

February 2015



Ticket to Thrive

**The role of
urban public
transport
in tackling
unemployment**

This report forms part of **pteg's** wider role in stimulating debate around broader policy issues of relevance to transport. We hope that it will generate ideas, discussion and feedback and therefore welcome any comments you may have on the points it raises. You can find our contact details on the back cover of this report.

pteg represents the six strategic transport bodies which between them serve more than eleven million people in Greater Manchester (Transport for Greater Manchester), Merseyside (Merseytravel), South Yorkshire (South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive), Tyne and Wear (Nexus), the West Midlands (Centro) and West Yorkshire (West Yorkshire Combined Authority). **pteg** is also a wider professional network for Britain's largest urban transport authorities.



Ticket to Thrive

The role of urban public transport in tackling unemployment

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01 Introduction

Public transport is vital in enabling people to find, and sustain, employment. One of the first considerations when embarking on a job search is 'where can I get to?' Transport plays a major role in the decision making process about whether to apply for, accept, or stay in employment.

This report explores the importance of public transport to jobseekers and the transport barriers they encounter in respect of the affordability of public transport tickets; poorly connected employment sites; mismatches between working hours offered and available public transport; and limited travel horizons. It also highlights the vital role public transport plays in helping people to stay in employment once they have found a job. It concludes by suggesting a number of policy measures that would assist in removing transport barriers to finding and sustaining employment. Taken together these measures represent not only a ticket to ride, but a ticket to thrive.

02 How important is public transport to jobseekers?

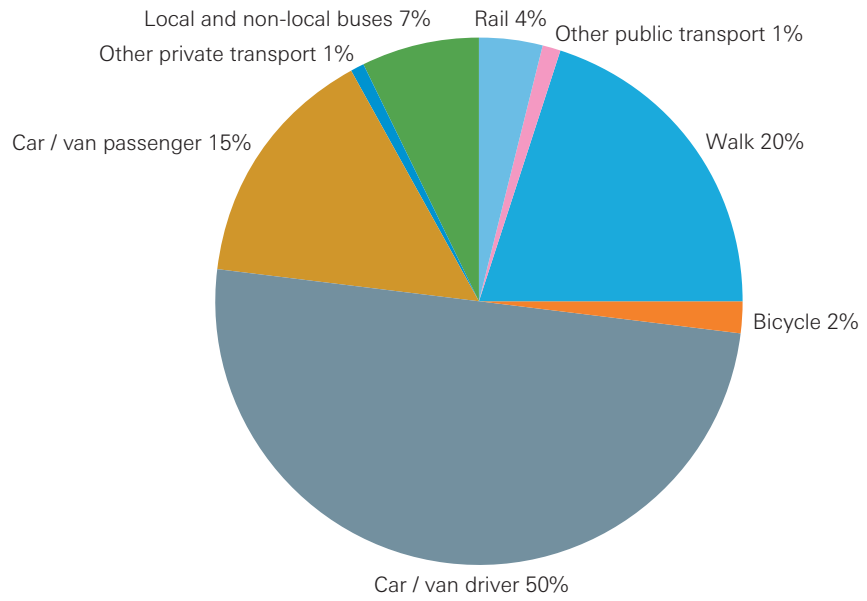
Research has shown that some 77% of jobseekers in British cities outside London do not have regular access to a car, van or motorbike, rising to 83% for those unemployed for more than six months and to 87% among 18-24 year olds¹. Almost 60% of jobseekers do not have a full car or motorbike driving licence, rising to 63% amongst those unemployed for more than six months and to 75% among 18-24 year olds².

Compared to all individuals aged 16 or over, people who have never worked or are long-term unemployed³:

- **Are more likely to make trips on foot:** walking accounts for the biggest proportion of trips made by this group (32%). For comparison, 20% of trips for all aged 16 or over are made on foot and it is car driver journeys that account for the biggest proportion of trips (50%).
- **Are less likely to make trips as a car driver:** A fifth of all trips made annually by this group are as a car driver, compared to half for all aged 16 or over.
- **Are more likely to make trips as a car passenger:** 23% of all trips made each year by this group are as a car passenger, compared to 15% for all aged 16 or over. Relying on lifts can make it difficult to get to interviews and work independently.
- **Are more likely to use buses:** Bus journeys account for 15% of all trips made annually by this group, compared to 7% for all aged 16 or over.
- **Are less likely to use rail:** 2% of trips made annually by this group are by rail compared to 4% for all aged 16 or over.

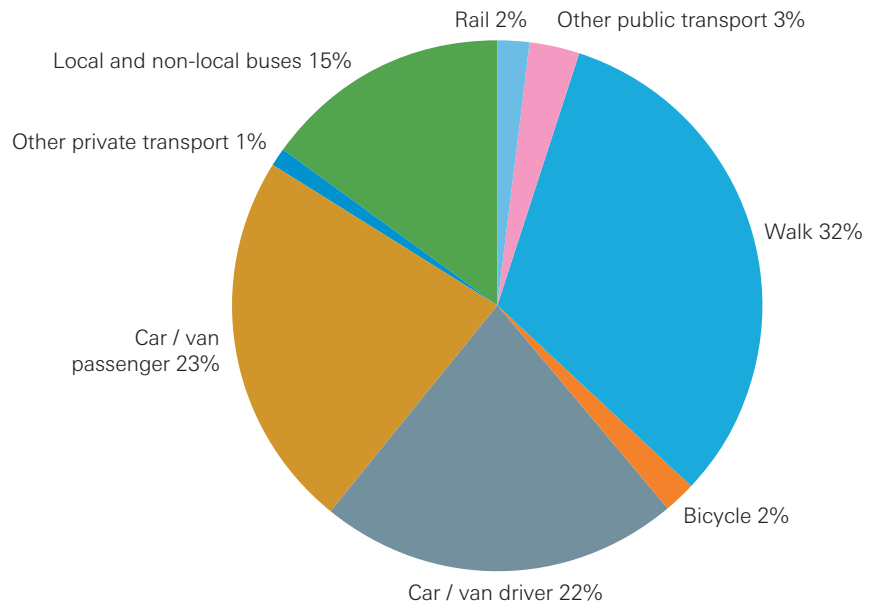
Most job opportunities are likely to be further than walking distance away, especially as jobseekers are required to apply for and take up job opportunities that involve up to a 90 minute journey. As the statistics above illustrate, jobseekers are more likely to rely on public transport, and the bus in particular, to reach these opportunities independently. Research among unemployed people has shown that women, those without access to a car, young people and people with lower skill levels are particularly dependent on bus services⁴.

All aged 16 or over: Proportion of trips made per year by main mode – 2013



Source: DfT National Travel Survey, table NTS0708.

People who have never worked or are long-term unemployed: Proportion of trips made per year by main mode – 2013



Source: DfT National Travel Survey, table NTS0708.

03 What transport barriers do jobseekers encounter?

Around 40% of jobseekers say that a lack of personal transport, or poor public transport, is a key barrier preventing them from getting a job⁵. Reflecting the particular importance of the bus, a fifth of unemployed people with no car availability have at some stage not applied for a job or attended an interview because of the lack of a suitable or affordable bus service⁶.

Barriers that may be encountered include:

- Affordability of public transport tickets
- Poorly connected employment sites
- Mismatches between working hours offered and available public transport
- Limited travel horizons

Affordability of public transport tickets

One in four people say their job search is inhibited by the cost of travel to interviews⁷. In some cases, travel expenses can make the difference between being better off on benefits or being better off in work.

In the deregulated bus market outside London, bus operators are free to decide the fares they will charge. Bus fares in the Metropolitan areas continue to rise significantly, increasing by 26% in the last ten years⁸.

'For a great many young people, the costs of transport remains a major barrier to engaging in education or work... high transport costs can eat significant chunks out of the earnings of a young person on the minimum wage, and be a major disincentive to staying in training for a prolonged period, or to undertaking unpaid work experience.'

The ACEVO Commission on Youth Unemployment⁹

For rail travel, jobseekers benefit from the Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card, which offers them 50% off rail fares for local or national travel. In London, the discount applies to all modes of transport (including buses), with the discount loaded onto the jobseeker's Oyster card. Transport for London has been able to do this because it is responsible for managing all aspects of public transport in the capital, including smart, integrated ticketing in the form of Oyster. The deregulated market outside London makes such a move harder to achieve, as agreement would need to be secured from each individual transport operator to apply the discount.

Whilst there have been isolated or time-limited examples of bus operators using the card to offer discounts on bus travel for jobseekers, there is nowhere near the nationwide coverage achieved for rail services. This is a missed opportunity given that jobseekers are far more likely to rely on buses, rather than trains, to get around.

In the Metropolitan areas, most Passenger Transport Executives (PTEs) run forms of WorkWise schemes to help people meet the travel costs of finding work. However, recent spending cuts have meant that a number of schemes have had to close or be reduced in scope as PTEs become less able to provide the funding for them.

Case study: WorkWise schemes

WorkWise schemes combine free or discounted travel tickets to interviews (and for the first weeks of a new job) with personalised journey planning advice to help jobseekers understand where they can get to using public transport.

WorkWise is a tried-and-tested approach. For example, over a ten year period, WorkWise schemes in the West Midlands alone have supported around 14,000 jobseekers back to work¹⁰. An evaluation of one such scheme in the area found that more than 80% of customers said that they would have struggled to access employment opportunities without the travel passes provided¹¹. In another survey of WorkWise customers, when asked why they valued the monthly pass provided by the scheme, 76% of respondents said it *'Saves me a lot of money/takes away the worry about money'*¹².



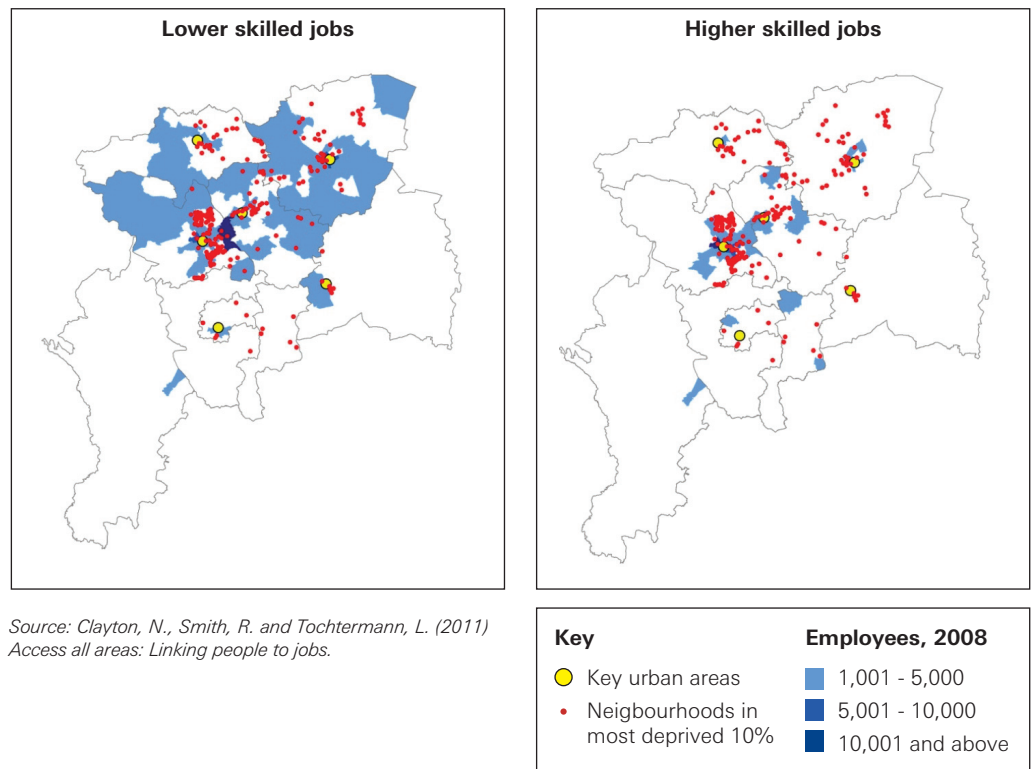
Picture: Centro

Poorly connected employment sites

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 has shown that these tend to be more dispersed and often remote from the communities who may wish to access them¹³.

The maps below of Sheffield City Region help to illustrate the issue. The blue areas show where jobs are located – the locations of lower skilled jobs are shown on the left-hand map, higher skilled jobs on the right. The red dots show the locations of the most deprived neighbourhoods.

Location of higher and lower skilled jobs in the Sheffield City Region



The maps show that many of the most deprived neighbourhoods are focused around key urban areas (the yellow dots). However, as the map on the right shows, these areas also tend to contain the largest concentrations of higher skilled jobs. The map on the left shows that lower skilled jobs are more dispersed and are often remote from deprived communities who may wish to access them.

A recent study by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation 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 transport¹⁴.

“St Helens has some areas of high unemployment and the people who need to work are up to five miles from getting to those jobs. The bus has played a key part in providing much needed jobs for local people and helped staff recruitment and retention for businesses which in turn enhances productivity.”

Sue Waller, Business Advocate for St Helens Chamber on new direct bus services to Haydock Industrial Estate

Research among a sample of 912 jobseekers in British cities outside of London found that over 60% felt they would have less chance of finding a job without bus services. Over a third felt that they would have a better chance of finding work if bus services were improved¹⁵.

In a deregulated bus market, transport authorities have no direct control over where commercial bus services run. Bus operators need to make a profit and are unlikely to run services that lose money, even if there is a need for them. Instead, they tend to focus on profitable major corridors and commuter routes into city centres. As described above, lower skilled vacancies are often found outside of these key corridors. Transport authorities may step in to fund extra 'socially necessary' (also known as tendered, subsidised or supported) bus services, but cuts to revenue funding mean that they are becoming less able to do this.

The case study below shows the difference a bus connection can make in opening up employment opportunities.

Case study: Buses open up job opportunities at ASOS¹⁶

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 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 grew 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.

The case study above serves to illustrate a wider problem. All too often job-generating developments are planned with little consideration for how the people from surrounding communities will access them without a car. The increasing liberalisation of the planning system runs the risk of creating further problems if development is permitted in inaccessible areas on the grounds of short-term economic growth benefits.

Adding in transport infrastructure and links after the development is up and running is costly and, given the squeeze on revenue spending, transport authorities are becoming less able to step in. These problems could be avoided if transport were to be considered from the earliest stages of land-use planning decisions. The case study below shows how this can be achieved.

Case study: South Yorkshire Land Use and Transport Integration (SY LUTI) project

In South Yorkshire, close partnership working between South Yorkshire PTE and the South Yorkshire districts through the South Yorkshire Land Use and Transport Integration (SY LUTI) project has helped to ensure that new developments are now prioritised around existing public transport corridors and that any sites which are poorly connected are outlined as requiring developer contributions towards public transport services. This work has been welcomed on a city region basis, with partners outside of South Yorkshire now requesting LUTI modelling.

Mismatches between working hours offered and available public transport

The previous section highlighted how lower skilled job opportunities in particular tend to be located in dispersed, out-of-town locations. An additional problem is that these jobs often involve shift working and unconventional working hours.

Public transport services usually correspond to more 'traditional' nine-to-five working patterns meaning jobseekers may find themselves having to refuse job offers that require working hours outside of this pattern.

Off-peak bus services are often unprofitable and therefore vulnerable to cuts. Again, transport authorities can – and do – step in to fill gaps (as the case study below illustrates) but are becoming less able to do so due to squeezed revenue budgets.

Case study: 24 hour Manchester airport and Enterprise Zone link¹⁷

A key employer for the residents of Wythenshawe in Manchester is Manchester Airport. Many of the jobs available cover unconventional working hours and it is vital that residents of this deprived area are able to take them up. In response, Transport for Greater Manchester began providing a 'Local Link' bus service between 3am and 5.30am to cater for airport workers on early shifts or night workers returning home. The service takes people from door-to-door and is booked in advance. In May 2013, the service was extended to cover 24 hours a day, seven days a week, not only to the airport but also to the wider Manchester Enterprise Zone.

Limited travel horizons

Research by Citizens Advice asked jobseekers to complete the sentence *'It would help me get back to work if...'* One of the top two answers was *'...I could find work near where I live.'*¹⁸ Evidence suggests that limited travel horizons mean that some jobseekers are reluctant to travel beyond their local area to access employment.

A number of reasons for limited travel horizons were identified in research by the Social Exclusion Unit¹⁹ including:

- Trust – people may lack the confidence that public transport will get them to where they need to be, on time.
- Knowledge – people may have poor knowledge of where they can get to using public transport.
- Familiarity – a tendency to look for work in, or travel to, places that are familiar. This can be influenced in part by traditional patterns of employment locally.
- Uncertainty – frequent changes to bus routes, timetables and fares can exacerbate the above.

It is for these reasons that the WorkWise schemes described above usually include an element of personalised journey planning, alongside free or discounted travel. These schemes help to broaden travel horizons, giving people the information and personalised advice they need to understand where they can get to using public transport, be reassured that they will arrive where they need to be on time and have the confidence to look for work beyond their immediate local area.

Case study: James

James had been looking for work for two years, when he was offered a job at Morrisons. Journey planning support from a scheme using a WorkWise-style approach in West Yorkshire helped him plan his route so that he knew when and where to catch the bus to work and back.

James said: *"I found the travel information really helpful as I work shifts, so I needed to know that I could definitely get back home late at night. The free MetroCard [travel pass] was great, I catch four buses a day and am paid monthly, so it really helped until the first pay day."*

04 Moving into work

Public transport, and the bus in particular, continues to play a vital role as people move into employment.

Among unemployed people, research suggests that 58% would usually use buses to get to work if they were in employment²⁰. This intention is translated into practice – more people commute to work by bus than by all other forms of public transport combined²¹. Some 400,000 workers are in better, more productive jobs as a direct result of the bus, and the additional economic output they produce as a result of being in a better job is £400 million per annum²². More widely, bus commuters generate £64 billion in economic output every year²³. One in ten of these commuters would be forced to look for another job, or give up work altogether, if they could no longer travel to work by bus²⁴.

“The bus services in and around Cobalt Business Park have helped retain our staff as well as helped with staff recruitment. Without the services, many of our employees wouldn’t be able to get to work, they are crucial to Formica in this respect and they have helped transform accessibility to the Park”

Richard Pollington, European President at Formica Ltd²⁵

On moving into work, many people find that transport problems persist. Research in British cities outside London found that 13% of jobseekers with no car availability have left or turned down a job because of a lack of suitable or affordable bus services²⁶. Transport problems can make it very difficult for people to sustain employment once they have found a job.

In Hartlepool (where 28% of people do not have access to a car or van²⁷), all subsidised bus services were cut, leaving just one regular evening service in the whole town. This led some workers able to get to work but unable to get home. Reports at the time suggested that this had affected shift workers, with some, for example, faced with a six mile walk home²⁸.

Another example comes from Marchwood, on the outskirts of Southampton, where subsidised Sunday and evening bus services were cut back.

Case study: Mark²⁹

Mark works part-time in the evenings and at weekends as a steward at a venue in Southampton. Since the cuts to bus services, Mark has found it very difficult to get to and from his evening shifts. Mark's shift does not end until 10.30pm, leaving him with few options to get home. Mark cannot afford to pay for taxis and so is no longer able to work in the evenings:

"They want me to be there but I've told them that as the bus service has cut down completely I can't come to work in the evenings."

Mark also used to work some Sundays, but now that the bus service has ended, he cannot do these shifts either. The only day that Mark can now work is Saturday and he is concerned that he will lose his job as a result.

As well as the availability of public transport, affordability can also be an issue for people moving into work. Those entering an apprenticeship scheme, for example, are entitled to an apprentice minimum wage of £2.73 per hour³⁰. The costs of getting to work can account for a high proportion of earnings and act as a barrier to participation. More broadly, for any new employee money can be tight, particularly in the first weeks of a new job before the first wage packet arrives.

WorkWise schemes often continue to offer free or discounted travel in the first weeks of a new job in order to ease the transition. This support can be crucial in ensuring new employees stay in work, as this quote illustrates:

"My customer started work for a cleaning company...The bus pass has been a great financial incentive as she was struggling to cope with paying dinner money for children, rent and council tax whilst waiting for her first working tax credit payment. She came into the office to say it had really helped her stay in her job."

Jobcentre Plus Advisor supporting a WorkWise-style scheme in West Yorkshire³¹

WorkWise schemes also provide advice on finding the best value tickets once in work to help people save money in the longer term.

05 What policy measures would assist in removing transport barriers to finding and sustaining employment?

This report has illustrated the vital importance of public transport, and the bus in particular, to jobseekers. The affordability of public transport tickets, poorly connected employment sites, mismatches between working hours and available transport and limited travel horizons can all present significant obstacles to finding a job. Public transport goes on playing a key role as people move into work, helping them to stay in employment and continue on into better and more productive jobs. Without available and affordable public transport, accepting – and sustaining – employment can prove impossible.

We believe a range of policy measures would assist in ensuring that transport does not pose an insurmountable barrier to getting and keeping a job. These policy measures are:

- 1. Recognition of how public transport can – and does – tackle unemployment.**
- 2. A new funding deal to protect bus services.**
- 3. More effective powers over bus services for local transport authorities.**
- 4. Review of jobseeker and apprentice travel concessions and the potential for a national scheme.**
- 5. Personalised advice on journey planning for all jobseekers facing transport barriers.**
- 6. A 'Bus Bonus' for commuters.**
- 7. Land-use planning that supports access to employment.**

Each of these is described in more detail opposite.

1. Recognition of how public transport can – and does – tackle unemployment

Transport problems can pose a significant barrier to people finding, accepting and sustaining employment. Employment opportunities can be opened up by measures to make travel more affordable; to ensure employment sites are well connected to public transport networks; to provide bus services that correspond to working patterns; and to provide people with the information and advice they need to expand their travel horizons.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) already benefits greatly from transport interventions – welfare spending is reduced by providing jobseekers with access to employment. This contribution – and the potential to do more – should be recognised and valued by the Department. It should consider funding for public transport and its users alongside other policy tools used to tackle unemployment.

To facilitate this, we recommend that DWP conduct an appraisal as to the effectiveness and value for money of providing transport support for jobseekers compared to other forms of support offered to this group.

2. A new funding deal to protect bus services

Revenue funding is required to support key transport measures for tackling unemployment described in this paper, from bus links to key employment sites to discounted fares for jobseekers. Funding for these types of schemes comes primarily from wider local government revenue budgets which have been badly hit by reductions in all of the six main sources of public support for buses³², most notably as a result of cuts in wider local government funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

Cuts to local transport budgets mean that transport authorities are increasingly having to focus their efforts on meeting their statutory responsibilities first (funding the National Concessionary Travel Scheme for older and disabled people; capital repayments; and pensions) before looking at what level of discretionary services they can provide, including schemes that benefit jobseekers and supported bus services. Such schemes are all non-statutory areas of spend, making them vulnerable to cuts as transport authorities seek to ensure they can meet their core legal responsibilities from reduced budgets.

Local councils need targeted support to protect lifeline local bus services and connect people to opportunity. This could take the form of a new 'Connectivity Fund'. The case for such a fund is set out in our 2014 'Making the Connections – the cross-sector benefits of supporting bus services' report which shows how the bus is key to achieving 46 policy goals of 12 of the 24 Departments across Whitehall including the Department for Work and Pensions, HM Treasury, Department of Health, Department for Education and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. In major urban areas outside London alone, bus networks are estimated to generate over £2.5bn in economic benefits against public funding of £0.5bn. The report goes on to make the case for the consolidation and protection of existing bus funding streams through a new dedicated, devolved and ring-fenced Connectivity Fund enabling local government to support bus services.

The Connectivity Fund would bring together the existing fuel subsidy that the Department for Transport (DfT) provides for bus operators (known as Bus Service Operators Grant) with additional top slicing from other Government Departments in recognition of the significant contribution bus services make towards key policy goals across Government³³, including connecting people to employment.

The Fund should offer local authorities the flexibility they need to allocate spending in accordance with local priorities. This could include, for example, providing discounted travel to jobseekers or connecting communities with employment sites through new bus services.

3. More effective powers over bus services for local transport authorities

Currently, local transport authorities outside of London have little power over the fares that bus operators charge or the services that are provided. Fares have risen above inflation and the bus services provided do not necessarily correspond to the needs of communities, restricting access to employment and to other opportunities.

The powers that local transport authorities have should be significantly enhanced to enable them to make bus travel more affordable, introduce simple integrated ticketing systems, and design and protect route networks. Enhanced powers would enable the transport authority to specify routes and timetables of bus services, protecting less profitable but socially necessary services and ensuring communities are connected to the places they want to go, at the times they need to travel.

4. Review of jobseeker and apprentice travel concessions and the potential for a national scheme

High fares, on the bus in particular, pose a key barrier to people seeking work.

We propose that DWP, in partnership with DfT, conduct a review of existing travel concessions available to jobseekers and apprentices. The review should consider the effectiveness and costs of these schemes and explore the potential for a nationwide concessionary travel offer for these groups, covering both bus and train.

The review should consider how any nationwide scheme could be achieved in a way which builds on existing industry and local government initiatives; be implemented so as not to lead to unintended consequences for the overall level of bus service provision; and is adequately funded.

Funding for the national concessionary travel scheme for older and disabled people has not kept pace with the rising costs of the scheme, having a knock on effect on wider transport authority budgets. It is important that such a situation is avoided in any new scheme.

5. Personalised advice on journey planning for all jobseekers facing transport barriers

Experience from WorkWise schemes shows the value of providing free or discounted travel for jobseekers in conjunction with personalised advice on journey planning and on selecting the best value tickets once in work.

Jobcentre Plus now has more flexibility and choice over what support to offer to its customers. Personalised transport advice should be a key component of the toolkit available to Jobcentre Plus Advisors to help people understand where they can get to using public transport and to broaden travel horizons. Training for advisors can be provided by transport authorities utilising their knowledge of the local transport network and journey planning tools available.

6. A 'Bus Bonus' for commuters³⁴

As this report has demonstrated, transport barriers do not necessarily disappear once someone has found employment. Affordable transport makes it more likely that people will be able to stay – and be better off – in work. London-style powers over bus networks are key to achieving this (see policy measure three).

To further support affordability, the Government should introduce a 'Bus Bonus' scheme – a tax benefit concession for commuters who use buses. This would level the playing field with car commuters who are provided with tax-free parking by employers. Such arrangements have been very successful over many years in the United States and elsewhere.

KPMG LLP estimate that such a scheme would generate a net benefit of £74.8 million per year to the UK economy³⁵. Against a cost to the Treasury of £75 million per year, the scheme is expected to generate £149.8 million of benefits in its first year of operation, as illustrated below. The net benefits are expected to increase over time, stimulated by new demand.

Summary of the annual costs and benefits of the Bus Bonus



Source: Greener Journeys (2014) Tax incentives for bus commuters.

7. Land-use planning that supports access to employment³⁶

How people will reach key employment generators without a car is often little more than an afterthought in the land-use planning process. Transport authorities need to be involved in land-use planning decisions in their earliest stages to look at:

- Locating developments so that they connect to existing public transport networks
- Developing and improving walking and cycling routes to proposed developments
- Encouraging the use of town centre locations where possible

Through better integrating transport infrastructure within the planning of developments, these measures could pre-empt situations that are very difficult (and costly) to remedy retrospectively.

Conclusion

We believe that the seven policy measures outlined above would assist in removing the kinds of transport barriers to finding and sustaining work discussed throughout this report. We have seen how vital available and affordable public transport is to jobseekers as they search for, and move into, employment. The implementation of these seven measures could open up opportunities for countless jobseekers across the country as well as for the many others who rely on public transport to get to work and to continue moving forward in their careers. Taken together they represent not only a ticket to ride, but a ticket to thrive.

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- ³³For more on the cross-Departmental benefits of the bus, and on the Connectivity Fund, see **pteg** (2014) *Making the connections: The cross-sector benefits of supporting bus services*.
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