



Outcome Based Accountability Factsheet 3. Transport Congestion and Accessibility in Wigan

Congestion means many things to different people. The **Highways Agency** says:

“The traditional congestion indicator used to measure progress is defined as average time lost per vehicle kilometre. This is measured as the difference in travel times along roads between 'free-flow conditions' and the actual average travel times across the day.”

That does not really tally with motorist’s perceptions. To most people it is any delay caused by excess traffic on the road they are travelling on. (A German roadside campaign stated, “You’re not *in* traffic – You are the traffic!”)

There is also usually a disparity between the reality of congestion and motorist’s perceptions. Perhaps a more useful set of definitions was proposed by Brownfield et al (2003):

Congestion Type	Definition
Recurrent congestion	Occurs at regular times at a site. It can be anticipated by road users that normally use the route during those times. Examples of recurrent congestion are morning or evening peak hour congestion, or congestion due to a regular events such as a street market on a particular day each week
Non-recurrent congestion	Occurs at non-regular times at a site. It is unexpected and unpredictable by the driver and is normally due to incidents such as accidents, vehicle breakdowns or other unforeseen loss of carriageway capacity
Pre-congestion (Borderline congestion)	Occurs where free-flow conditions breakdown but full congestion has not yet occurred. This may occur either side of the time period when congestion occurs or upstream or downstream of congestion that is already occurring.

Problems of congestion:

Damage to the local environment – Increased emissions and noise

Damage to health – Air quality problems, respiratory diseases, serious links between pollution and health (traffic pollution is estimated to be a factor in tens of thousands of deaths across Europe). On average, drivers breathe in three times more pollution than bus users.

Money – Time and energy spent waiting in traffic, increased fuel consumption, difficulties in planning and logistics, driver fatigue,

Social issues – The more heavily trafficked a street, the fewer friends and acquaintances people have. It has been argued, though not proved, that this can have affects on mental health.

Frustration and irritation – Personal transport, especially the car, promised to be liberating and bring unfettered mobility. Congestion brings lack of mobility and it does cause stress to a lot of people.

Other issues

Recurrent congestion (see above) in local areas reduces accident rates; the opposite is true on motorways.

Powered two wheelers, cyclists and pedestrians remain as vulnerable in congested conditions as they do when uncongested but the rate of accidents involving powered two wheelers increases 7-fold in congested motorway conditions.

A poor local environment affected by traffic congestion can deter people from walking or cycling – thereby compounding the problem.

Policy Responses

Local Transport Plans (LTP) stated aim is for economic growth not to increase congestion significantly (by no more than 2%).

Congestion is tackled through hard measures such as engineering works on roads, as well as smarter choices work which includes Travel Plans, School Travel Plans and other marketing and promotional messages.

The proposed Transport Innovation Fund bid for Greater Manchester aims to tackle congestion in the sub-region through improving public transport and charging for road use at certain times of day in certain places.

Wigan Congestion Study 2006

Average speeds on A, B and C roads are similar across different times of the day and are slightly faster than the GM average - between 20.2 and 21.9 mph compared with 19.0 and 21.2 mph for Greater Manchester in general.

Motorway speed averages are 39.8 mph in the morning peak, 46.1 mph in the off-peak and 43.0 mph in the evening peak. These are very similar to the Greater Manchester average.

Roads with the lowest average speeds (less than 10 mph) in the morning peak (0730-0930) are:

- A58 southbound and A577 westbound in Hindley.
- B5207 between Golborne and A580.
- King Street, Leigh in both directions.
- Twist Lane, Leigh from Firs Lane to Atherleigh Way.
- B5206 between Orrell and Orrell Post.

- A49 southbound and A5209 eastbound in Standish.

Overall average speeds in the morning peak in Wigan Town Centre and on main radials are between 10 and 15 mph. Evening peak average speeds of less than 10 mph are at:

- King Street, Leigh southbound.
- A572 southbound between A580 and Winwick Lane.
- Ashton in Makerfield Town Centre.
- A573 southbound in Platt Bridge.
- A577 Sale Lane approaching Hough Lane.
- A577 westbound towards Orrell Post.
- Radial routes from Wigan Centre to Hindley, Worsley Mesnes, Saddle Junction and Shevington.
- Riverway northbound.

The slowest routes are:

- A577 through Hindley, Ince and Wigan.
- A58 through Hindley and Platt Bridge.
- A49/B5238 to and from Wigan Town Centre.
- A573 through Ince and Platt Bridge.

The junctions with greatest delays are:

- A58/A577 in Hindley Town Centre.
- A58 Bridge Street/Ladies Lane, Hindley.
- A573/A577 Darlington Street/Warrington Lane.
- A577/Ince Green Lane.

Community Perceptions

Perceptions of transport issues in Wigan show that congestion on our roads is a major concern. Recent surveys by the Wigan Chamber of Commerce, whilst not statistically significant, illustrate public views. The Autumn 2006 survey showed:

- over 90% of local businesses supported the improvement of local transport infrastructure;
- over half the individuals questioned travelled to work alone and by car;
- the average journey to work was under 5 miles but average journey time was 23 minutes;
- fewer than one person in six travelled to work by foot or cycle;
- journey times by car were perceived to be much faster than by bus with cars travelling at 12 mph and buses at an average of 8 mph;
- 58% of those surveyed felt that Wigan's transport network was inferior to other towns.

Accessibility Issues

Social Exclusion

“Social exclusion is about more than income poverty. It is a short-hand term for what can happen when people or areas have a combination of linked problems, such as unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime and family breakdown. These problems are linked and mutually reinforcing. Social exclusion is an extreme consequence of what happens when people don't get a fair deal throughout their lives, often because of disadvantage they face at birth, and this disadvantage can be transmitted from one generation to the next.” **Cabinet Office, Social Exclusion Taskforce**

Accessibility

“...can people get to key services at reasonable cost, in reasonable time and with reasonable ease? Accessibility depends on several things: does transport exist between the people and the service? Do people know about the transport, trust its reliability and feel safe using it? Are people physically and financially able to access transport? Are the services and activities within a reasonable distance? Solving accessibility problems may be about transport but also about locating and delivering key activities in ways that help people reach them.” **(Making the Connections; Transport and Social Exclusion) Social Exclusion Unit, 2003**

The 2003 Social Exclusion Unit report (*Making the Connections: Transport and Social Exclusion*) considered access to transport barriers for the following distinct groups of people.

- Older people
- Young people
- Women
- Black and Minority Ethnic people
- People with disabilities
- People on low incomes
- Single parents

The problem can be exacerbated when people fall into a number of groups.

The key services the report highlighted as being important for accessibility were:

- Access to employment
- Access to education (lifelong learning as well as schools and colleges)
- Access to health (facilities as well as healthy activity)
- Access to leisure and recreation
- Access to food

The problem can be compounded as people require access to all these services.

What can cause the problem?

- Rising prosperity leads to high car ownership

- Leading to a car-centred society
- Leading to a huge rise in mobility
- But for those without a car.....?

No clear responsibility for accessibility:

Until incorporated into the Local Transport Plan process, accessibility was not the responsibility of any one lead. It was split across departments as a bolt-on to everyday duties.

Lack of joined up thinking:

Supermarkets and shop owners, Leisure providers, Healthcare providers, Education providers and Employers are all responsible for the location of their own facilities. In the main, they have very little input into, interest in or response from the transport planning process.

The fragmented public transport system makes for difficult planning, poor response to change and rising costs. National public expenditure on revenue support for buses is more than £1billion per year with a further £billion spent on school, patient and social services transport. There is a finite pot of money available to provide subsidised services, so they are subject to prioritisation.

Provision for those with particular social needs such as disabled and older people and those accessing health facilities is very fragmented with several different providers, agencies and contacts creating a confused marketplace and lack of consumer confidence.

There remains a lack of engagement across the public and private sectors to take responsibility for accessibility issues. It is always someone else's problem.

Wigan Issues

Demographics (2001 census):

- A fifth of Wigan's population is over 60
- A quarter of Wigan's population is under 18
- Less than 0.5% of the population are BEM
- 55% of the population are women
- 7% of the population is permanently sick or disabled
- 3% of households are lone parent households

Primary Education – only small areas of the Borough lie more than a 15 minute walk or public transport journey from a primary school. Wards with less than 100% accessibility for pupils include Worsley Mesnes, Ashton, Lowton East, Orrell and Golborne and Lowton.

Secondary Education – accessibility is measured as pupils with a 20 minute walk or public transport journey. Winstanley, Abram, Shevington, Wigan Central, Lowton East and Tyldesley emerge as the least accessible in this category.

Further Education – accessibility is measured as students with a 30 minute walk or public transport journey. The wards experiencing the worst accessibility in this category include Bryn, Shevington, Hindley, Golborne and Lowton, Ashton and Atherleigh.

Employment – this measures the numbers of people within 20 minutes of a location with more than 500 jobs by public transport, walking or cycling. There is 100% accessibility throughout, even for those on jobseekers allowance. However, this does not measure the type of jobs available or whether people are appropriately qualified to undertake them. Other GM data indicates that access to employment in the regional centre and other destinations outside the borough by public transport is problematic for areas outside central Wigan and Leigh.

Access to GP Surgeries – this accessibility indicator is measured as households within a 15 minute walk or public transport journey of a GP. The wards experiencing the worst accessibility include Shevington, Pemberton and Orrell.

Access to Hospitals – accessibility mapping shows that Astley Mosley Common and Tyldesley are wards where households have a journey of more than 30 minutes walking or by public transport to access a hospital. Other GM studies have indicated the central, south western and parts of the north of the Borough have accessibility to hospitals by public transport of more than 30 minutes. This does not take account of the type of service provided by a particular hospital.

Access to Supermarkets – There is good access in the Borough to supermarkets by public transport and walking within 15 minutes. (However, transport cannot determine whether or not people purchase healthy food!)

Access to Local Centres – The entire Borough lies within 30 minutes of a local centre by public transport. The poorest accessibility is at the interfaces between centres, particularly in the north of the Borough (off the A49) and between Ashton in Makerfield and Golborne and other centres such as Leigh and Wigan.

The major issues facing the Borough are:

- Access to GP surgeries by public transport in the west and north
- Poor access to employment in the regional centre and key centres outside the borough by public transport or walking
- Access to education in certain wards.