

Transport into Work: a proposal for a new programme

Introduction

This paper proposes a “Transport into Work” programme, to build on the most economically focused and evidence-based elements within the Local Sustainable Transport Fund. It would provide funding to support targeted initiatives that overcome transport barriers to employment, for both individuals and communities.

Background: the case for action

The Government is going through a very tough Spending Review at present. Unprotected Departments like Transport are particularly under scrutiny, and resource funding will need to have a strong justification.

One current element of DfT spending is the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF). This was established under the Coalition Government with twin headline objectives of “supporting growth and cutting carbon” and accounted for over £600m of both capital and revenue spending in the last Parliament. In SR 2013, the capital element of LSTF was rolled into the Local Growth Fund, and Local Enterprise Partnerships were encouraged to include sustainable transport projects and programmes in the Strategic Economic Plans and in Growth Fund bids. The revenue LSTF budget remained outside the LGF and has no allocation beyond next year. This creates an opportunity for Ministers to revise and rebrand LSTF, creating a new local programme and with new targets.

The LSTF has funded a very wide range of local programmes and projects. There has been extensive monitoring and evaluation of these, using annual reports submitted by each project/ authority and also assessments of particular themes. Campaign for Better Transport has collated and summarised the economic contribution of LSTF large projects in its own report, funded by DfT: “Improving local transport helps the economy: experience from the LSTF” (<http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/sites/default/files/research-files/Improving%20local%20transport%20helps%20the%20economy%20-%20experience%20from%20the%20LSTF.pdf>).

From this there is good evidence that LSTF projects that have supported improved access to employment by individuals and communities have had a strongly positive effect, through:

- Targeting households and individuals with a history of worklessness
- Creating new links between communities and employment areas
- Supporting businesses and employers with improved transport links.

This supports Government objectives by helping people into employment and also by widening labour markets and helping businesses thrive.

There is further evidence supporting such measures from evaluations of other projects and programmes, especially in the city-regions (see for example http://www.pteg.net/system/files/general-docs/WorkWise%20briefing%20Version%204_April%202015.pdf and <http://www.pteg.net/system/files/general-docs/PTEG%20%E2%80%93%20Ticket%20to%20Thrive%20Final%20Feb%202015.pdf>).

This evidence suggests that transport problems can form significant barriers to employment and that it is possible to overcome such barriers through targeted measures. These include:

- **Affordability:** discount/ free travelcards for job seekers and new employees can provide essential help for unemployed people in low income households.
- **Support:** tailored packages of information, “travel training”, bikeability and discount travel can help individuals access training and employment opportunities. Workplace-based packages can also help employees access different forms of transport and can help reduce workplace congestion
- **Mobility:** “wheels to work” projects can provide loans and vehicles (bicycles, motor bikes and sometimes cars) to new employees to help them take up jobs in advance of their first pay packets
- **Access:** support for new transport services to link areas of high unemployment with employment, including new/ extended bus services, where “kickstart” funding can support new services until they become commercial. This can also help with new housing and commercial development where bus services can be initiated before the bulk of new residents or employers have arrived.

Examples of some of the programmes include:

- Network West Midlands “Workwise”: http://www.networkwestmidlands.com/workwise/home_two.aspx
- Merseytravel “Travel Solutions”: http://www.letstravelwise.org/content49_Transport-Solutions.html
- Nottingham job seekers “kangaroo card”: <http://www.citycardnottingham.co.uk/get-a-citycard/jobseekerscitycard.html>
- Wheels to Work in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire: <http://www.wheelstowork.org>
- South Yorkshire Job-Connector buses:
- Bristol coaches to North Bristol fringe: <https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/News/Pages/New-coach-service-set-to-make-life-easy-for-commuters.aspx>

Some of the evidence suggests that such interventions can be at least as effective as mainstream Department of Work and Pensions programmes in helping unemployed people back into work. The DWP and Job Centre Plus have not so far generally funded such interventions, certainly at a programme level.

There is also a range of LSTF projects, including those promoting active travel, which have a good payback and economic benefits, including reducing congestion, NHS costs and absence from work through illness.

LSTF has funded a number of projects under these headings and there are programmes in both city-regions and in rural areas that have been implementing these measures. If LSTF funding finishes, it seems likely that most will fall away, especially given general pressures on local authority resource budgets.

A new programme

We therefore suggest that these kinds of interventions be brought together into a “**Transport into Work**” programme, targeted at support for initiatives to overcome transport barriers to work and support employers in enlarging labour markets. This programme could be managed jointly with the Department of Work & Pensions and could also be linked to the Local Growth Fund and Local Enterprise Partnerships. It should include a mix of revenue and capital to maximise results – a principle underlined in the report for DfT by Sloman et al (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/416797/finding-the-balance-sustainable-travel.pdf). Given the potential and the scale of the need, we recommend that it be funded at roughly the current level of LSTF, around £100m a year in capital funding and £65m a year in resource funding.

In summary, the evidence from LSTF and other projects suggests that a new “Transport into Work” programme could provide cost-efficient support to the Government’s core economic objectives and supplement and support efforts by the transport industry and local authorities. We would be happy to discuss this further.

October 2015

Campaign for Better Transport’s vision is a country where communities have affordable transport that improves quality of life and protects the environment. Achieving our vision requires substantial changes to UK transport policy which we aim to achieve by providing well-researched, practical solutions that gain support from both decision-makers and the public.

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