ASSESSING THE "VALUE" OF NEW TRANSPORT INITIATIVES IN DEPRIVED NEIGHBOURHOODS IN THE UK

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ABSTRACT

Since 1996, there has been growing policy awareness in the UK of the links between transport and social exclusion. Research by the government's Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) has highlighted the fact that transport problems are often a major barrier to accessing work, healthcare, educational and other key facilities and has, therefore, become an increasingly important policy objective in moving people from welfare into work, addressing health inequalities, improving poor educational attainment and more generally promoting social exclusion and neighbourhood renewal. The SEU study puts in place a cross-departmental strategy to address these issues through a new local framework entitled Accessibility Planning, which is to be delivered by local transport planning authorities and their partners through the next round of Local Transport Plans.

However, there has been little, if any, qualitative or quantitative analysis and evaluation of the contribution of new transport interventions in deprived areas. As such very little is known about whether they are facilitating increased economic and social participation for the individuals who use them. It is equally unclear if they have any positive impact on the wider process of regeneration in the neighbourhoods they serve. Anecdotal evidence suggests that they are assisting transitions from welfare into work, as well facilitating other important activities, such as health visits, educational attendance and leisure and social activities.

The current funding and subsidy arrangements for transport initiatives specifically designed to support social inclusion are minimal at best and often non-existent. This paper describes case study research of four different transport projects that were funded under the UK Department for Transport's now obsolete Urban Bus Challenge Fund. It aims to qualitatively and quantitatively evaluate their value to passengers in terms of quality of life benefits and also to identify their wider value to the local practitioners charged with the regeneration of the deprived areas they serve. On the basis of this evidence study aims to offer recommendations to central and local government on how such initiatives can be better supported in the future. Its key objectives are:

- To identify the changes in travel behaviour and accessibility that have been brought about through the introduction of transport interventions within deprived and disadvantaged communities;

- To explore the perceptions of local people in relation to these new services and with the broader aim of identifying the impact of these on the quality of life of the people who use them;
- To explore the views of local practitioners regarding the contribution of such projects to the wider process of neighbourhood renewal in these areas;
- To offer recommendations to central and local government on how such schemes can be better supported in the context of policies for neighbourhood renewal and the new requirements for accessibility planning in the 2006 Local Transport Plans.

The research is funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, a UK-based poverty campaign organisation that aims to raise awareness of the needs of people living in poor neighbourhoods across the UK.

INTRODUCTION

Since 1996, there has been growing policy awareness in the UK of the links between transport and social exclusion. This is generally seen in the context of increasing levels of car dependence across the general population, at the expense of those who do not have access to a car and must rely on lifts from friends and family or less reliable and usually much slower modes.

In 2005, the UK National Travel Survey (DfT, 2006) demonstrated that 64% of all trips in the UK were made by car and travel by car accounted for 61% of all time spent travelling. However, approximately one in four households still do not have regular access to a car. These households are overwhelmingly concentrated in the lowest income quintile of the population, with less than half (47 per cent) owning cars; although car ownership among this sector of the population is increasing more rapidly year on year than for the other income sectors. Between 1995/7 and 2005 car ownership amongst the lowest income households increased from 34 to 47 percent. This trend of increasing car ownership even amongst the lowest income groups could be seen as an indication of the basic social and economic need to own and use cars in a highly mobile and affluent society such as the UK (Lucas, 2004).

The last decade has witnessed a dramatic decline in public transport services outside of London, with lower frequency and reliability levels, in many areas of the UK and this has had a particularly pronounced impact on low income households (Donald and Pickup, 1991). Over 80% of bus services in England (outside London) are now run on a commercial basis by private operators within the UK deregulated market context (DfT, 2004a). Since the introduction of a deregulated market in local public transport in 1986, many of the services that are not commercially viable have been cut. Fare levels have also been increasing at a greater rate than motoring costs (Lucas et al, 2001). These factors have been compounded by many entry-level jobs and key activity locations, such as hospitals, colleges and shopping and leisure centres being developed in suburban areas, which are not well-served by public transport. In addition, many low paid jobs involve working hours that make access difficult by any means other than the car.

In 2005, people in the highest income quintile made 30 percent more trips overall than, and travelled three times as far as, those in the lowest income quintile. The number of trips made and distances travelled are strongly correlated with car availability; adults in households with two or more cars travelled over three times as far as adults in households without a car, and nearly one and a half times as far as adults in households with only one car (DfT, 2006). It can also be noted that people using modes other than the car generally spend twice as long to

travel the same distance. This suggests that a significant proportion of people living on low incomes in the UK are finding it increasingly necessary to own and drive cars to maintain a basic lifestyle, whilst those who do not have access to cars may be excluded from fully participating in the everyday activities the majority take for granted.

BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

In recognition of the growing relevance of transport to people living on low incomes, in 1999, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation funded a scoping study to explore of the impact of 'transport poverty' on the daily lives of people experiencing or at risk of social exclusion (Lucas et al, 2001). Up until this point, there had been very little research into the links between transport and social exclusion. The main finding of this study was that transport policies and programmes in the UK were failing to meet the basic accessibility needs of a significant proportion of already disadvantaged people and communities and, thus, acting as a barrier to their social inclusion. In addition, the study highlighted the fact that transport had not yet been addressed by the Social Exclusion Unit, despite the fact that a 1998 SEU report had identified poor transport links as a problem for some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in Britain (SEU, 1998).

Partly in response to this and other studies (e.g. Church and Frost, 1999; TraC, 2000; Gaffron et al, 2001), in 2002, the Prime Minister directed the SEU to undertake a study to make evident the links between transport and social exclusion and to integrate transport and social inclusion policy across government. The 2003 Social Exclusion Unit's final report "Making the connections: transport and social exclusion" (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2003) concluded that transport was indeed a significant contributing factor in the exclusion of many low-income groups and communities.

The study identified lack of transport as a significant barrier to the take-up of employment for many job seekers and that it is also linked with low participation in post-16 education and college dropouts. It found that getting to hospital is particularly difficult for people who have to rely on public transport, leading to failed health appointments and associated delays in medical intervention. The problem is particularly acute in rural areas but is also prevalent in the urban periphery on low income estates. The study also (unsurprisingly) found that the most significant difference in people's ability to participate was based on car availability within households, i.e. non-car drivers in low income households found it more difficult to access key services than their car owning counterparts across all areas of the UK.

The SEU study set in motion a new cross-departmental policy framework called accessibility planning, which it recommended should become central to the transport planning process over the next five years. The method should ensure that all groups in society, but particularly those who are already economically and socially disadvantaged, are treated fairly in future service planning and delivery and that spending decisions should be more focused on the accessibility needs of people than the operational management of modes and vehicles.

FROM POLICY INTO PRACTICE

Numerous transport initiatives with the explicit or implicit aim to address socially exclusion are already in place within many deprived areas. Most of these have been funded through targeted Government grants such as Rural and Urban Bus Challenges, Single Regeneration Budget, New Deal for Communities and Neighbourhood Renewal Funds in the recognition by practitioners that improved transport links can significantly contribute to the neighbourhood

renewal process. The Department for Transport is expected to publish a good practice guide to accessibility planning in 2007, which will highlight a number of examples.

However, there has been little if any direct evaluation of the contribution of such initiatives to either the increased participation of individuals who use them or to the wider renewal of the areas in which they serve. Recent case study research carried out in the UK as part of an international study into the role of transport in moving people from welfare to work (Lucas and Tyler, 2006) suggests that some targeted transport initiatives have been successful in enabling people to access new employment opportunities. In addition, they are often facilitating other important activities, such as health visits, educational attendance and leisure and social activities.

The study also highlighted that despite successes in enabling job access and therefore meeting the objectives of government employment agencies, very few of these agencies either locally or nationally were contributing to the set-up or operating costs of these transport services. Most were therefore largely dependent on transport-related funding streams, many of which were only available to support their initial set up in the short term and many initiatives have now been discontinued due to the lack of continued funding to subsidise their ongoing running costs. For example, the Rural and Urban Bus Challenge programmes were suspended in 2003 and the replacement "Kickstart" programme was also discontinued in 2005.

The problem appears to be three-fold:

- Current evaluations (both within and outside the transport sector) fail to capture the non-transport benefits and value of such schemes to non-transport related outcomes;
- The value of these services to both the end users of these services and local practitioners promoting their social inclusion are not being articulated to key decision-makers within central government;
- As a consequence, policy and decision-makers within central government do not fully understand the wider implications of their short-term approach to funding and its potential to undermine their policy aims for social inclusion.

Capturing the social benefits of transport

The commonly applied method for calculating the benefits of a transport project is cost benefit analysis (CBA). This involves attributing an economic value to all the resources committed to a project and comparing these to the economic benefits that will accrue from the project over its lifetime. According to Root (2003), CBAs generally involve making a number of often quite flawed assumptions. For example, one key assumption is that it is possible to define the key impacts over time and, in particular, the parties that will be affected by project. However, there are no hard and fast rules where the geographical boundaries for these impacts should be drawn, particularly when it comes to those relating to the environment or on future generations.

One further assumption is that the user benefits from a scheme can defined in terms of journey time savings. There are a number of problems with this approach when considering transport projects in deprived areas. First, journey time savings take no account of suppressed demand, which mean that certain journeys may not be being made at all due to the lack of a viable transport service. Second, they do not allow for the benefits of extending service hours (e.g. to meet early and late shift times) to be calculated.

Third, even when journey time savings could be calculated, e.g. for fixed route bus services, they are often not the main policy priority for initiating a project; enabling access to a greater number key facilities, meeting the needs of different parts of the community and keeping fare levels down are all usually much higher on the list of priorities. The post-hoc evaluation of the social benefits of transport projects has also been patchy. This is largely because each funding source has had its own, and very often highly differing, evaluation protocol and criteria and in the instance of Rural Bus Challenge there has been no evaluation at all of funded schemes.

The projects themselves are also wide ranging in both their objectives and design, ranging from traditional fixed route bus services to flexible and demand responsive transport, travel training and advice schemes, motorbike and car loans and even driving lessons. As such, it is difficult to comprehensively assess the contribution of these projects to the renewal process in the areas they serve or, perhaps more importantly, to the social inclusion and improved quality of life of the people who use them. For this reason, attempts to quantify and monetarize the more readily available qualitative evidence of their value to communities is considered an essential aspect of current research practice.

Articulating the value of transport to non-transport professionals

It is largely because of the way in which the benefits new transport projects are calculated that it has been so difficult to communicate to policy makers outside of the transport world that, if properly targeted and supported, these projects can have a significant impact in delivering wider social policy goals. These include improving employment take-up or reducing school truancies or preventing missed health appointments or simply improving people's quality of life. The value of transport service to policy makers from outside the transport sector was explored in the piloting research that informed the development of the Department for Transport Accessibility Planning Guidance for Local Transport Authorities (Department for Transport, 2004b; Lucas, 2006). The pilot studies demonstrated that while the benefits of improved accessibility were evident from project evaluations, transport planners were finding it difficult to engage decision-makers in other key delivery sectors and convincing them of the value of accessibility planning in the context of their own delivery agendas.

Even amongst highly supportive organisations, cross-sector working was perceived as threatening to established administrative structures, or simply a lower priority. The study recommended that over-reliance on transport authorities to deliver solutions to the problems of poor accessibility in low-income areas would be problematic. This is because of the shift away from the public subsidy of public transport by Government but also because the root cause of the problem often lies in the poor location decisions and delivery patterns of other public sector services.

Implications of current funding arrangements

The majority of transport schemes addressing social exclusion have been funded via a small number of specific programmes focusing either on neighbourhood renewal or the introduction of new transport services. These include the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, Single Regeneration Budget, Rural and Urban Bus Challenges. In the majority of cases, the lifetime of the funding has only been for three or four years. Thereafter, successful schemes are forced to look elsewhere for funding.

The assumption on the part of Government appears to be that after an initial pump-priming period these projects will become financially self-supporting. However, a previous study by

the authors (Lucas and Tyler, 2006) suggests that due to a variety of reasons, including operating times and other operational issues, fare structures, passenger densities and the location of facilities, this is rarely the case and unlikely to become so.

Indeed, past experience has regularly demonstrated that once the funding period is over many schemes are terminated or seriously downsized to the point where they are no longer adequately serving their original intended function. This not only has a huge negative impact on the lives of the people who rely on them to access work, school, college, hospital and other activities, but can also undermine the wider regenerative aspirations of the areas they serve, not least, by adding to the widely held belief of local people that government has once more failed to respond appropriately to their needs. The problem has been further exacerbated because funding from other agencies is also being withdrawn. For example, the Jobcentre Plus Transport Project Fund was discontinued in 2005 and funding for transport from the NHS at a local level has also not been forthcoming due to the more general financial problems of NHS delivery and reorganisation over last few years.

Our research, as described by this paper, has been funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to further the policy debate surrounding the contribution of transport initiatives to social inclusion and regeneration in deprived areas of the UK.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

The study set out to make evident the wider benefits and value of transport projects in deprived and disadvantaged communities to end-users and practitioners, in order to raise the profile of such schemes within the national and local policy context. Its objectives are to:

- Identify the changes in travel behaviour and accessibility that have been brought about through the introduction of transport interventions within deprived and disadvantaged communities;
- Explore the perceptions of local people in relation to these new services and with the broader aim of identifying the impact of these on the quality of life of the people who use them;
- Explore the views of local practitioners regarding the contribution of such projects to the wider process of neighbourhood renewal in these areas;
- Offer recommendations to central and local government on how such schemes can be better supported in the context of policies for neighbourhood renewal and the new requirements for accessibility planning in the 2006/7 – 2010/11 Local Transport Plans.

The study adopted a case study approach, identifying four new transport initiatives that have been established in different parts of the UK over the past 2-5 years upon which to centre our fieldwork surveys. Although the primary focus of the research was the collection and analysis of qualitative data, this was supplemented with quantitative information about overall levels of patronage, running costs and revenue where possible in order to allow both monetary and non-monetary evaluations. The four case studies were:

- The Braunstone Bus, Leicester – a fixed route service connecting an outlying housing estate with the city centre and key employment sites and facilities in the urban periphery.

- The Trevithick Urban Link, Cornwall – a fixed route service connecting a number of rural conurbations with new industrial site based employment and extending the services to cover shift work patterns.
- The Walsall Workwise initiative, West Midlands – a project to assist people with their travel costs in the first weeks of new employment or for interviews and providing travel advice.
- The Wythenshaw Local Link, Manchester – a flexibly routed minibus service that takes local people to key destinations in the local and wider area using a booking system.

Whilst the main intention of this study has been to give 'a voice' to the people who use these projects, it was clearly impossible to interview every client. For this reason, it was felt important to augment the interview data with information about the overall numbers of people using the service and their reasons, in order to make inferences about the overall 'value' of such projects. This was achieve by undertaking supporting postal, telephone or on-bus surveys with a representative sample of all users of each service. The research was designed to build upon and compliment our earlier studies of this topic (Lucas et al, 2001; Lucas and Tyler, 2006) and other relevant past and ongoing studies. It involved six key stages; a review of the grey policy literature, case study identification and selection; interviews with key professional stakeholders; service user surveys; in-depth interviews with a sub-sample of those surveyed; data analysis and 'value' assessments (in progress).

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The following sections of the paper identify some of our key initial findings from the research, although analysis is still ongoing at the present time.

Profile of service users

Based on the on-board vehicle, telephone and postal surveys we undertook as part of the research, it can be seen that the overwhelming majority of users did not have access to a car within their households and that most were heavily reliant on the bus services being provided through these initiatives. In the case of the Walsall Workwise it should be noted that frequency of use of the free travel advice and travel card was most often on a single occasion e.g. to job interview due to the nature of the project. The majority (47%) stated that they had only used the service once, 23% had used the service twice and 9% used the service three times. In contrast, 19% had used the service 'four or more times'.

Table 1: Profile of service users based on study surveys

	Braunstone	Trevithick	Walsall	Wythenshawe
Total surveyed	511	149	159	180
% of average patronage	10% of average weekly patronage	15% of average weekly patronage	14% of all registered users since 2004	24% of all users July 06 – Jan 07
Registered unemployed	15%	9%	25%	0.6%
In receipt of benefits	41%	21%	55%	49%
66 years and over	11%	23%	0.6%	51%
Lone parents	18%	1%	15%	7%
Ethnic minority	12%	5%	21%	8%
Women	68%	62%	44%	86%
No car	80%	66%	74%	82%
Use at least once a week	86%	96%	n/a	79%

It can be noted from the above table that a significantly greater number of women than men tend to be the users of these services (for all but the Walsall Workwise initiative) and that a large proportion of service users are in receipt of welfare benefits. It can be seen that most are catering for a relatively small number of ethnic minority users, although this is in part reflected in the population profiles of the areas served by these buses. The Wythenshawe flexi-bus service attracts a high percentage of over 65 year olds, which is largely a reflection of its door-to-door provision in contrast to both the Braunstone Bus and the Trevithick Link services which are fixed route and thus require walking access and egress. Quite a significant minority of users of both the Braunstone and Walsall initiatives are single parents.

Overall use of the services

Each of the four initiatives is quite different in character and also project intention. For example the Braunstone Bus was designed to provide a generalised public transport service around the estate and connect it with key employment sites and other service activities in the wider area. Similarly, the Trevithick Link was intended as an extension to existing public transport network and was specifically routed to link job seekers with new job opportunities in previously inaccessible locations. Both of these services are run under contract with a local private operator as a socially necessary tendered service.

Conversely, the Walsall Workwise initiative does not provide people with any actual transport service but rather offers journey planning advice and assistance with the cost of travel to job interviews and for the first two months of taking up new employment, while the Wythenshawe flexi-bus focuses on both access to employment and healthcare services using a small intra-estate, door-to-door minibus service. For this reason, it is of little value to compare or evaluate these initiatives much further in contrast to each other. Rather, through face-to-face interviews with both service users and the initiators and providers of these services we aimed to capture their intrinsic value to the communities they served as well as their wider contribution to social inclusion and neighbourhood renewal through increased access to employment, healthcare, education services and shopping and other service facilities. Below is a summary of our key findings in relation to each service.

The Braunstone Bus

The results of the on-board survey demonstrated that the Braunstone bus is being used for a whole range of journey purposes. The most frequently stated journey purpose was shopping (56%), with leisure and social activities coming second (34%); work and training third (30%); health care visits fourth (23%) and school and college trips fifth (15%). Whilst all these journey purposes were considered important for the purposes of social inclusion, the in depth interviews revealed how the bus was absolutely essential for many respondents when it came to trips to the two city hospitals and to enable family members to care for elderly relatives. Without the bus, an expensive taxi ride was usually the only viable alternative.

The bus has contributed in terms of take-up of employment. Nearly a third of respondents in our bus survey used the bus to get to work or training. Journeys for work purposes, whilst not the most frequently made, were also significant. A third of the survey respondents used the bus to get to work. Nearly a half of those reported that without the Braunstone Bus, they would have to take two or more buses with the associated increases in journey time and ticket costs. The bus was the main form of transport for most respondents and the overwhelming majority (three-quarters) of respondents were non car owners. Most people were using it between 3 and 7 days a week. Of the survey respondents, those that indicated strongly that the Braunstone bus was of value to them tended to be those on benefit, who couldn't drive and didn't have access to a car.

The most frequent journey purpose in the survey was shopping, with leisure and social activities coming second. The in-depth interviews also highlighted the value of these trips, in terms of residents being able to access lower cost supermarkets. However, what emerged very strongly from in the interviews was the sense in which the bus brought more indirect benefits. For example, elderly residents were able to get out of the house and parents with children were able to visit family and friends. As one local resident noted:

> "Bus services are essential and sometimes you're even running at a loss, obviously you can't 'ave every trade or bus service running at a loss but they are essential to people's welfare, mode of travel. Especially the 302, yes especially pensioners and people with children it's invaluable". Single, White British, Male, Aged 66+. Retired

Generally, the Braunstone bus has helped to raise local expectations and opened up new opportunities to residents. Braunstone residents also felt that the bus had helped to make Braunstone a better place to live, increasing a sense of community and helping to reduce the feeling of isolation from the rest of Leicester. They identified a sense of pride of ownership of the service, something they could look to as wider criteria for the growing success and economic buoyancy of the area. Both survey respondents and interviewees highlighted how their needs could not be met by alternative bus services, due to cost, distance to bus stops and lack of direct services to key facilities.

Despite considerable efforts by the BCA to optimise the route in order to serve as many local facilities as possible and to operate at times that match the opening hours at these facilities, the service is not yet fully commercial (although it is at some times of the day) and is unlikely to become so. Although not fully commercial the service is running at a much lower per passenger subsidy than other socially necessary subsidised services in Leicester. However, efforts to reduce the level of subsidy to the service to make it more commercial over time

have resulted in a significantly poorer service in terms of both coverage and frequency, which has in turn reduced the viability of the route.

Trevithick Link

For the majority of those using the Trevithick Link, the bus is their main mode of transport, with 66% of the survey respondents not having access to a car. The Trevithick Link is being used for a wide variety of purposes. The most frequently stated journey purpose, was shopping (49%), work and training coming second (45%); with leisure and social activities third (35%); health care visits fourth (11%) and school and college trips fifth (7%). Of the sixteen survey respondents that stated that their primary use of the Trevithick Link was to access healthcare, 62% stated that they wouldn't be able to access healthcare without the bus. Furthermore, 17% of the total sample said they wouldn't be able to access healthcare without the Link service.

Whilst the interviewees highlighted the relative scarcity of jobs locally, what jobs there are could often only be accessed by the Trevithick Link, whether because of the design its route or the early and late timetable. A key function of the service, therefore, has been to open up new employment opportunities to local residents and thus encourage people from welfare into work.

> "Well no buses go up that way to work at that time of the morning, you're the only early ones really to go that way to get us to work at six in the morning…. And there is no alternative mode of transport. Used the taxi when, before the T20s used to go Roach's past Roach Foods. I used to have to walk up there took about half an hour, three-quarters of an hour." In a couple, White British, Female, aged 36-45. Employed.

The service has helped the local Action Team for Jobs and CPR Regeneration , the local regeneration company to become more aware that there are transport and access barriers to job take-up and the continued economic vitality of the area.

Nearly half of passengers (42%) use the service five or more times a week and 88% use it at least twice a week. When compared to other local bus services the Trevithick Link is considered cheaper, quicker, more convenient, reliable and clean and less overcrowded. The in-depth interviews demonstrated how the Trevithick Link has been successful in providing a direct service to supermarkets, enabling trips that otherwise might involve a taxi at considerable extra cost. Whilst the survey revealed a large number of trips being made to the leisure centre, journeys to visit family and friends or to attend after school activities were more often mentioned by the interviewees.

The service is perceived to offer better value than other alternative services in the area. It serves more areas than the other services and is the only bus running at certain times in the morning.

> "I'd get a taxi, it would cost a bob too. Sometimes you pay nine, nine to twelve quid." Single, White British, Male, aged 36-45. Employed.

Interviewees highlighted how they would not be able to access important employment sites or shopping facilities without it and, as with the Braunstone Bus, there was an important sense of community ownership about the service. The Trevithick Link is generally considered to be an asset to the community and something 'belonging to them'. This is part of its success. The majority of the stakeholders talked about how successful the service has been in terms of encouraging the local regeneration of the area. Improved access to employment is reportedly seen as a benefit by new employers moving into the area. Because the Trevithick Link is viewed by local policymakers and practitioners as something positive to the area, local authority officers are highlighting it as important factor in their development plans. This will help to ensure the future security of the existing service and build up a more comprehensive public transport network in the area over time.

If withdrawn now, people felt there would be various negative impacts ranging from having to walk long distances and using more expensive taxi services. Interviewees also felt that people, especially those that do not own a car and the elderly, would lose their independence without the service, as they have to rely on other people to give them a lift. Its withdrawal is unlikely, however, because if it is seen to be valuable over time, it will come under review for mainstream support from Cornwall County Council. Innovatively, the County's criteria for assessing this not only includes consideration of total patronage and cost per journey, but also an indicator of "social needs met".

Walsall Workwise

There was consensus amongst the professional stakeholders we interviewed that the key barriers to work in Walsall are cultural and educational, leading to low aspirations and in some cases generations who are not in work. However, the cost of transport, low travel horizons and lack of travel skills and personal confidence were also highlighted. Beneficiaries of the Workwise initiative broadly agreed with this professional assessment, identifying the main barriers for people getting to work in Walsall as the fear of travelling outside the immediate area, the cost pressures of travelling and wider cultural and personal confidence issues.

The postal survey found that the overwhelming majority of Workwise clients (86%) used the scheme solely for the travel card (an additional 6% used it for both the travel card and information service) and 45% of respondents used it for the full 8 week period. Whilst survey respondents and interviewees were generally very satisfied with the scheme, it was suggested that more should be done to make it more widely publicised, particularly to ensure that potential clients heard about it before they started work. The survey also demonstrated how a significant number of respondents were only able to maintain a new job with due to the financial support that Workwise provided. This was also underlined by the interviewees.

> "Yes I think it does really help and obviously from the people who have been out of work for quite a while… they're probably thinking oh God they're going back to work and they have all the stress and if they're not obviously something is pushing forward and motivating them, if the travel cost is OK they need help, they need help!" Single, British Asian, Female, aged 16-25. In college/training.

With the perception that it was difficult to get a good job locally, the scheme had often assisted clients to widen their job search area and their employment horizons more generally.

The survey demonstrated that 30% of the respondents were able to keep their job because they had help with the travel cost of getting to work and a further 6% were able get a job and keep their job. This indicates that there is a proportion of people in Walsall who are in need of financial support with their travel costs but, without Workwise, are unable to obtain it. By dissolving the barriers that are created by lack of information about travel options and alleviating the cost of travel to job interview and to work in the initial months of a person's employment, Workwise has also inadvertently helped to solve problems that are non-transport related – getting people into training, changing the culture of Walsall, both in terms of only doing things locally and of believing that it is not necessary to work.

In some cases, Workwise had also enabled clients to remain in work longer and therefore be better positioned to move on to a better job. Amongst both the survey respondents and the interviewees, there was a feeling that Workwise provided much more than just travel cards and travel information; it linked into other services and helped those return to work do so with confidence.

> "Well it didn't change my life it just helped me and it's, it's a well best service"
> Single, White British, Female, aged 46-55. Employed.

Faced with the scenario of Workwise not being available, the survey respondents reported a number of different impacts, ranging from finding the money from elsewhere (mostly involving borrowing), working more locally or simply struggling financially. However, there was a strong indication that more generally improving the public transport network in the area, both in terms of extending the timetables and addressing reliability was an important factor in enabling Workwise to operate more successfully. Although the Jobcentre has an Advisory Discretionary Fund to help support people when they start work it cannot be used to pay for bus fares for those that have already got a job, conversely, Workwise can only help people with travel fares if they have only been in work for a week or less. This means that there is a very small window in which prospective clients can successfully access its services.

Wythenshawe Local Link (Flexibus)

Of the 180 people who participated in our telephone survey, 37% primarily used the service for getting to and from work; 17% use it to travel to and from the leisure centre and other social activities; 14% visit friends and family; 12% use the service for food shopping and a further 6% for non-food shopping; 5% to access education/study; 4% travel to a place of worship; 4% travel to healthcare facilities; 2% travel to the doctors and 1 person uses it to take their child to the nursery.

Over a quarter said that they would not have been able to make the trip without the flexi-bus service and the remainder said that they would have made the trip either by public transport or taxi, but that it would take them considerably longer to get there and/or cost more. In many instances, this would reduce their overall level of travel. Of these 65% said they would not be able to access work or training and 23% said that they would not be able to access healthcare services. These were the two of the primary instigators for initiating the service in the first place.

The survey identified that the majority of respondents tend to use the service '2 to 4 times a week'.

> "I get the Local Link everywhere I go now. Doing shopping, going to the doctor's, going to the 'ospital, going to see people, friends and neighbours. I liked the idea so I've been going on it two years now." In a couple, Mixed Race, Male, aged 46-55. Registered unemployed.

There was recognisable division of use between economically active and economically inactive passengers. Economically active passengers primarily used the service to get to work but tended not use it for any other journey purposes. These passengers represented approximately a third of our survey sample. Economically inactive users (59% of all those surveyed), most of whom were retired, primarily used the service for shopping trips, social and leisure activities and getting to the doctor or hospital.

Generally, people are happy with the service itself, although there were some complaints about late collections and over-long journey times due to poor routing.

> "Because there isn't a bus for instance on a Sunday I could, I start at seven o'clock on a Sunday and if I'm on an early or a long day on Sunday, I can't get a bus to take me to work. Yes, yes it serves the time yes, it serves the purpose and that's what we need and the beauty that it comes to your door and it collects you." Single, Black British, Female, aged 56-65. Employed.

The most commented upon positive aspect of the service was the drivers, who were seen to be friendly and helpful. People liked the fact that that they saw the same drivers on a regular basis and said that this helped them feel safe using the service. There was a suggestion that ID badges would be a welcome addition when new drivers are being introduced.

On the downside, the majority of people we interviewed in both the telephone and face-to-face interviews registered that they were dissatisfied with the booking service. It was broadly recognised that this is partly due to the Local Link becoming a victim of its own success, in that many more people now know about and use the service. There were, however, a large number of complaints about the booking service, in terms of both the length of time in advance that is required to secure a booking (5-6 days) and the way in which the computer system places people on the service in terms of its routing. This was generally felt to be illogical and thus inefficient, resulting in buses running at less than capacity and unnecessarily long inconsequential trips. Part of the problem was seen as a lack of local knowledge within the call centre, which is located outside of the local area and does not employ local people who would be more familiar with the geography of the area.

In terms of GMPTE, the value of the Wythenshawe Local Link has been that it is able to provide a local bus service (albeit limited in its capacity and scope) in an area where more traditional transport has failed. This in itself is seen as a value, despite the relatively high subsidy cost of the service in comparison to fixed route services. For this reason, GMPTE is prepared to continue to pick up the subsidy costs from running the service as well as roll the model out to other deprived peripheral neighbourhoods around Manchester. Officers describe a 'moral' obligation in continuing to provide the service, in that, clearly people need transport and it is difficult to see what other service could be cheaper and as equally effective.

In terms of benefits to other sectors, it is clear that the Wythenshawe Link is ensuring that a large number of people requiring health interventions are getting to their hospital and primary

care appointments. A number of people in the telephone survey stated that they had been able to get a job or a better job as a result of the service.

There is, however, a general perception amongst both users and operators of the Wythenshawe Local Link that it suffers from trying to be all things to all people. Officers felt that it has largely failed to reach out to young people, who still perceive the service as a Dial-a-Ride service for older and disabled people. Some people who use the service to access work have registered frustration with its slow operating times and indirect flexible routing, whilst some of the older and disabled people using the service, who cannot use regular buses, feel that they should be given priority (or even sole) access.

'VALUING' THE BENEFITS OF THE FOUR INITIATIVES

There are a number of alternative ways to 'value' the overall benefits of transport projects that are specifically aimed at reducing social inclusion and supporting communities. These can be seen in terms of benefits to the individual in terms of improved accessibility to services, reduced travel costs and journey time savings or the suppressed journeys that the service has now allowed and would not have undertaken without it.

There are also wider benefits to the community that can be considered, although these are more difficult to accurately calculate and must be based on estimated figures of option values (i.e. the benefit to the local community of having the additional travel option of that service), which can be vital where no alternative form of transport is available.

There may also be additional social values attached to certain types of journeys, where these are considered to be of wider benefit to the UK economy, for example where someone has been able to take up work or keep a health appointment. The exact calculation of these benefits is even more uncertain and can only be hinted at within traditional cost benefit such as those recommended by the UK Department of Transport under its WebTag guidance (www.webtag.org.uk).

Finally, and even more difficult to attach a monetary value to, there are the quality of life benefits that accrue from the introduction of new transport services, such as reduced isolation, feelings of security and confidence raising that the users of the service described to us during their interviews. In some instances, although usually only with major infrastructure projects, there can be secondary neighbourhood effects, such as reduced incidence of crime, regeneration of the urban fabric and increased economic activity.

This final stage of the project is still in progress and as such it is not possible to produce any results at this time. On the basis of the completed analysis of our qualitative data, however, it is possible to assert that socially targeted transport projects such as the four we have studies are perceived as hugely beneficial to the people who use them. It is clear that where transport poverty is a key factor in a person's inability to fully participate in society, projects like these can make a significant contribution to their social inclusion and quality of life and in the case of major schemes, can also lead to wider neighbourhood regeneration benefits.

CONCLUSIONS

Clearly not everyone who experiences social exclusion has a transport problem and transport is not always the most important issue for people living in deprived neighbourhoods. Our study has not attempted to engage with the people who do not make use of these initiatives

(even if they may need to) because it is difficult to identify and track non-users through surveys we have undertaken. It is likely that the majority of people who have slipped through the net of these services do so because there are other more pressing reasons why they cannot take up employment or training, such as skills shortages, low wages, long-term illness, drug or alcohol addiction, etc. People who do not use the services may represent the majority of the population in many deprived areas.

Another question is whether those people that are most in transport need are getting to the activities they need for their social inclusion, e.g. our study has an urban focus – what about poor people in rural areas where their plight is often made worse by a general lack of local facilities? Is public transport the solution in these more isolated areas or do people need better access to cars, either through supported private ownership or membership of community-based car clubs?

Whatever the outcome of these wider philosophical debates, it is clear that public transport does and will continue to have a significant role to play in both the exclusion and inclusion of low-income individuals and communities. Our interviews with the local professional stakeholders charged with promoting the social inclusion of local people and regeneration of their neighbourhoods highlighted the fact that providing transport services alone cannot address the difficulties caused by a "workless" culture; this requires a number of different interventions.

However, transport is widely acknowledged as a key barrier to successfully enabling people to find a job or return to work. Providing information and support is seen as just as important as bus or other transport services. Providing links to key facilities and services, such as shopping and health facilities was also highlighted. In most cases, the services were filling gaps in the commercial bus network and helping to prevent communities being isolated. And yet, all the initiators of these projects identified either crises in future or at the very least difficulties with securing this year on year in the context of wider local transport provision in their areas, whilst simultaneously recognising that their withdrawal could have a hugely detrimental impact on not just the lives of local people, but on the prospects for neighbourhood renewal in the areas they serve.

If the UK Government (and other governments around the world experiencing similar transport trends) is serious about its commitment to improving the lives of people experiencing social exclusion through the improved public transport accessibility of deprived neighbourhoods it needs to wake up to these local difficulties and act quickly, before it is too late. A comprehensive national review of both the commercial and socially necessary bus provision is needed in these areas to clearly identify where there are shortfalls in existing services. A new local funding stream should then be identified to address these shortfalls in the next HM Treasury Spending Review and allocate this to the relevant transport authorities as an additional ring-fenced element in their Local Transport Plan allocation. In order to afford this new subsidy, the Treasury may need to reconsider the national framework for the provision of concessionary fares and school transport and redirect the focus of funding towards financially deprived individuals and households.

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