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chapter 14 Road User Audits

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14.1 Role of road user audits

Many road and traffic management schemes are introduced primarily for motor vehicles and can be detrimental to other road users. Road user audits are a way of representing the needs of different road users within the road design process. The main categories of road users that should be considered are:

- cyclists
- pedestrians
- people with mobility/sensory impairment
- motorcyclists
- Public transport

There will also be occasions when it is necessary to take into account the specific needs of other road users such as equestrians.

The purpose of the road user audit is to ensure that road designs take into account the particular needs of the various user groups and that conditions are not made worse as a result of introducing schemes. Designers can also seek to introduce features that encourage walking, cycling, use of public transport and facilities for the mobility/sensory impaired. Road user audits are different from road safety audits (which deal only with road safety issues), and look at both amenity and safety issues. Inevitably there is an area of overlap between the two types of audit.

The DTO and its agencies are developing checklists and procedures to assess the design of transport proposals from the point of view of safety, pedestrians, cyclists, buses, cars and goods vehicles.

Road user audits check the design and operation of schemes. The brief for a project should outline how road users' needs are to be taken into account and how road user audits should be carried out. This should ensure that a scheme is developed in line with a road authority's policy for walking, cycling and mobility/sensory impaired road users. The audits should be



Pedestrian disadvantages by traffic management scheme



Lack of traffic indicators for vision impaired pedestrians

carried out independently from the design team and at specific stages of the development of a scheme (see Chapter 14.2).

There are a number of benefits to be gained from carrying out road user audits. These include:

- encouraging walking and cycling in line with sustainable transport objectives
- reducing perceived safety problems to encourage mobility for the vulnerable road users
- assisting in the provision of schemes to manage the demand for vehicular road space
- demonstrating that schemes have adequately catered for the needs of all road users (see Chapter 12.1)

14.2 Policy and procedures

The process of road user audit is one that is still developing. In the UK, some authorities have developed road user audit checklists for designers to use as part of the general design process. This reduces the risk of designs failing to cater adequately for all road users and helps designers to provide facilities that are friendly to all road users. Road user audit should be applied for all vulnerable road users rather than just for one group of users such as cyclists. Cycle audits are becoming more common and some authorities are developing procedures for formal pedestrian and mobility audits.

Road authorities should consider whether a system of road user audits should be implemented for the design and construction of schemes in their area. In order to set out a policy and procedure for carrying out road user audits, a number of issues need to be considered by the road authority.

Which schemes should be subject to audit?

It is necessary to subject a wide variety of schemes to the road user audit process if a significant impact is to be made. The following schemes should be considered

- road improvement schemes
- traffic management schemes
- development schemes
- new roads
- major maintenance schemes



Incomplete marking of cycletrack at vehicle access



Example of poor design

Which standards and good practice guidelines should schemes be audited against?

It is necessary to have some standards and advice on good practice for comparison in order to assess the adequacy of the measures being proposed. A number of reference sources are given in Chapter 14.4.

When should the audit take place?

Audits should be undertaken at key stages of the development of a scheme such as:

- feasibility design
- preliminary design
- detailed design
- post-construction

These key stages are applicable for medium and larger schemes but for smaller schemes some of the stages such as feasibility/preliminary design can be combined. This also generally fits in with the timing of road safety audits, which should be carried out separately and after the road user audits to ensure that any proposals made are as safe as possible.

Who should carry out the audits?

At the formal key stages, the road user audits should be carried out independently of the design team, by someone with specialist knowledge and understanding of the issues involved. It is useful to give designers a checklist to aid the design process. The checklist should highlight the issues to be considered, good practice and references for the provision of appropriate facilities. Examples of unacceptable practice or scenarios to be avoided can also help.

Which road users should be considered?

Pedestrians, cyclists, mobility/sensory impaired road users, public transport users and motorcyclists should be considered. It may also be necessary to consider equestrians where appropriate.

14.3 Design issues and common problems

The main design issues and common problems are dealt with in Chapters 12 and 13. Sources of advice on good practice and further references are given in Chapter 14.4.

14.4 References

1. Provision of Cycle Facilities, National Manual for Urban Areas – DTO/DoELG. (Available from Government Publications Sale Office, Sun Alliance House, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2, or by mail order from Government Publications, Postal Trade Section, 51 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2, Tel 01 6476879; Fax 01 6476843)
2. Reducing Mobility Handicaps, Towards a Barrier-Free Environment – Institution of Highways and Transportation – UK. Available from IHT, 3 Lygon Place, Ebury Street, London SW1W 0JS
3. Guidance on the use of tactile paving surfaces – DETR – UK. Available from The Stationery Office, PO Box 276, London SW8 5DT. Tel +44 870 600 5522
4. Guidelines for Cycle Audit and Cycle Review – Institution of Highways and Transportation – UK. Available from IHT, 3 Lygon Place, tEbury Street, London SW1W 0JS