

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

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# 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



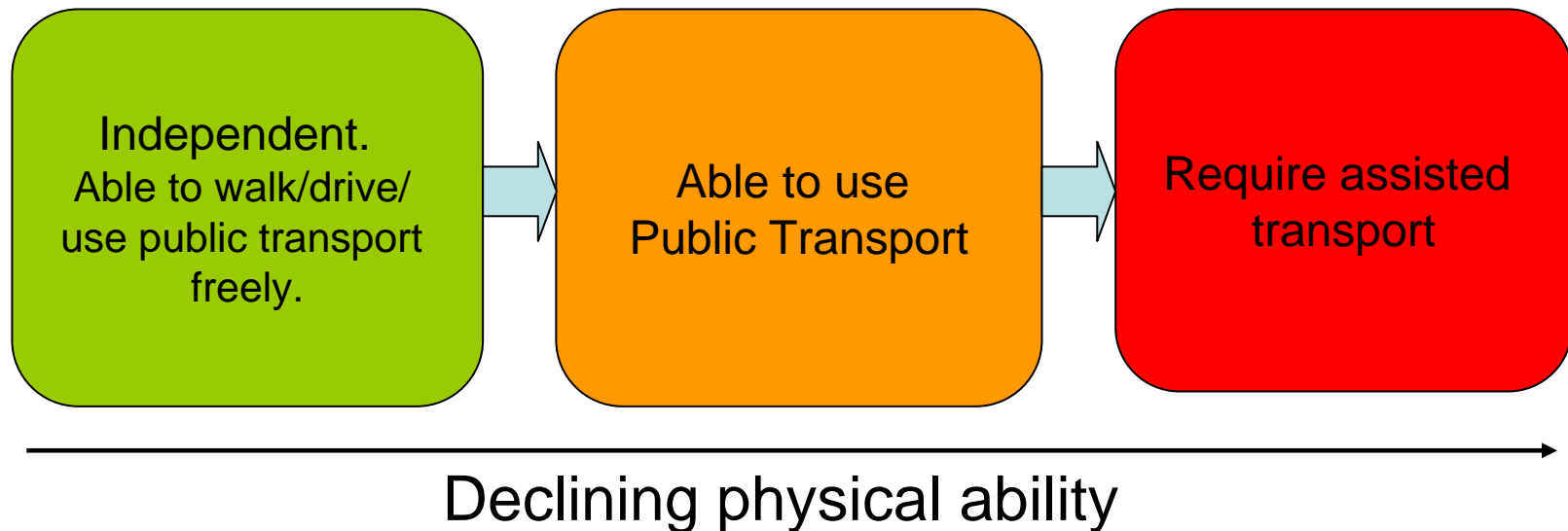
# What affects older people's ability to get around?

3 higher order themes identified



# 1. Physical Ability

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



# 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:



## More acceptable:



# 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 it 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



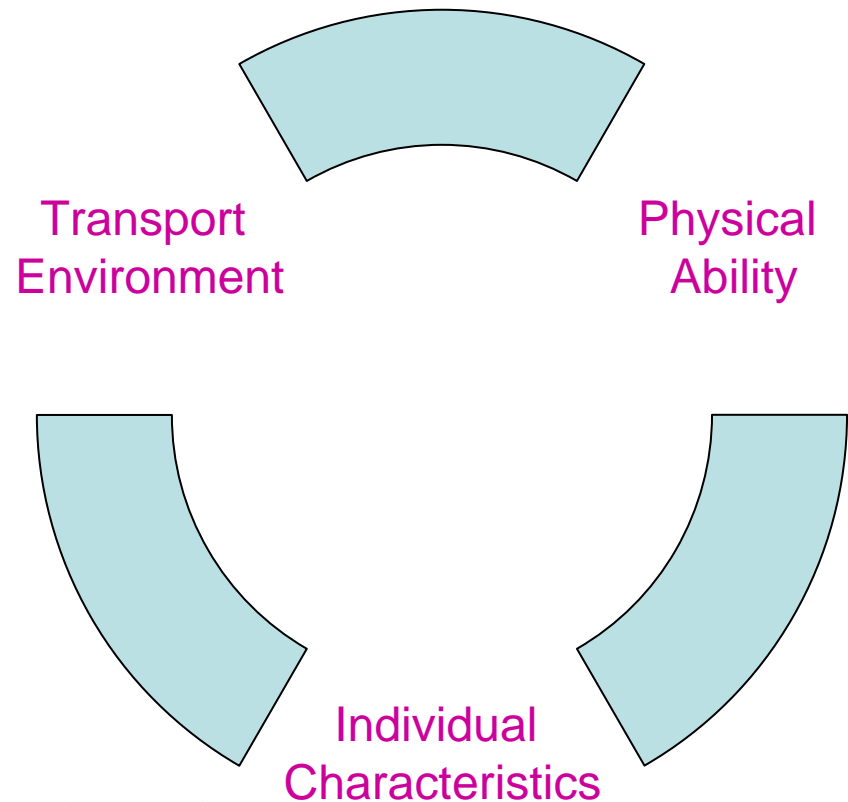
# 3. The Transport Environment

- 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