



From Behind the Wheel to a Seat on the Bus: Persuading Older People to Use Public Transport

Ann Frye

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LIMITED



Ageing Baby Boomers

“Providing for the ongoing safe mobility of ageing baby boomers will require active planning and a rethinking of strategies, policies and provision of services in order to support their continued health and wellbeing into and beyond retirement” ...

OECD 2001

Mobility and Lifestyle

“A lack of mobility can lead to low morale, depression and loneliness. In particular, there is evidence that having to cease driving is associated with depressive symptoms.”

“Older Richer Fitter” Dr David Metz 2005

Driving Trends

	% licensed drivers 65+ in 2000	% licensed drivers 65+ 2030	% increase in licensed drivers 65+
Finland	14.9	26.7	79
France	16.1	25.8	60
Netherlands	13.7	26.5	93
Spain	16.8	26.1	55
Sweden	17.2	24.1	40
UK	15.7	23.5	49

Licensing Statistics provided to the OECD in response to an OECD survey 2000

Travel Patterns among Older People

- More older people are choosing to drive;
- Walking is still an important transport mode for older people, but;
- Car use seems to be replacing walking and, to a lesser extent, public transport;
- Currently public transport is most commonly used by people aged 75 + and by women.

- What's wrong with public transport ...?

Older People's Problems Using Public Transport

- Walking to the bus stop or railway station;
- Waiting at the bus stop or railway station;
- Understanding the timetable;
- Getting on and off the bus or train;
- Fear of falling on board;
- Fear for personal security.



Getting to the Bus Stop or Station

- Many older people don't use public transport because they can't get to it;
- Land Use Planning is a major factor;
- New communities should be planned with local services and facilities;
- Where this isn't possible, flexibly routed or door to door transport services can provide a good solution – particularly in rural areas.



The pedestrian environment



- Even if public transport is within walking distance there are often no useable pavements or safe crossing points;
- The loss of local outdoor mobility is a major cause of declining mental and physical health among older people;
- Good highway design and maintenance is a key factor in creating an environment in which older people feel safe;
- Maintaining or re-creating neighbourhoods with local shops is also important.



The waiting environment

- Many bus stops have no shelter or information;
- They are often located in places where people feel vulnerable.



Information



- Timetable information is often illegible or incomprehensible;
- Older people need clear real time information so they can decide whether they are able to wait.



Getting on Board

- Many public transport systems are now more easily accessible;
- But a low floor isn't the whole solution;
- Bus driver training and traffic management are also key so that buses pull up close to stops and give people time to get on board.



Fear of Falling



- For many older people, a fear of falling is a major deterrent to using public transport;
- They need time to get to a seat;
- They need plenty of handholds to steady themselves;
- This is about good design and about driver training.

Personal Security

- Many older people are worried about their personal security;
- They feel vulnerable on public transport and waiting to get on it;
- Good lighting and the presence of staff can be a great help.



Key Policy Issues: Understanding the Baby Boomer Generation

- Recognise that older people are as diverse as any other section of the population – their needs will vary;
- Understand that the ageing baby boomer generation will have much higher expectations of continuing mobility than previous generations;
- Many – but not all – will also have higher disposable incomes;
- Many have gone through adult life without using public transport!

Key Policy Issues: Getting the Right Balance

- Involve older people in policy development – listen to what they want;
- Understand that affordability is important but that cheap or free transport will not, in isolation, get people out of their cars;
- Recognise that there is a balance to be struck between safety and mobility – older people are more at risk as pedestrians than they are as drivers!

Key Policy Issues: “Driving to the Funeral Parlour”

- Many older people continue to drive because they do not know that there are alternatives – or do not understand how to access them;
- There is also fear about loss of independence and – for men in particular – of control over their own lives;
- There is a need for assessment and advice services to help older drivers prolong their driving careers safely but also to know when to stop ;
- Part of this process is helping people to understand the alternatives to driving and build up their confidence to try them.

The Way Forward



Using public transport should not be seen as a last resort and a sign of old age and infirmity!

It is important to encourage older people to start to use public transport as an option while they are still driving;

This will make the transition less painful.



The Way Forward

- To do this, public transport operators and highway authorities need to work together to make public transport:
 - More accessible (in terms of location and vehicle design);
 - More user friendly (in terms of information, driver attitude, reliability, flexibility and personal security).





ann@frye.demon.co.uk

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