

Beyond the Infrastructure: Understanding the Further Design and Implementation Requirements of Transport Interchanges within the Urban Public Transport Network

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Abstract

Improvements to local public transport are increasingly seen as a catalyst to achieving the development objectives of regional, national and European-level strategic policy. The provision of an integrated and accessible public transport network is considered an essential requirement to cater for the growth of our city regions, to tackle the increasing pressures of traffic congestion and to promote a more dynamic and socially inclusive society. A combination of different elements is necessary for the constraints that continue to hinder the development of attractive and efficient urban and regional public transport networks to be overcome.

East Lancashire is typical of a European sub-region. Its location on the periphery of a major regional centre makes it comparable to similar city regions throughout the UK and Europe. The role of an integrated transit system for East Lancashire is comprehensively recognised in regional and local policy documents as an essential element for securing the region's future prosperity and development.

Journeys which involve interchange represent the area of travel by public transport where the greatest number of barriers exist that prohibit service contemplation and use. The significance of a high quality interchange environment in achieving an integrated public transport system conducive to the development of 'seamless' public transport journeys is therefore paramount.

A comprehensive study was undertaken across East Lancashire that involved detailed research to identify the range of physical, commercial, institutional and conceptual barriers to public transport use that prevent such 'seamless' journeys from being realised. Three classifications of interchange type representative of the different interchange journeys undertaken by East Lancashire residents were then defined. These included bus-bus interchanges centred at local hubs of the regional transit network; bus-rail interchanges at peripheral commuter locations; and multi-modal interchange opportunities at the centre of the regional public transport system.

Through understanding the requirements of the passenger at different stages of the interchange journey and appreciating the variable significance of barriers to travel, a series of different packages of measures were identified for implementation at each type of interchange facility. These packages aimed to highlight the necessary requirements with respect to designing for

interchange, over and beyond the high quality physical environment that has become accepted as a standard prerequisite for network planning.

The range of measures identified included a combined approach to infrastructure and passenger information provision, together with examination of modal synergy and interchange layout. The classification of different interchange types allowed the specific tailoring of requirements to target identified user groups felt to be at most risk from negative attitudes towards the use of public transport for undertaking such journeys.

Bespoke measures and information strategies were assembled for three different interchange locations across East Lancashire representative of the three different interchange types identified. Pilot testing of some of the information material was also carried out to further refine outputs, maximising value for potential users. A series of implementation strategies were also compiled, outlining task and funding requirements in the short, medium and long term.

The findings of the study demonstrate that whilst improvements to the standard of infrastructure and quality of service are required as standard, 'softer' elements of the journey should not be overlooked. The range of initiatives outlined to facilitate smoother transition between services at these locations may be used as a benchmark for the necessary requirements at similar public transport interchanges on a European-wide level. Informing the traveller and making the convenience and understanding of public transport use more comparable to that of the car are both essential for negative perceptions and behaviour towards public transport to be radically altered.

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