

Sustainable Transport: Securing Jobs

Transport Planning Society Bursary Paper, October 2009

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The past twelve months has been, without question, a challenging time for the UK economy. The country entered recession and unemployment levels grew. This paper will discuss how unemployed people are often faced by a number of transport barriers, which prevent them from accessing many job opportunities. It will also describe and assess the performance of a number of transport schemes which have been introduced by local authorities and PTES in recent years, aimed at addressing these barriers. The evidence shows that these schemes have been very successful at addressing some of the issues contributing to the country's economic problems, as well as assisting in its efforts to improve environmental sustainability. These schemes are needed now more than ever, however, their long-term financial stability remains unclear. This paper will also provide details of efforts to encourage central government to provide greater support to mainstream such schemes.

2 Unemployment and Worklessness

- 2.1 Unemployment has been on the rise since the UK entered the current economic downturn. In the three months to July 2009 there were 2.47 million unemployed people in the UK, up 2.3 percentage points from the year earlier. The number of people unemployed for over 12 months was 567,000 in the three months to July 2009, up 46,000 from the three months to February 2009¹. Additionally, the working age economic inactivity rate at May 2009 was 20.9%, some 7.9 million people.
- 2.2 Long-term unemployment and economic inactivity has been termed by many, including the Government, as 'worklessness'. "'Worklessness' is defined as detachment from the formal labour market in particular areas, and among particular groups. Workless individuals include individuals who are unemployed and claiming unemployment benefits, individuals who are economically inactive and eligible for inactive benefits (who may or may not be claiming them), and individuals who are working exclusively in the informal economy (who may or may not be also claiming benefits)."²
- 2.3 Workless people often include those with disabilities and lone parents, but also students and people who have taken early retirement. More than often, workless households are concentrated in particular neighbourhoods, such as areas of social housing. This has wider implications for community regeneration the economic vitality of neighbourhoods and local capacity³.
- 2.4 Certain groups of people are more likely to be unemployed or workless:
- A higher proportion of men than women are unemployed;
 - Unemployment rates are highest the youngest age group – those aged 16-24;

¹ ONS Labour Market Statistics: Statistical Bulletin (September 2009)

² LDA <http://www.lda.gov.uk/server.php?show=conGlossary.157>

³ Improvement and Development Agency (IDEA) (2008) 'Worklessness: Overview'
<http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=8148769&aspect=full>

- Unemployment rates for those from ethnic minority groups as a whole are higher than for the white population;
 - Unemployment is concentrated on those with low or no qualifications;
 - Unemployment is slightly higher among people with disabilities (though a high proportion is economically inactive); and
 - A high proportion of lone parents are unemployed compared to the population as a whole.
- 2.5 The evidence is that many workless people would like to take a job if they had the right opportunity, incentive or path back to employment. In many ways work is central to the economic and social wellbeing of communities.

3 Worklessness and Transport

3.1 There are many factors which contribute to worklessness, namely a lack of skills, poor health or disabilities. It has also been recognised that the transport options available to people also affect their ability to take up employment opportunities. Research has shown that⁴:

- Unemployed people often have problems getting around. Their travel patterns become tied to the biweekly cycle of social benefit payments. Therefore, the costs of transport to gain access to training, interviews or non-local job markets become critical. Non-local social interaction is also constrained (time spent visiting friends and family).
- Low income wage earners have been known to spend up to one third of their income on travel; particularly where a lack of public transport means that they have to acquire and maintain a car for commuting.
- Low income families tend to maximise the use of 'saver' tickets on public transport which influences the pattern of journeys they make.
- Low mobility among all transport disadvantaged groups can reinforce a local lifestyle and increase the chances of further social exclusion.
- Children and teenagers from deprived families can also suffer from their limited ability to travel beyond their 'disadvantaged' area. 'Feeling trapped' has been shown to be of particular importance in the social lifestyles of teenagers in the transition from dependencies to working life.
- Even though jobs are inaccessible, deprived families are often reluctant to move home because they would lose the local support networks they rely on. This is more common in ethnic minority and migrant communities.

3.2 There are common transport obstacles which contribute to worklessness, including⁵:

- Poor accessibility or unaffordable transport prevent people from attending interviews or narrow the area in which they can apply for jobs;

⁴ Pickup and Barham (2002) 'European actions to combat social exclusion – the MATISSE Initiative', Conference on Transport & Social Exclusion, Liverpool

⁵ Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) (2003) 'Making the Connections: Final Report on Transport and Social Exclusion'

- New sites of employment (such as call centres or supermarkets) are often built on the edge of towns. Bus routes traditionally operate on radial routes to town centres, therefore people are often forced to take longer journeys by public transport or journey times become too time consuming, making these new employment opportunities inaccessible;
 - People's knowledge of and trust in local transport services is key to their confidence using them. Frequent changes in timetables or a lack of information can restrict people's ability to confidently seek new employment opportunities; and
 - People's mental geography is influenced in part by traditional patterns of employment in their communities. They will often search for opportunities in similar areas as the rest of the local population.
- 3.3 Additionally, transport improvement schemes and new infrastructure often result in a rise in local house prices close to the development. People who can no longer afford to live in the area are forced to move out, further away from employment opportunities⁶. Experiencing these travel problems can encourage people to give up their jobs. Therefore, thought needs to be given to ensuring that jobs entail travel patterns that are sustainable⁷.

4 The Role of Sustainable Transport Planning

- 4.1 There appears to be limited research evidence on the contribution transport policy can make to address the needs of workless people. However, some reports do indicate a role for transport policy and conclusions can be drawn from specific issues relating to affordability and accessibility of transport. In terms of policy and action, there is a need for measures which positively connect the unemployed and workless to those job opportunities which do occur⁸.
- 4.2 Eddington (2006) also showed that improvements to the transport network can increase employment mobility, labour market flexibility and the accessibility of jobs. There is a high correlation between employment density and accessibility. New firms often base their decisions on their accessibility to qualified staff⁹. In this respect, an increase in transport accessibility can improve employment prospects.
- 4.3 A study by HM Treasury (2007) showed that a worker's effective employment field is limited by the spatial distribution of actual or potential employment opportunities and their awareness of those opportunities. Even though a job may be in commutable range within the wage on offer, it will not be within the person's effective employment field or search area if he or she is not aware of its existence¹⁰. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that people have greater access to the best information about employment opportunities and to the most appropriate transport means of getting to a potential workplace. For example, in Inner London, where worklessness is most acute, residents may not have access to alternative employment opportunities that may

⁶ Eddington (2006) 'The Eddington Transport Study: Transport's role in sustaining the UK's productivity and competitiveness'

⁷ Stafford et al, 2007; Lewis et al, 2005; Dixon and Warrener, 2008; Johnson, 2002; Walker and Kellard, 2001 cited in Meadows (2008)

'Local initiatives to help workless people find and keep paid work', Rowntree Foundation

⁸ Improvement and Development Agency (IDEA) (2008) 'Worklessness: Overview'

<http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=8148769&aspect=full>

⁹ Mayor of London (2004) 'The Case for London'

¹⁰ HM Treasury (2007) 'Employment opportunity for all: tackling worklessness in London'

exist in Outer London because of high transport costs and poor information. Policy should therefore focus on broadening people's actual employment fields in order to spread the job search across the urban area¹¹.

4.4 For addressing travel to work issues, a range of initiatives can help assist workless individuals when they are looking for, and sustaining, employment. Such initiatives include¹²:

- Provision of funds to cover travel costs;
- Better or improved travel information and journey planning in Jobcentre Plus offices;
- Provision of concessions on public transport for target groups;
- Extension of current public transport provision;
- Express transport services from excluded and deprived neighbourhoods to employment opportunities;
- Provision of fixed route services that would otherwise not exist;
- Demand responsive transport schemes; and
- Streetscape improvements (to help address security and safety concerns).

5 Schemes to Assist Jobseekers

5.1 Recent years have seen a growth in the number of transport schemes designed and implemented to address transport barriers to employment for local people. The majority of these operate in urban areas through PTEs or ITAs, although some are also found in rural settings. Although Jobcentre Plus offers a travel-to-interview scheme, which provides financial assistance for travel costs to jobseekers, this only covers travel to interviews outside of the resident's region. In this respect, travel assistance schemes for jobseekers fill the gap in local settings.

5.2 Eligibility for such schemes are usually very similar. In most cases a client must:

- Live within the local area (sometimes in certain postcodes);
- Be unemployed;
- Claiming benefits;
- Aged 16 years or older; and
- Have a permanent job offer of work for 16 hours a week or more.

5.3 The most common service provided by travel to work schemes include some form of free day travel pass to assist a client attending an interview and a free travel pass for between 1 and 3 months upon confirmation of employment. Most schemes also provide free personal journey planning and training to clients to improve their confidence using public transport. These can be regarded as the 'core' services of such schemes; however, many offer additional services as can be seen in the table below.

¹¹ ibid

¹² ERS with Northumbria University and Durham Business School (2005) 'Effective Interventions to Tackle Worklessness – Review of Evidence', One North East

Table 5.1 Comparison of travel assistance schemes for jobseekers

Scheme	Operating since	Additional services
WorkWise North Solihull	2003	Consultancy advice to businesses
WorkWise Birmingham	2003	Special delivery of travel passes for those who cannot afford to travel to a collection point
WorkWise Walsall	2004	Financial assistance to purchase a photograph for travel pass identification
WorkWise MerseySide	2008	6 month moped loan and cycle loan
WorkWise Greater Manchester	In planning stage	Training Jobcentre Plus staff to provide personal journey planning advice
Travel for Work (West Yorkshire)	2007	Training Jobcentre Plus staff to provide personal journey planning advice

5.4 While the schemes outlined above can be found in urban settings, similar initiatives have been established in rural settings. For example, in Warwickshire, a greater emphasis has been placed on the role of 'Wheels to Work' and 'On Your Bike', which offer moped and bicycle loans to help jobseekers access employment opportunities in areas with poor public transport coverage.

5.5 Most schemes are administered through a small team of project managers and officers. They are often supported by a steering group, usually comprising of local Jobcentre Plus and PTE/ITA staff. However, they vary in the way they manage the delivery of their services. This includes the location from which they distribute travel passes and those who are authorised to carry out this function. For example, there are schemes which:

- Operate from a local Jobcentre Plus (WorkWise North Solihull & Birmingham);
- Operate from local council offices (WorkWise Sandwell);
- Operate from a community venue (local charity) (WorkWise Walsall); and
- Allow local Jobcentre Plus or voluntary organisations to distribute passes (Travel for Work West Yorkshire & WorkWise Walsall).

5.6 In most cases resources (including staff costs) are provided by the local PTE/ITA, with funding for travel passes and other services provided by local authorities. However, there are slight differences in the ultimate funding source which provides funds to the PTE/ITA and local authority to manage the scheme. These include:

- **Regional Development Agencies** (WorkWise North Solihull, Travel for Work West Yorkshire); and

- **European funding, ESF (European Social Fund) or ERDF (European Regional Development Fund)** – (WorkWise in North Solihull, Greater Manchester and Merseyside are currently applying for such funding).

6 Case Study: WorkWise North Solihull

Background

- 6.1 Centro, the ITA for the West Midlands, has introduced a number of schemes since 2003 aimed at breaking down transport barriers for unemployed people under the banner of 'WorkWise'. This has been based on evidence that jobseekers in some of the areas most deprived wards are denied adequate accessibility to employment opportunities. Separate schemes were originally introduced in Birmingham and North Solihull, with more recent schemes being commissioned in Walsall and Sandwell.
- 6.2 Over the past four years, the WorkWise schemes in the West Midlands have helped over 4,200 people to get to interviews and over 4,300 people travel to a new job. The average cost of supporting a client into a new job on the scheme is approximately £200¹³. The effort of Centro has been praised in the House of Lords and won accolades, including the Guardian Public Service Award and the National Award for Accessibility.
- 6.3 WorkWise has been operating in North Solihull since May 2003. Since its inception it has received further funding in April 2007 from Advantage West Midlands (AWM – the Regional Development Agency) and Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council to maintain the scheme until March 2010.
- 6.4 The North Solihull scheme offers a range of services to jobseekers to help them overcome transport barriers to employment. These include:
- Free day travel passes to attend interviews;
 - Free travel passes for up to 2 months for clients on Jobseekers Allowance;
 - Free travel passes for up to 3 months for 'harder to reach' clients on Incapacity Benefit and Income Support (usually out of work longer than JSA clients); and
 - Personalised door-to-door public transport information and other useful travel information to broaden people's travel horizons - offered to all people, not just unemployed.
- 6.5 It also offers consultancy services to local businesses to assist staff with public transport travel training and information (including route maps, timetables and ticket options) in order for staff to reduce absences and staff turnover.
- 6.6 WorkWise in North Solihull addresses the West Midlands LTP objectives of:
- Supporting the local economy by ensuring access to employment sites;

¹³ PTEG (2009) 'WorkWise – a ticket to employment – based on the figure for 2 months travel support under Centro's scheme (£217.48). This includes ticketing, staff, administration and marketing (not accommodation which is provided in kind by the Jobcentre).

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- Ensuring that transport contributes towards social inclusion by increasing accessibility for everyone;
- Moving towards a more sustainable pattern of development and growth;
- Improving safety and health for all; and
- Integrating all forms of transport with each other, with other land uses and with other policies and priorities.

Operations and Management

- 6.7 The scheme is currently managed by Centro's Sustainable Travel Team, with day to day operations led by a WorkWise officer. The officer is based at Chelmsley Wood Jobcentre Plus (JCP), where he meets with jobseekers (clients) referred to him by JCP staff. It is the responsibility of the WorkWise officer to assess the needs of clients and issue them with a day ticket for an interview, monthly travel pass and/or travel advice as needed. The WorkWise officer also initiates consultations with local businesses, providing them with an information pack which includes details of the scheme's core services (travel assistance measures for jobseekers), local bus and rail timetables and maps, and general ticket information.
- 6.8 A key element of success in the North Solihull scheme has been the close working relationship of Centro management, the WorkWise officer and JCP staff at Chelmsley Wood.

Objectives

- 6.9 WorkWise was set a number of targets to achieve in North Solihull as part of its latest funding award. These include:
- Distribute 350 day tickets for interviews per year;
 - 345 people into work per year 2007/08 (revised from 225 because it achieved a lot more in the first year);
 - 285 people into work per year 2008-2010;
 - 2 businesses supported in 2007/08;
 - 5 businesses supported in 2008/09; and
 - 3 businesses supported in 2009/10.
- 6.10 The relatively low target for the number of businesses supported by WorkWise is a reflection of the level of funding provided for staff (one officer) and the greater need to be available for clients to distribute travel passes and provide advice.

Achievements to date

- 6.11 WorkWise in North Solihull has been meeting all of its targets and in some cases far exceeded them, as can be seen in table 6.1. In recent years it has exceeded its target to help people into work by 41% (2008-09).

Table 6.1 WorkWise North Solihull Achievements vs. Targets April 2007 – March 2009¹⁴

Target	Achievement
Distribute 350 day tickets for interviews per year	325 in 07/08 350 in 08/09
345 people into work per year 2007/08	403 in 07/08
285 people into work per year 2008-2010	401 in 08/09
2 businesses supported in 2007/08	2 supported in 07/08
5 businesses supported in 2008/09	5 supported in 08/09

Impact on Local Community

6.12 Recent qualitative research shows that WorkWise has had a resounding positive impact on local jobseekers and employers. The study has shown that from a sample of former clients who had received assistance in the past 18 months, 91% said that WorkWise has had a significant impact on their life¹⁵. Many clients stated that they would not have been able to take job offers beyond walking distance because they could not afford to travel to work while waiting for their first month’s wage. Others stated that the knowledge that support was at hand encouraged them to search more widely for job opportunities and reduced their anxiety over the financial burden to travelling to work. For example, one middle-aged female said:

“WorkWise makes a huge difference to people that aren’t earning very much. When I was looking for jobs I used to fret and panic about how I could afford to get there, adding up in my head what I could and couldn’t afford. Having a bus pass takes away that worry.”

6.13 One of the hidden benefits uncovered by the research has been the high level of knowledge transfer between scheme clients and their friends and family. Over three quarters of former clients said that they had told other people about the scheme, therefore increasing awareness of its services. Additionally, the vast majority of local employers who have been consulted by WorkWise inform new staff of the schemes core services.

6.14 It was also found that over 90% of former clients continue to use public transport as their main mode of daily travel¹⁶. In this respect, WorkWise has had great success in promoting and sustaining high levels of sustainable transport use amongst its target group.

¹⁴MVA Consultancy (2009) Evaluating Performance: Qualitative Study of WorkWise in North Solihull (DRAFT)

¹⁵ ibid

¹⁶ ibid

Challenges Faced by WorkWise in North Solihull

- 6.15 It is clear that WorkWise has been a success story in North Solihull in terms of its achievements to date, including its impact on the local community. Centro are currently developing a funding application to deliver to AVM and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) which, if successful, would secure resources to sustain the scheme until December 2013. The prospects for achieving funding for this period look promising. However, the long term sustainability of the scheme remains unclear. It currently survives on three-year funding from AWM, Centro and ERDF but efforts are in place to source a long term solution to mainstream funding. Centro, along with PTEG are currently developing a case to lobby central government (particularly the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to mainstream WorkWise schemes across the country. Like many other WorkWise-type schemes across the country, the scheme in North Solihull would benefit greatly from a commitment from central government to support such initiatives.

7 Future Developments

- 7.1 Like WorkWise in North Solihull, nearly all similar schemes across the country are currently funded for around three years. Many would like to expand their schemes to nearby wards and in some cases introduce additional services (such as a Wheels to Work cycle or moped loan scheme). However, the three year funding arrangements usually leave such schemes in an unsustainable position, with some PTEs and ITAs paying a disproportionate share of the costs (such as unexpected changes in services and operating costs)¹⁷. In this light, scheme promoters are keen to see a mainstreaming of WorkWise across the UK. This would essentially involve securing a funding commitment from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and potentially the Department for Transport (DfT).
- 7.2 Given the current economic situation in the UK, as highlighted in the introduction of this report, the evidence of rising unemployment shows that WorkWise is needed now more than ever. This is sentiment shared by PTEG, who have now developed a lobbying policy directed at the Government:

“Where a Local Authority want to offer a WorkWise type scheme, the Government (DWP) pledge to partner it and put in 50% of the funding. The remainder of the funding will be matched by local partnerships”.

- 7.3 In the England in August 2009 there were 1,199,010 people claiming jobseekers allowance who had been unemployed for 12 months or less. These are the people that WorkWise schemes are most likely to help because after a year they are likely to be handed over to external contractors who often have their own budget for travel support. Though dated, the 2003 Social Exclusion Unit Report ‘Making the Connections’ stated that 38% of jobseekers said transport was a key barrier to getting a job. Assuming 38% of the 1,199,010 jobseekers are experiencing transport barriers, then 455,624 people who could benefit from WorkWise in England. Even though this is a rough estimate it gives an example of the sheer scale of benefit which a widespread introduction of the scheme could bring.

¹⁷ PTEG (2009) ‘WorkWise – a ticket to employment’

- 7.4 WorkWise has shown in recent years that it has helped its clients secure long-term employment. The most recent figures from the West Midlands, Tyne and Wear and West Yorkshires schemes suggest that on average 79% of clients remained in employment 13 weeks after receiving assistance. As mentioned earlier, WorkWise costs approximately £200 per client in North Solihull, or around £250 for those who need 3 months worth of travel support. If this model was applied across PTE areas (where there were 351,615 jobseekers of 12 months or less in August 2009), it would cost £33m annually (based on 3 months travel support with 38% of claimants requiring assistance). Of course, this is also a rough estimate, since every claimant would not need 3 months support. If the Government did express a strong interest in supporting PTEG's request this would require more in-depth analysis and budgeting.
- 7.5 The maximum weekly allowance for claimants aged over 25 is £64.60 per week, less for those who are younger. The cost of helping someone into work with WorkWise is significantly less supporting someone on jobseekers allowance for the same period of time and could potentially result in savings on public expenditure.
- 7.6 PTEG argue that WorkWise schemes are excellent value for money in terms of returning people to work. Recognising the effectiveness of WorkWise in connecting people to jobs, they would like the DWP, in liaison with the PTEs and DfT, to investigate the potential for similar schemes to be rolled out across the country¹⁸.

8 Conclusion

- 8.1 Unemployment has been rising over the past twelve months in the UK. This will inevitably lead to a greater number of people facing transport barriers to job opportunities. This paper has shown that such transport barriers can increase levels of worklessness and long-term unemployment, as many jobseekers struggle to access employment in areas which they deem too costly to reach.
- 8.2 In light of this trend, it is apparent that sustainable transport planning has a key role to play to help reduce unemployment and encourage social and economic development. In recent years, schemes such as WorkWise have helped thousands of jobseekers into employment, by providing much needed financial breaks in the form of free travel passes, and guidance through personal journey planning. Some schemes broaden people's travel horizons by providing demand responsive transport (DRT), moped and cycle loans to help jobseekers reach employment in areas underserved by public transport. The example of WorkWise in North Solihull demonstrates that such schemes can have a huge positive impact on local jobseekers and employers, motivating people into work and improving personal wellbeing.
- 8.3 Not only do WorkWise schemes improve local social and economic sustainability, they also encourage environmental sustainability. Scheme officers actively encourage their clients to use public transport, walking and cycling to travel to interviews and work. As shown in the North Solihull example, this extends to local employers, who are provided with information for their staff and visitors to encourage them to travel by sustainable modes to their site. Such initiatives demonstrate to clients to value for money of travelling sustainably, through the cash saved by using monthly travel passes. As seen in North Solihull, the vast majority of clients

¹⁸ ibid

continue to travel regularly by public transport many months after receiving support from WorkWise.

- 8.4 The success of WorkWise schemes is very evident; however, the long term sustainability of such schemes is less clear. PTEG and many PTEs would like to see central government provide greater financial support to WorkWise-type schemes. This would remove some of the pressure on PTEs to seek funding from a number of sources in three year periods, giving them more time to provide assistance to jobseekers and develop new services. Rising unemployment, coupled with the success of schemes like WorkWise at encouraging economic, environmental and social sustainability, should demonstrate to central government the reasons for backing such initiatives. The challenge will be to develop strong business cases for the schemes, along with positive demonstrations of their sustainable benefits, in a time of tightly controlled government spending¹⁹.

¹⁹ Based on comment from Head of Equalities Policy, DfT (24th August 2009)

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following people for their help, guidance and encouragement with the production of this report:

Bob Coe, Eoconsulting/TPS

Steve Atkins, MVA Consultancy

Sarah Bayliss, Centro

Martin Dix, MVA Consultancy

Nigel Dotchin, DfT

Rebecca Handley, PTEG

Alison Pickett, Centro