

## Chapter 7 Summary and Recommendations

As this report (and especially the “Best Practice” examples) has shown, a great deal of good work is already underway to improve accessibility in Tyne and Wear. This chapter outlines potential challenges to our accessibility agenda and suggests some possible solutions. Most of these rely on information-sharing, communication and enforcement rather than significant additional spending; however, as capital programmes are developed, it may be possible to fund more radical measures.

<b>CHALLENGES</b>	<b>SOLUTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>
<p><b>7.1 General Issues</b></p> <p><b>1)</b> Many schemes are not well-known outside their local area, which makes it difficult to pool information and to share good practice</p> <p><b>2)</b> There is a lack of ‘ownership’ for accessibility. It is not always easy to identify who, in the Plan Partners, is responsible for ensuring good accessibility to key services or for co-ordinating the different schemes</p> <p><b>3)</b> Central and local government policies are sometimes inimical to improving accessibility – for example, closure of local Post Offices or centralisation of hospital facilities</p>	<p>Establish a Tyne and Wear Accessibility website, to act as a knowledge base and a means of sharing good practice <b>LTP CORE TEAM</b></p> <p>Each Plan Partner to nominate an individual who can co-ordinate content on the above site. This person would act as a “gatekeeper” fielding initial contacts and passing them to colleagues as appropriate <b>JTWG</b></p> <p>LTP Team to challenge (on a region-wide basis) any plans which are likely to worsen accessibility to key services – liaising with Plan Partners, local MPs and Government Office, as necessary <b>LTP CORE TEAM</b></p>	<p>By Autumn 2008</p> <p>By Autumn 2008</p> <p>By Autumn 2008</p>

<p>4) There is a danger of “volunteer fatigue” amongst stakeholder groups and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), especially if they lack budgets / powers and become disillusioned at their inability to effect significant change</p>	<p>Improve communication with LSPs and seek to establish a protocol for involving them in developing capital programmes, also taking into account the new Local Area Agreements (LAAs) <b>ALL PLAN PARTNERS</b></p>	<p>Ongoing, but initial stages should aim to inform April 2009 capital programme development</p>
<p>5) In a region like the North-East, with higher than average unemployment, there is a temptation to approve new retail or office developments, even if accessibility to such developments is likely to be poor</p>	<p>Continue to emphasise good accessibility as a key planning requirement, with the aim of building accessibility thresholds into the planning process. Judgements on out of town / edge sites should depend on a realistic assessment of the actual number of <b>new</b> jobs to be created <b>PLANNING OFFICERS</b></p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>6) Some organisations remain reluctant to embrace the need for Travel Plans and make only ‘token’ efforts to comply with the obligations set out in their planning consent</p>	<p>Use the planning / enforcement process to ensure that Travel Plans are realistic, adequately-resourced and are actually delivered <b>PLANNING ENFORCEMENT (liaising with Travel Plan officers)</b></p>	<p>2008-09</p>
<p>7) Lack of effective enforcement can lead to a car-dominated environment – e.g., cars parked on pavements, in cycle lanes or bus stops – worsening accessibility for non-motorists</p>	<p>Improved enforcement and an information campaign making use of free council newspapers – e.g. explaining the meaning of bus stop clearways (operators feel these are not always understood by public) <b>ALL DISTRICTS (working with Core Team, operators, Living Streets)</b></p>	<p>2008-09</p>

<p><b>8)</b> Bus service provision is becoming stretched as operators concentrate resources on the busiest corridors and there are increasing demands to secure loss-making bus services from a limited pot of money</p> <p><b>9)</b> Many accessibility schemes require co-operation between a variety of partners and it can be difficult to manage the differing expectations and resources of the various partners. There is sometimes an unrealistic expectation that the Local Authority (or Nexus) will provide transport, something which is not always feasible. Community Transport can be a solution but even this has to be paid for by someone</p> <p><b>10)</b> Physical accessibility of services is still inconsistent. For example, investment in low-floor buses is not always matched by the introduction of raised kerbs at bus stops or the presence of suitable bus stop clearways to enable the bus to access the kerb</p>	<p>Examine ways to better integrate DRT, secured bus services, community transport and taxis to create a community bus resource for journeys that cannot be made by scheduled public transport services. Pages 50 to 52 outline work that has been done in other areas to develop ITUs (Integrated Transport Units) with the aim of meeting demand for more transport at lower cost. One option might be to connect current Tyne and Wear CT schemes to Nexus's "Trapeze" software system.</p> <p><b>NEXUS, CORE TEAM AND ALL PLAN PARTNERS (working with CT operators and taxi trade)</b></p> <p>Carry out "access to public transport" audits to ensure consistent standards in bus provision and surrounding infrastructure</p> <p><b>NEXUS, CORE TEAM AND ALL PLAN PARTNERS</b></p>	<p>Develop during 2008-09</p> <p>During 2008-09</p>
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<p><b>7.2 Access to Education</b></p> <p><b>11)</b> The school choice agenda and the growth in car travel are making it more difficult to maintain existing levels of accessibility to education</p> <p><b>12)</b> Many school walking buses are set up and then fold due to lack of support which School Travel Advisers are unable to offer at the level required</p> <hr/> <p><b>7.3 Access to Employment</b></p> <p><b>13)</b> The cost of transport and limited travel horizons are key barriers to employment</p>	<p>Greater consistency of approach, coordination and continuity of school travel planning in Tyne and Wear</p> <p>Complete overhaul / review of scholar's transport with remit to examine quality, cost and passenger demand (inc extensive consultation with current and future users)</p> <p>Funding for a dedicated Walking Bus Coordinator</p> <hr/> <p>See Page 60 for suggested measures</p>	<p>Ongoing, working via Home to School advisers</p> <p>During 2008-09</p> <p>During 2008-09</p> <hr/> <p>In progress</p>
<p><b>7.4 Access to Fresh Food</b></p> <p><b>14)</b> Creation of "food deserts" as small local shops close and residents without cars have to travel further to access a wide range of products</p>	<p>Explore ways of developing more "food co-ops" on the Gateshead model and ways of supporting local shops. Seek to use the planning process to address concerns about the lack of accessibility of major food retailers, drawing on best practice from elsewhere</p>	<p>During 2008-09</p>
<p><b>7.5 Access to Healthcare</b></p> <p>See Page 73</p>		

## 7.6 Cost and security on public transport

There is a wide body of research confirming that cost, safety and security are significant deterrents to use of public transport, with the poorest individuals often paying the highest fares. These problems are experienced nationwide and all regions are seeking solutions.

### Cost

Public transport fares can be substantially reduced if users are able to pre-pay (for a week, a month or longer). However, some people may not be able to afford the cost of such tickets or they may have irregular journey patterns that are not compatible with a time-limited ticket offer. Cross-boundary journeys are also a problem with passengers holding Tyne and Wear-wide passes needing to re-book at the county boundary.

Where two or more people are travelling by public transport, the cost can be high compared to car travel. "Two for one" ticket offers are common in the retail and leisure sectors and are used by Northern Rail (the Duo ticket) but do not appear to have been adopted by bus operators.

As local authorities have no influence over the fares charged by commercial bus operators, they have instead tended to focus on infrastructure improvements (better bus shelters, priority lanes, etc.) and concessionary fare schemes for disadvantaged groups.

The issue of cost remains a concern for many passengers, however, and the new powers granted under the Local Transport Bill may assist in stabilising fare levels. The proposed transfer of transport responsibilities to the City Region may also enable ticketing schemes to be aligned around journey-to-work areas, rather than county boundaries as at present.

Go-Ahead have introduced a pilot project, reducing and simplifying the fare structure on the 53/54 bus routes serving areas of Gateshead where many residents are on low incomes. This has been introduced on a commercial basis, with no Local Authority involvement, and if it is successful in increasing revenue, this may encourage wider adoption.

There may also be potential for some type of *carnet* ticket, targeted at individuals seeking to reduce the cost of bus travel but whose journeys are insufficiently regular to justify purchase of a weekly pass.

**It is recommended that Plan Partners, using the new powers available to them where necessary, work with operators to explore ways to reduce fares in disadvantaged areas.**

**Action by: Joint Transport Working Group, Nexus**

**Timescale: During 2008-09**

**Cost: Not yet determined**

## Safety

Research by the Department for Transport shows that 11.5% more journeys would be made by public transport nationally if passengers felt they were more secure.<sup>1</sup> This is borne out by local findings – in 2006, Sunderland’s Community Spirit panel said that improved safety / security was the main measure that would encourage them to make more use of public transport.

Serious crime on public transport is rare; however, as the DfT state: “Insecurity is not just the fear of direct personal assault. It is also the discomfort and intimidation felt when witnessing anti-social behaviour, criminal damage and graffiti.” By contrast, the private car is seen as a closed, safe environment where the driver chooses who shares their vehicle and which, by travelling door to door, avoids waiting at dark bus stops or unstaffed stations.

All Metro stations and most local buses are now covered by CCTV and increased staff have been taken on by Nexus to address concerns about safety and security on the Metro system.

Nevertheless passenger research suggests that these issues still concern passengers – not just in terms of the actual bus or rail journey but also the walk to the station or bus stop and then the wait for the vehicle. The presence of other (law-abiding) passengers is a reassurance and so, by encouraging more passengers to travel, a virtuous circle can be created.

These are societal issues which cannot be addressed purely by public transport operators or local authorities, but there are measures which could be examined:

- Re-introduce conductors / ‘guards’ on selected local buses – particularly evening services
- Increase staff presence at bus and Metro stations / interchanges and explore ways in which they can be closed at night to non-travellers
- Audit lighting at bus stops and main access routes to stops
- Introduce night-time taxi marshalling at key taxi ranks

**Action by: Joint Transport Working Group, Nexus**

**Timescale: During 2008-09**

**Cost: £25,000 for feasibility study**

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<sup>1</sup> Tackling Crime on Public Transport – [www.dft.gov.uk](http://www.dft.gov.uk)

## 7.7 Metro Re-Invigoration

Levels of patronage on the Tyne and Wear Metro system have held up well, compared to local bus services. One of the key strengths of rail systems is their permanence; by operating on fixed routes over a long-term timescale, this provides a certainty about accessibility to destinations served, enabling individuals and businesses to make locational choices. The frequency of service also means that most passengers treat the Metro on a “turn up and go” basis, obviating the need to consult timetables which deters some users from public transport.

**On accessibility grounds, there is therefore a strong case for proceeding with the Metro Re-invigoration programme as it contributes significantly to accessibility in large areas of urban Tyne and Wear. Renewal of the system will also increase its physical accessibility by bringing it fully in line with current DDA criteria.**

**Action by: Nexus**

**Timescale: Over next 20 years**

**Cost: Seeking funding assistance from central government, outwith this plan**

## 7.8 Working with the health sector

The health sector has had limited involvement in Tyne and Wear accessibility issues, even though successful delivery of accessibility schemes could have major public health benefits.

Whilst there is an Access to Employment Forum and regular meetings of school / workplace Travel Plan officers, there has been no current forum bringing together transport officers and health professionals to explore ways to improve accessibility to healthcare. Frequent NHS re-structuring in recent years has not assisted in long-term planning for such issues.

We are attempting to re-convene a regular forum for this purpose and two initial meetings have been held, in November 2007 and April 2008.

Other regions offer examples of good practice which we could learn from. For example, Primary Care Trusts on Merseyside fund the Heart of Mersey group, England's biggest coronary heart disease (CHD) prevention programme, which is attempting to address the very high levels of CHD on Merseyside. As part of the group's work, it is attempting to identify food deserts across Merseyside and improve access to fresh food through measures such as the Knowsley Veggie Van, bringing fresh fruit and vegetables to a very deprived inner city area.

**It is recommended that Plan Partners attempt to work more closely with the health sector, to identify and fund measures that assist transport objectives and improve public health.**

**Action by: LTP Core Team, Local Authorities, Nexus**

**Timescale: November 2007 onwards**

**Cost: £25,000**

## **7.9 Opportunities**

The new Local Transport Bill, due to receive Royal Assent in summer 2008, and the expanding role of the Tyne and Wear City Region offer the opportunity of developing a new structure and a new way of working – one that incorporates more local democratic control over bus services, a better service for passengers and that is more closely-aligned to travel to work areas rather than administrative boundaries.

However, to make best use of the new arrangements it is essential that land use planning and transport provision are more closely integrated, making full use of the Tyne and Wear Accessibility Model. We have recently been working with PCTs north of the Tyne to identify, using the Model, the most accessible locations for the siting of new doctors' surgeries and more joint working of this kind will help to ensure that future locational decisions take full account of accessibility.