Passenger transport in isolated urban communities – supplementary note

About *pteg*

pteg represents the six Passenger Transport Executives (PTEs) which between them serve more than eleven million people in Greater Manchester (Transport for Greater Manchester), Merseyside (Merseytravel), South Yorkshire (SYPTE), Tyne and Wear (Nexus), the West Midlands (Centro) and West Yorkshire (Metro). *pteg* is also a wider professional network for Britain's largest urban transport authorities. The PTEs plan, procure, provide and promote public transport in some of Britain's largest city regions, with the aim of delivering integrated public transport networks accessible to all.

About this document

This is a supplementary note to accompany *pteg*'s main submission to the Transport Committee's inquiry into Passenger Transport in Isolated Communities which is available from http://pteg.net/resources/types/consultation-responses/passenger-transport-isolated-communities. This note provides additional evidence on passenger transport related isolation specifically in urban communities.

What is an isolated urban community?

Any community – urban or rural – is at risk of becoming isolated without passenger transport that fulfils four criteria:

1. **Available:** the passenger transport network should be within easy reach of where people live and take them to and from the places they want to go at times and frequencies that correspond to patterns of social and working life. People also need to be kept informed of the services that are available.
2. **Accessible:** vehicles, stops and interchanges (and the walking routes to and from these) must be designed in such a way that, as far as possible, anyone can use them without difficulty.
3. **Affordable:** people should not be 'priced out' of using passenger transport because of high fares and should be able to easily find the right ticket for them.

4. **Acceptable:** people should feel that passenger transport is something that is equipped to meet their needs as well as comfortable, safe and convenient.

If one (or several) of these criteria are not fulfilled, people can find themselves isolated from opportunity – whether they live in the middle of a city or in a small village. The case study below provides an example of an urban area where these criteria were not met.

Urban isolation: Burbank estate, Hartlepool[1]

The Burbank Estate is located one mile from Hartlepool town centre. Hartlepool was ranked the 24th most deprived ward in the country in 2012 and the Stranton ward (which includes Burbank) is the second most deprived in the borough. Some 62% of residents in the ward have no access to a car. In 2011, the estate's only bus service was removed due to cuts to the local authority's budget.

Alternatives for Burbank residents were to walk in to town or to make greater use of taxis. The walk into town was unpleasant, involving crossing main roads with fast moving traffic and negotiating poorly maintained footways. These features posed particular problems for older people (who make up a large proportion of the estate's residents), disabled people and people walking with young children.

Many estate residents were forced to use taxis, but restricted their journeys to the bare essentials due to the costs. In a survey of residents, 83% said that the loss of the bus service had a financial impact on them as they now had to take more taxis. Older and disabled residents were particularly frustrated by this because they had free bus travel but no buses on which to use it.

In this example, we see all four criteria at play. A bus service would be an **affordable** option but no bus service is **available**. Taxis are **available** but not **affordable**. Walking is **available** and **affordable** but routes are not **accessible** or **acceptable** for all residents. None of the transport options meet all four criteria.

These factors mean that, despite living in an urban area, Burbank residents found themselves isolated. Vulnerable groups such as older and disabled people and people on a low income were particularly affected. The effects are summed up by this quote from an older resident of the estate:

"It's like a forgotten world. It makes you feel depressed…we've got bus passes – that's brilliant – I feel like framing mine…But no bus services to use them on. We're on an estate surrounded by main roads. The whole of life is out there but we can't access it."[2]

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[1] Ecorys (2012) The Social Inclusion Value of Buses - Burbank
[2] Channel 4 News report 'Cuts to bus subsidies leave vulnerable stranded' broadcast 14 August 2011.

As the case study above indicates, certain groups are particularly vulnerable to isolation:

- People on a low income and jobseekers
- People with disabilities
- Older people
- Children and young people

All of the above groups are less likely to have independent access to a car and therefore rely on passenger transport to get them to the places they want to go.

The case study below takes the example of jobseekers to explore urban isolation.

Urban isolation: Jobseekers

Some 77% of jobseekers in British cities outside London do not have regular access to a car, van or motorbike[3].

Employment opportunities can often be located in isolated out-of-town industrial or trading estates that can be difficult to access without a car. This is particularly true for lower skilled jobs. Research by Centre for Cities[4] has shown that these tend to be more dispersed and often remote from the communities who may wish to access them. Looking at Sheffield City Region, for example, the research found that the most deprived neighbourhoods tend to be located close to key urban centres, where higher skilled jobs tend to be found. Lower skilled jobs are frequently remote from these central urban areas, making it difficult for jobseekers from deprived communities to access them.

A recent study by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation[5] analysed three contrasting urban labour markets and potential candidates for low skilled vacancies. It found that whilst 70 to 90% of unfilled vacancies were easily accessible by car, only 35 to 55% could be reached within 30 minutes by public transport.

Research among a sample of 912 jobseekers in British cities outside of London[6] found that over 60% felt they would have less chance of finding a job without a bus services. Over a third felt that they would have a better chance of finding work if bus services were improved.

As well as issues with the **availability** of transport connections to employment opportunities, job seekers in urban areas can also face isolation because of problems with the **affordability** and **acceptability** of transport options.

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[3] Institute of Transport Studies (2013) Buses and the Economy II: Survey of bus use amongst the unemployed
[4] Clayton, N., Smith, R. and Tochtermann, L. (2011) Access all areas: Linking people to jobs
[5] JRF (2012) The challenges for disadvantaged young people seeking work.
[6] Institute of Transport Studies (2013) Buses and the Economy II: Survey of bus use amongst the unemployed

On affordability, one in four people say their job search is inhibited by the cost of travel to interviews[7]. Bus fares in the Metropolitan areas continue to rise well above the rate of inflation[8] meaning urban jobseekers can find themselves priced out and isolated from job opportunities.

Acceptability is also an issue for this group – bus services may be available but jobseekers may be unwilling to travel beyond a certain area or may lack the knowledge of where they can get to using the services.

How much of an issue is isolation in urban, compared to rural areas?

For most people in urban areas, the bus *is* public transport. Over 80% of all public transport trips in Metropolitan areas outside London are made by bus – more than one billion journeys annually. The affordability and availability of bus services are particular issues in urban areas.

Affordability of bus services

High bus fares can price people out of using public transport, leading to isolation and to people making fewer journeys than they would like to. Metropolitan areas have experienced far steeper fare rises than non-Metropolitan areas. Between 2005 and 2013, bus fares in Metropolitan areas rose by 23.5%. In non-Metropolitan areas, the increase over the same period was 2.9%.

The example below shows how even relatively small hikes in bus fares can contribute to isolation in urban areas.

Urban isolation: bus fare rises

In Greater Manchester, child fares had to increase by 20p to cover the costs of providing statutory free travel for older and disabled people. Research among parents found that, as a result, they were restricting the journeys that their children made, particularly for those activities falling outside of school[9].

Research by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Mobility found that participation in after school activities is a key factor in breaking the cycle of social immobility[10].

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[7] Social Exclusion Unit (2003) Making the Connections: Final Report on Transport and Social Exclusion
[8] Department for Transport, table BUS0405b 'Local bus fares index (at constant prices) by metropolitan area status and county: Great Britain 1995-2013.
[9] Greater Manchester Transport Research Unit (2008) Food or education – the impact of the rise in the concessionary bus fare in Greater Manchester.
[10] All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Mobility (2012) Seven key truths about social mobility.

Availability of bus services

In the last year, urban areas outside of London have been hit hardest by cuts to bus services, as the table below shows.

Table 1 Change in total vehicle miles on local bus services 2011/12 - 2012/13[11]

Area type	Total	Commercial	Local authority supported
London	No change	n/a	n/a
Metropolitan areas	-2%	-1%	-7%
Other urban areas	-3%	No change	-15%
Significant rural areas	+1%	+4%	-8%
Predominantly rural areas	+0.5%	+3%	-5%

Metropolitan areas are the only ones to suffer a 'double whammy' overall, seeing cuts to both commercial and local authority supported services.

All areas have seen cuts to local authority supported bus services, due to reduced local authority budgets. Metropolitan areas have endeavoured to protect supported bus services where possible, meaning the cuts have been less severe than in other urban areas. However, overall, urban areas have seen a 10% cut in local authority supported bus mileage, compared to 6% in rural areas.

Data is not available on bus mileage changes by urban/rural area pre-2011/12, however, time series data for metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas suggests similar trends.

Table 2 Changes in vehicle miles over time[12]

	Commercial	Local authority supported
Metropolitan area bus service mileage in 2012/13 compared to…		
- 5 years ago (2007/08)	-8%	-6%
- 10 years ago (2012/13)	-14%	-2%
Non-metropolitan area bus service mileage in 2012/13 compared to…		
- 5 years ago (2007/08)	+4%	-19%
- 10 years ago (2012/13)	-4%	-3%

The metropolitan areas have been the most affected by cuts to commercial services but managed to protect a greater proportion of local authority supported bus services.

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[11] DfT Bus Statistics Table BUS0207a
[12] DfT Bus Statistics Table BUS0205a

However, cuts to public spending are leaving urban transport authorities less able to fill in the gaps left by commercial operators. Those gaps tend to be services that are not profitable enough to run commercially (e.g. outside of commuting patterns) but that are 'socially necessary'. These socially necessary services may connect isolated urban and rural communities to key services and opportunities, for example, or run outside of traditional hours to serve shift workers.

The vast majority of the resource budgets used to fund such services in the Metropolitan areas come from constituent Districts, whose funding in turn comes from CLG, where budgets have been significantly cut.

Research by SIGOMA has found that the CLG cuts are most severe in urban and Metropolitan areas[13]. Earlier analysis by *pteg* also identified a shift in CLG funding from urban to rural areas. In the 2011-12 Local Government Funding Settlement, funding for Metropolitan Districts fell by around 10% in real terms, compared to a 5% cut in Shire areas, relative to the previous year[14].

Falling resource funding will have a major impact on the ability of urban areas to support bus services as well as other discretionary initiatives to prevent isolation, such as concessionary fares to make travel more affordable for young people or jobseekers.

Tackling urban isolation

Below are a number of case studies demonstrating how Passenger Transport Executives (PTEs) have worked to tackle urban isolation through transport.

Tackling urban isolation: The GEM Centre, Wolverhampton

The GEM Centre is a key centre supporting children with special needs or disabilities in the Wolverhampton area. However, it was built on an isolated site, and families in poorer areas of the city were struggling to access it because of a lack of bus services to get there.

In response the PTE (Centro), together with the health authority and a community transport organisation put on a dedicated bus service.

Before the bus service was introduced, the centre had a high proportion of people who were missing their appointments. Following the introduction of the bus service, missed appointments at the clinic dropped by 60%.

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[13] SIGOMA (2013) Stop the Growing Divide
http://www.sigoma.gov.uk/Docs/sigomareports/A%20Fair%20Future%20or%20a%20Growing%20Divide_SIGOMA%20Updated%20Figures.pdf
[14] *pteg* (2013) Funding shift: How the city regions lose out on transport.

Tackling urban isolation: Connecting urban communities to job opportunities at ASOS, Barnsley

ASOS is the largest online fashion store in both the UK and Europe. ASOS partnered with Unipart to manage its European distribution centre when it relocated to Barnsley, South Yorkshire.

ASOS Unipart began recruiting in early 2011, teaming up with Jobcentre Plus they sought to draw candidates from a jobseeker market of largely semi-skilled people aged 19-25 from the local area.

Initial survey data showed that more than 75% of candidates did not drive or have access to vehicles. This made it nearly impossible to get to the site, where buses were infrequent and there were no evening or Sunday services. Jobcentre Plus was finding that up to 92 potential candidates per week were unable to accept or apply for a role at ASOS.

In response, South Yorkshire PTE, in partnership with local bus operators, altered bus routes stopping at the site and adjusted and expanded timetables to match shift patterns.

Following the alterations, bus patronage on the enhanced services has grown from 108 in the first week of service in late June 2011, to 831 per week in September 2011. The bulk of this increase is likely to represent people connected to jobs that they otherwise could not have reached.

Tackling urban isolation: Local Link, Greater Manchester

Transport for Greater Manchester runs a number of 'Local Link' door-to-door bus services. The services provide a vital lifeline to many urban communities.

Research into just one of the Local Link services found that a quarter of passengers would have been unable to make their journey if the service ceased. Ending the service would have severe consequences given that the majority of journeys made were to key health facilities, fresh food shops and employment.

Another Local Link service provides a 24 hour bus connection between Wythenshawe in Manchester and the city's airport and wider Manchester Enterprise Zone. The service takes people from door-to-door and is booked in advance. Manchester airport is a key employer for Wythenshawe residents. Many of the jobs available cover unconventional working hours and the Local Link service means that residents of this deprived area of the city are able to take them up.