

2005 showed again that transport is not a major election issue, yet transport planners claim that there are mounting problems that should be addressed.

- > Have transport planners got it wrong?
- > Should the general public really be concerned?
- > And, if so, how can this "gap" in understanding be rectified?

Meera Rambissoon

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank the TPS and Stephen Joseph at Transport 2000 for giving me the opportunity to explore and write on this exciting topic, my mentor Tony Bolden, whose continued support and good humour has been invaluable, my mother, my guiding light, and my father to whom this is dedicated.

## Contents

1. Introduction: transport – the ‘troublesome teenager’?	4
2. The General election 2005: transport, conspicuous by its absence	5
3. Should transport be a major election issue?	6
What lobbying organisations and the media think?	
Why is transport disappearing from the election radar?	
4. What do the public think about transport?	8
A review of opinion polls and Department for Transport findings	
A review of issues covered in the print media	
5. What do the professionals think: transport problems and the problematic nature of transport	11
6. Mind the gap – reconciling the viewpoints between transport professionals and the public	13
7. Conclusions: time to start caring about the 'troublesome teenager'?	15
Appendices	17
Appendix A	
Summary table of MORI Political Monitor: Long Term Trends. The Most Important Issues Facing Britain Today	
Appendix B	
Summary of review of Local Transport Today’s Media Monitor pages between March 2005 and March 2006	
Appendix C	
Transport professionals consulted	
Bibliography	26

## 1. INTRODUCTION: TRANSPORT - THE 'TROUBLESOME TEENAGER'?

*"Transport is a bit like the troublesome teenager the government don't like to talk about. It is always hanging around, not helping much (politically), and demanding a vast amount of mum and dad's money... But in the list of things that would improve your life, would getting around more easily feature quite highly? Quite possibly. It is not a big election issue, but that doesn't mean transport is not a big issue."*

Tom Symonds<sup>1</sup> analogy<sup>2</sup>, one day before the general election, holds a sharp lens up to an issue that has frustrated the media, lobbying organisations and transport planners alike: the slippage of transport from the election agenda, an issue possibly greater than that of transport itself. He encapsulates the conundrum: why isn't transport a big election issue, when it clearly affects people's everyday lives?

This position paper is intended to explore the following key issues:

- Should transport be a major issue at general election?  
This section reviews the 2005 manifestos of the leading parties and how transport featured; and what transport-related lobbying organisations, the media and transport planners thought about its 'presence' during election.
- What the public think  
Gauged by a review of public opinion polls, Department of Transport statistics on behaviour and attitudes, and transport issues covered in leading tabloids and broadsheets between March 2005 and 2006.
- What the transport professionals think are the 'mounting problems'  
35 transport planners were consulted on their views<sup>3</sup>.
- Is there a gap in understanding between the professionals and public, and how can it be rectified?
- Finally, what are the solutions and how can transport gain greater public and political recognition?

---

<sup>1</sup> BBC News transport correspondent

<sup>2</sup> 4 May 2005

<sup>3</sup> over the phone, via email, or in person

## 2. THE GENERAL ELECTION ISSUE 2005: TRANSPORT, CONSPICUOUS BY ITS ABSENCE

The strap-line on the front of the Conservative manifesto reflects the extent to which transport featured in last year's General Election campaign – *"More police. Cleaner hospitals. Lower Taxes. School Discipline. Controlled Immigration"*. In the manifesto itself, transport is in no way treated as a core issue - its bare mention of three/four small paragraphs out of 28 pages comes under another key issue, 'accountability', which together with the issues on the front cover gets its own chapter heading. Where it is mentioned, transport is related to the individual, specifically to the motorist; transport problems are identified as, primarily, the 'war on motorists', carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions and road safety. Priorities are improving conditions and roads for drivers; making low-carbon emission cars cheaper; extending successful rail franchises and reviewing speed cameras.

The Labour manifesto, also, does not on focus transport independently and two out of 112 pages are devoted to transport under the heading of 'Economy: Rising prosperity in an opportunity society'. Transport is referred to as a 'vital' issue – albeit in relation to other contexts: *"An efficient transport system is vital to the country's future, to our economy and to our quality of life."*

The manifesto identifies problems of a pressurised transport system, road congestion, road safety and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Their priorities include investment; better management and planning; road-pricing in the long term; public transport, walking and cycling and steps to reduce pollutant emissions.

The Liberal Democrats' manifesto gave transport the highest priority with its own chapter '*Getting Britain Moving*', and integrated it with other issues, most notably the environment and school transport. Problems centred on the environment, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and rail. Priorities were green transport policies such as more congestion charging, better public transport, and reforming aviation taxes.

With perhaps the exception of the Liberal Democrats' manifesto, you could almost miss the mention of transport.

### 3. SHOULD TRANSPORT BE A MAJOR ELECTION ISSUE?

In the run up to the election, key transport lobbying organisations certainly urged, even challenged the political parties to make transport an election priority.

The Association of British Drivers asked<sup>4</sup> *"which party will offer the UK the transport choices it so badly needs?"* and called for the political parties to *"put transport issues at the centre of their manifestos"*. The RAC Foundation<sup>5</sup> warned that a *"hidden transport crisis is looming if the new Government buries its head in the sand and fails to develop and fund a national transport strategy..."*. Transport 2000<sup>6</sup> *"criticised politicians... for effectively ignoring transport and the environment in their election campaigns... in their obsession with education, health, immigration and the economy"*.

An AA Trust spokesperson suggested that for the Government, transport's lack of prominence was a success given that allegedly: *"Alistair Darling's brief was to keep transport off the front pages."*

Similarly, the Times, Independent, Observer and the Sunday Mirror all bemoaned the absence of transport in the election debate. The Sunday Mirror's motoring columnist stood up for *"the 30 million licence holders"* who Labour have *"routinely neglected, abused and marginalised"* and offered the Tory leader some advice:

*"... offer them some real and substantial transport policies that make a difference... most of all reassure this disaffected, browbeaten and overtaxed motoring electorate that, if you were in power, you'd spend more on roads."*

The Times' journalist Patrick Kidd predicted<sup>7</sup> almost in despair as much as sarcasm:

*"...it is more likely that transport will have a lower profile in the election than a Turkey Twizzler at a Jamie Oliver barbecue... Why is transport always the bridesmaid in elections? Do politicians not think that people care about the freedom to move?"*

Kidd criticises Labour's lack of achievement halfway into the Ten Year Transport Plan and the lack of criticism from the Opposition. He comments that ways to improve transport are either too technical for the public to understand or too expensive. The Independent<sup>8</sup> surmised from the Labour manifesto that: *"there are major transport schemes proposed but few firm commitments to do more than think about building them"*.

Closest to election day the Observer<sup>9</sup> expressed considerable disillusionment: *"Just how much will it cost to haul Britain's creaking transport infrastructure to 21<sup>st</sup> century standards? Don't ask the two main political parties; it's something they'd rather not contemplate... Perhaps because the sheer scale of fiscal commitment needed has stunned Labour and Conservatives into silence, transport issues are not on the 2005 radar..."*.

---

<sup>4</sup> Press release of 12 April 2005

<sup>5</sup> Press release of 29 April 2005

<sup>6</sup> Press release of 6 May 2005

<sup>7</sup> 5 April 2005

<sup>8</sup> April, exact date missed out of Local Transport Today

<sup>9</sup> 17 April 2005

It seems that the only times when transport was mentioned in an election context were when the newspapers talked about its absence - they resorted to campaigning to raise the issue of transport.

Most transport planners consulted agreed that transport was not a major issue and all agreed that it *should* be. Three pointed out the difference between the general/national picture and the local, where transport, in their view, features as a high priority. One transport planner commented "*Transport is always around the middle somewhere - it's more of an issue locally.*"

### **Why is transport disappearing from the election radar?**

Several planners explained the gradual disappearance of transport by imperceptible differences on transport between the main parties and being overshadowed "*behind the usual suspects of taxation and education*". Some noted that whilst transport is important to people's lives, it isn't, or has not been allowed to be a deciding factor.

One professional reflected about the parties that: "*each is trying to occupy the middle ground and anything too radical might cause them to lose votes. So anything that could be spun by the opposite party as a 'cost' or an additional tax is shied away from. Increases in tax... significant increases in fuel duty... road pricing etc are all therefore avoided in the national debate.*"

Another reflected that the "*unique nature of transport as a means to an end means it's something that's criticised when it's going wrong, but not noticed when it's going right... Despite rhetoric, major parties think similarly about transport. Perhaps it's at a bit of an impasse: traditional roads solutions are expensive... and tend to worsen the long-term situation; rail is in a mess and the main aim is to get spending under control; and promoting walking, cycling and even buses perhaps lacks the glamour of major photo opportunities*".

So, transport is too costly and difficult to deal with, too complicated to explain to the voting public and too politically risky to be raised as a key election issue. Therefore, it seems to have been pushed to the back of the pecking order, behind tax, education, crime and so forth. It is not 'sexy' enough - unless it's going wrong. This seems to be a depressing but accurate synopsis of why politicians keep it out of the election spotlight: the troublesome teenager the Government don't like to talk about. Yet it was more of a prominent issue a few years ago: "*remember the fuel price revolt? As recently as 2002 the conservatives rated the botched rail privatisation as one of their biggest electoral liabilities. Some people think that Alistair Darling's main achievement has been getting transport off the public agenda*" one transport planner commented. No wonder the government does not like to talk about transport, but pushing it under the electoral carpet doesn't eliminate the problems.

#### 4. WHAT DO THE PUBLIC THINK?

##### A review of opinion polls and Department for Transport findings

If transport has gradually been disappearing from the general election, Garrett Emmerson's<sup>10</sup> words from Local Transport Today<sup>11</sup> come as little surprise: *"As the MORI data published in LTT clearly showed... over the last three years, transport has steadily declined as a public priority from 22% identifying it as a key issue in 2002 to just 4% today"*.

Only 4% of 1,000 survey respondents in March 2005 identified transport without prompting as either the most important issue facing Britain today or an important issue. Low-level interest has been the overall trend since MORI carried out its surveys in the current format<sup>12</sup>. The highest figure for transport was 22% in January 2002. The key issues identified by the March 2005 poll were crime/law & order, defence, education, the NHS and race relations/immigration. Transport ranked only joint 16<sup>th</sup> on the list of vital topics, alongside the environment (see Appendix A).

Indeed, a review of MORI and Populus<sup>13</sup> polls and findings from 2005 identifies two patterns. Either the issue of transport is rated by the public as a low priority in comparison with other, more dominant issues, or the issue of transport is not included as a key issue in the polls themselves. For example a Times poll<sup>14</sup> asked whether the interviewee trusts the Conservative party in dealing with a list of key issues – from the economy to policies for family – transport was not included, although the environment was.

The picture is, however, very different:

1. when the public are asked about transport directly, not in relation to other issues, or are asked about issues without any prompting of what those are;
2. at the local level; and
3. between the years of 2000 and 2003.

Data from MORI surveys and Department for Transport (DfT) findings between 2000 and 2006<sup>15</sup> showed the following:

##### Transport Problems

- transport problems were spontaneously cited by 32% of respondents – more than twice as many as any other issue except crime and vandalism, which scored 28% (2000).
- Congestion was considered the main single transport problem.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Chair of Local Transport Planning Network, member of Commission for Integrated Transport and Head of transportation at Buckinghamshire County Council.

<sup>11</sup> 12 May 2005

<sup>12</sup> July 1997

<sup>13</sup> YouGov and politics.co.uk were examined; their polls weren't relevant to this paper

<sup>14</sup> 2 to 5 December 2005, phone interview of 1014 18+

<sup>15</sup> MORI survey for the Commission for Integrated Transport (CfIT) 2000; DfT's 'Public Attitudes to Transport in England' 2002; MORI's survey 'Transport in Britain: Latest Trends' 2003; DfT's Transport Trends 2005; DfT's Public attitudes to congestion and road pricing 2006; DfT's Attitudes to car use March 2006; DfT's Attitudes to climate change and the importance of transport 2006

<sup>16</sup> 87% of respondents considered road congestion to be a serious problem in the country as a whole (2006); 72% found road congestion a major problem in their local area (2003); four in ten saw transport

## **A predominance towards car use<sup>17</sup>**

(2006)

- Cars were the most frequently used form of transport - 40% said they never used a train; 37% never got on a bus.<sup>18</sup>
- 51% of car drivers never investigated other options when planning a one-off journey.
- 30% of respondents agreed '*people should be allowed to use their cars as much as they like, even if it causes damage to the environment*'.

## **Views on road pricing**

When respondents were asked in 2006 how road pricing would affect them personally, 27% indicated no impact because they did not drive; 10% indicated it would lead a change of behaviour; 24% would not change their behaviour (because they were unable to or did not want to).

## **Transport and environmental issues**

The proportion of people who understood that emissions from transport are a major factor contributing to climate change increased to 65% in 2001 (from 40% in 1993 and 1996/7)<sup>19</sup>

Transport is also identified as an important factor in choosing where to live;<sup>20</sup> of those who had moved in the last five year, 31% said access to good transport links (public and road) were a very important consideration in deciding where to live.

In the context of or when superseded by other issues, transport is not in the public consciousness or is not prompted to be. When asked about transport, the public does care about it and can identify mounting problems that they feel need to be addressed. The statistics provide a picture of a majority of car users whose priority is related around transport improvements, especially the alleviation of road congestion, which would make their life easier. They want choice and freedom.

---

as the most important local issue with congestion cited as the main problem (2002); 70% deeming local government responsible for tackling congestion in towns and cities (2001).

<sup>17</sup> According to the DfT's Transport Trends 2005: four out of five motorists are at least occasional public transport users; buses: a quarter of respondents cited fares, reliability and frequency as the key issues to be addressed in the next few years; rail increased by over 40% over the last 10 years despite effects of Hatfield crash, October 2000.

<sup>18</sup> although, conversely, 22% wanted to see improved conditions for motorists while nearly three times as many - 66% wanted to see public transport improved

<sup>19</sup> according to surveys of public attitudes to environment in England by DEFRA.

<sup>20</sup> DfT's Attitudes to car use, 2006

## A review of issues covered in the print media

This section is based on a review of the Local Transport Today Media Monitor pages to see what transport issues were covered in the leading tabloids and broad-sheets<sup>21</sup> between March 2005 and 2006<sup>22</sup> (See Appendix B.)

The difference in the political persuasion and readership of the newspapers, in broad terms, between the tabloids and the broadsheets, is reflected in the topics that are reported, particularly in the way that certain topics are reported on, whether negative or positively if not neutral.

The tabloids are more against than for transport issues mentioned; the most common issues<sup>23</sup> and number of mentions are:

- Speed cameras – 11
- Road pricing – 5
- Rising fuel costs – 5
- Government acting against environmental considerations – 3

As with the public polls and DfT findings, we get a picture of a predominantly motorist majority who do not want to be penalised. The broad-sheets on the other hand, report issues relatively more neutrally (with the exception of the Times and Telegraph) and analytically. They focus more on environmental issues in relation to transport, and are critical of Government performance on transport. For example the Independent on Sunday refers to air and road expansion as *"the ultimate drug we are willing to pay any price for"*.

A comparison of readers' letters is telling. The Observer received four letters castigating it for backing Labour in the general election in that they blame Labour for ignoring the impact that transport is having on climate change. Similarly, a reader's letter to the Guardian points out its contradiction of having a travel section. Conversely, the Daily Express received three letters against road charging proposals, one describing it has 'Orwellian', another 'Stalinistic'. The Times, on the other hand, criticises Darling for delaying on road charging to such an extent.

It is, however, the tabloids that the majority read and like the review of public opinion polls and statistics on public attitudes shows, again we see a majority who care, specifically, about choice, not being restricted, in this context by higher taxation on cars and planes or speed cameras. The dilemma is that the public, the *"30 million licence holders"* want congestion to be alleviated, but if tabloid views represent them, they are wholly against road user charging.

---

<sup>21</sup> the Daily Mirror, Sunday Mirror, Daily Star, News of the World, and Sun, Daily Express, Daily Mail, Mail on Sunday, Metro, Standard, Daily Telegraph, Times, Sunday Times, Financial Times, Guardian, Observer, Independent, and Independent on Sunday. UK newspapers are grouped into three groups, mass market tabloids or red-tops such as the Sun, middle-market tabloids, such as the Daily Mail/Express and quality broadsheets such as the Times. I have differentiated between the tabloids and the broadsheets as the patterns are most evident between the two.

<sup>22</sup> as another way of helping to gauge what issues are important to the public. This approach, of course, assumes that the newspapers reflect the views of the public (as opposed to shaping them) and needs to be taken with a degree of flexibility.

<sup>23</sup> I reviewed predominant themes and topics, not one-off ones, to see what issues newspapers were for and against.

## 5. WHAT DO THE PROFESSIONALS THINK: TRANSPORT PROBLEMS AND THE PROBLEMATIC NATURE OF TRANSPORT

The views of 35 transport planners (See Appendix C) were sought on:

- what they think are the main problems in transport
- whether the public share their view and should they care

A summary of their responses identifies the following 'top' problems (mentioned more than once) and the percentage of planners who identified them:

### **Congestion** (26%)

Just as the public identified congestion as the main transport problem, it featured as top on the professionals' list – or at least they acknowledged that it was perceived to a problem by the public:

*"The overriding concern expressed is that congestion and the perception that it exists, in all the towns I have worked, is that it is terrible getting around all the time by car and it is getting worse, nobody cares and nobody is spending any money on it."*

Transport planners connected congestion with arising problems of air pollution, impacts on journey time, unreliability, and curbing regeneration.

### **Lack of funding** (26%)

Specifically:

- capital finance needed for worthwhile and innovative transport schemes, for example new public transport, or maintaining and improving existing infrastructure and services
- lack of sustained funding and a shortage of revenue funds

They most frequently mention lack of funding/revenue as an obstruction to public transport delivery and encouraging modal shift.

### **Lack of political will** (20%)

Political champions and the courage to take progressive decisions which will potentially 'upset' the majority, are identified as a vital factor to successful transport, with London and good practice in Europe cited as examples. The lack of political courageousness and government commitment – together with a lack of committed funding – are identified as preventing change, in deference to the voting majority:

*"Politicians realise people want independence and choice, and are wary and nervous of closing down people's choices... Politicians don't want to be seen as interventionist, though they are happy to talk about improving choices and making fair interventions."*

### **Pollution/air quality/environment** (17%)

The problems of pollution and poor air quality draw the strongest connection between transport and the environment, where planners call for action and demand management.

### **(Poor) Quality of public transport** (14%)

This ranged from the overarching problems – inadequate funding or lack of government will to increase capacity – to limited or overly expensive services,

overcrowding on trains and poor bus punctuality. The problem of the public's perception of public transport was also identified.

**Cost of transport (11%)**

Transport planners highlight that the costs of motoring have fallen in real terms, yet the comparative cost of using public transport has risen dramatically, cementing dependence on the car and preventing modal shift to public transport.

**Lack of modal shift from the car to alternative, more sustainable transport (11%)**

The professionals highlight the problem of a lack of shift from car-dependency<sup>24</sup> to 'healthy', 'sustainable' and 'energy efficient' transport. The government/decision-makers are blamed for not enabling this shift as are the public's perception of alternatives to the car and their "lack of understanding that individual behaviour has a major impact on these issues". This is identified as "a long-term problem requiring major policy interventions."

**Inconsistency between transport policy and other, wider policies (9%)**

Transport planners highlight the "failure of central government to deal with transport issues in a joined up way, across modes and recognising transport's contribution to other policy objectives". Several planners refer to the breach between transport and land-use planning in the context of the 'Sustainable Communities Plan' and its failures to address the sustainability agenda and enable accessibility.

**Negative role of media (9%)**

This was identified as obstructive to promoting transport. One professional identified "a focus in the media on negative news stories relating to discrimination against motorist... The only time that the press seems to get behind transport proposals is if they are seen as "sexy" or "prestige" major infrastructure schemes." This compares to the situation in Europe, where transport is portrayed positively and there are frequent reports on new, up-and-coming projects.

It is also noted that "small motoring lobbies have a high level of influence in terms of media coverage and political perceptions about public attitudes to motoring. Any rise in the cost of motoring, or anything which affects speeds... now gets a pretty awful press even if it is a logical and reasonable reaction to a particular problem".

The professionals identify two levels of transport problems: direct, 'real' problems, such as congestion and pollution on the one hand and indirect, wider problems, on the other, based on how transport is perceived, especially by the public, and how it is reported by the media or treated by the government. This highlights the difference between transport problems and the problematic nature of transport. But how can long-term problems and perceptions be changed?

---

<sup>24</sup> which the professionals associate with traffic growth and link it to knock-on effects in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, poor air quality, road traffic accidents, rising obesity and local congestion.

## 6. MIND THE GAP – RECONCILING THE DIFFERING VIEWPOINTS BETWEEN TRANSPORT PROFESSIONALS AND THE PUBLIC

The premise of this paper assumes that a fundamental gap in understanding exists between what the transport professionals think and want on transport, and what the public at large, the voting majority, think and want. So, do the problems and views identified vary greatly between the two camps?

Attempts to gauge the public's views on transport has shown the following trends:

- that the public do care about transport but care about choice, freedom and (low) cost
- a seemingly motorist majority who don't often use public transport and who want choice and the alleviation of road congestion (though not road pricing) so they can around more freely, and who don't want restrictions such as speed cameras.

Communication with transport planners has identified serious problems in and with transport that they believe need to be resolved, from congestion, to the views that the public hold and/or are encouraged to hold, and the attitude and role of the Government. They want:

- politicians to give transport greater attention, take more risks, commit more funding to transport and tackle long-term problems;
- the public to rate transport as an issue – to understand the problems and the true costs, and acknowledge their responsibility in the travel behaviours they choose; and
- the media to take responsibility for its role in shaping public opinion over transport and do so positively.

Comparing and contrasting their views shows some interesting points:

The public identifies road congestion as the main problem with transport, according to the polls and statistics. When the professionals refer to congestion as a problem, however, it is insofar as the public identifies it as a problem:

*"Congestion remains the number one concern of the greatest number of people... The difficulty is that these are simply perceptions. If you look at the data, the actual experience of congestion in cities is a problem that is still only experienced for around 3-4 hours a day..."*

The public is very much against rising costs of fuel prices, yet transport planners highlight that the costs of motoring have fallen in real terms, and wish that the public realise the true costs of transport in its wider context:

*"...people are unaware of the wider costs and politics needs to respond to this. When people choose where to live, transport and its true costs are not played into their decision. There are a lot of complex factors that go into people's decisions but transport is not seen as a critical determinant."*

The 'gap' is not necessarily a direct gap in understanding but a difference in approach, viewpoint and realms of knowledge and experience. Firstly, the public aren't stupid, and secondly, they are naturally concerned with their experience of transport, insofar as they are users and consumers who want the product/service they use to be as free from restriction and cheap as possible.

Professionally, transport planners need to be aware of the issues, and see, even try to prevent or counteract the problems with the way the 'services' are delivered. They have to deal with funding difficulties, planning and accessibility and environmental targets. How and what the transport planners think the public should think is, of course, not necessarily going to be the same as how and what the public think - nor should it be. Equally, how the public think and how the public behave aren't necessarily going to be the same. They know cars and aviation are pollutant but they don't stop or cut down on their use of those modes.

Part of reconciling the problems with transport, and the gap between transport planner and public views, lies in informing, empowering and mobilising the public. Transport planners thought the following solutions would enable this:

**Debate and education** was the most popular solution advocated, that is to engage the public, not alienate them, in open honest debate, so as to educate and inform their understanding, so as to enable a behavioral change and to counter unsubstantiated claims made by motoring pressure groups:

*"People need to understand the significance of transport... people don't know the facts... or believe that the cost of car travel has in real terms got cheaper."*

#### **Enabling behavioral change**

People are starting to believe in the existence of climate change but they need to understand the interaction between different issues. In a sense the public 'have it too easy' in terms of getting into their car and making unlimited trips. One planner suggests *"We have to internalise the external costs of transport so people make more rational decisions, based around choice and price... more sustained smarter choices... to help encourage motorists to reduce their car use."*

#### **Linking transport to popular voting issues**

To make people care and take proper notice of transport, it needs to be linked with the issues that people do care and vote about, as one planner encapsulates: *"The debate needs to be widened beyond transport to have any hope of winning hearts and minds... Experts have a part to play, but this is an approach that would depend a lot more on understanding how the issues are viewed by 'ordinary people' - they are the experts on the problems they experience..."*

Of course professionals dictating or trying to directly influence how people think isn't necessarily the right approach. The public needs to be and feel empowered. This means a subtle approach that reaches out to their aspirations and expectations - in their language, frames of reference and in terms of what they value.

A gap that does need breaching is that between what both the professionals and the public want - namely improved transport - and what the government is going to do about it.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS: TIME TO START CARING FOR THE 'TROUBLESOME TEENAGER'?

The question that the conclusion of the paper seeks to address, what is the way forward, begs the question, as one transport planner commented, "*we're here at the moment, but where do we want to be?*"

If we want better transport and an end to the problems, does transport necessarily have to be a major issue at general election when it has such local level importance? If the main parties don't include it in their manifesto and campaigns, can transport not be raised in other ways?

The vicious circle is that at election time, people want better education and health but transport is left aside; as a result, government don't bother covering it. We cannot expect the public to care and know about transport issues, when those issues aren't properly raised or explained, nor when the media reports on transport in largely negative terms. The public does not get an accurate picture of transport issues. They are prone to the media manipulating their views, whereas the government seems to pander to their views. Even the professionals, who are erudite on transport, should not necessarily know or be deemed to know 'what's best' and will have their own biases and motives.

### **So, what are the options in order to break the circle?**

Either: nothing changes - transport stays off the election radar, problems continue to worsen and presumably spiral out of control. Politicians would keep their votes but the public, and the environment, bears the brunt of transport problems and pays in non-financial terms if not in taxes. This isn't really an option so we are left with the following scenarios:

Either:

(a) Government and politicians change - become courageous and promote difficult and unpopular decisions on transport, and proactively regiment a modal shift to more sustainable forms of transport and integrate transport with other, wider policy issues, primarily planning.

Or

(b) The media help by celebrating positive transport stories and debate the issues that need addressing.

Or

(c) the public change - their attitudes and more crucially, their behaviour, reduce their dependence on the car, think about how they travel and travel more sustainably.

The status quo and brushing transport under the carpet is simply not sustainable or feasible but the solution means changing minds, attitudes, behaviour and opinions, changing the system - a process that is neither quick nor easy.

The options a) to c) aren't 'either/or': Government, the media, the public – each has a role to play. The transport professionals can campaign on the relevance of transport to other fields of life that affect the public most directly. The media can help to tease out the issues, cajole government into action, and deliver more positive transport messages. Government needs long-term political leadership and courage, not short-term party politics, and this means drastic overhaul and change.

This also means that there will be winners and losers: between different sections of the public; urban and rural; and different parts of the UK. Identifying these constituents is one of the real challenges that needs to be addressed. If politicians promote unpopular decisions, like implementing national road user charging, surely the public will 'lose out', feel restricted against using their cars - and pay more in direct and time costs. They might actually benefit from a better transport system but would the Government then lose votes and risk public revolt? Is government in a position, not to mention willing, to do this? If they put more funding into improving transport where will the money come from? Will other sectors lose out financially? If the media stops criticising and starts praising transport would the public still buy the newspapers, more specifically the tabloids, if they talk less in terms that the public relate to and on less controversial topics?

Changing policies, political tack, and behaviours will all mean a change in dynamics which will affect people. This could be in terms of changing social, environmental and economic patterns, a shift between urban and rural contexts, patterns and population balance, between national, regional and local decisions, governance and agenda, and finally between the short and long terms.

Helping and changing the troublesome teenager will be difficult and challenging but, crucially, not impossible. The troublesome teenager needs to be cared about and measures need to be taken to give it the resolutions it deserves.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

#### Summary table of MORI Political Monitor: Long Term Trends. The Most Important Issues Facing Britain Today

Issue	Percentage of people surveyed who identified each issue as important					
	July 1997	Mar 1999	Mar 2001	Jan 2002	Mar 2005	Mar 2006
Transport/public transport	4	3	6	<b>22</b>	<b>4</b>	3
NHS	46	34	37	66	44	37
Race relations/immigration	4	5	10	16	33	30
Crime, law & order etc	23	16	16	23	29	26
Economy	14	15	9	12	12	9
Defence	2	4	1	5	24	29

## Appendix B

### Summary of review of Local Transport Today's Media Monitor pages between March 2005 and March 2006

<b>THE DAILY EXPRESS</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Issues covered</b>
9 March 05	Support Tory call for removal of road humps
18 March 05	Warn of fuel prices rocketing.
9 April 05	Anger at European commission paper calling for 55 mph speed limit; separate story speed cameras as way of raising stealth tax
23 April 05	Possible pre-election protests over fuel rises
30 April 05	Drivers to protest against speed cameras by driving slowly on May bank holiday, 5000 drivers predicted to show
20 May 05	Anger at decision on speeding police driver to go free
6 June 05	£16,000 a year if you want to drive on Britain's roads – reaction to road user charging
9 August 05	Record breaking petrol prices (£1 a litre)
23 August 05	Ridicule high cost but unused park and ride site in Doncaster
17 November 05	Decry rise in parking fines - up 50%
13, 14 September 05	Top Gear's Jeremy Clarkson having had a pie thrown in his face for receiving an honorary degree – a stunt carried out on environmental grounds
15,16 May 06	Readers attack 'Orwellian' nature of Alexander's road pricing plan 'the worst thing of all is we can be tracked by this totalitarian Stalinistic government' ' We have no one fighting our corner on this - Tory leader David Cameron spends his life looking at icebergs'
May 06	Tabloid anger about 'war on motorist' renewed with new transport secretary – due to Douglas Alexander committing to nationwide road pricing
<b>THE DAILY MAIL</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Issues covered</b>
18 March 05	Warn of fuel prices rocketing: 'motorists could be paying £4 a gallon by polling day'
22 March 05	Defend SUV drivers
11 April 05	"transport and education the key election issues for business, the Confederation of British Industry says today"
April 05	War on motorists - Government should promote speed awareness courses
29 April 05	Drivers to protest against speed cameras by driving slowly on May bank holiday
June 05	Mathematical implications of 1.34 a mile - high costs – reaction against road user charging
June 05	'highway robbery' headline "Pay-as-you-drive plan targets middle classes" but doesn't refer to how or why this group targeted.
19 June 05	Tory decision to appoint as transport spokesman man who was given suspended jail sentence after killing motorist on wrong side of road in Italy
July 05	8% reduction in road deaths - negative spin - record low but focus on areas where casualties increased since 2004 despite speed cameras
10 August 05	Blames car magazines for 'boy racer' syndrome
10 November 05	Road user charging portrayed as step towards 'Big Brother' State
<b>THE MAIL ON SUNDAY</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Issues covered</b>

22 May 05	Ineffectiveness of speed cameras according to new research
14, 16 August 05	Attack Government's green credentials by detailing modes of travel to/from G8 summit - 153 officials flew, one train; to offset from next April; picked up by Sun
September 05	Panic buying urged/reported re. fuel rises
January 06	Government criticised over decision to offer brand new Jaguars to 22 cabinet members - initially choice between jags and Toyota Prius, conceding unlikely to favour latter because 'of security considerations'
28, 29 April 06	Cameron attacked - cycles to work, but shoes and briefcase follow by car
<b>THE DAILY MIRROR</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Issues covered</b>
17 March 05	Post-election increase in fuel criticised by motorist groups
29 April 05	Drivers to protest against speed cameras by driving slowly on May bank holiday
May 06	Tabloid anger about 'war on motorist' renewed with new transport secretary – due to Douglas Alexander committing to nationwide road pricing
20 May 05	Anger at decision on speeding police driver to go free
7 June 05	Firmly against Darling's road charging proposals - the idea of charging motorists up to £1.34 for each mile they drive is... bloody stupid
19 June 05	Tory decision to appoint as transport spokesman man who was given suspended jail sentence after killing motorist on wrong side of road in Italy
July 05	8% reduction in road deaths - negative spin - record low but focus on areas where casualties increased since 2004 despite speed cameras
9 August 05	Record breaking petrol prices (£1 a litre), though few calls for cut in fuel duty
<b>THE SUNDAY MIRROR</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Issues covered</b>
13 March; 15 March 05	Anti-speed camera
27 March 05	Advice to Tory Leader, Howard: 'there are 30 million licence holders out there, who Labour have routinely neglected' - prioritise spending on roads, including improvement and safety
<b>THE DAILY STAR</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Issues covered</b>
13 April 05	Story of Transport 2000 calling for Top Gear axing from BBC on environmental grounds.
26, 27 April 05	Indicate fuel protests will go ahead
27 April 05	1.9 million speed fines mean checking drug and careless driving neglected (RAC)
23 May 05	"Speed cameras don't save lives - official".
23 June 05	Vanessa Feltz outraged after decades of bullying people out of cars now plan to congestion charging on trains
June 05	"The Government and the Greens have a case.. Our roads are clogged and action is desperately needed. So what's the answer? .. integrated system of public transport.. cheap enough to tempt drivers to leave their vehicles at home.. taxation on motorist must be simple to collect and fair to all" but didn't back Darling's proposals, instead proposing incentives for green machines through fuel tax e.g. gas guzzlers
15, 16 July 05	Government decision to block new safety camera sites (500 cameras) taken as beginning of end of emphasis on camera based speed enforcement
10 November 05	Road user charging portrayed as step towards 'Big Brother' State

<b>THE METRO</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Issues covered</b>
13 April 05	Story of Transport 2000 calling for Top Gear axing from BBC.
9 August 05	Record breaking petrol prices (£1 a litre)
<b>THE NEWS OF THE WORLD</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Issues covered</b>
22 May 05	Road safety bill (not made law pre-election) presents possibility of variable system of penalty points for speeding
5, 6 November 05	Times heralds halting of speed cameras
<b>THE EVENING STANDARD</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Issues covered</b>
June 05	Tory columnist - Darling dull but amazing idea of road user charging - wont restrict freedom of motorists as already in jam
21 June 05	Idea of road user charging should be quashed
30, 31 August 05	Debate impact of Thames Gateway bridge on congestion
September 05	Damp squid - no protests over fuel rises!
January 06	Government criticised over decision to offer brand new Jaguars to 22 cabinet members - initially choice between jags and Toyota Prius, conceding unlikely to favour latter because 'of security considerations'
3 Jan 06 onwards	Annual announcement of above-inflation rail fare rises – papers lambaste Govt's transport record
April 06	Report major study showing programmes like Top Gear glorify speed and aggressive driving
<b>THE SUN</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Issues covered</b>
8 March 05	Tories call for removal of road humps
April 06	Clarkson attacks inconsiderate attitude of nation's bus drivers
23 April 05	Fury over petrol rises to £1 a litre
29 April 05	Rail would be a solution over the car if prices were cheaper
30 April 05	Clarkson joins protest, saying motorways are safe at 70mph which is largely unenforced
23 May 05	" 'Speed cam con" (speed humps save more lives)
22 June 05	Clarkson - mileage charges to make people leave car and travel by train X ATOC can't cope with huge numbers so congestion charge on trains proposed
28 June 05	House of Commons Public Accounts committee - criticise Highways Agency shortcomings (traffic jams, £3bn costs).
13, 14 September 05	Top Gear's Jeremy Clarkson having had a pie thrown in his face for receiving an honorary degree – a stunt carried out on environmental grounds
1 November 05	Following Road safety bill amendments - tabloids welcome proposed stiffer sentences for motorists who kill etc
April 06	Media continues to call for tougher sentences for killer drivers whilst maintaining that most motorists persecuted by judicial system
<b>THE DAILY TELEGRAPH</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Issues covered</b>
9 March 2005	High death toll of motorcyclists on some main rural roads
April 05	Use of speed cameras endangers lives

April 05	Top Gear presenter: bicycling not solution to transport problems and can lead to desire for cars
9 May 05	Contemplates Labour manifesto commitment to seek political consensus on road pricing "armed with the popular mandate of around one quarter of the electorate" labour are pushing a radical measure - why Government t not take opportunity for public discussion during the election.
June 05	Editorial: "Why didn't the Government draw attention to this policy during the election campaign?" "what Alistair Darling is proposing is nothing short of a revolution in the way in which Britons conduct their lives.. You would think that the Labour Party might have warned the electorate that this was what it had in mind when it offered itself for re-election only a month ago, yet the plan was buried in a vaguely worded, throwaway sub-clause of the party's manifesto...."Labour ministers, as so often in the past preferred to keep voters in the dark about the details of their plans, because they did not trust them to agree"
Jan 06	The cause of the beleaguered motorist taken up
<b>THE TIMES</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Issues covered</b>
21 March 05	Criticise 4x4s
5 April 05	Bemoans absence of transport in election debate 'why is transport always the bridesmaid in elections'?
26, 27 April 05	Indicate fuel protests will go ahead
28 April 05	Blockades on fuel protests are a no-show
13 May 05	Average new car fails to meet European environmental targets
1 June 05	Road safety bill (not made law pre-election) presents possibility of variable system of penalty points for speeding
6 June 05	Darling saying nothing new - same story/arguments as a year ago - no conviction/concrete proposals
10 June 05	Critique of park and ride/green belt
June 05	ATOC suggestion of 'congestion charge' for dealing with rail overcrowding ie pricing off at peak times
15, 16 July 05	Government decision to block new safety camera sites (500 cameras) taken as beginning of end of emphasis on camera based speed enforcement
13, 14 September 05	Clarkson pieing
15 October 05	Against High Court verdict against Railtrack shareholders on compensation case/Byers; critical of Government conduct in bringing the rail network into public hands
4 November 05	Scrapping of Leeds Supertram
5, 6 November 05	Heralds halting of speed cameras
13 November 05	Roadside spy cameras planned
14, 16 August 05	Attack Government's green credentials by detailing modes of travel to/from G8 summit - 153 officials flew, one train; to offset from next April; picked up by Sun
January 06	Government criticised over decision to offer brand new Jaguars to 22 cabinet members - initially choice between jags and Toyota Prius, conceding unlikely to favour latter because 'of security considerations'
January 06	Darling supports road user charging but keeps it a decade away
January 06	Motorists incessantly pandered to by the Government
March 06	Predictions and coverage of Darling speech on rail - high-speed rail: yes/no/maybe
22 April 06	Labour's environmental U-turn on road building criticised
<b>THE SUNDAY TIMES</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Issues covered</b>

15 May 05	New road safety minister (Ladyman) caught speeding 3 times
5 June 05	Darling interviews with Sunday papers on possible road user charging proposals - drivers pay £1.30 a mile, though with road tax and petrol duty reduced/scrapped
21 August 05	Health risks of urban cycling
March 06	Budget - Brown's targeting of gas guzzlers
April 06	Media continues to call for tougher sentences for killer drivers whilst maintaining that most motorists are persecuted by judicial system
<b>THE FINANCIAL TIMES</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Issues covered</b>
17 March 05	Report the deferral of increase in fuel duty
28 April 05	Fuel duty blockades are a no-show
5 September 05	RAC call for variable rate of fuel duty to deal with rising costs of petrol; new plans to blockade oil refineries
15 October 05	Against High Court verdict against Railtrack shareholders on compensation case/Byers; critical of Government conduct in bringing the rail network into public hands
4 November 05	Scrapping of Leeds Supertram
<b>THE GUARDIAN</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Issues covered</b>
9 March 2005	Dangerous scenic roads/motorcyclists
17 March 05	Postponement of road user charging plans is down to electoral politics - a pre-election move to avoid backlash from unhappy motorists
19 March 05	Further petrol rises after crude oil hits record high
9 April 05	Bus operator predicts a gridlocked Britain is close where public transport will be the solution
23 April 05	Possible pre-election protests
21 May 05	"During the election campaign it was widely agreed that the 'real issues' were never discussed... The British electorate learned a little about the minor differences between the large parliamentary parties. Meanwhile the Arctic ice cap, sadly unavailable to be interrogated by Jeremy Paxman, continued to melt." (Granta editor) Environmental consequences of more airports, more roads, more untaxed aviation fuel, more 4x4s... -
23 May 05	Research on Britons compared to Europe likelihood of penalisation by speeding
25 May 05	Reader's letter on the contradiction of Guardian having travel section
8 June 05	Critique of park and ride/green belt
July 05	Report government's latest statistics in 2004 on road traffic accidents - fatalities at record low since but cyclist fatalities up
21 August 05	Pollution worse for drivers - car ventilation hoovers up ground level pollution
4 November 05	Scrapping of Leeds Supertram
3 January 06 onwards	Annual announcement of above-inflation rail fare rises - papers lambaste Govt's transport record
22 April 06	Cameron's green plans to make UK motorists drive cars that emit less CO2 and his own conversion to fuel-efficient motoring - hybrid
<b>THE OBSERVER</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Issues covered</b>
17 April 05	Brief mention of road pricing. Allegation that transport deliberately ignored by 2 biggest parties in run up to the Election: "Just how much will it cost to haul Britain's creaking transport infrastructure to 21 <sup>st</sup> century standards? Don't ask the two main political parties; it's something they'd rather not contemplate.. Perhaps because the sheer scale of fiscal commitment needed has stunned Labour and conservatives into silence, transport

	issues are not on the 2005 radar". Conservatives focus: auditing speed cameras, increasing speed limit on motorways to 80mph, involving private firms in road building and greater freedom to train operators to set timetables. Labour's manifesto commitments described as rehash of current policies. Boasts of doubling transport spending since 1997 but will this last past current spending round.
1 May 05	Only 400 drivers protested over fuel rises
1 May 05	Individual action to combat government plans to triple aviation during the next 30 years
8 May 05	4 letters castigating political establishment for ignoring impact that transport is having on climate change; and Observer for backing Labour in general election
5 June 05	Darling interviews with Sunday papers on possible road user charging proposals - drivers pay £1.30 a mile, though with road tax and petrol duty reduced/scrapped
6, 7 July 05	Support for London getting 2012 Olympics, boost to transport infrastructure
August 05	Officials looking at Intelligent Speed Adaptation which would remove speed bumps
January 06	Darling talking and doing nothing is a joke (Forth bridge toll/traffic)
<b>THE INDEPENDENT</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Issues covered</b>
17 March 05	Environmental view: failure to tackle pollution
26 April 05	Speed awareness courses
April 05	Story analysing contents of Labour manifesto, focusing on a wholesale move to road charging over taxing floated as solution to congestion; on rail commitment to Crossrail and North/South High Speed rail link feasibility study Major schemes have been proposed but not firm commitment <i>but</i> floating idea of national road pricing highly controversial
16 May 05	Danger of cycling
29 May 05	True cost of air travel in contributing to global warming "In spelling out what is for most people - and for many politicians - a very uncomfortable truth..." with pricing people of planes cited as the solution.
29 May 05	Editorial Government's lack of joined up thinking e.g. energy policy focusing on reduction and yet policy of increasing cheap flights.
31 May 05	8 Labour Government ministers abandon Jaguars for Toyota Priuses
June 05	Supportive of Darling pressing on with radical and innovative scheme to get Britains roads out of gridlock
July 05	Report Government's latest statistics in 2004 on road traffic accidents - fatalities at record low since but cyclist fatalities up
6, 7 July 05	Shouldn't take the Olympics to boost transport provision
30, 31 August 05	Debate impact of Thames Gateway bridge on congestion
13, 14 September 05	Top Gear's Jeremy Clarkson having had a pie thrown in his face for receiving an honorary degree – a stunt carried out on environmental grounds
15 October 05	High Court verdict against Railtrack shareholders on compensation case/Byers - evidence seems to show Government played matters by the book
January 06	Government criticised over decision to offer brand new Jaguars to 22 cabinet members - initially choice between jags and Toyota Prius, conceding unlikely to favour latter because 'of security considerations'
January 06	Halting of tram schemes - Darling = dull, fine print!
3 January 06 onwards	Annual announcement of above-inflation rail fare rises - papers lambaste Government's transport record
April 06	Media continues to call for tougher sentences for killer drivers whilst maintaining that most motorists persecuted by judicial system
March 06	Budget - Brown's targeting of gas guzzlers
7 June 06	Edition devoted mainly to cycling

<b>THE INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Issues covered</b>
24 April 05	CBI concern that environmental targets will hamper air expansion
1 May 05	"Expansion of air and road transport is the ultimate drug we are willing to pay any price for"
8 May 05	Surge in demand for 4x4s maybe have peaked whereas hybrid environmentally friendly cars have boomed
March 06	Predictions and coverage of Darling speech on rail - high-speed rail: yes/no/maybe
22 April 06	Cameron's green plans to make UK motorists drive cars that emit less CO2 and his own conversion to fuel-efficient motoring - hybrid

## **Appendix C**

### **Transport professionals consulted**

Information was derived from a survey distributed to members of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport and from interviews, phone-calls or emails with the following transport planners:

Grant Butterworth – Nottingham County Council

Jason Copper – MRC McClean Ltd

Garrett Emmerson – Chair of Transport Planning Network, CfIT and Buckinghamshire County Council

Sue Flack – Northamptonshire County Council

Reg Harman – Independent consultant

Martin Higgitt – Steer Davies Gleave

Victoria Hills – TPS executive committee and Greater London Authority

Sheila Holden – Professional Planning Inspector

Graham Hughes – Cambridgeshire County Council

Nicola Kane – JMP Consulting

John Rigby – Exeter County Council

Alan Wenban-Smith – TPS Committee and independent consultant

## **Bibliography**

Conservative manifesto 2005

Labour manifesto 2005

Liberal Democrats manifesto 2005

### **MORI polls/surveys**

- MORI Political monitor: Recent Trends, The Most Important Issues Facing Britain Today
- Importance Of Key Issues To Voting
- The Sun Election Research – Poll 1 2005
- Evening Standard Election Research
- Transport in Britain: Latest Trends - 20 Nov 2003
- Commission for Integrated Transport (2000). Transport - England's Most Important Local Issue
- Commission for Integrated Transport (2002). Public Attitudes to Transport in England

### **Populus polls/surveys**

- Times poll - fieldwork 14-17 April 2005
- Times poll fieldwork 2-5 December 2005
- Times poll fieldwork - 31 March - 2 April 2006

### **YOUNGOV polls/surveys**

Daily Telegraph Survey results March 2005

### **Department for Transport**

- DfT Attitudes to Car Use. 9 March 2006
- DfT Public Attitudes to congestion and road pricing. 21 June 2006
- DfT Attitudes to climate change and the impact of transport. 24 January 2006. Modified: 3 February 2006.
- DfT Transport Trends: 2005 edition. Added: March 1, 2005 Modified: January 25, 2006

### **Media issues**

- Local Transport Today (Media Monitor pages between March 2005 and 2006)
- Transport Times
- *Vote for... Who?* Jonathan Maitland 2005