

LOCKED OUT

Transport poverty in England

There is no official recognition of 'transport poverty' yet it is a daily reality for millions of people across England.

For decades transport and planning policy has focused on the needs of motorists and daily destinations have been planned on the assumption that everyone has access to a car. But nearly half of all households in England could already be struggling with the costs of car ownership⁽¹⁾. And the absence of practical alternatives – including inadequate and expensive public transport and hostile walking and cycling environments – is forcing millions of people to choose between debt and social exclusion⁽²⁾.

Transport poverty is a complex issue but its impact is clear. Our transport planning system penalises people who cannot afford a car, who struggle to cover rising public transport fares and who lack access to public or private transport because of age, disability or where they live.

Schools, hospitals, job opportunities, leisure facilities and shops have become inaccessible to many. In rural areas, where activities and services are more widely dispersed, high public transport costs, inadequate information and non-existent, infrequent or impractical transport services are major concerns⁽³⁾. In cities, public transport networks often serve peripheral housing and employment areas badly, with travel times and costs creating a barrier to opportunity, particularly for lower income households⁽⁴⁾. Poor walking and cycling environments can leave areas even more isolated, damaging community cohesion⁽⁵⁾.

One in four households in England is already without a car (more than five million homes in total)⁽⁶⁾ – a figure that is likely to rise as the costs of running a car continue to grow – and many more find public transport unaffordable, inaccessible and inappropriate to their needs. Yet, unlike fuel poverty, there is no officially accepted measure of transport poverty and no strategies in place to address the issue.

The role that well planned investment in public transport, walking and cycling can play in tackling social exclusion is clear⁽⁷⁾. Integrating these travel choices into transport provision focused on access by all rather than simply mobility for those that can afford it, will create a more equal, affordable and accessible range of travel options.

The impact of transport poverty on people's lives is real and far-reaching.

Restricting individual opportunity

Access to jobs: For millions of people access to reliable and affordable transport can mean the difference between being able to work and being locked into welfare dependency⁽⁸⁾; 64% of jobseekers do not have access to a car and two in five say lack of affordable transport is a barrier to getting a job⁽⁵⁾. Transport costs can also easily wipe out modest financial gains from entering or returning to work, and difficulties in accessing childcare by public transport can present a further barrier for working parents⁽¹⁰⁾.

Access to education: School choice is directly affected by transport provision and a lack of transport options limits young people's educational opportunities⁽¹¹⁾. Activities such as breakfast clubs, homework and study clubs, and outdoor activities can make a significant difference to pupils' attainment, attitude at school and attendance, but often fall outside of regular school transport services⁽⁵⁾. Evidence also suggests that adult learners and older people without private means of transport miss out on continuing training and lifelong learning opportunities⁽⁵⁾.

Denying access to frontline care

Hospitals are among the most difficult locations to reach without a car⁽¹²⁾. Poor access to health facilities can mean that people miss health appointments or suffer delays in being discharged from hospital – both of which incur significant costs to the NHS and can deepen health inequalities⁽⁵⁾.

Disconnecting communities

Participation in social, cultural and leisure activities is very important to people's quality of life and can play a major part in meeting wider goals like reducing crime and building cohesive communities. However, people without cars are twice as likely to miss out on these opportunities⁽⁵⁾. In addition, where access to supermarkets is restricted and high street services have been lost, higher prices can result in poor dietary habits and, consequently, poor health⁽¹³⁾.

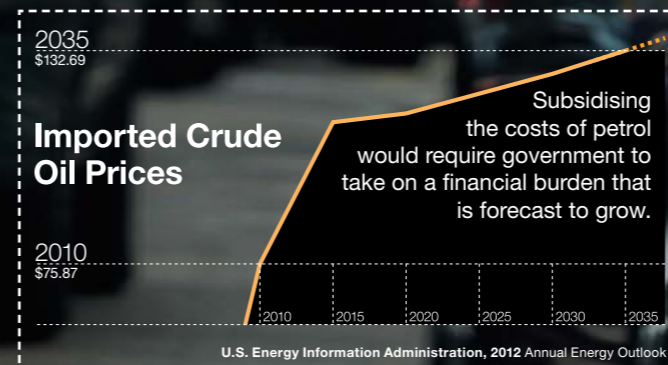
Slowing our recovery

Our over-reliance on cars is stunting our economic recovery, preventing access to jobs and choking essential routes to supply chains and markets further afield⁽¹⁴⁾.

Minimising the need for 'forced car ownership' would address growing social and environmental concerns, and would strengthen our economy.

Greater and more efficient investment in affordable alternatives to car use is one of the most cost-effective means of adding to England's overall transport capacity⁽¹⁵⁾, stimulating investment interest, facilitating future expansion and creating new employment opportunities⁽¹⁶⁾.

However, too often the proposed solution to support people who are struggling is to reduce fuel tax and subsidise the costs of petrol and diesel. This might be attractive in the short term, but is clearly an unsustainable long-term solution – placing an additional strain on government budgets – and would further enforce car dependency, ignoring the needs of those without access to a car.



Instead the government should reinvest a significant proportion of the £1.5bn additional fuel duty revenues, expected from January 2013, creating a ring-fenced local fund to improve travel choices for all – a move supported by more than 70% of drivers in Britain⁽¹⁷⁾.

Addressing the challenge of transport poverty and developing a transport strategy to stimulate economic growth in a constrained public spending environment will require innovative thinking, collaboration and an understanding of how existing resources can be best invested⁽¹⁶⁾. This briefing outlines a number of policy calls that will support local and national government to develop an affordable, efficient and dynamic approach to the transport system in England; addressing the isolation of those without access to a car and improving the health, well-being and economic prosperity of our communities.

David, 39, lives with his wife in Southam, Warwickshire – both of them have to own a car to get to work each day.

“ We've recently settled in Southam. It's close to my wife's job (near Coventry Airport) but it's nearly 60 miles to Rutland where I work.

Despite it taking up a huge proportion of our income, we both have to have our own car. Using public transport would take me two hours each way and I'd need to leave the house before 6am to get to work on time. I've tried to find another job, closer to home, but nothing has come up.

My wife has a much shorter commute and would love to ride her bike to work, but there's only a busy A-road and she doesn't feel safe. The only option is for her to drive.

The cost of running two cars means we've no chance of saving up to get a mortgage on a house. We just have to continue to rent, giving us no security for our future.

The lack of transport options is impacting on our social life too – the public transport links to Southam are so bad that there'd be no chance of getting home after a night out.

We can get by, but I'm really concerned that soon it won't be worth going to work at all. If we could just cut back to owning one car it would make a big difference, but with the worsening state of public transport in our area I just can't see how this will be possible.

1. Sustrans has identified the number of households that would need to spend 10 per cent or more of their income on the costs of running a car (whether or not they are actually running one). This will include most households that cannot afford a car at all. For the poorest households, research shows this figure can be as high as 25 per cent (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003 Making the Connections).
2. Sustrans has combined population data from three indicators of transport poverty to identify at risk areas. For more information please see overleaf.
3. Commission for Rural Communities, 2009 Rural Insights
4. Centre for Cities, 2011 Moving on up, moving on out?
5. Social Exclusion Unit, 2003 Making the Connections
6. Department for Transport, 2011 Household car ownership by region and area type: Great Britain – Table NTS9902
7. Lucas et al., 2008 The value of new transport in deprived areas. Who benefits, how and why?
8. PTEG, 2010 The effect of bus fare increases on low income families
9. National Centre for Social Research, 2003 Easing the transition into work
10. Department for Work and Pensions, 2010 21st Century Welfare
11. Barnardos, 2012 Staying the course
12. Consumer Focus, 2011 Rural consumers in the UK
13. Consumers' Association, 1997 The Food Divide: eating on a low income
14. Cushman & Wakefield, 2008 UK Cities Monitor
15. Sloman et al., 2010 The effects of smarter choice programmes in the sustainable travel towns: Research report
16. Centre for Cities, 2011 Access all areas: Linking people to jobs

Tackling transport poverty in England

Freedom.

Everyone should have the freedom to access opportunities in their wider community.

Promoting alternatives to full car ownership: Supporting the introduction of car clubs and developing and incentivising systems to enable flexible car sharing offers car use without the burden of ownership.

Making public transport available to all: In densely populated urban areas buses are a cost effective way to increase transport capacity⁽¹⁸⁾. In rural and peripheral urban areas, community and Demand Responsive Transport schemes introduce flexible routes into the network where demand is more dispersed⁽⁵⁾.

Increasing awareness of existing alternatives: Locally-driven programmes offering maps and tailored travel advice introduce people struggling with car costs to less costly alternatives and enable people without a car to access the services and opportunities they need⁽¹⁹⁾.

Making walking and cycling safer: Developing high quality local walking and cycling networks based on analysis of existing travel patterns would give access on foot and by bike to everyday destinations. And instating 20mph as the default national speed limit in UK residential areas would make our streets safer and more attractive, preventing more than 500 children from being killed or seriously injured on our roads each year⁽²⁰⁾.

Making best use of existing resources

The efficiency of our public transport systems could be significantly improved. In developing Local Transport Plans, Transport Authorities should undertake a strategic analysis of public transport demand in their area and work with providers to integrate services for passengers travelling by rail, bus, bike or on foot to make more complicated journeys easier.

In addition, pooling local authority vehicles across social, health, education and public transport departments would prevent vehicle fleets sitting unused for large chunks of the day whilst travel needs go un-met⁽²¹⁾.

Redeploying a proportion of the existing £1bn school transport budget to support walking and cycling schemes would ensure more equitable access to local schools and the wider community, and could improve employment prospects⁽²²⁾.

Fairness.

A fair public transport system must be affordable to all.

Bus fares have more than tripled since deregulation in 1986⁽²³⁾, hitting low-income households hardest⁽⁶⁾. Compounding the issue of high fares is the complexity and range of tickets on offer, making it difficult to find the best value product⁽²¹⁾.

Young people: A simple, affordable and consistent fare offer for children can dramatically increase their use of public transport, enabling them to see friends, access further education, participate in sports and attend attainment-boosting after-school activities⁽²⁴⁾.

Older people: The national bus concession enables older people to maintain an active and independent life, essential for both physical and mental health, and reducing premature entry into full time care⁽²⁵⁾.

Jobseekers: Making public transport affordable for job seekers will be key in ensuring access to work for those in areas with slack labour demands⁽¹⁶⁾.

In more urban areas, smart ticketing (similar to London's Oyster card scheme) can make transport more affordable; ensuring people get the best value fares without the upfront costs involved in season ticket purchase and allowing low income groups to access discounts without stigma. In more rural areas, or where the start-up costs of such schemes may prove prohibitive, greater cross-provider cooperation can address these issues.

Making best use of existing subsidies

Refocusing existing public transport subsidies, such as the Bus Services Operators Grant, on socially-necessary and non-commercial services and targeting affordable fare schemes to meet the needs of jobseekers and those in full time education would ensure existing subsidies are spent to maximum effect.

Responsibility.

Responsibility for tackling transport poverty must be integrated into all levels of government, across transport, planning and welfare programmes.

The recognition by key sectors of the importance of transport policy in the context of their own delivery agendas, will be crucial to tackling this complex issue⁽²¹⁾ and could result in significant efficiency benefits. As there is for fuel poverty, there must be a cross-department commitment to tackling transport poverty and bi-lateral initiatives implemented to address it.

There should be a review of 'accessibility planning' as a valuable mechanism in tackling social exclusion. Guidance should be issued on behalf of the Department for Transport, Department for Work and Pensions and Department of Health to better support local authorities in using accessibility planning tools, focusing particularly on access to the opportunities that have the most impact on life chances (such as work, learning and healthcare)⁽²¹⁾.

Making best use of existing budgets

It is clear that a ring-fenced fund for investment in increasing people's travel choices would deliver real value and is widely popular⁽¹⁷⁾. Ensuring the continuation and expansion of the Local Sustainable Transport Fund through the hypothecation of fuel duty or through greater collaboration of government departmental funding should be a priority.

In addition, the division of transport budgets into capital and revenue funding streams, dictated by Whitehall and heavily weighted in favour of capital projects, constrains local authorities' ability to adopt tailored approaches to tackling transport poverty.

Risk of transport poverty in England

Mind the gap

Transport poverty in London

Many of the transport poverty measures suggested are already in place in London, such as a concessionary fares scheme that offers reduced tariffs to vulnerable groups (including jobseekers) and an unparalleled transport network. However, access to affordable housing will reshape the demographic make-up of the capital and will require a renewed focus on the role of transport in tackling social exclusion.

- Transport for London should commit to expanding the bus network in London (typically the preferred mode of transport for low-income groups⁽⁸⁾) as a means of effectively improving transport provision in areas of highest need.
- Ring-fenced funding for walking and cycling through the Local Implementation Plans process should be provided to better meet people's local travel needs.
- Transport for London should revise its ticketing policy (especially with regard to rail and underground zoning) to address social exclusion concerns.

Nearly 1.5 million people are at high risk of suffering from 'transport poverty'

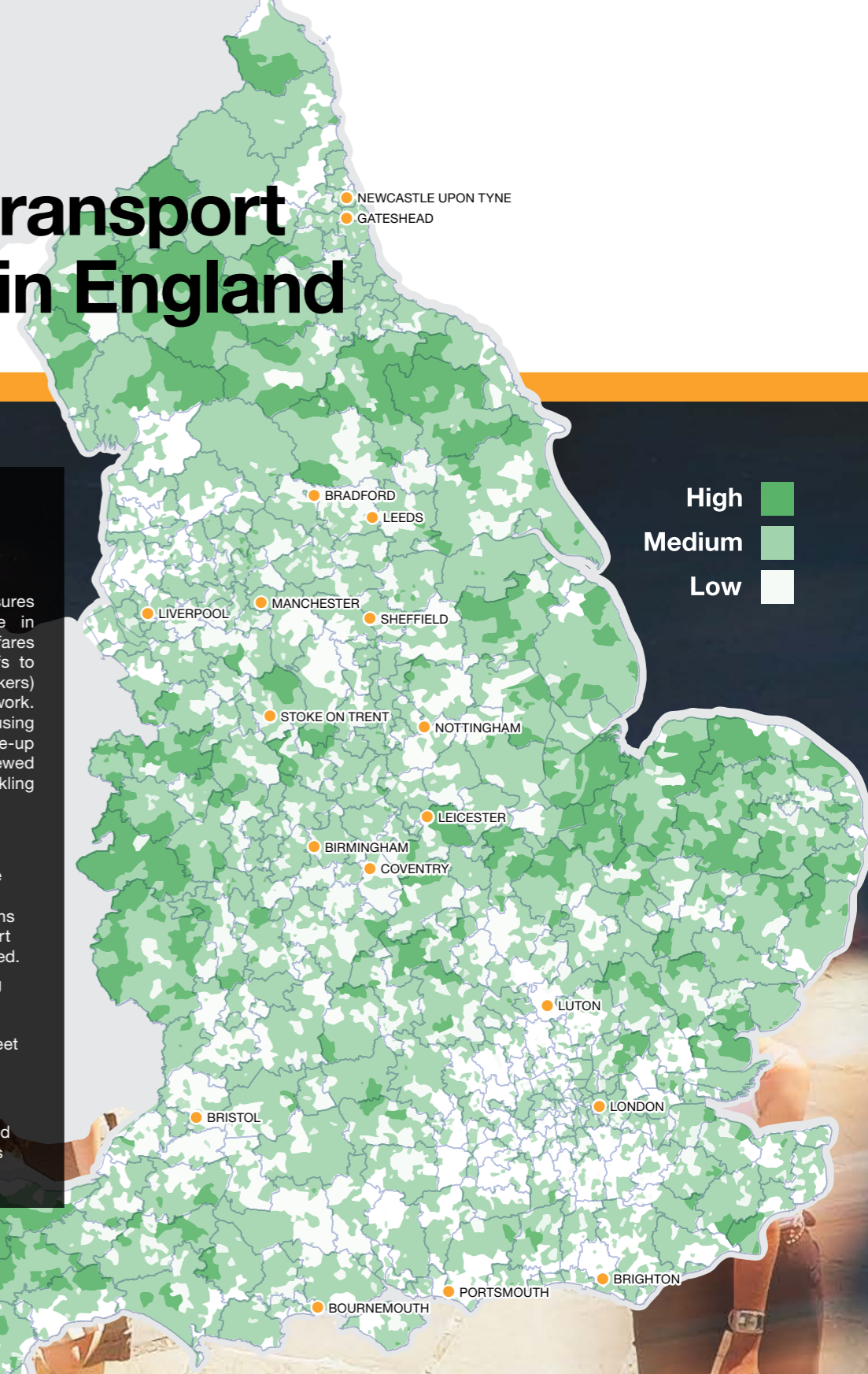
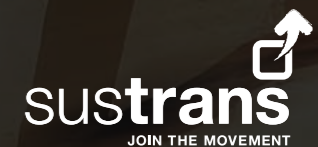
Half of all local authorities in England have at least one high risk area.

This map combines three indicators of transport poverty: areas of low income (where the costs of running a car or using public transport would place a significant strain on household budgets); areas where a significant proportion of residents live further than a mile from their nearest bus

or railway station; and areas where it would take longer than an hour to access essential goods and services⁽²⁶⁾ by walking, cycling and public transport. Using these indicators, communities have been identified as facing a 'low', 'medium' or 'high' risk of transport poverty.

For more information and further details on the methodology used please visit

sustrans.org.uk/lockedout



17. RAC, 2012 Report on Motoring
 18. Cabinet Office, 2009 An analysis of urban transport
 19. Sustrans/Socialdata, 2009 Travel behaviour research in the Sustainable Travel Towns
 20. A report in 2011 (North West Public Health Observatory, 2011 Road traffic collisions and casualties in the North West of England) indicated that 140 killed or seriously injured child casualties could have been prevented each year between 2004 and 2008 if 20 mph traffic speed zones had been introduced in residential areas (other than main roads) across the North West. Applying a similar methodology to police accident records across Britain, Sustrans believes that as many as 578 killed or seriously injured child casualties could be prevented in Britain each year.
 21. PTEG, 2010 Transport and social inclusion: Have we made the connections in our cities?
 22. In Merseyside, providing free bikes for 349 low-income jobseekers resulted in 296 retained or new jobs at a cost of £151 per job, a fraction of the cost of providing travel passes or mopeds (Merseyside Transport Partnership, 2010 WorkWise Wheels evaluation report).
 23. Davis et al., 2012 A minimum income standard for the UK in 2012: Keeping up in hard times
 24. Greater Manchester Transport Research Unit, 2008 Food or Education
 25. Age UK, 2012 Getting out and about: Keeping bus services free and sustainable
 26. These statistics have been taken from the Department for Transport's own accessibility analysis. The eight essential goods and services identified by the Department for Transport are: employment, primary school, secondary school, further education, GP, hospital, food store and town centre.