

Rural Transport Learning Network Roundtables 2023-24

Roundtable 4: Transport and Development 24 April 2024

Summary

This report documents the fourth in a series of roundtable discussions in 2023/24 commissioned and sponsored by Transport East¹ for the Rural Transport Learning Network and organised by the Smart Mobility Unit at the University of Hertfordshire.

The series builds on earlier roundtables hosted by the University of Hertfordshire between 2020 and 2022 to address the shortage of research and policy on transport outside cities and in rural areas.

The format for this roundtable was a two hour online meeting by Zoom and consisted of presentations by speakers followed by questions and discussion, both verbally and via the chat function.

The theme for this roundtable was the future of transport and development outside cities in rural areas. Topics to consider were:

- What are the trends in new developments in England outside cities and what are their implications for transport?
- What can be learnt from examples of good practice in creating less car-dependent developments? How scalable and replicable are these?
- What can and should be done by local planning and transport authorities and by Government and its agencies to reduce car dependence in new housing and other developments?
- How can sub-national transport bodies contribute to this via their regional transport strategies and are there regional approaches that would add value to this area of work?

There were 27 participants. Sectors represented were: national, sub-national and local government, transport consultancy, academic research, non-governmental organisations, property development and statutory bodies. Stephen Joseph chaired the discussion. The meeting heard from six speakers with expertise in transport and development outside cities. Participants responded with questions and comments.

1. **Jenny Raggett, coordinator, Transport for New Homes**, painted a picture of typical English greenfield housing developments, as documented by field

¹ Transport East runs the Rural Mobility Centre of Excellence
<https://www.transporteast.org.uk/rural-mobility-centre-of-excellence/>

researchers for Transport for New Homes. Site selection is usually outside planning authority control with car-dependency the inevitable consequence. Out of town shopping in retail parks becomes the norm, undermining the economy of nearby market towns. Existing residents lose walking and cycling access to the countryside and are forced to drive for services, goods and amenities previously available nearby. Even the most dedicated local authority transport officer is powerless to ameliorate the damage caused by poor site location. This pattern of development is confirmed by the TRICS and Census data², which shows some of the highest trip rates and car ownership is at edge of town locations. Transport for New Homes will shortly publish the latest findings in a State of the Nation³ Report.

2. **David Milner, deputy director, Create Streets**, demonstrated how housing growth outside cities could be transformed by replacing the ‘Predict and Provide’ approach to traffic modelling with a vision-led approach. Place-making on the edge of towns can reduce traffic and increase active travel by careful choice of location, street layouts and densities similar to existing market town centres and by pump priming shops and services in the heart of new settlements. To demonstrate the practical impact of this approach Create Streets re-designed an existing masterplan for an edge of town development for Chippenham with £75m allocated for a new road. Dropping the bypass and concentrating the housing in a smaller area nearer to the railway station, building new cycling and walking paths into the town centre and subsidising local businesses in the new neighbourhood would deliver meaningful travel behaviour change with better quality of life and less land take. The full report is available online⁴.

3. **Matt Russell, director, SLR**, declared that there is no time to waste in adopting a ‘Vision and Validate’ approach to transport and land-use planning if we are serious about avoiding catastrophic consequences of climate change. There is consensus amongst professional planning institutions that ‘Predict and Provide’ has to be replaced⁵. The assumption that car use will rise inexorably and that it

² <http://www.pedi.trics.org/img/TRICS%20Good%20Practice%20Guide%202024.pdf> see p7 para 4.4

³ <https://www.transportfornewhomes.org.uk/the-project/state-of-the-nation/>

⁴ Stepping off the Road to Nowhere, Create Streets and Sustrans (2024)

<https://www.createstreets.com/projects/stepping-off-the-road-to-nowhere/>

⁵ <https://makingsustainabilityhappen.co.uk/insights/mobility-and-net-zero-how-accessibility-can-contribute-positively-to-transport-carbon-targets/> and <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10058850/> ;

must be met with increasing road capacity is out of date. Younger generations are driving less and living more online. Work patterns have changed. We have tools to allow transport planners and urban designers to select the most effective interventions for a given location from a wide range of options. It is possible to design places where people can live, work and shop locally, travel sustainably and enjoy healthy, vibrant and connected communities. We must not be afraid of innovating.

4. **George Hazel, director of E-Rail**, explained the E-Rail approach to Land Value Capture (LVC)⁶. At the very outset, a Local Authority negotiates with the landowner where new transit is planned. An agreement is signed to legally bind a proportion of the increase in land value due to the public investment in transit infrastructure. The funds are paid by the landowner to the Local Authority when the planning permissions are granted. This approach works well for all parties: housing near a rail station, guided bus or tram route has more appeal, attracting higher prices; sustainable planning policies are met; applicants are more likely to secure planning permission and at higher densities. This leads to higher profits for the landowner/developer and savings for the public purse. The value released typically funds 25% to 50% of new infrastructure. Sustainable travel patterns are an automatic spin off from the developments. The biggest challenge is faced by two tier local authorities which struggle to coordinate and identify strategic opportunities early enough.

5. **Robin Pointon, managing director of Go Travel Solutions**, described a travel planning project for New Lubbethorpe on the edge of Leicester. The landowner/developer is Drummond Estate, a values-led trust determined to create a best practice settlement. Go Travel Solutions has developed LocalGo, a free community travel package for residents offering travel discounts and personal travel planning. Services include new buses, e-bike hire and a car club. The project has also invested in cycling promotion. There is an on-site travel plan

<https://www.rtpi.org.uk/netzerotransport>; <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/collection/garden-city-standards-21st-century/>

⁶ <https://www.georgehazel.com/assets/Land-Value-Capture-Discussion-Paper-Metrolinx-August-2013.pdf> <http://www.georgehazel.com/assets/Land-Value-Capture-National-Bank-October-2014.pdf>

ambassador who is also a resident. The project illustrates the key requirements for embedding sustainable travel behaviour in a new edge of city development. The landowner and developer have to want to do the right thing. It is essential to make strategies and plans flexible to adapt to changing circumstances. Funding is a major challenge, especially for new bus services which require revenue support. A high level of community engagement and diverse channels of communication are essential.

- 6. Holly Bunting, sustainable travel planning officer, Essex County Council,** presented the results of a travel planning trial for people moving into new housing developments in Essex. The pilot is centred around an innovative app to address a common barrier faced by people moving into new settlements. New postcodes are not accepted by journey planning software until some time after moving into a new property, meaning that frustrated residents rapidly revert to the car. The app overcomes this problem by integrating maps held by the local planning authority and supplied by developers. Combined with relevant data from Essex County Council transport and other services, the app has been a major success in changing travel behaviour.

Discussion

The discussion began with support for and a powerful analysis of vision-led development as seen from within a statutory body responsible for housing. While initial land allocation, site selection and phasing perpetuate car dependency in new developments, the most difficult problem is cultural beliefs about car-use and parking. There was agreement on the need to influence the views of local elected representatives. Persuasive arguments are needed to sell the wider benefits of alternative options, with pressure coming from the top down and the bottom up. These observations were echoed completely by a housing developer.

David from Create Streets suggested there are many interacting vicious circles in existing development, land-use planning and transport systems. A series of carefully selected interventions could start to create virtuous feedback circles in their place. Examples include reforming traffic modelling and appraisal, codifying the transport and amenities for a given development at the outset, removing the statutory duty on Highway Authorities to prioritise free flowing traffic and changing Treasury cost/benefit assumptions.

There was wide agreement that limited local authority resources, both in terms of capacity and ambition, are barriers to vision-led development. Coordination between Local Authorities in areas of two tier local government was widely recognised as difficult. Funding likewise. Phasing of housebuilding is a problem because shops and

other businesses aren't economically viable until the majority of a site is filled, hence pump-priming onsite amenities from the outset is a requirement.

Several participants suggested that sub-regional spatial planning frameworks are essential to gain control over the locations for development and allow new settlements to be served by sustainable transport. There was strong interest in LVC to fund new transit infrastructure and thereby increase sustainable travel behaviour. There was an appetite to understand how LVC might be able to create self-sustaining funds for revenue projects.

To conclude, car based development is not an inevitable or essentially English approach to life. Case studies reveal how internalisation, active travel interventions, better public transport, travel planning and site specific approaches can change travel behaviour. This is not the norm because we have perverse incentives. 'Predict and Provide' traffic modelling rules out alternatives to road-based development such as public transport at the outline plan stage and as a consequence Land Value Capture can never be an option.

Key References

TRICS Good Practice Guide 2024, TRICS Consortium Limited (October 2023) Ian Coles

Stepping off the Road to Nowhere (2024) Create Streets and Sustrans

Land Value Capture Discussion Paper for Metrolinx (August 2013) George Hazel Consultancy

Land Value Capture as a Source of Funding of Public Transit for Greater Montréal (October 2014) George Hazel Consultancy and National Bank of Canada

Triple Access Planning for Uncertain Futures – A Handbook for Practitioners (March 2024) Lyons et al ISBN 978-1-86043-621-5 <https://www.tapforuncertainty.eu/triple-access-planning-for-uncertain-futures-a-handbook-for-practitioners/> and a blog post from Jonas Bylund on Triple Access Planning for Uncertain Futures provided by: <https://www.tapforuncertainty.eu/triple-access-planning-perspectives-blog/>

Computer Says Road: why outdated transport models ruin new developments and how to fix them, Create Streets Briefing Paper (2022) <https://www.createstreets.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Computer-says-road-1.pdf>