The contribution that a co-design approach can make to idea generation for workplace travel plans

Ross, T., Mitchell, V.A., May, A.J. and Sims, R.E.

Abstract

The importance of public (or 'end user') participation in travel planning in the UK has long been recognised as a result of policy shift as well as in more recent DfT guidance. Published research into the process of public involvement has, however, been limited, with one exception being a study by Bickerstaff et al (2002) who found (from local authority surveys and transport plans) that traditional modes of information provision and user involvement dominated and that, although some more 'interactive, deliberative' approaches were being experimented with, these were infrequent. In addition, early involvement in problem identification was only briefly mentioned, only a fifth of plans identified public engagement in objective setting, and considerable efforts were made to engage 'special interest' groups, often to the exclusion of 'ordinary people', hence questioning their representativeness.

This paper investigates the proposition that the methods and techniques used in 'co-design' can enhance idea generation compared with more traditional approaches to public participation. Using co-design as a method by which to develop effective public service provision is not new but its application to idea-generation in travel planning (particularly sustainable behaviours) is little researched and the benefits rarely quantified. This paper reports on a study which attempted a quantitative comparison of ideas generated by a co-design approach compared with those generated by more traditional techniques in terms of the number, originality, and type of ideas generated by each method.

Initial findings are that the co-design approach generated: (i) a greater number of ideas in total, (ii) a similar level of innovativeness in terms of interventions previously seen in the UK or abroad; (iii) a greater level of innovativeness at the *local* level (i.e. the particular workplace setting); (iv) different *types* of ideas, specifically a greater number of ideas relating to interventions that relied on the provision of comparative information, social information, norms and incentives.