Seamless journeys from door to door

Seamless journeys from door to door

If public transport is to offer a real and attractive alternative to cars, it needs to offer the same kind of door-to-door service that cars do. This is not impossible, as experience in some parts of the UK and in many other countries shows.

The last government had high ambitions to make 'integrated transport' the norm but failed to overcome the barriers to bring this about. The new Government has inherited reviews of both rail and bus systems and this briefing argues that the Government should use these to deliver the changes needed to put passengers at the heart of our transport system and turn the promise of seamless journeys by public transport into reality.

There is now plenty of evidence about what works and what makes the difference for passengers. Coupled with new information and communication technology (ICT) and reviews of rail and bus structures, we now have an unparalleled opportunity to finally get this right.

The Government must seize this opportunity and work with local government and transport operators to overcome the barriers to seamless door-to-door journeys by public transport. This briefing sets out a simple plan to overcome the legal, political, governance and regulatory barriers to integrating transport.

The briefing is a companion document to research commissioned by Campaign for Better Transport from TRL Ltd, supported by Abellio. TRL's full report, published alongside this briefing, sets out in more detail the opportunities and challenges for improving door-to-door transport.

What needs to improve for passengers

There are four main elements that are needed to integrate transport. These are:
- Giving people good information before and during their journeys
- Making sure that the interchanges between different public transport services don't act as a barrier (and that walking and cycling access and facilities are good)
- Getting transport services to connect with each other
- Having tickets that allow services to join up in a simple and transparent way

The TRL research draws on many studies to set out what passengers' priorities are.

Information
Passengers need:
- Information on the level of fares, times of departure and arrival before travelling, and the ability to compare different ways of reaching the same destination
- Real-time information about their journey, particularly on delays and how these will impact on onward connections
- Access to more tailored information, for instance from data being opened up to independent developers to provide more meaningful information for particular groups or lead to more innovative approaches
- Simple fares that are understandable and flexible so that a delay in one part of a trip doesn't result in having to buy a new ticket if a connection is missed

Interchange
Passengers need:
- High quality and attractive facilities to reduce concerns about having to change between services. Clear signage, maps and information are needed to help passengers continue their journey easily
- Good facilities for handling or storing luggage on longer distance trips

- Good cycle storage/parking
- Good access on foot and by bike to stops and stations, including safe routes to stations
- Appropriate and sensibly priced car access/parking at stations

Connections

Passengers need:

- Reliable and frequent services to avoid worries about long waiting times, particularly if delays mean that connections are missed
- Real-time information on services (and help from staff)
- Timetabling that enables connections to be made, for instance developing new timetables round a 'transfer scheme' to build in connections with other services

Ticketing

Passengers need:

- Through ticketing from origin to destination without needing to get tickets for individual elements of the journey. This means tickets need to be valid on different operators and different modes of transport (as the Travelcard has done in London since the 1980s)
- Smart tickets like the Oystercard to make it easier to use public transport and speed up accessing buses or trains
- Simple ticketing options like zonal fares so passengers can understand what they will pay in advance – particularly if smartcards give passengers less obvious feedback on how much individual journeys cost

Progress in tackling the barriers to integrated transport

New Labour and the New Deal for Transport

In 1997, the Labour manifesto promised an integrated transport policy and followed it up by a White Paper which made integrated transport a key part of its approach. The 1998 New Deal for Transport included these aims:

- Better information, before and when travelling
- Better interchanges and better connections
- Enhanced networks with simplified fares and better marketing, including more through-ticketing and travelcards (including smartcards)

This was to have been achieved through the new process of Local Transport Plans with strengthened powers for local authorities and changes to rail franchising to put passengers' interests higher up the priority when franchising new services.

Overcoming barriers

However, despite the intentions, the New Deal for Transport and successive policies from the Labour government failed to overcome many of the barriers to improving the integration of transport modes. These included:

- Short-term funding
- A confusing mix of local authority duties, powers and regulations
- Lack of strong governance for many transport authorities
- A model of competition in the bus market which can make it difficult to co-operate on information, ticketing and connections
- Lack of flexibility in the rail-franchising system and the contractual nature of relationships within the rail industry, which can prevent more innovative approaches

To some extent, the continuation of these barriers was hidden by the significant rise in funding for transport under Labour, which more than doubled in real terms. Now with big spending cuts, particularly at a local level, it is even more important to get the details right to overcome these kinds of barriers and make the best use of limited funding.

Successful examples

Despite this, there are some good examples of integrated transport in the UK. The full report from TRL, published alongside this briefing, describes these in more detail and also sets out examples from Europe and elsewhere.

Good practice examples include:
- Using branding to give a common identity to different transport operators or modes, as with the Transport for London roundels on different modes, Nottingham's buses or Network West Midlands
- Online or smartphone applications like the Brighton and Hove bus real-time info board or MyBus, which gives either real time information on departures from bus stops or information about scheduled departures, or EdinBus, which also includes real-time information about services
- The Oyster card in London and new smartcards in other cities, such as the Pop card in Tyne and Wear
- The taxibus service run by Chiltern Railways at Bicester to take rail passengers to their door
- The Leeds cycle hub (Cycle Point) which Abellio and partners Network Rail, Metro, Leeds City Council and Sustrans have developed at Leeds railway station which offers secure cycle storage, cycle repair, sales of cycles and accessories and cycle hire

New opportunities

The new coalition Government has much more modest ambitions for transport compared to New Labour in 1997. There are no grand strategies but an emphasis on delivering a much more limited departmental business plan which has the goals of supporting the economy and cutting carbon. The words 'integrated transport' do not appear in the business plan and there are only two actions which would clearly fall under the four areas set out above (to back smart ticketing in the main English cities and to change the rail franchise system to deliver better stations).

However, the Government is developing new policies for both the structure of the railway and – in response to the Competition Commission inquiry into the bus market – how bus operators and local councils work with each other. These new policies should be used to improve the integrated transport on offer for passengers. If not, the coalition Government will miss a golden opportunity to focus transport around the needs of passengers, rather than providers.

Agenda for integrating transport

1. Information

There is much good practice in developing good mapping, both of transport routes and street maps and signage around stations, but practice across the country is still mixed. The Confederation of Passenger Transport, ATOC and the Local Government Association should work together to encourage the highest standards in mapping and signage.

The Government should continue to invest and use regulatory powers to ensure that real-time information services and technology is spread across the country and that all buses are fitted with the requisite equipment.

The Government should ensure that data on timetabled and real-time public transport operations is freely available

for use by third parties, subject to controls on accuracy and quality.

The Government should provide encouragement for local authorities and operators to work together to create consistent branding for transport networks and ticketing. This will give users more confidence that the networks are joined up and that all operators are signed up to the door-to-door journey.

2. Interchange

Although there has been much investment in new transport infrastructure, many transport interchanges are geared more to the needs of the transport modes themselves, rather than the needs of people. Network Rail, bus operators and local transport authorities should do more to promote more people-centred design in new transport interchanges, particularly for waiting areas, and to allow for pedestrian movement between services and with surrounding streets.

In considering new structures for the rail industry (and changes to rail franchises), the Government should seek to enhance incentives to invest in stations as transport hubs and as interchanges, and to improve access to surrounding areas.

Cycle access and cycle parking should become core parts of franchises. Cycle parking at bus interchanges should also be improved.

There are significant opportunities to build on the successful bike hire scheme in London but also to link bike hire more to the rail network. ATOC should explore how rail companies can be involved in developing cycle hire in the main cities outside London, drawing on the successful Dutch model.

Car parking and car access at stations is important but should not be the sole focus for station access. The Government should require station travel plans, which look at the full range of options for accessing stations, and set out plans to improve them.

3. Connections

Punctuality is important to give passengers confidence that they can make connecting services, whether by train or bus. Passenger Focus, the Office of Rail Regulation and the Traffic Commissioners should continue to focus on punctuality and reliability, but should also support operators keeping connections where appropriate. The Government should ensure that in restructuring the rail industry incentives are given to provide connections between key services and that the performance regime is modified to incorporate the holding of trains for connections. In the same way, its response to the Competition Commission should ensure that bus performance regimes overseen by the Traffic Commissioners allow for the holding of connections.

4. Ticketing

The Dutch experience of zonal tickets (and the experience of their introduction in London in the 1980s) shows their potential to simplify ticketing and grow demand. The Department for Transport should use its smart ticketing programme as an opportunity to work with Integrated Transport Authorities and transport operators to introduce a simple, zoned, integrated fare structure in metropolitan areas outside London as a stage to rolling out zonal fares in all areas. The experience of London's Oystercard and the Netherlands' national Chipkaart also shows the potential for smartcards to grow demand. The current debate in

the Netherlands is now how quickly paper-based ticket systems will now survive.

In responding to the Competition Commission's report on the bus market, the Department for Transport should ensure that tickets and passes valid on more than one bus operator are available and competitively priced in comparison to those only valid on one operator.

Bus-train integrated ticketing should be developed and requirements for standard smartcard and mobile phone readers on buses should be included over time within licensing regimes.

5. Wider policy

To help achieve these changes, the Government also needs to ensure that regulation, funding and spatial planning help remove barriers to integrating door-to-door travel.

On regulation:

- The Department for Transport should consider whether the various regulatory powers over transport and highways could be brought together under Integrated Transport Authorities in the main metropolitan areas
- In other parts of the country, the Department for Transport should promote and enable transport partnerships, such as Transport for South Hampshire

On funding:

- The Department for Transport should seek to maximise the impact of the new Local Sustainable Transport Fund to integrate transport by ensuring that best practice is shared between local authorities
- The Department for Communities and Local Government should ensure that the second phase of the local government resource review looks at a full range of options for funding transport enhancements including tax increment finance, property taxes and business rate supplements

On spatial planning:

- The new National Planning Policy Framework, which the Department for Communities and Local Government is developing, should give priority to development around public transport interchanges and better integration of public transport in the design of new developments

Conclusion

Our research has shown that, contrary to some professional and political opinion, public transport can form part of seamless, door-to-door journeys, that many of the factors for this already exist in some places, and that Government action could make it the norm across much of the country.

But this will require a different focus. It is often suggested that transport policy makers and professionals concentrate too much on the infrastructure for transport and not enough about people's motivations and desires about their travel choices. Efforts to integrate transport can be particularly prone to that, with more emphasis (and more money) on bus or rail stations than on overcoming regulatory or cultural barriers between services and then marketing them effectively to people.

Our recommendations seek to do this. They set out how central and local government, working with transport operators, can together deliver more integrated and seamless transport services. With the reviews of both rail and bus structures, we now have a unique opportunity to fulfil longstanding ambitions for door-to-door integrated transport. The Government must not miss it.

June 2011

[1] Door to door journeys, TRL for Campaign for Better Transport, 2011. Available from www.bettertransport.org.uk.

[2] See Transport Statistics Great Britain (DfT, 2010 and earlier) for detailed breakdown

[3] Less than one in four passengers travel by car to get to the station when using rail. Just under half get there by foot and over a quarter arrive by public transport. Figures from National Passenger Survey carried out by Passenger Focus.

Campaign for
Better Transport

Campaign for Better Transport's vision is a country where communities have affordable transport that improves quality of life and protects the environmentt. Achieving our vision requires substantial changes to UK transport policy which we aim to achieve by providing well-researched, practical solutions that gain support from both decision-makers and the public.

info@bettertransport.org.uk.
Phone: 020 7566 6480
Fax: 020 7566 6493
www.bettertransport.org.uk
www.facebook.com/bettertransport
www.twitter.com/fairfaresnow
www.twitter.com/saveourbuses_uk

16 Waterside, 44-48 Wharf Road, London N1 7UX

Better transport, better lives