Third Edition

TRANSPORT AND TOURISM

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

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Transport and Tourism

● ● ● ● Formulating state-level tourist transport policy

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Tourism Committee, formed in 1948, pursued tourism as a vehicle for economic cooperation and development during the post-war reconstruction of Europe. One of its principal objectives is to provide advice and information to member countries on the issues commonly faced by government tourism administrations. Its reports and activities are particularly influential in shaping and influencing government policies on tourism, particularly the issue of globalisation and obstacles to improving member state's tourism competitiveness. Many OECD countries possess relatively mature tourism destinations and so improving their global competitiveness involves policy developments such as the greater linking of different cross-cutting policies across government to improve tourism performance. One such area is transport and tourism, particularly the improvement of infrastructure (OECD 2008a: 15).

The OECD has argued that effective state policies for tourist transport should be integrated so that tourism and transport concerns work in harmony rather than in isolation. These policy issues are predominantly concerned with issues of competition, accessibility and destination development. Transport policy needs to consider tourism as a related activity that is directly influenced by the objectives pursued in national, regional and local transport policy. In fact Sinclair and Page (1993) examined the role of policy formulation in a transfrontier region (the Euroregion – in North East France and South East England) in relation to transport, tourism and regional development. This is an interesting example where cross-border cooperation and planning for transport assisted in coordinating the variety of bodies involved in implementing tourism and transport planning in two different countries. It also illustrates how a wider policy-making framework can assist in the recognition of the vital link between transport planning and tourism to promote economic development in local areas.

Yet translating policy objectives into a planning framework may pose particular problems for tourist transport systems, since the political philosophy of national governments can lead to different approaches to funding and development of transport infrastructure projects. For example, the case of airport development highlights the inherent tensions and a trend towards airports being operated as commercial enterprises. This means that infrastructure provision now based in the private sector, with the UK government's market-led philosophy also applying to complementary infrastructure provision through PPPs. This was demonstrated by the public/private sector partnership between the former British Rail and the BAA's £300 million Heathrow Express rail-link project to connect Heathrow and Paddington in London (see Chapter 7). According to May et al. (2005: 238) integration in transport can be achieved by:

- integrating the policy instruments used across different modes of transport;
- integrating policy instruments associated with the provision of infrastructure, management, pricing and information provision;
- integrating land use planning with different transport schemes and measures;
- linking policies not currently aligned with transport such as health, education and other areas (e.g. tourism);
- integrating the activities of different public bodies and authorities in large urban areas.

As May et al. (2005) argue, policy instruments to achieve integration can involve a wide range of options that can be grouped under six headings: infrastructure provision; management and regulation; attitude change; pricing; land use; and information provision. From a policy perspective, their effectiveness will depend upon their ability to influence or alter a number of underlying factors (e.g. the number of journeys undertaken, length of journey, mode of transport used, timing and routing). In most studies of transport integration, May et al. (2005) point to two underlying principles: the pursuit of synergy (i.e. how policy instruments interact to give a positive outcome) and the removal of barriers (i.e. those factors which may be obstacles to effective implementation such as institutional, financial, political and practical barriers). For example, in the example of the London Congestion Charge influencing road user behaviour, a number of complementary strategies as alternatives to road use had to be developed (e.g. prioritising bus use of roads, improving the frequency of rail schedules, expanding rail infrastructure).

Where countries do formulate a tourist transport policy, the following issues should be taken into account in its implementation through planning measures:

- *The management of tourist traffic* in large urban areas (see the London Tourist Board 1987: 61–3, on managing transport used by visitors, particularly the problems of coach parking, which is also discussed by the Bus and Coach Council 1991) and small historic cities (see Page 1992a for a case study of Canterbury). In 1997 the English Historic Towns Forum (1997) established a Code of Practice for coach tourism to address the issue amongst its members in line with growing concerns about managing tourists and non-tourists and traffic in town centres (Page and Hardyman 1996).
- *The management of tourist and recreational traffic in rural areas* (see Sharpley 1993; also see the Department for Rural Affairs in the UK 2004 Rural White Paper Review, *Transport*, *www.defra.gov.uk/rural* for a discussion of the issues, along with its 2002 *Review of English National Park Authorities* on the same website and its arguments for a greater examination of local transport plans to assist with transport planning in these sensitive environments and the need to work with transport operators and visitors to reduce car-based visits to extend choice and reduce environmental pollution).
- *The promotion of off-peak travel by tourists* to spread the seasonal and geographical distribution of tourist travel and the resulting economic, social, cultural and economic impacts of tourism. For example, in late 2006, a collaborative venture between tourism partners in Budapest entitled Budapest's Winter Invasion sought to address seasonality by providing incentives for visiting (e.g. three nights for the price of two) with a free pass to visit the city's museums and unlimited travel by public transport.
- *Maximising the use of existing transport infrastructure* and the use of more novel forms of tourist transport together with the provision of new infrastructure on the basis of long-term traffic forecasts.
- *Integration of transport modes* (see Stubbs and Jegede 1998) as evident from the UK's Department for Transport move towards an integrated transport strategy and illustrated by Insight 3.3 in relation to tourism and transport in Hong Kong.
- *More integration between the public and private sector* rather than the fragmentation that has arisen from privatisation in the UK rail network.

INSIGHT 3.3

Integrated transport provision for tourism – Hong Kong

According to the Hong Kong Planning Department, transport is a key prerequisite for achieving the strategic development aims of the Special Administrative Regional (SAR) government to support tourism, as one of the four cornerstones of its economy. The Planning Department identified the importance of understanding visitor characteristics, mode of transport chosen and how they used transport to travel in Hong Kong. This was seen as critical to future transport planning exercises given the crucial role of tourism to the economy. For example, visitor arrivals have grown from almost 10 million in 1995 to 16 million in 2002 and 25 million in 2006. With a high annual growth rate in visitor arrivals, mainly by air and with increasing numbers from mainland China, understanding transport needs was important to plan future transport services and capacity. With most visitors staying around three days, we need to understand the tourism requirements in terms of use of private transport, organised tours, taxis and other forms of public transport.

Given Hong Kong's expansion as a global financial and business centre, located on a land area of $1104km^2$ with a population of 6.9 million in 2004, developing forms of mass transit to transport residents and tourists efficiently and safely was a high priority.

Government policies have prioritised mass carriers whilst controlling private cars (Tang and Lo 2008). Since the 1970s, Hong Kong has had a mass tourist railway and an electrified overground railway and a key pillar of Hong Kong's transport policy is an integrated public transport system. Basic principles behind the state management of transport services include inter-modal coordination, particularly between bus and rail that underpin the transport network.

The Planning Department Study (2003) noted that most visitors use the mass tourist railway and taxi to explore Hong Kong followed by coach transfers, public buses, airport express links and the harbour ferries. This will inevitably have changed since the opening of Hong Kong's newest mega-attraction – Hong Kong Disneyland, with its own dedicated rail service. To accommodate future growth in tourism until around 2030 Hong Kong opened its new airport in February 2007 and the former Kai Tak site is currently being developed into a new cruise terminal. This reflects an expanding market sector for the tourism sector, with its own transport and infrastructure needs.

The Planning Department (2003) study rightly acknowledged that tourist trip patterns are very different to domestic work and school trips that may be able to avoid peak period usage. The Department expected the current transport network to be able to cope with tourism demand although potential arrivals by road in the future may cause major impacts. Among the improvements recommended to enhance the visitor's experience of travelling in Hong Kong were: improved seating around popular tourist attractions and transport nodes; improvements to the pedestrian environment; better signposting; and increased integration of public transport at major tourist attraction. In addition, better information was seen as vital to encourage visitors to tour around the SAR to create a more 'tourism-friendly transport environment'. What this Insight demonstrates is that Hong Kong not only recognises the symbiotic relationship between transport and tourism, but sees an important value-adding process which can enhance the visitor travel experience and satisfaction levels by attention to detail and investing in measures to promote easy access and travel. This is particularly significant when the SAR land use planning model has helped to cluster tourism activities for large visitor volumes at 'tourism nodes'.

Privatisation and the UK rail system: lessons for governments

Tourist and recreational use of rail services remains a poorly understood area of tourism research, with the exception of examples of transport for tourism such as the Orient Express or sightseeing excursions as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. According to Halsall (1982) and Page (2003b) tourism and leisure rail travel generate a number of journey types typically including more than one category:

● The use of dedicated rail corridors that connect major gateways (airports and ports) of a country to the final destination, or as a mode of transit to the tourist accommodation in the nearby city.
● The use of rapid transit systems and metros to travel within urban areas.
● The use of high-speed and non-high-speed intercity rail corridors to facilitate movement as part of an itinerary or city-to-city journey, typically for business and leisure travel. These journeys may cross country borders in the EU and form part of a pan-European network.
● The use of local rail services outside of urban areas, often used in peak hours by commuters to journey to/from mainline/intercity rail terminals en route to other destinations.
● The use of peripheral rail services that serve remote communities in the tourist season for scenic sightseeing and special interest travel.

A study by OGM (2002) for the EU on *The Development of International Rail Passenger Markets and Policy* expanded the scope of the market for such services,

Plate 3.2 Car parking pressures in rural areas such as National Parks remain a major challenge for transport planners as shown in Widecombe car park, Devon. Do you accommodate the volume or try to de-market the area by non-provision of parking areas?

Source: Dr Joanne Connell

identifying five detailed segments at an international level that were also relevant to domestic trips:

● *regional cross-border services* for commuting or tourist trips, typically 80–90 km in duration. These services are used by EU citizens living in border areas of one member state but who work in another;
● *long-distance intercity services* for leisure and business travellers;
● *high-speed services* for leisure and business travellers where a dedicated link has been provided (e.g. the Brussels–Paris link) and that has seen a major modal shift from car and air to high-speed rail travel with the THALYS service capturing 53 per cent of the traffic between Brussels and Paris;
● *regular niches* such as night trains and car-sleeper services, with a notable growth in the German market of 10 per cent per annum since the restructuring of services;
● *occasional services* such as winter sport destinations or coastal resorts.

But how has privatisation affected this market for tourist travel in the UK?

The pre-privatisation era and tourist and leisure use of rail

Turton (1992a) provided a broad overview of the various factors that affected the organisation and management of pre-privatisation passenger services (Figure 3.2), the impact of government policy and the relative importance of rail versus other modes of transport. Potter (1987) argues that the main determinants of the demand for rail travel are:

● speed;
● cost;
● comfort;
● convenience;
● access to stations;
● the image of the service.

These affect the perceived quality of the service and are often judged in relation to competing modes of transport.

In terms of tourist demand, Turton (1991) reports that the Long Distance Travel Survey (1979–80) found that rail had a 20 per cent share of all long-distance trips (those over 40 km). According to Jefferson and Lickorish (1991), the number of domestic tourists using rail to reach their holiday destination in Great Britain dropped from 13 per cent in 1971 to 10 per cent in 1985 and 8 per cent in 1989. For journeys to the European mainland that included a sea crossing, 8 per cent of British tourists travelled by BR in 1986. In 1991/2, the business traveller using InterCity (long-distance, high-speed rail services) comprised:

● 23 per cent of InterCity passenger volumes;
● 35 per cent of receipts; and
● approximately 8 per cent of the UK long-distance travel market.

According to Green (1994) InterCity accounted for 8 per cent of all long distance trips in the UK and 52 per cent of these trips were classified as 'leisure travel' (which includes tourist travel). A further 27 per cent of travellers were undertaking business trips that could also have an element of tourism since some of these trips would involve an overnight stay away from the traveller's normal place of residence.
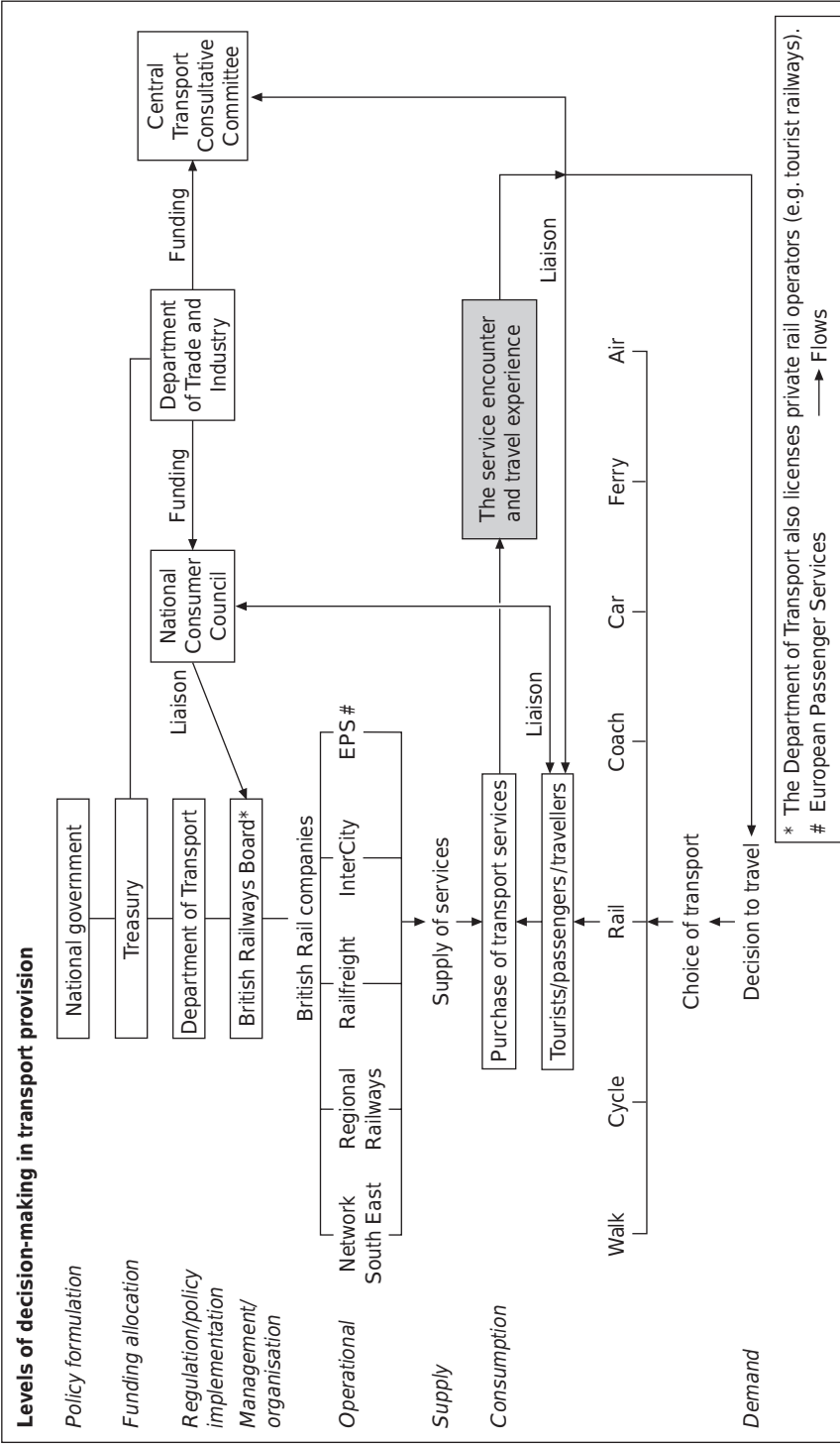
Figure 3.2 The tourist rail system pre-privatisation

Source: Adapted from Page 1994.