Transport Planning Society – Written evidence (TTS0057)

About TPS

The Transport Planning Society (TPS) is the only professional body focusing entirely on transport planning in the UK. The aim of the Society is to raise the profile of transport planning and chart a course for the profession.

Public transport is an essential part of our transport network, and it has been both underfunded and poorly managed in the recent past. It's essential we increase passenger levels on our public transport services to meet our decarbonisation targets as well as other wider policy goals. To do this we need to make public transport a more attractive option by improving reliability, efficiency and safety. Building on the expertise within our organisation, we believe we have some innovative and unique suggestions to do this.

Response to Questions

1. **What are the current and anticipated levels of public transport demand and capacity in towns and cities in England? What influences public transport travel patterns? How does the choice of public transport vary across different demographic groups?**

Demand
Without positive government and local government action, it's unlikely that demand will return to pre-pandemic levels.[1] On an anecdotal level this is the view of the bus and rail operators that we have spoken to over the last 2 years, with many feeling worried about the future. In these circumstances capacity is unlikely to be the issue, with networks, frequency and ticket costs becoming larger problems. Reducing frequencies and rising prices will discourage customers from using public transport, especially with current fears surrounding Covid-19.[2] Travel patterns are influenced by the availability of a connected, frequent network providing effective options, as well as adequate facilities and reliability. Public transport needs to provide a frequent and reliable service if we want to reach pre-pandemic levels of use.

However, demand is too complicated an issue to focus solely on the aggregate picture. For example, we have seen an influx of commuting on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday for hybrid workers who find these the most attractive days to be in the office.[3] Similarly, there appears to be more of an appetite for travelling for leisure and on weekends in a post Covid-19 landscape.[4] Any

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[1] Docherty, I. and Marsden, G. (2021) *COVID-19 will have a profound long-term impact on transport policy and travel patterns, but rapid change is less likely.* London School of Economics [https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/covid-19-impact-transport/]
[2] Aston, L. and Currie, G. and Jain, T. (2021) *Evidence of a post-COVID change in travel behaviour – Self-reported expectations of commuting in Melbourne.* Transportation Research [https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0965856421002391]
[3] Baker, F. (2021) *There's A New Nickname For Hybrid Workers – And It Sounds A Bit Rude.* Huffington Post [https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/theres-a-new-name-for-remote-workers-and-its-raising-a-lot-of-eyebrows_uk_616005cce4b0196444237826]
[4] Str (2021) *A tale of two travel sentiments: business remains negative while leisure still upbeat.* Str [https://str.com/data-insights-blog/A-tale-of-two-travel-sentiments-business-remains-

emerging public transport policy should understand the complexities of these emerging travel trends and recognise which trips people are more likely to take post Covid-19 and for what reasons. We must be cognisant of the regional differences in demand instead of taking a London centric view of all towns and cities.

Demand for longer distance public transport will likely remain stagnant as remote working remains popular and commuters continue to adjust their travel behaviour.[5] We expect there to be latent demand for more local journeys, particularly in the traditional commuter belt. The demand for public transport is likely to now be greater in the (traditional) inter peak period (10:00 – 16:00) with less longer distance peak period commuting in particular.[6]

E - Mobility
There has been a sharp increase in the adoption of E-mobility such as e-scooters and e-bikes in the past few years. With the popularity of trials coupled with the pandemic, E-scooter use in particular has shot up.[7] Just how this affects public transport demand is not quite yet fully known and deserves further research. Some evidence has shown E-mobility to act as a key player in multi modal journeys, increasing overall demand for public transport by acting as a solution to the first/last mile problem.[8] The decision by Transport for London to ban E-scooters on their transport networks will in that light have inevitable adverse effects on public transport use in the capital.[9]

Demographics
Evidence is emerging of how public transport demand of different demographic groups has been affected by the COVID-19 lockdowns. A study in Zurich found not just changes in demand but also in route choice; this paper also contains a literature list of further valuable studies worldwide.[10] A study in Melbourne no statistically significant differences.[11]

negative-while-leisure-still-upbeat]

[5] Bloom, N. and Mizen, P. and Taneja, S. (2021) *What is the future of commuting to work?* Economics Observatory [https://www.economicsobservatory.com/what-is-the-future-of-commuting-to-work]

[6] International Association of Public Transport (2020) *Flattening peak travel time: measures to better distribute travel demand*. International Association of Public Transport [https://cms.uitp.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Knowledge-Brief-Flattening-the-Peak_DEC2020.pdf]

[7] Intelligent Transport (2021) *UK fuel crisis causes 44 per cent increase in demand for Voi e-scooters.* Intelligent Transport [https://www.intelligenttransport.com/transport-news/128513/uk-fuel-crisis-increase-demand-voi-e-scooters/]

[8] Fearnley, N. and Hegna Berge, S. and Johnsson, E. (2020) *Patterns of E-Scooter Use in Combination with Public Transport.* Transport Findings [https://findingspress.org/article/13707-patterns-of-e-scooter-use-in-combination-with-public-transport]

[9] Transport for London (2021) *TfL announces safety ban of e-scooters on transport network.* Transport for London [https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2021/december/tfl-announces-safety-ban-of-e-scooters-on-transport-network]

[10] Corman, F. and Marra, A. D. and Sun, L. (2022) *The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on public transport usage and route choice: Evidences from a long-term tracking study in urban area.* Transport Policy [https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0967070X21003620]

[11] Aston, L. and Currie, G. and Jain, T. (2021) Evidence of a post-COVID change in travel behaviour – Self-reported expectations of commuting in Melbourne. Transportation Research

2. How might public transport travel patterns shift in the next 10 years? What impact could digitalisation and the COVID-19 pandemic have on travel patterns in the long term?

An active approach
Rather than creating policy in a response to what *could* happened we should be thinking more actively about what *should* happen e.g., we need to decarbonise transport regardless of what travel patterns.[12] For this to happen we need to focus on how public transport and the behaviours of customers must shift. There is a need to understand on a macro and micro level how people's lifestyle choices have been impacted by the pandemic and to then design a (public) transport future that facilitates that rather than assume that a return to the previous normal is possible, or even desirable.

Improving public transport (PT) will help to support the behaviour change we need to see. For example, improving the reliability, efficiency and safety of our PT networks should result in an increase in ridership. But we also must improve the sustainability of our networks which for bus and rail primarily takes the form of electrification. There is a lot of work currently being done in this area which we can learn from. [13]

Covid-19 and working patterns
With a greater number of people spending more time at home working remotely and travelling on the weekends, there is a clear opportunity to encourage this further by running offers at weekends, public holidays and potentially evenings so that people can still have the face-to-face social interactions which they used to have in the workplace.

Future travel patterns could be affected positively via Local Transport Plans, with networks developed in collaboration with operators to be included in local planning policy so they are linked to new housing and employment development.

Future Proofing
The way we as transport planners protect ourselves for the future is through effective scenario planning. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown how unprepared the transport industry were for unforeseen events. As the pandemic has changed the way we travel, perhaps indefinitely, the way we plan for the future needs to reflect that and prepare for other future threats. This must go beyond just planning for new variants or pandemics, we must plan for different economic futures (future crashes, growth or degrowth in major cities/success of levelling up, anti-globalisation), population change and of course climate change.[14]

Digitalisation

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[12] Department for Transport (2021) *Decarbonising Transport a Better, Greener Britain.* Department for Transport
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1009448/decarbonising-transport-a-better-greener-britain.pdf]
[13] Europe Commission (2017) *Electrification of the Transport System.* European Commission [https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/horizon2020/document.cfm?doc_id=46368]
[14] Curry, A. and Lyons, G. and Rohr, C. and Rothnie, A. and Smith, A. (2021) *Scenario planning for transport practitioners.* Transportation Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives [https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590198221001445]

Digitalisation will affect travel patterns in different ways. Firstly, it has allowed for home working to become feasible and popular, which may be expected to increase as the technology in home offices improves. This is likely to reduce travel at traditional commuter times but may increase the short trips made when home workers are at home, which are often made by walking or cycling, not returning to public transport. [15]

Advances in digital technology should allow for improvements in ticketing and the real time information available on public transport. With regards to ticketing, the goal should be to replicate London's Oyster system allowing for multi modal travel using one card.[16] There are countless examples of good real time information initiatives whether that's apps or information displayed on the network.[17] In general, operators should aim to provide as much information as possible in a concise and accessible manner.

Digitalisation and the evolution towards MaaS (mobility as a service) increase the use of multiple other modes of transport beyond public transport like taxis, shared options and other E-mobility. We consider it eminently possible to increase the use of other, complementary modes to PT without necessarily decreasing the use of public transport. Supporting the viability of E-scooters (shared or owned) can solve the first/last mile problem thereby increasing public transport ridership. Careful licensing of the commercial operation of shared e-mobility options is needed to strengthen, rather than weaken the commercial operation of mass public transport services.

3. What can be done to improve connectivity across public transport modes? How could better integration be delivered in urban areas outside London?

Subregional Transport Bodies

To replicate the successes of London it is worth looking at what Transport for London (TfL), and other similar regional transport bodies like Transport for West Midlands and Transport for Greater Manchester, do well. What is hugely important is to develop land use planning and transport policy at the same time. Doing this well means that all new developments can be sufficiently linked to the existing transport network. We cover this point further when answering question 6.

It's crucial that local authorities work collaboratively with public transport providers to develop an integrated network which can evolve and improve over time. It needs to consider interchanges, frequency, connectivity, comfort, and price, including simplified ticketing/pricing. Again, there are already good examples of this in some of our major cities, particularly TfL in London.[18]

[15] PJA (2021) *An analysis of travel and work, pre and post pandemic times.* PJA
[https://pja.co.uk/2021/09/15/6471/]
[16] Elliot, J. and Ford, M. and Umar, A (2019) *Smart and integrated ticketing options.* Transport for the South East
[https://transportforthesoutheast.org.uk/app/uploads/2020/11/Smart-and-integrated-ticketing-options.pdf]
[17] Jaffe E, (2018) *The real benefits of real-time transit data*. Sidewalk Talk
[https://medium.com/sidewalk-talk/the-real-benefits-of-real-time-transit-data-1fee19988b73
[18] Andison, P. and Dickie, J. and De Cani, R. and Nothstine, A. and Phillips, D and Tyndall, A

Mobility as a Service

Mobility as a Service (MaaS), or at least the principles of MaaS, should stand front and centre of robust future public transport plans, particularly in relation to payments and information.[19] This requires national leadership promoting behaviour change from private motor vehicles to a unified, non-car transport network (rather than leave individual operators or individual authorities to plough lone furrows). We also need to continue creating successful mobility hubs where future mobility (e-scooter/e-bikes etc) options provide the last mile connectivity to/from public transport.[20]

What is just as important as providing good public transport are the successful marketing and communication campaigns that promote the use of them. Many regions focus heavily on integrating operations networks but not enough get operators marketing and communications teams working collaboratively.

4. What are the likely areas of innovation in urban public transport over the next 10 years? How should public policy be shaped considering both incremental and transformational innovations? How could data help transport services meet consumer demand?

Data

There needs to be a greater emphasis on data within public transport policy. For example, ensuring people know how busy or quiet a service or specific carriage is or is expected to be before they embark on their journey is a simple way we can make public transport a more attractive option, particularly in a post COVID-19 world.

Another practical example of the use of data is replacing pre-paid season tickets with a retrospective payment system that charges you for the number of journeys actually undertaken rather than paying in advance for the number of days or journeys a user 'thinks' they're going to make.[21]

Vehicle technology

Of course, vehicle technology and quality must continue to improve, both in terms of emissions to meet our desired emissions targets, and internal comfort/facilities. At some point electrification and automation could help improve frequency and the network availability of public transport in both urban and rural areas. However, that change is likely still longer than 10 years away. Fuel supplies are still evolving for rail and bus operations and the demand for

(2021) *Transport in London New solutions for a changing city.* London First [https://www.londonfirst.co.uk/sites/default/files/documents/2021-01/TransportInLondon.pdf]

[19] International Association of Public Transport (2018) *Mobility as a Service: with great potential comes great discussion.* International Association of Public Transport [https://uitpsummit.org/mobility-as-a-service-with-great-potential-comes-great-discussion/]

[20] Collaborative Mobility UK (2019) *Mobility Hubs Guidance.* Collaborative Mobility UK [https://como.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Mobility-Hub-Guide-241019-final.pdf]

[21] Stagecoach (2018) *World's first 'retrospective pricing' rail ticketing app being tested by stagecoach.* Stagecoach [https://www.stagecoachgroup.com/media/news-releases/2018/2018-12-03.aspx]

sustainable electrical energy has the possibility to overwhelm supplies in the future. [22]

Road works
Data and connectivity must resolve problems associated with disruption on transport networks. Major road infrastructure works should be supported by a robust travel demand management plan to help road users to adapt their behaviours, which can include increasing their awareness of public transport options.

5. Are local authorities well equipped with appropriate funding and powers to deliver high-quality public transport services? Would further devolution of transport policy contribute to better outcomes?

Lack of capacity and capability and the differences in Local Authorities
In general, Local Authorities (LA's) lack the capacity and capability to deliver high quality public transport services, but this is not always the case everywhere. As mentioned previously, TfL and some of the other combined authorities located in urban conglomerates have the funding to deliver a frequent and good standard of service, particularly in the urban centres. However, outside of these city centres, and especially in rural England, the standard or provision drops off considerably.[23]

In these LA's with less capacity and capability, there is a substantial training demand to be met. Most new developments remain car dominated, and the authorities have neither the power nor the capacity to insist on public transport provision.[24] This is further complicated by the split in responsibilities for planning and transport across 2 tier authorities.

Support beyond funding
Funding alone is not always what LA's need. Those that plan and operate public transport (whether public or private sector) also require intellectual support.[25] Too many local authorities rely on consultant support without being able to increase in-house capabilities. Central government could drive support programmes that local authorities can tap into. These should offer support for all aspects of delivery from network planning through payment systems to behaviour change marketing and communications. The current model is inefficient.

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[22] Oudalov, A. and Salge, G. (2020) *Could electric vehicles pose a threat to our power systems?* World Economic Forum [https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/08/could-electric-vehicles-pose-a-threat-to-our-power-systems/]

[23] Kubitz, B. (2021) *Travel solutions for rural communities.* Smart Transport [https://www.smarttransport.org.uk/insight-and-policy/latest-insight-and-policy/travel-solutions-for-rural-communities]

[24] Transport for New Homes (2022) *Building Car Dependency: The Tarmac Suburbs of the Future*. Transport for New Homes [https://www.transportfornewhomes.org.uk/the-project/building-car-dependency/]

[25] Department for Transport (2022) *Call for transport leaders to help 'super-charge' skills and build future workforce.* Department for Transport [https://www.gov.uk/government/news/call-for-transport-leaders-to-help-super-charge-skills-and-build-future-workforce]

6. Could better policy coordination across government departments, and between central and local government, improve public transport outcomes? If so, how can this be achieved?

Transport and planning policy in sync
Integrated transport and land-use planning at the regional level is an absolute necessity for a transfer of car-dependence to public transport usage. A unified approach means they can be mutually supportive in achieving wider social and environmental objectives that public transport supports. Currently the policies in the Department for Transport and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities tend not to be mutually reinforcing and regularly pull in opposite directions. The same occurs between central and local government and within different local authorities.

The National Planning Policy Framework may need reviewing to align it with other transport and decarbonisation objectives. A national strategic plan could help, as would more effective and integrated spatial plans looking at places, people and functionality rather than separated by (generally overlapping and interdependent) topics (e.g., transport and land use). We have spoken about this topic in more detail elsewhere.[26]

We must focus on policy adherence and delivery as well as policy setting. Policy implementation is where the system can unravel as those delivering programmes slowly dilute the impact of the policy as competing needs emerge at a local level.[27] The closer to the coal face things get the more the risk that the policy delivery gets derailed by other pressures.

7. **What are the barriers to improving urban public transport, in terms of delivering the necessary infrastructure, increasing connectivity and improving the consumer experience**?

Long term funding
Local authorities need to have the confidence that investment will be consistent and guaranteed over a long period of time to give them the ability to properly plan for the future. Funding should ideally be ringfenced and government must communicate to Local Authorities over what time frame the funding applies and what future funding past this time frame may look like. Local authorities need to be able to think strategically about public transport provision rather than just worrying about the day to day running of the service and bidding for future funding which is too often the case under the current funding regime.[28]

Behaviour change

[26] The Transport Planning Society (2020) *State of the Nations: Transport Planning for a Sustainable Future.* The Transport Planning Society
[https://tps.org.uk/public/downloads/P0_Ey/SON%20Final%20report%20rev.pdf]
[27] Hudson, B. and Hunter, B. and Peckham, S (2019) *Policy failure and the policy-implementation gap: can policy support programs help?* Policy Design and Practice
[https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/25741292.2018.1540378]
[28] Mallows R. (2021) *Fundamental shift in funding to local level needed to help level up English towns.* National Infrastructure Commission [https://nic.org.uk/news/fundamental-shift-in-funding-to-local-level-needed-to-help-level-up-english-towns-recommends-commission/]

The logistics of consultations can act as a barrier to innovative and experimental public transport projects coming to fruition. Poorly conceived and executed public consultations can provide a platform for negative responses making it a lot harder for politicians to accept proposals. We have seen this with recent Low Traffic Neighbourhood consultations.[29] We already know that in many cases innovative, newer initiatives are by their nature likely to be met with scepticism, so we suggest a (new) model of engagement that focuses on behaviour change and encapsulates all audience segments. Engaging communities is necessary and still a hugely important part of project delivery, but this should be centred around the government's own statements on the need for change.

8. Are there other important changes, not covered elsewhere in these questions, which would improve matters?

Unintended consequences
There are many issues not covered here which will potentially impact public transport. A current example of unintended consequences surrounds the electric vehicle debate. This technological solution to decarbonisation has the risk of further promoting and embedding car ownership and use, with further detrimental impacts on the viability of public transport. Electric vehicle congestion is still congestion even if it's electric powered. The bus remains stuck in a queue, and without some form of user charging, the reduced operating costs of EV's will tip the generalised cost balance further towards EV, inducing car demand and reducing PT patronage.[30]

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[29] Local Government Association (2021) *Stakeholder engagement in an emergency: Lessons from low-traffic neighbourhoods*. Local Government Association
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Greener Britain Transport Planning Society's Full Response. Transport Planning Society
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