Transport and Travel Statistics Advisory Committee Minutes – 13th June 2013

Chair: Matt Perkins (MP), Transport Analytical Services, Transport Scotland (TS)

Secretary: Andrew Paterson (AP), Transport Analytical Services, TS

Attendees
Derek Halden (DH) - DHC
Alastair Short (AS) – SESTRAN representing SCOTS
David Connolly (DC) - MVA
Neil Sturrock (NS) - SPT - Strathclyde Partnership for Transport
Kathy Johnston (KJ) - Transport Analytical Services, TS
Andrew Knight (AK) - Transport Analytical Services, TS
Jennifer McCahill (JM) – Scottish Safety Camera Project
Tom Hart (TH) - Scottish Transport Studies Group
Jock Robertson (JR) - representing Transport Statistics Users Group
Stephen Cragg (SC) – Transport modelling team, TS

1. Introductions
1.1 MP welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were given around the table.

2. minutes of previous meeting
2.1 MP ran through the action points of the previous meeting, detailed updates are included in paper 1. All actions are complete apart from:

Ongoing actions
ACTION 1: TS statistics team to investigate ways to get directly to the data from PDF documents
ACTION 7: TS Stats team to speak to Ben Coleman at DfT to understand their methodology and to consider whether additional analysis of journey time and speed can be done to make the publication more useful
ACTION 9: Transport Statistics team to look in more detail at business trips reported in the one day SHS Travel Diary compared to the 7 day NTS Travel diary.

Outstanding actions (To be done as part of SHS Travel Diary publication 2012)
ACTION 8: Transport Statistics team to consider how best to footnote data tables for short walking journeys. [This was in relation to discussion of the paper looking at how the straight line distance under estimates distance travelled, particularly for walking journeys.]

2.2 The following actions have been completed but TS Stats asked for members to identify any further issues:
ACTION 3: TTSAC members to inform the TS team of links to other data sources that aren’t available on the TS statistics web pages
ACTION 4: Transport Statistics team to check that all time-series breaks are in place in the Excel files and all footnotes are relevant and updated.
This forms part of broader piece of work looking at comparability and methodology and MP noted that this would be picked up a part of the SHS update.

2.3 SC raised the issue of the National Travel Survey no longer covering Scotland and making sure that users were aware. MP said that they had used mailing lists at the time to make as many people as possible aware of the change, including consultation with ScotStat.

3. Transport Scotland Statistics work plan
3.1 MP introduced the Transport Scotland statistics work plan (paper 2), which outlined the work that the TS Statistics team will be undertaking. The plan is to continue publishing Transport and Travel in Scotland alongside the main SHS results at the end of August. It is intended to review the contents of Scottish Transport Statistics for 2013 which will involve moving the publication to February 2014. This would be discussed further under agenda item 5.

3.2 DC suggested that responding to adhoc requests should feature prominently in the plan as this was something that, whilst not a new development or work stream, would account for a significant amount of the branch’s time.

3.3 MP suggested that this might be picked up across different sections of the report.

3.4 Local Authority data was discussed, and it was suggested that TS should highlight availability better, not just to data held centrally but also to locally collected data. There would need to be some way of identifying the quality of any dataset. MP mentioned this was something that could be looked at as part of STS and planned work on the TS website.

3.5 The more general issue of who is collecting what was also discussed, with availability of Park and Ride data used as an example. Data is collected for rail station car parks but some of these are only part owned by rail, and any dataset would exclude any on street parking in the surrounding area. It was suggested that CLIP, a Local Government Information Service may help to fill some of these gaps.

3.6 Other things to consider for work planning are developing trends such as the growth in Rail travel and other pieces of work including connectivity of the transport network.

Action: TS to update and finalise work plan  
Action: TS to consider better signposting to alternative data sources for publications and website.

4. SHS update

4a) 2012 data

4.1 AP introduced a paper providing an update on issues relating to the SHS. (paper 3)
4.2 The data relating to 2012 is the first available following significant design changes to the Scottish Household Survey (SHS).

4.3 Due to issues of comparability, we do not intend to combine data from 2011 and 2012. This is in line with others publishing SHS data, including the main SHS annual report. Responses will be published for 2012 as a standalone.

4.4 TS Stats team are on track to meet the usual publication dates for TATIS and Travel Diary.

4.5 It was asked whether this meant that the 2011 data was useless and a year that never happened. AP explained that it had been published and provided national figures, it just couldn’t be combined with 2012 to provide the more detailed biennial figures eg at Local Authority level which were normally released.

4.6 The paper explained that due to the design changes lower levels of precision will result. However, the major positive is that full sample figures will be available annually and if higher levels of precision are needed, then from 2012 onwards, it will be possible to combine two or more years’ data at a LA level, or potentially on a rolling basis as required.

4.7 It was asked whether response rates had changed ie are they at the levels hoped for and AS confirmed that they were.

4b) Weighting and NTS comparisons

4.8 AP outlined comparison figures between the SHS and NTS that suggested that some individuals’ SHS journeys received comparatively very high weights.

4.9 It was queried to what extent the increased chances of selection were taken into account in weighting and concern was expressed over very large weights and mooted the idea of clipping the results.

Action: TS Stats to carry out analysis of SHS TD tables to compare weighted and unweighted totals.
Action: TS Stats to look at potential changes in weighting with OCSP survey team

4.10 One area of particular interest for the SHS in the past has been business trips, and the figures do suggest differences in what the SHS and NTS pick up. Business trips account for a higher proportion of journeys in the NTS compared to SHS (3.2% in the NTS 2009/2010 and 1.2% in 2009 and 0.9% in 2010 according to the SHS).
4.11 One solution discussed was the inclusion of an additional question covering long distance trips over a longer period of time than ‘the previous day’. This would come closer to establishing the true frequency of business trips and trips of longer duration.

4.12 It was highlighted however, that the issue was not with one particular type of journey such as business trips but with all journeys that had an overnight component and would therefore be under-represented within the survey.

**Action:** Transport statistics team to consider the under-representation of overnight stays in the Travel Diary.

4c) 2014 question changes

4.13 The question about car access was discussed given changing ownership and travel patterns. It was felt that existing wording was not clear to users of the data, and probably interviewees as well. For example whilst the numbers of people who are members of city car clubs is small, there are other ways that people may have access to a car, eg through family / friends or through regular agreement with hire car companies. The question needs to ensure that all respondents are reporting ‘access’ to a vehicle in the same way. Similar issues exist for bikes where bike hire schemes are becoming more widespread. This is an area likely to grow, and a focus of policy. It was pointed out that journeys would still be collected through the travel diary and could be compared with the access to car variable though this wouldn’t isolate car club use.

4.14 DH pointed out that other issues were identified in the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places report. DC also pointed to the cycling review MVA produced for Transport Scotland which also included recommendations relating to the SHS.

4.14 DH suggested the need for a review of the questionnaire to identify how it can be future-proofed.

4.15 The requirement for a question on the state of the repair of the roads was discussed. NS queried whether the survey best place for state of the roads type question. It was suggested that user concern may not be the best measure and it was also pointed out that there may be alternative sources eg the ‘fix my street’ website.

**Action:** TS Statistics to consider need for review of SHS questionnaire and include SCSP and cycling review recommendations as part of this.

5) STS consultation

5.1 MP provided a verbal update on plans for the future of Scottish Transport Statistics. These are to continue producing a hard copy at a certain point in the year
(though the time point may change from the present), whilst updating the data more regularly.

5.2 It was felt that it would be helpful if the release of new data could be flagged up on Scotstat. MP highlighted that the Scotstat topic areas for Transport had been expanded and aligned with STS chapters which means tailored updates could be sent to interested members when sections were updated.

5.3 TH felt that this sounded positive as getting the data asap would be the priority.

5.4 It was reiterated that it would be very helpful to keep the table numbers the same so that the same table could easily be found in earlier or later publications. MP confirmed that this would be an aim with future updates to the publication.

5.5 It was noted that if the hardcopy is pushed back to the new year then there could be some confusion as to what year the data actually refers to. For example you could potentially have a publication in 2015 with data referring to 2013.

5.6 AS queried what the process would be for reconsidering freight policy content. MP suggested using the TTSAC group and ScotStat mailing list as a sounding board.

Action – TS Stats to keep TTSAC updated on review of STS content.

6) Alternative sources for statistics
6.1 MP talked through paper 4, explaining the data sources investigated and possible uses of them. He pointed out that there would be a significant time commitment in developing any new data source and that this had to be balanced against priorities.

6.2 There was a roundtable discussion on alternative sources for statistics, including electronic tracking data. Sources that were discussed included:
- Traffic Speed data as used in the access domain of SIMD
- Traffic Master
- ITIS data for Scotland.
- Bing, Google
- Sat Nav data

6.3 It was suggested that the peak/off peak split available in DfT traffic statistics was too broad and that the DfT Trafficmaster derived statistics masked local congestion such as was more common in Scottish towns and cities. Only larger cities like London had 2 hour peak periods. DH suggested that it would be better to mine statistically representative observed speeds rather than purchasing processed datasets which were less useful and that in most cases mining a big dataset is cheaper than obtaining data from surveys.
6.4 There was then some discussion over what Transport Scotland’s role should be, around publishing analysis from other data sources, particularly where TS may have to pay for access to commercial datasets.

6.5 DC suggested that the role of TS should be to produce data for vehicle speeds on the whole of the network to enable comparison of perception of congestion vs actual congestion.

6.6 It was highlighted that something that is topical would be cross border data eg in relation to sleeper train, also station to station data ie where do passengers from Scotland to London originate from. The recording of cross border road travel and how this is monitored was also discussed.

6.7 DH pointed out that footfall data will be collected for particular projects and most shopping centres will collect the data and report it in real time. DC suggested that similar data will be collected for cycling for some projects. There is still a black hole for active travel data away from these areas as we do not have detailed data on where people use these modes.

*Action: Transport Stats to consider alternative data sources for future publications.*

7) AOB

7.1 DC flagged up that the census was currently under review with its future unclear. There is a certain amount of transport/travel content in the census including travel to work and car access. DC encouraged those in attendance to respond to any consultations regarding the travel to work question and any future consultations to this effect.

7.2 MP flagged up the publication of census travel to work data later likely to be in the Autumn. He also pointed the group to work being taken forward by NRS around developing alternatives to a decennial census, including the use of administrative data sources. SC pointed out that the census was important for modelling transport for small geographic areas. The group was in agreement that the census was a very important data source but that more timely and ideally more frequent availability of data would be helpful. MP encouraged the group to feed into the work when the opportunity arose, as TS have been doing to internal consultations.

7.3 MP asked if around the same time next year would be convenient and no one dissented.