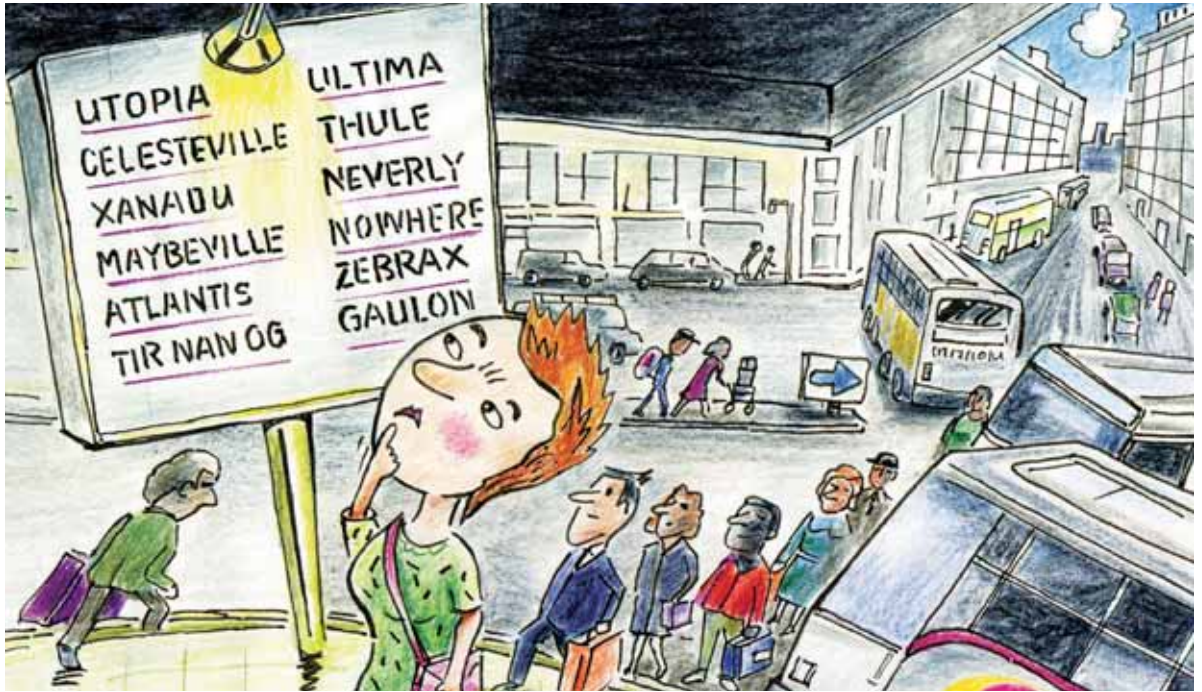


A more integrated fit



Peter Rochford

'In many areas, social exclusion is reinforced by the fact that the places where people live are not connected to those where they work'

ECLIPSE, one of 24 projects funded under the EC's 2nd Transnational Exchange Programme, was set up to address the issue of transport impacts on social exclusion. Now five cities in Europe are bidding for funding to take this work to the next level.

Cities in five European countries are hoping to gain European funding for a project aimed at achieving a better fit between EU Member States' national social agendas and their transport policies. If funding is provided, the initiative would follow the September 2005-August 2007 European Cooperation and Learning to Implement transPort Solutions to combat Exclusion (ECLIPSE) project.

The ECLIPSE II (Local Actions to Address Transport and Social Inclusion) consortium has submitted its proposal under the EC call Mutual Learning on Social Inclusion and Social Protection and should hear later in 2007 whether the bid has been successful. Coordinator of the proposed consortium would be Merseytravel (UK), with Liverpool being one of the main cities leading the project.

Perugia (Italy) would be one of its potential test sites and others would be identified during the first phase of the project. (Expressions of interest have come from cities in France, Hungary, Poland and Portugal).

ECLIPSE places particular emphasis on cooperation with the coordinators of EU Member States' national action plans (see box). It stems from some not-always-appreciated statistics; approximately 40% of households in the EU do not have a car, and 60% of people with disabilities live in such households.

Recent years have seen growing recognition that

transport (or its lack) can represent a significant barrier to social inclusion. There is, however, currently, limited joint working between policy makers in the transport and social inclusion fields though some examples of good practice identified by the ECLIPSE project are available on the project website. An example of integrated transport and social inclusion policies in Flanders is on the next page.

The aim of ECLIPSE was to change the situation by:

- Highlighting the role that transport can play in increasing mobility for marginalised groups, such as the young, low-income families, the elderly, ethnic minorities and the unemployed; and
- Increasing awareness of the issue among the two sets of policymakers and bringing them together at the European, national, regional and local levels.

Key ECLIPSE recommendations appear on the project website and identify a trio of linked objectives linked to specific actions designed to achieve them, as detailed in table 1.

STEP 1: The importance of providing of a fully-accessible public transport network has emerged throughout the ECLIPSE series of national workshops and its collation of examples of good practice. At least five countries – France, Italy, Hungary, Romania and the UK – have existing national and local obligations to make public transport accessible to all years.

National action plans

All EU Member States are required to submit to the EC national action plans against poverty and social exclusion (NAPs/inclusion), in response to the March 2000 Lisbon European Council agreement to make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty by 2010. The Council decided that Member States' policies should be based on a set of common objectives, which were adopted by the December 2000 Nice European Council.

The EC requires updating of NAPs every two years, with the next set due in 2008. In the intermediate years, it asks Member States to report on issues that it is prioritising; for 2007, it has singled out the themes of child poverty and active inclusion. Both have close links with transport policy; one response to child poverty, for example, is to reduce the cost of school travel. Active inclusion is concerned mainly with improving access to the labour market and ECLIPSE has already built up a strong case for implementing dedicated transport for commuter trips.

It is, however, difficult to assess the benefits of the necessary investments being made in public transport accessibility. Relevant questions are:

- Will the identified target groups actually use improved public transport? and
- How can you measure the impact of the improvements?

It is also difficult to strike a balance between providing mainstream investments in accessibility, and tailor-made transport services for people with disabilities. Again, while accessibility is important, this in itself does not guarantee that the bus or tram is going where, for example, a job seeker has to go.

STEP 2: Where is the vehicle going? In many areas, social exclusion is reinforced by the fact that the places where people live are not connected to those where they go to school or work.

Again, public transport operators, school bus companies and community transport services often operate in isolation rather than as elements in a single delivery system.

One answer lies in smart public transport provision, eg demand responsive transport (DRT).

Another can emerge through the linking of urban regeneration projects to major public transport investment. A further solution involves bringing goods and services into deprived neighbourhoods, eg via mobile food retailers and van deliveries, library buses and satellite (possibly mobile) civic administration offices.

There remains, however, the question of the extent to which people will be prepared to make use of such services, since their travel horizons can be limited. Again, therefore, it can be difficult to assess the benefits of the necessary investments.

STEP 3: The development of personalised

Table 1

Step	Objective	Action
1	Allow people to access a transport system...	Provide a universally-designed public transport network that is accessible to all;
2	...that gives access to relevant destinations and services...	Gives access to specific areas and destinations, and brings services to those that need them; and
3	... and allows people to participate in society to the fullest possible degree.	Offers personalised transport promotion and services.

transport services, supported by adequate information and promotion, is the final stage in moving towards an integrated transport and social inclusion policy. Potential measures include targeted fares policies, personalised trip information and guidance on making the best use of public transport, improving access to cycling and mopeds.

The basic aim here is to increase people's travel horizons, while recognising the heterogeneity of the socially-excluded. Although the implementation of some of these measures can mean substantial costs per user for the authority concerned, their impact is often higher than with more open-ended approaches.

Research shows that the mobility-impaired consider human factors as the major area for improvement in transport systems. They are concerned about the respect with which they are treated on public transport and as road users (they typically find traffic 'too hectic').

Personalised transport services can contribute to easing the problem.

In addition to continuing to increase awareness of social inclusion issues among European transport professionals, and disseminate best practice guidance and appropriate tools, ECLIPSE II proposes to:

- Develop, test, evaluate, produce and disseminate specific resources to support training to meet the needs of vulnerable groups and transport providers;
- Develop, test and implement a system for impact assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of transport initiatives to tackle social exclusion; and
- Highlight the topic at European level

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/emplweb/tenders/tenders_en.cfm?id=1485
www.eclipse-eu.net
www.matisse-eu.com

Basic mobility in Flanders

In 2001, the Parliament of the Belgian Flemish-speaking region of Flanders adopted a law on 'Basismobiliteit' ('basic level of mobility'). This gives every inhabitant the right to a basic standard of public transport provision.

It standardises the maximum distance from any point to the nearest bus stop, as well as the service frequency and maximum waiting time. These standards vary according to the nature of the area being served (metropolitan, urban, peripheral/small town and suburban, rural) and the time of day (peak/off-peak) (see Table 2).

In order to achieve progress in three defined areas of sustainability: economic development the law is designed to:

- Give carless households better access to the wider world around them; and
- Create opportunities for modal shift environmental concerns; and social equality.

Methods adopted include 'belbus' ('call-a-bus'), which is currently operational in 118 low-population areas of the region. In 2005, this generated 581,309 trips, transporting almost 1.8 million passengers. (Eleven local authorities are using smaller taxi-bus vehicles).

Less high-profile, but equally important, is the ongoing upgrade of existing routes to meet the new standards. Figures show that such adaptation can generate impressive increases in bus usage (up to 87% over three years in one test area).

The Region has established a list of priority areas to enable systematic planning of the necessary investment. Regional public transport De Lijn has calculated levels of compliance for each municipality covered, and the priority list determines the timeframe for each to access the necessary funding.

Table 2

Area	Weekdays 0600-0900hrs & 1600-1800hrs	Weekdays 0900-1600hrs & 1800-2100hrs	Weekends 0800-2300hrs	Maximum distance to bus stop
Metropolitan	5 trips/h	4 trips/h	3 trips/h	500m
Urban	4 trips/h	3 trips/h	2 trips/h	500m
Peripheral/ small towns	3 trips/h	2 trips/h	1 trip/h	650m
Rural	2 trips/h	1 trip/h	1 trip/2h	750m