

What is the position of public transport in the local area?

The purpose of this investigation was for me to engage in a real world investigation of economic and business phenomenon, and hypothesis. The aim of my investigation was to find out what the position of public transport is in my local area, the area being Cheshire. I have used a number of strategies to compile my information; the main strategy being a public survey carried out in the middle of Chester one morning. I have also gathered information from various websites and directly from Cheshire County Council (CCC). The information that I was given by the CCC was all about how the council is going to improve on transport in the area, and not anything about what it is like now. This gives the impression that public transport at this current point in time is not as it should be. To find out what it is currently like, I carried out a survey in Chester one morning and asked roughly thirty people about how they felt on the subject of public transport, but over one hundred and thirty were carried out in my class and the results have been compared and contrasted. This gave me a good indication of how the public, the people the transport is for, feel on the subject. The Internet gave me information on how much the council is spending on public transport at the moment as well as a good indication on how well it is doing from a neutral's point of view.

My prediction is that the overall view of public transport is not going to be a good one. I know from my own experience's that it has never been any good, or prompt. People that I know also rate public transport very poorly. The fact that I never use it even when it is the only thing available just shows how highly I rate. But this investigation was not just about me. I predict that the council will only talk about what improvements will be made and how much better public transport will get. They will not talk about the current situation unless it is very good. I'm sure that the figures shown of government spending will show that more will be spent this year than the last and so on. I predict that the public that I interviewed do not rate public transport highly, and that not many of them will actually use it. The ones who don't I'm pretty sure will not be using it because of past experience's they've had which have put them off it forever.

Public transport is a merit good. Merit good's are goods that are underprovided by the market mechanism. This basically means anything that is needed by the public but is not readily available to them. Such goods are seen as highly desirable for the welfare of the citizens. Examples of merit goods include public transport, refuse collection and school cleaning. Taxes pay for such goods; the government needs to raise taxes to pay for public spending. Merit goods have two objectives:

1. They facilitate a redistribution of real income.
2. By making these goods readily available to all citizens at well below the market-clearing price, society can take advantage of positive externalities.

One of the key problems in the city of Chester is congestion. A fall in taxes on Chester citizens would lead to a rise in their real incomes. This would be okay for them as long as they never use public transport, as they would be better off.

The questionnaire that I used to ask people their thoughts on public transport had eight questions. The first was asking where the person had travelled from that day. The second question was asking the purpose of the visit that they had made to Chester for that day. What form of transport did they use was the next question and then whether or not they used the park and ride. The next two questions were only to the people who had travelled by car that day and were asking why they did not use public transport, where did they park, and what would make them use public transport in the future. The last question was what sex the person in question was, which normally answered itself. The results for each are in pie chart form elsewhere but here are the written results:

1.
 - 75 out of 141 had travelled from Chester itself.
 - 12 had travelled from Liverpool.
 - 5 people had travelled from villages within an eight-mile radius.
 - From Wrexham and North Wales, there was 22 people.
 - 11 people travelled from Ellesmere Port.
 - Manchester had 8.
 - Crewe and Nantwich had 2.
 - 2 people came from Birmingham.
 - From Leeds, Shropshire, Paris and London, 1 came from each.
2.
 - 61 people were in Chester for work.
 - 38 people were in Chester for shopping.
 - Tourism brought in 9 people this day.
 - 15 people were in for other reasons.
3.
 - 53 people out of the 142 had travelled into Chester by car.
 - The buses had brought in 44.
 - Train had brought in 17 people.
 - 28 out of 142 had come into Chester through other means of transport.
4. Out of the 44 people that had used the bus, 8 people had used the park and ride and 36 had not.
5. 31 people use public transport daily.
 - 15 use public transport every other day.
 - 30 people use it every week.
 - 17 use it monthly.
 - 49 use it less frequently.
6. The sixth question is for car users only. If you travelled by car, then why did you not use public transport?
 - 4 people thought that the availability was not good enough.
 - 10 people thought that it was too expensive.
 - 29 thought that it was inconvenient.
 - 10 thought of other reasons why they did not use it.

7. Question 7 is where did you park your vehicle?
 - Park and ride was where 3 people parked their cars.
 - 21 people used city centre parking.
 - 10 people used street parking.
 - 19 people used other places.
8. Question 8 asked what would make people use public transport in the future. Many answers were given, including:
 - If it was more convenient.
 - If it was cheaper/cleaner/more frequent.
 - If accessibility was better.
 - If it was more efficient.
9. The final question was what sex were the people asked. There was 70 males asked and 72 females asked, so it was nearly perfect.

All of the data above can be found on pie charts attached. The above information proves that my predictions were correct, as the majority of people that used public transport did not rate it highly and the people that didn't use it had a number of reasons why they didn't. I carried out the survey in the week commencing the 4th of March 2002, at the times between half eight and ten in the morning. The statistics show that more than half of the people asked actually came from Chester itself and shouldn't really have a need for the public transport, but 61 out of the 142 people used public transport. More people also walked or cycled in to the city rather than use public transport. A lot of people also parked their cars in the city, the cost of which is astronomical, showing us that people would rather spend a lot more money to travel in their own vehicle. When I asked the people that did not use public transport what would make them, a lot of answers came out, meaning that there are plenty of problems with the current state of public transport.

All in all, I think that the majority of people are not pleased with the state of public transport. But the people that do use it seem content. It would appear to be that people will travel in whichever way they are used to, whether that be on a bus, or by bike. I think that until the government dramatically improves public transport there will be no surge of demand for it. And until that day, we are all going to travel how we want.