

# **Older people: Their transport needs and requirements - Summary report**

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## **Foreword by Keith Hill**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

Ageing of the population is one of the major structural changes facing the UK over the next two or three decades. The Prime Minister has stated that "one of the greatest opportunities that face us this century is to respond to the needs of this ageing population and to harness effectively the contributions older people can and do make to society".

This summary report contains the findings and recommendations of a fuller report that explores the transport needs and requirements of older people.

Older people are the major users of public services. New strategies for engaging with older people and providing better services are needed. Government at all levels needs older people to be fully engaged and involved in deciding priorities and helping shape the policies to meet them.

This report will be fed into the work of the Better Government for Older People Programme which aims to improve public services for older people by better meeting their needs, listening to their views and encouraging their contribution. The clear message from this Programme is that central and local government and service providers, working together at all levels and with older people and their organisations, can produce better and more effective outcomes.

The report is an important contribution in understanding the transport needs and requirements of older people. These needs are not just about the ability to travel from A to B - travel serves a number of important functions for older people. I am sure the report will prove a useful guide for local authorities and transport operators in developing affordable, safe, accessible and available transport systems which meet these needs.

## Executive Summary

### Key Results and Conclusions

- Transport provides an essential link to friends, family and the wider community - a vital lifeline to maintaining independence. Research has shown that a lack of mobility can prevent older people from participating in social activities and lead to low morale, depression and loneliness. It can also impact upon others, such as carers, social services and health agencies.
- Despite the rising number of older driving licence holders, declining driving ability and financial constraints mean that many motorists will have to adjust their driving practices and probably ultimately give up their car. A high proportion of the older population will be dependent on public transport. However, evidence suggests that many will experience difficulties in using bus and rail services.
- Amongst the largest barriers to mobility are physical difficulties associated with walking and accessing public transport. Poor access to travel information can also deter potential users. Lack of awareness, particularly awareness of special transport schemes like Dial-A-Ride and Shopmobility, can mean that those with the greatest need fail to benefit from services that have been specifically implemented to help them.
- Older people worry more about their safety because they are likely to be more severely injured, take longer to recover and suffer greater psychological impact than a younger person in a similar incident.
- A common theme throughout the study was the poor attitude of transport providers and drivers and their failure to meet customer needs. For example, isolated stops, badly lit waiting areas and moving off before passengers are seated.
- Cost is a significant factor determining people's ability to travel as often as they would like. The high cost of rail fares, compounded by the inaccessibility of many railway stations is a major deterrent to using a train. Fuel and car insurance prices are also impacting on the travel patterns of older people using cars. Taxis are an important mode of travel for those who do not have a car available to them and are unable to use public transport because of mobility or timetable constraints. However, there is evidence that high fares and uncertainties about how much the trip will cost are deterring potential users.
- For those with more severe mobility impairments, community transport provides a valuable service, but often has barriers of its own, such as long advance booking times, a restricted choice of destinations, limited operating hours and anxiety over completing the return trip.
- Improvements in accessibility will go some way towards increasing the availability of public transport by better meeting the needs of older and disabled users with 'mainstream' transport.
- One of the most important recommendations is that transport planners and service providers take a more 'holistic' approach to address concerns associated with every element of the journey. Furthermore, when new or improved services are introduced, they are given sufficient time to bed in; short-term pilots are sure to fail if potential users do not have long enough to try them out.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Background to the Study

The aim of the study was to conduct an audit of both current and future transport needs, taking into account future demographic changes in England and Wales. The primary focus was on people aged 60 or more, although some qualitative work was also conducted among the 50-59 age group. It primarily focused on public transport, but necessarily included personal mobility and walking.

The need to meet the transport requirements of a growing population of older people is vital to the success of the Government's commitment to sustainable mobility and people's own ability to retain a high quality of life as their income, health and mobility levels change. Statistics across Europe, including the UK, highlight a steady increase in the percentage of population over retirement age, a difference most marked in the 75 plus age group.

There is very little material on identifying the needs of older people in a systematic way, or categorising them in any detail.

### Methodology

The work programme concentrated on four main tasks:

- Literature review;
- Qualitative research (six focus groups);
- Quantitative research (1,445 household interviews); and
- Discussions with an Advisory Group (convened for the study and comprising representatives from DETR, transport providers, charities and others with expertise in the area).

### Policy Context

We live in a society where the proportion of older people is rising. This group is more likely to be on low incomes and less likely to have access to a private car than other sections of the population. They are also more likely to suffer from one or more disabilities and hence have some form of restricted mobility, while still wishing to maintain a good quality of life. Older women in particular are likely to be dependent on public transport for their travel needs. For those with some form of restricted mobility, mainstream public transport can be difficult to use, if not completely impossible.

Current Government policy underlines the importance of mainstreaming the needs and requirements of different social groups. The White Paper *A New Deal For Transport: Better For Everyone*<sup>1</sup> notes that access to public transport can be a matter of social justice and prioritises high quality public transport designed for everyone to use. Accessibility, affordability and personal security are some of the key public transport issues, as well as issues of gender, age, ethnicity and religion.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (1998), HMSO

## **Chapter 2: Overview**

### **The Need to Travel**

The ability to travel serves a number of functions for older people, including:

- Entertainment - participants enjoy getting out of the house and often travel "just to see people around" and not because they have a destination in mind.
- Participation - they are involved in a number of organisations, including Church and community groups.
- Independence - they do not want to have to rely on friends and family to take them to the shops, bank, etc.
- Social interaction - travelling provides an opportunity to meet friends and neighbours en route.

### **Unmet Need**

Most participants in the surveys travel four or more times a week and getting out of the house is very important to them. Some would like to travel more frequently, but are constrained by costs, difficulties in walking and using public transport, and a more generalised lack of means of getting to certain destinations. In addition to not being able to reach particular destinations, some participants felt that they were missing out on the social aspects of travel, especially the opportunity to meet and interact with other people on buses.

### **Barriers to Travel**

The most frequently mentioned problem associated with all transport modes was accessibility (defined as difficulties with boarding and alighting vehicles, carrying items, confusion over use and staff attitudes). Affordability was cited as important in relation to trains and taxis, rather than buses, largely because of the availability of concessionary bus fares.

Four-fifths of drivers indicated that they would prefer not to travel long distances, nor drive at night, in bad weather, nor in town centres, suggesting that they would use alternative modes if they had more information and perceived them to offer advantages in terms of ease of use, comfort and cost.

Ageing brought greater reliance on others for lifts and increased difficulty in securing transport following the loss of driver licence-holding partners. This had particular implications for essential activities such as grocery shopping.

The survey also found that awareness of concessionary travel is relatively lower amongst drivers, people from ethnic minority backgrounds and people aged 75 or more, suggesting an urgent need to re-examine the methods used to convey information to potential users.

### **Anticipated Changes in Travel Behaviour**

#### ***Car Driving***

There was fairly widespread acceptance that participants' ability to continue using their preferred modes would change as they got older. Regular drivers aimed to carry on driving for as long as possible and many dreaded the prospect of giving up their car because of declining health and cognitive ability, as well as increasing costs.

#### ***Using Public Transport***

Regular public transport users said they would continue to travel by bus in particular, and felt that their experience of using services and their knowledge of local routes would give them an advantage

over people who were currently reliant on their car. They anticipated improvements in accessibility, brought about through increases in the number of kneeling and low floor buses, but were concerned about on-going problems associated with quality and unreliability as well as the decline in bus routes operated.

Community and voluntary transport schemes were highly valued, especially by those who had mobility constraints or lived far from a bus stop/railway station and were therefore unable to use mainstream services. However, 50-60 year olds were sceptical about such schemes largely because they felt they would not be able to adjust to planning journeys a long time in advance.

## **Suggested Improvements**

### ***Car Driving***

Amongst the suggested changes was a more formal role for doctors and opticians in deciding whether drivers were safe to continue driving, possibly accompanied by compulsory eye tests, refresher driving courses and driving tests for 70 year olds.

Participants also wanted more information - for example, in the form of a factsheet - on issues to be aware of as you got older. This could include topics such as failing eyesight, driving at night and coping with congestion, and special features to look out for when purchasing a car, such as automatic transmission and power steering.

### ***Public Transport***

Suggestions tended to concern improvements in reliability and journey times on local buses through the introduction of financial penalties for operators, extension of bus lane operations, stricter enforcement of stopping regulations and the re-introduction of bus conductors to reduce boarding times and control behaviour on-board.

Participants also wanted buses to serve residential areas better to reduce walking distances to the bus stop, better waiting facilities and more passenger information (including real-time information).

### ***Other Modes***

Participants wanted more Shopmobility, Dial-A-Ride and door-to-door transport schemes, and better provision of essential infrastructure, including seating and toilet facilities in shopping areas and stations. They wanted prompt repair of pavements and a central telephone number for reporting potential hazards such as broken slabs.

### **Chapter 3: Conclusions - Key Issues**

Social and leisure trips are areas in which unmet need is greatest.

There is a need for awareness training of transport staff at all levels and within both operating companies and local authorities to make them more sensitive to the needs of older people and better able to meet these needs.

The poor state of maintenance and repair of pavements was raised a number of times during the focus groups, with a desire for prompt repairs to pavements and a central telephone number for reporting potential hazards such as broken slabs.

As well as providing comprehensive information for the whole of the local network, including facilities for older and mobility impaired people, there is also an issue of raising awareness among both current and potential users that the information exists.

Technological advances have meant that it is now possible to relay real time information via the Internet and WAP telephones. In the short term there are questions over whether older people using public transport would be able to afford the technology, be interested in it or be able to use it. There is a risk that it may become a further cause of exclusion for those who are not able to afford, understand or use the technology.

As well as a lack of facilities, poorly maintained bus stops and stations can contribute to feelings of uneasiness and fears for personal security. Concerns over safety and security on public transport are especially prevalent amongst people who are used to being driven about. They are concerned about what to do if the journey goes wrong and they have to make alternative arrangements.

Poor punctuality, journey time unreliability, sparse networks and low frequencies are all criticisms of using the bus, as they are among other users.

There is potential for a number of low-cost, easily implemented changes to buses and the way services are run that could improve the travel experience for older people, such as more noticeable signs requesting passengers to give up their seats for older people and giving priority to older people when boarding.

Community transport provides a valuable service, but often has barriers of its own, such as difficulty booking a trip due to demand exceeding supply, a restricted choice of destinations, restricted operating hours and anxiety over completing the return trip.

Health problems tend to be the main reason for giving up driving and the most frequently reported ones are related to vision. Hence an adequate public transport network that caters for the needs of those with health problems is critical in reducing the concerns over loss of mobility brought about by giving up driving.

Both the literature review and the focus groups proposed a greater role for doctors and opticians in promoting better driving, deciding whether drivers are safe to continue driving and also in being channels through which to provide older drivers with information on public transport options. Compulsory eye tests, refresher driving courses and driving tests for 70 year olds were also suggested during the focus groups.

Advice and guidance could also be provided to older drivers e.g. on failing eyesight, driving at night and coping with congestion as well as special features to look out for when purchasing a car, such as automatic transmission and power steering.

Stricter enforcement of Orange/Blue Badge Holder parking spaces to discourage fraudulent use; rationalisation of traffic signs; the removal of unnecessary street clutter, and extension of the 'L-plates' system for learner drivers and 'P' for new drivers to include a letter to indicate an older driver, were all suggested as measures that could help older drivers.

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Initiatives such as car sharing and/or car clubs for older people were suggested, with either the local authority or senior citizens organisations acting as facilitator, rather like employers and green commuter plans.

There appears to be a lack of awareness of both public transport and community transport as an option to travel among drivers, and also among a proportion of people who usually travel as car passengers.

## Chapter 4: Recommendations

### Introduction

Many of the recommendations are concerned with buses and supporting infrastructure, since the study has demonstrated that this mode is the primary public transport means for older people on a daily basis. The overall aim should be to increase access to mainstream services to maximise social justice and inclusion and reduce demand for the more expensive demand responsive services such as Dial-a-Ride and Taxicard. This in turn would free up capacity in these services for those unable to use mainstream public transport, regardless of how accessible it was.

The recommendations are presented in two ways: firstly in a table showing the different stages in the journey and the different modes of transport, and secondly in a narrative on the actions different organisations could take in transport planning and design.

### Summary of recommendations by different stages in the journey and different modes of transport

Problem	Recommendations
<p><b>Journey Planning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Lack of information</li> <li>■ Poor accessibility of services</li> <li>■ A transport network that does not meet the needs of older people</li> <li>■ Difficulties making long distance trips</li> <li>■ Confusing community and voluntary transport alternatives</li> <li>■ Parked vehicles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A more co-ordinated approach to providing travel information. To include whole network and complete range of services, such as ancillary services</li> <li>■ Greater use of existing guidelines on presentation of information</li> <li>■ Raise awareness of services through targeting existing and potential users through marketing</li> <li>■ Close adherence to principles of PPG13</li> <li>■ LTP appraisal process to include impact on older people and involve consultation with them/their representatives</li> <li>■ Systematic demographic, geographic and topographic analysis of area in service planning</li> <li>■ Greater focus on long distance travel provision (e.g. coaches). Possible role for new Regional Planning Authorities</li> <li>■ More proactive role for local authorities in co-ordinating community and voluntary transport</li> <li>■ An older people user group to assist in planning and evaluation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Walking</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Heavy and fast traffic</li> <li>■ Poor road crossing facilities</li> <li>■ Pavements in poor condition (uneven surfaces)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Better pavement design, including even surfaces with no obstructions</li> <li>■ Provide dropped kerbs at crossing points, with tactile paving, in accordance with DETR guidance</li> <li>■ More entry treatments on side roads to make crossing safer</li> </ul>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Obstacles on pavements</li> <li>■ No pavements at all</li> <li>■ Declining local services such as post offices, chemists and banks</li> <li>■ Increased risk of accident</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Road crossings at ground level rather than subway or bridge; if not, subways in preference to bridges</li> <li>■ Maintain adequate access for older people when work is being carried out on pavements</li> <li>■ Ban free standing adverts</li> <li>■ Good lighting</li> <li>■ Better maintenance of walkways</li> <li>■ Greater enforcement of parking restrictions at pedestrian crossings, pavement access ramps, bus stops and parking on pavements</li> <li>■ Greater enforcement of speed restrictions to reduce pedestrian accidents</li> <li>■ Encourage bus manufacturers to produce vehicles designed to minimise the injuries caused to pedestrians</li> <li>■ Greater enforcement of cycling restrictions on pavements</li> <li>■ Examination of shared use facilities between pedestrians and cyclists - need enough space and barriers separating the two (this is to be explored in a forthcoming DETR consultation exercise)</li> <li>■ Longer phases at pedestrian crossings</li> <li>■ Acoustic signals at crossings</li> <li>■ Stakeholder consultation to consider need for local services and ways to cut down on street accidents</li> <li>■ Systematic use of the forthcoming DETR good practice guidance on meeting the needs of disabled people in the pedestrian environment and in transport related infrastructure</li> </ul>
<p><b>Buses</b></p> <p><i>At stops/stations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Walking distances to and from stops</li> <li>■ Having to stand and wait for bus</li> </ul> <p><i>On-Board:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Difficulties getting on/off</li> <li>■ Poor on-board environment</li> <li>■ Concerns over delays/cancellations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More frequent/better placed bus stops, a more systematic approach to identifying appropriate sites</li> <li>■ Enforce parking restrictions at bus stops so buses can draw up to kerb</li> <li>■ More considered design and positioning of ticket machines</li> <li>■ More seating and well maintained shelters at bus stops</li> <li>■ Real Time Information at more stops and on-board</li> <li>■ High contrast, large print timetables including at stops</li> <li>■ Greater assistance and helpfulness to older people</li> </ul>

<p><i>In general:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cost</li> <li>■ Infrequent</li> <li>■ Unreliable</li> <li>■ The need to change buses</li> <li>■ Length of time needed to make trip</li> <li>■ Complicated connections</li> <li>■ Uncomfortable ride</li> </ul>	<p>at stations and platforms where there are stairs and gaps to negotiate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Upgrades to highway infrastructure marked bus stop cages, bus borders etc. to realise benefits of low floor buses</li> <li>■ As the PSVAR made under the DDA affects new vehicles coming into service from 31 December 2000, operators should be encouraged to upgrade old vehicles to meet DPTAC Specifications</li> <li>■ Low floors buses plus*:</li> <li>■ Door modifications</li> <li>■ Resting rails</li> <li>■ Pictograms</li> <li>■ Stairway handrails</li> <li>■ Improved PA systems/visual displays to announce stops</li> <li>■ A safety device on door of one person operated vehicles</li> <li>■ Waiting areas that match the buses to make step as small as possible; ideally providing raised areas at bus stops</li> <li>■ Rounded kerbs</li> <li>■ A marked caution zone at the waiting area to delineate the boarding zone with guide strips</li> <li>■ Cleaner environment and reduction of allergens</li> <li>■ Introduce accessible buses on a route by route basis</li> <li>■ Priority entry for older people</li> <li>■ More window stickers encouraging others to give seats up to older people</li> <li>■ Contingency plans for operational problems</li> <li>■ Improved standards for safety on vehicle, and at stops and stations</li> <li>■ Staff awareness training and modified driving, e.g. moving off more slowly</li> <li>■ A national, uniform scheme for concessionary fares</li> <li>■ Adequate, regular and properly co-ordinated services (including information and advice)</li> <li>■ Alternatives for those unable to use mainstream</li> </ul>
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	<p>public transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Balance profitability with need</li> <li>■ Legislation to make customer care training statutory</li> <li>■ Locally based bus user groups with the power to influence bus services</li> <li>■ Opportunities for private sector involvement</li> <li>■ Consider needs of bus passengers as element of designing traffic calming measures</li> <li>■ Greater sharing of best practice/case studies</li> <li>■ Off-peak schedules allowing more time at stops</li> </ul>
<p><b>Rail/Metro/Underground</b></p> <p><i>At stations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Access to stations getting to it</li> <li>■ Access within station steps, escalators etc.</li> </ul> <p><i>On-board:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Inaccessible rolling stock</li> </ul> <p><i>In general:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cost</li> <li>■ Poor customer care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Greater assistance to older people at stations and platforms where there are stairs and gaps to negotiate</li> <li>■ More seats</li> <li>■ High contrast, large print timetables</li> <li>■ More considered design and positioning of ticket machines</li> <li>■ Lifts to/from platforms, ramps, better stairs/escalators, more stations</li> <li>■ A stronger requirement on Railtrack to make stations more accessible</li> <li>■ A stronger requirement on operators to make rolling stock more accessible.</li> <li>■ Reduced gap between train and platform</li> <li>■ Less crowded</li> <li>■ Tactile floors</li> <li>■ Door modifications</li> <li>■ Resting rails</li> <li>■ Pictograms</li> <li>■ Handrails</li> <li>■ Improved public address systems</li> <li>■ A similar concessionary fare scheme to that being introduced in bus industry</li> <li>■ Discounted connections for Senior Railcard holders</li> <li>■ Legislation to make customer care training</li> </ul>

	<p>statutory</p>
<p><b>Driving</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The cost of buying, licensing, maintaining, and fuelling vehicles</li> <li>■ Poor visibility at intersections</li> <li>■ Difficult to read signs</li> <li>■ Age discrimination such as by insurance companies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Better road design</li> <li>■ Clearer signs that are well maintained</li> <li>■ Better vehicle design</li> <li>■ Freely available driver education through local authorities</li> </ul>

\*There is potential for conflict when introducing these types of solutions into certain environments, such as historic towns or where speed bumps are installed that buses have difficulty negotiating

## **Actions Different Organisations Could Take**

### **The Role of Local Authorities**

#### ***Policy and Planning***

Close adherence to the principles of PPG13 to ensure that hospitals and out of town developments are easily accessible to older people by modes other than the private car. Greater use of private sector contributions to improve access to new sites, for example by operating subsidised, easy access buses from major residential areas.

The Local Transport Plan (LTP) process represents an opportunity to propose a local transport strategy that encompasses all the different types of provision and how these inter-link, and to ensure that policies are consistent across all modes. The appraisal process must include the impact on older people. For example, a new pedestrianisation scheme should be accompanied by increased provision for blue/orange badge holders and Shopmobility, and careful planning of bus routes and stops to ensure that those with mobility impairments are not excluded from areas of 'improvement'.

Early consultation with older people during the LTP process would yield insight into perception of local need and views on transport services and infrastructure, while liaison with transport providers would enable discussion of inter-service co-ordination and matching of need.

More systematic analysis of the profile of the local population and characteristics of the local area, both geographically and topographically, before deciding which type of service would be most appropriate. For example, are areas where there is a high concentration of older people served by public transport that encompasses facilities such as local shops, hospitals, meeting places that they use?

In this increased culture of partnership, councils should take greater advantage of the potential for private sector involvement in the provision of local authority services, for example by including public transport services focused on the needs of older people as part of a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract. Potentially this could permit service level benchmarks to be specified as part of the PFI contract.

There is a need to address long distance travel requirements of older people and travel across county boundaries. The requirement for the new Regional Planning Authorities to produce a Regional Transport Strategy provides the opportunity to take a regional approach to planning transport services and providing information.

To supplement operator-defined routes there needs to be better co-ordination between subsidised services, health, community transport, schools transport and the wide range of voluntary transport services. Improved co-ordination would include both the services on offer and the utilisation of vehicles to review whether vehicles could be used in a number of roles across council services.

Community and voluntary transport providers must be involved in the planning process rather than called upon at the end to see what services are not available and to try to fill in the gaps.

A local authority/PTE convened Older Public Transport Users group, like the one convened by Kensington and Chelsea, could be instrumental in evaluating public transport services and infrastructure within an area. Feedback could be used in the LTP process and also in monitoring Quality Partnerships.

#### ***Bus Stops***

A more systematic approach to identifying appropriate sites for new bus stops and appraising the appropriateness of existing ones, to meet the needs of mobility impaired people, whilst recognising

other requirements and constraints, such as road safety, journey times for the bus and the relationship between bus stops and parking and loading facilities.

Upgrading and maintaining bus stops to provide a safer, more pleasant and comfortable waiting environment; for example, providing adequate lighting, shelters (where space permits) seating and possibly facilities to communicate with a central point to obtain travel information and report security concerns.

Providing upgrades to highway and footway infrastructure, such as marked bus stop cages, higher kerbs, or - in appropriate locations - bus boarders, to realise the access benefits afforded by low floor buses.

Stricter enforcement of parking restrictions at bus stops to enable maximum benefit to be gained from low floor vehicle design, by ensuring that buses are able to pull up alongside the kerb.

Systematic use of the forthcoming DETR good practice guidance on meeting the needs of disabled people in the pedestrian environment and in transport related infrastructure.

Opportunities for private sector involvement. For example, this is often achieved through partnerships with companies providing bus stop infrastructure, such as shelters, in return for the rights to advertising revenue.

Incorporating the needs of bus passengers as an element in the location decisions of traffic calming measures - these can jolt buses and endanger passengers, especially older people.

### ***Information - Journey Planning and En Route***

As part of the sustainable transport initiative, there is a need for a more co-ordinated approach to providing travel information that encompass the whole network and the complete range of services, including station/stop facilities, vehicles used, special facilities for people with visual, hearing or mobility impairments, availability and contact details for voluntary transport services. The new multi-modal travel booklets being introduced by Transport for London are an example of current best practice for local authorities.

More widespread provision of real time information systems at bus stops, with investigation of how this, or the equivalent information, can be accessed remotely (such as via television, telephones and, in the medium term, the Internet and WAP telephones) particularly to benefit those living in more rural areas where service frequencies are low.

### ***Marketing***

There is often a lack of awareness of local public transport among older people who still have use of a car. There is thus a need to target older drivers and passengers to communicate the availability and benefits of greater use of public transport. This could, for example, be through retirement training programmes; making information available at post offices and from health professionals, such as GPs and opticians; and making use of DVLA data for mailshots.

There is also a need to raise awareness of improvements that are relevant to both existing and potential older users. Different approaches are likely to be needed to reach users and non-users, and also different sub-groups within these two categories, such as people from ethnic communities.

### ***Quality Partnerships***

Deregulation of the bus industry can result in difficulties in getting operators and local authorities to develop and co-ordinate initiatives. However, there is scope for local authorities both to work with bus operators in Quality Partnership Agreements, and also to examine the possibility of taking a more proactive role in a number of areas that would result in improved access to transport services and therefore greater travel choices for older people.

There is a clear case for improving the level of service offered to older passengers through a wide range of initiatives within the existing definition of roles and responsibilities of local authorities and operators, and relating to both commercial and socially necessary services.

Through greater liaison and co-operation, local authorities and operators need to take a more 'holistic' approach to address concerns in all areas, from planning (routing, scheduling etc.), equipment (vehicle design), operations (including driving practices) and marketing, to better meet the needs of a wider base of customers.

### **Contributions from Bus, Train and Coach Operators, and Railtrack**

Since the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations made under the DDA only affects new vehicles coming into service from 31 December 2000, bus operators should be encouraged to upgrade old vehicles to meet DPTAC specifications.

Train operating companies should be required to provide special services to older people that have difficulty using trains and publicise them widely. For example, being able to phone ahead to book a parking space, or request assistance from staff.

A commitment from Railtrack to upgrade existing railway stations to be fully accessible within a given time.

Train operators could consider discounted joint taxi/train tickets to those holding a senior person's railcard.

Provide information in vehicles (both buses and trains) such as announcements of next stop and visual displays of the same information, also inductive loops.

Ensure that accessible buses are introduced on a route by route basis so that passengers with impaired mobility are not frustrated by long wait times for an appropriate vehicle.

Priority entry to buses for older people (e.g. those with concessionary fare passes) to allow them to take any spare seats and sit down before the bus moves off.

Use of high impact window stickers encouraging passengers to give up their seat for older people.

Operators should undertake to devise a contingency plan for operational problems, so older passengers know that they will get to their destination if, for example, the bus breaks down. This could be enshrined in a passenger charter.

Operators of both trains and buses to undertake to train all staff, from management through to drivers, on customer care, specifically on the needs of older and less mobile passengers. Refresher courses to be obligatory.

An independent monitor of customer service performance could form part of the contract for bus services procured by the local authority, with contract renewal conditional on achieving an agreed minimum standard. This approach would not be possible for commercially operated services.

Extending commercial service levels, for example lengthened hours of operation, more frequent buses or extending a route into a new development. However, the regulatory framework could lead to inconsistencies on the same route between the specification of a local authority contracted service and the specification adopted by the operator on the commercial service.

Coach operators need to be more proactive in better understanding the needs of existing and potential customers with regard to the physical accessibility of their vehicles, the destinations they cover and also the location of coach stations and the facilities on offer to make services better match the needs of users.

It is important that the use of new technology accommodates the needs of older people as opposed to being driven purely by commercial considerations. Smartcard technology could revolutionise the

payment and collection of bus and rail fares for both customers and operators alike, and permit greater integration of services between modes and operators. Importantly Smartcard technology could be used to purchase services other than transport, and safeguards may be needed to ensure that older people are able to share in the benefits that such technology could bring.

### **The Role of Central Government**

There is a need for wider assessment of the financial benefits of mobility e.g. to include the social and health benefits within a traditional financial appraisal for investment in new and improved public transport and the potential for reduced financial burdens on health and social service providers.

Affordable public transport is essential to allow older people the freedom to travel as they wish. The concessionary fares legislation will make discounted travel on local buses far more widely available than it currently is through provision of a universal concessionary fares scheme. This is clearly a great step forward for those who previously had to pay full fares. However, rail travel remains a high cost option and any scheme that mirrors what is happening in the bus industry would be welcomed.

To produce guidelines for local authorities/PTEs that issue service contracts and licensing agreements to operators to contribute to all round greater consistency in service provision. For example, reducing barriers caused by licensing restrictions, such as services operating under Section 22 of the 1985 Transport Act and providing transport to the general public who do not need to pre-book have to rely solely on volunteers who cannot be paid. This would minimise the risk of instances where commercial operators are not interested in providing a service, but where community alternatives cannot be implemented due to legal constraints.

Using the best practice contained in the *Personal Security on Public Transport*<sup>2</sup> and/or the guidance produced by the London Bus Initiative *Bus Stop Layouts for Low Floor Bus Accessibility* (June 2000)<sup>3</sup> as a basis for developing a bus stop checklist to guide planners in siting and design issues.

Using the guidance contained in DPTAC's Code of Good Practice on the legibility of timetables, books and leaflets<sup>4</sup>, and other advice from the Royal National Institute for the Blind, the Royal National Institute for Deaf People and the European Conference of Ministers of Transport<sup>5</sup> as a basis for developing guidelines/minimum standards covering the provision of clear, concise, accurate and timely passenger information. This should encompass paper-based timetables, real time information, public access terminals, announcements, information en route, telephone information and ticket office communications.

A need for case studies and sharing best practice among all those involved, particularly in policy and planning and the entire transport chain, rather than specific physical accessibility, which is more advanced and better documented. Use of the Internet could be made for this purpose - using a central site. Also linking with examples of best practice in Europe and North America.

Case studies on starting up demand responsive services to share good practice in this area and develop guidance on providing a service.

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<sup>2</sup> Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (1998) *Personal Security Issues on Public Transport: Guidelines for Operators*. DETR Free Literature

<sup>3</sup> Available from the London Bus Initiative within Transport for London

<sup>4</sup> Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (1996) *Legibility of Timetables, Books and Leaflets: a Code of Good Practice*, DETR

<sup>5</sup> *Improving Transport for People with Mobility Handicaps: a Guide to Good Practice* (1999). OECD Publications Service

The difficulty of committing long term funding, within local authorities, strategic partnerships and rail operators, due to inflexible and comparatively short term contracts suggests a need to review the planning horizon and duration of contracts/franchises.

Driver awareness training should be included as part of the vocational driving licence. This should include topics such as assisting older people, for example waiting before pulling away, stopping close to the kerb, a helpful and concerned attitude, etc.

Greater powers for the Strategic Rail Authority to force operators and Railtrack to implement accessibility improvements (bearing in mind the Disability Discrimination Act requirements), with powers to impose penalties on those who do not comply.

## **Further Research**

Developing an audit checklist for individual mainstream services that can be used to evaluate whether services meet the needs of older people. This could be based on existing good practice guidelines, but must take account of and include the whole transport chain.

A set of national guidelines/standards with regard to providing travel information before and during journeys.

### ***Pilot Studies***

To test the efficacy of conductors on buses, who would have a wider remit to include assistance and maintaining order to reduce feelings of insecurity/threats to personal safety. This could take the form of matched services - one with bus conductors, the other with high specification vehicles including single deck, high-powered lighting, new layouts and driver training.

There are a number of flexible demand-responsive initiatives in other countries that require public revenue and capital funding. Perceived constraints on revenue funding may be proving to be a deterrent on experimentation with innovative services in the UK. However, there may be scope to introduce innovative flexible route services that offset the expenditure on existing demand responsive services such as Dial-a-Ride, while offering greater value for money. Pilot appraisal should consider cross-sector benefits.

New schemes or initiatives must be given time to bed in. Short-term pilots are sure to fail because potential users are not given the opportunity to hear about and then try new schemes.