

YHTAR Focus

Newsletter of Yorkshire and the Humber Transport Activists' Roundtable

Issue 17, March 2005

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YHTAR Transport Symposium
"Where will Regional Transport be by 2020?"
Saturday 16th April
SEE LEAFLET FOR DETAILS

This issue of YHTAR Focus has kindly been sponsored by First Group.



Healthy and Sustainable Travel

Former YHTAR Chair Pam Ashton reviews the recent White Paper.

There is absolutely no dispute about the fact that transport and health are closely connected. It is sad therefore that the public health White Paper "*Choosing Health – Making Healthier Choices Easier*" published in November 2004 makes so little difference to the current situation where people can continue to make all their journeys by unhealthy unsustainable modes without regard to the damage they are doing to their own health and that of the planet.

For those who still need some ammunition when discussing the above I have summarised below my presentation to the first Shipley Seminar on Transport, organised by YHTAR. (for further details see www.yhtar.org.uk/seminar)

How Travel Mode Affects Health

- Physical activity
- Mental health
- "Accidents" (crashes)
- Air quality (respiratory and heart disease)
- Congestion and economic effects
- Climate change

It promotes health by giving access to health promoting facilities such as leisure centres, the countryside, healthy food and healthcare –

7% of people without cars say they have missed, turned down, or chosen not to seek medical help over the last 12 months because of transport problems.

Lack of access to transport is experienced disproportionately by older people and people from low income groups, especially those living in rural areas. This lack of access to transport means, in effect, lack of access to health promoting opportunities such as exercise, healthy food and health services. The Acheson report recommended subsidised fares for pensioners and low-income groups throughout the country.

It damages health through motor vehicle emissions, crashes, production of greenhouse gases leading to climate change, severance of communities, car dependency leading to inactivity and stress resulting from congestion and aggression

Physical Activity and Active Transport

Coronary heart disease is among the biggest killers in this country. More than 1.4 million suffer from angina. 300,000 have heart attacks every year. More than 110,000 die of heart problems in England every year.

But the effects of heart disease are unequal: among unskilled men the death rate is almost three times

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Climate Change and Transport - confronting the policy challenge

Anthony Rae reflects on an issue that can no longer be ignored

After a little behind-the-scenes tussle, a pre-consultation RSS Draft topic paper on climate change was included in the set of papers on which the Regional Assembly have been consulting (closing date 25th February). In view of the intrinsic importance of the subject, and the obvious relationship between climate changing emissions and transport, this paper is a priority for the TAR.

So, what does the topic paper propose in order to manage this relationship, and start to reduce transport emissions? The general proposal is that:

"... there will be a policy equivalent to S5, and that other policies (such as those listed in paragraph 7 above) that can address climate change causes and effects will be clearly identified and taken forward."

Policy S5 in turn states that:

"Local and regional authorities and agencies and others should: a) include policies and proposals in their development plans, local transport plans, strategies and investment programmes to help reduce the Region's greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20% below 1990 levels by 2010 and by at least 25% below 1990 levels by 2015. ..."

And paragraph 7 says about transport:

"Other Policies in current RSS aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions or plan for successful adaptation to the effects of climate change ... by various measures including: - reducing the need to travel (T1, T2, T3, T5 and T6)".

So far, so good. But let's start by noticing that, omitted from this list of transport policies to be considered, are Policies T9 Improvements to the highway network (which determines the approach to expansion or not of major roads); T10 Airports (well, what a surprise!); and T11 Transport investment and management priorities (which determines which schemes will not just be supported for investment, but can be positively included in subsequent local development frameworks, and now with statutory backing). T4 freight transport, T7 transport in rural areas and T8 tourism related transport measures are also omitted

These exclusions are significant, and we have drawn attention to them in the TAR's consultation response. Why was it that some of the Regional

Transport Strategy (RTS) policies were identified as relevant to climate change, and others - including the one which will bring about the greatest potential increase in emissions: aviation - not?

Then we have some other interesting parts of the regional policy context. The draft Regional Climate Change Action Plan on the one hand suggests consideration of "regional targets to reduce growth in road and air traffic; targets also for introducing alternative fuels and improving efficiency; and a commitment to ensure that new transport infrastructure is climate proofed."

The report on 'sustainability and transport' prepared for the Assembly's Sustainability Commission by SDG states on the other hand:

"As the economy grows and matures, there is little scope to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with the targets set in S5. If we accept that growth in travel demand is an inevitable consequence of economic growth, greenhouse gas emissions from transport are highly unlikely to reduce and are likely to rise, even with optimisation of modal choice and use of existing infrastructure. However, transport is only one source of GHG emissions and regional policies need to press ahead with promoting the reduction of emissions from other sources particularly if the current 'predict and provide, but manage' approach to surface and air travel demand is maintained".

You might think that this conclusion, from a distinguished transport consultant, misses a series of points and indeed their report has not (yet) been accepted by the Commission.

Finally, the government has not helped, because the detailed PPS11 guidance on preparing RTS's makes no reference to tackling climate change.

This is the confused policy context which the TAR must seek to influence in the right direction over the next year. But will the region's policy makers rise to the challenge?

To read our detailed response to the climate change and transport topic papers visit the YHTAR RSS Portal Webpage.

**Visit YHTAR's RSS Portal Webpage
at:**

www.yhtar.org.uk/rss

The Northern Way—Reality or Illusion?

John Hoare adds some comments to those made by Anthony Rae in the last "Focus" about the transport elements in "the Northern Way".

My reaction on reading the document was that I had never seen so ambitious a wish list for transport infrastructure in my life in an official production. At the present miserly rate of funding provision, there must be at least a century of work!

The list appears to set out to please everybody (and therefore nobody?) by including all favourite projects, including ones that cannot be regarded as of inter regional significance, like the Gateshead western by-pass.

As the Northern Way is supposed to deal with those areas where co-operation between the regions adds value and achieves mutual benefits, surely only transport projects which link two or more regions together or improve links with the wider world (like the East Coast Main Line) should logically be included. On this basis, the improvement of the East - West connections from the Humber ports across the Pennines, which I believe are regarded by the majority of members of our regional transport forum as the number one priority, should also be number one for the Northern Way.

Unlike the freight gauging paper recently produced by the SRA, which seems not to recognise congested tracks or west-east needs, we should be pressing for one or two railway lines to be promoted for passengers - a North and South Trans Pennine route - and a different line for freight, to be upgraded to continental high-cube container dimensions as soon as possible. Looking at the map, it can be done with very little need for freight to share tracks with express passenger services.

The danger of the illusion of the long list is that there is no certainty as to which projects will be promoted, no indication of priorities and there are elements which TAR members will oppose strongly. However, it is Yorkshire Forward who are leading initially on this aspect of the Northern Way so we know who to talk to.

I agree with Anthony that it is the references to airports that are the most controversial; not least in the way they follow the Government's White Paper in undermining all efforts to tackle climate change. And, frankly, Manchester Airport needs no outside assistance! I accept that air has to be the means of long-distance international transport, at least for people, and departure for this purpose from Yorkshire airports which can service such flights will reduce car mileage, but it is nonsense to promote totally unsustainable internal flights within Britain when such

journeys should be by rail. Additionally the notion that every airport should be surrounded by seemingly unchecked development is an anathema to most planners. There is no justification for promoting all airports, when one of ours at least is in a totally unsustainable location.

I thought we might have a better idea after the "Delivering Sustainable Communities" summit of the likelihood of particular projects been taken forward, but little certain has emerged. What does seem more than possible is that Manchester (and Leeds?) will be offered a significant proportion of the cost of tramline extension or construction provided that they introduced demand management measures, probably congestion charging, in the city centre. Neither of these cities can really make the claim that they will be disadvantaged competitively by making such a move.

On another issue, it is clear that, regardless of the referendum result in the North East, more power is to be devolved to the regions and we must be aware of the opportunities and challenges thus presented.

It looks as though it will not be laid down how the region handles this opportunity, but actual or notional budgets for economic development, housing and transport are to be presented and, at the least, the region will have to convert its transport wish-list into ordered priority and advise the government accordingly. While the idea is that these three fields of activity need to be considered in parallel, so that, for example, no proposals in economic development or housing are made without considering first whether the locations are (or can be) adequately served by transport infrastructure and services, actual shifting of funding between them is unlikely to be considered early. We have enough problems demonstrating the cost effectiveness (in government terms) of moving spending from one mode of transport to another! One virtual certainty is that something resembling a Regional Transport Board is likely to be the vehicle of carrying out that aspect of the work.

Pity Poor Bradford

YHTAR Co-ordinator Ray Wilkes discusses transport policy issues in Bradford.

In a recent Telegraph and Argus article (19th October 2004) West Yorkshire's public transport bosses recently admitted "We've got to do better" as figures showed 70% of Bradford commuters travel to work by car. In a more recent edition (8th February 2005) the Parking Services manger crowed about Bradford's parking being the cheapest in Yorkshire cities - £2.20 for a full day and less than the return bus fare. No link has been made between cheap parking and the crippling congestion which is throttling the city's commercial life and wrecking its residents' health with air pollution, a sedentary lifestyle and too many crashes.

The city is among the worst in the UK for the highest drive-to-work figures, compiled by the Office for National Statistics and covering 24 cities. It is also the heart disease capital of Europe.

London, where only 23% drive to work, was the only city in the survey where more than half of commuters use public transport. In Oxford 34% drive to work, in York 54% - public transport share is less than half in these cities because the active travel share is 25%. Bradford shared the 70% car commuting with Cardiff, Lincoln, Worcester, Belfast and Stevenage.

The article ended with warnings of gridlock in the city unless the Government puts more money into bus and train services.

More money? But Bradford has an excellent new bus and rail interchange, a fairly new station at Forster Square, a guided busway, good to excellent bus stop infrastructure, quite a few miles of bus lanes, and the superb Airedale & Wharfedale electric trains. So why are the figures so poor, compared with Oxford and London which have poor bus stations and no guideways?

The answer is that London, Oxford, York, Brighton and a few other places which are doing better than Bradford have some sort of demand management and they have good enforced bus priority.

Importantly, cyclists and pedestrians have much higher priority. Our speaker from Oxford at the Shipley Sustainable Transport Seminar wondered how Bradford's pedestrians survived!

In Bradford, cyclists and pedestrians are at the bottom of the heap, so their combined modal share is a measly 2%, compared with York and Oxford's 25%. Like most West Yorkshire bus and main rail

stations, Bradford Interchange is surrounded by a 'ring of steel' in the form of busy high speed roads (they are not supposed to be high speed, but they are). Cyclists and pedestrians are terrorised into using a car if they have one, even when active travel would otherwise be the quickest and healthiest choice.

Meanwhile cheap and plentiful parking creates a massive car inflow which makes buses unreliable and give a poor rate of return, so to balance the books high frequency services finish too early for modern commuters and Sunday services are poor. Bus lanes are often blocked with stationary cars so a 15 minute schedule will often take up to an hour. 'First Bradford' and 'Keighley & District', the local bus companies, have invested heavily in new low floor easy access buses, and the government has given money to Metro for raised kerbs. But this investment is largely wasted as there are no bus stop clearways and with so many cars parked at bus stops, less able people are nearly as badly off as in bad old days of rear entry buses.

Small wonder so many people 'choose' to use a car. *More money?* Yes please! But it needs to be spent wisely and the government should insist that in return for the next tranche of money we get real bus priority, demand management and the placing of active travellers at the top of the road user hierarchy, not just in theory but in practice. Then the value of the previous substantial investment will be unlocked, giving Bradford better health, fewer road casualties and the low congestion levels needed to attract inward investment.

Bradford could be a lovely city: it has lovely parks, extensive natural woods, heather clad hills, fine buildings and great people. This great and important city deserves much better than being sacrificed to unsustainable and outdated transport policies!

Meanwhile how is sustainability faring in the rest of West Yorkshire? We have had lots of money spent on meetings, reports, studies; enough money spent perhaps to keep rural transport going for a millennium.

But will we get delivery? Do not hold your breath. Perhaps we can use the piles of reports to strengthen our sea defences!

LATE NEWS: WYPTE, the local police and district councils are going to have a month long clampdown on bus lane blockers.

What's happened to Sheffield's Buses?

Simon Geller offers a personal view of developments in Sheffield

The bus service in Sheffield used to be the envy of the UK and beyond. An intensive network of cream coloured Corporation buses got the city's population to work and play, at prices so low it was cheaper to get the bus than cycle, let alone use a car, appropriately in a city with a low car ownership. Of course it wasn't just Sheffield - the whole of South Yorkshire benefited. A trip to Derbyshire was highly affordable with a fare to Fox House of under 10p – once past the border fares rose considerably.

The Rush Hour was unknown – well, there was a bus rush hour, with fleets of buses ready to get people home, and although the first bus was frequently full, there was always another one coming along. A night bus service ran until the early hours – double fares, but still not very much and a lot cheaper than a taxi.

The “Bible” – a single book with every bus and rail timetable in South Yorkshire, not much bigger than the PDA I now use to check train times and available from the office next to the goldfish tank in the Hole in the Road (some people claim that the goldfish are still down there, swimming around in the dark while the trams rumble overhead) was a “must have” for South Yorkshire folk.

There was a downside of course. The buses were inaccessible to disabled people and parents with pushchairs – the revolution in folding pushchairs, which now seems to have turned into the buggy equivalent of the 4x4, had not yet happened. Woe betide you if you turned up at the bus stop a second after the driver had closed the doors, and if the drivers went on strike, as they did frequently after a cohort of Southern lefties turned up in the seventies and attempted to “radicalise” the workforce, the whole city came to a standstill. Occasionally the Chamber of Commerce, ignoring the benefits of not having to pay workers the costs of commuting to work by car, would whinge about the cost of the system, subsidised out of business and residential rates.

Nevertheless, in the main the system worked, Sheffield prided itself on being one of the cleanest industrial cities in the world and transport was not an issue for the workforce in terms of cost and convenience.

So what happened? As the seventies turned into the eighties, with the “winter of discontent” a recent

memory (Sheffield really did grind to a halt that year) and the Tories ensconced in Westminster, someone called Ken Livingstone started getting up Mrs Thatcher's nose. As leader of the GLC, as well as posting London's unemployment figures on a huge banner on County Hall, opposite the Houses of Parliament, he brought in the Fare's Fair policy on London's public transport system, very similar to South Yorkshire. Some of the outlying boroughs in London objected to helping to pay for a scheme that benefited everyone in the area and the Law Lords ruled it illegal. The writing was on the wall for cheap fares schemes throughout the UK.

With the metropolitan boroughs abolished, the bus companies fell into private hands, a victim of monetarism. Former council leader and recently elected MP David Blunkett wrote a poignant piece for the Guardian bemoaning the loss of the highly successful South Yorkshire public transport “experiment”.

South Yorkshire Transport continued as a worker-owned co-operative, but fares rose considerably, and conductors became a thing of the past. That inevitably meant that journey times became ever-longer as drivers took fares and gave change, and the gradual increase in traffic exacerbated the problem. Bus patronage went into decline, and car use started to rise considerably. Cycling suffered too as the roads became ever more congested and dangerous, and as people got straight in their cars instead of walking to and from the bus stop, health suffered. Air pollution started to rise.

With the PTE unable to interfere with bus services, they turned their attention to Community Transport and rail. The Supertram system started to emerge, a competitor to existing services rather than an integrated part of the whole. The Council, slow to respond at first and with problems of its own, started to put in bus and cycle lanes – not needed before – and the modern street scene of coloured tarmac and blue signs everywhere started to emerge

When New Labour came to power, many fine words were said about reversing the decline in Public Transport, with John Prescott talking about “From workhorse to racehorse”. There were some signs of hope for the future. In Heeley, where I live, the council entered into a partnership with the bus operator whereby bus priority measures and an

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improved service, with accessible buses, were put in place.

However, policy and ideas continued to move on. The idea of a Quality Bus Partnership, piloted elsewhere, took on. This is not dissimilar to the franchise system on the railways, whereby a private operator guarantees a level of service in exchange for a subsidy. This system has seen passenger numbers on the railway rise exponentially. In the bus world the key inputs from the Local Authority are bus priority measures.

A QBP has now been set up in North Sheffield – the knock-on effect, however, has been that services in South Sheffield have suffered. The Heeley service I mentioned above is an example – with no obligation on the part of the operator to stick to its side of the bargain, the 20 minute daytime service became half-hourly, and the half-hourly evening service became hourly, with the last bus now too early for a drink after the theatre or cinema. With the buses running a longer route, punctuality has declined and services are often missing entirely. By a miracle of timetabling, instead of four buses an hour, two of which arrived at the same time, we now have three an hour, two of which...you guessed it!

The buggy-friendly buses have been sent elsewhere and older, non-accessible buses are being used. Traffic levels locally are rising again, and as the buses get caught up in it journey times increase, and so the spiral of decline starts again. The lesson

must be that we need the same standards of service throughout the city.

The City Council conducted a survey of bus users shortly after the QBP was introduced, and the results came as no surprise to watchers of the PT scene. 86% of respondents said that recent changes had been for the worse. Of course people take time to adapt for change – in the changes to Heeley bus services I mentioned above, one alteration that should be welcomed is that the bus now goes to the interchange instead of through town, convenient for the railway station which is where I'm usually heading when I get the bus, but of course I now find it inconvenient when I'm heading for the city centre – but even so, with this level of dissatisfaction the council has to take action. The bus operators certainly don't seem to have the best PR advice available to them and have not convinced the people of Sheffield that the changes are for the better – they need to work a lot harder to get public support behind them.

So, it seems we will soon reach full circle, with regulated bus services throughout the city. The only difference will be that the services will be run by a private operator that has to make a profit. Coupled with on-street bus priority measures and the benefits that technology can bring let's hope we can eventually go "back to the future" and have the Public Transport system that the UK's fourth largest city deserves.

Northern Railways - A Second Beeching in the Pipeline?

Colin Speakman highlights issues of concern on the railways.

Barely had the ink been allowed to dry on the new Northern Rail franchise before press and television reports revealed that the Strategic Rail Authority is about to appoint a team of consultants with a brief to find ways of drastically cutting costs of operating that very franchise. If reports are to be believed options may range from closing the whole network down, to cutting services, raising fares, closing stations and even entire lines.

Suddenly we are back in the 1960's, the years of Dr Beeching and the notorious "Cooper Brothers Formula" which forced even a more caring Labour Government to close such important routes as the Carlisle to Edinburgh Waverley route, the Malton to Whitby line and the Keswick branch by loading the

marginal costs of operating a country railway with massive imaginary overheads.

This time the costs that horrify the Treasury are the direct results of a botched privatisation which resulted in a rich bonanza for consultants, private track maintenance contractors (some of whom now face manslaughter charges post-Hatfield), financial advisers and lawyers, with former rail staff having to be hired back by Network Rail for as much as £500 per day. There are stories of how rolling stock companies have made £8 million profit out of a 20 year old, life-expired Pacer train which cost, in British Rail days, £800,000 to build.

But in the inverted world of the Department for Transport, where money spent on railways is

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“subsidy” but on roads and airports is “investment”, it is easier for bureaucrats to try to save money by cutting the system than dealing with the problem of rip-off contracts and a grotesque waste of resources.

Ominously, the removal of Regional Rail Passenger Committees and their replacement by a single London-based Passenger Council, and the measures to weaken the ability of Passenger Transport Executives to specify levels and quality of service, would appear to pave the way for the anti-rail accountants of the DfT to carry out a hatchet job, no doubt soon after an election to allow the anger to dissipate before politicians have to face their local communities.

We could all draw up our own lists of local lines which face the axe, not just in terms of service levels but perhaps withdrawal of all services. Among these could be the Wakefield-Pontefract line, the York-Selby, the Pontefract-Goole, the Leeds-Brighouse, the Wakefield-Huddersfield, and perhaps even the York-Harrogate, Hull-Scarborough and the Skipton-Lancaster lines.

Middlesbrough-Whitby and the Penistone lines might survive temporarily by becoming Community Railways, with funding reduced to a minimum and DfT cynics happy to see the experiment fail. Even lines that do survive may lose evening and Sunday services making the total journey less attractive if there's no return train at the end of a day or at weekends. Rising fares, deliberately to “choke off demand” will hit local train services especially hard, as people on lower incomes, not just wealthy commuters, are priced away from the train, increasingly to the highly polluting domestic airlines or ever more congested motorways. So-called replacement buses last on average around 3 months as rail travellers rapidly transfer to cars or don't travel at all rather than face slower, less comfortable trips in identical traffic jams.

Yet, outside in the real world, locally as well as nationally, rail travel is booming. Passenger levels are at a record high, but instead of investment in new services and facilities, the mean little men of Whitehall want to cut back on services, forcing us to travel on inadequate, overcrowded rolling stock whilst switching investment to roads and airports. Running down the railways is a process of deliberate public dis-investment which will make our region a less attractive place to work, travel to or live in. Rail cut-backs will hit poorer parts of our

region especially hard.

The trouble with 1960's thinking in the 21st century is that it is totally ignorant of wider economic, social and environmental realities. Cannot a Government that once urged “joined up thinking” and had a sensible Ten Year Transport Plan, recognise that when Stephen Byers, ex-Transport Minister and now the Government's guru on global warming, warns that “Global warming is approaching a critical point”, running down our railways is a complete contradiction?

There's perhaps less than a decade left for mankind to dramatically reduce fossil-fuel burning in order to ensure that the human race survives into the 22nd century. So what does the DfT do? Cut fuel-efficient railways in favour of hugely polluting airports and motorways, no doubt to ensure that even more of us can indulge our fantasy for 4x4 and SUV gas guzzlers.

It would be funny if it was not so tragic. Faced with such blinkered stupidity and obduracy we, as individuals and organisations, can at least ensure that the unfortunate consultants, as and when they are appointed, actually consult with us before they pre-judge the true economic costs of transport. For example let's compare the costs of maintaining the Skipton-Morecambe line with the two horrific crashes on the parallel A65 that have occurred this year alone. DfT's estimates the “cost” to the public of a road fatality is £1.1 million, or a £2.2 million cost for that particular road over the last six weeks just in fatal crashes.

Secondly, let's remember we still live in a democracy. 2005 is election year. MPs all want our votes, all want to be re-elected. It is vital we get not just railways but all forms of sustainable transport high on election agendas. MPs need to understand that any major cutbacks in the Northern Rail network will be political suicide, when or wherever they occur.

Faced with the darkening clouds of a major environmental crisis facing the whole human race, supporting realistic alternatives - such as fully integrated public transport networks, cycling and walking - rather than encouraging profligate energy consuming travel habits, is no longer a marginal issue. It's not just about the economy - stupid. It is perhaps the most important single issue facing our society now and in the decade of the Northern Franchise ahead.

Report on the TUC Transport Seminar, York Railway Museum

Simon Geller reports on the seminar held on October 2004.

The Railway Museum has started to make a bit of name for itself as a conference venue, this being the second one I had attended within a couple of months, and I recommend it as a venue, there always being something to look at during lunch!

Steve Houghton, Deputy Chair of Yorkshire Forward, opened the proceedings. His central tenet was that development is a good thing regardless of how sustainable it is. To this end he celebrated "Sheffield Doncaster Rotherham Robin Hood Finningley Airport".

Trans-Pennine links were also seen as important, along with north-south routes. GNER was held up as an example of what can be done, but I was disappointed that the MML was not mentioned as being in need of investment.

The Leeds-Sheffield corridor is recognised as being very poor, and the new Nottingham-Leeds rail service (at present it is just Sheffield - Leeds, but I believe an extension to Nottingham is in the pipeline – much needed as an hourly Norwich-Liverpool service is just not good enough, is often crowded and doesn't run late enough to allow for a night out in Nottingham from Sheffield) is welcomed. Air transport development was seen as a good thing, along with ports & waterways, with the Humber Ports, although under-used, being a strong regional economic driver.

He felt that we need to consider strategic access to urban centres and long-term sustainability, but whilst recognising the need to get goods to market we must not forget local access, with transport a major key to employment and modal shift needed to relieve congestion.

So we need to define our regional transport priorities. I was disappointed that no mention of cycling and walking was made. We know that there is a north-south fiscal divide and aligning priorities is important. There was guarded approval of Prescott's "Northern Way" proposal. However it was felt that the government has lost its way on transport, and there could be no quick fix, sustained investment is needed.

The chair noted that the TUC had become concerned about transport, not before time one might think!

At this point we split into different seminar groups and I attended the workshop on railways for a sustainable region with Paul Salveson. ACORP, the Association of Community Rail Partnerships funded by the Strategic Rail Authority, the Countryside Agency and the Government, etc, is looking for union support. It's not all rural, including for example the Gospel Oak - Barking line in London.

Development should benefit all parts of the community. Rural poverty exists - along the Middlesborough - Whitby line 1/3rd of the community doesn't have a car. Rail benefits both the environment and the community, and encourages sustainable tourism.

There is a hierarchy of rail routes – rural lines feed to main corridors. They have a role to play in delivering park and ride. Matlock to Derby for example feeds in to MML services.

If the regional assembly is formed then it is to be hoped that they will support rural re-openings. Malton to Pickering is an example.

The award of the Northern Rail franchise to Serco Nedrail is encouraging given the success they have made of Merseyrail, although the franchise agreement does no more than support the status quo. There has been some speculation in the railway press that they may buy cheap trains from China to replace the much-hated Pacers, and ACORP has suggested that Pacers could be used to provide additional space for cycles on rural services by adding them on to other units.

There is however government unease about rising costs on the railway, which is inhibiting reopenings.

The PTE's are supportive and Woodhead is an example where re-opening would bring major benefits with possibilities for Channel Tunnel traffic, Sheffield – Manchester trains, piggyback Trans-Pennine truck traffic and local services. Indeed it seems likely that if the Woodhead line were to be re-opened it would be working to capacity from the outset as long as the feeding infrastructure was in place.

In the railways white paper PTE's are given enhanced powers. There will be 6 pilot schemes for community rail, at least one of which will be in the region. It should be stressed that these partnerships are not replacing paid staff with volunteers, but involve working with allies.

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Where will Regional Transport be by 2020?

Anthony Rae previews the issues to be considered at our RSS symposium on 16th April.

In January the Regional Assembly published six consultation papers on a variety of transport topics so that people could contribute to shaping the developing Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), and the Regional Transport Strategy that is an essential component of RSS. The selected topics were 'Freight', 'Strategic public transport', 'Public transport accessibility', 'Demand management', 'Aviation' and 'Transport investment priorities'.

Transport was the only area so sub-divided (even the Economy only got one paper), reflecting its importance, you might think; but has something also been missed: namely, an overview as to where we want to be in 2010 or 2020? So the bigger questions - how do we stop the forecast and continuing reduction in public transport patronage?; or reduce equally continuing traffic growth?; or the rise in transport emissions? - have not been brought together in one place, if at all. Important transport issues have also been missed out for consultation.

The RSS is bringing forward proposals for a changed spatial emphasis across the region, which will consequently have considerable transport implications. If Leeds is to be identified as the pre-eminent regional 'growth pole', at the centre of what is now called the 'Leeds City region', how will people get in and out of the city sustainably? The implications of promoting the continued economic growth of Leeds without dealing with the sustainable transport consequences of that growth are immense - and so far Leeds itself has not identified a convincing strategic response to this question, or been successful in securing the necessary levels of investment.

And do we want to be encouraging more and new commuter flows like this, or instead should we be promoting a more 'localised' and multi-polar pattern of economic and social activity, which would have reduced travel needs already built in? You will want to establish how your particular part of the region is going to fare under the RSS/ RTS proposals.

Looking at the topic papers individually, 'Freight' brings forward the detailed work identified in the regional freight strategy prepared by consultants last year, and if you want to look at this, you will find the link on the TAR's RSS webpage (along with

many others associated with RSS - www.yhtar.org.uk). Just looking at ports and waterways in particular - and with Grimsby/Immingham identified as the UK's single largest port, and with many other natural assets - it ought to be possible to consider removing some of the 'bottlenecks' to development, as long as this can be achieved sustainably.

With a title like 'strategic public transport' one might hope that this topic paper would grapple with the major problems of patronage decline, and revenue and capital funding, that are progressively marginalising public transport use. But it doesn't - instead consultants are preparing some kind of 'strategic framework' which will have an indirect relationship with these problems and real-world solutions - and also there is quite an overlap with the paper on 'public transport accessibility'. This is a real disappointment.

On 'demand management', the problem with the existing regional policy - with its voluntary menu of DM measures that could be adopted locally, but aren't - is: what is the target we are seeking to which achieve (traffic reduction, congestion reduction or emissions reduction?), and do we actually intend to implement a regional demand management strategy or not? These are vital questions, because if we don't go down a 'demand management' route, instead we go down the alternative 'let's invest very large sums of money (which we don't have) in increased infrastructure capacity' route - in other words, more roads - which is neither sustainable, or achievable. And in fact, that is precisely what the sixth topic paper on 'transport investment priorities' proposes. So this issue hits at the credibility of the entire RTS.

The TAR's views on the topic of the final paper (aviation) were set out in the last edition of *YHTAR Focus*, and do not need to be repeated here. And then of course there are all the other issues which the TAR would have wished to see a proper focus on, within an overall framework moving us towards transport sustainability: climate change, walking and cycling, safety, 'soft measures', and so on and on.

So our meeting at the Guildhall in York on 16th April, where you will be able to discuss all these issues with transport officers from the Regional Assembly, promises to be a lively and constructive gathering. Do come along to make your views known.

Trains or Planes? What's your choice?

Anthony Rae discusses East Coast Main Line Developments

The headline was promising: "High-speed rail line plan back on track. Alistair Darling has ordered his DfT officials to make a serious assessment of building a new high-speed rail line to carry passengers from London to Edinburgh in less than three hours. Previously, the £33 billion cost of the new link had been considered too expensive, but now the Transport Secretary has had a rethink about the cost and benefits of the 186mph north-south line".

But in fact it was a detail hidden in the text, surely based on DfT briefing, that was more important: "A £5bn upgrade of the East Coast main line could be abandoned in order to reinvest the cash in the new high-speed line". So instead of the upgrade of an actual rail line now, we have substituted the vague possibility of a brand new one, sometime in the distant future, maybe, never?

For two years the region has been awaiting a decision about ECML modernisation, and every few months the prospect of this vital regeneration investment has been slipping further away. Think back to 2001, with the SRA promising that "momentum [will be] maintained towards bringing the other elements of this massive engineering

project in on time".

Last year the TAR took the initiative in our Regional Assembly and asked the authorities to link up with the other ECML regions to mount a public and determined lobby to secure this vital scheme. Not just because rail is an environmentally sustainable mode, but equally for its economic benefits: linking the centres of Doncaster, Leeds, York and then Newcastle to the booming service sector of London and the SE is essential if regeneration is to flow to the North.

That is what the 'Northern Way Growth Strategy' is meant to be promoting; yet in September it could only manage two sentences of support (airports, on the other hand, got an entire chapter and a 'Northern Airports Priorities Plan'). And in the progress report proudly presented to the Deputy Prime Minister at the Sustainable Communities Summit this February as a promise of 'early action'?: absolutely nothing! Presumably from this Mr Prescott would conclude that we aren't bothered.

In a few months we will have a new, short life, ECML franchise ... and no plans for the infrastructure. But we will have an Airports Priorities Plan. Shouldn't the Government and regional authorities make up their mind: what's their choice ... trains or planes?

No Rail Connection for New Hull Docks Container Terminal

Tony Ross of Hull & East Riding Rail Users' Association highlights on issue of concern.

At the end of January, Alistair Darling, the Secretary of State for Transport, gave the go-ahead for a new £40 million container terminal to be built by Associated British Ports (ABP) at Hull Docks. Mr Darling over-ruled a planning inspector's recommendation to refuse permission. The planning inspector conducted a two-week public enquiry into ABP's application for a 'port revision order' in connection with the project in July 2003. The Secretary of State's decision is subject to a 28-day consultation period.

The Quay 2005 project will be built on reclaimed land to the south west of the former Hull & Barnsley Railway's Alexandra Dock, with deep-water riverside quays in the Humber. This means that large container ships will not have to negotiate locks.

Alexandra Dock is immediately to the west of

ABP Hull's chief asset – King George Dock, home of the existing Hull Container Terminal, the fully enclosed Hull Steel Terminal, bulk handling (including coal) and ro-ro facilities and of course the Hull base of P & O's North Sea Ferries.

Unfortunately, Quay 2005 will be situated immediately to the east of Victoria Dock Village, a private housing estate built in the 1990s on the site of the old North Eastern Railways dock that closed in 1970. During the public inquiry ABP stated that the new terminal was essential because it would make it easier for larger container vessels to visit the port. But residents claimed that the terminal would ruin the estate, hit property prices and increase traffic congestion.

There will be no rail connection to the terminal and the containers will all be transported by road. The former H & B rail connection into Alexandra Dock

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was already out of use before the dock closed in 1982. The dock reopened (minus rail link) in 1991 following an expansion in trade. There was an internal rail ex-H & B connection between Alexandra Dock and King George Dock but that was also taken out.

King George Dock is currently served by a 7-mile long, mostly single, low speed branch that runs from Hessle Road, to the west of Hull. Much of it is on the formation of the 'overhead' (no level crossings) ex-H & B line to Alexandra Dock, circling around the city to the north. From Southcoates, near Alexandra Dock, the branch follows the course of the ex-NER line to King George Dock. The branch is supervised by Hessle Road signal box. The western half of the branch is equipped with track circuits and colour light signalling. The eastern half is operated by the divisible staff system. This arrangement is a modernised variation of the old Victorian 'staff and ticket' signalling system for operating single lines.

Upgrades to the track, signalling and operations of the Docks branch have been an objective of Hull City's Local Transport Plan for a number of years. The recommendations of the Hull East-West Corridor Multi-Modal Study (HUMMS) issued in July 2002 included such an upgrade (improved rail freight connections to the Port), and better facilities within the Port to transfer goods between water and rail.

The planning inspector said "The (container terminal) scheme, in conflict with Government objectives, fails to make provision for the transport of containers by rail". He also said "The increase in heavy goods vehicle traffic that would be generated by the proposal would have to pass close to Hull city centre, with an increase in traffic congestion".

In response to these points, the Government said "Favouring the transfer of a proportion of freight from road to rail is a national aspiration the Secretary of State recognises may not be achievable for every scheme."

The A63 trunk road passes west to east through Hull towards the Docks just south of the city centre and then crosses the River Hull on Myton Bridge. The bridge is opened for river traffic when required. Castle Street is the city centre section west of the bridge. There are two road junctions, with traffic signals at each end of Castle Street, and pedestrian operated signals in between each end.

The main HUMMS recommendations involved

- an upgrade to an earlier Castle Street scheme with local access from a parallel side road
- a new Grade Separated Junction (GSJ) at the west end of Castle Street
- an improved junction at the east end of Castle Street to eliminate traffic signals and reduce traffic conflict
- a pedestrian 'land bridge' over Castle Street to replace the existing 'Pelican' crossings near the Hull Marina.

A road tunnel under Castle Street and under the River Hull was not recommended by HUMMS because of the severe civil engineering problems likely to be encountered and because of the very high cost. A shorter 'cut-and-cover' road tunnel under Castle Street (but not the river), not considered by HUMMS, is being promoted as the solution to the road traffic congestion problems.

During a recent Radio Humberside interview, Doug Morrison, ABP's Port Director for Hull and Goole, was asked why the containers from the new terminal could not be transported by rail. Mr Morrison's reply was that the rail infrastructure was inadequate.

The Hull City councillor responsible for transport has called on the Government to approve plans for the Castle Street congestion scheme in the wake of its Quay 2005 decision.

Councillor Gary Wareing said that roads around the docks would become even more congested if the Government did not now approve the 'cut-and-cover' scheme. Cllr Wareing said: "The Castle Street improvements are now more important than ever." The scheme also has the backing of local commerce and, it's believed, the Highways Agency. About 55,000 vehicles pass along Castle Street every day and the Government is being lobbied strongly to approve plans to build the 'cut-and-cover' tunnel.

It's not obvious how road traffic could be diverted during the construction of the scheme without massive disruption.

An upgrade to the infrastructure of the rail freight line to Hull Docks (and the restoration of a rail link between King George Dock and Alexandra Dock) seems as far away as ever.

Healthy and Sustainable Travel (Continued from page 1)

higher than it is among professionals.

The National Service Framework for Coronary Heart Disease says that by April 2002 health organisations will be able to demonstrate how they are dealing with promoting physical activity (among other things and as an employer, have developed 'green' transport plans and taken steps to implement employee-friendly policies)

Regular exercise, such as walking and cycling, can reduce the risk of coronary heart disease by half

The number of cyclists killed in road traffic crashes last year was 114. Deaths from coronary heart disease in the same year were around 150,000.

Cancer now affects 1 in 3 people during their lifetimes and 25% of all deaths each year are cancer-related. Regular physical activity reduces the risk of colon cancer by 50% and breast, endometrial and prostate cancer by about one third.

Six out of ten men and seven out of ten women are not active at the level recommended for health benefits. The recommended type and quantity of physical activity to enhance health is a minimum of 30 minutes moderate intensity activity on at least five days a week. Moderate intensity means expending 5 - 7.5 kcals per minute, which would equate to activities such as brisk walking for half an hour a day.

The Scottish Health Survey of 1998 revealed that young Scots, particularly girls, are also now taking less exercise. The amount of exercise taken by boys stays roughly steady through the childhood years, at 15 hours a week; girls only manage seven hours by the time they reach 14 or 15. Professor Marmot - "Taking the issue of obesity and exercise, it is not enough to say to people: 'you must take more exercise'. There is also the whole question about where that fits into people's lives. Are there sports facilities available, is it safe for people to ride bikes?"

Young people are also walking and cycling less, particularly to school. Data on school travel show that the proportion of 5-10 year olds being driven to school has increased from 22% in 1985/6 to 36 % in 1998/2000 with corresponding decreases in the proportions walking and cycling.

The average U.K. commuting journey, at 45 minutes, is the longest in Europe. Many people say

it is the most stressful part of their day.

Community Severance

People who live on main roads cross the road to visit a neighbour or friend many times less than those who do not.

Crashes

At 1.21 fatalities per 100,000 our child pedestrian casualty rate is the worst in Europe.

There is a five fold difference in traffic casualty rate (KSI) between children in social class 1 and those in social class 5

The number of cyclists killed in road traffic crashes last year was 114. Deaths from coronary heart disease in the same year were around 150,000.

The NHS spends £1.6 billion each year in treating injury. The total value to the country of avoiding a single road crash death is estimated at almost £900,000.

Air Quality and Pollution

Levels of pollutants in the passenger compartment of the car are higher than those in the air outside.

Motor vehicle emissions such as particulates, NO² and ground level ozone are important triggers of asthma attacks.

Particulates are responsible for bringing forward 8,100 deaths each year and creating an additional 10,500 hospital admissions for respiratory disease. *DH's Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants (COMEAP)*

Congestion and Economic Activity

The CBI estimates that traffic congestion costs businesses in the UK £20 billion per annum. It also causes 1.6 billion extra hours travelling each year.

Congestion in Britain is the worst in Europe. Traffic on Britain's roads has increased by over a third in the last twenty years. A similar rate of increase is forecast for the next twenty years. Motorway traffic has increased at more than eleven times the rate of motorway construction over the last decade. (The Bow Group)

The CBI, the Bow Group and campaigners for sustainable transport agree that journeys by private motor car are the problem

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Climate Change

The average British resident travelled over 6,800 miles a year in 1999/2001, an increase of five per cent since 1989/91. Car (including van and lorry) travel now accounts for 82 per cent of total annual mileage. Energy consumption by transport was 55 million tonnes of oil equivalent in 2001 - this represented 34 per cent of all UK energy.

UK emissions of carbon dioxide - the main greenhouse gas causing climate change - are higher now than they were in 1997, when Labour first came to power, according to provisional Government estimates. The figures suggest Labour will struggle to meet its promise of cutting 1990 carbon dioxide levels by 20 per cent by 2010.

The effects of climate change include an increase in turbulent weather (storms and high intensity precipitation). This leads to power outages, damage to infrastructure and flooding

Cycling is close to being an ideal form of exercise.

- It is Aerobic – it uses major muscle groups (in the legs) and causes the heart rate and respiration to increase in order to supply the muscles
- It is low weight bearing – because the cycle takes the weight of the body off the legs much less pressure is exerted on the joints than in running for example. Cycling is therefore a good form of exercise for people with joint problems
- Cycling is a low skill activity – (by contrast with ballet for example) although navigating today's roads may sometimes seem very skilled it is essentially a skill that can be once acquired and never forgotten.
- Those who eschew sports orientated recreational activity, such as women, may find commuter

cycling acceptable.

- Cycling can take people out into green-space and the countryside which has, in itself been shown to have health benefits

Walking too!

- Because walking is weight bearing it offers protection against osteoporosis. (more women die with osteoporosis than of coronary heart disease [CHD])
- Anyone can do it regardless of culture, sex or religion
- It needs no equipment
- People who have had an episode of CHD can walk their way back to health at their own pace

The Walking and Cycling Action Plan is another disappointment. It was issued by DfT but not circulated to health professionals who would need to be involved in the implementation.

So... is there any hope in *Choosing Health*? The answer is possibly yes as one of the six overarching priorities is physical activity. Measures to increase walking and cycling are identified as priorities for the transport sector but without any sanctions if they fail to increase levels. It is recognised that safer local environments are also important if people are to abandon the comfort of their cars. Local authorities therefore have a responsibility to address this issue.

I await the daughter strategy "*Choosing Physical Activity*" but the experience of the last 20 years has taught me not to live in hope.

YHTAR Transport Symposium and AGM

As mentioned on page 9 a symposium on a major transport issue has been organised to co-incide with YHTAR's Annual General Meeting in York on 16th April.

The symposium is entitled "Where will Regional Transport be by 2020?", and features speakers from both the public and private sector.

In the afternoon, the YHTAR will hold its AGM and we would like as many members as possible to

attend. There will be a review of the past year's activities, and the all-important elections and appointments to take YHTAR forward for another year.

Full details of both events are included on a separate sheet with this edition of *YHTAR Focus*. Please note that pre-booking is essential if you are intending to join us for either the transport symposium or lunch.

(TUC Transport Seminar Report Continued from page 8)

The Wensleydale Railway is one example that can be pointed to in the region.

At this point the floor was thrown open to delegates. The prospect of re-nationalisation was raised, this being key to TUC policy on railways. It was felt that Network Rail is publicly owned in all but name.

Ray Jackson raised the issue of political interference in the railway. In calling for its re-privatisation he ignored the obvious contradiction in what he was saying. He went on to say that he had been monitoring ACORP and didn't like what he saw. He thought that Folk & Jazz trains were a bad idea because they distracted the driver from his job (so let's ban car radios then). In talking to Mr Jackson at lunchtime it emerged that he was a train driver who would be prepared to throw a crying baby off his train (at the next station, presumably) if it distracted him from his driving.

I made the point that putting in a replacement for the Trans-Pennine trail, which does provide a sustainable mode of transport, would not be a trivial undertaking. There was some talk about people arriving in 4x4's to use the trail, and that point is well made, although Sustrans statistics show that, perhaps surprisingly, a large number of users of NCN get there by sustainable means, and in fact the urban sections of route, which allow users to reach the rural parts, are more popular than those rural sections. I also raised the issue of cycling and walking – that community railways would only increase patronage if the stations were accessible, which didn't mean walking or cycling down a rural road with no pavements and 60 mph traffic. Paul agreed with this, and pointed out that CRP's were making progress with cycle routes and parking and Safe Routes to Stations. We also discussed safety, once more in our minds following the tragic events at Reading. It was noted that no passengers had been killed in the previous year (carnage on the roads continued at its usual levels) but the deaths of 9 track workers were very much to be regretted.

Tony McNulty

Tony was 5-6 weeks into his new post as Minister of State for Transport and described it as a

liberation. There was a lot happening and he was pleased to report that the night mail would be back in operation over the winter.

Local Transport Plan 2 is underway, with Local Authorities having until July to make their submissions. Vulnerable user crossings were an issue. There were examples of good practice in Barnsley, Wakefield, Sheffield and Bradford. Harrogate and York buses were pointed out as particularly good. The real-time bus information initiative was ongoing, with a Huddersfield pilot. Add-ons were safety conditions and more info to operators.

Transport in urban communities is a priority. Quality bus contracts should drive improvement in bus services. Park & Ride works well in many areas including York and Sheffield where Supertram provides very high quality onward transportation. But are we radical enough? We should consider congestion charges and changes in bus practices.

On the railways, GNER were cited as an example of best practice. As a Bike-rail user I am not entirely sure that their reputation as an exemplar of customer service is justified.

We need to support feeder services (a recent correspondent in the Guardian made the point that so-called branch lines should really be described as feeder services, branches being something that tend to get cut off!)

Ownership and control is naturally an issue for the TUC, which subscribes to the campaign to renationalise the railway. Tony McNulty did not however give any indication that this was likely to happen, although Network Rail, and therefore the rail infrastructure, is effectively owned by the public sector, and the improvement in service since the transfer from Railtrack took place is noticeable. South Eastern Trains, formerly Connex, are run as a franchise by the Strategic Rail Network and have turned around one of the most unpopular TOC's, although it would be fair to say that major investment was already going into this part of the network before Connex lost the franchise.

Lastly, there is a need for co-ordinated timetables.

1 million passengers and 14% of UK freight per annum go through Hull and Immingham Ports. The proximity of manufacturing and third-party handling is a factor in this. Coal and steel imports are a major part of the business.

Tony gave a spirited speech and it was notable that the collected TUC delegates didn't find much to take issue with him on, despite his efforts to

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provoke some response through some jokingly disparaging references to the North of England compared to the South!

Jack Dromey, General Secretary T&G

Jack started by contrasting the East with the West Coast.

There are wider concerns over environment. A balance must be achieved based on science.

On air transport the white paper was welcomed. He said that it is true that airline fuel not taxed but there are airport taxes. The government favours emission trading, personal opportunities & economic development.

Ports are still going strong but are dangerous places to work.

A strategic overview is needed and rail is central to an integrated system. Jack along with the union movement in general is pro nationalisation.

The decline in the manufacturing industry is cause for concern. We should not forget taxis as part of an integrated transport solution. Deregulation has become a public safety issue.

Buses carry the majority of public transport passengers. Subsidy has increased, as in the London example but drivers pay has been slashed. Quality bus contracts, better terms and conditions for bus workers, and a common approach internationally are needed.

On road freight, we have a 24 hour economy. Recruitment is an issue, and the Working Time Directive is going to have an impact on the hours drivers work. The customers are powerful - supermarkets for example - and are tantamount to gangmasters. Transport access is the key to development, and 40,000 new drivers are needed. The key issues then are pensions, skills, safety and working time.

Bob Crow RMT

Bob Crow is well known to us all for his pronouncements in the media, delivered in a strong Estuary accent. I find his style rather abrasive, and I'm sure employers do as well. The overall impression was "I gets 'old of the employers and I nuts 'em dun'!"

You could hardly expect Bob to ignore politics, and in his view transport is a key area. EWS (known apparently as Engines, Wagons and Slaves) were a

particular problem as they were trying to move to a 45 hour week, whilst the union wanted a 4 day 32 hour week.

Tony McNulty had refused to countenance re-nationalising the railways, whilst Bob advocated taking back the Train Operating Companies at the end of each Franchise. South Eastern Trains, formerly run disastrously by Connex, were showing steady signs of improvement under the SRA.

Railtrack had plainly made mistakes, and this had lead to the Hatfield tragedy, but under the new regime there was an artificial differentiation between maintenance and renewals. The PFI arrangements for London Underground were a cause for concern. PTE's should be providing transport for all.

RMT were fighting P&O redundancies.

Environmental problems and global warming were due to private car and flights and capacity increases were needed to achieve modal shift.

British Railways had not been perfect - it was certainly not democratic and there was little user involvement, but it was a safe railway. A safe punctual and affordable railway was only possible if it was nationalised.

RMT have had successes, but having drivers on different terms & conditions causes friction.

This was the note on which we ended a very full and interesting day.

Postscript:

Whenever I'm in York I try to find the time to sample the city's cycle network on my trusty Brompton .

On this occasion I followed NCN Route 66 to Stamford Bridge You can pick this up at the Millennium Bridge; on this occasion I found a perfect example of integration between a waterway and a cycle route, with the Trans-Pennine Trail fully subsumed into the Ouse. York is already living with climate change.

The route is poorly signposted in two places - at the York Garrison and the exit from the University - and I wasn't too happy as I headed out of town to find myself increasingly bogged down in a farmer's field. However, I emerged onto quiet lanes and soon found myself in Stamford Bridge where the excellent local bus service whisked me back to the city. A Brompton isn't a bicycle, it's a tool for integrating transport!

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Why not take a look at back issues of *YHTAR Focus* and our range of useful transport-related links next time you're online?

An online RSS portal is also now available on our website.

YHTAR Focus

YHTAR Focus is produced three times a year on behalf of the YHTAR.

It is mailed to over 350 people, including M.P.s, councillors, officers, bus and rail management, and campaigners around the Y+H region.

YHTAR Focus is currently available free of charge,
if you know of anyone who would be interested in receiving a copy please contact:
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