

## Undertsanding the need for improvement

A major public consultation exercise was undertaken during the early development of 'Wigan Borough on the Move' to help shape the future of transport in the biggest borough of Greater Manchester.

Over a three month period, we talked to people about transport and listened to individuals, local communities and businesses from across the borough about:

- Current journeys, travel within the borough and public transport provision;
- Future travel requirements, in light of higher fuel costs, the borough's health issues, and impacts of climate change; and
- What transport visions, aspirations and priorities they had for the next 20+ years.

This consultation and engagement process has been fundamental to the evidence behind this strategy document. Your views have helped to paint a picture of what local communities need and want - enabling us to prioritise actions and influence decisions to develop a better transport system.



## What YOU Told Us

The consultation process, along with our detailed and updated evidence base, has built up a very good picture of transport issues in the borough. All the views and comments received have been analysed to help inform the shape and direction of this strategy document and the detailed action plan within it.

### *Questionnaire Responses*

From the questionnaire responses you told us that public transport improvements and congestion were key issues for improvement, specifically with regards to buses not serving key destinations or where people believe / work at times that they are needed (before 7am, after 10pm, and weekends). Here is a summary of the key points raised from the questionnaire submissions:

- People in employment are more dissatisfied with transport than average, especially about congestion and public transport (99% of comments negative);
- Public transport was identified as a top priority for future investment and improvement for the unemployed, students / trainees, retired groups;
- Congestion was identified as a top priority for future investment and improvement for those in employment, including working parents;
- Businesses are considering the future role of electric vehicles, either on an individual basis or when they need to replace company fleet vehicles;
- Trains are popular choices for business trips, but the image portrayed by the station environment is not welcoming or inviting;
- People who don't usually use public transport (49% of respondents) said cheaper fares would encourage them to use public transport more, then they asked for more frequent services, then park and ride facilities (this was an unusual trend, as we would normally expect to see 'service frequency' and 'reliability/punctuality' as part of the top items listed – this was not the case from the consultation results)
- Responses from more deprived areas, or who responded as unemployed confirmed that their preferred transport mode was taxis rather than public transport (buses and rail). People attributed this to the high cost of bus fares, the lack of convenience of waiting for buses and having to catch irregular/ multiple bus services in late evenings versus the direct service provided by taxis, picking the customer up and dropping them off at their door especially if they have been shopping and they have weighty bags and a pram to navigate.
- The majority of bus passengers using the bus services all had passes and provided positive responses about their public transport experience. Concerns for this group related to the withdrawal of services and removing their travel choices. Those who paid for a ticket at the time of travel provided comments relating to cost and general dissatisfaction.
- The responses also provided a origin – destination map for commuter trips, education trips and shopping trips, all of which showed a dominance of localised travel patterns (within the Borough) compared to regional / strategic travel patterns.



Comments and views were also submitted to us through facebook / twitter comments, some of the more popular comments are listed below:

**'I would like lower bus fares - more than three of you, you may as well use your car or get a taxi!'**

**'I would definitely catch the bus rather than the car but can't afford it - much cheaper in the car!'**

**'Can't you install screens at bus stops so you know when a bus is running late?'**

**'I think there should be free school buses – that would help sort out congestion'**

**'Why don't the trains run on Sunday?'**

**'The last train from Manchester to Wigan needs to be later than 10.30pm'**

**'As long as I have 2 working legs, I won't use my car for any local journeys'**

**'I walk more these days - the cost of parking, petrol, delays with all the road works and one way systems just ain't worth the hassle'**

**'Cycle on the roads and put your life in the hands of car drivers - Wigan has so many brilliant cycle ways across countryside, including cycle paths and canals you can get really close to most places without touching many roads'**

**'I'd cycle more, but companies don't supply adequate bike storage and shower facilities, oh and the Great British Weather doesn't help'**



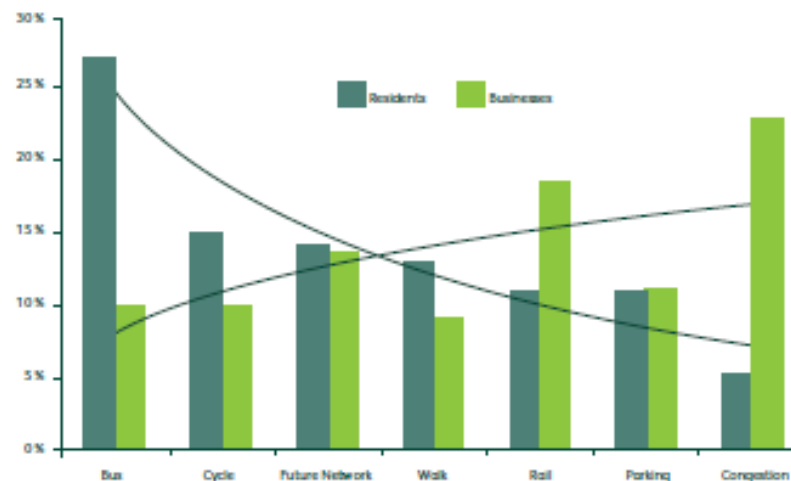
### Priority Voting Activity

Fully appreciating that questionnaires and interviews were not always applicable, we also wanted to understand what peoples' future transport priorities might be. A priority voting activity was undertaken at most of the consultation and engagement events, in order to gain a snapshot view of what people wanted to see improved.

Each of the eight key themes from within the transport strategy consultation were available for selection, but similarly to our predicament (in that with limited funding we simply cannot solve all the transport problems and we cannot deliver all the necessary transport solutions), people were only given three voting chips from which to select their priorities. This helped to focus people on what they considered to be their top priorities, and given the choice of putting all three chips into one theme, or spreading them amongst their three top priorities the results opposite were obtained.

The chart reveals that residents consider improvements for our bus services, cycling provision and walking improvements were their top priorities for future investment decisions. In comparison, our businesses voted for investment to resolve congestion related issues, improve rail services, and parking. While these diverse interest areas provide us with the usual issues of balancing the transport demands of our different communities, interestingly, both groups identified that improved transport connections (by all modes) were top priority for investment and therefore supports our interest in the provision of a holistic transport strategy.

Residential and Business Transport Priorities (from the consultation responses)



Overall, this activity did provide us with a clearer steer for the direction our strategy needs to take: sustainable transport mode improvements for our residential communities and strategic road and rail connections to support our business communities and future economic development.

### What have we learned

From all the consultation feedback, it is clear that people recognise that transport needs to change and, perhaps more importantly, that they are willing to change their travel habits. We now have a better understanding about some of the barriers and perceptions that need to be resolved to make this happen.

In particular, there is a lack of awareness about alternative transport choices other than the car; something we need to address through better information. And there are concerns and ideas about travel costs, convenience and effectiveness of the current transport choices available; while we recognise that these might be attributable to attitudes and perceptions, the right marketing and promotion strategy will be key to making a difference in future.

Both residents and businesses agree that tackling congestion is a priority. However, these two groups do not agree on the solution, with residents tending to select sustainable transport choices and businesses tending to want improved strategic connections.

We know that modal shift has the greatest potential to reduce congestion, improve travel conditions for all users (including motorists), and improve the quality of our environment - the places we live, work and play.

Therefore, moving forward... we need to develop a transport strategy that provides balanced sustainable transport choices and improved access and connections. The evidence and consultation results have led us develop the following transport principles to help us deliver the range of transport outcomes for our residents, visitors and businesses and to get Wigan Borough on the Move:

- Reducing the need to travel in the first place - to reduce the total number of trips on the network and their mileage;
- Promoting / encouraging the use of sustainable modes - to reduce congestion and the other adverse impacts of motor vehicles; and,
- Making more efficient use of our networks and vehicles - to make the best use of everything we have.

