



Improving Access to Employment and Services

LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN
MERSEYSIDE



Public
Transport



Goods



Walking



Cycling



Traffic

Introduction

Good transport links are essential in enabling people to reach employment and services. Merseyside's Accessibility Strategy sets out our assessment of accessibility problems and our proposals for improvements over the next five years. It is a statutory document and a key part of the Local Transport Plan, a £230m delivery programme of transport investment and service improvements. The Merseyside LTP Partnership consists of Merseytravel and the five district councils of Merseyside.

Our Accessibility Strategy highlights priority areas to be addressed:

- **Access to jobs and training;**
- **Access to education in particular to post 16 education;**
- **Access to healthcare; and**
- **Access to fresh food shopping.**

In defining what is meant by accessibility, we ask whether people can get to key services at a reasonable cost, in reasonable time and with reasonable ease. The Accessibility Strategy therefore refers to a broader definition than describing the needs of disabled people and includes promoting social inclusion by tackling the accessibility problems faced by those in disadvantaged groups and areas such as costs of travel, availability of service and information.

Why we need an Accessibility Strategy

All members of the community should be able to enjoy the benefits of Merseyside's economic regeneration. The ability to reach places of employment, learning, healthcare, shopping, leisure and other opportunities is often taken for granted. However for many people, particularly those without access to a car, transport can be a major barrier and this can significantly impact on the quality of life and life chances of those individuals.

Transport clearly has a role to play in making sure that everybody is included, by ensuring that there are adequate, safe, secure and affordable bus and train services and walking and cycling facilities. We also have to ensure that our public services and employment areas are planned for and located in places with good public transport.

We must also ensure policies and practices aid accessibility. For example, are healthcare appointments made for times that it is easy for non car users or parents with child care responsibilities to attend? Are costs of transport too high and forcing some people to give up their jobs or forcing some young people to give up further education?

These are not just issues for the LTP partners or the bus and rail operators but will require the support of all services providers. This includes Jobcentre Plus, the Primary Care Trusts, the Local Education Authorities and the Learning and Skills Council. We also welcome the opportunity to work with the Merseyside Local Strategic Partnerships to look at developing solutions that can help across the whole of Merseyside.

The problems that we face

Research has helped us to identify barriers that prevent people from reaching services:

- ***The cost of transport*** – the relatively high cost of public transport is a significant barrier to many people. Bus fares are continuing to rise faster than rail and motoring costs. For many, the cost of travel in relation to income means far fewer trips are made. We have to increase the opportunity to travel for those on low incomes.
- ***The availability and physical accessibility of transport*** – we need to provide adequate public transport at times of the day and to places where people want to go, including evening services and business parks.
- ***Safety and security concerns*** – about 15% of the community do not travel on public transport at night because they feel unsafe. This is despite the fact that Merseyside has one of the safest public transport networks in the country.
- ***Services and facilities in inaccessible locations*** – We have too many examples of important public services or job opportunities being located in places difficult to reach without a car.
- ***Travel horizons*** –many people feel unsure of travelling to areas that they are unfamiliar with. We need to ensure that our travel information is as easy to use as possible in helping them to travel.



What are we doing?

The aims of the Accessibility Strategy can only be achieved by working in partnership with service providers to ensure that accessibility issues inform the decisions that you make.

Each of the Local Authorities has developed an action plan with service providers through their Local Strategic Partnership, setting out what they are going to do to improve accessibility. For example:

- **Better land use and transport integration** – A draft Supplementary Planning Document on transport and access has been drafted for consultation and adoption by all Local Authorities. This aims to increase good location choices for employment and services and good access to developments by all modes of travel.
- **Increasing the amount of transport available** – The Merseyside Bus Strategy sets out how we would like to work with a range of providers including the Community Transport sector and the health and social services transport fleets, to expand services. We have already helped to establish The Merseyside Community Transport Operators Forum and are talking to other providers to see how we can improve services.
- **TravelWise** - By working with schools, colleges, businesses and healthcare providers on site specific Travel Plans our TravelWise programme aims to improve accessibility to these sites and to encourage greater use of sustainable transport. www.LetsTravelWise.org
- **Innovative Solutions** – We are working with colleagues in health, education and Jobcentre Plus to examine how we can jointly make access easier for people. For example we could examine new arrangements for hospital visiting times, or improving information for job seekers so that people know what services are available and how to use them.

The Local Transport Plan Partnership successfully bid for £3m of Objective 1 funding to support the Accessibility Strategy. Three key projects are being delivered, under the 'Lets Get Moving' banner; Neighbourhood Travel Teams, WorkWise and Dial a Ride.

The Neighbourhood Travel Teams

Neighbourhood Travel Teams in each authority, provide free, face to face transport advice surgeries to assist people who would normally not seek transport information or who are unable to access information through mainstream provision. Providing travel surgeries in community locations raises awareness of transport services and the support available to help people reach training and employment opportunities.

WorkWise Merseyside

WorkWise addresses transport barriers to employment, education or training.

Key WorkWise Schemes include:-

- Up to a months free public transport travel for residents of target areas travelling to interviews, training or employment.
- WorkWise Wheels – up to six months' loan of a bicycle, equipment and training for eligible residents.
- Scooter Commuter – up to six months' loan of a scooter complete with training, insurance and personal protective equipment.
- A series of 'How to get to Guides' to provide detailed information on transport links to specific sites of employment and education.

WorkWise Merseyside has the full support of key stakeholder agencies such as Jobcentre Plus.

Improving access to information

WorkWise Merseyside have created an interactive employment map aimed at partner organisations and clients. The map provides site specific easy to understand public transport information. The search facility allows users to look for employment sites that are easily accessible to them and provides details on how to find out about opportunities at the organisation. Partners are able to advise clients to whether certain job opportunities are accessible to them by public transport.

www.workwisemerseyside.org



New Bus Services

Merseytravel have introduced new Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services to fill gaps in the conventional bus network particularly for reaching employment. At a total cost of £1.4m, Dial-a-Link provides six services on a wholly Demand Responsive Transport basis to compliment the existing Joblink bus services.

The LTP partnership's Communities on the Move project offers funding to implement innovative accessibility solutions. It is designed to build capacity and capabilities within the Merseyside community transport sector to be used for the benefit of socially excluded communities.

Improving access to jobs

The St Helens Chamber, St Helens Council and Merseytravel have entered into a partnership with Arriva to provide new bus links to Haydock Industrial Estate. This will significantly improve access to this key employment location, which was struggling with recruitment and retention of staff due to poor transport links. The new 920 service was introduced in February 2007.

Further Information

If you have any comments on the Accessibility Strategy or want to get involved with helping to improve access to services then please contact

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You can download this document and the full Accessibility Strategy and see the latest transport news updates at www.transportmerseyside.org



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