



INTRODUCTION

12.1 The term “social exclusion”, applies to those individuals, groups or communities that are, through poverty or discrimination, excluded from mainstream opportunities, activities and access to services available to the wider community. A strategy for transport and social inclusion, including details of a number of pilot projects, is included in the appendices to this Plan and is summarised in this Chapter.

12.2 The impact of social exclusion is intensified by complicated, time consuming or expensive transport access to jobs, training, health facilities, shops, sports facilities or community facilities. Socially excluded groups are more dependent on public transport than socially included groups who in general have a greater access to the private car.

OBJECTIVES

12.3 We aim to ensure that nobody is excluded from using the transport system and that transport policies complement broader social inclusion strategies. More specifically, our objectives in tackling social inclusion are:

Accessibility:

- to promote equal opportunities for access to transport.

Access to jobs and training:

- to promote better access to jobs and training opportunities from disadvantaged communities.

Transport impacts:

- to ensure that disadvantaged communities benefit from transport investment;
- to ensure that investment is targeted to reduce adverse safety and environmental effects of transport use on disadvantaged communities.

Planning Issues:

- to ensure that the planning system takes proper account of connections between transport and social inclusion.

STRATEGY

12.4 Tackling social exclusion is a cross cutting theme that affects all other strategies throughout the Plan. Measures to improve social inclusion will be an integral part of most public transport and highway based projects. A number of the strategies and measures to achieve the social inclusion objectives are detailed in other chapters, in particular, Public Transport (Chapter 7), Walking (Chapter 8) and Road Safety (Chapter 10). Strategies for other issues are given below.

ACCESSIBILITY

12.5 We will tackle issues of accessibility by:

- promoting the development of high quality public transport, as set out in Chapter 7;
- providing concessionary fares for eligible groups, as set out below;
- increasing the use and benefits of pre-paid and concessionary, ticketing within targeted groups and extended to 'New Deal' participants;
- implementing a comprehensive strategy for access for disabled people, as set out below;
- ensuring that no social groups feel restricted in their use of the transport system because of concerns about personal safety and security;
- improving rural transport options for all, through co-ordination of rural services;
- carrying out an audit of our transport strategy to ensure that issues relating to women and transport are identified and addressed;
- ensuring that actions to reduce car dependency do not unreasonably compromise the mobility of disabled people, some of whom may always have to rely on a car.

Concessionary Fares

12.6 Concessionary Fares are a lifeline for many people, providing enhanced travel opportunities for elderly, disabled, blind and young people. Almost 40% of bus journeys within West Yorkshire are made under the Concessionary Travel Scheme. Operator reimbursement is a major area of expenditure for Metro and a significant source of income for operators.

12.7 The provision of affordable travel for those with limited financial resources because of age, disability or family

circumstances is a prime commitment. We have ensured that all those eligible are able to receive concessions. A partnership approach has also made it possible to retain free travel for blind persons and eligible companions as a result of operators agreeing to commercially fund elements of the fare.

12.8 Two strands of Government policy are the establishment of a minimum national standard for concessionary fares for elderly people and also the encouragement of children to travel to and from school by public transport. Whilst the West Yorkshire scheme supports and actively promotes these objectives we will shortly be undertaking an extensive review of current policy.

Pre-paid Tickets

12.9 Cheaper travel is made possible by MetroRover tickets for unemployed people funded on a commercial basis by the operators. The partnership approach taken by Metro, the operators and the Department for Education and Employment has resulted in the scheme being extended to include certain people participating in the Government's Welfare to Work Initiative - New Deal for 18 to 24 year olds.

Access to Public Transport for Disabled People

12.10 Our goal is to ensure that the transport system (vehicles, infrastructure and information) is fully accessible. A strategy for access to public transport (Table 12.1) has been developed and agreed by all the Districts and bus operators.

We will work together to create a public transport system which provides the highest achievable standards of access for disabled people.

We will take account of the needs of:

- people who have difficulty walking or who use a wheelchair;
- sight and hearing impaired people;
- people with communication difficulties;
- people with learning disabilities;
- people who have difficulty with stretching, reaching or dexterity.

It is important that every aspect of a journey should be accessible for a disabled person. In designing bus and rail services we will address each of the following stages of a journey:

- pedestrian access to bus stops and bus and rail stations;
- the waiting environment at stops or stations;
- boarding and alighting buses and trains;
- vehicle design and fleet renewals;
- information availability before and during a journey;

We will support the preparation of funding bids and seek financial support from other sources to fund public transport access improvements. In addition, we will endeavour to improve access by developing, implementing and reviewing good practice

Table 12.1 Summary of the West Yorkshire Public Transport Access Strategy

12.11 In order to ensure that this strategy is implemented, we have adopted an Accessibility Checklist, which is being used in the design of all new facilities to ensure that the needs of disabled people are fully considered.

Bus Stops and Services

12.12 Testing by local access groups has shown that a high degree of accessibility can be achieved through a combination of raised kerbs and low floor buses, providing the bus can stop adjacent to the kerb. Bus stops, including approaches and exits will be made accessible, in some cases with police assistance, by:

- preventing obstruction by parked vehicles to allow buses to pull up adjacent to the kerb edge by using bus stop clearway, other markings and bus boarders;
- designing the bus stop environment to remove obstructions that impede movement by pedestrians;
- reducing the vertical gap between the kerb and the bus by ensuring a minimum kerb height of 125mm where practicable;
- preventing excessive gradients when ramps are used.



Easier access for pushchairs and other users is afforded by modern low floor buses.

12.13 We will work together, through quality partnerships and other means, with operators to further improve access to vehicles and conditions on the vehicle itself, taking into account the views of users and using appropriate technology.



Rail stations are becoming more accessible by various means eg, via the provision of lifts such as at Halifax Station.

Bus and Rail Stations

12.14 Existing guidance has been used together with the outcome of consultation with local access groups to make access improvements at all Metro owned bus stations.

12.15 We will continue to work with rail operators and Railtrack as they continue to develop their strategies for further rail access measures across the county.

Information

12.16 Access to information is a key element in the provision of a public transport system that provides the highest achievable standards of access for disabled people. A recent 'Mystery Traveller' project was commissioned to assess and advise Metro of the availability of public transport information and additional services in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act.

12.17 The findings indicated the standards of information service provision are generally high. Disabled travellers did suggest certain small improvements that would enrich the information service. Some of these recommendations have already been implemented with others still being considered.

Access to Roads and Footways for Disabled People

12.18 Using the highway can present a number of difficulties for people with visual and mobility impairment. To address these difficulties, we are currently developing a West Yorkshire Access Strategy which will aim to make services accessible and particularly to ensure provision for disabled people is made within the mainstream environment. Our strategy will ensure that the relevant steps are taken to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act and that disabled people are fully consulted on issues.

12.19 The strategy will include:

- adopting an inclusive approach to design by ensuring that access issues are considered early in the design of schemes, as required by the "hierarchy of consideration" (Chapter 9);
- working towards all footways and crossings being of adequate width, evenly surfaced and free of obstructions;
- developing continuous networks of footways and pedestrian facilities which provide accessible crossing points across busy roads, particularly at junctions, including audible and tactile information at traffic signals;
- providing convenient parking spaces for disabled people both in car parks and on-street;
- supporting 'Shopmobility' schemes which provide independent mobility within the central areas.

Personal Safety and Security

12.20 We will develop links with Crime and Disorder Partnerships across the County to establish integration of transport policies in local strategies to tackle crime.

12.21 Community consultation has played an essential role in the development of the Safety and Security Strategy (see Chapter 7) and in taking into account the needs of socially excluded individuals, often living within otherwise socially included neighbourhoods. We will develop a long-term strategy for community consultation and involvement in scheme prioritisation within the Plan period.

Access to Jobs and Training

12.22 This issue is being tackled in a number of ways:

- the review of the bus network being undertaken as part of the Bus Strategy (see Chapter 7) will consider issues of access to work and training;
- a project officer has been appointed to liaise and consult with targeted disadvantaged communities in West Yorkshire and develop pilot public transport schemes aimed at improving access to training and employment opportunities for residents of target communities;
- major highway schemes linked to regeneration proposals include measures to improve public transport access.

Transport Impacts

12.23 This impact of transport on socially disadvantaged communities is being tackled in a number of ways:

- development of the use of GIS social mapping to identify and target transport initiatives aimed at promoting social inclusion in disadvantaged areas;
- measures to reduce casualties, reduce speeds through area-wide traffic calming schemes (Chapters 9 and 10) and implement Air Quality Action Plans to reduce pollution will be targeted at areas with the most severe problems.

Planning Issues

12.24 In order to help to take account of the connection between social inclusion and transport we will:

- pilot social inclusion strategies within all aspects of district community planning, including transport planning;
- include and family friendly working patterns within local authority travel plans;
- seek leverage of new funds for transport improvements benefiting socially deprived neighbourhoods;
- publish guidelines for developers to improving public transport access to new developments, particularly those which offer new jobs to deprived communities.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP

12.25 In taking this strategy forward, we will:

- work in partnership with all relevant agencies to ensure the procurement and provision of a truly inclusive transport system;
- develop community involvement of all key socially excluded groups in the process of implementing the Transport Plan strategies.

