PARKING AT PUBLIC TRANSPORT INTERCHANGES

Introduction
The need to effect a modal shift from car to other modes is one of the main strands of the Government’s Transport Policy. The transfer of car users onto public transport is becoming increasingly difficult as a result of constraints to the provision of adequate numbers of parking spaces at or near rail stations and bus stations.

A number of issues have been identified that act as inhibitors to increasing this transfer. This paper seeks to outline some of the parking-related constraints and makes a number of recommendations aimed at addressing the issues concerned. The inhibitors to progress were identified during a recent discussion by members of the Parking Forum.

Improving the security of existing car parks
The low level of security of parked cars (including their contents and the safety of their passengers), cycles and powered two-wheelers, such as motorcycles, scooters etc, can act as a deterrent to the use of car parks in some areas.

The British Transport Police (BTP) report that crime is unacceptably high in many railway station car parks mainly as a result of miscreants knowing that most of the vehicles are left for the whole day – more than 10% of all crime recorded by the BTP involves a vehicle. The Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) intends to require that all new rail franchisees enrol their station car parks in the ACPO's Secured Car Parks Scheme (SCPS) that is managed by the British Parking Association. Research undertaken by the Home Office has demonstrated that the Secured Car Parks Scheme can help reduce levels of crime and fear of crime when targeted at high crime car parks.

Improving cycle parking facilities at public transport interchanges
The provision of adequate and secure cycle parking facilities with space for the stowage of helmets, protective clothing etc should be reviewed to identify where improved facilities could lead to the increased use of cycling as a means of getting to the public transport network. TRANSAC’s Statutory Security Regulation limits where cycle parking for rail users can be sited. The same regulations should be applied to bus stops and bus stations.

Improving motorcycling parking facilities at public transport interchanges
The provision of adequate and secure motorcycle parking facilities with space for the stowage of helmets, protective clothing etc should be reviewed for all major rail and bus stations to, again, identify where improved facilities could lead to the increased use of public transport. Any parking facilities should be covered by the SCPS.

Satisfying the perceived need for increased parking facilities at public transport interchanges
Providing extra parking spaces
Those arriving by vehicle (motorised or non-motorised) should be able to plan on the basis that there will be a space where they can safely leave their vehicle.

The physical layout of many car parks means it can be difficult to easily increase capacity. Parking capacity could be increased by encouraging use of smaller cars and powered two-wheelers, all of which take up less space. Many rail station car parks, for instance, are long and narrow as a result of the land being previously used to accommodate railway sidings etc. The provision of extra space outside the curtilage of the rail or bus station will need to involve local authority transport.
planners who in turn should be required to address the issue in their Local Transport Plan (LTP). Other solutions such as multi-storey car parks may be the most cost-effective solution.

**Diverting some current parkers onto other modes**
Reducing reliance on the use of car for travel to a station or bus stop could involve encouraging the use of motorcycles, cycles and walking instead. To achieve this there should be sufficient bike and motorcycle parking facilities at rail stations, bus stations & bus stops if more people are to be persuaded to transfer some of the journeys they currently undertake by car. The provision of facilities could reduce demand for car parking spaces. Guidance issued by the Government in 2000 on preparing Local Transport Plans called for improved access to transport interchanges.

The provision of public transport (including shared taxis and buses operating on flexible routes) could provide an alternative means of reaching a station especially for car commuters who tend to travel at the same time each day. Chiltern Railways have introduced Taxibuses that serve some of the stations on its network.

Safer walking routes to stations and bus stops are also likely to increase the numbers of walkers. Since the LTP Guidance calls for improving pedestrian access to transport interchanges local authorities should be encouraged to consider these within their LTP process as a matter of some urgency.

**Park & Ride**
Although Park & Ride does not get people out of their cars for the whole of a trip the concept of well-designed and serviced Park & Ride sites does attract motorists to use them. Despite occasionally experiencing difficulty in securing planning permission, especially where an authority is required to given planning permission for a facility planned by an adjoining authority, local authorities and public transport operators should be encouraged to maximise their use of this type of facility. Most Park & Ride sites serve just one destination (often with a number of alighting/boarding points at that destination) – the use of multi-destination services could be attractive to motorists providing sufficient parking capacity can be provided. Park & Ride sites should also make provision for the parking of powered two-wheelers and cycles.

**Parkway Stations**
Parkway stations have been successfully introduced at a number of locations where the major road network is in close proximity to the rail or coaching network.

Providing extra parking capacity at existing or new parkway stations infers that there will be sufficient capacity on the public transport leg of a journey to accommodate any extra passengers. This will not be possible on some parts of the network.

As a first stage possible parkway station sites should be identified within the UK so that the potential effect of introducing extra interchange points on the public transport network can be estimated. Strategic planners will then need to determine the costs and benefits of providing the parkway capacity and public transport services to satisfy the anticipated demand.

**Dealing with informal parking**
There are locations where motorists are already parking in side roads, countryside verges, near motorway junctions etc. in order to travel onward by public transport or car share. Many of these locations become unsightly and increase the risk of road
accidents. Highway authorities should deal with these issues as part of their Local Transport Plan (LTP) process.

**Planning Issues**

Planners would prefer to encourage the provision of high density commercial and/or residential developments rather than extra parking facilities in the vicinity of stations and bus stops. It is argued that the location of offices and residential accommodation will stimulate a greater increased use of public transport than providing extra parking facilities.

However, if the station is viewed as an origin for trips, such as in dormitory towns, the key determinant for land use should be to improve accessibility to the station by all modes. If, however, the station is viewed as a destination for trips then commercial development may be a better use for this land. Often the land owner will seek to maximise its income from a site without regard to the potential benefit to the whole community.

**Traffic management issues**

Most car parks adjacent to public transport facilities are usually located in urban areas. Much of the travel by car to/from these facilities is often undertaken at periods of high demand for the road network. The provision of extra parking might be expected to increase traffic congestion at certain times of the day. The use of out of town parking is not attractive to public transport operators as it requires the building of new facilities and the provision of extra services on an already congested rail/bus network. Traffic Impact Assessments (TIAs) should be undertaken for some stations to assess the likely effect on the road network of providing extra parking facilities at stations.

**The effects of traffic restraint measures**

Congestion charging was introduced in London as a means of reducing the level of traffic on the capital’s roads. One effect of this restraint mechanism has been the transfer of motorists to public transport – some of which will occur in areas outside the jurisdiction of the charging authority.

Some of the income generated should be used to provide extra facilities where the demand can be demonstrated to have emanated from the actions of another authority.

**Use of car parking income**

Income from car park fees is usually retained by car park operators for use in maintaining and operating their estate. Many Park & Ride sites are not able to cover their costs of operation, including the associated bus services, purely from income. Some P & R sites are supported financially by income generated from the city centre car parks.

One means of suppressing demand for car parking spaces at stations and funding the provision of extra cycle and motorcycle parking, a safer walking environment and innovative bus/ taxi services would be to levy a surcharge on station car park fees for use in introducing or supporting any of the above facilities. This would require the co-operation of public transport operators and highway authorities in effecting an integrated transport strategy.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the Government’s aims, motorists are very reluctant to give up using their car and walk, cycle, motorcycle or use public transport. However, by a combination of improvement to public transport, public transport interchanges, awareness of alternative forms of travel some impact could be made to ease the problem. The following are, therefore, recommended:

- There should be sufficient capacity at rail stations and other interchange points for those wishing to park a car or motorcycle or leave a bike securely. This capacity may need to be managed to ensure that there are always available spaces. Where it is not possible to provide for the demand there should be details of where alternative parking facilities exist in the vicinity.
- All car parks should be covered by the Secured Car Parks Award. Public transport operators should be responsible for complying with that requirement. If they are not able or willing to do so they should secure the services of a car park operating company.
- There should be facilities provided to enable motorcyclists and cyclists to leave helmets and protective clothing before continuing their journey by public transport.
- Walking, cycling and motorcycling facilities should be improved at/near interchanges as a means of encouraging those who currently travel by car to consider cycling, motorcycling or walking as an alternative.
- New parkway stations should only be provided where there is the public transport capacity to take the extra passengers generated. Potential rail and/or coach parkway stations should be identified in/near the locality of the major road network. The costs and benefits of providing a facility (including the provision of extra public transport services) should be determined so that capacity constraints on the public transport network might be identified.
- Formalised parking should be provided where demand for parking is identified by the informal parking of cars.
- Increased use of Park & Ride should be encouraged including the servicing of more than one destination from a site.
- Traffic Impact Assessments (TIAs) should be commissioned to assess the likely impact on the road network of providing extra parking facilities at a rail station.
- There should be a formal dialogue between town planners and transport planners on the most effective use of land around rail and bus stations.
- Authorities introducing traffic restraint measures such as congestion charging should reimburse other authorities when the impact of a measure affects other areas.
- A proportion of car park income at public transport interchanges should be used to stimulate travel to that interchange by other modes.

A number of these recommendations are likely to be difficult to achieve when bus and train operators are charged with making profits for their share holders and do not have a requirement to consider the benefits of some of the above to society as a whole.