

ENGAGING VULNERABLE ROAD USERS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS: A CASE STUDY OF ZEBRA CROSSINGS

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Background

- In the UK, Zebra crossings provide an alternative to uncontrolled crossings and are more economical than signalised crossings.
- However, the use of Zebra crossings may be problematic for some groups, especially people with disabilities.
- Methods for fully exploring and understanding their experiences and perceptions of their interactions with public spaces have not been well researched.



Study Conception

- In 2021, Jacobs, with partners The Scottish Collaboration for Public Health Research and Policy (SCPHRP), University of Edinburgh, was appointed by Transport Scotland to undertake a second phase of research into Zebra crossings.
- This phase of research (Phase 2) had a particular focus on the needs of people with disabilities and their attitudes to, and experience of, Zebra crossings.

Aim

To explore how reasonable adjustments could be made to Zebra crossings to ensure they meet the needs of individuals with protected characteristics.



Methods

- Individuals from the most at risk road user groups were invited to participate in the research. This included individuals who were: aged 65 and over, visually impaired or blind, hearing impaired or deaf, had a physical disabili(es), and/or had a cognitive disabili(es).
- Representative organisations played a key role in promoting the opportunity to participate via their networks.
- Recommendations from these organisations and best practice guidance informed the design of recruitment materials and data collection methods.
- The content and format was tailored to meet the communication preferences of the different target groups.
- Participants had the opportunity to participate in either one or both stages of the study.



Stage 1: Focus Groups

- Five focus groups were conducted on Zoom between May–June 2022.
- Each session included a different representative group, and was specifically designed and delivered to enable full participation by participants.
- For example, in the focus group for individuals who were hearing impaired or deaf, a researcher fluent in British sign language (BSL) facilitated the session and English/BSL interpretation with captioning was also provided via two interpreters and Zoom's captioning software.



Stage 2: Participant Observation

- Participants included individuals from four of the five representative groups (all except the cognitive impairment group).
- The observational study took place at a Zebra crossing in the City of Edinburgh.
- This crossing had been identified for suitability and risk assessed prior to being used in the study.
- Participants were accompanied and recorded by a researcher on approaching the Zebra crossing, whilst crossing, and on moving away from the crossing.
- One of the researchers conducted a short interview (also recorded) with each participant after crossing to understand their crossing experience.
- Participants who preferred to communicate in BSL crossed with, and were interviewed by, a researcher who spoke BSL.



Practical Considerations

- Additional care was taken to ensure that recruitment materials and methods were developed, and data collection was conducted, in a manner that was inclusive, and enabled full participation by all participant groups.
- This involved working closely with representative organisations and developing a thorough understanding of best practice guidance on how to conduct research with each specific participant group.
- While working with individuals with protected characteristics, it is recommended that researchers allocate additional time and effort when planning recruitment and data collection.
- This will ensure methods are ethical, and inclusive and maximise the chances of collecting the desired quality and quantity of data to make sound policy and practice recommendations for those who need it most.



Conclusion

- This study outlines ways in which to include disability groups in transport planning research.
- Group members were highly engaged and willing to participate in research that benefits them and how they interact with public spaces.



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