

Briefing: Transport

LGC's weekly analysis and round-up, edited by Robin Latchem
robin.latchem@emap.com



SUE FLACK ON CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

Managing director, MRC McLean Hazel transport consultants

All aboard: it's time for 'Total Transport'

Transport has been hard hit by the spending cuts. In the past transport professionals have been quick to respond to funding challenges by outsourcing, performance management and innovation. Can we still show the way?

Consumers are becoming more demanding and are not satisfied with the old top-down 'rationing' of public services.

Following Total Place, transport professionals will have to review internal organisation and will also have to use methods 'owned' by other departments – personalisation of services, customer relationship management, shared back offices, increased use of IT to monitor and manage demand, and better targeting of scarce resources.

Transport projects will have to be integrated with other priorities to stand a chance of being funded. For

“Projects will have to be integrated with other priorities to secure funding. With a leap of imagination, transport professionals can again take the lead

example, a new bus priority scheme will have to convince stakeholders that the project is more beneficial than a skills training scheme or new medical services.

With a leap of imagination, transport professionals can again take the lead. My proposal is to use methods developed by successful supermarkets and online retail stores who create a market advantage by using IT to get to know their customers and to ensure a quick response so

that the right products are available at the right times. Transport can do the same.

So, what if the new bus scheme included an application on concessionary fare smartcards to allow personalised health and transport packages for selected groups? What if discounted gym membership could be added to the package alongside a health monitoring system? What about further value-added services – such as deliveries of healthy food, or discounted travel or life insurance? Or points – that can be redeemed locally – for taking healthy walks or cycle rides?

These added benefits would provide more services for the customer, enable selected data and tracking for health providers, and would allow investment to be directed towards those most in need. It could be the

beginning of a 'Total Transport' initiative that would complement Total Place.

You could go further and create more commercial models. A contracted 'city mobility manager' could be responsible for achieving whole city solutions. People would be nudged away from behaviour that would normally result in pressure for new and expensive infrastructure.

For example, a pilot project in the Netherlands has found the cheapest and most effective way to reduce congestion is to pay drivers to use public transport or to drive out of peak time.

Comprehensive implementation of these ideas could even result in additional revenue streams for local authorities, as commercial organisations bid to use the valuable lifestyle database.

Round-up More at www.LGCplus.com/Transport

Stagecoach campaigns to protect fares

Stagecoach, the major public transport group, launched a campaign to protect buses and trains from budget cuts. It urged economies on investment in roads and said bus subsidies and rail fares should not bear the brunt in a reduced Department for Transport budget.

Consultation targets dangerous trucks

Transport secretary Philip Hammond launched a consultation on dangerous trucks and coaches. He called for the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency to have more flexibility in tackling vehicles it suspects of being overloaded or breaking operating rules. Go to www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/open.

£8m

the fund announced by Alex Salmond to promote the use of environmentally friendly vehicles by public bodies

Scotland unveils £8m for green vehicles

Scotland's first minister Alex Salmond pledged nearly £8m to help bus companies increase their green vehicle fleets. Councils will receive £4.3m to help cover cost differences between buying normal petrol and cleaner alternatives.

Eastleigh scheme withdrawal criticised

The Local Government Ombudsman criticised Eastleigh BC after it cancelled a travel scheme offering cheap or free public transport to elderly and disabled people. The council said an alternative scheme would offer a wider choice of travel options.

Car case ruling goes against Ealing

The ombudsman also concluded that Ealing LBC wrongly destroyed a woman's car after deciding it was abandoned. Local Government Ombudsman Tony Redmond ruled that the power to deal with abandoned vehicles "must be used reasonably" and councils should retain "robust evidence" to justify their decisions.