

Moving the Region Forward seminar – 27/01/2010,  
Centre for Sustainable Transport, University of Plymouth

# Business Attitudes Towards Transport

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West of England



Centre for  
Transport &  
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# Overview



- Introduction and an opening caveat
- Transport compared to other concerns



- Attitudes to specific transport issues
- Attitudes to alternative transport solutions and policies
- Conclusions



- Recommendations

# The voice of business(es)

"The CBI has put the cost to the British economy [of congestion] at around £15 billion every year"

*DfT (1998). A New Deal for Transport Better for Everyone, Transport White Paper.*

**BBC NEWS** **BBC NEWS CHANNEL** LIVE

Last Updated: Monday, 28 November 2005, 12:08 GMT

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## Spend more on transport, says CBI

The CBI has called on the government to spend an extra £1bn on transport over the next two years, claiming delays are hitting output and stressing-out staff.

The business leaders' group wants the cash spent on road and rail projects, and demanded a £60bn injection to take spending in the next decade to £300bn.

Transport delays mean staff often arrive late for work

A CBI survey of 1,000 firms and individual workers revealed "widespread dissatisfaction" with the UK's transport infrastructure.

# Straw poll

“I find traffic congestion a significant problem”

AGREE

UNSURE

DISAGREE

“The organisation I work for / study at finds traffic congestion a significant problem”

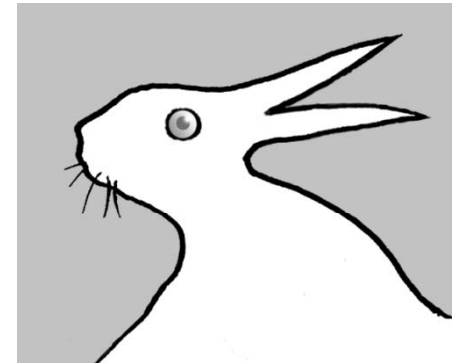
AGREE

UNSURE

DISAGREE

# Caveat – beware ambiguity

- It may not be clear what is meant by 'business thinks that...'
- Individuals can express their individual views
- Does a corporate body with (primarily) commercial objectives have a single view and how can this be captured?



# Our study

- Commissioned by the DfT – published at end of 2009  
<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/scienceresearch/social/businessattitudes/knowledgereview/>
- Intended to complement a similar public attitudes review
- Just over 150 articles identified after searches and direct enquiries with some 30 organisations
- Some 100 articles thoroughly examined
- Studies commissioned by BCC and IoD notable

# Study aims

- Understanding of relative importance of transport issues
- Priority concerns regarding, and requirements from, transport
- Consider the robustness of the evidence

NOTE: views expressed in our presentation do not necessarily reflect those of the DfT

# The relative importance of transport compared to other concerns



# Transport is not top of mind

Biggest Obstacles to Business Success	%
Competition in the market	15
Regulations	14
Taxation, VAT, PAYE, National Insurance, business rates	12
The economy	10
Cash flow	10
Recruiting staff	6
Shortage of skills generally	4
Availability / cost of suitable premises	4
Obtaining finance	3
No obstacles	2
Shortage of managerial skills/expertise	1
No opinion	2

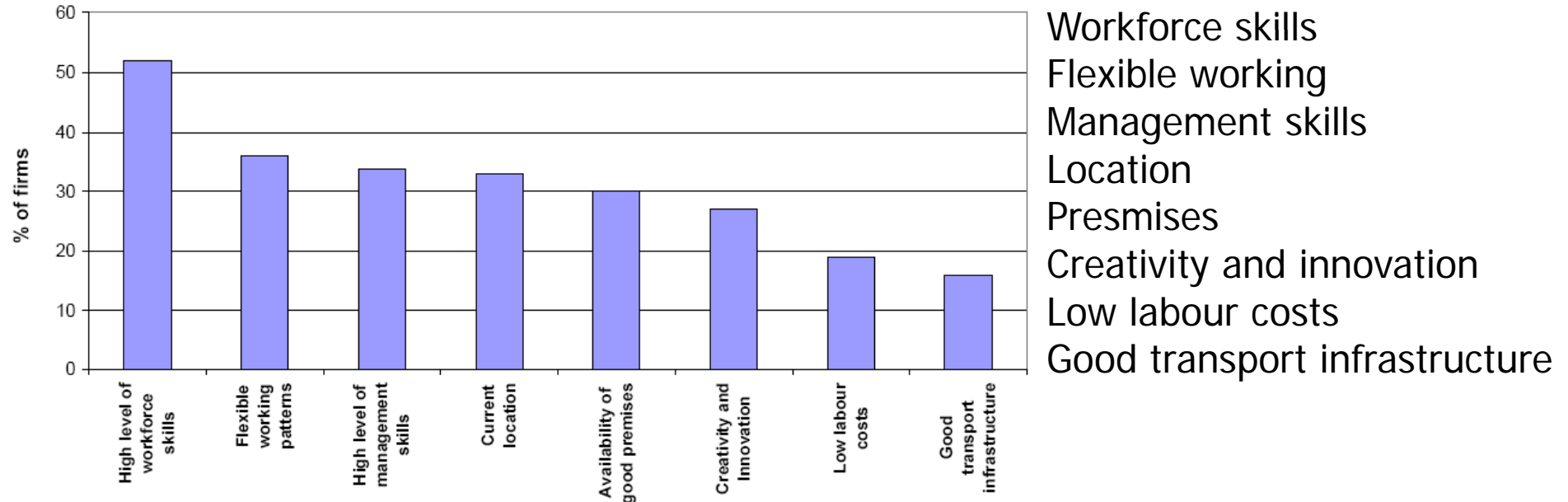
Base: All SME employers (weighted data); unweighted N- 8949

Just 24 mentions of transport

Department for Business Enterprise & Regulatory Reform  
Annual Small Business Survey 2006-7  
(businesses with 250 or fewer employees)



# When transport is raised...



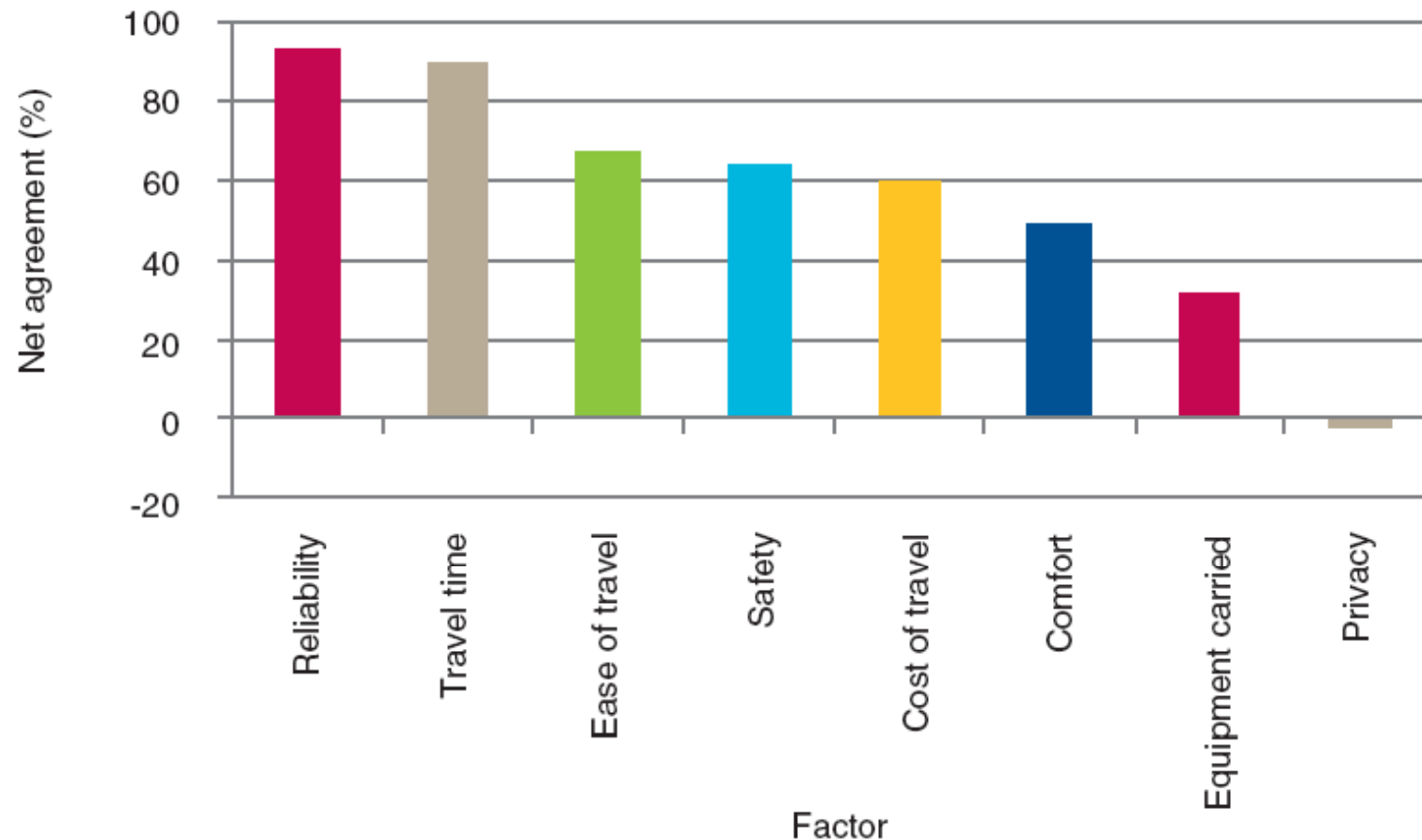
*"Which factors do you see as contributing most to your organisation's competitiveness at present?"*  
[unclear whether multiple responses allowed]

Survey of regional economic trends, Yorkshire Forward, 2007 – sample of 1840 organisations

# Prompts for relocation versus factors in relocating

- Main reasons for a business considering relocation include: expansion, need for new/better premises, lease up for renewal/ rental costs, consolidation of multi-site operations
- **Transport appears not to be seen as a direct prompt** for relocation; however its significance for such things as access to staff, supplies and clients should be noted
- Suggested that transport can (directly) represent only a small proportion of an organisation's costs
- When relocating transport provision is more likely to be a consideration – 59% of BCC respondents in 2008 agreed or strongly agreed that "*the UK's transport infrastructure is a major influence on our decision on business location*"

# Factors affecting business travel choices

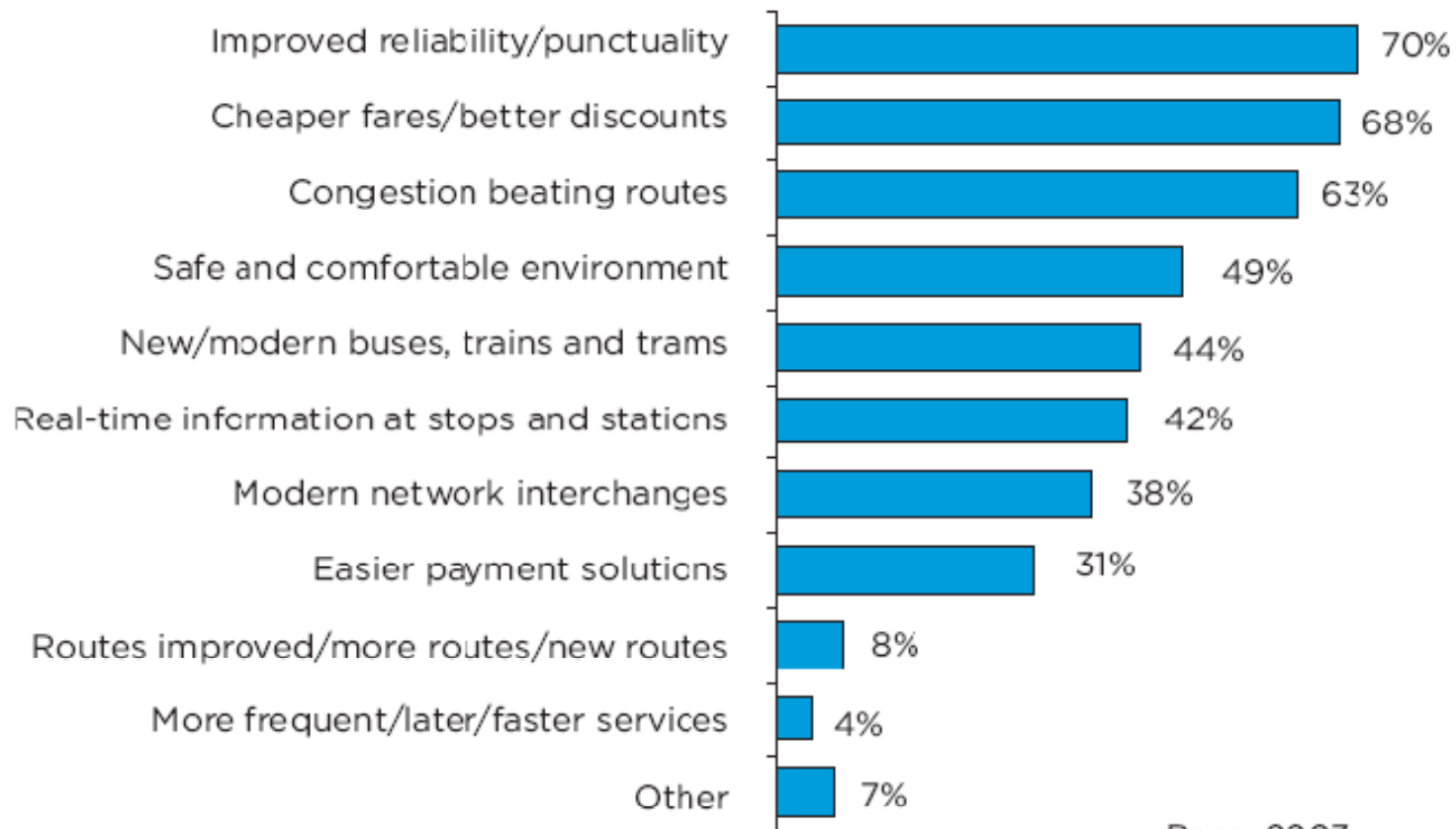


Important considerations for business travel mode choice  
2007 RAC/BCC study of business travel (n=409)

# Factors affecting business travel choices

*"Which of the following would be most likely to attract you and your colleagues/employees to use the public transport network more often?"*

2008 BCC transport survey (n=2203)



Base: 2203

# Attitudes to specific transport issues

# “Over 80% of businesses feel there is a problem with road congestion” (BCC)

*“How significant do you think the problem of road congestion is for your business locally, regionally and nationally?”*

Locally congestion for my business is...			
	2006	2007	2008
Not a problem at all	16	15	15
Somewhat of a problem	42	37	40
A significant problem	42	48	45

BCC transport surveys

# Main causes of congestion

Perceived causes of congestion...	...on local roads		
	2006	2007	2008
School run	*	89	87
Sheer volume of traffic throughout the day	72	51	52
Poor road design and planning	53	51	49
Lack of alternatives	*	50	48
Poor driving behaviour	*	47	44
Road accidents	17	16	16
Roadworks	50	*	*
Congestion not a problem	2	*	*
Other problems	6	8	10

*“What do you think are the main causes of congestion on local roads, A Roads/Trunk Roads, and motorways?”*

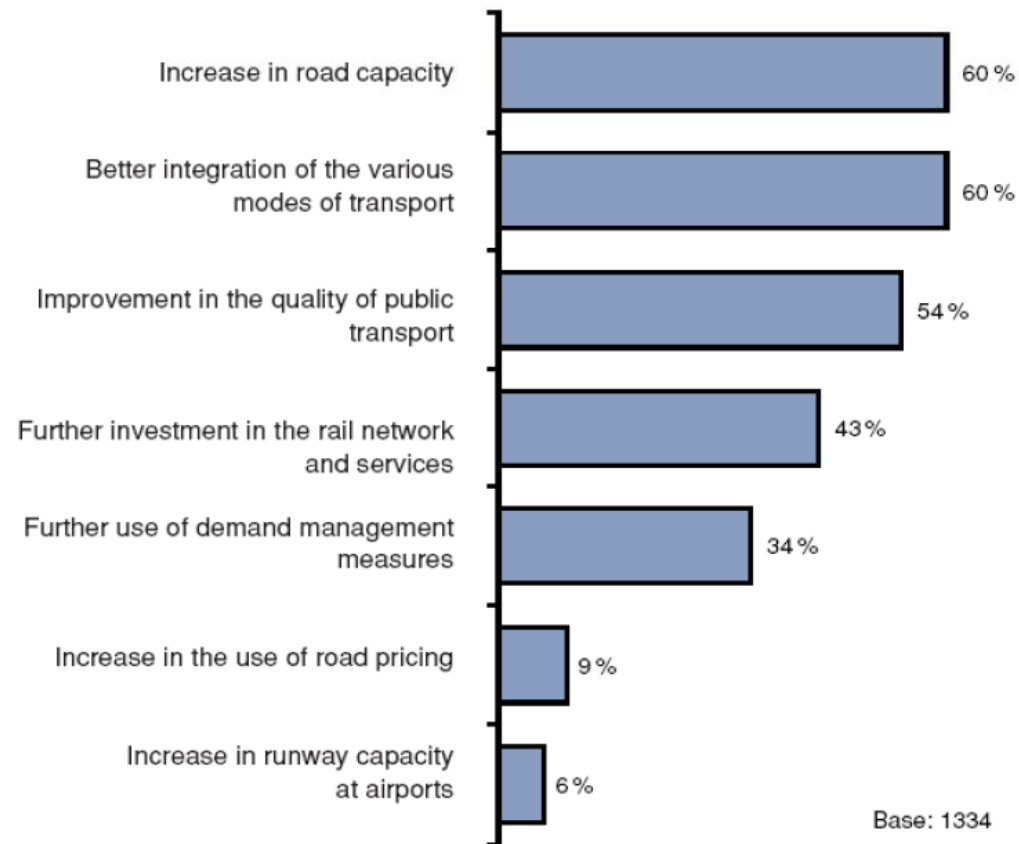
BCC transport surveys - shaded cells denote response categories not available for survey year concerned



# Attitudes to alternative transport solutions and policies

# Business wants more roads (?)

*“Which of the following transport solutions do you think most favour your business?” TICK NO MORE THAN 3*



BCC 2006 transport survey

# Strong (~80%) but conditional support for road pricing (?)

*“The Government’s road pricing initiatives include toll roads, congestion charging, pay per mile, etc. Which of the following, if any, do you consider to be the main circumstances under which you would support the principle of road pricing? (PLEASE TICK NO MORE THAN 3)”<sup>24</sup> (% of respondents selecting each circumstance)*

	2006	2007	2008
If significant improvements are made to public transport prior to the introduction of road pricing	41	42	39
If it replaces fuel duty	46	32	36
If money raised from road pricing is put directly into improving public transport	34	34	35
If it replaces road tax	42	31	32
If road capacity is significantly improved as a result	35	29	31
If it is used to reduce congestion	39	32	29
If it does not add administrative burdens to businesses	29	18	22
Would not support under any circumstances	13	22	22
Base:	1348	2568	2442

# Conditional support for road pricing (?)

IoD 2004:

“56% of businesses would support the introduction of widespread road pricing on motorways and major routes, on a revenue-neutral basis, with the revenues raised being used for extra transport capacity”

# Problems of interpretation

## ■ *Who* is speaking exactly?

Not the CEO, not the shareholders; mostly level of seniority not reported, mostly process of determination not known; sometimes a coordination body

## ■ Little attention to variance between businesses, and hardly any to variance within businesses

e.g. human resources might be more concerned with effects of commuting on employees; fleet managers concerned with deliveries; sales perhaps concerned with visitors...

# Problems of information

No tradition of the norms of research reporting –

- Sample characteristics and representativity
- Survey design – piloting, qualitative phase..
- Exact wording of questions (questionnaire rarely included)
- Analytical methods
- Evidence trail from data to conclusions
- Authorship and responsibility
- Peer review
- Caveats

# Business attitudes similar to public attitudes?

- Under half much bothered by congestion (more for 'the country' than 'us')
- Reliability more important than speed
- Conditions for road pricing
- Public transport seen as of greater importance than 'expected'

BUT

- Transport concerns less ubiquitous, more specialised
- Road building possibly more supported
- Less direct concern over issues of equity, environment, health, social welfare

# Recommendations

- For there to be confidence in the voice of business the foundation for expression of view must be robust, meaningful and transparent
- There is a role for Government in taking a proactive stance to improve standards in evidence
- The meaning of a 'business attitude' is at the heart of the matter
- We need to understand through exploratory research how businesses respond to consultation that leads in turn to an apparent collective voice



# Recommendations

## Survey design

- Understanding how an organisation has prepared its response
- Piloting/testing and preceding qualitative research
- Standardised key indicators such as size, sector and region
- Value of open-response questions

## Analysis and reporting

- Make clear exact wording of questions and response options
- Sample characteristics and potential biases should be clear
- More cross-tabulations and transparency of variance
- Consider peer-review of reporting