

A Climate Emergency Plan for Transport

A Guide to Local Authority Action

Overview

In terms of reducing its impact on the climate, transport is by far the worst performing sector, even excluding aviation. Many of the necessary actions need to be implemented by central Government. For example, there is a need to change funding priorities, unfreeze fuel duty and prioritise cycling and walking, local public transport (especially high quality, high frequency, low cost bus services), better rail services and integrated ticketing (across all modes and the new sharing economy). We need strategies that reduce demand, shift to active travel and public transport, and create pathways, at all levels, towards net zero emissions from transport that keep within local, regional and national [carbon budgets](#).

In that context, what can a local authority do?

First: Recognise that business-as-usual risks making things worse

1. New, and expanded, roads contribute to the problem by increasing the capacity of the network for more carbon-intensive journeys. Any benefit for the economy can be uncertain while the congestion reduction of such schemes is only short lived. It is necessary to stop using discredited data, forecasting and models to support road expansion and instead take a broader, integrated approach to the provision of infrastructure for all modes of transport.
2. The location and design of many new housing developments is focused around the car, while neglecting other modes. These developments will be around for decades, so it is important that they support the transport needs of the future, not the past. Local authorities should review new housing developments using the Transport for New Homes [checklist](#) and remove/oppose developments that will worsen car dependence.
3. Local authorities need to engage extensively with local people and stakeholders to identify the infrastructure that is needed to plan for sustainable transport alternatives to road building.

If authorities are members of sub-national transport bodies, they should push these bodies towards net zero pathways, including through demand management and modal shift, and away from road building and airport expansion.

This will release funding that can be used to deliver a zero carbon transport plan, as set out below. Some thoughts on solutions are provided by [Transport for Quality of Life](#).

Second: Establish key principles of a transport climate emergency: traffic reduction, modal shift and electrification (not business as usual with electrification)

The Committee on Climate Change (CCC) and other research shows that moving to electric vehicles is essential. However, this won't do enough to tackle [greenhouse gas emissions from transport](#) and will do nothing to solve congestion either. Cuts in road traffic and a move away from car use towards sustainable transport – walking, cycling and public transport - are needed. The CCC suggests around [10% demand reduction](#) is necessary although this is thought to be a rather conservative figure and is being re-examined in light of the new national target (net-zero carbon by 2050).

Research by Transport for Quality of Life suggests there is a need for at least a [20% traffic reduction by 2030](#). Professor Kevin Anderson from the Tyndall Centre estimates [a rapid reduction in vehicle-km of 40-60% could be needed](#).

Having a net-zero carbon target is not enough in itself to achieve the change required. Interim targets and monitoring of an area's remaining carbon budget will be required. Some local authorities have set the ambitious target of being carbon neutral by 2030. This is laudable but will make urgent action on demand management, traffic reduction and significant investment in sustainable transport even more important.

Third: Agree a plan with clear actions to reduce emissions now and provide a clear pathway to zero carbon transport for all

There are practical measures all councils can take now to make a difference and build support for change as set out below:

1. Improve the Gathering and Use of Data

Bring together data on travel patterns and where this doesn't exist seek to gather it to inform the provision of alternatives to car trips. Sometimes this can bust myths – the % of people arriving at shops by car and the proportion of through traffic in any town is often much lower than people think.

2. Significantly Scale-up Cycling and Walking

- **Produce Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plans (LCWIP):** LCWIPs are a recognised way of developing cycling and walking networks and are referenced in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Having one gives local planning authorities greater leverage with developers and in bids for funding. [Manchester's Bee-Line network](#) shows what can be achieved, while the Government's [£5 billion to improve bus and cycle links outside of London](#) provides funding to progress many more [mini-Hollands](#) around the country.
- **Put pedestrians and cyclists at the top of the road user hierarchy:** Review all road crossings to give pedestrians priority and make it as easy as possible for them to cross (for example, ensure that crossings are level with pavements, there are clear markings and sufficient time, and single stage – people can cross in one go and not have to wait in the middle of the road for a second set of lights, etc), ban pavement car parking and create continuous, coherent and safe cycle routes, etc
- **"20 is plenty":** Set 20mph as default speed limit in all residential areas and in even the whole urban area.
- **Promote e-bikes, cargo bikes and bike hire schemes:** A [half of all e-bike trips were previously made by car](#) as e-bikes increase people's range and mean that hills are no longer an obstacle to cycling. There is huge potential to increase e-bike use as demonstrated by the take up of e-bikes on the continent.
- **Provide sufficient, secure cycle parking facilities:** These should be located in prominent locations at public transport interchanges, centres of employment, high streets, leisure facilities, etc. They should be located closer to the main entrance than any car parking in order to prioritise cycling, but also recognising that some cyclists have mobility issues.

- **Adopt high quality standards:** Adopt the national cycle standards when they are eventually released by Government. In the meantime use a combination of [CD 195](#), [LTN 1/12](#) and [TfL's Cycle Design standards](#), replacing any previously adopted local guidance where it is of a lesser standard. This will help ensure any infrastructure is fit for purpose and encourage more people to cycle. Avoid using shared paths in urban areas, or areas of high footfall, as this can undermine both walking and cycling as well as raising equality issues.
- **Adopt the 'Manual for Streets':** Many authorities are still designing road layouts based on the withdrawn [Design Bulletin 32](#). These layouts compromise walking and cycling, with wide, splayed junctions and should not be used. The [Manual for Streets](#) should be formally adopted, taking note of any [updated advice](#).

Further information: see [Living Streets](#) and [Sustrans](#)

3. Scale-up Public Transport

- **Carry out a proper audit of public transport needs and use new bus powers to improve services:** Authorities are required to assess needs, but most don't. Use powers in the [Bus Services Act](#) for partnerships to get data on usage and seek to improve services in short term, moving towards franchising and [a more joined up provision that works well elsewhere](#). The aim should be to move towards integrated timetables / information, pricing and ticketing.
- **Total transport:** Review all public sector transport contracts locally (social services, education, non-emergency patient transport), as well as bespoke private sector transport, e.g. business parks, and bring them together as far as possible, [to create a mainstream public transport network](#) as opposed to lots of different transport services.
- **Bus priority:** Promote bus priority to increase reliability and reduce costs, which helps to reduce fares as buses are able to avoid [congestion](#). Measures include: bus lanes, bus-operated/priority traffic lights, road closures to cars, etc.
- **Better infrastructure:** Better buses, not just low or zero emission, but high quality buses – comfy seats, good legroom, plenty of space for buggies and wheelchairs (and even bikes), charging points, visual and aural information, etc. Encourage branded routes / networks to give them a distinctive and attractive feel. Bus stops and waiting rooms also need to be of high quality with seating, proper protection from the elements and good information. They also need to feel safe and be accessible for people with mobility and other disabilities.
- **Public transport promotion:** Ensure public transport is always promoted as a priority by events or venues and a requirement of any licensing. Encourage operators to produce joint timetables and marketing and better information at bus stops and online.
- **Rail and coach hubs:** Develop rail and coach stations as transport hubs with good bus interchanges, integrated timetables, secure and well-located cycle parking, good pedestrian and cycle access. [Cornwall's One Public Transport Network](#) is a good example.
- **Explore community/social enterprise/local ownership:** Good examples for public transport include [HCT Group](#) and [The Big Lemon](#).
- **Rail re-openings:** Look for opportunities for new/reopened rail stations and lines ([Campaign for Better Transport](#) and [Railfuture](#) have lists). Make use of the Government's [new £500 million](#)

[fund](#) to take forward suggestions for the re-opening of rail lines and stations and to accelerate the process where these have already been made.

Note public transport promotion is not enough in itself without demand management - only a small minority of additional trips made by public transport replace a journey by car. And on congested roads, every car removed frees up a space for another car to take its place. Doubling bus use (on its own) across the UK would only reduce car traffic by around 1.3% and is likely to result in a fall in walking and cycling.

4. Zero Carbon Planning

- **Review development plans and the location and design of development:** Focus development at public transport hubs and along well served public transport routes rather than around big roads. This may involve challenging Government targets and requirements for housebuilding, and the “viability test”, and/or convincing local residents that new development will bring better public transport and other facilities and won’t worsen traffic and parking issues.
- **Denser development brings benefits:** Having denser developments brings two important benefits:
 - It saves precious countryside from development as more homes can be provided on a smaller footprint.
 - It’s more likely to sustain commercially viable bus services, which not only ensures people are not left stranded if they don’t or can’t drive but that the Council is less likely to need to provide subsidised bus services.
- **Review design guidelines:** Give priority to walking, cycling and public transport both within new developments and to connect them to other parts of the town. Require local services and facilities to serve new developments. Make space for car sharing in new developments.
- **Ensure bus services for new developments are high quality:** Should aim for 7 days a week services for a minimum 18 hours a day, in clean, attractive and modern buses.
- **Use rail stations as hubs for development/gateways to towns:** Maximise densities around stations to minimise car use, while maximising the benefits to the local economy. Ensure that sufficient space is left for a proper bus interchange and high quality cycle facilities including cycle parking.

For further information see:

- Transport for New Homes: [Checklist for new homes](#)
- Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation: [Better planning, better transport, better places](#)
- Campaign to Protect Rural England: [Transport](#)
- Stagecoach: [Bus Services & New Residential Developments](#)
- Place Alliance: [A Housing Design Audit for England](#)
- Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission: [Living with beauty](#)

5. Develop travel plans for major travel generators - workplaces, schools, hospitals etc.

In addition to the usual need to provide public transport cycle parking/showers and good walking routes to their sites (as opposed to expecting pedestrians to negotiate giant car parks), major employers or destinations are best placed to promote car pooling and car sharing¹. This could play an important role in tackling congestion and pollution, but if successfully combined with other measures could free up land wasted on car parking. Such plans are also important because they help create a broader-based movement that is tackling climate change.

Local authorities are well placed to set up networks of travel planners to exploit any synergies that might exist between employers and venues. They are likely to meet with senior leaders in other public bodies and senior business leaders and can pursue this agenda with them at these meetings or convene a special forum where this can happen.

Local authorities should also require major new developments to set an ambitious travel plan with challenging modal split targets which should be used to drive the form of the development, not react to a business-as-usual model.

6. Cut the Total Amount of Traffic

- **Close roads to cars:** Restricting cars in certain lanes, roads or zones, can often be done relatively cheaply, simply by putting bollards or plant containers at the end of a road to stop motorised traffic. Closing roads to cars was the most popular measure considered by the [Greater Cambridge citizen's assembly](#).
- **Introduce charging measures:** This can be done through Clean Air Zones, pollution charges and flexible charges (charging when roads congested).
- **Parking:** Review the price and availability of parking – resident parking schemes, town centre parking charges, redevelop car parks. Review options for workplace parking levy as in Nottingham (which has raised substantial funds for investing in sustainable transport).
- **Reallocate road space to sustainable transport:** Invest in bus priority, cycle networks, wider pavements, etc.
- **Create car-free streets and areas:** Designing streets around the needs of people such as the [“mini-Holland” low traffic neighbourhood in Walthamstow](#).

7. Vision Zero for Road Safety

Set a plan to reduce road casualties to zero (linked to other measures). [Brake](#) and [Action Vision Zero](#) are two organisations working in this field. For details of reported accidents anywhere in the UK see [CrashMap](#).

8. Freight

Look at encouraging rail where possible and bringing in restrictions on HGVs. If [Kent County Council is successful](#) in persuading the Government to grant local authorities the power to enforce moving traffic offences, this could open up opportunities for a more coordinated approach to controlling lorries and

¹ Car pooling is where two or more people who would drive to the same destination go in one car instead. Car sharing is where people often don't own a car but join a car club and effectively rent a car for as long as they need it.

deliveries. Moving away from using diesel trucks is important, but also keeping them out of certain areas or restricting access to certain times could be important for both local amenity and safety reasons, regardless of how they are fuelled.

Include freight in strategic transport planning and if necessary, ensure sites are allocated for transshipment in the Local Plan to promote last mile options. The use of cargo bikes should be encouraged, where practicable, and where not the use of electric delivery vans should be promoted.

Councils could also look at facilitating local businesses to enable them to club together to offer home deliveries by low impact means to broaden their appeal and reduce the need for people to drive into an area.

9. Consider Co-benefits to help justify changes

Providing more choice with better cycling and walking infrastructure, better buses and bus services and more accessible rail will improve equality, reduce congestion and pollution, strengthen the local economy, increase physical activity and therefore improve health and well-being, reducing strain on the NHS, etc. Engage with public health and the NHS to amplify the messages and explore opportunities for joint funding.

More walking, cycling and public transport is, to put it simply, a more efficient way of moving large numbers of people around and so help to make the most efficient use of the limited space that is available. With the changes in shopping habits and the high street, making streets more attractive places to visit and to be in will help town centres adapt to changing priorities by bringing in investment and people. The World Health Organisation has a tool to help local authorities [estimate the economic benefits of increasing walking and cycling](#) amongst the adult population.

Join [UK100](#) (a network of local government leaders who have pledged to shift to 100% clean energy by 2050) for support and ideas in bringing change about.

The [Healthy Air Campaign](#) a broad coalition of partners has useful information on air pollution.

10. Seek policy and funding shifts wherever possible.

Lobby for more money and use funding opportunities where available – e.g. towns fund, housing investment, transforming cities, green buses, etc to promote modal shift.

11. Eliminate fossil fuel vehicles.

Alongside the above we need to eliminate fossil fuelled vehicles so need to:

- Roll out local EV charging infrastructure, including in all new homes/conversions, but care needs to be taken on its siting (see ‘Some Don’ts’ below).
- Require developers to integrate electric vehicle charging points in new developments, and make space for electric vehicle charging (including for bikes).
- Review all fleet vehicles such as waste trucks, salt spreaders and staff cars and procure alternatively-fuelled vehicles where practicable.
- When procuring services that include transport, or when there is an opportunity to review an existing contract, identify whether requirements could be included to minimise the amount of

transport involved, or ensure that the journeys that have to be made are undertaken on foot, by bike or with public transport, or, if not possible, using a clean vehicle.

- Employers in the area should be encouraged to promote electric vehicles, alongside reduced travel, and review their travel policies and allowances so as to move away from petrol and diesel vehicles and single-occupancy use (see point 5 on travel plans above).
- Zero emission buses: Use Government funding to shift to low/zero emission buses. Use the powers of the Bus Services Act to move towards all electric or hydrogen hybrid fleets longer-term.
- Press for all railways and new trains to be electrified.

Some Don'ts

- Don't just carry on with the existing approach to building infrastructure. Painting a cycle symbol on a road, or turning a footpath into a shared path, should be the options of last resort, as these do not provide the safe, easy options that are needed to encourage people to cycle and walk. It is necessary to design and build high quality infrastructure in order to be successful in achieving significant modal shift.
- Don't allow electric vehicles in bus lanes as this will undermine bus journey reliability and increase costs, pushing up fares. It will also increase expectations for electric vehicle drivers that these will be permanent measures, when they will not be.
- Don't build electric vehicle charging points in pavements where they will narrow the pavement, cause obstruction or create a hazard. Charging points can be best accommodated within lamp columns or can be positioned within the carriageway (or on build-outs) so that walking is not undermined.

Summary

Bring all this together into a plan that shifts short car journeys to walk/cycle/bus, and longer trips to rail/shared transport, with electrification of what is left.

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Campaign for Better Transport [research](#)

Friends of the Earth [transport and climate briefings](#)

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