

Accessibility planning challenges under the spotlight

With local authorities now starting to put together their next round of local transport plans it was highly appropriate that the latest TPS bursary to be completed deals with accessibility planning – a concept that will frame the LTP production process. The paper *Making accessibility planning the focus of strategy development and transport provision in a local area* by Helen Cumiskey of JMP has prompted the TPS to push for outstanding issues on accessibility planning to be resolved (see article below).

In her paper Helen examined issues on accessing employment in the ward of Bewsey and Whitecross in Warrington, which is one of England's 10% most deprived wards. Although Warrington "is a car dominated environment", nearly 43% of households in Bewsey and Whitecross do not have a car. Many job opportunities were simply not accessible from the ward by bus, or only accessible at limited times of the day, Helen said. Those that were, often required interchange because of the lack of cross-town services in Warrington, due to the failure of traditional bus net-

works to evolve with the changing needs of passengers. Having to change buses was a significant disincentive to users because of time and security concerns, she said. Even where buses linked to business parks and employment opportunities, suitable pedestrian access from the bus stop to facilities was often not provided as so many the employment sites were designed for car access. "It is important to acknowledge that this is not a problem specific to the Warrington area, it is a land use planning issue faced across the country," Helen said. Using accessibility planning means there will be policy conflicts between tackling social exclusion and encouraging mode shift, so some tough choices will have to be made, she concluded. Colin Brader, the member of the TPS Committee who acted as a mentor for Helen, commended the paper. "This topic particularly pertinent and fascinating as we await the DfT guidance on the second round of LTPs. Helen has made an excellent effort, and her case study from Merseyside provides lessons that could easily be expanded to a national level."

TPS tackles contradictions in accessibility planning

With both the government and the main opposition party promoting a policy of increased choice in both health and education, transport planners are facing new and not readily solvable accessibility issues, warned TPS Committee Member and ITP Director Colin Brader. Building on the points raised in Helen Cumiskey's bursary paper, the TPS will push for this and other contradictions to be resolved before the LTP production process begins in earnest. The accessibility framework guiding the second round of LTPs means that the best solutions to improving access to services may not be provided through transport provision, but rather through better decisions on the location of services. Designing a solution will inevitably require the involvement of many different sectors – and there is a pressing need for these sectors to be represented during the LTP decision-making processes. The right solution may have to be financed from a source outside the usual transport capital pot, and it is not yet clear where such funding is best found, Colin said. Also, such accessibility driven strategies clearly have a relationship with spatial strategies – yet both operate on different timelines, he pointed out, while it was not clear which would provide the context for land allocation.

'A good start' on walking and cycling

On the very day of its launch the government's action plan on walking and cycling came under scrutiny at the TPS event *Tipping the Balance: Are we moving forward on achieving more walking and cycling?* Many aspects of the plan were welcome, speaker Roger Geffen of CTC told the audience, particularly that the DfT was putting together a manual for streets, that would help avoid some of the highway howlers that pedestrians and cyclists currently had to negotiate. Further clarification on the highway rules for cyclists was still needed, he added. The ten year plan needed to be bolder – encouraging more walking and cycling needs traffic restraint, he concluded. Jo Pike of Living Streets said the action plan provided more recognition for walking and cycling than ever before. Both speakers stressed the value of individualised travel planning. "The reason that children are driven to school is because they do not know how to walk safely," Jo Pike said. The third speaker, Alix Stredwick of the Women's Design Service told the audience about a project she was running in London to encourage more women to cycle by providing them with cycle training and other support. Interest in the scheme showed there was a huge amount of suppressed demand for cycling, she said, and the main reason for women joining the scheme was to boost their confidence. The project helped identify barriers to cycling – security was a big problem, particularly where the women lived in flats that had no storage facilities. Providing fold-away bikes was one solution, Alix said.

Events

7-8 July *Turning Ideas into Reality* 2nd UK Transport Practitioners' Meeting, Aston University, Birmingham. Contact PTRC T: 020 7348 1970 E: info@ptrc-training.co.uk

14 July *Birmingham City Centre Tour* organised by TPS West Midlands, starting 18.30. Contact Keith Homer T: 0121 214 7385. E: KeithHomer@centro.org.uk

21 July *What future for the suburbs?* 18.30, ICE, 1 Great George Street, London SW1. Speakers include Prof Marcial Echenique and Terence Bendixson. Contact Ann Scannell, T: 020 7665 2229 E: Ann.Scannell@ice.org.uk

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