

PACTS Response to:

**Public Consultation on the future design of the National
Travel Survey**

Department for Transport

The Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety (PACTS) is a registered charity and an associate Parliamentary Group. Its charitable objective is "**To protect human life through the promotion of transport safety for the public benefit**". Its aim is to advise and inform members of the House of Commons and of the House of Lords on air, rail and road safety issues.

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1. Replacing the travel diary with personal GPS systems

The advantages of replacing the travel diary with GPS systems seem to be greater than the disadvantages. PACTS would welcome the accuracy and the richer journey detail which the GPS system could provide, particularly valuing the contribution to a greater understanding of active travel modes. The consequential loss of information such as parking costs, road tolls, type of ticket and cost of ticket is not vitally important, and could mostly be obtained elsewhere if it were required. However the answers to the following questions are important, as they allow revealing information to be deduced such as patterns of car sharing:

How many people travelled including you?

Which car or other motor vehicle did you use?

Were you the driver or passenger?

It is suggested that these questions be posed at the pick-up interview in relation to specific journeys recorded by the GPS system, which would give a more accurate data set than the proposed solutions:

'... car occupancy could be alternatively estimated using questions in the interview asking respondents how many people were in the vehicle last time they made a trip by car or van.'

'It is possible we could probe further in the interview about who uses which car(s) in the household and to what extent, which may help indicate which vehicle is being used for some, but not necessarily all trips.'

'Knowledge of who typically drives which car(s) in the household may allow us to infer some information about this but it will not be complete for all journeys. This could be estimated using questions in the interview asking respondents whether they were the driver or passenger when they last made a trip by car or van.'

2. Reviewing the content of the NTS questionnaire

Please see the attached 'tick-box' questions.

On the whole we agree with the questions that DfT proposes to cut, except the following:

We feel questions relating to home deliveries are important in analysing traffic patterns. For example we would be interested in the effect of the transfer of risk from individuals in cars driving to the supermarket to delivery workers in vans.

Within the section 'attitude to local services', many questions would be answered in other publications, such as reports from Passenger Focus. However the following questions may not get answered elsewhere if they were not included in the NTS

'How would you rate the provision of cycle lanes/cycle paths locally?'

'How would you rate the condition of pavements locally where you live?'

The answers to these questions are very informative and useful, particularly in view of the benefits active transport produce for both the health and the environment agendas.

3. Reducing the geographic coverage of DfT-funded survey fieldwork from Great Britain to England

We strongly disagree with the proposal to reduce the scope of DfT-funded fieldwork from Great Britain to England. Although operational transport issues are devolved, safety management is not, with Westminster maintaining responsibility for road traffic law.

Reducing the NTS to an England only survey would render it significantly less useful, as it would no longer be complimented by other GB-collected data, such as Reported Road Casualties.

It is possible the Scotland and Wales would not take up the collection of NTS data, and even if they did, the surveys could be produced in a different format, making comparisons impossible.

Finally, we would assume that there are economies of scale in collecting this survey data on a GB scale.

4. Wider potential changes for the collection of NTS data

'Sharing fieldwork with another government social survey in order to split the fixed costs of survey management and optimise the time spent with respondents. We have already written to government departmental Heads of Profession for Statistics with a brief proposal to this effect, and are awaiting responses.'

We support this proposal as it seems a sensible way to ensure that there is no wasteful repetition in government data collection across departments. A more radical suggestion would be to hand over responsibility for all departmental surveys to one government department such as the Office for National Statistics.

Using cheaper methods of data collection, possibly as part of a 'mixed' design. For example, it may be possible to offer respondents the option to complete the survey questionnaire on-line, while continuing to offer a traditional face-to-face interview to those who are unwilling to take this route or who do not have internet access.

Making greater use of data sources based on developing technology (e.g. 'smart' ticketing data, mobile phone data, etc.) which could, in time, replace certain aspects of the NTS.

In principal we support both proposals based on the idea of utilising technology to enhance and facilitate the NTS.