

# UWE studies travel time - is it really wasted?

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Travel is something that impacts on most of us. For many, the daily commute is a way of life and bookends the beginning and end of the day. But is travel time ‘dead time’ that needs to be reduced to a minimum by providing more and faster transportation, or is there more to the way we choose to use our travel time?

The latest research from the University of the West of England into travel time is featured on a new Research TV film that can be seen at [www.research-tv.com/stories/society/time/](http://www.research-tv.com/stories/society/time/) .

The film, entitled ‘Travelling Times’, shows that travelling between home and our place of work is a phenomenon largely confined to modern industrialised societies. It considers the question that the best approach to transport may not be to reduce travel time but to provide a framework that enables people to use this time more constructively.

Researchers spent many hours studying travel habits, watching people on trains, coaches and buses, observing the paraphernalia we surround ourselves with on modern journeys. The knowledge developed by the project will then be shared and transferred to the transport sector.

Professor Glenn Lyons, director of UWE’s Centre for Transport and Society, says:

“A key assumption is that travel time is wasted, and that by reducing it we will become more productive. That assumption is at the heart of multi-billion pound decisions about how we’ve invested in our transport system.”

However, because of changes in technology and the changing nature of employment, there are lots of opportunities to use travel time. When people are on a business trip, travelling in a car or on a train, they have a choice whether to work or take time out and have a break. There are more ways to use our time, with mobile phones, laptops, listening to music or playing the latest video game.

Professor Lyons continues:

“The film shows that people attach certain values to the journey to and from work that they’re not immediately conscious of. It has a transitional value between work and domestic roles, offering an escape from responsibilities in both the office and the home.”

The research will produce a number of reports and recommendations aimed at the transport industry that will help shape the future of travel. The lessons coming out of the study, entitled ‘Travel-Time Use in the Information Age’ suggest that it is the quality of the travel time, rather than the duration or cost of the journey, that is really crucial to the commuter. If this is so, the research could encourage changes in our infrastructure to ensure public transport once again offers a very real alternative to the car.

Source: University of the West of England

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