

New Northern research project set to tackle link between transport and social exclusion

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A new research project has been launched by Transport for the North (TfN) to help uncover and address the challenges of transport-related social exclusion in the North of England. The results will inform transport planning in the coming years, helping the region to build back better and support its 15 million residents in accessing jobs, homes, services, and social and leisure opportunities.

Transport-related social exclusion (TRSE) is a complex issue with many potential causes and consequences, but the ultimate result is that people are prevented from participating in the opportunities and community around them because of poor mobility and connectivity.

There is currently an evidence gap on the effects of transport on social exclusion and given the North's diverse geography and communities, the challenges faced can vary considerably. Transport for the North hopes that improving this data will mean the social benefits of improving transport and infrastructure can be taken into account when investment decisions are made.

It's all part of a major push by the North's transport body to make the region's transport networks greener and more inclusive.

Tim Foster, Interim Strategy and Programmes Director at Transport for the North, said: “As the North emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic, we need to understand how our transport system can deliver better opportunities for all of our 15 million residents, and ensure that people can reconnect.

“Having poor transport links can have a major impact on every aspect of people’s lives – from being able to get to work or school or visiting friends and family, to ensuring deliveries and vital services can get through without disruption. Improving our understanding of the challenges that people face, and by sharing the evidence with our delivery partners and decision-makers, we can drive positive change for all communities across the North.

“This research will produce new and up to date evidence on transport and social exclusion, including the impacts of COVID-19.”

The research programme will build evidence on how a lack of access to transport leads to exclusion from education and training opportunities, good quality employment, access to key services, and a community and social life.

A survey is now being carried out among local authorities, charities, and community groups until 21 April 2021. Alongside this, TfN has commissioned Social Research Associates and Temple to conduct an additional survey, focus groups and interviews with invited members of the public between May and July 2021. These will take place across five areas of the North to gather further evidence and insights from individuals.

The evidence from this research will be used to inform further development of TfN’s Strategic Transport Plan and statutory advice to Government on transport investment priorities for the North of England. It will also be of value to delivery partners, local authorities and other public bodies, and community and charity groups to help showcase the challenges of social exclusion and inform their policies and activities.

Any local authorities, charities or community groups interested in finding out more or taking part in the research should email: research@transportfornorth.com

Photo credit: Transport for the North