

# **Commission on Travel Demand**

Evidence Session Two

Changing Demand: Part 1

University College London, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2017

## Summary

The overarching aim of the evidence session was to explore some key aspects of how demand has been changing and what might explain this as well as to continue to explore how this impacts decision-making. This note summarises some of the key outcomes of the discussion. The report does not imply consensus amongst all of the participants of the evidence session and the opinions shared, whilst not attributed, were those of the individuals rather than the organisations they belong to.

## Travel Time

The written evidence from Transport for London showed that between 2006/07 and 2015/16, the amount of time the average London resident spent travelling had fallen from 73 to 66 minutes per day, a drop of more than 10 per cent. The drop in per capita travel has primarily been from car use and lower trip making in cars. These trends in trip reduction have been observed in several places but we do not have good explanations for most of the reductions. In London, there has been a rise in non-travel, in other words, people staying at home all day and not making any trips. Little attention is paid in transport planning to in-home time and decisions not to travel, particularly given the rise in ICT. On any given day, around 20% of Londoners do not make any journeys. There is also a significant proportion of people in London (22%) who travel for more than two hours per day. There was significant debate about whether our understanding of travel time is sufficient given this kind of distribution. It was also noted that an increasing proportion of people travel to work for the week or part of it but return home for weekends. How people trade off travel time with other parts of their lives is not fully clear, at least when a broader framing of time and timescale over and above individual journeys is considered. The different use of time in travel remains under explored.

## Generational Issues

The evidence presented suggests that insufficient attention has been given, in current approaches to forecasting, to differences over time and across different groups. This is particularly important given the continued trend towards lower driving licence uptake in under 30s and later ownership of vehicles. Whilst affecting both men and women the effects are more pronounced for males who started with a higher propensity for licensure and ownership. In past decades Gordon Stokes' evidence showed that those taking up a car later in life used the car less than those taking it up earlier. This may be for a range of reasons but it does mean that this group of the population find other ways of doing things which are less car reliant and this will likely have some long-term impact on their behaviour. The question as to whether 'car later' might also mean 'car less' is critical for future demand forecasts. To understand better the role of change over time it was suggested that there is a need to give greater attention to:

- Age effects: changing mobility over the life course
- Period effects: temporary circumstances that affect everyone simultaneously
- Cohort effects: differences in mobility for groups of individuals who experience an initial event together, such as birth year; and

In looking at these different components however it would be important to try and understand which aspects of change become norms for future generations. For example, the recession of 2007

was a period effect but the ripple effects of the recession may affect the future structure of employment for all new entrants to the labour market.

Kiron Chatterjee's presentation also identified different pathways through the life course which have an impact (in the aggregate) on likelihood and timing of owning a car. Diversity of effects within the population was generally agreed to be less well reflected in our data and understandings. It was suggested that we do not spend enough time trying to understand the travel of over 65s, which given their growing share of the population is a significant weakness. It was also suggested that not enough is understood about the aspirations of younger people and the role of the car (or other factors) in their identity.

### **Spatial Differences**

There seem to be strikingly different trends happening in different parts of cities but in particular in different parts of the country. This appears in the data for inner and outer London. The Commission should, as part of future evidence, explore these spatial differences in greater depth. The NTS tends to mask variations in space due to the need to aggregate the same size over area types rather than over areas.

### **Ownership and Sharing**

In the light of recent figures on record numbers of new car registrations the Commission heard about trends in Germany. There, the number of vehicles continues to increase. There is a similar trend for 18-30 year olds to travel less and less by car but also an increase in car travel from the over 60s. Despite the significant rise in car club memberships and use in Germany however the data seems to suggest a continuation of the individual auto-ownership model rather than a society wide shift to a greater shared use model. The importance of the travel of the over 60s for the coming decades was emphasised.

### **Healthcare and Travel**

This was the first of three discussions around treating travel as a derived demand. The NHS is looking at important influences on its services over the coming decade (itself an interesting comparator time period for how other sectors project futures). The rising healthcare burden from older people coupled with reduced GDP to fund services and fewer carers in particular is anticipated to place a high burden on the NHS. It is looking at ways to deliver better health outcomes whilst reducing the demand to access the most expensive acute services. It is therefore trying to expand local services but in particular seeking to expand digital health, remote diagnostics and telemedicine to allow aging in place. How the NHS configures its services matters. Between 2002 and 2010 the average distance travelled to healthcare increased from 7.23 to 8.11km or just over 10%. This is an area where the number of trips per capita has been rising and may be expected to continue to rise. It was noted that whilst there are recognised transport and public health relationships and greater potential to act in a more integrated way this has yet to really happen on the scale it should.

### **Overarching Reflections**

The need to understand travel as a derived demand and therefore to be able to understand more about activities which now no longer need travel or to travel as much or as often (or to travel more

or further) was necessary. Notions of 'peak car' should not be taken for granted but the trends we have not understood should stimulate new thinking about how to understand travel change. The profession has been better at understanding how much and what sort of travel but has underexplored these other questions. This will be further explored at the next Commission session on 13<sup>th</sup> June.

The diversity of travel trends across places, between genders, across cohorts etc. is important to understand and represent better in transport futures and our aggregate data sources have hidden the potential importance of some of these variations although the UK has better data sources than many other places.

It is striking that, given the pervasiveness of ICTs, there is currently very little certainty or understanding of the different ways in which this has influenced travel.

There is a feeling that some land-use interventions and some supply side interventions promoting non-car alternatives, particularly in cities where the traffic network is essentially full in the peaks, have been effective at reducing the car intensity of travel. This evidence needs to be studied and made clearer to decision-makers. By contrast, growth continues to occur on the motorway networks.

The Commission may want to consider optimism bias in forecasting and whether any approach will counter this? There remains a lag between observed evidence on travel behaviour trends and the willingness of some decision-makers to acknowledge that this could impact on the types of solutions that could be deployed. It was suggested that we have never been able to forecast travel accurately and that ranges and uncertainty were necessary to accept. However, it was also suggested that scenarios may be preferable as they allowed for a wider set of factors to vary. The Commission will return to the implications of the evidence for decision-making in September.

## **Acknowledgments**

The report was assembled by Greg Marsden based on the rapporteur notes provided by Julian Burkinshaw. The workshop participants are gratefully acknowledged for their contributions. The report is agreed as a summary of the meeting by the Commissioners and we are responsible for any omissions or factual errors.