

## **Beacon Council Scheme Round Five** **Better Local Public Transport Theme**

### ***Evidence on Current Practice, Best Practice and User Satisfaction***

#### **Background**

This paper presents key findings on current practice, best practice and user satisfaction in the selected theme. This information has been taken from the Round Five theme reports completed by the central government policy leads in each theme in late Spring 2003. The full theme reports can be found at: [www.local.odpm.gov.uk/research/beacon/beacon.htm](http://www.local.odpm.gov.uk/research/beacon/beacon.htm)

The user satisfaction data and analysis was completed by MORI in August 2003 and the full report on all themes is available at [www.local.odpm.gov.uk/research/beacon5.pdf](http://www.local.odpm.gov.uk/research/beacon5.pdf)

The evidence base on theme research and user satisfaction is designed to assist the Independent Advisory Panel in creating the selection criteria for the scheme. It is also designed to assist local authorities in applying for the scheme and in improving services generally. The research evidence base on the Beacon Council Scheme is crucial in identifying current and best practice in service provision whilst taking into account the satisfaction of those that receive the services. This evidence base also enables local authorities to identify areas for improvement aswell as potential areas for innovation in attempting to achieve continuous improvement in service provision.

The research evidence base can also demonstrate whether the scheme is achieving its long-term objective of improving services. Warwick University Business School has commenced work on a three to five year ODPM / IDeA funded project entitled *An Impact Evaluation of the Beacon Council Scheme* and this will yield further evidence shortly and greatly contribute to the future evidence base on service improvement.

#### **Section A - Current Practice in Better Local Public Transport**

1. Local bus services carry the vast majority of local public transport journeys (outside London) and are the focus of the majority of the

contribution local authorities can make to improving local public transport.

2. Light rapid transit can make an important contribution in parts of larger urban areas and be a step change in the local experience of public transport. However, new systems are not a viable solution for most authority areas, because of the intense use that is needed to justify their high capital cost and extensive planning.
3. There has been a long term decline in bus patronage outside London, but the Government's Ten Year Transport Plan and most Local Transport Plans (produced by local authorities) aim to reverse the decline and increase patronage. In some localities, such as Brighton and York, there has been substantial recent growth in bus patronage.
4. A number of authorities have designated as centres of excellence for transport, in relation to specific local transport themes. Those particularly relevant to local public transport are summarised below – more details and contacts can be found at [local-transport.dft.gsi.gov.uk/excellence](http://local-transport.dft.gsi.gov.uk/excellence).
5. **Bus.** Oxfordshire has a long history of developing bus-based solutions to the problems caused by traffic growth inside Oxford. Following major changes in June 1999, car and taxi journeys into the city centre have fallen by over 15% whilst bus use has increased by 17%. Through its Local Transport Plan, Oxfordshire has started to apply the benefits of this experience across the whole of the county, and is in the process of developing a Premium Routes and Interchange network which will provide high quality services, facilities and priority networks linking the county's principal towns.
6. **Integrated Transport.** West Yorkshire's LTP authorities and key partners are committed to delivering a fully integrated transport system, and have considerable experience in developing three key elements that are helping to contribute towards this:
  - *Interchanges:* West Yorkshire has developed a network of modern bus interchanges in the major urban centres of the county. These developments feature wheelchair accessible waiting areas, better signage, improved lighting and closed circuit television, improved bus information. The latest designs have resulted in significant improvements in user satisfaction, and increases in passenger throughputs;
  - *Smartcard:* The development of multi-modal, multi-operator Smartcard ticketing will benefit passengers by improving interchange arrangements, and improving operator efficiency, through quicker boarding; and

- *Guided bus:* West Yorkshire has considerable experience in developing guided bus schemes. This includes experience in identifying suitable locations, securing partnership co-operation, branding, marketing, consultation and public ownership, design and development, construction, operation, infrastructure, integration and co-ordination. The introduction of a guided bus scheme on the A61 has resulted in the number of new passengers increasing by 30%, and in 30% of existing passengers making more frequent trips.
7. **Light Rail.** The city's new tram system, Nottingham Express Transit (NET) will transform the way people move around the city and encourage sustainable growth and prosperity. When launched the scheme was the largest public transport private finance initiative in the UK, a partnership between joint promoters Nottingham City Council, Nottinghamshire County Council and concession company Arrow Light Rail Ltd.
  8. After services begin, NET Line One is projected to carry eleven million passengers and take two million car journeys off Nottingham's roads each year. The related reduction in congestion and pollution, together with increased access to work, health, education, leisure and tourism sites will enable Nottingham to remain an attractive place to live, work and visit as well as to attract new jobs and investment. Effective communication about the scheme is crucial to its successful development, and ensuring community support. Key to the success of the communications strategy is the establishment of a fully integrated, joint-funded operation working in partnership with the contractor and on behalf of both the promoters and the concession company.
  9. **Public Transport.** Improving public transport information and providing integrated ticketing are two effective ways to improve the standard of public transport provision. Getting timetable and connection information is vital for many passengers and can be provided locally through a range of media, including telephone enquiry bureaux and information in printed and electronic form. Providing integrated ticketing is essential to create the seamless public transport journey that can act as an attractive alternative to the car. The South Yorkshire Local Transport Plan Partnership has placed a strong emphasis on these issues.
  10. Some examples of recent initiatives include:
    - The Travel Options Planning Service (TOPS), providing advice to firms with employee specific travel diaries and ticketing offers, as part of broader TravelWise activities.

- A high quality Traveline Service, operating from 0700-2200 daily, linked to the Yorkshire Regional Information Partnership, Yorkshire TravelNET.
- A website including a full journey planner, with a map based system being developed as part of the regional TravelNET partnership.
- Travel Information Centres at main interchanges and in town centres.
- Help Points providing direct telephone connection to travel advisors.
- Ticketing initiatives, implemented in partnership with the operators to help provide more seamless travel and address social exclusion.
- The regional YORCARD smartcard project, including a joint LTP major scheme bid for funding with West Yorkshire.

11. **Rural.** Reflecting the rural nature of Cornwall, the County Council has developed a series of measures to provide essential links between rural and dispersed communities and existing transport networks. In partnership with a wide range of players including public transport operators, interest groups, businesses and the local community, the council has developed innovative projects that optimise transport integration.
12. The potential for bus and rail operators to work together with authorities to provide integrated and seamless travel options is demonstrated in the T34 Helston branch line project, the first "bus branch line" in the UK. Work on the project, which fully integrates rail and bus services was completed in September 2000 and the service now operates between Redruth train station and Helston. The T34 bus service incorporates bus route infrastructure improvements at key locations along the route and its features include through-ticketing, low-floor, easy access buses, and the provision of bicycle racks on the back of the buses. Improvements at Redruth station include substantial new waiting and interchange facilities with a new platform construction for buses. A recent passenger survey carried out at Redruth station indicated a high level of satisfaction with the service.
13. **Accessibility.** The Tyne and Wear Local Transport Plan places strong emphasis on public transport accessibility for disabled people and in terms of access to locations. The area already has a very high proportion of fully accessible low-floor buses, delivered through Quality Partnerships with the operators, as part of the extensive network of accessible bus routes. A key objective of the Plan is to ensure that jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services are accessible by all forms of public transport. Tyne and Wear has developed computer systems to allow analysis of their public transport timetables and property databases.

This has provided a means to measure accessibility to key locations in Tyne and Wear. Indicators have been developed to help monitor the implications of changes to public transport routes and land use planning proposals.

14. **Cycling and Park & Ride.** City of York Council has been at the forefront of promoting cycling and using park & ride facilities for over a decade. Between 15 and 20% of York's residents cycle to work, whilst its park & ride service carries one million passengers a year, keeping two thousand cars out of the city every day. York has shown that it is possible to achieve a modal shift from car use to public transport.
15. **Rural.** Integration, co-ordination and partnership in the provision of transport services are key to addressing the needs of rural communities in Devon. The council's Transport Co-ordination Service ensures a fully integrated approach to public and community transport and has realised imaginative solutions, including flexibus and taxicar services, and the 'Life in the Bus Lane' project which utilises smartcard technology. The co-ordination extends beyond local public transport.
16. **Social Inclusion.** Ensuring equality of travel opportunities for all is one of Merseytravel's main goals. Many people without access to private transport can be denied access to jobs, training, education and other essential services without the provision of safe, convenient and affordable public transport. To address this, Merseytravel has:
  - established a Community Links Team 'to work at a local level with the community on transport issues that affect their lives';
  - helped to develop Merseyside Community Transport, and the Pathways Transport Group to develop a programme of action for the 38 most economically deprived areas of the region that have been targeted for special measures;
  - established a multi-agency approach, involving bodies such as Employment Services, Merseyside Health Action Zone, Single Regeneration Budget Partnerships and Local Strategic Partnerships to address social inclusion and accessibility issues;
  - commissioned a research project to identify travel needs across the 38 Pathways areas and the barriers to using the current network. This work has formed the basis of an Action Plan which can be used for future developments within the Local Transport Plan and Objective One programmes.

17. A key early outcome of this work is the introduction of the new Merseytravel “Job Link” bus services linking Pathways areas to key employment, education, training and other opportunities generated by the Objective One programme.
18. The Department for Transport operates challenge funds in rural and urban areas to support good practice and is introducing a pilot version of the ‘Kickstart’ initiative involving local authorities and bus operators.
19. Beacon projects will tend to be consistent with the characteristics of good Local Transport Plans, as set out in the Department for Transport’s Local Transport Plan guidance, in respect of bus strategies, public transport interchange and public transport information. However, an average (or lower) Departmental assessment of the Local Transport Plan in respect of buses need not prevent proposals for beacons being accepted from the authorities concerned.

The characteristics of a good Local Transport Plan bus strategy include evidence of partnership, integration with traffic management policies, clear assessment & targets and closer integration of conventional bus services with health & community transport and the voluntary sector

## **Section B - Indications Of Best Practice in Better Local Public Transport**

1. Submissions for beacons under this theme will be assessed particularly in respect of evidence and material that can be observed or measured. Evidence about outcomes and the satisfaction of users and the community will be valued highly. Practice that is transferable to other authorities and areas will be sought.
2. The assessment will consider a number of aspects including:
  - Vision and strategy;
  - Consultation and social inclusion;
  - Partnership;
  - Innovation;
  - Processes;
  - Outcomes;
  - User and community satisfaction.
3. **Vision and Strategy.** Are these appropriate, ambitious and well-founded for the local authority area? Does the vision reflect local aspirations and priorities? Is the strategy consistent with the Department of Transport Local Transport Plan guidance including for bus strategies (if appropriate) [see Current Practice, paragraph 20].
4. **Consultation and Social Inclusion.** Has the public been involved constructively in the work covered by the proposal? Have the requirements of particular target groups (eg geographical or demographical groups) been considered satisfactorily? Is the work socially inclusive? How have any tensions between different groups been resolved?
5. **Partnership.** Has there been partnership with operators and other service providers? How have any issues cutting across different service areas been considered? Which other key groups or organisations been drawn into the partnership and how?
6. **Innovation.** Does the work involve innovation? How does it differ from what has been done before by the authority and elsewhere? Has the proposal been improved prior or during implementation?

7. **Processes.** Has the work involved innovative processes and ways of working? How well was it planned and implemented? What key actions on the part of the authority enabled excellence to be achieved?
8. **Outcomes.** What difference has the project made to transport and non-transport outcomes?
9. **User and Community Satisfaction.** What evidence is there of the satisfaction of the local public and those using the service?

## Section C - User Satisfaction in Better Local Public Transport

There is a wealth of national quantitative data surrounding the topic of improving local public transport. The Department for Transport (formerly part of the DTLR) and the Commission for Integrated Transport (CfIT) have commissioned regular studies among the general public and users of transport measuring their attitudes to various forms of transport and travel. However, none of these specifically refer to the approach taken by *local authorities* in improving local transport.

In the 2001 Best Value survey, half of those researched say traffic is a problem, rising to three in five among people living in London.

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**Q** *I am going to read out a list of things that can cause problems for people in their area. I would like you to tell me whether traffic is a problem in this area?*

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	<b>Problem</b>	Serious problem	Problem, but not serious	Not a problem	Don't know/not stated
<i>Base: All residents (2,568).</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>Great Britain</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Government Office Region</b>					
East Midlands	47	21	26	50	3
Eastern	56	25	31	42	1
London	62	31	31	37	1
North East	31	14	17	69	0
North West	45	21	24	55	1
South East	53	25	28	46	1
South West	53	28	25	47	1
West Midlands	44	21	23	57	0
Yorkshire	49	26	23	49	2
<b>Authority Type</b>					
Inner London Boroughs	59	32	27	40	1
Outer London Boroughs	64	30	34	35	1
Mets	45	22	23	54	1
Unitary	50	28	22	50	*
County	50	23	27	49	1
District	56	25	31	43	1

*Source: ODPM (Best Value, 2001).*

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'Public Attitudes to Transport' for the Commission for Integrated Transport is an excellent source of recent national data among users of transport. It suggests that between 25% and 35% of people would travel by train or bus if these modes of transport were improved. Results from this survey relevant to this theme are outlined below.

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**Q** *How strongly do you agree or disagree with the statements 'I would travel by car less if bus/train services around here were better'*

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	Agree %	Disagree %
<i>Base: All general public, England (1,725).</i>		
<b>Bus better:</b>		
2001	47	31
2002	34	42
<b>Train better:</b>		
2001	35	31
2002	24	42

*Source: Commission for Integrated Transport, Public Attitudes to Transport in England (2002).*

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National user satisfaction with transport services is shown below:

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**Q** *How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the quality of each?*

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	<i>Base: All users</i>	Satisfied %	Dissatisfied %	Net Satisfaction +/-
Local buses	(956)	64	22	+42
Local trains	(756)	58	19	+39
Long distance coaches	(377)	58	3	+55
London Underground	(583)	43	22	+21
Long distance trains	(511)	41	24	+17
Pavement maintenance	(1,725)	31	50	-19
Road maintenance	(1,725)	27	55	-28

*Source: Commission for Integrated Transport, Public Attitudes to Transport in England (2002).*

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The table below shows the average satisfaction ratings for a series of issues related to buses. As can be seen, bus stop information and reliability are the two key issues for people in England, with satisfaction lowest for these two areas.

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**Bus passenger satisfaction survey, average satisfaction rating, April – June 2002**

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	England %	Metropolitan areas %	Shire areas %	London %
On bus safety/security	<b>88</b>	90	89	84
Staff (driver/conductor behaviour)	<b>87</b>	89	89	83
Level of crowding on bus	<b>85</b>	88	89	78
Overall services	<b>81</b>	83	82	77
Comfort on bus	<b>80</b>	82	81	76
Time waited to catch bus	<b>79</b>	82	81	74
Bus stop/shelter condition	<b>77</b>	79	76	78
Value for money	<b>76</b>	78	72	78
Reliability	<b>65</b>	65	65	66
Bus stop information	<b>62</b>	59	57	72

*Source: Transport Statistics Bulletin, Department for Transport (2002).*

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The CfIT's 'Public Attitudes to Transport' survey details public priorities for public transport. When asked what would make them use buses and trains in their local area most people identify improved punctuality/reliability and frequency, as well as affordable fares.

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**Q Can you tell me how... services in your local areas could be better?**

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	Bus %	Train %
<i>Base: All who would travel by car if less buses and trains.</i>	<i>(568)</i>	<i>(404)</i>
Improved punctuality/reliability	46	55
Improved frequency	51	42
Public transport fares costing no more than car	41	45
Extended service	34	28
Timetable information and knowing where to get on	33	27
Better connection between bus and rail	26	32
Improved cleanliness	21	28

*Source: Commission for Integrated Transport, Public Attitudes to Transport in England (2002).*

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The 'Public Attitudes to Transport' survey also addresses the issue of public perceptions of transport in the future. Although the question does not specifically make reference to the role of local authorities and bodies in attempting to improve public transport, it does record peoples' views about the likelihood of improvement in a variety of transport areas. The results are shown below, with most people generally sceptical about transport over the next ten years.

**Q** *I'm now going to read out a list of issues and I'd like you to tell me whether you think each is going to improve, deteriorate or stay the same, over the next ten years.*

	Improve %	Deteriorate %	Net improve %
<i>Base: All general public, England (1,725).</i>			
Frequency of local bus services	21	21	0
Frequency of trains	18	22	-4
Frequency of underground	9	15	-6
Punctuality and reliability of local buses	21	25	-4
Punctuality and reliability of trains	22	27	-5
Punctuality and reliability of underground	11	17	-6
Safety of pedestrians	27	33	-6
Safety of cyclists	27	38	-11
Road safety	28	44	-16
Overcrowding on local buses	10	32	-22
Overcrowding on underground	8	45	-33
Overcrowding on trains	4	39	-35
Level of underground fares	4	37	-33
Level of bus fares	9	57	-48
Level of train fares	8	62	-54

*Source: Commission for Integrated Transport, Public Attitudes to Transport in England (2002).*

**Suggested further reading:**

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and the Department of Transport have published a report called '*Guide to Producing Regional Transport Strategies*' (March 2003), intended to assist in the development of regional transport strategies (RTS) over the next two years. It is designed as a practical tool for Regional Planning bodies (RPBs), Government Offices for the Regions (GORs) and other organisations engaged in the RTS process. For more information please visit <http://www.dft.gov.uk/itwp/regstrat/index.htm>.

The Commission for Integrated Transport commissioned a report entitled '*Organisation, Planning and Delivery of Transport at the Regional Level: A 10 Year Transport Plan Monitoring Strategy*' (2002). This report identifies key problems and issues for the delivery of the 10 Year Plan (10YP) arising out of current arrangements of planning and transport at the regional level. Please visit <http://www.cfit.gov.uk/research/10year/index.htm>.

**Ronan Smyth**  
**Local and Regional Government Research Unit (ODPM)**  
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