

9 What people in Leicestershire say about their transport system

Introduction

According to the DfT, that Local Transport Plans recognise the views and needs of local residents, businesses and workers, is crucial¹. As a result, this evidence base has, as much as possible, drawn on various consultation evidence. Emphasis has been placed on who and where in the county thinks a certain way, is most affected by a particular issue and so should, or should not, be considered a priority for intervention. The aim of this final chapter is partly to summarise these people and places, but also to give a sense of the extent to which local residents are satisfied with, or see as a concern, Leicestershire’s transport system. It therefore considers views about transport in the context of other authorities and other (public sector) responsibilities, before restating which people and places in the county express most concern about transport issues.

Using the 2008 Place Survey and the National Highways and Transport Network’s benchmarking study, the chapter mainly discusses issues in the context of local residents and workers. However, in 2009 the Leicester and Leicestershire Business Survey introduced two new transport questions. Where possible, this evidence has been included within the chapter.

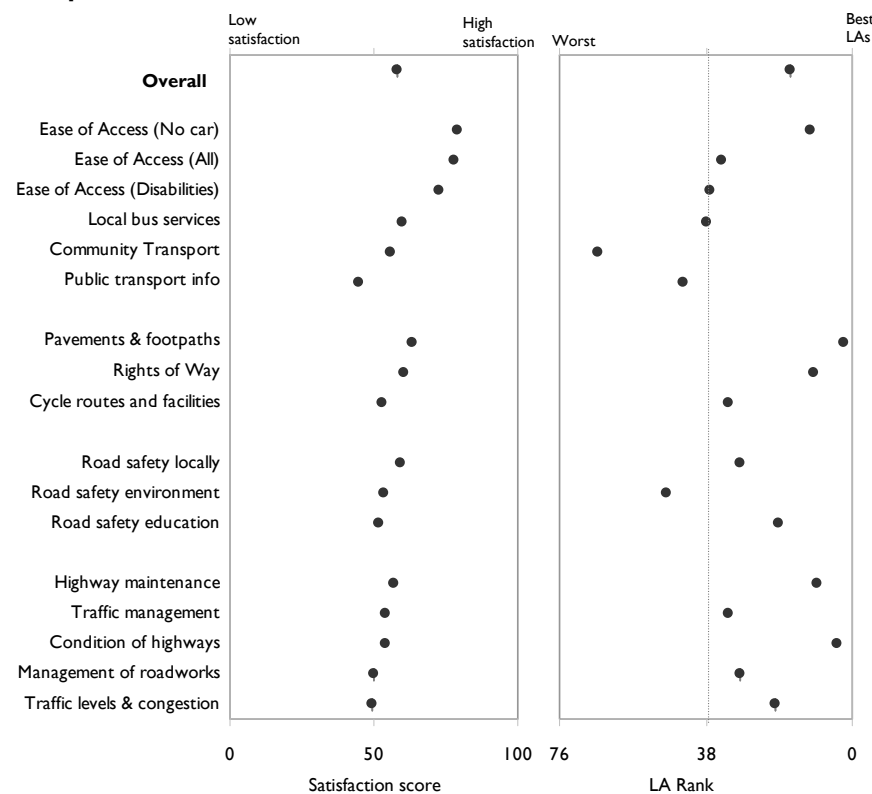
9.1 Compared with other authorities, how satisfied are Leicestershire’s residents with their transport system?

The National Highways and Transport Network (NHT Network) was set up to evaluate and compare English authorities’ performance on highways services. In 2008 it commissioned a standardised customer satisfaction survey, and in 2009, 76 English authorities took part. The survey asks members of the public to rate different aspects of their local transport service. Responses

have been analysed and combined to give local authority level satisfaction scores. More details of the survey, and the method behind the scores, is at: <http://www.nhtsurvey.org/>.

Leicestershire’s performance on the NHT benchmarking study is presented in figure 9.1a. Due to the fact that only 28 county councils took part, all 76 authorities (which include some district councils and London Boroughs) are included. The chart shows overall satisfaction with transport services to be comparatively high. After combining ratings for all questions Leicestershire scores 16th best of all authorities. This makes sense since, on the 17 service

Figure 9.1a: Public satisfaction with transport in Leicestershire compared with other authorities



Source: NHT Survey, 2009

areas presented in the chart, Leicestershire is within the bottom half of authorities on only 3 occasions. These are around satisfaction with ‘community transport’, ‘public transport information’ and the ‘road safety environment’.

Encouragingly, residents in Leicestershire find it easy to access local services. This is particularly true for those without a car. The county’s relative performance slips slightly when considering disabled respondents, though Leicestershire is still (albeit only just) within the top half of authorities. Also around access, satisfaction with the provision of ‘community transport’ is relatively low, and compared with all other transport service areas, local residents are least satisfied with public transport information. It should be noted that, for the latter two, the range of satisfaction values is small and Leicestershire’s rank should perhaps be read cautiously. On satisfaction around road management related services, Leicestershire’s performance is encouraging. So too is relative satisfaction with pavements, rights of way and cycle routes and facilities. Finally on road safety, satisfaction scores are more modest, with Leicestershire’s performance against other authorities also unexceptional.

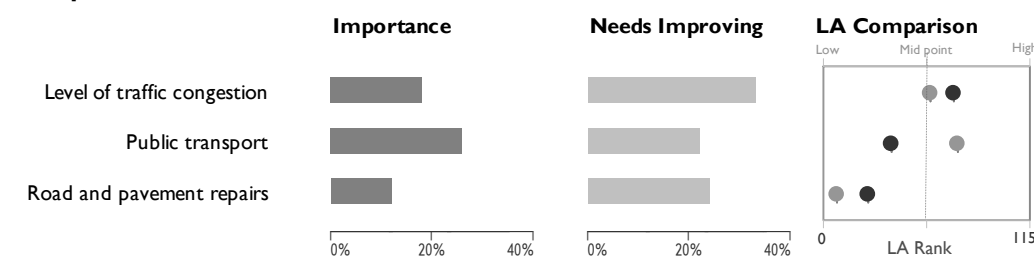
Due to the size of the survey sample, we are unable to carry out an analysis around which people in Leicestershire are more or less satisfied with each of these issues. Instead, the rest of this chapter mainly draws on responses from the 2008 Place Survey to identify how much of a local priority transport related issues are in the context of other authorities issues, and for which people and places in Leicestershire this is the case. Where possible, reference is also made to the opinions of local businesses.

9.2 Compared with other authorities and issues, how much of a concern are transport-related issues in Leicestershire?

Figure 9.2a (below) summarises responses to three transport themes in Leicestershire’s 2008 Place Survey and compares these against responses from 115 other county and unitary authorities. The responses are taken from question 1 and 2 of the survey, which ask residents to select five issues (from a possible list of 20) that: are the most important in making somewhere a good place to live and most need improving in Leicestershire. The three transport issues which come under this list are ‘traffic congestion’, ‘public transport’ and ‘road and pavement repairs’.

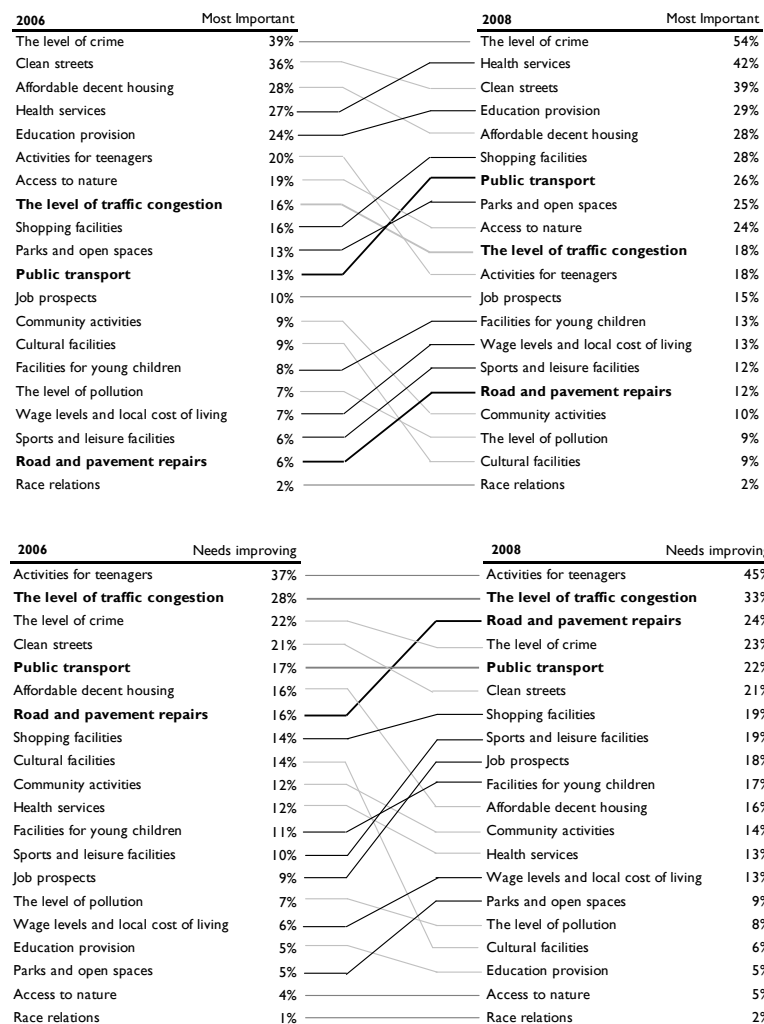
Chapters 7 and 8 of this evidence base have already considered whether or not, according to local residents, these three transport issues are of concern when balanced against other issues in Leicestershire. Figure 9.2b (next page) is another way of summarising this information, but shows the extent to which issues have grown or declined in relative importance since the 2006 BVPI Survey (the predecessor to the Place Survey).

Figure 9.2a: Public transport, traffic congestion and road and pavement repairs compared with other authorities



Source: Place Survey, 2008

Figure 9.2b: Public transport, traffic congestion and road and pavement repairs compared with other issues



Source: Place Survey, 2008

Traffic congestion

Thirty-three percent of residents in Leicestershire feel that ‘levels of traffic congestion’ needed improving. Compared with other county and unitary authorities in England, Leicestershire is within the top half, though not top quartile, of authorities here (figure 9.2a): a relatively high proportion of residents feel traffic congestion is both important and something which needs improving.

Compared with most other issues in Leicestershire (figure 9.2b), traffic congestion also does stand out. As was the case in 2006, it is the second most cited issue which residents feel needs improving. Despite this, in terms of importance, traffic congestion appears to be slightly less of a priority. Between 2006 and 2008, it slipped from the 8th to the 10th most cited issue in importance.

Responses from the 2009 Leicester and Leicestershire Business Survey show that businesses also view traffic congestion as a problem. When asked, a quarter of all businesses agreed that they are concerned about local levels of traffic. Unfortunately it is not possible to compare these results across other authorities.

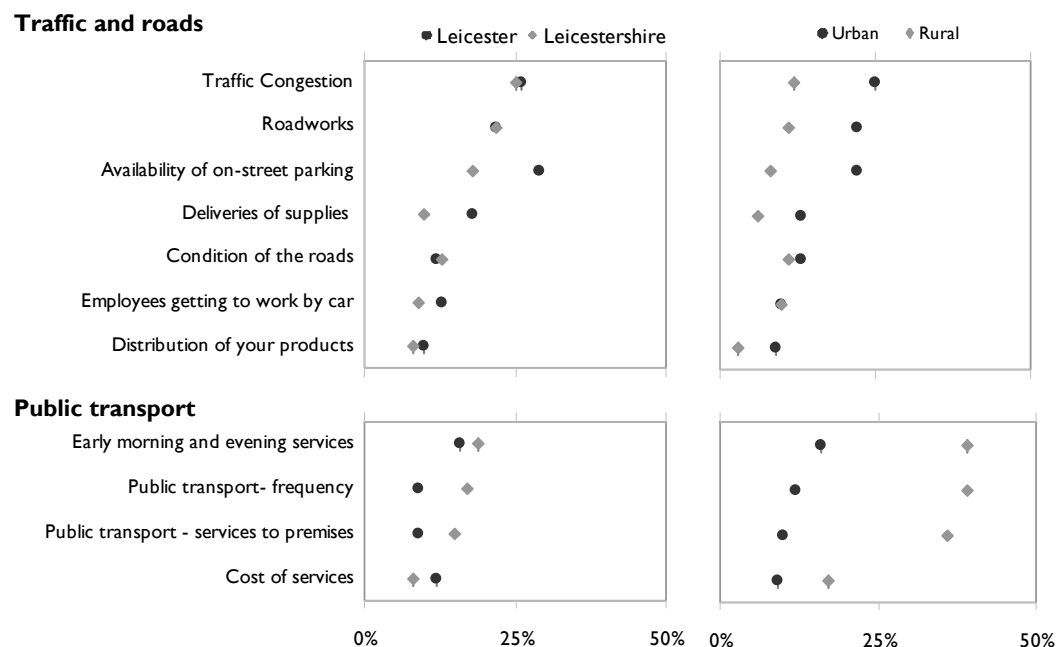
Public transport

A substantial portion of Leicestershire’s residents (26 percent) said they thought ‘public transport’ is important. This proportion is nevertheless smaller than for most other authorities (figure 9.2a). More than a fifth of residents agreed that local public transport services need improving, and this time a higher proportion than for most other authorities (figure 9.2a). Later we try to better understand the personal characteristics of individuals who express these views.

Interestingly, from the quadrant analysis on page 158, public transport is the only transport issue which emerges above most others in terms of importance *and* as an area in need of improvement. In the 2006 BVPI Survey, it was the county’s 11th most important issue, whereas in the 2008 Place Survey it ranked 7th in importance (figure 9.2b).

The findings from Leicester and Leicestershire’s Business Survey 2009 are worth mentioning here (figure 9.2c). Businesses were asked the extent to which public transport provision in Leicestershire is a problem for their employees who depend on it. Fifteen percent of businesses in Leicestershire County, and just 9 percent of businesses in Leicester City, agreed that public transport services do not run close or direct enough to their premises. If businesses have a rural location, this increases to 36 percent. Similarly, when compared with those in Leicester City (9 percent), the frequency of public transport services is a greater problem for businesses in the county (17 percent) and again particularly those with a rural location (39 percent). The same pattern emerges when businesses are asked about the provision of services early in the morning. This time almost a fifth of businesses in Leicestershire agreed that the provision of early morning public transport services is a problem.

Figure 9.2c: Business Survey responses to transport questions



Source: Leicester and Leicestershire Business Survey, 2009

The implications of this perhaps require some explanation and possible follow-up work is suggested towards the end of the chapter.

Road and pavement repairs

Finally, road and pavement repairs are less of concern for residents in Leicestershire than they are for residents in most other authorities. In total, only 6 percent believe that road and pavement repairs are important. Compared with other issues in Leicestershire, then, they are also of low importance (figure 9.2b). Despite this, a relatively high proportion - almost a quarter of residents - feel that road and pavement repairs need improving, and of the 20 issues in the Place Survey, it is the 3rd most popular cited for improvement (figure 9.2c).

There is some evidence that road and pavement repairs are not necessarily the most pressing concern for businesses. Only 13 percent of businesses in Leicestershire found fault with the ‘condition of local roads’. Nevertheless, 22 percent still agreed that local ‘road works’ were a problem, and as with residents, there is some dissatisfaction with the way repairs to roads in Leicestershire are being handled (figure 9.2c).

9.3 Who in the county thinks that transport needs improving and/or is important?

Looking at the relative importance of transport issues at a local authority level is interesting and gives some sense of priorities. However, questionnaire surveys are necessarily limited in terms of the depth of information they can directly elicit². Most researchers also admit that, even where space is left for respondents to explain a certain view, there is often a gap between what respondents say and what they actually think or feel². This evidence base has been written with these considerations in mind. It has been recognised that studying the personal circumstances around a certain view or issue is sometimes more useful to policy makers than headline figures.

This chapter aims mainly at gauging what local people say about transport issues and not to summarise what has come before it. Nevertheless, since they are significant transport issues, it makes sense to restate the social and situational characteristics of those who see 'public transport', 'traffic congestion' and 'road and pavement repairs' as a concern, in the context of earlier chapters.

Public Transport: important and needs improving

The social demographics of those who believe that public transport is important and needs improving are summarised in page 160. As probably expected, people who are more likely to be concerned with public transport are those who possibly depend the most on it. Residents in full-time education, living in households without access to a car, the unemployed, retired and those with poor health or a disability, are significantly overrepresented amongst the sample of residents who said public transport is important and needs improving.

There is evidence that, in some instances, perceptions here might have something to do with geography and poor service provision. People living in more isolated rural areas, for example, were also significantly overrepresented. Given what we know about residents' ability to access services (Chapter 5), however, it is mainly individual, not simply geographical, circumstances which significantly affect people's perceived mobility. This point is further reinforced by the fact that those in very good health, aged 25-44, with a mortgage and with access to at least two cars/vans - the physically and economically mobile - were significantly less likely to prioritise public transport.

Traffic Congestion: important and needs improving

Again, the demographics of residents who believe traffic congestion is both a problem and something which needs improving are set out on page 129. As expected, people who own a car are significantly more likely than non-car owning residents to be concerned with traffic congestion. Other personal characteristics that were identified suggest those more likely to commute or travel longer distances. Individuals living in hamlets and isolated dwellings and within the OAC classification 'Countryside', for example, were significantly overrepresented. So too were males (who generally travel further distances to work than females³), those approaching, though not yet at, retirement age and residents who own their house outright. The latter two characteristics are typical of the 'Countryside' classification.

The corollary is that people significantly underrepresented in this group, and therefore who tend not to see traffic congestion as a concern, are those unlikely to be affected by it. The unemployed, residents from BME communities, people living in OAC 'Blue Collar Communities', in rented accommodation, without access to a car

and younger residents are amongst those significantly less likely to see traffic congestion as a concern. These groups perhaps have other, more pressing day-to-day things to worry about. Residents of 'Blue Collar Communities' and younger respondents, for example, tend to prioritise activities for young people, job prospects and affordable housing over traffic congestion.

With an issue like traffic congestion, the so-called target individuals are clearly different from the 'target areas' where changes might be made. Chapter 4 identifies some possible 'target areas' - parts of the county which tend to experience the greatest levels of congestion during peak travel times. These stretches of road may require some form of intervention. It is also worth remembering, however, that when acting on congestion, local government needs to balance a number of priorities. Since emissions from road traffic will need to reduce, expanding the road network in specific areas may not always be the most tenable option. One alternative is to encourage residents to take up walking and cycling, or make better use of public transport. Understanding who and where in Leicestershire might be most predisposed to substitute their cars for alternative travel modes may help in targeting intervention, and the health section in Chapter 6 and the latter half of Chapter 7 attempt at this.

Road and pavement repairs: important and needs improving

Finally, those who thought that road and pavement repairs were a priority and need improving are summarised on page 162. Older respondents (aged 65-84), people with poor health and those probably representing the retired (either wholly retired from work, with no children under the age of 17 and owning their house outright) were significantly more likely to be within this group. By contrast, younger residents (aged 25-44), people in very good

health, those in employment, buying their house on a mortgage or renting from a private household, were statistically underrepresented amongst the sample who thought road and pavement repairs were a priority and need improving.

The issue of road and pavement repairs was discussed in Chapter 8 in the context of 'quality of life'. It was suggested that, if older residents and those with poor health are most likely to see road and pavement repairs as a concern, then a reason might be that these are people most vulnerable to accidents/falls. More generally, it is also worth remembering that the NHT Benchmarking Survey shows satisfaction with highway maintenance to be comparatively high, and in the Place Survey and the Leicester and Leicestershire Business Survey, they are also generally of low importance.

9.4 Who and where in Leicestershire is satisfied with public transport information and the local bus service

This chapter started with a discussion of results from the NHT satisfaction survey. One of the findings was that, compared with other authorities, there are lower levels of satisfaction with public transport information and moderate levels of satisfaction with the local bus service. Due to the size of the survey sample, however, we were unable to identify the demographics of individuals who are more likely to be satisfied with each and, more importantly, whether satisfaction levels change when only bus users are considered. Usefully, data on both areas have been collected since 2000/2001 through the Best Value Performance Indicator Surveys and then in 2008, the Place Survey. This final section briefly shows how satisfaction varies by users/non-users and different social-demographic groups.

Firstly, and encouragingly thinking about the validity of the NHT Benchmarking study which has a much smaller sample, there is some convergence between the two surveys. Forty-two percent of residents from the Place Survey were satisfied with PT information (the NHT result was 45 percent) and fifty-one percent were satisfied with the local bus service overall (the NHT Survey recorded 60 percent). For users, based on the Place survey data, this increases to 47 percent and 58 percent respectively. Analysis by personal characteristics also shows significantly higher levels of satisfaction amongst those who may depend on or use these services more (Figure 9.4a). What is particularly interesting here is that there is some overlap between the demographics of those significantly more likely to rate Public Transport as a local priority.

That satisfaction levels are higher amongst users, and those who depend on Public Transport, is clearly a good thing. However, comparison against BVPI surveys since 2000/2001 shows that, over time, reported levels of satisfaction amongst all residents and users is declining. Also, on the Place Survey as well as NHT Survey, satisfaction levels in Leicestershire are still lower than for most other authorities.

Figure 9.4a: Demographics of respondents satisfied with public transport information and the local bus service: characteristics associated with bus use are significantly more likely to be satisfied with the local service

Demographic of respondents who are satisfied with Public Transport Information		Demographic of respondents who are satisfied with Local Bus Service	
Significantly over represented in the sample	Significantly under represented in the sample	Significantly over represented in the sample	Significantly under represented in the sample
Bus User	Non bus-user	Bus user	Non bus-user
Wholly retired from work	Employee in full-time job (30 hours plus per week)	Blue collar, constrained by circumstances and multicultural OAC communities	Countryside OAC communities
55 to 64	Two/ three/ four or more cars/vans	Moderately deprived neighbourhoods	Neighbourhoods with very low levels of deprivation
65 to 74	25 to 44	Urban/Rural Classification: Urban >10K - Less Sparse	Urban/Rural Classification: Hamlet & Isolated Dwellings - Less Sparse, Town and Fringe - Less Sparse and Village - Less Sparse
None/ one cars/vans	45 to 54	Do have longstanding illness	Employee in full-time job (30 hours plus per week), self-employed full or part-time
No children aged 17 and under	Live with one/ two children aged under 17	Wholly retired from work	Living with one/two children under 17 in household
Has a long-term illness	Self-employed full or part-time	Living with none/one adults	With very good health
Asian or Asian British	Countryside OAC community	No children under 17 in household	Aged 25 to 44/ 45 to 54
10%-20% most deprived	Urban/Rural Classification: Hamlet & Isolated Dwellings and Village - Less Sparse	With fair/bad health	Two cars or more available by household
Looking after the home		Aged 55 to 64, 65-74 and 75-84	
Urban/Rural Classification: Urban >10K - Less Sparse		No/one cars/vans available by household	
Constrained by Circumstances OAC communities			

Source: Leicester and Leicestershire Place Survey, 2008

Conclusion

This chapter has tried to give an indication of what local residents, workers and businesses think about their local transport system. Findings from the NHT Benchmarking Survey suggest that overall satisfaction with transport services in Leicestershire is relatively high. The county performs well on 'ease of access' related questions, though satisfaction levels drop around 'community transport' provision and the quality of 'public transport information'. Satisfaction with the latter is very significantly higher amongst users than non-users. Scores around the management of roads, paths and cycle routes are encouraging, whilst satisfaction with road safety is modest. On the transport related questions in the 2008 Place Survey, public transport emerges as the most important transport issue for residents in Leicestershire. It is an issue which, since the 2006 BVPI Survey, respondents have shown a growing interest in. For Leicestershire's businesses, and particularly those based in rural areas, it is also a genuine concern. Although less of a priority, a substantial portion of residents in Leicestershire feel that local levels of traffic congestion need improving. For a quarter of Leicestershire's businesses, congestion is also a problem. Though to a lesser extent, the same is true of road and pavement repairs.

These headline figures are useful in identifying possible priorities at a general level, but they offer little to policy makers in terms of specific people and places of need. Deeper analysis of each of the three transport issues within the Place Survey has shown that the least socially and economically mobile residents of the county are most likely to express concerns about public transport; that traffic congestion is more of a priority for residents likely to travel longer distances to access employment and other services; and

that road and pavement repairs are a greater concern for the elderly and those in poor health. Each of these themes has been considered within earlier chapters of the evidence base.

Finally, one important finding to have come out of the chapter is that the provision of public transport services is a problem for a high proportion (up to 39 percent) of rural businesses in Leicestershire. Any further analysis here is likely to be limited by the survey's sample size (only 1,000 businesses were interviewed). However, an important task may be to identify where these businesses are located and how they relate to the 'priority wards', where access to jobs may be a problem, detailed in Chapter 4.

References

1. Department for Transport (2006) **Full Guidance on Preparing Local Transport Plans: Second Edition**. Published on the Internet at: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/ltp/guidance/fltp/fullguidanceonlocaltransport3657>
2. May, T. (2001) **Social Research: Issues, Methods and Processes**. Open University Press, Milton Keynes.
3. Owen, D. and Green, A. (2005) **'Factors associated with commuting behaviour in England and Wales'**. A paper presented to the British Society for Population Studies.