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(Track 11)

What Constitutes a 'Successful' Mega Urban
Transport Project (MUTP):
Some Findings from the UK

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❑ **Some general findings**

- politics
- tools & techniques
- sustainable development
- retrofitting
- project objectives

❑ **UK case study projects**

- Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL - now known as HS1)
- Jubilee Line Extension (JLE - London)
- M6 Toll Road (West Midlands)

- 80+ interviews conducted
- Structured and unstructured interviews
- Focus on key stakeholders involved in/impacted by case study projects:
 - decision-makers: public and private sector
 - senior managers
 - senior/local politicians
 - community/lobby groups

Project appraisal

□ Political will/ influence

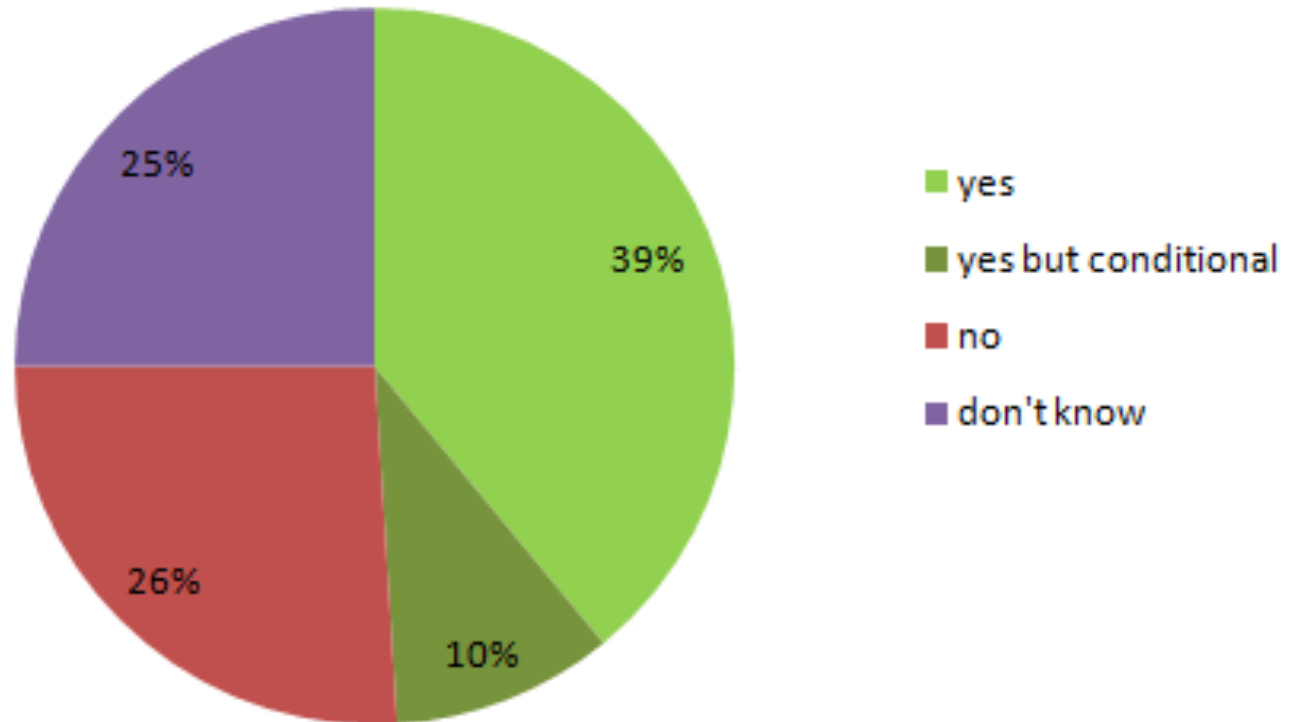
- **political will/political imperatives and pragmatism, as well as gut feelings of key project stakeholders**, frequently override technocratically / economically derived outputs based on conventional appraisal methodologies such as CBA
- **there is even widespread skepticism as to whether CBA is a suitable appraisal methodology** to accurately reflect the true costs and benefits of such projects among MUTP experts. A recent international survey of such persons indicated that 82 per cent of those interviewed considered these methods alone as inadequate to judge the success/failure of MUTPs. This is reflected by the following quote provided from an interviewee:

"The thing is when you make a decision, what do you make that decision based on? The decision has got to be based on how much good it can provide and at what cost. It's basically a Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA). But if you look at a lot of projects that are currently being considered, the Cost Benefit Analysis, or the (CBA) ratio, is *actually* very poor, so you've got to conclude that they're being driven by political wish lists rather than the realities of life....."

□ Techniques/tools/models

- **current project forecasting, appraisal and evaluation tools and processes** (especially the manner in which they are utilised) are, in too many cases, perceived to be *flawed* and/or too limited in scope for MUTP use;
- **there is widespread professional reluctance (if not denial)** in many influential professional and academic quarters to acknowledge these shortcomings, except insofar as these techniques can be incrementally improved upon by employing ever more 'sophisticated' techniques/enhancements.

Figure #1: UK Interviewee responses :
“Were the appraisal and travel demand models used to forecast potential revenues fundamentally flawed”



Sustainable development visions

- **Role of sustainability in MUTP planning, appraisal & delivery**
- **Interviewee responses recognise the need for a broader range of appraisal criteria need to be employed** for MUTPs that emphasise 'sustainability' and that this use of sustainability criteria should be:
 - applicable to *all* parties in MUTP planning, appraisal & delivery;
 - capable of being operationalized; and
 - supported by sustainable institutional frameworks.
- **Sustainability appraisals should be a key part of the initial MUTP conception**, as well as planning and appraisal process:
 - to determine the need and justification for the project; and
 - to determine alignments, associated developments and technical **specifications etc. that will enhance the sustainability profile of the project and the areas on which it impacts.**
- **Sustainability appraisals should *not* simply be used as a means to appraise the performance of different pre-determined narrow options.**

Figure #2: UK Interviewee responses :
“Do you consider that sustainability considerations should play a major part in the planning and delivery of MUTPs

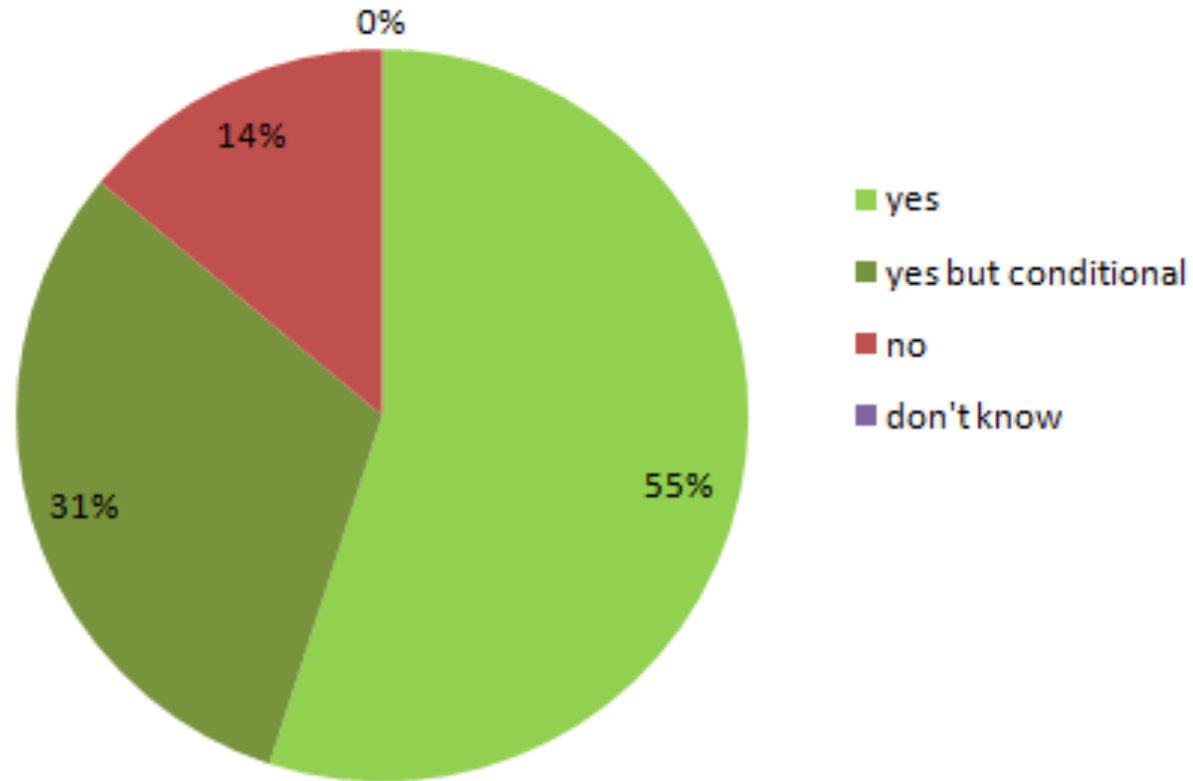
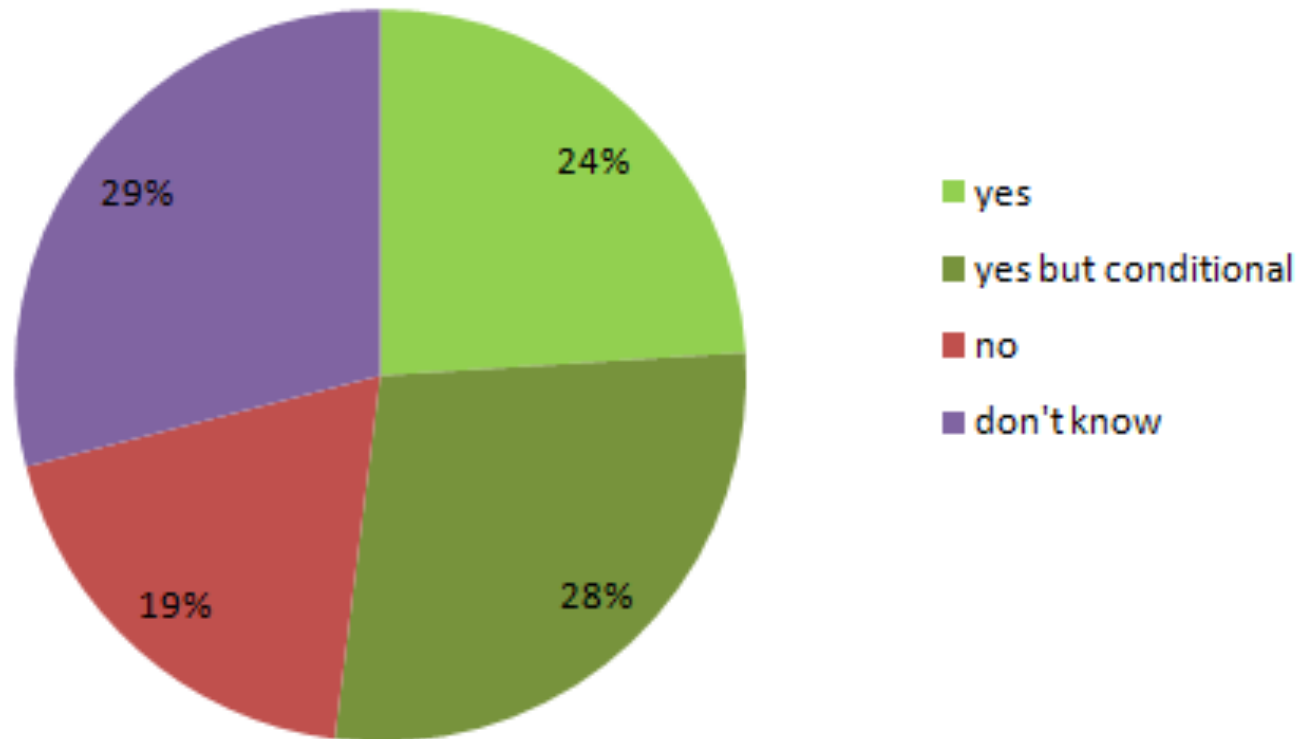


Figure #3: UK Interviewee responses :

“ Does the new emerging agenda related to visions of sustainable development offer a better framework for judging the success of MUTPs?”

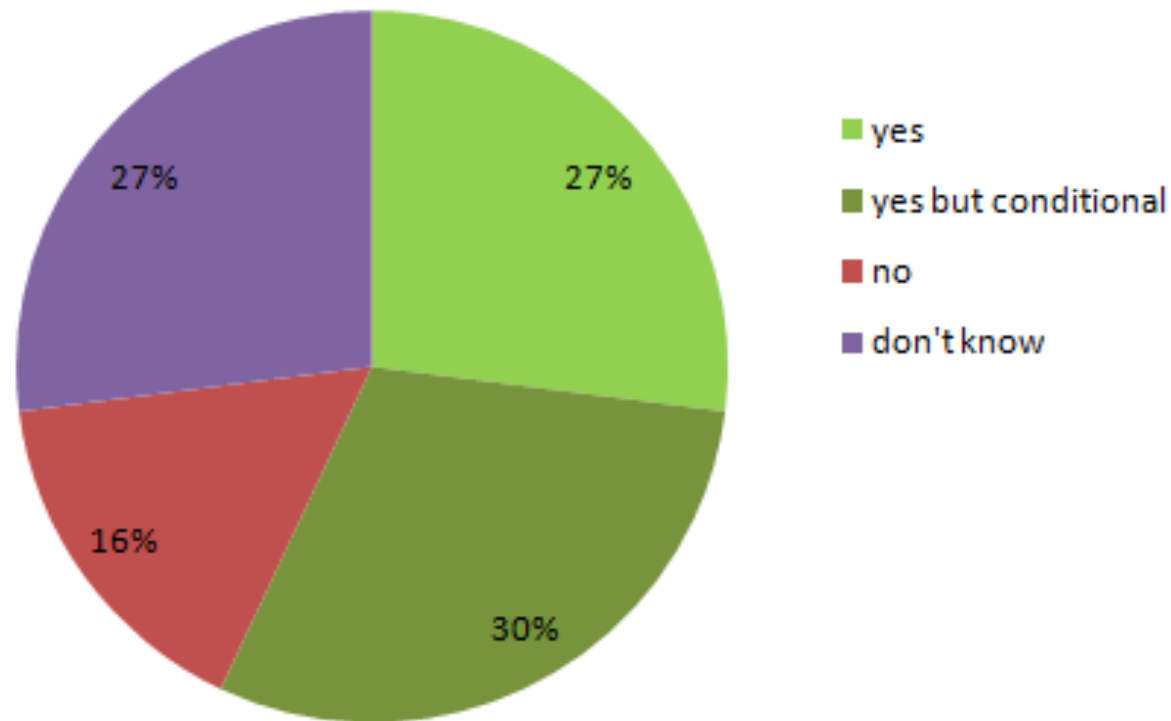


❑ **MUTPs and retrofitting**

- **despite the increasingly acknowledged ‘evolutionary’ nature of many MUTPs**, there is little current thinking or debate in the UK as to how such projects might be better retrofitted so as to meet the future needs/ requirements of the 21stC in relation to SDVs; and
- **there is, furthermore, a distinct lack of clarity** as to how MUTPs and the development/regeneration projects they spawn might be planned and/or retrofitted so as to achieve key sustainability objectives needed for 21st century.

Figure #4: UK Interviewee responses :

“Do you consider that it would be possible to introduce retrofit strategies that would enable MUTPs in general, and the project in particular, to achieve more sustainable outcomes?”

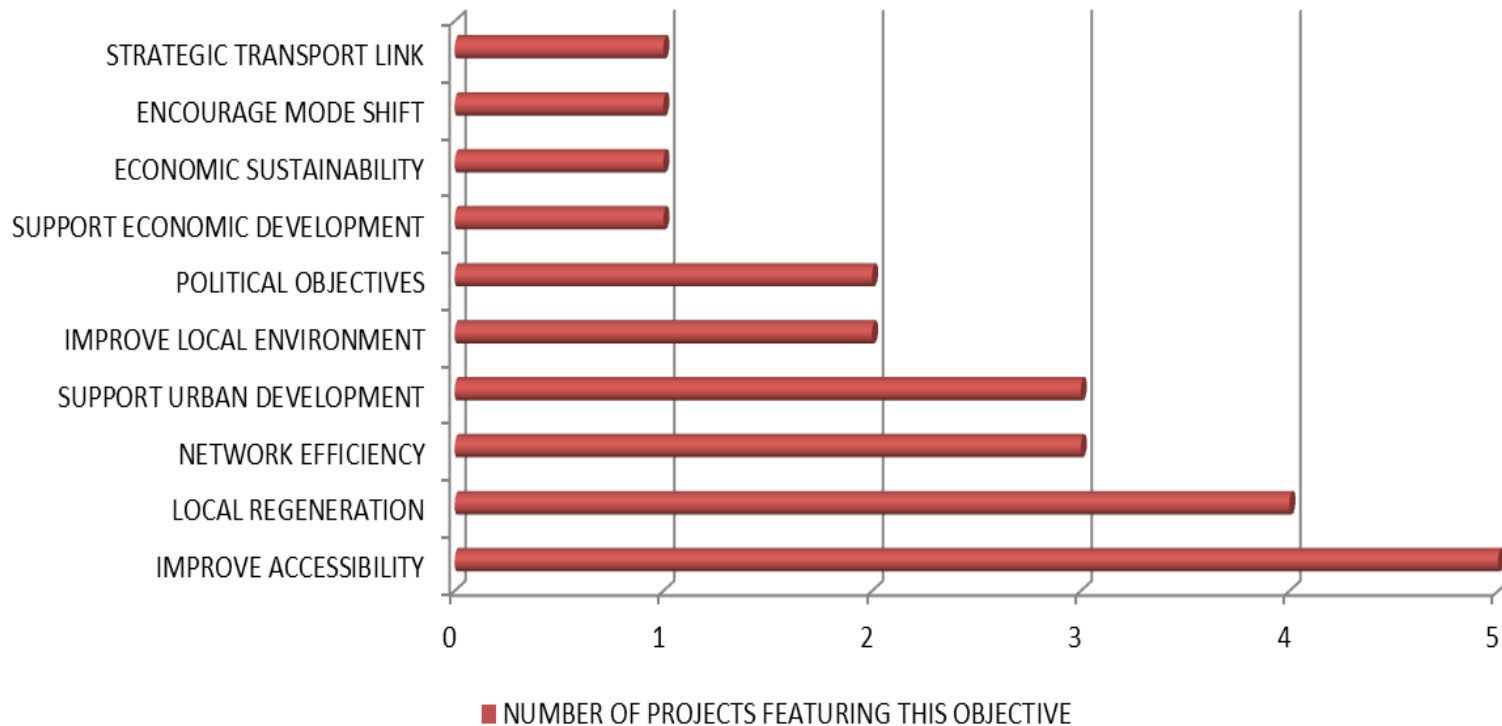


Project success & project objectives

□ General observations

- **to make sound judgements about a project's success/failure** it is important to have a clear sense of the overriding context that prevailed at the time of project's conception and subsequent key development phases since this will impact on:
 - the fundamental objectives for the project when set; and
 - any revisions made to project objectives during the planning, appraisal and delivery period, including 'bolt-on' needs/desires associated with such matters as territorial restructuring, regeneration - frequently as a reflection of political imperatives or visions ('emergent objectives').
- **project objectives for MUTPs typically evolve almost 'organically' over time** as a result of the interplay between many different influential stakeholder agendas which encompass much broader expectations of these projects than was originally envisaged.

Figure #5: Emergent Objectives from 30 Omega Case Studies



□ UK observations

• CTRL:

- **basic project management objectives associated with time/cost/specification were seemingly met** - but *only* on the basis of the revised implementation programme established after the 1997/98 financial restructuring;
- **wider agglomeration objectives are still in the process of being met** in light of development/regeneration initiatives currently underway at King's Cross, Stratford and Ebbsfleet (all private sector funded) but such developments are still years from completion – the full spectrum of agglomeration impacts will not therefore become apparent for many years

• M6 Toll Road:

- **Basic project management objectives associated with time/ cost/specification were seemingly met** at minimal cost to public purse;
- **there are clear differences, however, in the way that the 'success/failure' of this project is perceived** due to the lack of clarity about its principle intended function (congestion free alternative to M6 versus relief road); and
- **Evidence suggests that the revised *stated* project objectives were *not* made abundantly clear to all stakeholders.**

- **JLE:**
 - **This project was over budget and over time** with ultimately a reduced capacity due to signalling system downgrade (currently now being improved); and
 - **Clear differences of views/positions exist** as to the criteria of success/failure of the project exists, depending on different stakeholder perspectives:
 - Treasury thought it an enormous disaster;
 - Private sector see it as a ‘success’, although it concedes it could have been better planned/managed;
 - Planners, real estate interests and users see it also as a ‘success’.

- **Importance of early establishment of project goals & objectives**
- **Seen to be very helpful for those projects which are seen as straightforward** (i.e. with limited roles/functions and functional/geographic interfaces):
 - beneficial both in reaching a firm understanding with stakeholders about anticipated project outcomes (especially in terms of managing stakeholder expectations); and
 - beneficial in providing a widely agreed basis for appraisal and evaluation.
- **For complex projects with multiple roles/functions and complex interfaces**, however, these typically need to *evolve* in response to changing and different contextual influences – here, planning may even positively benefit from the interplay (of tensions) between competing stakeholder agendas.
- **MUTP planning and delivery agents need to take an *early view* on the degree of complexity likely to be associated with each project** – ideally this needs to be arrived at in discussion with key stakeholders as a basis for preparing appropriate consultation plans/programmes.

- **For ‘complex’ projects** - especially those which are positioned as ‘strategic agents of change’, these require *considerable* reflection and debate during which the interplay between different key MUTP stakeholders and other policy agendas can be played out. A key challenge here is: for how long should this engagement last and who should be involved? An interviewee representing one of the key stakeholders of a UK MUTP defended this process by explaining:

"..... basically you plan the project and then see what it can do in terms of delivering other benefits - but initially you concentrate on the project itself. This is not muddling through, it is just the way the system works whereby you have the project up front and then expose it to the system in which 'planning' plays the role of honest broker, hearing all stakeholder views....."

Lessons

- Wherever possible, differentiate between those MUTP objectives that are:
 - core/essential, and represent the fundamental reason(s) why the project was planned and is being implemented, and;
 - those that represent perhaps less certain but nevertheless desirable outcomes.
- Enable a more consistent and broader approach to MUTP appraisal to be undertaken employing multi-criteria analysis (MCA).
- Provide for the establishment of systems/processes and measurements (where applicable) that enable clear and transparent MUTP appraisal and post-project evaluation.
- Ensure that sustainability appraisal criteria are capable of being operationalized in such a way as to be meaningful to all important MUTP stakeholders.
- Acknowledge that the benefits/costs/impacts associated with MUTPs are:
 - often very difficult to discern at the outset;
 - often only realised in the long-term;
 - often unexpected; but are nonetheless often critically important, and to avoid the rhetoric which hides these facts.