

Recommendations for further work and policy changes to tackle transport related poverty

Campaign for Better Transport carried out a literature review into the relationship between transport and poverty, which included a number of findings and identified areas where further work and policy change are needed. This paper includes the main findings and suggests recommendations for national government, local authorities and public transport operators to address the issues raised.

Improving access to employment, services and amenities

Accessibility

Improving transport services, making them more affordable or more physically accessible, or providing transport services where none previously existed, can help address social exclusion. In addition accessibility planning could help promote the integration of transport, land-use planning and decisions about the location of employment and education, health, social service and retail amenities.

Among authorities which have implemented accessibility planning, those that recognised the need and had the skills to involve other stakeholders and sectors in the accessibility planning process have been proving the most effective.

However, there appears to have been a loss of momentum in the implementation of accessibility planning. The Department for Transport needs to say whether or not it considers accessibility planning valuable and if it does, to provide guidance on accessibility planning across relevant government departments.

Recommendations

1. All agencies whose policies or decisions have a transport impact should show that the transport dimension has been taken into account. For example, benefits policy needs to take account of people's transport difficulties. Where public services are being reorganised and relocated, access plans to show how those without cars will access these services should be mandatory and relocation/ reorganisation should not go ahead unless the access plans have been implemented.
2. The Department for Transport (DfT) should give advice on the effectiveness or otherwise of accessibility planning. Good practice will need to be developed from successful examples of accessibility planning emerging from the review sponsored by the DfT. Accessibility planning is potentially one of the ways that other government departments can address transport concerns.
3. In order to improve accessibility, the DfT and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) should collaborate in producing guidance and support for local planning authorities on the provision of local employment, services and amenities both in new development and by retrofitting existing developed areas. Corresponding changes may be required in the National Planning Policy Framework.
4. Local authorities and transport operators should ensure improved access to town and local centres by bus and by walking and cycling routes. Where appropriate, bus tickets should be valid on several services for a single journey and the DfT should use the recommendations from the Competition

Commission inquiry into the bus market to ensure that local authorities can require this from operators.

5. The DfT, in collaboration with the DCLG, should oversee an adequately funded programme to improve the accessibility of the public realm focusing on the physical accessibility of the public transport network; the improvement of the walking and cycling environment; and, where appropriate, the provision of walking and cycling routes.
6. Further work is needed on the appraisal of transport schemes and projects to take better account of social impacts and ensure these are accurately reflected in cost benefit analyses within the business case of the DfT appraisal process.

Bus services

Spending cuts have limited the capacity of transport authorities and others to introduce new services to address the needs of deprived groups and have affected existing services on which groups depend, thus further exposing them to poverty or other forms of social exclusion.

Low income families are more dependent than others on bus travel; buses account for a larger proportion of their income and the cheaper fare deals which involve paying larger lump sums are often unavailable to them. Bus fare increases restrict the ability of households to meet the transport costs of their children for important out of school activities and transport costs can be a barrier to employment for low income families.

Recommendations

7. Research is needed on the location and extent of 'transport deserts' where the availability, affordability and accessibility of transport services is poor or non-existent for those on low incomes.
8. The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and the DfT should guarantee to fund jointly with local authorities a roll-out of WorkWise schemes that help people overcome the transport barriers to securing and retaining employment.
9. The DWP should review guidance to Job Centres on meeting the transport needs of job seekers.
10. The DfT should develop proposals for the reform of bus policy (including financial support from central and local government) which takes account of those on low incomes and include sufficient funding for concessionary fares schemes.
11. The DfT and the Department for Education need to address young people's problems with transport, particularly since the abolition of the Educational Maintenance Allowance, and develop a package of support for young people including concessionary fares.
12. The DfT should conduct research on the importance of bus services to disadvantaged groups and the impact on them of bus service cuts.

Low income households and car use

It is difficult to measure transport poverty and there is an absence of any officially accepted definition or measure. Any definition needs to recognise that transport poverty is not simply a question of the affordability of motoring costs. Definitions that use the percentage of household spending on transport costs are not

meaningful, particularly given that higher income households spend a greater share of income on transport than lower income households.

Increases in the cost of fuel would particularly affect low income households in rural areas but the impacts could be mitigated by, for example, improving rural public transport.

Recommendations

13. Research is required to inform the debate about fuel duty, likely long term changes in the cost of oil and the price of public transport alternatives to the car.
14. The Government should develop a strategy to redress the deterioration over the last 15 years in the relative overall costs of motoring and public transport.
15. The DfT should develop a package of measures to meet the needs of people in rural areas. This could include, for example: demand responsive public transport to connect with essential services or the wider public transport network; measures to improve access to services; support for local bus services; improved integration of rail and bus services; and the development of local walking and cycling networks.
16. The integration of taxis into public transport networks is also important and the Government should use the current Law Commission review of laws governing taxis to promote this, including by ensuring that taxi licensing powers are based with those local authorities with other transport powers and duties.

Impact of traffic on low income communities

Children in low income groups have much higher rates of casualties from road traffic collisions due to greater exposure to higher levels of traffic. This could be addressed through changes to the physical environment, better traffic management and through a range of government bodies attaching a higher priority to road safety.

Elevated levels of pollution are concentrated amongst socially deprived neighbourhoods and have serious health impacts.

Heavy traffic has a negative effect on the social interaction of a community with lower levels of social capital likely as a result.

Recommendations

17. Government, nationally and in London, needs to implement measures to cut air pollution at source by promoting the use of cleaner vehicles and introducing policies to reduce traffic.
18. Local highway authorities should develop and implement strategies for the improvement of the walking and cycling environment including, for example, street audits, 20 mph limits, removal of one-way systems and the introduction of filtered permeability.

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Campaign for Better Transport's vision is a country where communities have affordable transport that improves quality of life and protects the environment. 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.

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