

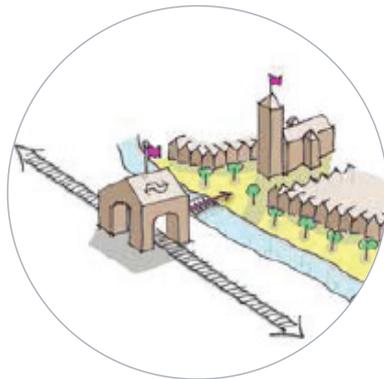
FIXING  
THE LINK

## Changing places by developing a door-to-door solution to travel

### What does society expect of us as a passenger transport provider?

In many ways the answer is simple: we are expected to facilitate the movement of people.

The challenge we face as an industry is to ensure that we understand the changing expectations of society and that we continually explore opportunities to innovate and deliver on those expectations. In 2013, Abellio jointly with the Campaign for Better Transport launched the publication 'Fixing the Link'. We believe the Fixing the Link methodology responds to the expectation of society by enhancing the contribution that train companies can make to the economic prosperity of local town centres and high streets.



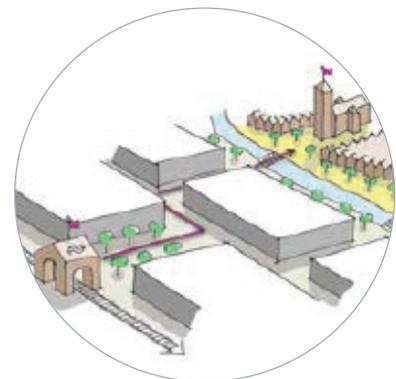
This is a new planning methodology that goes beyond traditional station travel planning. Behavioural research shows that people will stay longer and spend more money at their destination if they have a positive experience from arrival at the station onwards. Our Fixing the Link approach, developed by our parent company, Nederlandse Spoorwegen, measures and assesses the quality of walking routes between local stations and adjacent town centres, using four criteria; liveliness/ 'busyness', distance, safety and comfort.

If the station is to become a facilitator of town centre growth its proximity to the centre is a crucial determinant of success. Therefore walking and cycling routes, which are often complicated and cross busy roads, are assessed by Fixing the Link to identify remedies to the barriers to easier access.

Improving the quality of the pedestrian route can complement other measures to promote sustainable modes. It can benefit those who already travel regularly to the station on foot or by bicycle, as well as visitors who travel to the town on an occasional or one-off basis. Modal shift can bring obvious environmental improvements but can also help to restore and enhance the historic fabric of towns, which is often the main attraction for visitors.

By encouraging active travel through the Fixing the Link approach, the benefits are:

- A better quality of life
- A more attractive environment
- A boost to business
- Respite where damage caused by heavy traffic can be repaired
- Encouragement to develop and maximise sustainable transport developments



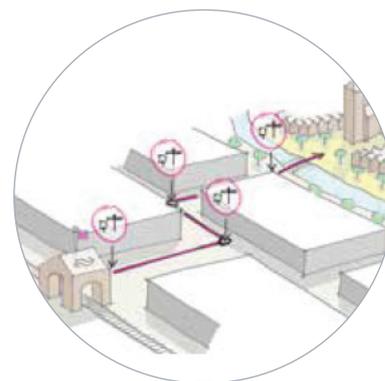
### The UK context

Many railway stations have poor links to town centres. Recent developments have not helped, with responsibility for town centre links split between railway and local authority. For some decades transport and spatial planning was more concerned to provide for access by car than by public transport and this has also left its mark on the pattern and type of developments in towns as elsewhere.

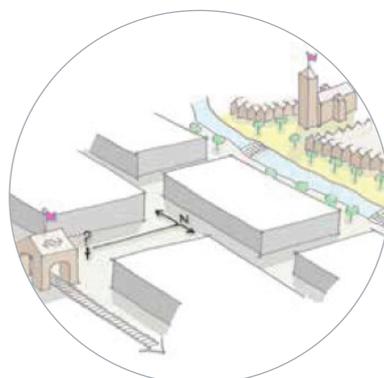
At Abellio Greater Anglia we have been working with three towns on the franchise route; Ely, Colchester and Ipswich with a view of using the Fixing the Link methodology to understand their environment and how it can be improved through the research. Piloting Fixing the Link in these towns gives a good indication of how well the Dutch format has been adapted for the UK market. The towns are independently evaluated by the Campaign for Better Transport to identify improvements that have occurred through Fixing the Link.

Recent debate on town centres has focused on parking and access by car. However, good access by public transport, by bicycle and on foot is of at least equal importance. This places a premium on the quality of the route between the station and town centre. Fixing the Link methodology offers a way for local authorities and train operators to assess the quality of the link and come up with perception based measures to improve it over the short and the longer term. It should be possible to enhance the legibility and the safety and comfort of a link in the shorter term, though the creation of a more human scale may be a longer term project.

Abellio's application of the Fixing the Link methodology resulted in lower scores being recorded for the English towns compared to the average Dutch score. The methodology was designed specifically for Dutch environments therefore the use in the English context would produce different figures. A major issue that does bring down the score of English towns is the station's location to the town centre. In the Netherlands, the proximity of station and town centre is much closer than their English counterparts and thus connectivity between the two will be more of an issue. Simple recommendations, derived from Fixing the Link go some way to improve the links between the town centre and station, thus making the journey to and from easier to navigate.



Signs can be quickly and cheaply installed



Pedestrians need good signs when the route is not obvious



the  
abellio  
way

Beyond  
a-to-b