

# DISTILLATE

Improved Indicators for Sustainable Transport and  
Planning

Deliverable C2

Measuring wider economic benefits of transport

A case study in good practice for indicator selection

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## Executive Summary

Previous research within DISTILLATE identified difficulties in monitoring the impacts of transport on important areas including the economy, health and the street environment. These are policy areas where the impact of transport interventions on changes in the outcomes are less easy to establish than, say, traffic flow levels and congestion. In addition, central government is being requested to specify fewer indicators to local authorities and to allow greater local autonomy in deciding what to measure. A key question is therefore how should local authorities approach the task of identify indicators that are both meaningful and operationally feasible once a monitoring need is identified?

A methodology has been established to evaluate whether new indicators are suitable for adoption against six key areas:

- i. Clearly defined?
- ii. Controllable?
- iii. Measurable?
- iv. Responsive?
- v. Easy to understand?
- vi. Cost

This deliverable reports on the application of this methodology to new indicators that might be applied to capture the impacts of transport on productivity and competitiveness which, in recent years, have moved further up the policy agenda with the production of the Eddington Report (2006) and the notion that transport interventions have a major role in shaping the evolution of our cities and their productivity and competitiveness.

The evaluation shows the value of understanding the relationships between the intermediate transport outcomes that can be measured (e.g. generalised cost) and the end outcomes that these are expected to influence (e.g. productivity). In this instance the evidence base for the relationship between transport and productivity is still comparatively new and what is available suggests that most local transport initiatives will have very limited impact on productivity. Further understanding will

need to be developed, probably through major scheme development examples, before the added value of monitoring any related indicators could be assured.

Productivity and competitiveness are just two examples of areas in which new indicators might be developed. We see wider possibilities for the application of the methods described in this report and we would encourage their application in generating a cost-effective and credible monitoring programme.

Whilst there appears little value in a local authority leading in productivity measurement, more generally there will always be risks and costs involved in the adoption of new indicators. There appears to be a strong case for central government pilots of indicators which appear to have promise so that the circumstances for their effective adoption can be identified.