

Results of consultation with customers on the future of the National Travel Survey September 2000

Summary

- Almost all users wanted the National Travel Survey (NTS) to continue in a broadly similar form, with all members of a household completing a seven day travel diary.
- The inclusion of students in halls of residence would be welcomed, as would travel by non-GB residents.
- Many users wanted to be able to disaggregate data to finer geographic detail, or by single years. These needs could be met by increasing the sample size of the survey.
- A number of suggestions for new questionnaire topics and extra diary details were made. In particular, the collection of short walk data on more days was frequently mentioned.
- Designing a set of core questions to be asked every year, with rotating questions on other topics was welcomed by a majority of users.
- Some users wanted more information on origins and destinations of journeys, including geocoding and land use.
- The use of questionnaire data from 'partially responding' households who failed to complete diaries was favoured.
- A number of users considered a non-response survey to be important, and that some form of weighting to overcome non-response bias was necessary.
- The possibility of running tables from a web-based interface was welcomed.
- No overwhelming need to use new technologies was expressed, but the possibility of a web-based diary, or a diary on a hand held personal computer could appeal to younger users who were more difficult to motivate.

Background

1. As part of a National Statistics Quality Review, over 200 questionnaires were sent out to users of the National Travel Survey (NTS). Copies were sent out:
 - with the NTS bulletin on 17 August
 - to a transport contact in each Government Office Region (GOR)
 - to each Head of Profession in other Government Departments
 - on request
2. In addition, the questionnaire could be downloaded from the Transport Statistics Liaison Group (TSLG) web site, part of the Central and Local Government Information Partnership (CLIP) site, and from the National Statistics site (which had 52 'hits' on the questionnaire).
3. A seminar was also held on 6 September, attended by 50 users outside DETR, and further copies of the questionnaire were distributed. All members of the Transport Statistics Users' Group (TSUG) were invited to this seminar, which was also advertised on the questionnaire and in 'Local Transport Today'.

Responses to questionnaire

4. A total of 61 responses were received by (or shortly after) the closing date of 15 September. This paper presents an analysis of the results of the responses, prepared by Barbara Noble of DETR and Glyn Rhys-Tyler of the Transport Research Laboratory, representing the TSUG. Tables 8-10 at the end of this annex summarise the widely varied uses of the NTS by the main groups of respondents.
5. A list of organisations who provided responses and/ or attended the seminar is included as Table 11 at the end of this Annex.
6. The questionnaire was organised in seven sections. In each section, respondents had the options of making no comment, opting to maintain the status quo, or suggesting changes. The following sections tabulate these options, and summarise the changes suggested.

Responses to seminar

7. A separate report of the seminar of 6 September is available (Annex C). The main points raised are also shown in the appropriate sections below.

Section 1 Current format of the NTS

TABLE 1	Current format of the NTS					
	Consultants	Academics	Central Gov. ¹	Local Gov. ²	Other ³	Total
No comment	0	4	8	3	1	16
No change	15	5	5	11	4	40
Change preferred	2	0	1	2	0	5
Total	17	9	14	16	5	61

1 Government Departments and agencies

2 Government Offices for the Regions (3), Local Government (11), PTE/ CPT (2)

3 Pressure Groups, commercial use, private individuals

Changes suggested:

- Electronic diaries to improve response (3)
- Overcome lumpiness, e.g. in rail travel, from using PSUs
- One day travel diaries, but covering more households
- One person per household sufficient

Seminar: Strongly supported retaining current format of the NTS

Section 2 Survey sampling details

TABLE 2	Survey sampling details					
	Consultants	Academics	Central Gov.	Local Gov.	Other	Total
No comment	3	1	8	3	2	17
No change	8	6	3	5	2	24
Change preferred	6	2	3	8	1	20
Total	17	9	14	16	5	61

Changes suggested:

- Change stratification- eg urban/rural, by age (6)
- Need to ensure that any stratification is consistent with other sample surveys (e.g. FES)
- Larger sample (6)
- Address declining response- use incentives? (2)
- Substitute households to compensate for non-respondents?
- Include students' residences (5)
- Include visitors' travel (3)
- Include guest houses, bed & breakfast, hotels, holiday camps etc.
- More regional data (2)
- International journeys (2)
- Increase the sample for minority groups e.g. disabled, ethnic minorities
- Sampling by age group category
- Carry out additional sampling of different spatial types (ACORN?)

Seminar: Expand data beyond households to include students in halls of residence, and perhaps NTS of travel in GB (including that by foreign tourists) and travel abroad by GB residents.

Section 3 Questionnaire topics

TABLE 3	Questionnaire topics					
	Consultants	Academics	Central Gov.	Local Gov.	Other	Total
No comment	3	1	2	3	1	10
No change	5	2	2	4	2	15
Change preferred	9	6	10	9	2	36
Total	17	9	14	16	5	61

Changes suggested:

- Support suggested topics (11)

Household topics

- Access to public transport- more detail (2)
- Measures taken to reduce car usage
- Add E-shopping and other deliveries (2)
- Utility of public transport for accessing services (main purposes)
- Travel on holiday in UK
- If no bicycle – anywhere to keep a bicycle
- Attitudes to a wider range of transport issues e.g. congestion, road pricing. Willingness to accept changes in lifestyle / extra costs.
- BUT Drop attitudinal questions (2)
- Car availability for journeys undertaken

Individual topics

- Attitudes of all users (2)
- Time restrictions on season tickets and railcards
- Frequency of use; average journey time and length
- Disability
- Employers' green travel plans
- Frequency of walking and cycling (2)
- Distance on off-road cycle routes
- Changes from usual mode
- Journeys not undertaken and why (2)
- Barriers to use of public transport
- Use of park and ride

Seminar: A number of specific ideas suggested.

- Information on what children are / are not allowed to do in terms of travel
- What do adults feel they are able to do (e.g. go out alone after dark)
- 'Main mode' analysis to be based on time spent on mode as well as distance travelled (2)
- Participation in activities (eg shopping, leisure)
- Teleworking
- Attitudes to facilities for pedestrians

Vehicle topics

- More company car details, tax relief for self-employed
- Cash alternatives to company cars
- Length of time in current owners' possession
- Include non- motorised vehicles
- Visitors' mileage within GB
- More categories of fuel type (eg LPG- but drop leaded/ unleaded) (2)
- Add CO₂ emissions, and European emission standard for newer cars (2)
- Vehicle Excise Duty category (2)
- Shared private and business use especially light vans
- Bicycle ownership/usage (2)
- Where is the car kept and parked (home and work); payment for parking. (2)
- Use of intelligent transport systems such as in-car navigation
- Business mileage
- Drop 'mileage outside UK'
- Fuel consumption

Section 4 Diary data

TABLE 4	Diary data					
	Consultants	Academics	Central Gov.	Local Gov.	Other	Total
No comment	0	1	7	1	1	10
No change	5	2	2	5	0	14
Change preferred	12	6	5	10	4	37
Total	17	9	14	16	5	61

Changes suggested:

- Improve accuracy/ coverage of walking data if possible (eg collect every day) (17)
- Change ‘short walk’ day to day 1?
- Short walks for 7 days
- More information on cycle journeys (2)
- More detailed origin and destination data (eg home/ work postcodes) (7)
- Type of road used (especially motorways) (2)
- More location type/ land use details (4)
- Automate capture of postcodes for major destinations
- Car availability for individual non-car journeys (4)
- Bridge possible gap on freight movements
- Weather
- In future, details of road user/ workplace parking charges paid,
- Waiting due to late arrival of public transport
- Multi-purpose journey details
- Seasonality
- Journeys considered but not made
- Include foreign travel on long distance diary, including destination outside UK (4)
- Follow-up diary with attitudes survey
- Clarify use of passengers picked up/dropped off en route
- Is the 50 yard cut-off too low? Could it be increased without significant loss of data?
- Attitudinal questions (priorities and trade-offs)
- Children’s travel (accompanied and unaccompanied)
- Increased accuracy on long distance trips
- Move from 7 day to 1 day diary

Seminar: other information on car availability at time of journey (assessing impact this has on mode use), road types traversed in journey, whether other members of the household travelled together on the journey

Section 5 Data processing

TABLE 5	Data processing					
	Consultants	Academics	Central Gov.	Local Gov.	Other	Total
No comment	2	0	4	5	2	13
No change	2	2	1	0	0	5
Change preferred	13	7	9	11	3	43
Total	17	9	14	16	5	61

Changes suggested:

- Tours data useful (20)
- Include household data even if diaries not complete (ie partially responding households) (21)
- It would be nice to have the option of including or excluding the interview-only households, and of including / excluding imputed data (2)
- Non- response survey (9)
- Validation survey
- Use attributes of 'hard to contact' households to impute those of similar households
- Choose main mode by time instead of distance
- Weighting needed (10)- including:
 - reflect known age etc of population (3)
 - by selection probability of household (2)
 - for non-completed household diaries
- Imputation needed (2); use model-based imputation for missing data from partially responding households
- More data distributions, rather than usual averages
- Link data on household members travelling together (2)
- Link locally available data eg public transport services, distance to town centre (with population band), distance to public transport facilities, numbers of different facility types in area, Census data, ACORN data (3)
- Geocode addresses (3)
- Separate 'escort' from 'accompanying'
- Add 'daylight' variable imputed from time of day, time of year, and sunrise and sunset. Useful for analysis of 'personal security issues'.

Seminar: Tour data desired; non-response survey needed, with subsequent treatment of bias

Section 6 Data access

TABLE 6	Data access					
	Consultants	Academics	Central Gov.	Local Gov.	Other	Total
No comment	2	0	2	3	1	8
No change	8	4	10	9	4	35
Change preferred	7	5	2	4	0	18
Total	17	9	14	16	5	61
Likely to use more often?	7	3	2	9	0	21

Changes suggested:

- Raw data more widely distributed
- Would use web-based interrogation (17)
- Include regional tables for DETR targets
- All LAs to receive bulletins
- DETR to maintain list of users (2)
- Disaggregation by distance; Socio-Economic Group, Household composition
- Data archive available to commercial bodies?
- Make form of raw data more convenient for SPSS
- Add an alphabetical index
- Improve access to NTS for voluntary and community groups
- Display data more imaginatively, especially using graphics
- Each NTS should be available on a CD-ROM for purchase
- Replace CD ROM with online
- Can a more 'systematic' way of processing ad hoc requests for data be devised (to avoid errors)

Seminar: Data access - keeping people up to date with changes/ publications via use of email users list, as well as usual means (TSUG etc).

Section 7 Other innovations

TABLE 7a	Increased sample size					
	Consultants	Academics	Central Gov.	Local Gov.	Other	Total
No comment	1	0	2	0	0	3
No change	1	1	0	2	0	4
Change preferred	15	8	12	14	5	54
Total	17	9	14	16	5	61

Increased sample would assist:

- Better geographic breakdowns (17)
- Annual data- especially for targets (14)
- Better socio-economic breakdown (4)
- Better data for small groups (2)
- Better rates data for accidents
- BUT expensive (3)
- Provide 'buy-in' service for Local Authorities (LAs) to boost sample in their own areas (2)
- Reduce clustering problems
- Top up surveys of under represented groups, e.g. ethnic minorities and working households
- Identification of trends
- Possible concentration on a local area
- Larger sample of older people
- More detailed analysis of short / medium term trends
- Improved accuracy for longer distance trips
- Company cars

Seminar: Increasing sample - should be done on a uniform basis?

TABLE 7b	Core/ rotating question design					
	Consultants	Academics	Central Gov.	Local Gov.	Other	Total
No comment	3	1	4	2	2	12
No change	4	2	4	4	1	15
Change preferred	10	6	6	10	2	34
Total	17	9	14	16	5	61

Comments on rotating design:

- Rotation supported- subject to question choice (31)
- Include annual questions on walking and cycling
- Split sample design as opposed to rotation (2)
- Include 'unreported accidents' in rotating questions
- Ensure 'core' is not restricted to car use
- Need to ensure consistency in question design over time to facilitate the analysis of trends
- Support questions on access to local facilities and public transport frequency (4)

TABLE 7c	New technologies					
	Consultants	Academics	Central Gov.	Local Gov.	Other	Total
No comment	7	6	11	12	4	40
Suggest use	10	3	3	4	1	21
Total	17	9	14	16	5	61

Use of new technologies suggested:

- Plotting routes important in future to determine use of different road types (eg for environmental modelling) (2)
- Need to ensure use of new technology does not lead to bias as only part of sample will use it
- GPS would be more accurate and would reduce need for diary data (5)
- Data from smart cards (2)
- Monitor vehicles by satellite.. technology available yet? (2)
- Global Positioning System (GPS) only useful with larger sample to make trip detail reliable
- Use GPS for data validation (3)
- Track with mobile/WAP phones (3)
- Palm pilots for young people to encourage them to record trips
- The use of more than one method of data collection may help to boost response rate (3)
- Use of internet as a means of collecting data and monitoring diary completion, and the use of e-mail to remind respondents if required (5)
- Use of Dictaphones or hand-held computers to allow respondents to record diaries in real time (2).
- Internet technology incorporating reactive pathways allow questionnaires to be 'personalised', improving response rates

Seminar: Technology - web-based diaries - technology is now okay, although specific to certain parts of the sample.

Other comments

- Better to collect attitude data on a different survey, or NTS follow-up
- Aim to increase consistency between NTS and sources such as bus operator returns

- Privacy issues
 - More careful selection of surveyors to maximise response rate, taking
- into account ethnic minorities, language, age and gender

TABLE 8	Types of use of the NTS				
	Consultants	Academics	Official ¹	Other ²	Total
Research	13	9	17	5	44
Planning	6	0	15	2	23
Policy	6	0	17	3	26
Teaching	3	3	0	0	6
Commercial	2	0	0	0	2
Not used	1	0	5	0	6
Other	0	0	6	1	7
Total responses	17	9	28	5	59

Note that most respondents used the data for several purposes.

TABLE 9	Access to NTS data				
Printed tables	16	7	23	5	51
Electronic tables	0	3	3	1	7
Custom tables	8	4	12	3	27
ESRC data archive	1	6	0	0	7
Never used it	1	0	5	0	6

TABLE 10	Frequency of use of the NTS				
Every week	0	2	3	1	5
Every month	5	6	8	1	20
Every quarter	5	1	8	1	15
Every six months	3	0	1	0	4
Every year	2	0	3	0	5
Less than once a year	1	0	0	1	2
Never used it	1	0	5	0	6

1 Government Offices for the Regions, Other Government Departments, County Councils, Agencies, PTEs etc

2 Pressure Groups, commercial use, private individuals

TABLE 11

Academic bodies, research organisations and lobby groups

Anglia Polytechnic University
 Caledonian University
 Glasgow Caledonian University
 Imperial College
 Institute for European Environmental Policy
 Institute for Policy Research
 National Centre for Social Research
 Pedestrians Association
 Policy Studies Institute
 Social Research Associates
 Sustrans
 Transport Research Laboratory
 University College London
 University of Leeds
 University of Newcastle upon Tyne
 University of the West of England
 University of Westminster

Government and official bodies

Association of Local Government
 Association of Train Operating Companies
 Buckinghamshire County Council
 Cardiff County Council
 Confederation of Passenger Transport
 Countryside Agency
 Department of Culture Media and Sport
 Equal Opportunities Commission
 Essex County Council
 Gloucestershire County Council
 Greater Manchester PTE
 Government Office North West
 Government Office East
 Government Office South East
 Hertfordshire County Council
 Inland Revenue
 International Air Rail Organisation
 Leeds City Council
 Local Government Association
 National Assembly for Wales

Office for National Statistics
 Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
 Scottish Executive
 Staffordshire County Council
 Strathclyde PTE
 Suffolk County Council
 Surrey County Council
 Transport for London
 Transport Statistics Users Group
 West Sussex County Council

Consultants

AEA Technology
 Babbie Group
 Cleary Hughes Associates
 Colin Buchanan and Partners
 Derek Done Associates
 The Emerson Group
 Halcrow Fox
 ITS Focus
 IRN Services LTD
 Marcial Echenique and Partners
 MVA
 Sandman Consultants
 Steer Davies Gleave
 URS Thorburn Colquhoun

Richard Butchart
 Dr Tony Green
 Tony Lucking
 Dr Kit Mitchell
 Tim Pharoah
 Stephen Plowden

