

Transport Planning *Society*

Cities and Infrastructure: An ITC Consultation

What is the contribution of peak and off-peak travel to the urban economy?

TPS response

TPS is dedicated to the consideration of transport issues in their broader context, which includes spatial, social and environmental as well as economic dimensions. Our vision is that transport planning should contribute to making places that are not only well-connected, but also attractive, productive and sustainable ('decide and provide' rather than 'predict and provide'). This is the perspective we have taken in responding to recent consultations by DCLG on housing matters, which are relevant to the questions raised in this consultation.

Historically, the priority given to meeting peak hour demands has enabled (and to a major extent, driven) dispersion of activity and settlement, and this has had detrimental effects on urban agglomeration and environment off-peak as well as on. We would therefore be concerned if there was a return to transport planning and evaluation methodologies that placed undue emphasis on meeting peak hour demands. The immediate economic benefits of a wider labour market at traditional commuting times needs to be set against the longer-run negative consequence of more dispersed locational choices generating additional travel demands and congestion costs throughout the day. Changes in patterns of working have resulted in some significant trends which spread demand around the clock:

- Peak spreading, so there is more of a mix of journeys to work and journeys at work in the extended peak;
- Off peak travel has become increasingly important for flexible and part-time workers;
- There is growing demand for weekend travel which supports the retail and leisure economies; and
- The increase in availability of 24-hour services that support the night-time economy (eg London's night tube).

These trends have the potential to make better use of infrastructure and to make public transport services more viable. In our view, these considerations strengthen the case for a broader approach, giving particular attention to land-use effects and interventions.

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