

## 8. Accessibility Planning Statement

The Partners have worked with consultants "Automatica Ltd" to develop an approach to analysing the levels of public transport accessibility throughout Tyne and Wear, both as a planning tool and a means of monitoring the performance of public transport services.

Accessibility is a key influence on the choices that people make regarding work, shopping, schools and leisure activities. The level of accessibility provided by public transport networks helps to determine the local impact of strategies to reduce levels of road traffic, promote sustainable development (PPG6 & PPG13) and address issues of social exclusion.

The approach adopted is a spatial one, based on what activities exist in different parts of Tyne and Wear and the time taken to travel between them. The level of accessibility is assessed as the time taken by public transport to make a specific journey between a defined origin and destination (see Technical Annex).

The model uses a version of the county-wide public transport timetable database – including bus, Metro, rail and ferry services. Factors for walking and waiting times are used to represent all parts of the public transport trip.

Links to GIS mapping systems provide a powerful method of illustrating how the public transport system provides access to work, education, health facilities and other land-uses across Tyne and Wear. (For further information on the accessibility planning tools, see Technical Appendix).

Accessibility planning assessments have been used in the following applications, so far:

- Local Transport Plan Monitoring
- Best Value reviews of Public Transport accessibility
- Development control planning and S106 transport assessments
- Strategic planning (UDP) reviews
- Accessibility of hospitals in Tyne and Wear

Further development of accessibility planning will consider the following strategic planning issues;

- Design of future sustainable public transport networks to ensure an acceptable level of accessibility throughout the area
- Establishing accessibility standards for locating new housing developments to ensure residents have travel choices

- Standards and policies for trip-attractor developments to ensure that people without access to cars have opportunities to travel to work, shopping and health services
- Evaluating changes in future public transport networks e.g. the introduction of new light rail, bus or demand-responsive transport services.

In 2002/03, the Plan Partners' approach to accessibility planning has been extended to inform the development of the North East Regional Transport Strategy. The partners have also contributed to development of national thinking on accessibility planning through participation in work led by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Preparations are well in-hand for the partners' Centre of Excellence conference on "Social Inclusion & Accessibility Planning" in autumn 2003.

The following examples show how our delivery programmes support planning for improved accessibility;

- The provision of Easy Access (low floor) buses enables more people to use conventional bus services. In Tyne and Wear over the past year, the number of these vehicles rose by 41, and the proportion of the bus fleet which is Easy Access is now 47% from 41%.
- The Nexus Care Service, funded by the PTA, is a transport service for those unable to use other forms of public transport. Using a combination of wheelchair-accessible minibuses and taxis, the service offers a combination of door-to-door services with a small number of fixed route services, bookable in advance through a dedicated call centre. The past year has seen the bringing together in one centre of Care Service, Traveline and UCALL. Approximately 243,000 people used Care Service in the year. A new booking system has been introduced and it is enabling improved vehicle productivity with a better service for service users.
- A pilot accessibility planning project will take place in 2003/4 to further examine access to employment in South Tyneside. The accessibility modelling and mapping techniques developed by the LTP partners will be used to audit the transport needs of people in South Tyneside who are seeking work, and the resources available. An action plan and a monitoring framework will be developed. This work will be carried in partnership with South Tyneside Action Team for Jobs and JobCentre Plus.