

TransportPlanningSociety

Monday 7 August 2023

The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

Cc: Mark Harper MP, Transport Secretary
Jesse Norman MP, Minister of State
Ben Goldsmith, Chair of the Conservative Environmental Network
Ruth Cadbury, MP, Co-Chair of the Cycling and Walking APPG
Selaine Saxby MP, Co-Chair of the Cycling and Walking APPG

Dear Prime Minister,

Active Travel and Mode-shift Schemes – Central to the Government’s core goals

I am writing on behalf of the Transport Planning Society (TPS) in response to recent reports in the press regarding the government’s approach to local traffic calming schemes, such as Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs).

The TPS represents the UK’s transport planning professionals, with members in national government, local government and the private sector. Our members strongly support measures to encourage active travel and targeted mode-shift schemes, which we believe are critical in advancing most of the government’s policy objectives. We are therefore concerned about the recent shift in tone from yourself and ministers regarding delivering the local improvements we believe are necessary to improve local air quality, decarbonise our transport network, support economic development and regenerate our towns and cities. This includes your recent interview in the Sunday Telegraph, in which you stated that you wanted people to know you were on their side “in supporting them to use their cars to do all the things that matter to them.”

The role of active travel in achieving the government’s priorities

Like you and your government, we believe in meaningful choice. Our view is that a sustainable and equitable transport system would offer people genuine choices in how they travel, including not having to travel long distances to do all the things that matter to them. Local improvements such as Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) are part of a range of investments in sustainable transport, including public transport, which can improve choice and achieve most of your goals for government:

- **Tackling Inflation and the cost of living:** The average UK household spent £74.40 a week on transport in 2021/22, the second biggest household expenditure item¹. Rising transport costs are an important part of the wider pressure on household budgets. This pressure will be relieved by creating environments that encourage walking and cycling for local trips (which are the majority of all trips).
- **Developing the economy:** Retail and leisure depend on street interaction and footfall as every developer knows. Furthermore, evidence from London indicates that walking and cycling schemes increase office and retail rental values, and result in more people shopping in those areas². The quality of public spaces is a more important determinant of the economic success of an area than more parking³.
- **Achieving value for money from public investment:** Investment in walking and cycling schemes gives an average economic benefit of £6.10 for every £1 spent on them⁴, a very good rate of return for the Treasury. This compares to an average economic benefit of £2 for every £1 spent on Major Enhancements as part of the RIS 2⁵.
- **Improving public health and cutting NHS Waiting Lists:** Public Health England states that people who walk and cycle more have improved metabolic health, and reduced risks for several diseases such as heart disease, respiratory diseases, and diabetes. They state very clearly that walking and cycling has the potential to lead to important health gains at the population level, and thus benefit the NHS and the wider health and care system⁶.

The role of LTNs in supporting mode-shift and delivering national priorities locally

We commend your government's clear vision and significant investment in prioritising affordable and convenient sustainable transport options in recent years, as outlined in Gear Change, the National Bus Strategy, and Integrated Rail Plan. The schemes that have been delivered have increased travel choice and improved the quality of the places in local communities. They have also proved to be very popular. A recent Department for Transport survey shows 8 out of 10 people support measures to reduce road traffic, and two-thirds support the reallocation of road space⁷. Rethinking how we plan our cities, towns and communities is pro-people, not anti-car.

We acknowledge that cars are an important means of transport for many people, giving access to essential activities like work, shopping, caring responsibilities and leisure. We fully support policies that promote uptake of EVs, which have a critical role in mitigating some of the negative impacts of motorised transportation. However, even with a growing uptake of EVs, studies have consistently shown that a reduction in car mileage will be necessary to reach net-zero emissions, reduce road casualties and ensure clean air for all.

¹<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdfinances/expenditure/bulletins/familyspendingintheuk/april2021tomarch2022>

² [Economic benefits of walking and cycling - Transport for London \(tfl.gov.uk\)](#)

³ [pedestrian-pound-2018.pdf \(livingstreets.org.uk\)](#)

⁴ [Investing in cycling and walking: the economic case for action \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

⁵ [gfd20_0072-economic-analysis-of-rp2-brochure_v4.pdf \(nationalhighways.co.uk\)](#)

⁶ [Cycling and walking for individual and population health benefits: a rapid evidence review \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

⁷<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/175-million-more-for-cycling-and-walking-as-research-shows-public-support>

Alongside investment in public transport, local improvements like LTNs can play a vital role in achieving these objectives. They are also essential in meeting the Government's target to increase the proportion of urban trips made by walking and cycling to 50% by 2030⁸ and delivering the goals in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

The need to continue to prioritise active travel to achieve your decarbonisation policy goals

We are confident that the government's review of active travel policies will reaffirm the many benefits that such schemes offer and we urge you to maintain support and investment for schemes that promote walking, cycling and public transport. Remarkable progress can be achieved when national and local government work together, with national government providing policy guidance and funding and local authorities working with local communities to deliver locally appropriate improvements. Over the past three years, many local authorities have successfully implemented active travel policies like LTNs under guidance from the government. It is crucial that the government builds on this success by maintaining a consistent framework of policies, guidance and funding so the sector can move forward constructively.

We welcome the opportunity to participate in the government's review of LTNs and other schemes and look forward to engaging in constructive discussions with your team to further promote sustainable transport planning in the United Kingdom.

Yours sincerely,

Ben Plowden, Chair, Transport Planning Society

⁸ Gear Change: a bold vision for cycling and walking