⁷⁷.

The development is being led by CEG, working with Leeds City Council and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, and secured £10.3million from the Department for Transport to support the new stations at Kirkstall Forge and nearby Apperley Bridge, with additional funding from the LEP⁷⁸.

TRANSPORT'S ROLE IN HELPING MEET HOUSING DEMAND

8

With rising pressure to create more homes, joining up housing and transport strategy is vitally important to ensure the homes built foster lifestyles that support the viability of towns, rather than draw people away.

Households want to be within reach of a range of jobs but also close enough to environmental amenities. With careful planning of transport and other measures to support quality of life, towns can be ideally placed to meet both of those criteria. At their best, they offer the benefits of city living – with access to shops and services on the doorstep, combined with the green space, schools and community life associated with smaller settlements.

Situating high-density housing near transport hubs in towns has the potential to make them more attractive to residents, limit damaging urban sprawl as well as reduce car dependency and congestion. Research by the Campaign to Protect Rural England⁷⁹ has found that too often people do not get the full benefits from their town's transport links because their homes are only accessible by car.

When housebuilding efforts are focused on the edge of towns, with little thought to how people will reach them without a car, residents have little choice but to adopt a car-based lifestyle. Potentially this means commuting by car to the nearest city, visiting out of town supermarkets and shopping centres and ultimately a lack of connection to their town centre and what it has to offer.

Like starting a new job, moving house marks a major life transition at which point people have been found to be more receptive to making alternative and lasting changes to their travel behaviour⁸⁰. Ensuring housing developments are well connected from the outset is crucial in maximising this time limited opportunity.

Alongside transport connections, environmental and public realm improvements within towns can attract housing development and new residents by providing streets that are pleasant to spend time (and money) in.

CASE STUDIES

Stockport – combining a modern bus station, attractive public realm and high density residential development



Image source: Transport for Greater Manchester

Plans for a new multi-million pound redevelopment of Stockport Bus Station include a two-acre public park and 200 new apartments⁸¹. Funded by Transport for Greater Manchester, Stockport Council and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, it continues the £1 billion transformation already underway in the town centre.

The innovative design sees the bus station sunk into the middle of a new public park, with the new apartments overlooking the space. In doing so, it will create an attractive, green environment combined with high density housing and excellent transport connectivity. The 20 bus stands to be housed within the interchange will be further complemented by better and easier walking routes into the town centre and to the railway station.

Building further on its investment plans, Stockport is one of a number of Greater Manchester's towns nominated to take part in Mayor Andy Burnham's 'Town Centre Challenge'⁸². The Challenge will see the Mayor bring together public and private landowners, developers, investors, housing providers, community groups and other key stakeholders to support the regeneration of urban centres across the city region. A key focus of the challenge is to encourage housing growth in town centres to maximise them as residential centres and minimise greenbelt development.

Maghull North – new housing, new station

In June 2018, the new £13m Maghull North rail station opened on the Merseyrail Electrics network⁸³, serving the north end of the town and complementing the existing Maghull station. The scheme was funded through the Government’s Local Growth Fund, Merseytravel and the Homes and Communities Association.

A major reason for building the new station was to anticipate demand from a nearby new housing development. The development will include 370 homes, with many more homes planned for the area in the near future⁸⁴.

The new station will help ensure new residents have a viable alternative to the car from the moment they move in.

The new station demonstrates a strategic approach to ensuring policies work in harmony across areas including transport, housing, economic development and skills.

The wider Liverpool City Region Long Term Rail Strategy sets out 24 further potential stations, including proposals related to new housing and economic development sites⁸⁵.



Image source: Merseytravel

HEALTHY TOWNS

9

There is increasing understanding and recognition of the importance of land use and transport planning in determining health outcomes. There are extensive, well-documented benefits of more people walking and cycling, more often⁸⁶. Regular physical activity can help to prevent and manage over 20 chronic conditions and diseases⁸⁷. Furthermore, according to evidence from Public Health England, people who are inactive have three times the rate of moderate to severe depression of active people⁸⁸. The importance of reducing pollution from transport to improve air quality is also well documented.

Creating pleasant, attractive and safe street environments within our towns and cities improves health and wellbeing, as does ensuring residents can access work, learning, leisure and social opportunities as well as health care settings.

In relation to transport, features of a healthy town might include:

- more space for walking and cycling, as well as steps to ensure these options are seen as safe and appealing
- the creation of inviting public spaces where people want to linger and interact
- support for transport options that reduce noise and air pollution
- affordable public transport that enables access to opportunities
- healthcare settings within easy reach of where people live

CASE STUDIES

Healthy New Towns

NHS England is supporting the creation of ten 'Healthy New Towns' across the country, covering more than 76,000 new homes with potential capacity for around 170,000 residents. Working with housing developers, the NHS will shape the way these sites are delivered and test ways in which they can be designed to promote good health.

The NHS sees this as an "opportunity to *'design out' the obesogenic environment, and 'design in' health and wellbeing*"⁸⁹

Options to be considered and potentially tested in the demonstrator towns include⁹⁰:

- building dementia friendly streets
- designing 'adventure areas' into streets to encourage walking and play
- safe walking and cycling routes
- green corridors into town centres to improve air quality and encourage walking and cycling
- one stop centres including sports facilities, community space, GP and primary care services

Transport for London Healthy Streets

Central to the London Mayor’s Transport Strategy is the ‘Healthy Streets’ approach, which is just as applicable to a small town as it is to a global city. The approach gives a framework for urban transport planning which puts people and their health first. It uses ten evidence based indicators, shown in the diagram below,⁹¹ to demonstrate what a Healthy Street should look and feel like from the perspective of people using it.

Transport for London has produced a number of tools and guidance documents⁹² to support the application of the Healthy Streets approach which has generated interest from towns and cities around the world.



Image source: Transport for London

OPTIMISING CAPITAL INVESTMENT IN STEEL AND CONCRETE

10

Investing in new transport infrastructure (such as a new interchange) as a standalone project is unlikely to bring about transformative change by itself. Instead, capital investment should be considered as part of wider long term and cross-cutting strategies to maximise benefits.

This can include complementary transport revenue spending measures such as:

- Targeted fares initiatives so that key user groups can use the services the new infrastructure supports.
- Promotion of the use of the infrastructure through marketing campaigns, travel training and confidence building measures for key groups of users and potential users.
- The opportunities for service reorganisation or improvements that the infrastructure might provide a trigger for.

Cross cutting strategies can also involve collaboration between the public and private sectors, including in relation to:

- Location decisions by public and private sector bodies.
- Land reclamation and creation of development sites.
- How the new infrastructure relates to, or symbolises, long term strategies for promoting tourism and inward investment as well as its role within longer term economic, housing and land use development plans.
- Boosting local supply chains and employment by engaging local companies in the construction process and boosting local skills.
- Being a good employer (both in terms of wages and developing skills) of local people in the operation of the infrastructure once built.
- Looking for opportunities for community involvement in the design detail of the infrastructure and opportunities for the new infrastructure to provide a resource for local communities and entrepreneurs (be it new pocket parks or cheap room space).

CASE STUDIES

Nexus – investing in infrastructure and in skills

Nexus, the Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive, has begun construction of an £8.4m Nexus Learning Centre in South Shields town centre⁹³. The centre will provide a bespoke facility to deliver a wide range of rail infrastructure and operations training for its staff as well as boosting skills and access to jobs for the local community. As well as training Nexus staff, the centre will host apprenticeships for local people.

The learning opportunities at the centre underpin the ongoing development of, and capital investment in, the Tyne and Wear Metro. The new facility will include a 70 metre stretch of track and a new Metro driver training simulator to prepare for the delivery of new Metros from 2021.

The site is designed to dovetail with the ongoing regeneration of South Shields town centre, including a new Metro and bus interchange.



Image source: Nexus

Building confidence in using public transport in Lancashire

Through activities that build confidence and understanding, Community Rail Lancashire's Railway Confidence Programme has engaged with more than 150 young people with learning needs and disabilities⁹⁴. The project enables young people to travel using rail in a safe and comfortable way, giving them lifelong skills and a significant range of positive experiences.

It also opens up opportunities to access education, leisure, employment and healthcare. A useful guide has been produced with advice for teachers and the rail industry on the programme and how it works⁹⁵.

Heerlen – coal field community transformation

Heerlen is a small city in south east Holland and a former coal mining area. With a population of around 220,000 it is roughly the size of a large town such as Rotherham. Its station was renovated in 2016 as part of a wider transformation of the local area, to create a 'miniature city-within-a-city'⁹⁶ called 'Maankwartier'. Maankwartier is the newly-created area around Heerlen's bus and train station which is also *'a work of art, and a place where people can work, live and enjoy themselves'*⁹⁷.

Maankwartier connects the north and south sides of the city (which were previously divided by the railway track). The area was conceived as a large-scale art work consisting of new housing, offices, shops and public spaces characterised by *'high arches, intimate streets, grand stairs and meeting squares'*⁹⁸. Designed by Heerlen artist, Michel Huisman, it also contains 89 smaller artworks.



Borders Railway – more than a line reopening

The opening of the Borders Railway (a 35 mile railway which links Edinburgh, Midlothian and the Scottish Borders, including a number of towns along the route) was more than just a transport and engineering project. Arguably, in a more comprehensive way than any previous line reopening, it was fully integrated into a long term multi-agency strategy – The Borders Railway Blueprint⁹⁹ – for revitalising the areas it serves.

This strategy is jointly owned by national bodies like Transport Scotland, ScotRail, Network Rail, Scotland Enterprise and Visit Scotland as well as local councils. Significant Scottish Government funding was also put behind it. The strategy is centred around three ways in which the railway could help support Borders communities in being:

- Great Locations for Working and Investing
- Great Communities for Living and Working
- Great Destinations to Visit

Practical initiatives to emerge included using former station buildings as local business hubs, developing industrial estates and setting up a Borders Railway Investment Fund to support local business investment. These initiatives also formed part of development plans and new planning masterplans for the main towns on the route. The coming of the railway also gave the opportunity to invest in new hubs for bus services as well as improved walking and cycling routes and better signage. A coordinated tourism promotion campaign was also launched.

Impacts of the coordinated approach include:

- New businesses and business expansions around the railway stations on the route. Tempest Brewing moved to the industrial estate developed around the new Tweedbank station, motivated by ease of access for its staff from Edinburgh and surrounding areas¹⁰⁰.
- Significant increases in tourism directly attributed to the opening of the Borders Railway, including 27% rise in visitor days in hotels and B&Bs; 16% rise in visitor spend; and 8% rise in tourism related employment¹⁰².
- 74% increase in external applications to Borders College thanks to improved access facilitated by the railway. At least 66% of the College's students use the railway¹⁰³.

The Borders Railway is a prime example of a wider approach to rail in Scotland where ScotRail's objectives are specifically linked to wider national Scottish Government priorities which are:

- A wealthier, fairer Scotland
- A smarter Scotland
- A healthier Scotland
- A safer, stronger Scotland
- A greener Scotland



Image Source: ScotRail

ScotRail initiatives which aim to contribute to these objectives include:

- Redeveloping stations as gateways with new business and community facilities.
- Working with Scotland's Towns Partnership on a local stations strategy to assist town centre investment.
- Partnerships with Homes for Scotland to support first time buyer schemes – includes a free monthly season ticket.
- Employing a Head of Economic Development to identify and deliver projects that support community regeneration.
- Providing grants for start-up businesses to refurbish unused station buildings for premises, plus mentoring from expert ScotRail commercial staff.
- Making station land available for local events and farmers' markets.

As part of this approach ScotRail is also a key partner of the Scotland Towns Partnership, an umbrella organisation for the towns of Scotland. The Partnership produce an excellent Town Centre Toolkit¹⁰⁴ with a raft of ideas and examples for improving the vitality and viability of town centres.

THRIVING TOWNS THROUGH TRANSPORT – IDEAS, QUESTIONS AND POINTERS

As this report shows there are many positive examples of how transport initiatives can help towns maximise their potential and change for the better.

In this section of the report we set out some ideas, questions and pointers designed to help those involved in thinking about what transport policies and programmes might work best in helping a town to thrive.

Vision, leadership and governance

- If a city region or a sub region is a jigsaw, what piece of the jigsaw is this town? How does it fit in with wider labour and housing markets, and how and what role could it play?
- How can efforts to improve transport for a town be made part of wider efforts with businesses; community groups; and public sector planning, economic development, skills and health sectors?
- There was a saying in the United States from the 1990s *“Transit goes from where people used to live, to where people used to work”*. Does this ring true? What shape of public transport network is needed for the town’s needs today both within the town and as part of the wider sub-region in which it sits? And how best might that service be provided?
- What are comparable towns with similar challenges to this town: in the UK, Europe and the United States? What can be learned from them?
- How is the town involving the local community in the way it develops? How is the town making space for, and encouraging, bottom up initiatives from community groups and local entrepreneurs?

Gateways, specialisms, identity and civic pride

- What is the first impression of this town when arriving by public transport or car? How can you make your town’s “guests” feel welcome on arrival, and make town centres attractive places to spend time (and money)?
- What makes this town unique? How can it reflect its heritage and past in a way that makes it interesting and relevant today?
- What plans are there to get activity in the town centre? What is the retail and services offer, cultural and entertainment facilities and other attractions? What reasons are there for people to come and visit this town? What work with different stakeholders is there on place-making?
- Is the public sector (including the health and education sectors) alive to the need to make decisions on locating facilities in accessible locations as well as realising opportunities to be part of wider regeneration opportunities around transport hubs?
- Where are rail stations, corridors and public transport interchanges in relation to potential opportunities for complementary housing and commercial developments? Is there dialogue between the rail industry, developers, local authorities and community groups to produce joined up “mini-development plans”?
- Is consideration being given to the town’s future relation to the car and its place in a sustainable transport system? How is the right balance to be struck on improving access to the town by road and how does that impact on the quality of the place itself in terms of its attraction as a destination? As part of this, is consideration being given to how technology will impact on people’s use of cars and how this fits with creating an attractive place to live and work?

Transport as a local anchor institution and exemplary employer

The transport sector needs to be an exemplary employer. Are you considering why your organisation is, or is not, one of the 3,500 accredited Living Wage Foundation employers in the UK?

- If relevant, what thought has been given to the potential for your organisation to be an anchor institution and how can its local spend in the town be increased?

Access to jobs

- How can the town be “open for business” with economic development sites ready to go, land reclaimed and assembled, and appropriate public transport services for workers up and running from day one?
- How can residents get easy access to job opportunities beyond the town?

Access to skills

- Is a Further Education College in, or being located to, the town centre? As well as the win of good public transport accessibility, this helps get activity in town centres.
- What are the best measures to ensure that access by public transport to educational and training opportunities is affordable?

Access to wider opportunities

- How well does the health sector engage on the decisions it takes on the location of healthcare facilities?
- How good is the local network of safe walking and cycling routes in order that people can access a town’s facilities and opportunities in a healthy and affordable way?

Opening up investment opportunities

- Is there a dialogue with the local business community to help understand how to attract investment, help get goods to markets, make business to business connections, plan last mile deliveries and support wider business needs?

Transport’s role in helping meet housing demand

- What steps are being taken to build new homes in the town centre and other accessible locations? Is upfront public sector investment happening to unlock private sector investment?
- Is there scope for higher density housing as part of station and interchange development?

Healthy towns

- What percentage of the town’s journeys are less than one mile and between one to two miles? What proportion of these could be made by walking and cycling? Is the “Healthy Streets” approach being implemented, with high quality local cycle networks?
- How accessible are healthcare settings to the town’s residents?

Optimising capital investment in steel and concrete with supporting measures

- Are capital investments in transport infrastructure being planned and developed as part of wider, longer term complementary strategies for unlocking development opportunities and boosting the local supply chain, skills base and employment levels?
- As well as capital investment, is the transport authority introducing supporting “Optimising Capital Investment Revenue Schemes” such as soft, revenue measures and engagement to help people overcome barriers to using new transport services?

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