

Transport *for* Better: Cities and City-regions

A Transport Planning Society event series



A little background

Transport planners know that transport is a means, not an end; and that to configure cities around their transport would be, almost literally, to put the cart before the horse. Yet, for more than half a century, cities across Britain, and indeed the globe, have had transport done to them (usually in the form of major highways schemes) in ways that often compete with, rather than complement, the cities' wider needs.

Largely, this has been because the central urban transport question to which answers have been sought has been the wrong one: 'How can we solve the city's transport problems?'

When that's the question, the answer almost always treats the city as little more than a technical area for manoeuvring and storing vehicles. Over the long term, the results of such 'answers' have tended to make things worse, not better, for the city as a whole – its people, economy and environment. And even the main problem that measures were intended to address – congestion – has typically been just kicked into the longer grass for a while, not solved.

The right way of framing the city-and-transport question is first to ask 'What kind of city do we want?', and then to ask 'What can transport do to help us have that kind of city?'

Whether or not this way of framing the question is explicitly acknowledged, the leaders of Britain's large cities and city-regions now recognise the urgent need to find more city-friendly ways to meet the demand for movement of both people and goods. Urban population growth is placing increasing stress on transport networks, and it is vital that existing and future demand is both managed and met according to a clear, shared vision of how the city can thrive and how its citizens can have a better quality of life.

New transport technologies, new ways of accessing transport, and developing forms of communication all offer new opportunities. But they are not solutions in themselves, and their potential could fail to be realised, or indeed their impact could be more malign than benign, if they are not planned for and harnessed in line with the city's vision of its future.

The events

With this in mind, the intended purpose of the Transport *for* Better event series is essentially twofold:

- to enable transport planners better to understand the challenges facing the leaders of our cities and city-regions, and
- to establish how transport planners can best support those leaders to enable their cities and city-regions become better places – in terms of their public, economic and environmental health.

At the heart of this challenge is the need to craft, and agree, a persuasive vision that gives politicians, the public and other institutions confidence to pursue a plan of transport actions that will have long-term benefits, and to resist the pressure to take actions that may bring short-term relief but are more likely to perpetuate than solve the underlying problems.

To this end, three events have initially been arranged, as follows:

Thursday 20th April 2017 (London)

This event will give TPS members and other attendees based in and around London a better grasp of the national picture, with lessons from recent practice as well as future opportunities and threats.

Speakers:

Martin Capstick, Director, Regional Transport Strategies at the DfT

Sue Flack, former Director of Planning and Transport at Nottingham City Council

Chair: Lynda Addison (TPS)

Thursday 15th June (Manchester)

This event will give members the opportunity to hear about the developing experience of combined and devolved authorities, including key issues relating to governance and funding.

Speakers:

Nicola Kane, Interim Head of Strategic Planning and Research, Transport for Greater Manchester

Sandeep Shingadia, Head of Programme Development, Transport for West Midlands

Ben Still, Managing Director, West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Chair: John Dales (TPS)

Venue: TfGM, 2 Piccadilly Place, Manchester M1 3BG

Please arrive from 5.30pm (refreshments and opportunity to meet the TPS Board) for a 6.30pm start

Tuesday 4th July (London)

Val Shawcross, Deputy London Mayor for Transport, will introduce the draft Mayor's Transport Strategy, which will have been launched a few days earlier.

Venue: Telford Theatre, ICE, One Great George Street, SW1P 3AA

Please arrive 6pm for a 6.30pm start

The TPS will prepare a full record on all events and make this available afterwards. It will also use the outcomes to influence the future direction of its policy and action.