



# LTP3 Research and Evidence Overview

March 2011  
Merseyside Transport Partnership



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24 Hatton Garden, Liverpool, L3 2AN



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# 1. Introduction

## **1.1 Background**

A large amount of research and intelligence gathering activity has been undertaken to underpin the Third Merseyside Local Transport Plan (LTP3). These reports have, predominately, been produced as stand alone research items designed to fulfil specific needs and inform key decision making processes. A need has been identified to make an over-arching assessment of this research to clearly identify and articulate the key issues that are being identified for LTP3.

## **1.2 Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to provide a context for LTP3, drawing on the outputs of the research and monitoring that have been undertaken both during the LTP process to date, and in preparation of LTP3. By providing an over-arching review this report seeks to identify and clearly articulate the main cross cutting arguments raised by the various research items, as they impact upon Merseyside LTP3 policy. The report provides a summary of these items, and their interactions with each other, signposting the reader to the individual reports assessed for the detail.

## **1.3 Report Structure**

This report is structured as follows.

- Section 2 – Methodology
- Section 3 – Findings
- Section 4 - Summary

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Methodology

The methodology for reviewing the research and monitoring reports that have been used to develop LTP3 was as follows.

#### 2.1.1 Review

Each document listed in section 2.2 was reviewed by either the LTP Support Unit or Mott MacDonald to identify the key issues and evidence that had been put forward from that study or report.

#### 2.1.2 Workshop

The workshop collated the key issues from the review and identified common themes from the evidence that was identified by the reviewers. This workshop involved discussions to develop the key themes that would form the structure of this report.

#### 2.1.3 Themes

The themes that were identified are a mixture, with some closely aligned to existing policy themes while others are new or are a combination of other elements of policy, context and strategy. The common themes make eight groups, these are:

- Equity
- Travel Costs
- Behaviour Change/Smarter Choices
- Active Travel
- Regeneration/Policy
- Congestion
- Air Quality
- Road Safety

Each theme is covered individually in section 3 of this report, summarising the main research findings and policy conclusions, and noting where research elements complement or conflict with parallel work.

### 2.2 Documents Reviewed

The following 34 reports were reviewed for this report.

1. LTP Annual Progress Report 2009
2. LTP Annual Progress Report 2010
3. Congestion Monitoring Report 2009/10
4. Countywide Household Travel Survey 2010
5. Draft Merseyside Active Travel Strategy, October 2010
6. Foresight Group Final Report, March 2010
7. Integrated Assessments for LTP3, December 2010
8. Liverpool City Region Economic Evidence Project; Transport component, August 2010
9. Liverpool City Region State of the Environment 2009-2010

10. Liverpool City Regional Transport Model, Nov 2010
11. LTP Fuel Price Survey 2010
12. LTP Fuel Price Survey, 2008
13. LTP3 Freight Strategy, 2010
14. Merseyside Cycle and Short Trip Evidence Study, August 2010
15. Merseyside Disadvantaged Communities Study; Transport Research, August 2010
16. Merseyside LTP Business & Transport Research Report, 2008
17. Merseyside LTP Monitoring and Evidence Base Update, Nov 2010
18. Merseyside LTP3 Evidence Base Review, March 2010
19. Merseytravel Annual Passenger Services Review
20. Modal Share Surveys Report 2009/10
21. Moving in the 21st Century; Harnessing Transport Interventions to Maximise Economic Performance and Regeneration, October 2008 (Professor John Whitelegg)
22. Northwest Modal Shift Mapping Exercise, July 2009 (Atkins)
23. Planning for the Future Forum, Interim Report, December 2009, (Liverpool Chamber of Commerce)
24. Transport Demand in the North, including Impacts of the recession, Summer 2010, (Northern Way)
25. Travel in Merseyside 2010
26. Travel to School Monitoring 2010
27. TravelWise Behaviour Change Review 2008-2011 (TTR)
28. TravelWise Comparison of Changes in Attitude to Travel Behaviour 2006-2010 (TTR)
29. WorkWise Returns, Nov 2010 / Workwise Report, Jan 2011 (LTPSU)
30. CE/PION City Region Economic Forecasts
31. Lets get moving evaluation
32. Cycle Training evaluation
33. Child Poverty Assessment
34. DfT and Department for Health - Transport and Health, January 2011
35. LTP Fuel Price Survey 2011

These reports are cross referenced by these numbers throughout this document.

## 3. Findings

### 3.1 Introduction

From the research methodology described above the following key themes were identified from the studies/reports.

- Equity
- Costs
- Behaviour Change/Smarter Choices
- Active Travel
- Regeneration/Policy
- Congestion
- Air Quality
- Road Safety

Away from the main themes the following issues were also identified, but fell short of being included as themes in their own right. For completeness these are recorded here as:

- The impact of a rising elderly population on travel needs
- The significance of the “school run” in terms of volume of trips per day
- The extent to which Merseyside transport and travel needs follow national trends; and
- The impacts that funding cuts are likely to place on all of the issues discussed.

The exclusion of discussion of each and every topic covered in the research and evidence base is deliberate – the report has sought to highlight the strongest recurring and interlinking themes from the research undertaken. Some perceived “key” issues may therefore appear to be missing from this report because there was not a themed research topic in that area. One way in which this may have occurred is where the issues associated with that theme are understood on a wider macro-economic and macro-policy level. The issue of the extent of transport’s contribution and capability towards delivering economic growth is a possible example (although this was touched upon under the “Regeneration/Policy” theme). The need to provide full breadth of discussion of all policy areas is addressed by the full Third Local Transport Plan.

The eight themes identified are discussed in turn. There is no significance in the ordering of these themes.

### 3.2 Equity

The first theme is equity. This was a theme that recurred and resonated through much of the documentation. Equity of transport provision and availability is important to allow fair access to services and opportunity.

Underlying socio-economic conditions have a strong influence on travel choice, and with Merseyside having a high concentration of the most deprived areas in the UK (18), equity is an important theme for LTP3. Perhaps the most well known relationship between economic circumstance and transport is the divide between those who can afford to own, run, and use a car, and those who cannot. The relationship between travel choice and income is spelt out more fully in the results of the Merseyside “Countywide Household Travel Survey” (4,18). These results show strong trends in reliance on bus and walk modes in

lower income groups, with car use, and also rail use, associated with higher income brackets. The more restricted transport choices of those on lower incomes are therefore an important issue for LTP3. This was emphasised by the specific research undertaken with disadvantaged communities (15). The cost of running a car was identified as beyond the means of many Merseyside residents. A reliance on other modes means provision of good public transport networks is important to try and provide equity of travel options.

Those on lower incomes (and usually residents in more disadvantaged communities) were also identified (15, 18) as being most vulnerable to be hit by any reductions in bus services, due to their more limited access to other forms of transport. The risk of lower funding for subsidised services in the LTP3 period could therefore easily lead to cuts that impact upon access to employment opportunities (e.g. shift work starting/ending outside of commercial bus service provision).

The evidence has also shown that travel horizons (how long in distance and time that people are prepared to travel to access services and opportunities) for those in disadvantaged areas can be lower than those in less deprived areas of the region (4, 15). In respect of this issue access to transport information and education in how to access and use transport information (for example using timetables) was also identified as an important factor in equity of access. The growth of the internet and information technology has provided easier access to transport information but it should be remembered that presently only 46% of households in deprived areas have access to the internet compared to 66% in Merseyside overall (4).

Alongside economic circumstance, ethnicity, disability, and also age and gender have all been identified as groups who have particular needs from the transport system (7). Access to a car was highlighted as particularly important for those with disabilities or living in areas with no public transport (e.g. rural communities) where the reliance on access to a car played a greater role in their independence than for other sections of society (15).

The importance of the equity issue was acknowledged from a policy perspective by a variety of stakeholders and partners. A series of strategic groups identified the problems of restricted travel horizons and perceived, or real, barriers to access services and opportunities. It was also noted that disadvantaged groups often experience the worst effects of traffic through higher road safety risk, and greater exposure to traffic noise and pollution (21).

In this context transport was identified as crucial for addressing child and family poverty (33), and the Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA)(7) of the LTP noted the strong impacts that the LTP can have on a variety of groups. At a wider level the Northern Way identified the irony that the North of the country has more sustainable travel patterns than the South (24), and that whilst this was driven by lower incomes, it represented an opportunity to embed sustainable and equitable access into Northern communities in the future. In this regard the EQIA noted that proposed investments through the LTP in Smarter Choices could disproportionately benefit disadvantaged groups.

However, there remain challenges in achieving progress in this area. This is not a new issue and successive policies, arguably most notably through European ERDF Objective One funding have attempted to address these issues. The Disadvantaged Communities research (15) noted particular resistance to cycling by some lower income groups who did not aspire to use this mode. More positively there was evidence of success in this area through the specific targeted interventions of the Lets Get Moving and Workwise programmes.

The importance of partnership working was also raised in delivering equity in transport (6). Examples included ensuring that transport services are available when hospital appointments are made and that

transport services are promoted for those who are seeking employment (e.g. job centre claimants are informed of appropriate transport services to support their applications).

### 3.3 Costs

Transport costs have emerged as a key issue for the LTP3 period.

The Merseytravel Statistical Monitor has shown that the cost of bus travel has increased by around 600% since 1986 whilst over the same period motoring costs have risen at less than the rate of inflation (retail price index) (19). The impact of this disparity has undoubtedly contributed towards falling levels of bus patronage and increasing car use (25). As discussed in the section on equity, those that are without access to a car find themselves at risk of being priced out of making journeys that would otherwise support access to opportunity, including taking up employment or training.

Whilst concessionary travel is available to some groups this does not extend to all who might arguably need some discounting of costs to open up access to services and opportunity. Such concessions remain under financial pressure, for example moves nationally to reduce eligibility to elderly bus passes.

After sharp increases in 2008, in 2011 there have been further shifts in vehicle fuel price with fluctuations and sharp rises due to the global market price of oil. In 2008 research showed that the increased price of fuel was having some effect on a third of drivers who were changing their travel habits (12). Emerging findings from a 2011 update of this work suggest that the new record highs in fuel prices in March 2011 are seeing up to a half of people now making some adjustment to their travel choices (35). Whilst fuel prices will be determined via international events, the impacts of higher fuel prices, particularly over the long term if peak oil concerns are founded, could have profound impacts on the affordability of oil dependant modes (21).

Costs of bus travel were a significant theme in the research reviewed and at a policy level there has been considerable discussion around how smartcards and ticketing products can be used in the future to make bus travel more affordable (6, 23). Currently it is understood that those on lower incomes often pay the highest fare per journey due to their inability to invest in costly weekly, monthly and annual passes that offer discounts in the long run. The aspiration is that a smartcard system could allow people to benefit more easily from discounts for multiple journeys, without the need for large up-front payments.

Another consideration around ticketing has been the way in which people approach costs when they are pre-paid. Examples include mobile phone costs and the sunk costs in purchasing a car. In both circumstances it is argued that with the main costs paid for up front day to day usage is not accounted for as a normal expense. If this mentality could be replicated for public transport costs, perhaps through pre-paid or pay monthly smart card products then it is argued that usage could be boosted (23).

The higher costs of bus use also lead to reference to the comparable cost of using taxis for certain journey types (23). It was identified that taxis play an important role in supporting certain employment opportunities, such as those working in the night-time economy where limited public transport exists, and for non-car households being able to access fresh food retailers (23, 15). The costs and availability of affordable taxis can therefore play an important role as part of the wider public transport network to allow access to employment and services such as affordable fresh food. Taxis also play an important role for those with mobility and other difficulties by providing an accessible transport service. The potential for taxis to more efficiently and cost effectively cater for some of these journeys (as opposed to subsidised bus services) was raised in this context (23).

Away from the motorised modes of transport the research body identified that the active travel modes are an extremely cheap form of transport with low costs for use and for set up. However, even though there are low costs there isn't yet a strong indication of a take up of active travel modes for cost reasons (27, 28). Results from cycle training evaluation suggest that leisure activities were the most popular reason for taking up active travel modes (32).

### **3.4 Behaviour Change/Smarter Choices**

Behaviour Change and the concept of advocating Smarter (transport) Choices was a dominant theme of the research and evidence documents reviewed.

Several of the research reports that were prepared in the lead up to LTP3 were specifically focused on behaviour change and smarter choices (21, 22, 23, 27, 28). These reports looked at recent use of established marketing techniques and their application for transport planning locally. Specifically, studies sought to understand and then seek to influence how people decide to make trips and choose the method of transport they use.

The reports used to develop LTP3 found that differing socio-economic groups (and even differences within groups) respond to different marketing and different infrastructure provision (e.g. some groups will use cycle tracks others won't). In a local context the studies indicate that only certain sections of the Merseyside population would respond positively to campaigns and measures to change their trip habits (27, 28). The latest evidence suggests that around a third of the population fall into a convertible category where they are particularly open to change, either towards public transport modes or to the active modes (28).

Further empirical evidence has also identified that people are willing to make changes where they are persuaded of the benefits to them. Surveys of employees (16) identified that people were willing to adapt their behaviour in order to minimise delay, and driving more slowly was identified in 2008 as a common response to higher fuel costs (12).

Within all of these categories it must be borne in mind that with current land use patterns there will always be types of trips, such as grocery shopping, which are inherently more convenient by car (22).

In Liverpool city centre there has been a significant change over the past seven years towards usage of more sustainable transport to access the heart of the city (20). It is reported that changes within the city centre such as the City Centre Movement Strategy have put a greater focus on public and sustainable transport with increased allocation of road space to bus and increased pedestrian areas and priority (e.g. crossings on The Strand). The Liverpool One development has also changed trip habits to the city centre (although not necessary by sustainable means) with later shopping hours and supporting leisure facilities (e.g. Echo Arena). Pre-agreement of relatively high parking charges has played a part in incentivising usage of more sustainable modes.

Across Merseyside there has been an increase in cycling and rail use with a stabilisation in car use recorded in the past five years (25). Bus usage has continued to decline.

Evaluation of the extent to which behavioural change and smarter choices measures have contributed to changes in travel choices is not easy, with a myriad of economic and external factors influencing peoples movements. However, an evaluation report has concluded that there have been successes with local work, particularly with regard to walking and cycling, and with workplace travel planning (27). Evaluation of

workplace travel planning activity has demonstrated a 4.3% overall reduction in single car occupancy trips (1), whilst Workwise “scooter commuter” clients have an excellent 74% employment retention rate 3 months after travel support is withdrawn (29). Evaluation of cycle training showed that the Bikeability training had encouraged cycle use for the individuals who had undertaken training, and had also had an influence on increased cycling levels in other householders. Increased usage was recorded as mainly for leisure uses with minor encouragement for utility trips (32).

### **3.5 Active Travel**

This theme, focused on the active modes of walking and cycling, was sufficiently prominent in the research and evidence to merit its own theme separate to the wider Smarter Choices topic already covered.

Several of the reports compiled in the development of LTP3 were dedicated to Active Travel (14, 32). In conjunction with these reports it is clear that there is considerably more data and detail available on the potential role of Active Modes than in the past.

Strong evidence was referenced from studies which have shown that encouraging cycling and walking had major economic returns relating to health, environment benefits and congestion. The Benefit Cost Ratio is stated to be especially strong for health benefits. Here, returns are greater for those individuals who were inactive before and become active, rather than making existing active people more active (14).

The potential benefits of Active Modes have a particular resonance in Merseyside where high levels of obesity and other health conditions relating to physical inactivity (along with other health conditions) contribute towards significant social and economic costs to the region (18). It is considered that increased active travel by all but especially those who are inactive can address health costs and also improve economic productivity through reduced sick leave and other related issues (19).

Notably the role of active travel in health is now being firmly acknowledged by the health sector with the recent joint DfT and Department for Health national paper on Transport and Health strongly advocating the benefits of supporting shifts to higher levels of walking and cycling (34).

Between the positive research messages around Active Travel, and Smarter Choices and Behaviour change, is a potentially awkward tension. Those groups that would benefit the most from active travel are potentially located in the areas and categories of people who would normally be relatively unreceptive to suggested primary marketing messages promoting these modes. An important piece of evidence to balance this issue is the impact of the Workwise “Wheels” programme. For this programme free bicycles were provided to those meeting certain criteria who required a transportation solution to allow them to take up employment. The scheme has seen an 85% employment retention rate 3 months after receiving a bicycle, with a high proportion of these people coming from areas of disadvantage (29). This suggests that specific targeted measures can have success with otherwise reluctant active travel users, and that complimenting schemes and programmes can allow increased active mode usage across different social groups.

Other important evidence has shown that the majority of trips in Merseyside are under 5 miles, and with around half of these trips made by car the potential is there for conversion of large numbers of trips to active modes (14).

Active Travel was also identified as being more inclusive than other modes (primarily due to its low cost) and this can support the ongoing regeneration in Merseyside as it is usable by all (5).

### **3.6 Regeneration/Policy**

This theme has emerged as an important recognition of the link between transport and other public policy themes, most notably around regeneration.

Current and future land use policy is considered from the reports to have an important impact on transport. The redevelopment of the city centre has put greater focus on its transport provision. Further inner city redevelopment such as HMRI (or successor programmes) and the proposed Wirral and Liverpool Waters schemes will put further requirements on the urban transport network to cater for demand (21, 23).

It has also been clearly recognised that the same issue must also be viewed from the other direction with transport decisions actively influencing the location of development to ensure both environmental sustainability and economic viability. This principle was recognised in a number of research and evidence areas (6, 7, 21, 23, 24). It has also been argued that increased economic productivity (GDP) can be achieved through adopting a sustainable development path, with high quality public transport infrastructure, and a resultant low carbon economy (6). It is noted that regeneration by car focused developments can be limited and can make the region less attractive for inward investment on an international scale. In comparison a number of European cities are cited where a strong focus on sustainable transport and development has been a key feature of a strong economic performance (21).

The research also notes that a regeneration focus cannot be limited to existing urban areas and also has a focus on “out of town” type of development and cross border movements. Supporting access to these locations is also argued as important to support economic and regeneration aims (23, 24). Access to existing locations such as the Estuary Business Park and Deeside, along with proposed developments such as Parkside and Omega, was recognised as difficult, especially for workers on shifts and with no car access. The success of such sites was considered important to secure inward investment in Merseyside and the North West.

Tourism was highlighted as an area where clear transport policy is important to support this growing element of the economy (18). Links with the health sector have been discussed under the Active Travel theme, whilst there were additional issues raised by the Integrated Assessment (7) that sought to get health impacts of all transport policies more fully considered.

There was evidence in the reports that there was good co-operation between policy sectors in Merseyside and with neighbouring districts on joint beneficial goals (6). However, this highlighted the need for strong leadership across the city region to ensure that there are joint plans and a single direction being taken across the authorities and supporting organisations to deliver successful strategies (6, 21, 23). In addition the importance of establishing good working relationships with the private sector, in particular transport operators, was highlighted (18).

### **3.7 Congestion**

Congestion emerged as a theme of significance from the body of research.

The reports identified highway congestion as an important issue and that the costs caused by congestion are important in a Merseyside context (16). Notably, the view prevailed that congestion was not considered a significant problem yet for Merseyside, but that it had the potential to develop into a problem in the future. Some research (28) showed that during the LTP2 period concerns around congestion subsided. There is empirical evidence to support this with traffic levels stalling or falling as the recession impacted (25). An

over-arching view was that the relative lack of congestion in Merseyside currently was seen as an economic advantage and opportunity when the area was compared against comparable and competing areas (16).

Congestion was raised as not being solely a car-based issue. Highway congestion can have a damaging effect on bus users unless priority is given to buses, and significant work was undertaken to identify net benefits across all users of a corridor when improvements were proposed during LTP2 (3). On the rail network growth in rail use has reduced available capacity and created congestion and crowding issues at peak times, not just on trains but also at stations – most notably at Liverpool Central station (2).

There was also evidence that in aggregate car park capacity in Liverpool city centre was not constraining access. However both cost and the location of empty spaces in relation to attractions do provide a degree of restriction (e.g. parking at retail car parks was full at weekends but low during the week and vice versa for business district parking)(25).

The recession has produced some variation in traffic levels and thus congestion data. Nonetheless the evidence is there both in long term trends, and also in local forecasting (17) that significant pressures can be expected in the future, particularly if car travel continues to become cheaper both relative to inflation and other modes.

### **3.8 Air Quality**

Air quality was raised regularly in the research as an issue and is therefore identified as an underlying theme. This issue is closely linked to wider concerns about carbon emissions and climate change.

The Merseyside Atmospheric Emissions Inventory is supported by the Merseyside Transport Partnership and provides a strong evidence base for understanding transport's contribution to local air quality (and climate change)(18). Air quality issues have worsened in recent years and this has been reflected in a worrying increase in the number of air quality management area designations, primarily on the grounds of transport emissions (18, 2). Simple forecasts based on projections of traffic growth would suggest that the situation could be set to worsen in the future. However, there are a number of important external and local factors to take account of in assessing transport's future contribution towards air quality issues. Technology has been improving rapidly and in the future the composition of the vehicle fleet will be considerably cleaner than it is today. In addition the Integrated Assessment of LTP3 (7) noted that the proposed strategy would have positive effects on air quality and climate change. This assessment also strongly advocated the importance of supporting the uptake of Electric Vehicles and lower emission freight vehicles in Merseyside.

As discussed under the Equity theme air quality problems are understood to be most likely to be experienced by those in more disadvantaged communities.

While attitudinal surveys have indicated that awareness of climate change and air quality issues is high, it is interesting to note that this is not raised spontaneously by people as a transport issue, and is only highlighted when prompted. Underlying this response is a prevailing attitude that most people are not prepared to modify their behaviour on the grounds of this issue. They perceive that improving air quality is the responsibility of external groups and isn't their problem (15, 16, 18). In this respect air quality and carbon emissions can be described as a significant externality to the costs paid by the user for most travel.

### **3.9 Road Safety**

Road safety was not raised as commonly as the other themes identified in this overview report. However whenever it was discussed in the research and evidence there was full and unequivocal support for the priority status of this issue (18, 6, 23).

Road safety is considered to be a successful element in the LTP process to date and has shown improvements over a long period of time. Child KSI's have been reduced by 66% since 1995 (25). Research discussion has also highlighted it as an example of where a partnership approach has been successful in developing a plan and achieving results.

Whilst there has been overall success there are certain groups that are dis-proportionately affected by traffic accidents - especially children and those from disadvantaged communities (6, 15). The links to the equity theme are once again clear.

## 4. Summary

The wealth of research and evidence collated for the LTP has contributed towards a wide ranging consideration of transport planning issues for Merseyside. This report has sought to review this wide ranging body of research and evidence. Eight recurring themes emerged from this review and have been discussed in this report. They are:

- Equity
- Costs
- Behaviour Change/Smarter Choices
- Active Travel
- Regeneration/Policy
- Congestion
- Air Quality
- Road Safety

From the documents reviewed for this study the eight themes discussed were the most prominent issues that were consistently raised across the research and evidence base. In most areas there was strong correlation between the evidence and conclusions of the various research elements.

The eight areas identified summarise the primary issues raised across the research reports and evidence assessed. They are not, necessarily, the only issues for Merseyside's LTP and it is the role of the LTP itself to distinguish the final priorities for the plan.

The table below provides a summary of the eight themes and some concluding comments for each. The comments seek to emphasise some final considerations for the final LTP from each theme.

**Table 1: Concluding Comments on the eight themes**

Theme	Consideration
Equity	The need to ensure that Merseyside's transport networks provide equitable access to opportunity and services.
Costs	The need to ensure that the cost of travel is not a barrier to mobility and sustainable travel choices are affordable.
Behaviour Change/Smarter Choices	The need to secure agreement from both policy makers and the public of the value of behaviour change interventions (coupled with the right physical measures) to deliver more sustainable travel patterns.
Active Travel	The need for effective partnership working to facilitate the promotion of active travel choices and, in-turn, significantly contribute towards the health and wellbeing of Merseyside.
Regeneration/Policy	The need to forge strong cross sector partnerships, especially with regard to land use decisions, to successfully deliver economic growth that is also mitigating against climate change.
Congestion	The need to build on a position of a relative lack of congestion currently to develop a vibrant and sustainable non-carbon dependant economy in the future.
Air Quality	The need to investigate whether technological advancements, potentially coupled with difficult policy decisions can deliver marked improvements in air quality.
Road Safety	The need to maintain high road safety standards and continue to deliver road safety improvements, reducing the risk for all Merseyside residents.