

LEE LI MING
PROGRAMME IN
AGEING URBANISM

Transportation
Strategies for
Ageing
Populations, UK

Ageing and Mobility¹

Adithi Moogoor

Part 2 – Accessibility and
Acceptability

Accessibility

Access to reliable and safe transport is essential for older adults. It enables them to access goods, services, employment and other activities.

A 2008 study² on older people and their travel behaviour identified measures to combat accessibility barriers to public transport and pedestrian walkways. Examples of potential measures include:

- a: Provision of road crossings at a greater number of wide or busy junctions.
- b: Providing road crossings that allow pedestrians a longer time to cross.

¹ This is an evolving database. We will be adding more examples and cases over time.

² The study was conducted by the University of Leeds and Leeds Metropolitan University

c: Designing bus interiors to accommodate handholds in wheelchair and buggy storage areas.

d: Designing bus stops to ensure that the approaching buses are easily visible to the seated passengers who would otherwise have to get up repeatedly to check for the buses.

e: Introducing a system of accredited standards for taxi companies to reassure older people that they will be taken to their destination via the most direct route.

Key findings from the above mentioned study helped the DfT in devising solutions for problems of accessibility. These solutions are listed in Box 3.

Box 3: Schemes to enhance ‘Accessibility’

- **Accessible Design of Small Buses**

The Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations 2000 (PSVAR) sets out standards for public service vehicles that will ensure they are accessible to people with disabilities by 1 January 2017. Buses that comply with the accessibility regulations are issued with an accessibility certificate. This certificate was issued to 94% of buses in England in March 2016.

- **Improving Access at Rail Stations**

The ‘Access for All’ programme is part of ‘Railway for All’ strategy. It addresses

station accessibility issues experienced by passengers with mobility constraints. DfT is providing funds to 218 rail stations to make them obstacle-free and accessible (i.e. accessible routes to, and between, platforms at priority stations). Provision of lifts and ramps, platform edge tactile paving, accessible toilets and humps to reduce the stepping distance between platform and train are additional initiatives of the programme.

- **Accessible Taxis**

The Equality Act 2010 contains provisions to ensure licensing authorities do not refuse licenses to wheelchair accessible vehicles if there are less than a prescribed number in a specific geographical area. Although the Government is still considering the commencement strategy, as at 2015, 58% of all taxis in England were wheelchair accessible.

- **Street Lighting**

Good quality street lighting can contribute to a safe night time environment by reducing people’s perceived fear of crime and lessening light pollution. Street lighting servicing companies under private finance initiatives provide technical assistance to local authorities to maintain and improve street lighting.

- **Walking and Cycling**

a: Home Zones- Residential areas with streets designed for very low vehicle speeds to accommodate the needs of pedestrians and cyclists. 'Homes Zones- Challenging the Future of Our Streets', published by DfT, disseminates good practices of creating safer streets for walking and cycling. The intent of Home Zones is to promote social activities (such as people chatting or children playing) in street space.

b: Puffin crossings- Pedestrian crossings where the time allowed for crossing is automatically extended in response to sensors that can spot if pedestrians are waiting to cross a road and in some cases identify the movement of pedestrians when they cross.

- **Use of Cars**

Driving licenses expire when a person turns 70 and need to be renewed every three years thereafter. At each renewal, applicants must declare whether they have any relevant medical conditions that may interfere with their driving ability. Also, they must continue to meet the eyesight standard. Failure to complete the declaration honestly is an offence and may invalidate motor insurance.

- **Mobility Centre**

DfT supports a number of mobility centres, which are voluntary organisations setup to provide advice to drivers and car passengers who are having difficulties getting in or out of a vehicle, or who are concerned about their driving ability. The centre mainly focuses on people whose mobility is impaired by a medical condition or disability.

- **Blue Badge Scheme**

This scheme provides a range of parking benefits for people who have disabilities that impair their ability to walk. The badge can be used to park for free in 'pay and display' bays and also on double and single yellow lines³.

- **Mobility Vehicles**

Powered wheelchairs and powered mobility scooters are two types of mobility vehicles that can be used by people with reduced mobility to help them commute. There are different classes of vehicles, and restrictions placed on their usage on roads are based on travel speeds.

³ Yellow lines indicate vehicle waiting restrictions along the carriageway, pavement and verge. Single yellow line means no waiting during certain times and double yellow lines mean no waiting at any time of the day.

Source: Department for Transport. (2012). *Transport Solutions for Older People*. London: Government of UK

Case studies for 'Accessibility'

In the county of Merseyside, 'Easy Access' buses display stickers by their doors to inform passengers about the buses accessibility. Information displayed on the stickers include: low floor design, able to kneel at the kerb for easy boarding with wide doors and extending ramps, and space for wheelchairs.

The Motability⁴ scheme enables people with disabilities, as well as their families and caretakers, to use their government funded mobility allowance to lease a new car, scooter or powered wheelchair. Customers are able to choose a new car every three years or a wheelchair accessible vehicle every five years.

Acceptability

There are a range of transport networks available to older adults. However, willingness to use these networks depends on people's concerns of unsafety, poor customer service, and a lack of information about travel mode choice and usage of public transport. DfT has

⁴ Motability is an independent charitable organisation operated in partnership with the Government, leading banks, and the motor and insurance industries.

undertaken several initiatives to tackle these issues, and they are highlighted in Box 4.

Box 4: Schemes to promote 'Acceptability'

- **Personal Security and Safety**

Some people feel unsafe while walking and waiting for buses or trains. DfT is exploring options to cooperate with agencies such as Crime and Disorder Partnerships and to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour that influence people's feelings of unsafety.

The Secure Station Scheme operated by DfT and the British Transport police sets strict criteria for station design and management to prevent crime. To gain accreditation, rail stations must be able to show a reduction in crime rates at the station. A survey of users must also reveal that the passengers feel safe at the station.

- **Travel Training and Mentoring**

The travel training schemes can help instil in people the confidence and skills they need to travel on public transport. This may be important for older adults who have given up driving for health reasons and are using public transport for the first time.

- **Staff Attitudes and Training**

The Public Service Vehicles (Conduct of Drivers, Inspectors, Conductors and Passengers) Regulations 1990 requires coach and bus staff to ensure the safe travel of people with disabilities. Training programmes available for taxi drivers who want to improve their skills and services for older and disabled passengers.

The Equality Act 2010 imposes a penalty on drivers of wheelchair accessible taxis and private hire vehicles if they refuse access assistance to wheelchair passengers.

- **Audio Visual Announcements**

All new trains are required to have audio visual announcements and all buses in London currently have them in place.

Talking bus stops provide real time information about bus schedules, including details such as which services are due, when they are due, and where they are going. A battery-operated key fob alerts blind and partially sighted when they approach a talking bus stop.

Source: Department for Transport. (2012). *Transport Solutions for Older People*. London: Government of UK

Case studies for 'Acceptability'

First TransPennine Express (FTPE) manages 30 rail stations that have been accredited to DfT's Secure Station Scheme. They have invested in CCTV and passenger help points, and provided staff training on how to deal with difficult situations and how to protect vulnerable passengers. Information points allow passengers to report crime and security concerns directly to the rail operating agency or through British Transport Police and Crimestoppers (an independent crime-fighting charitable organisation).

Falling while riding on a bus is a concern for older people. Research by Age UK revealed that over 800 older people fall on a bus per day and nearly two million are concerned about falling. Passengers who are fearful of falling can claim for a safe journey card that can be used on buses operated by FirstGroup (a transport company). The card is shown to the driver who then waits until the passenger is safely seated before driving off.

'Metro-Timetables', developed by West Yorkshire Metro, uses an automated voice system to provide people with real time and scheduled departures. The information is provided to passengers over their phones and is also provided via SMS and web services.

Transport for Greater Manchester provides a guide on how to access hospital sites in the county. The guide provides details about key bus stops along major routes to hospitals. It also shows how long the travel times are between the key stops and hospitals. Also, the guide contains a detailed map of the hospital sites..

Sources:

Age UK. (n.d.). *On the buses*. London: Age UK London.

Department for Transport. (2012). *Transport Solutions for Older People*. London: Government of UK.

Firstgroup. (n.d.). *Stay Safe on Board*. Retrieved from Firstgroup:

<https://www.firstgroup.com/safejourney/index.php>

Greg Marsden, M. C. (2008). *Older People and Transport: integrating transport planning tools and user needs*. City of Leeds: Strategic Promotion of Ageing Research Capacity

Motability Operations Group. (n.d.). *The Car and Scooter Scheme*. Retrieved from Motability UK: <http://www.motability.co.uk/about-the-scheme/why-join/>

Transport, D. F. (2016). *Annual bus statistics: England 2015/16*. London: Department for Transport , UK.