Local Action for a Low Traffic Future

Local Transport Plans: A guide for councillors and campaigners

LOW TRAFFIC FUTURE

Our vision is a world with clean air, safe streets, vibrant communities, a stable climate and healthy natural environment for future generations

For more, visit our website

INTRODUCTION

Why we need a Low Traffic Future

A low traffic future is one in which children can play in the streets, where neighbours can socialise, and young and old alike can get out and about easily, without needing to drive everywhere.

It is a world with cleaner air, safer streets, excellent public transport networks, great walking and cycling provision. It would be good for our health and that of our streets and communities, our economy and our environment.

Compare this with the costs of the UK's current 'High Traffic Present':

- *Congestion:* This is estimated to cost the UK economy £7.7 billion a year.
- *Air pollution:* Pollution is estimated to be involved in 30,000 deaths annually in the UK, at an economic cost of £27 bn or more. The UK Government has lost three court cases over its failure to keep pollution within legal limits.
- *Noise pollution:* The estimated health, societal, amenity and lost productivity costs of noise in England add up to around £14-20bn annually.
- *Road danger:* The cost of road deaths and injuries in 2023 was estimated to be £42.25bn.
- *Physical inactivity:* Inactivity-related ill health costs the UK around £7.4bn annually.
- *Greenhouse gas emissions.* Transport is now the largest emitting sector of the UK economy, with pre-pandemic emissions levels in 2019 being only 5% below those in 1990. Most of this consists of CO_2 emissions from road transport. Increases in road traffic (particularly van traffic) and, more recently, increases in vehicle size have offset the benefits of more fuel-efficient engines.

Solutions: an overview

There is no single 'silver bullet' for achieving a low traffic future. However, at the local level, it will involve investing in safe and accessible streets for walking, wheeling and cycling - including measures such as 20mph schemes, school streets and low traffic neighbourhoods - as well as by working to improve public, shared and community transport (i.e. not only rail, 'metro', bus and coach services, but also car-pooling, ride-sharing, public cycle hire schemes. dial-a-ride and similar schemes). It will also involve managing travel demand, primarily by ensuring that new housing and other developments are located and designed to make it easy to travel to and from them without depending on private cars.

Sustainable transport improvements can be funded partly by rebalancing transport spending away from new road schemes that won't be needed in a low traffic future, and partly from some form of road user charging. Charging schemes should aim not only to reduce road traffic demand directly, but also indirectly by funding improvements to walking, cycling and public transport, thereby reducing our dependence on cars, vans and lorries. Public support for the principle of road user charging has grown markedly since 2007, though it remains important to ensure that charging schemes are fair and seen to be fair.

As for freight transport, the primary goal should be to enable as much long-distance freight as possible to be shifted onto freight trains. This should be combined with a range of solutions to improve urban logistics (i.e. delivering goods to and within town and city centres), including trans-shipment facilities and increased use of cargo-bikes.

LOCAL TRANSPORT PLANS: BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

Background to LTPs

In April 2025, Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander re-confirmed plans, originally announced by the previous Government, to revive the Local Transport Plan (LTP) process, with updated guidance on preparing LTPs to be issued later in 2025. This could be a crucial opportunity for the Department for Transport (DfT) to set out what local transport authorities (LTAs) outside London (i.e. county councils, non-metropolitan unitary authorities, and the combined authorities and combined county authorities which cover England's main conurbations and which have been forming in other areas in recent years) need to do to support the vision of DfT's Integrated National Transport Strategy, which is also due for publication later in 2025.

The LTP system was established in 1999/2000, under powers set out in Sections 108, 109 and 112 of the Local Transport Act 2000. These initially required local transport authorities in England to set out a long-term vision for transport in their area, together with a multi-year programme of local transport improvements, taking account of Government policy and specifically any statutory guidance it issued on the preparation and content of LTPs. The Department for Transport (DfT) would then allocate multi-year (initially 5-year) funding settlements to each authority, depending on the quality of its LTP.

However the system fell into neglect after 2010, when DfT announced that local authorities were free to submit LTPs whenever they wished to (rather than on a fixed 5-year cycle), and that their funding settlements would no longer depend on these. DfT has not updated its guidance on LTPs since 2009. Councils were instead forced to seek funding from various short-term funding streams, often involving competitive bidding processes, depriving them of the long-term certainty they needed to develop coherent local transport plans and scheme programmes.

So when the last Government announced (in its 2021 Transport Decarbonisation Plan) that it would revive the LTP process, this was widely welcomed by local authorities and environmental campaigners alike. Although it later abandoned that commitment, the current Government now says it plans to issue LTP guidance later in 2025, linked to its forthcoming Integrated National Transport Strategy. This will be accompanied by guidance on setting Quantifiable Carbon Reductions (QCRs) in their LTPs.

Most LTAs in England began revising their LTPs following the last Government's announcement that new LTP guidance would be issued in spring 2022. This never appeared officially (though the draft QCR guidance was published unofficially in response to a Freedom of Information request). Many local authorities have now completed the reviews of their LTPs.

The Government's 2025 Spending Review has now increased the proportion of transport funding LTAs will receive over the four years 2025/6 to 2029/30, to spend as they choose. It includes:

- £8bn of Transport for City Regions (TCR) funding for the 9 city regions with combined authorities - the amount in 2029/30 will be double the amount in 2024/5 in real terms (n.b. a further £7.6bn of TCR funding has also been allocated for the following two years);
- £2.3bn of Local Transport Grant (LTG) funding for England's other local transport authorities outside London - this funding will quadruple between 2024/5 and 2029/30;
- £2bn for London.

With these sorts of funding increases, Low Traffic Future believes it is crucial that DfT's forthcoming LTP guidance clearly specifies the outcomes it expects LTAs to achieve with this funding, e.g. transport decarbonisation, as well as improving air quality, public health, road safety, accessibility and the range of travel options available, particularly for children, young people and others who cannot drive for whatever reason. It should also incentivise them to make further updates to their LTPs, particularly to ensure that LTPs support the Government's forthcoming Integrated National Transport Strategy and its Carbon Budget Delivery Plan (both of which are due for publication later this year), and to take advantage of the opportunities to improve the integration of strategic transport and land-use planning policies which are expected to arise from the passing of the Government's Devolution Bill.

The business case: gathering evidence on the local area

The first step in preparing a Local Transport Plan is to gather evidence on the local area, its needs and opportunities, its people and their travel patterns. This evidence needs to inform the development of the 'business case' for the proposed LTP. The Government's guidance on preparing transport business cases explains that a business case should consist of the following elements:

- A strategic case: showing how the proposed plan fits with the authorities' and the Government's policies and priorities;
- An economic case: showing how it represents value-for-money in delivering public benefits;
- A financial case: showing that the plan is affordable;
- A commercial case: showing that robust financial, contractual and risk-management arrangements can be put in place with relevant private sector contractors or partners;
- A management case: showing that the authority itself has the capacity to implement the Plan.

The strategic case is crucial at the outset. It needs to reflect the Government's emphasis on a 'place-based approach', not least towards decarbonising transport (this is emphasised in the Government's Transport Decarbonisation Plan). Hence the business case needs to reflect the specific needs, challenges and opportunities of the area to be covered, taking account of its:

- Natural environment - including any environmental factors which affect travel patterns or infrastructure provision;
- Physical environment - including settlements, other key destinations and existing transport and other infrastructure;
- Economy - e.g. where key industries or travel attractors are located;
- Demographics - including any factors (e.g. the presence of younger people in university towns) which may affect travel patterns, as well as population groups who face transport poverty or who have a high prevalence of health conditions relating to deprivation that may be exacerbated by air pollution or other transport-related factors.

The Government provides guidance on preparing local transport models and using them to appraise alternative transport options for a local area.

Consultation and engagement

Section 109 of the Transport Act 2000 sets out statutory requirements for public consultation. In summary, when preparing or reviewing an LTP, local transport authorities must consult:

- The Secretary of State;
- Other relevant local highway or traffic authorities and district councils;
- Public transport operators and service providers;
- Organisations representing users of those services; and
- Anyone else they consider appropriate.

It is particularly important to seek to engage with people from demographic groups who are less likely to respond to conventional consultations but who may be particularly impacted by transport (including both poor transport provision and adverse impacts of pollution, unsafe roads etc). These groups include young people, disabled people, women and people from ethnic minority groups.

It is worth bearing in mind Arnstein's Ladder of Engagement, a framework for understanding the different levels of public engagement in decision-making (from non-participation to genuine citizen control). Reaching the higher rungs of the ladder is harder and more resource-intensive, but can produce much better feedback and greater public buy-in to the resulting strategy.

Objectives, targets and (key) performance indicators

The strategy set out in a LTP should have clearly-defined 'objectives'. Being clear about these can help inform decisions about what measures to prioritise for inclusion in the Plan (and the resources to be allocated to them), as well as to explain the rationale for the plan to decision-makers and the public.

Objectives should normally be quantified, in the form of 'performance indicators' (PIs) or, better still, 'targets'. The difference is that PIs merely signal whether progress is being made in the right direction (e.g. whether road casualties are being reduced), whereas targets also spell out the amount of change to be achieved in a given time-period (e.g. an X% reduction in road casualties by year YYYY). The term 'key performance indicators' (KPIs) can also be used to indicate the most important measures of success. Whatever term is used, quantifiable measures of progress help show whether the plan's originally-defined objectives are being met or whether corrective action is needed. Clear objectives and monitoring should not be feared - as if they were an exam to be passed - but as a way of allowing for experimentation and, if need be, learning from what doesn't work as well as what does.

Recommended targets or performance indicators can relate to 'inputs' (e.g. the amount of money spent on cycle facilities), 'outputs' (e.g. the length of cycle network delivered) or 'outcomes' (e.g. increases in cycle use or improvements in cycle safety).

We suggest that targets should relate to:

- Reductions in total mileage travelled, or trips made, by car or by private motor vehicles;
- Increases in the number or (preferably) the proportion of personal trips made by sustainable transport modes: walking, wheeling or cycling, public, community or shared transport;
- Reductions in overall road casualties, and particularly serious or fatal casualties;
- Reductions in the risk (per mile or per trip) of injury (or of serious or fatal injury) while walking or cycling - n.b. risk-based targets or indicators are essential here, as targets simply to reduce pedestrian or cycle casualty numbers can create a perverse incentive to reduce walking and cycling activity. Conversely, a risk-based indicator also reflects changes in the levels of walking and cycling. So for instance, if cycle mileage increases by 50%, a 25% increase in cyclist casualties still amounts to a 17% reduction in the risk of a cycling casualty per mile travelled.
- Reductions in pollutant emissions from road transport, and/or compliance with air quality standards at road-side monitoring sites.

Quantifiable Carbon Reduction (QCR) targets

Besides the targets or indicators suggested above, DfT has said it will expect LTPs to quantify the Plan's expected impact on reducing carbon from surface transport - though DfT prefers not to refer to these Quantifiable Carbon Reductions (QCRs) as "targets". England's seven Sub-national Transport Bodies (STBs - e.g. Transport for the North, or Transport for the South East) have developed a Carbon

Assessment Playbook to support local transport authorities in setting QCRs for their areas. QCRs are expected to include not only the emissions from burning petrol or diesel but also from producing energy for electric vehicles, and emissions from building and maintaining transport infrastructure. Nonetheless, the main component of QCRs is likely to be tail-pipe emissions from motor vehicles, predominantly private cars.

The consultancy Transport for Quality of Life (TQL) has summarised evidence from the Green Alliance and sources indicating the need to reduce car-kilometres by at least 20% by 2030.

We therefore recommend setting targets to reduce car mileage by at least 20% in rural areas by 2030, with more ambitious targets being set for urban areas, given the additional need to reduce congestion and to meet air pollution targets.

Appraisal

Local authorities are required to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment of their LTPs. This will include identifying climate and air pollution impacts, as well as on landscapes, biodiversity, habitats and indeed on human health (see guidance). It should never be simply a tick-box exercise. Legally, it must genuinely be used either to validate the LTP's proposed strategy or to consider whether to adopt other policy options to reduce adverse environmental and health impacts.

Monitoring

The setting of targets or (key) performance indicators (KPIs or PIs) clearly needs to go hand-in-hand with considering how they will be monitored, including what data is already available that can be drawn on, what additional data may be needed in order that meaningful targets and (K)PIs can be set, and what resources are needed to gather and analyse these data. Data sources can include:

- Manual, automatic or video counts of vehicles or people, e.g. crossing cordons or screenlines - this will reveal levels of transport activity at the locations in question (and hence changes over time in this activity), but not the demographics of the people travelling, nor the start or end-points of those journeys or the reasons why they are being made;
- Surveys - which can reveal more information about where people are travelling from, why, and the demographics of those travellers. However, comprehensive travel surveys are clearly more expensive. More limited surveys e.g. 'hands up' school travel surveys) can be a cost-effective way to reveal data on specific trip-types and/or to specific locations of interest.
- Nationally-collected data, such as the census.

In the absence of more formal guidance on cost-effective monitoring strategies, we recommend the guidance on sustainable transport monitoring strategies, produced by the Distillate project.

ACTIVE TRAVEL AND SAFE STREETS

A key measure for creating a low traffic future is to redesign our roads, streets and junctions to be people-friendly places, where children can play, neighbours can socialise, people of all ages and abilities can get around safely and easily by walking, wheeling and cycling, and where high-streets and street-life can thrive without being choked by exhaust fumes.
[N.B. 'Wheeling' means using any mobility aid that can legally be used on the footway, i.e. the pavement].

However. as well as creating good facilities specifically for active travel, councils also need to look at ways to reduce through traffic and/or the speed of traffic, whether in urban centres, residential neighbourhoods or rural lanes. Taken together, these measures should create comprehensive networks of routes for walking and cycling that should be set out in each local authority's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs - see the Department for Transport's guidance on LCWIPs), and incorporated into their Local Transport Plans.

Councils also need to consider the importance of good road and path maintenance, and the positive promotion of walking and cycling, particularly among the groups who could most benefit from the physical activity but who are least likely to take up active travel without encouragement and support.

Walking and wheeling

Walking networks in towns need to connect people safely and conveniently from their homes to nearby schools, shops and other key facilities – for more, see local cycling and walking network plans.

Pavements must be wide enough, well-maintained and clear of clutter. Features such as signing, seats, trees and planters are crucial for enabling people to navigate, for older people to rest, to reduce pollution and create safe and attractive places where people want to spend time. However they need to be placed where they will not obstruct wheelchair users or create hazards for visually impaired people. Tactile paving is vital for informing visually impaired people where they can walk safely.

Road crossings need to be located and designed to maximise the convenience of using them. Crossing-points across more minor side-roads should be designed to visually reinforce the new Highway Code rules which give priority to pedestrians and cycle users going straight ahead over vehicles turning into and out of those side roads. Signalised pedestrian crossings need to provide plenty of crossing time for pedestrians, allowing older and disabled people also to use them without danger or stress. For the fastest and/or busiest roads, bridges or tunnels are needed. These should be step-free and with gradients and diversions minimised, to make it as easy as possible for disabled people to use them. Where tunnels are provided, they should be wide and straight to provide natural light and good visibility right through the tunnel wherever possible.

Further information

Official guidance: The UK Department for Transport (DfT) has yet to produce a guide to designing infrastructure for walking, to complement its Cycling Infrastructure Design guidance (see below). However Active Travel England (an arms-length Government agency responsible for supporting and assessing local authorities in delivering good practice on walking, wheeling and cycling) has published various tools to support good design for specific schemes and for new developments, as well as a library of good practice case studies.

There is important advice on the planning of networks (as distinct from individual schemes) for walking, wheeling and indeed cycling, in DfT's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) guidance, and some useful (though dated) design advice in the two volumes of the Manual for Streets guidance (see volume 1 - n.b. volume 2 is not available online, but a replacement for both volumes is planned). Other useful sources include the Welsh Government's Active Travel Act guidance and any locally applicable guidance (such as Transport for London's Planning for Walking Toolkit).

Unofficial guidance: See Living Streets's online briefing on inclusive pedestrian design.

Cycling

Cycling networks, like walking networks, need to be safe, direct, coherent, comfortable and attractive – see local cycling and walking network plans.

Cycle facilities along fast or busy main roads should be physically protected from motor traffic: the faster and busier the traffic, the greater the level of protection that is needed (but see also the section on safe streets and lanes for solutions where protection is not needed). Cycles should also be kept separate from pedestrians, unless there is plenty of space and/or usage is light (e.g. on a path next to an inter-urban road), allowing both groups to mix safely and without stress.

Safe and secure cycle parking should be provided in new residential developments and at key destinations such as schools, shops, workplaces, public transport stations and interchanges, and other public facilities. In addition to cycle parking, public transport services should make provision for cycling to and from stations and interchanges, with space on trains, trams and longer-distance bus or coach services, and cycle reservation systems on any train services where seats can also be reserved. See also the shared transport section for more on the important role of cycle hire schemes.

National and local government should support the use of non-standard pedal cycles, such as child trailers and cargo-bikes (whether for households or businesses), trikes and hand-cycles (these can be crucial mobility aids for the many people who find walking difficult but who can cycle), and electrically assisted pedal cycles (or 'e-bikes'). Dutch evidence shows that the average journey on an e-bike is about 60% longer than on a conventional bicycle. E-bikes can therefore substantially increase cycling's contribution to tackling climate change, enabling people to replace car-use for longer or hillier journeys in rural areas, as well as enabling older, less healthy or disabled people to take up cycling who might otherwise find it difficult or impossible.

Cyclists also need good signing and waymarking.

Further information

Official guidance: As noted in the previous section, DfT provides guidance on the planning of active travel networks (as distinct from individual schemes) in its Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) guidance. For planning specific cycle routes or other infrastructure features (e.g. cycle parking), the key reference in England and in Northern Ireland is DfT's Cycling Infrastructure Design guidance (Local Transport Note LTN 1/20), together with the various design advice and support tools provided by Active Travel England. Other cycle-specific design guidance includes National Highways' Designing for Cycle Traffic (which applies to England's trunk roads and motorways, including their junctions and crossings), the Welsh Government's Active Travel Act guidance, (n.b. this also covers network planning), the Scottish Government's Cycling by Design guidance, and any relevant local guidance (such as Transport for London's London Cycling Infrastructure Design Guidance).

Unofficial guidance: See Cycling UK's Space for Cycling guide and the Guide to Inclusive Cycling from Wheels for Wellbeing.

Safe urban streets and rural lanes

The majority of roads and streets in built-up areas should be subject to 20mph speed limits, with similar reductions (e.g. to no more than 40mph for quieter rural lanes). Exceptions can be made for faster and busier main roads, though these should be provided with separate cycle facilities. There is a mistaken view that 20mph limits should be concentrated around school gates. However this simply reinforces the idea that children will normally be driven to school and that they only need to get safely from their parents' car to the school gate. Instead, we need 20mph schemes to keep children safe near their homes and throughout their walking and cycling journeys, whether to school or to visit friends or anywhere else. For more information, see the 20sPlentyForUs website.

In September 2023, 20mph became the 'default' speed limit for built-up streets in Wales – allowing exceptions as above. This was implemented following a Public Health Wales evidence review, a Task Force Report and extensive consultation. Low Traffic Future urges the governments for England and Scotland to follow suit.

Other solutions can involve creating various forms of vehicle restriction in town or city centres or in residential neighbourhoods. Town or city centre schemes typically involve using traffic restrictions to create pedestrianised or pedestrian-priority areas, normally with cycle access and possibly also with bus, taxi and/or delivery access, at least at some times of the day.

In residential areas though, the approach normally involves introducing traffic-filters which cut off rat-runs, while maintaining access for walking, wheeling and cycling, giving them an advantage for local trips. This type of scheme has come to be known as a Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN), though it is not a new technique. Overall, LTNs have been shown to improve road safety, increase walking and cycling and reduce car use for local journeys. They have generally attracted high public support, both in principle and in practice after their implementation, despite the efforts of vocal minorities to derail their introduction. However they need careful design and good consultation to ensure local community support, and wider measures may also be needed to ensure they reduce traffic overall.

School Streets are another option for reducing local traffic pressures and creating more child-friendly street environments, particularly around primary schools. These schemes prohibit driving at school arrival and drop-off times on selected local streets. Exemptions can be made for local residents and businesses. School Streets tend to cover very minor roads and a more limited area than LTNs, though the two types of measures can also be combined. School Streets are generally easier to implement and are more popular initially than LTNs. Monitoring has shown these schemes do also reduce traffic.

Traffic calming features (such as road humps and speed cushions) and/or zonal speed camera systems can reduce speeds and improve safety (see review of evidence), and may be useful where the layout of a street (or a street network) does not naturally keep most drivers' speeds down to around 20mph. Still, it is generally preferable to design streets to feel like safe, people-friendly places, with attractive surfacing and street furniture (e.g. seating and planters) which enable and welcome people of all ages and abilities to walk, cycle and wheel safely and easily.

Oxfordshire and Cornwall have delivered 20mph limits for almost all of the counties' towns and villages, having made funding available subject to support from local councillors and parish councils - this was forthcoming in the vast majority of cases. Surrey County Council is not only introducing 20mph limits for most (though not all) urban streets but also has a process for reducing rural single-carriageway limits potentially to 40mph on rural lanes, or to 20mph or 30mph in villages. This

approach could be combined with the design features employed by the Quiet Lanes schemes in Norfolk and Kent and/or with the use of average speed cameras.

Further information

Official guidance: See DfT's statutory guidance on Setting local speed limits (though a long-promised update to this document is still awaited). The Welsh Government has published several documents relating to its plans to make 20mph the 'default' speed limit for built-up areas in Wales.

Unofficial guidance: See the guides to creating Low Traffic Neighbourhoods from the charities Possible, Sustrans, and from Living Streets and the London Cycling Campaign. CPRE produces a guide to Quiet Lanes; the School Streets Initiative has a collection of useful resources on creating School Streets; while 20sPlentyForUs provides information and advice on 20mph limits.

Local cycling and walking network plans

The UK Government has encouraged local authorities in England (outside London) to draw up Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs), while Welsh authorities are legally required to adopt Active Travel Network Maps (ATNMs), in accordance with the Welsh Government's Active Travel Act design guidance. However the principles, and the steps needed to create a LCWIP or an ATNM, are similar:

- Define the geographical area to be covered (including any cross-boundary issues).
- Identify the most important start and end-points of journeys (e.g. residential areas, schools and colleges, employment locations, shopping areas, healthcare, public transport and other facilities) that need to be connected by safe, convenient and direct walking and cycling routes.
- Prioritise the corridors with the greatest potential to unlock increased cycling and walking if provision is improved – the Propensity to Cycle Tool can assist with this.
- Identify the actual route alignments where walking and/or cycling conditions can be improved most cost-effectively to maximise the increases in walking and/or cycling.
- Consult and seek support for the route proposals (including from neighbouring authorities etc where cross-boundary issues arise, as well as from the wider public), adapting them as required in the light of feedback received.

However councils need to do more to integrate the planning and funding of LCWIPs (or ATNMs in Wales) and Rights of Way Improvement Plans (RoWIPs). LCWIPs and ATNMs are widely seen as being mainly for day-to-day walking and cycling in urban areas, while rights of way are often seen as being for recreational walking (and, to a more limited extent, cycling and horse-riding) in rural areas. Yet this distinction is not, and should not be, hard and fast. On the contrary, joining up the planning and funding of these networks would make it easier, for instance, for children to walk or cycle from outlying villages to schools in nearby towns, or for families in those towns to get out for recreational walks or bike rides without feeling the need to jump in the car to get there.

Further information

Official guidance: The key sources for planning walking and cycling networks (as distinct from specific routes or other infrastructure features) are DfT's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) guidance and its statutory guidance on reallocating roadspace to support active travel - or the Active Travel Act guidance in Wales. N.B. The DfT-backed Propensity to Cycle Tool is a very useful resource for prioritising the links in a proposed local cycle network in England or Wales. Finally, there is Government guidance on preparing Rights of Way Improvement Plans (RoWiPs).

Unofficial guidance: See also the guidance on rights of way and RoWIPs from the Ramblers and Cycling UK.

'E-scooters and other 'micro-mobility vehicles'

Electrically-assisted scooters (or 'e-scooters') have become popular in recent years. However at present, the only e-scooters that may be ridden on UK roads are publicly hired e-scooters, as part of a UK Government trial to assess whether to legalise them and, if so, how. Privately-owned scooters may only legally be ridden on private land with the landowner's permission.

The previous Government had plans to create a new category of 'micro-mobility vehicles', that would include e-scooters and other light motor-vehicles, whose power and weight limits will be low enough to permit them to be ridden under similar laws to those applying to pedal cycles. Low Traffic Future urges that these vehicles should be regulated in a way that seeks to maximise their potential benefits for reducing car traffic, while minimising the safety risks to their riders and other people - especially to more vulnerable pedestrians - and to the health benefits of walking and cycling. Micromobility parking bays should preferably be provided on the carriageway, and should never obstruct footways.

Further information:

Official guidance: DfT's guidance on e-scooter trials applies in England, Scotland and Wales.

Larger cars and Sports Utility Vehicles (SUVs)

SUVs have a range of adverse impacts for the environment, road safety, highway maintenance and the management of road space, due to their excessive height, bonnet-height, length, width, weight and/or fuel consumption.

The adverse safety impacts are borne disproportionately by pedestrians and cyclists, especially children, though SUVs present an increased risk to other road-users too. Their own occupants also face increased risks, as they have a significantly higher risk of 'roll-over' incidents compared with standard-cars. There are also psychological effects due to SUV drivers feeling more protected (and thus being less mindful of the risks they might present to other road users) and of 'looking down' on other road users, both literally and metaphorically (even if subconsciously).

SUVs have outsized climate and air pollution impacts, due to their height, weight and width, their tyres, and indeed the emissions from manufacturing them. This is true even when they are electrified. They also have disproportionate road maintenance impacts: these increase exponentially, in proportion to the 4th power of a vehicle's axle load. Parked SUVs can block narrower roads, when lorries, buses, emergency service vehicles or other larger vehicles are unable to get past them.

With SUV sales rising, cars in the UK and EU have been getting wider by an average of 1 cm every 2 years, with over a half being too wide for many car-parking spaces. We support calls from the SUV Alliance and its members (notably Transport & Environment, the Green Alliance and Clean Cities Campaign) for regulations and financial measures to deter the manufacture, purchase and use of larger, heavier and/or higher-emitting vehicles. Paris has trebled the parking charges for heavier vehicles, while Edinburgh has banned SUV advertising on the City Council's billboards and other property. Other councils are actively considering the options available to them.

Further information:

Unofficial guidance: The consultancy Transport for Quality of Life has created a toolkit of measures available to local authorities for managing cars which are heavy, long, wide, have high bonnet-heights

and/or have high fuel consumption. The SUV Alliance provides a compendium of evidence on the range of problems associated with SUVs.

Road and path maintenance

Poorly-maintained roads are the bane of drivers' lives. But pedestrians, cyclists and people with disabilities are far more seriously affected by poor maintenance than drivers. Potholes, obstructions and trip-hazards can cause serious and even fatal injuries, while poor winter maintenance can trap older and disabled people indoors, unable to get to the shops for fear of a dangerous fall.

Yet road maintenance budgets are increasingly skewed towards maintaining motorways, trunk roads and other A-roads. That is despite evidence that funding cuts to minor road maintenance have significantly higher economic costs than those affecting trunk road maintenance. This is probably because walking and cycling account for a greater proportion of the traffic on minor roads, while pedestrians and cyclists' maintenance claims are much more likely to involve serious injuries, not just property damage. The average maintenance-related legal claim made by cyclists is 13 times higher than those made by drivers.

Councils therefore need to give greater priority to inspecting and maintaining minor-roads and off-road paths, including winter maintenance and vegetation clearance of off-road paths and tracks. From a cycling perspective, they also need to focus more on the area of the road nearest the kerb, on potholes which run parallel to (rather than across) the line of cyclists' travel, on hills (where they will be travelling at higher speeds) and on junctions (where cyclists will be turning and watching out for other vehicles' movements rather than the road surface).

Further information:

Official guidance: Well Managed Highway Infrastructure, produced by the UK Roads Liaison Group (UKRLG), applies throughout the UK.

Unofficial guidance: For a cycling perspective, see Cycling UK's briefing on Highway maintenance.

Inclusive access

A key consideration in all aspects of road and street planning and design is the need to consider the needs of children, older people and people with mobility, sensory or cognitive difficulties that make it difficult or dangerous for them to walk or cycle independently. The need for inclusive design is recognised in official walking and cycling infrastructure guidance, though the principle is often overlooked in practice.

In general, infrastructure that is designed for wheelchair access will also work for all forms of pedal cycle (including children's trailers and cargo-bikes, as well as non-standard pedal cycles that are often used as mobility aids). However, there is a tension between the preference of wheelchair users for level surfaces and those of visually-impaired people for kerbs to provide protection and aid navigation. It is therefore vital that schemes are well designed and that tactile surfacing is correctly installed.

Further information:

Official guidance: See DfT's Inclusive mobility guide.

Unofficial guidance: See Living Streets's online briefing on inclusive pedestrian design and Wheels for Wellbeing's Guide to Inclusive Cycling.

Behaviour change programmes to boost walking and cycling

Besides creating a safe and attractive environment for walking, wheeling and cycling, councils should also provide opportunities to try out walking and cycling, so as to remove the non-physical 'barriers' which prevent people from doing so. This is particularly important for groups such as women, people from minority ethnic backgrounds, health patients, older or disabled people. People from these groups are particularly prone to thinking that "cycling and walking aren't for people like me", yet they are exactly the people whose health, wealth and well-being has most to gain from discovering the joys of walking and cycling!

The Government-baked Bikeability cycle training programme has been designed for adults and teenagers as well as younger children, taking people from learning basic balance and control skills (level 1) through to being able to handle busy roads and junctions (level 3).

Cycle training and other 'behaviour change' opportunities should be made available not just in primary schools but also in secondary schools and colleges, cycle-friendly workplaces and in a range of community settings. Women, health patients, people with disabilities, and people from ethnic minority groups (especially women and teenage girls) are much more likely to take up cycling if they do so among peers. This has been well demonstrated by Cycling UK's Big Bike Revival, Cycling for Health and other social prescribing or community outreach programmes, and by Glasgow's Bikes for All programme (which offers heavily discounted access for those on lower incomes to the city's cycle hire scheme). These programmes have all attracted significant participation from these under-represented groups. Living Streets's programmes for diverse communities and older people, and the Ramblers' Wellbeing Walks programmes have similarly impressive results in terms of boosting walking among less active groups.

Further information:

Official guidance: See DfT's webpage on behaviour change projects.

Unofficial guidance: Living Streets runs various programmes to promote walking, notably its WOW programme to promote walking to school, as well as its workplace and communities programmes. Cycling UK provides briefings on the case for and benefits of behaviour change projects generally and cycle training specifically, while the Bikeability Trust provides a range of resources on delivering cycle training for people of different ages and abilities. Sustrans' behaviour change programmes mainly focus on promoting cycling to school, while Modeshift Stars also runs programmes to promote active and sustainable travel for schools and colleges, workplaces and local communities. Campaign for Better Transport's flagship Better Transport Week is an annual celebration of all sustainable transport modes and offers many free resources for local authorities and partners.

PUBLIC, SHARED AND COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

Introduction

Improving the service provided by Britain's public transport networks needs to be central to any plan for a Low Traffic Future. So too is the promotion of various forms of shared transport (e.g. car-clubs and ride-sharing schemes, or public cycle-hire) and voluntary community transport services. The latter often fill critical gaps in the conventional public transport network, and can be vital particularly for older and/or disabled people to maintain their independence, access services and participate in their communities. Yet they are often neglected in planning local transport services.

At present though, public transport in Britain is often expensive, unreliable and poorly co-ordinated, mainly due to a combination of underfunding, fragmentation and organisational failures. It does not help that successive governments have consistently held down or (more recently) cut fuel duty each year since 2010, while allowing public transport fares to rise. The New Economics Foundation reported in 2023 that bus fares had risen by 76% and rail fares by 50% since the fuel duty freezes began, whereas petrol costs were up by just 23%. Greener Vision showed in 2020 that, by then, the policy had increased motor traffic by 5%, resulting in an extra 5 million tonnes of CO_2 emissions and 15,000 tonnes of extra NOx emissions, 250m fewer bus journeys and 75m fewer rail journeys, compared with what would otherwise have happened. The Social Market Foundation has since shown that this policy has cost the Exchequer £100bn.

The current Government has brought in legislation - with another Bill being planned - to bring Britain's railways and rail services back under national public control. Meanwhile, proposed legislation on buses will give local transport authorities greater control over local bus services, including the ability once again to set up municipal bus companies. The 2025 Spending Review has provided funding for various tram and rail schemes, while substantially increasing the levels of non-ringfenced capital funding that local transport authorities will be able to invest in local transport schemes (though the position on revenue funding is more concerning). The proposed English Devolution Bill is expected to lead to the creation of more combined authorities (to be renamed as 'strategic authorities'), with greater financial autonomy, increased powers to manage local transport services, and a remit which will enable them to integrate transport and land-use planning policies in their areas.

The success of bus franchising and public transport integration in Greater Manchester (introduced using powers that were already available to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority), and the track record of the municipal bus companies that were never abolished (e.g. in Nottingham and Reading) shows the potential to achieve similar benefits in other areas. The advantages can include:

- Opportunities to improve the integration of timetables and ticketing (i.e. eliminating the need for passengers to have separate tickets for different transport operators' services);
- Avoiding 'bus wars', where inefficient competition among bus operators on lucrative corridors (e.g. Oxford Road, Manchester) results in congestion, due to 'over-busing';
- Allowing commercially unviable but socially necessary services to be cross-subsidised by other more profitable routes;
- Direct public accountability - this will generally boost public transport services and service quality, by giving the public more of a say in what improvements are most needed.

To maximise the benefits of public, shared and community transport, local transport authorities should seek to:

- Support the expansion of rail and 'metro' networks (n.b the term 'metro' encompasses underground, light rail and tram networks) and new or upgraded stations.

- Similarly, support more frequent and reliable bus and coach services, e.g. by improving bus priority in urban areas and by boosting the coverage and frequency of rural services. Rural buses are a lifeline for rural communities: without them, people who are unable to drive (including young and older people, people with some disabilities and those who simply cannot afford to run a car) face social and economic isolation, unable to reach schools, colleges or work-places other than by relying on lifts and taxis.
- Improve public transport to and within National Parks and other protected landscapes. People will feel much more inclined to leave the car at home when going on weekend breaks or holidays if they feel they can get around without a car when they get there.
- Support community transport services - many of them volunteer-run - such as school or hospital transport schemes, dial-a-ride schemes and similar services, including those aimed primarily at older and/or disabled people.
- Increase usage of the full range of shared transport options, e.g. car clubs in residential areas or ride-sharing for people travelling the same workplaces or business parks.
- Support the growth of public cycle hire schemes, as well as targeted opportunities for people to try cargo-bikes and non-standard pedal cycles, including those with electric assistance.
- Promote better integration of all of the above, including coordinated timetabling and ticketing (e.g. through online 'mobility as a service' (MaaS) platforms), 'mobility hubs' and active travel.

Rail and 'metro' services

Our rail network can provide rapid, environmentally sustainable connectivity, particularly between Britain's main cities. However, passengers can also suffer from:

- High fares, complicated fare structures and inflexible season ticket rules which do not reflect that, for many people, the regular commute is now a thing of the past.
- Overcrowding, particularly at peak times – meaning that the passengers paying the highest fares often get the worst service.
- Poorly integrated ticketing or timetabling, including with buses and other local services.
- Old, uncomfortable and dirty trains on some routes (particularly on non-electrified lines).
- Cancellations and delays – often due to failures of the rail infrastructure itself (e.g. maintenance, signalling or power failures).
- Poor customer service, e.g. a lack of staff at stations and poor information when things go wrong.
- Insufficient provision for cycle users and disabled people – although wheelchair spaces on trains are now standard, many stations lack step-free access and tactile paving, and it can be hard to access mobility support, especially if problems arise (e.g. if a connecting train is delayed). Pedestrian and cycle access to stations is often poor, while cycle parking and cycle spaces on trains are often inadequate and/or poorly designed.

Many of these problems (e.g. high fares, overcrowding and, in the case of underground networks, poor disabled access) also affect our metro networks.

It is hoped that the Government's rail reforms (i.e. the ability to bring rail services under national public control, and the proposed setting up of Great British Railways under the proposed Railways Bill) will address at least some of these problems. Meanwhile local authorities can play a role by:

- Supporting the opening of new or revived rail lines and stations;
- Supporting access and accessibility improvements to and within stations (e.g. for walking, cycling and shared transport, and for disabled people, whatever their mode of transport);
- Promoting integration with other public and shared transport modes, e.g. by creating mobility hubs, improving the coordination of timetables and ticketing arrangements, and integrating rail travel with local bike-share schemes.

Urban 'metro' systems can carry significant numbers of passengers at peak times, on routes which are fixed and therefore easy to visualise and remember. Light rail systems can make use of suburban rail lines, increasing the frequency of services by connecting them to routes which run on-street through the hearts of the cities they serve. The permanence of the investment in a tram system can lend prestige to a city, while the arrangement of tracks and platforms is very space-efficient and offers excellent disabled access. For more, see this report from the Urban Transport Group.

Yet trams and light rail systems have high installation costs, can be disruptive when they fail, their routes cannot be varied or extended easily and, if not designed carefully, the tram-rails themselves can be hazardous for cycle users. There are debates about whether their benefits can be achieved more cost-effectively, safely and flexibly by opting for some form of guided bus system, including those where the bus is guided by white lines or magnetic wiring rather than by a separate kerb.

Further information:

Unofficial guidance: The Rail Delivery Group (RDG, representing the rail industry)) has a toolkit and other publications to support the development of Station Travel Plans, to facilitate access to and from stations primarily by non-car means. The Government-backed Cycle Rail Working Group has published a Cycle Rail Toolkit.

Buses and coaches

Buses are an essential lifeline for many rural communities, especially for people who cannot or do not drive, whether because they are too young, have a disability or simply cannot afford to run a car. Yet many people have lost bus services which they depended on to reach schools or colleges, employment or training, and other key facilities. Many villages have a bus service that runs less than once a day (i.e. on certain days of the week only), or no bus service at all. Campaign for Better Transport and CPRE, the countryside charity, have published research on 'transport deserts', finding that 56% of small rural towns now fit their definition of a 'transport desert' or are at risk of doing so.

The introduction of a cap on single bus fares - initially at £2, more recently increased to £3 - has contributed to a partial recovery. However the Campaign for Better Transport's report Better buses: reforming bus funding documents the complexity of current bus funding arrangements and huge disparities in the resulting funding allocations to different local authorities - from £236 per person in Portsmouth to below £4 per person in Swindon. It calls for all local transport authorities to have a single long-term bus funding pot, and a bus service guarantee to ensure that all areas at least meet some minimum service standards, with no areas left without bus services.

New regulations have already given all local authorities the powers to franchise bus services in their areas (this power was previously only available to Transport for London and combined authorities). The Government's Bus Services (No. 2) Bill, currently before Parliament, contains further measures to improve services, including reversing the current ban on local authorities setting up new municipal bus companies, as well as tackling anti-social behaviour on buses, improving bus stops and information.

The success of bus franchising in Greater London (which now accounts for 51% of bus passenger journeys in England) and Greater Manchester, and municipal bus companies in Reading and Nottingham, highlights some key advantages of these options, as compared with existing partnership or enhanced partnership arrangements. Local authorities should look to maximise these benefits, by:

- Improving the integration of timetables and ticketing (i.e. eliminating the need for passengers to have separate tickets for different transport operators' services);
- Tackling the congestion caused by 'over-busing' (i.e. excessive bus numbers, due to inefficient competition on high-demand routes, e.g. the Oxford Road corridor in Manchester);

- Allowing commercially unviable but socially necessary services to be cross-subsidised by other more profitable routes;
- Improving public accountability - this will generally boost public transport services and service quality, by giving the public more of a say in what improvements are most needed.

CPRE, the countryside charity, has called for England to follow the Swiss model of providing at least an hourly bus service from 6am till midnight, for every village over a certain population size (e.g. 300 inhabitants in the Zurich and Bern regions). CPRE estimates that this would cost £2.7bn annually but would provide huge benefits in terms of boosting education, training and employment opportunities, saving parents from having to drive or hire taxis to get their children to and from school etc, while also reducing the congestion, pollution and greenhouse gas emissions associated with car travel.

There is also significant potential to improve the quality of coach services, by creating coachway interchanges at edge-of-town sites (typically next to the motorway network), where intercity coaches can connect with rapid public transport (preferably rail-based) connections into city centres.

Further information:

Official guidance: The Government has issued guidance on Bus Service Improvement Plans and on bus franchising. The latter exists in two versions: one from March 2024 (which should be used by local authorities which gave notice of intent to develop a franchising assessment prior to 17 December 2024, and an updated version for LAs who issued a notice of intent after that date).

Unofficial guidance: The case for bus franchising and how to deliver it are outlined by campaign group We Own It, and in reports from the Centre for Cities, Transport for Quality of Life and a joint report by the Local Government Association (LGA) and Urban Transport Group (UTG). See also the countryside charity CPRE's Every Village Every Hour report, and Campaign for Better Transport's report Funding local bus services in England.

Community transport services

Community transport schemes encompass a wide range of services, run on a not-for-profit basis, with many of them provided by volunteers. They can include school or hospital transport, and dial-a-ride and similar services aimed particularly at meeting the needs of older and/or disabled people. They are often vital to enable people to stay independent, participate in their local communities or access public services, education or employment. Most are demand-responsive but some operate on fixed routes, filling in gaps in conventional public transport services. For more, see the Community Transport Association's website.

As well as supporting these services, local authorities need to play a role in improving the coordination of conventional public transport, school transport and community transport services. This is not straightforward, as school buses and community transport services are often supported by a separate local authority department from that which supports conventional public transport.

Further information:

Unofficial guidance: The Community Transport Association (CTA-UK) produces a range of resources on funding, setting-up, funding and managing community transport schemes.

Car clubs, peer-to-peer car sharing and ride sharing

Car clubs, peer-to-peer car sharing and ride sharing schemes are all ways in which people can have use of a car when required, without needing to own one.

Traditional car sharing schemes are similar to straightforward car rental, though the cars are usually available from parking bays in residential areas rather than from a car rental depot. Still, the car normally needs to be returned 'back to base', i.e. to the place where it was picked up. Variants of this model are emerging, with larger car club operators now able to offer one-way journeys, though so far this is more common in Germany than the UK. Another option is peer-to-peer lending, where individuals offer to rent out their cars to other individuals, rather like an AirBnB for cars.

Ride-sharing is another form of peer-to-peer collaboration, but involves individuals giving lifts to other individuals, brokered by sites such as Getaround, Hiyacar, Karshare and Turo. It differs from ride-hailing apps like Uber, in that the drivers are not seeking to make a living from providing this service, they are simply offering a lift while making a journey for which they would be driving anyway. Another ride-sharing company, Liftshare also sets up ride-sharing schemes based on workplaces or business parks, e.g. at engineering firm Arup's business campus in the West Midlands.

Further information:

Unofficial guidance: Shared transport charity CoMoUK's Community Carshare Handbook provides advice on setting up car sharing clubs. CoMoUK also provides a listing of accredited car club operators, peer-to-peer car sharing platforms and local or regional car clubs.

Cycle hire (or 'bike-share') schemes

Cycle hire (or 'bike-share') can take the following distinct forms:

- Cycle hire based on designated hire and drop-off locations, in which cycles can be unlocked by registering payment) either at docking stations or from marked areas (where users can park their bike without additional charge or penalty at the end of a ride).
- Free-floating (or 'dockless') cycle hire, where the bike-share operator allows cycles to be picked up and dropped off at any location within their operating zone.
- Hub-based cycle hire, where bikes are hired and returned to staffed locations, e.g. at train stations or at recreational destinations (e.g. in or near national parks). Cycles usually have to be returned to the place where they were collected, though some operators have networks of hire locations, enabling cycles to be hired and dropped off in different places (similar to larger car-hire schemes).
- Workplace-based pool bikes.
- Cycle loan schemes, often run by social enterprises and/or based at community locations, where, cycles can be loaned out on a 'try before you buy' basis.

The shared transport charity CoMoUK shows the bike-share schemes and operators active in the UK.

For all of these options, the pedal cycles themselves can either be conventional or electrically-assisted cycles, and may include non-standard cycles that can be used as mobility aids (e.g. tricycles, regular tandems, side-by-side tandems or hand-cycles).

International evidence highlights the potential for bike-share schemes to act as catalysts for creating a local cycling culture, with successful schemes attracting 4 to 8 rides per bike per day. Among the positive findings in a CoMoUK survey, half of UK bike-share users were taking up cycling after a period of not doing so, including 6% who had never cycled before.

However the arrival in the UK, and equally sudden departure, of a wave of venture capital-backed dockless cycle hire operators in 2017-18 showed that viable bike-share schemes need at least some initial public capital investment to get established, while additional revenue support may be needed

to keep them running, particularly in more deprived areas. This investment is likely to be well justified though, given the evidence of bike-share's wide-ranging benefits .

Further information:

Unofficial guidance: CoMoUK has various advice notes for councils and others on bike-share schemes, as well as a map and listing of existing bike-share schemes and operators that are active in the UK.

Integration: coordinated timetabling, through ticketing, 'Mobility as a Service', mobility hubs and active travel

Rail operators and transport authorities (e.g. combined metropolitan authorities, county and most city councils) need to work more closely together to improve the coordination of rail and bus timetables, though transport authorities also need greater powers to achieve this where voluntary agreements cannot be reached. It is hoped that the Government's plans to restructure Britain's railways could open up opportunities for improvements.

Similarly, there is a need to simplify and integrate ticketing and payment schemes for public and shared transport. The Urban Transport Group (UTG) and EU have produced evidence showing that integrated ticketing can substantially increase public transport patronage, as well as increasing revenues, improving passenger satisfaction, speeding up boarding times, reducing fraud and operational costs and, crucially, reducing car use. The West of England Combined Authority is actively seeking to improve integrated ticketing in and around Bristol, Bath and the surrounding region.

One opportunity to integrate payment is the development of Mobility as a Service (MaaS) platforms. MaaS is effectively a digital platform which enables users to see the full range of options for the journey they wish to make, and then make a single on-demand payment for whatever option they choose. This can include public or shared transport (including cycle hire) as well as taxis and ride-hailing options. It can help users find sustainable transport options in real time. Trials (e.g. in the West Midlands and Greater Manchester) have shown that MaaS is popular but that better coordination and (probably) regulation is needed to maximise its effectiveness.

Mobility hubs are locations where sustainable and/or shared transport services can be accessed in close physical proximity, e.g. where people can interchange between public transport (including park and ride), shared cars, cycle parking and bike-share services - see evidence of their benefits.

Finally, it is vital to improve the integration of public transport services with active travel (i.e. walking, wheeling or cycling). This involves not only providing step-free pedestrian and cycle access to and within stations, but also providing better facilities and customer service for those wishing to combine public transport with cycling and/or the use of a mobility aid (bearing in mind that, for some disabled cycle users, a pedal cycle is a mobility aid). Hence there is a need to improve cycle parking and hire facilities at stations, to provide well-designed cycle and wheelchair spaces on trains and other public transport vehicles, to put in place user-friendly ticketing and cycle reservation systems, and to provide useful practical information (e.g. on step-free access or where to board a train with a pedal cycle).

Further information:

Official guidance: DfT has issued a Code of Practice for Mobility as a Service platforms.

Unofficial guidance: See the Urban Mobility Partnership's Practical guide to Mobility as a Service and CoMoUK's Mobility hubs guidance. The Rail Delivery Group provides guidance on Station Travel Plans (which seek to improve the integration of rail and other services) and a Cycle-Rail Toolkit.

MANAGING TRAVEL DEMAND

Besides ensuring good provision for non-car alternatives (walking, wheeling and cycling, public, shared and community transport), there are two other main mechanisms for managing travel demand. The first is reducing the need to travel, e.g. through planning policies and/or investing in digital connectivity, while the second is to reduce demand for private motorised travel, through some form of pricing mechanism.

Planning policies and urban design

The need to travel (especially by car, van or lorry) can be reduced through planning policies which aim to create 'close knit communities', where:

- Schools, shops, doctors, dentists etc are close to where people live;
- There are safe and easy ways to reach these and other key destinations by walking, wheeling or cycling and/or by public, shared or community transport; and
- Motor traffic is therefore kept in check, because the alternatives are preferable to driving.

'Close knit communities' would:

- Be located close to high-quality public transport, or where this can be easily extended to serve the new development. This helps avoid the need for residents to own cars and for excessive car-parking provision (see below).
- Have road and path networks which are designed to enable safe walking, wheeling and cycling by all - including children and people with disabilities - with key destinations being easily and safely accessible by these modes. Roads and streets should either have a design speed of no more than 20mph or should include high-quality protected cycle provision.
- Be built to high but 'gentle' densities, e.g. at least 40-60 dwellings per hectare. Building 4 to 6 storey dwellings allows high-quality homes to be built on less land, with shared garden spaces, while also generating the density of demand for public transport services needed to ensure they are well used, and thus remain financially viable.
- Minimise the space given over to car-parking. This in turn frees up space for walking and cycling and for an attractive public realm, including green open space, benches and play space.
- Incorporate ample quantities of secure, well-designed and conveniently-located cycle parking, and provision for shared mobility, including spaces for mobility hubs, car-sharing cars and bike-share schemes.

Local authorities should be empowered to secure developer contributions for any sustainable transport provision that may be needed to achieve these aims. Equally, they should be given a clear mandate to reject development proposals that are likely to become car-dependent.

Yet, despite decades of planning policy supporting these aims, research by the Royal Town Planning Institute suggests that we have made no progress in this direction, while the New Economics Foundation's analysis suggests that new developments have, if anything, increased car dependence. Reports by Transport for New Homes have documented the persistence of low-density developments

in poorly-connected locations, with lots of road and car parking space but little or no provision for walking, cycling, public or shared transport, or green open space.

The Government needs to be much clearer that its 'vision-led approach' to transport and planning aims to bring about a future with a lot less motor traffic - as required for surface transport to deliver its share of the UK's carbon reduction targets. Proposed development sites or actual developments should be subject to a 'traffic net reduction' test to assess whether they are in line with this vision. DfT's Connectivity Tool can be used to assess whether or not proposed development sites are well connected by walking, cycling and public transport to key destinations. It could form part of this test (though the tool itself is regrettably only available to local authorities).

A study by property firm Knight Frank has shown that a lot of housing could be provided on land currently occupied by under-used publicly-owned car parks.

Digital accessibility

A combination of technological advance and the experience of covid has increased our reliance on digital connectivity and our ability to fulfil many aspects of our lives without needing to travel. However the benefits of digital connectivity are not evenly distributed, with some of the most car-dependent locations also being those with the poorest digital connectivity. Improving digital connectivity, particularly in more remote rural areas, may help reduce the need for some longer-distance car, van and rail journeys. See discussion of the impacts of digital accessibility.

Vehicle scrappage schemes

Local authorities seeking to reduce pollution from internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles - e.g. through Clean Air Zones and similar schemes - should also incentivise vehicle owners to scrap older or dirtier vehicles and replace them with cleaner alternatives. However, rather than simply offering cash to buy new vehicles, these schemes should offer 'mobility credits', which can instead be used for public or shared transport (e.g. for season tickets or subscriptions to car-share or bike-share scheme) and/or to purchase pedal cycles (including electrically-assisted cargo-bikes or other non-standard machines), as has been done by the French Government and by Transport for the West Midlands.

Pricing for using roads or parking space

There is a complementary 'chicken-and-egg' relationship between improving public, shared and community transport and active travel, while deterring the use of private cars through some form of pricing. Pricing can relate to the use of road-space (either in general or at particularly busy times and places), or parking space (including the options of workplace parking levies and/or higher charges for the largest, heaviest or least fuel-efficient vehicles), or motor vehicles, or fuel.

These types of pricing mechanisms can provide much of the funding needed to improve public transport and active travel. Yet they are also needed to deter unnecessary driving, so as to make space available for those walking, cycling and public transport improvements. Still, using the funding from these pricing schemes to improve the alternatives is vital if the pricing schemes themselves are to be seen to be fair, with people seeing the money being used to make it easier for them to get around without depending on private cars.

Polling by Ipsos found that public support for pricing for urban road-space has gone up from 33% in 2007 to 62% in 2020. It is higher among captains of industry, and rises higher still if the revenues are used to improve public transport, to tackle air pollution or greenhouse gas emissions, and if the taxes are higher on more polluting vehicles. Conversely, support falls if the revenues are returned to drivers in the form of reduced road taxes. Research by Campaign for Better Transport found a clear majority supported road pricing more generally (49% in favour compared with 19% against), echoing earlier findings from the Social Marketing Foundation. Both reports reinforce the point that road pricing schemes need to be fair.

There is a good case for national government to introduce road pricing nationally, not least to tackle road transport's climate impacts. Meanwhile local authorities can develop more localised schemes to tackle the (predominantly urban) impacts of congestion and pollution, using the proceeds to fund local transport improvements (e.g. walking and cycling provision, as well as improving local bus and metro services). The Greater Cambridge Partnership's Sustainable Travel Zone proposals - which combine local road user charging with walking, cycling and bus service improvements covering a wide area around (as well as within) Cambridge - look set to be a model of best practice.

Further information:

Unofficial guidance: A White Paper on Charging for Road Use, from the Chartered Institution for Highways & Transportation, summarises the latest research, technological practicalities and empirical evidence on implementing road user charging schemes around the world. UK100 provides a toolkit for implementing workplace parking levies.

RURAL TRANSPORT

The solutions advocated in previous sections of this guide all apply to both urban and rural areas. However there is a common misperception that they only really work in urban areas.

It is of course true that they are harder to apply in rural areas. The journeys people make in rural areas are typically longer (making it less likely that they can be walked or cycled), while the lower levels of travel demand make it harder to provide public, shared and community transport services that are both convenient and cost-effective. It is therefore harder for rural residents to get by without a car. However the lack of alternatives obviously creates real problems for children and young people in rural communities, as well as those on low incomes and those (especially older people) who are prevented from driving by health conditions or disabilities.

Yet it is particularly important to reduce car use for longer journeys, given that around 30% of greenhouse emissions from cars arise from just 3% of car trips[1]. Moreover, successful schemes do exist, as was demonstrated in a series of roundtable discussions held by the University of Hertfordshire's Smart Mobility Unit in 2020. The report of these roundtables identified a number of solutions, and examples of good practice, for tackling car-dependence in the 'peri-urban' areas around smaller towns, as well as in more remote rural areas, not least those which are popular as recreational and holiday destinations:

[1] Adeel, M, Wadud Z and Anable J 2020. *An exploratory analysis of long distance travel by English residents within Great Britain*, presented at the 99th Annual Meeting of the Transportation Research Board, January, Washington DC (not available online).

- Integration of public transport: the 'One Public Transport System for Cornwall', run by Cornwall Council, was cited as an example of good practice, as was the Intalink partnership in Hertfordshire;
- 'Total transport': ensuring better coordination of transport services commissioned by different public bodies (e.g. public transport, school transport, patient transport and community transport schemes);
- Demand-responsive transport (DRT): where public transport services can operate on flexible routes, allowing users to summon a bus by altering its route (within reason) to pick them up or drop them off at a convenient location. An example is the ArrivaClick service operating in Liverpool, Leicester, Watford and Ebbsfleet.

Meanwhile the charity CoMoUK's website cites several case-studies of car-sharing schemes operating in small towns or rural areas.

There is a particularly strong case for improving public transport provision in National Parks and other protected landscapes. If visitors to these areas feel they can get around within these areas without needing a car, they are also likely to use public transport for the (probably much longer) journey to get there in the first place. In doing so, they are helping to reduce the congestion, pollution and visual intrusion that reduces the quality of the environment they are there to enjoy. For instance, prohibiting on-road car parking on the Llanberis Pass in Snowdonia while providing park-and-ride buses to get there has created a much better experience for those wishing to climb Snowden from the pass.

In terms of promoting walking and (particularly) cycling, it is worth reiterating our earlier point about the need for better integration between the planning and funding for Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) and Rights of Way Improvement Plans (RoWIPs). LCWIPs are generally perceived to be about 'purposeful' walking and cycling in urban areas, with RoWIPs being about recreational walking, cycling and horseriding in rural areas.

Yet this distinction should not be hard and fast. On the contrary, if walking and cycling networks are to enable people to make the switch from car journeys in smaller towns - e.g. for children in outlying villages to walk or cycle to school in nearby towns - those networks need to overcome people's fears of walking and cycling on the 60mph rural single-carriageway A and B roads which link those towns to other towns, settlements and key destinations nearby. This will either involve providing segregated cycle tracks alongside those roads, or providing an alternative route using the rights of way network. A route alignment that is separate from the road network may well be safer and pleasanter. but it needs to be sufficiently direct, well surfaced and lit for use in all weathers at all times of year.

It therefore makes sense for councils to ensure that their LCWIP and RoWIP networks are well integrated, and to seek opportunities to use LCWIP funding to improve the surfacing and lighting of those sections of the Rights of Way network which also have potential for 'purposeful' walking and cycling journeys (n.b. these will generally be the sections closer to towns).

FREIGHT

A concern often raised about plans to reduce traffic in towns and cities is the question "what about goods deliveries"?

Freight transport is obviously vital for delivering goods to shops, homes and businesses. Yet our over-reliance on heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) for freight transport is seriously harmful:

- Safety: In the 5 years pre-Covid, HGVs accounted for only 3.5% of motor-vehicle mileage on Britain's road network (excluding motorways), yet they were involved in 13% of pedestrian fatalities and 17% of cyclist fatalities. The injuries resulting from being hit by a lorry are much more likely to be fatal than those involving other vehicles.
- Road maintenance: the damage caused by a vehicle increases exponentially with its weight, meaning that a 44-tonne lorry does 136,000 times more damage to a road than a typical small car. Lorries are also much more likely to over-run kerbs and pavements, and to damage verges on rural roads and lanes.
- Emissions: lorries are responsible for 17% of greenhouse gas emissions from road transport and 21% of nitrogen dioxide emissions, even though they account for just 5% of road traffic mileage (including motorways).

In recent years, a decline in the GB population's annual average car mileage has been offset by an increase in van mileage, with the result that road traffic overall continues to grow. This is to a large extent driven by the growth in home deliveries, a trend which accelerated during the pandemic.

So how can we reduce these problems while still delivering the goods?

Inter-urban freight

Part of the answer is to get more of our goods delivered by rail. Rail is obviously well suited to carrying heavy or bulky goods and could take a lot of lorries off our motorways.

Improved collaboration and data-sharing within the logistics industry could also help to reduce the c30% of GB HGV mileage where the lorry runs empty.

In time, the use of self-driving lorries on motorways may soon contribute to reductions in the costs and the environmental and safety impacts of road freight for journeys that cannot be made by rail.

Urban logistics, including cargo bikes

Meanwhile, local authorities can support the transfer of freight to rail by supporting the creation of new railfreight terminals, both at the origin and destination ends of potential railfreight journeys. They should also look into supporting urban logistics hubs, where large lorries can transfer their loads onto smaller urban delivery vehicles, including cargo bikes, for delivery to shops and other destinations within urban areas. This would reduce the safety risks of large lorries in urban areas, not to mention the road maintenance damage and indeed their requirements for wide-cornered junctions, which impede efforts to slow motor vehicles and enable pedestrians to cross at junctions.

The EU-funded Cycle Logistics project found that 51% of urban freight journeys could be undertaken by cargo bike. More recent research by the Active Travel Academy, commissioned by the charity Possible, found that cargo bikes made urban deliveries around 60% faster than vans (delivering 10 parcels per hour, compared with 6 per hour for vans), as well as reducing congestion, road danger, air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

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The electronic version of this guide, and a leaflet summarising it, can be downloaded from https://lowtrafficfuture.org.uk/portfolio-items/local-transport-plans/