Planning transport to support the independence of older people – mind the gap, please!

Focus Group Findings

• Wide range of mobility:
  – From physically fit to extremely frail
  – Conditions included; visual impairments, mental health problems, osteoarthritis, Parkinson’s

• Wide range of activity levels:
  – From travelling “all over” to “the sitting brigade”
  – The ability to “just get out of the 4 walls and see people” more important than specific activities
  – Shopping serves many purposes; functional, gives structure to the week and an activity in itself "it's a day out, it's a social thing"
Transport Modes

• Discussed many ways of “getting about”
  – Walking
  – Driving
  – Public buses
  – Access bus
  – Lifts
  – Taxis
  – Trains
  – Scooters

• Today – focus on 2 themes
Bus safety issues

• Many examples of nasty falls - many “don’t dare” to use
  – “It’s like the grand prix, it’s a wonder we survive”

• Caused by:
  – Drivers setting off before they are seated
  – Having to get up before they stop
  – No grab rail and front tipping seats
  – General rough driving

• Getting on and off significant problem – “kneeling” inconsistent

• Some drivers “terrific” but great variability
  – “they are impatient with us for being so slow, but so are we!”
Taxis

• Essential service for many “I’d be lost without them”
  – When carrying (return shopping journeys), during the evening
  – Plug gaps in bus service

• Some taxi drivers superb

• Clear concerns over:
  – Expense – fear of over-charging, taking “strange routes”
  – Concerns over driver behaviour / security – many would not go alone
  – Feel unable to challenge

• Using known taxi companies helps
What affects older people’s ability to get around?

3 higher order themes identified
1. Physical Ability

- Gradual process of physical decline described
- Corresponding increased levels of support to get around needed

- Independent. Able to walk/drive/use public transport freely.
- Able to use Public Transport
- Require assisted transport

Declining physical ability
1. Physical Ability cont

- The accessibility / acceptability of Public Transport affects:
  - How long people wish to remain driving
  - When they start needing assisted transport

**Less acceptable:**

- Independent
- Able to use Public Transport
- Require assisted transport

**More acceptable:**

- Independent
- Able to use Public Transport
- Require assisted transport
2. Individual Characteristics

- Feeling of a lack of control over transport provision
- Ill thought out decisions particularly irritating

- Three typographies:

1. The Resigned Acceptors
   “we can’t change the bus route, we can’t change the fact we can’t walk as well as we did, we just have to accept is as best we can”

2. The Frustrated Acceptors
   Frustrated but aren’t aware of how / feel unable to influence

3. The involved. “Fighters!”
   Actively trying to influence decisions at a local or city level
3. The Transport Environment

• Feeling of being “pushed out” or “out of step” with the environment

• Comprises 3 main elements:
  – Transport - often described in very harsh / aggressive terms “rough”, “flung” “jerked”. Desire comfort / security.
  – Built environment
  – People - can soften the environment or make it harsher

• Familiarity or a common culture can make the environment more conducive
  – Discomfort when disturbed
Fitting Together

• All three affect older people’s ability to get around
• Each interacts with the other
Walks with older people
Overview of Issues

- Difficulties **CROSSING ROADS** is the dominant issue
  - Everybody said something about this

- Issues with other people’s use of pavement space

- Issues with condition of pavements
Crossing Roads: informal crossing

- Width of crossings
- Lines of sight (angle of junction)
- Number of roads joining a junction
Informal Crossings Cont

• Other issues included:
  – Speed and volume of traffic
  – Traffic queuing to reach junctions
  – Large vehicles block lines of sight
  – Parking at the side of the road (legal & illegal)
Crossing roads: formal crossing

• Issues with formal crossings experienced more by those with visual and mobility impairments

• Timing too short on pelican crossings
  – Being in the middle of the road with no central reservation when the green man goes back to red is scary!!!

• Lights on pelican crossings are difficult to see (except for some of the new, larger ones)
Uses for a Pavement

- A car park
- A bicycle park
- A bicycle lane
- A place to keep your rubbish bin
- A dog toilet
- A garden extension – overgrown hedges
- A compost heap – hedge clippings
- A speed track – mobility scooter
Positives

• Amenities within walking distance
• Smooth pavements and up to date maintenance
• Ginnels and courtyards – pedestrian only routes and areas
• Benches
• Markets
Diversity

• Attitude to life
• Mental health
• Gender
• Visual impairments
• Hearing impairments
• Mobility impairments
• Degrees of frailty and hidden disabilities
Some conclusions

• Guidance and training regarding needs of older people for
  – Transport operators and front line staff
  – Traffic engineers and other decision makers
• Bottom up consultation – engage the hard to reach
• Pedestrian focused environment
• Enforcement
• More research into catering for diversity of older population to feed into guidance