

UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL IMPACTS

SYSTRA



OUR SERVICE



The COM-B model of behaviour is that individuals' behaviours and attitudes are heavily influenced by the opportunity afforded by the environment. It is these opportunity factors which can therefore act as a barrier to individuals' participation in economic and social life, creating social exclusion. In the context of transport, it may be that a lack of accessible and affordable bus services limits job and social opportunities, or that feeling unsafe whilst using tram services excludes protected characteristics groups.

Understanding the barriers and social impacts of transport schemes has never been more important, with the COVID-19 pandemic and UK Cost of Living Crisis introducing additional challenges for mobility for many people and efforts to achieve net zero providing opportunities to address these.

Decision makers need robust evidence on the barriers and social impacts of schemes to inform decision-making and provide accountability for public funding. SYSTRA has over 50 years of experience in this space through our dedicated behaviour change and research division. The team provides high-quality, customised research and analysis, coupled with expert interpretation and advisory services, specialising in the transport sector.



OUR EXPERIENCE



A selection of our research and analysis on the barriers and social impacts of transport schemes can be found below.

Addressing the Cost of Living Crisis with a national £2 bus fare cap | Department for Transport (DfT)

SYSTRA, with partners Frontier Economics, are undertaking an evaluation of the national £2 bus fare cap, seeking to understand the impacts of the scheme on a multitude of factors, including bus patronage, access to opportunities and cost of living. With the evaluation still ongoing, interim analysis of various data sources, including national panel surveys and focus groups conducted by SYSTRA,

indicate substantial awareness of the cap among the public. Moreover, perceptions regarding the scheme's impact on access to different opportunities and cost of living are generally positive, particularly among younger age groups. Many respondents report the £2 bus fare cap is having a positive impact on participation in leisure activities and visiting friends and family, in addition to their amount of disposable income and income for other expenses. Interim findings have been published.

Understanding the social value of Metro stations | NEXUS

This research used the Rail Social Value Tool (RSVT) to assess the social value of Metro services on passengers, the local community, and the environment, aiming to quantify the broader benefits beyond transportation and highlight the system's role in societal well-being and environmental sustainability. Four stations were examined through case studies to pinpoint social value facilities and attributes, with their social value subsequently quantified using the RSVT. The case studies underscored the extensive social, economic, and environmental advantages of the Metro system, emphasizing its positive effects on passengers and local communities such as reduced social isolation, and improved sense of community and wellbeing.





Assessing accessibility and safety perceptions for bus and coach travel amongst disabled people and those with other protected characteristics | Department for Transport

The Department for Transport (DfT) tasked SYSTRA Ltd and University College London (UCL) with researching bus and coach travel among disabled individuals and those with protected characteristics. Following an inclusive research design, disability was approached through the social model, recognising societal barriers over individual impairments, while protected characteristics, as defined by the Equality Act (2010), encompassed various factors like age, disability, gender, and race. These intersecting identities are

analysed under intersectionality, which considers how they interact within societal systems and structures. This research found that disabled individuals face barriers to bus travel, varying by disability type, highlighting the need for flexible vehicle design and stakeholder collaboration for accessibility improvements. Safety perceptions on buses are influenced by factors like passenger behaviours and personal characteristics, underlining the need for collaborative safety initiatives.



Understanding the employment outcomes of city tram | Nottingham City Council

Over ten years, SYSTRA have delivered an evaluation the Nottingham Express Transit scheme, uncovering construction impacts, transport and wider social impacts, including economic benefits. Primary research was undertaken to consider a range of impacts, including on mobility impaired travellers which identified real employment opportunity benefits.



Creating opportunities for social mobility for young people in Greater Manchester | Transport for Greater Manchester

The 'Our Pass' concessionary bus fare scheme offers free bus travel to 16-18-year-olds across Greater Manchester, aiming to increase access to employment, education, training, and social and cultural opportunities by reducing the barrier that the cost of transport poses to young people. SYSTRA undertook an online baseline survey, in addition to three online evaluation surveys to understand the impacts of Our Pass on travel behaviour and access to opportunities. All surveys were distributed by gatekeeper organisations, such as schools, colleges, community groups and sports clubs, in addition to being

sent to the Our Pass distribution list. Across all evaluation surveys, findings consistently highlighted the positive impact of Our Pass on young people's lives, particularly in facilitating access to education, employment, and leisure activities. The scheme also notably enhanced satisfaction with bus travel and feelings of inclusion and personal freedom. Notably, impacts were observed to be greater on disabled young people, on young people classed as 'Urban Adversity' or 'Financially Stretched' and on those without driving licenses and/or access to a car.



Understanding the opportunities created by concessionary bus fares | Department for Transport

SYSTRA, with partners Frontier Economics, conducted research on concessionary bus travel in England. Sixty-four bus operators, 16 Travel Concession Authorities (TCAs), and representative groups completed online surveys and in-depth interviews alongside a Rapid Evidence Assessment. Findings highlighted how instrumental concessionary bus passes are in fostering feelings of independence and accessing shopping, leisure activities and healthcare. Suggestions for improving bus service frequency and reliability were put forward to enhance the opportunities created by concessionary bus fares, especially among disabled people.





“Having Our Pass was an incredible opportunity and thank you for keeping the cost down to only £10! I felt so much more freedom to be able to travel to college, libraries, outings, events, to meet friends, etc... It felt like the people running Manchester cared about us and that we could be free from worry about the high costs of bus travel, which would usually make me hesitate and not go on as many journeys.”

Supporting positive health and financial outcomes through Social Prescribing | Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council

SYSTRA supported Doncaster’s bid for funding from the DfT for an Active Travel Social Prescribing (ATSP) pilot project, which resulted in them being awarded over £600k. SYSTRA has managed an extensive programme of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), including online surveys, in-depth interviews and workshops. Findings have shown the pilot to improve feelings of independence, reduction of stress and increased social interaction. Financial advantages, particularly reductions in transportation costs as a result of increased walking and cycling have also been observed. These findings emphasise the broader social benefits of the ATSP initiative.



Understanding life outcomes from participation in the Workwise Scheme | Transport for West Midlands

The West Midlands WorkWise scheme helped unemployed people access interviews and jobs by reducing the financial costs associated with transport. SYSTRA undertook in-depth interviews with over 100 WorkWise clients to understand the strengths and weaknesses of WorkWise and how life-outcomes may have changed as a result of taking part in the scheme.







For more information on how SYSTRA can help you with monitoring and evaluation, please contact:

CARRY STEPHENSON

Director of Behaviour Change & Research

e: cstephenson@systra.com

WWW.SYSTRA.COM/UK/

Whilst every care has been taken to ensure that the information contained in this publication is accurate, neither SYSTRA Limited makes no representations, warranties or guarantees with respect to the content, nor accepts responsibility or liability for errors or for information which is found to be misleading. This publication is not intended to amount to advice on which you should rely and you must obtain professional or specialist advice before taking, or refraining from, any action on the basis of the content of this publication.



Copyright 2024 SYSTRA Limited. SYSTRA Limited is registered in England under number 03383212
Registered office: 3rd Floor, 1 Carey Lane, London, England EC2V 8AE. Tel: +44 20 3855 0079