

Valuing Urban Realm: Successfully making the case for investment in walking

Martin Wedderburn

Colin Buchanan Principal Transport Planner

UK

Qualification of the presenter:

Martin Wedderburn, BSc MPhil, is a Principal Transport Planner at Colin Buchanan in London. He has over six years experience in transport planning, policy and analysis. Drawing on analytical expertise, wide-ranging policy insight and the ability to challenge ideas, he is recognised as an innovative and committed researcher and project manager. Martin has worked for a variety of public and private sector clients on transport assessments, demand forecasting, economic appraisal and travel behaviour research. With a keen understanding of policy and delivery issues, he has also assisted clients such as Transport for London and London 2012 with the development of guidance and strategy. Drawing on a sound understanding of transport appraisal, he has been instrumental in the development of methods to appraise public realm investment. With substantial experience in the measurement of pedestrian activity and local movement analysis, he is able to work with urban designers and traffic engineers to promote holistic and context-sensitive public realm design.

Co-author(s): Rob Sheldon, Managing Director of Accent Market Research Rob is an acclaimed expert in the use of stated preference techniques and transport appraisal. Shepley Orr, Senior Research Fellow at University College London Shepley conducts research on public policy and investment decision theory. He is recognised for a cross-sectoral approach that incorporates wider policy goals around health and access.

Proposal:

Valuing Urban Realm comprises a set of three studies designed to create a coherent evaluation methodology for determining the economic values of improvements to urban public spaces generally.

The first phase of research, based around an approach presented at the Walk 21 conference in Copenhagen, established users' willingness to pay for improvements to the urban realm. This phase applied a standard user benefit approach to variations in the quality of public realm and hence provided a justification for investment in public realm improvements. A version of this method was subsequently incorporated into Transport for London's Business Case Development Manual and is now a firm part of the transport scheme appraisal process.

The second phase of research used hedonic pricing to establish a value from revealed price data (residential and commercial). This phase demonstrated the impact of improved public realm on house prices and retail rents.

The third phase of research seeks to collate the evidence of a wide range of health and social benefits. There is a powerful body of evidence around the more tangible benefits of more walkable environments including increased physical activity, opportunity for children to play, reduced accident risk and reduced fear of crime. Yet it is more difficult to measure and place a value on many intangible benefits of people-centric design including community cohesion, social inclusion and civic pride.

This presentation will introduce the three phases, discuss the issues around measuring public realm quality, and explore the potential applications of this research.