

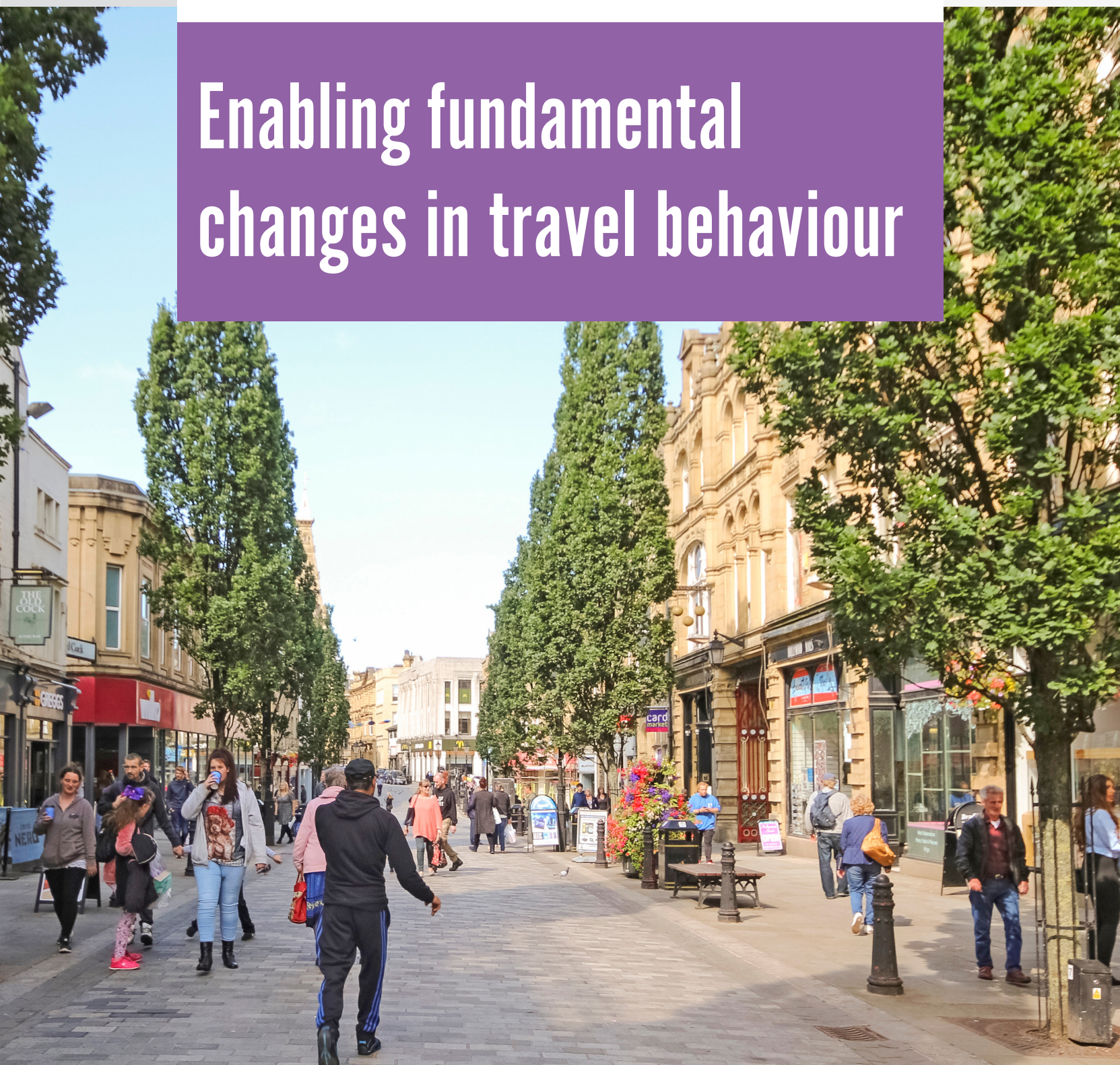


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Mobility Hubs

Enabling fundamental
changes in travel behaviour



This is the fourth instalment in a series of articles exploring the potential for Mobility Hubs to support enhanced access to transport in cities. The first three articles ([available here](#)) explored the importance of place, power and communications to the Mobility Hub concept. In this article we look closer at how Mobility Hubs could support behaviour change towards sustainable modes of transport.

➤ Mobility Hubs and behaviour change: a match made in heaven?

Mobility Hubs offer an exciting opportunity to bring together the latest technologies of urban mobility and design with the concepts of behavioural science and sustainable behaviour change. This is further enhanced by the clear shifts in behaviour trends as a result of societal and demographic changes, new technologies and by the impact of COVID-19, for example towards car usership versus ownership, and towards long-term remote/home working.

As well as improving transport cost and efficiency, a network of Mobility Hubs could also offer an opportunity

to radically change how transport users travel and move through their local environment. To do this Mobility Hubs will need to appeal and adapt to the needs of users, and support them in making decisions, quickly and effectively. This isn't easy, and requires consideration up front.

It is for this reason that Mobility Hubs of the future must have the concepts of behaviour change at their core: from the design stage through to development and well into their ongoing management.



Understanding how and why travel decisions are made

There are a [multitude of factors](#) that influence how we decide to travel¹. To understand them let's consider a scenario:

Let's imagine for example we wish to travel to the local supermarket, a distance too far to travel by foot, and are considering taking a bus.

First, we might consider the bus because we know the bus stop is within reasonable walking distance and today it appears to be a pleasant day outside: in behaviour terms this is a location and context preference.

Second, we might consider the walk to the bus stop to be beneficial for our health: this is an activity preference, in part formed by our own attitude to personal health and wellbeing.

Third and finally we consider the bus to be better for the environment, and we've also travelled on it before so have experience of the mode. This is a travel attitudinal preference which is formed in part by our perception and experience of the travel mode.

Altogether these three broad influencing factors go some way to influencing whether or not we take the bus, or choose another mode.

Of course, not all decision making is reasoned, or even conscious. Habits and impulses also play an important part in decision making: fight-or-flight reactions can and do ensure our safety or even our survival. But these responses can cloud our judgement, sometimes overriding reasoned decision. The Nobel Prize winning economist Daniel Kahneman termed these different modes of behaviour System 1 and System 2. System 1 is impulsive and automatic; System 2 is conscious and aware².

One of the most exciting aspects of the concept of Mobility Hubs is the opportunity to influence not only conscious decision making, but to support the breaking of old habits and the formation of new ones. In many ways this is the holy-grail of sustainable behaviour change.

1 Van Acker, V., van Wee, B. & Witlox, F. (2010). When Transport Geography Meets Social Psychology: Toward a Conceptual Model of Travel Behaviour. *Transport Reviews* 30(2), 219-240.

2 Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, fast and slow*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

3 Olander, F., Thøgersen, J. Understanding of consumer behaviour as a prerequisite for environmental protection. *J Consum Policy* 18, 345–385 (1995). <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01024160>

➤ Motivation, Opportunity, Ability

Could Mobility Hubs help to change travel behaviour?

For Mobility Hubs to be successful in creating new travel behaviours they will need to appeal to both systems of decision making. Not only will they need to influence rational decisions, they will also need to tackle habits that have formed over time by encouraging users to adapt and change their behaviour.

Fortunately models of behaviour change exist which can support and enhance the design of the Mobility Hubs of the future. The most widely adopted and easily understood model is the Motivation, Opportunity and Ability (MOA) framework proposed by Ölander and Thøgersen³.



At its core the MOA framework highlights three key concepts relevant to behaviour change:

MOTIVATION

Motivation describes an individual's willingness to act. This may include concerns over the environment, a desire to be healthier, or the ultimate economic factor: cost. Understanding what motivates present and future users of mobility hubs is an important step to grounding mobility hubs as a useful concept in the mind of the user.

OPPORTUNITY

Opportunity describes the context in which the individual is acting, and the factors that influence that context. A Mobility Hub brings together multiple modes providing greater accessibility and ease of use for those modes, e.g. breaking down barriers such as by reducing the distance to travel to jump on a bike instead of hail a taxi.

ABILITY

Ability describes a combination of the individual's awareness, knowledge, experience, and their access to information. Mobility Hubs can act as a source of information, guidance and support which can improve knowledge and awareness of sustainable forms of transport.

Changing modes is often cited as an area of dissatisfaction or frustration by travellers. Behaviour change interventions could be designed in Mobility Hubs to address this issue. For example, a Mobility Hub that encourages modal interchange to cycling or even walking could include information in the form of posters, on the health benefits of cycling (Motivation).

Flexible Mobility Hub infrastructure could mean users could be encouraged to move through spaces dedicated to information sharing (Opportunity), and stimuli could be designed to raise awareness and share knowledge of different services (Ability). How effective these methods are over the short and long-term must be explored through further research.

➤ Putting behaviour change front and centre

On the surface Mobility Hubs could simply be described as an interchange between modes, and in many ways that is their major function. But below the surface they offer much more than that. They provide a huge opportunity to not only improve key measures of transport efficiency and quality, but to also rethink and redesign core concepts of mobility services, improve digital connectivity, provide new logistics channels and act as conduits for vehicle to grid charging.

If developed effectively Mobility Hubs could help change behaviours beyond travel choices. By integrating and embedding behaviour change early in their design, Mobility Hubs can help to shift behaviours towards greener, cleaner and more sustainable forms of transport.



➤ START A CONVERSATION



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➤ OTHER PAPERS IN THIS SERIES

- # 1 – [Mobility Hubs – Introducing the concept](#)
- # 2 – [Mobility Hubs - The next generation](#)
- # 3 – [Mobility Hubs - It's all about connectivity](#)
- # 5 – London as a place to experiment (coming soon)



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