

**Sustrans' manifesto
for London**

2024

**Towards a healthy,
community-focused
London**

Foreword



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Just 40% of Londoners walk, wheel or cycle for 20 minutes a day¹. At a time of huge pressure on the NHS, we urgently need public health interventions to keep us healthy, and keep us out of hospital².

Walking, wheeling and cycling reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, coronary heart disease and stroke by 20-35%. They reduce the risk of diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis and colon/breast cancer. They are great for our mental health, and they increase functional capacities in older adults. That is a huge list of benefits, but we are not doing enough to bring them to everyone in London.

We need to create inviting, accessible and community-focussed outdoor spaces. We need to entice Londoners away from sedentary lifestyles: staring at screens and travelling in cars. If we do not, we will live in worse health. We will die younger. And we will overwhelm our GPs and hospitals with ailments we could have prevented.

Our city is moving in the right direction. Cycling is growing. Car traffic is falling. The air we breathe is getting cleaner. Many streets are being redesigned to build communities. But change is not fast enough.

We outline here seven proposals to positively transform our health, our economy, and our communities in London. We outline what candidates for Mayor of London should commit to delivering in their pledges to Londoners over the next four years. These are additional to the measures already currently planned for London, including the walking and wheeling improvements, the expansion of the Cycleway Network, the cleaning up of London's air, the traffic reduction measures and the ambition to eliminate road deaths and serious injuries.

We want future generations to look back at this period in London's history and say that politicians delivered bold, ambitious policies which created an excellent quality of life. Policies which other cities around the world followed. I hope our politicians will step up to the challenge.

About Sustrans

We work for and with communities, helping them come to life by walking, wheeling and cycling to create healthier places and happier lives for everyone.

Across the UK we involve communities in shaping our towns and cities. Together we campaign for and create spaces where everyone can move around safely and give people the tools and confidence to get out of their cars.

We inspire people to change the way we all travel every day, forging closer connections with our neighbours and reducing traffic to create a better environment and more sustainable society for everyone.



Cover photo © Sustrans

Our Asks for candidates – in addition to existing plans:

- 1. Double healthy streets investment to £300m per year, prioritised on areas of deprivation**
- 2. Create an inspiring Green Belt walking, wheeling and cycling network**
- 3. Transform the Rotherhithe Tunnel into a world-leading walking, wheeling and cycling connection**
- 4. Transform 25% of parking spaces into thriving public assets**
- 5. Provide targeted cycle skills provision to London's diverse communities**
- 6. Create sociable high streets**
- 7. Incorporate leisure cycling into London's Cycling Plan**



1. Double funding for Healthy Streets investment to £300m per year, prioritised on areas of deprivation

Why?

4,000 people are being killed and seriously injured on London's roads each year, which is 4,000 too many. We have seen progress in some areas, such as where 20 miles per hour limits have been introduced³, and where Transport for London's Cycleways have been built⁴. But we clearly need to work faster, and invest more, to create safe and healthy streets.

To implement the current Mayor's Transport Strategy, and its Healthy Streets and Vision Zero aims, past Transport for London Business Plans have set out annual budgets of often £250 million per year⁵. But the latest business plan only commits to a reduced £150m per year⁶.

Adjusting for inflation, getting back on track to implement the Mayor's Strategy now therefore requires annual investment of over £300 million⁷.

This is essential to continue the actions outlined in the existing Walking and Cycling plans, the Dangerous Junctions programme, and the Vision Zero Strategy, as well as the new measures outlined in this document. London must maintain its ambition and increase investment.

Generating income

Healthy Streets measures can generate income for London's transport authority and boroughs. For example, bus speeds and reliability are improved on bus-and-cycle priority schemes like those that have been introduced in Bishopsgate, Tooley Street and Stoke Newington Church Street. They increase bus demand and fare revenue and reduce cost⁸.

Improving high streets and town centres increases sales and reduces vacancy rates⁹, which in turn increases business rates revenue for local and regional authorities.

Prioritising areas of deprivation

Londoners living in more deprived areas are more likely to suffer from the impacts of traffic, such as road danger, community severance, and air pollution. And the greatest benefit of creating healthy, community-focussed streets accrue to those that live on, and around, those improved streets¹⁰. So, to tackle inequalities, we need to invest most in areas with the worst health outcomes. We also need to take a holistic approach to neighbourhood development, aiming to improve not just transport connectivity, but health, community, the environment, and any other issues raised by local people as part of any single project.

How can the Mayor make this happen?

- A. Update the Transport for London Business Plan with the increased investment
- B. Increase TfL fare revenue and income by incentivising the shift from private motor vehicle to public transport use (e.g. via bus priority schemes or more road user charging)
- C. Ensure all schemes, whether led by TfL or boroughs, are implemented to TfL's quality design standards and Vision Zero principles
- D. Systematically prioritise investment on areas of deprivation



2. Create an inspiring Green Belt Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Network

Why?

London's high quality cycle network has expanded at a rapid pace in recent years, under both Conservative and Labour Mayors.

But it hasn't extended to areas where car dependency is greatest. These are areas on the outskirts of Greater London, often bordering the Green Belt. These are areas with the sparsest public transport provision, worst walking and wheeling environments, and fewest cycle options. They are not on the Mayor's long-term plan for the Cycleway Network.

Every town, neighbourhood and community in and around London should be connected to each other. The number of people potentially using such routes may be lower than in the denser central areas of London. But because of the currently high car dependency of such areas, each of the journeys walked or cycled are more likely to replace a car journey.

There are hundreds of communities beyond TfL's planned Cycleway Network that will still have little-to-no cycle provision in 2041 under current plans. These are areas which need to be connected to each other, to the wider south-east, and to the denser, more-central London Cycleway Network. Different walking, wheeling and cycling design solutions will be applicable to these locations, which are often more rural in character than the current plans.

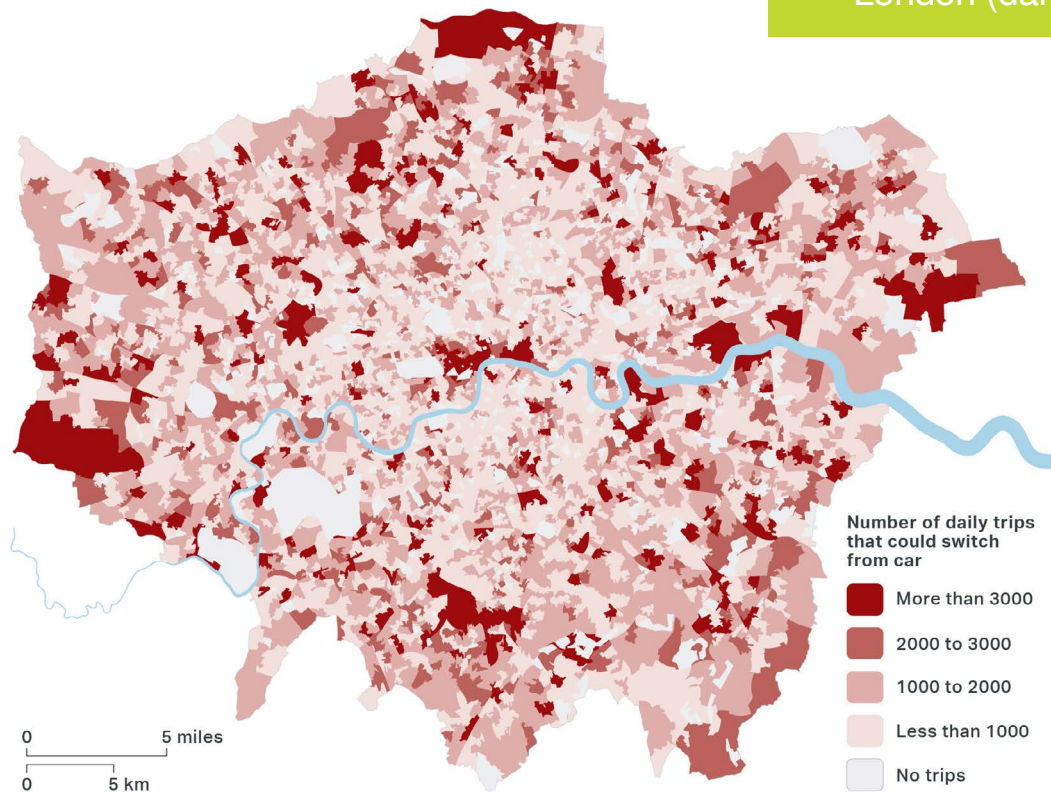
Creating such a Network can also be a way to support increased access to London's Green Belt, and to improve biodiversity as part of each scheme.

How can the Mayor make this happen?

- A. Convene a wider south-east group of interested boroughs, counties and other stakeholders, to produce a Green Belt Walking and Cycling Network Plan
- B. Map communities and current walking, wheeling and cycle infrastructure in outer London and the Green Belt. Assess how they could link up with the public transport network, such as the Superloop
- C. Determine design solutions specific to a peri-urban geography, which may include more traffic-free routes and more challenging rural roads than in London's high-density network
- D. Invest 10% of London's Healthy Streets funding on the Green Belt Network
- E. Improve biodiversity as part of each scheme



TfL analysis shows the potential to tackle car dependency in outer London (dark red)...



...But the planned Cycle Network doesn't extend that far.

Top Potential Connections

- 1 Kentish Town to Wood Green
- 2 Camden Town to Tottenham Hale
- 3 Dalston to Lea Bridge Road
- 4 Hackney Mare Street to Shadwell
- 5 Greenwich foot tunnel to Hackney
- 6 Stratford to Ilford
- 7 Leyton to Barking Road
- 8 Canning Town to Barking
- 9 Manor Park to Woolwich Ferry
- 10 Ilford to Dagenham Dock
- 11 Greenwich to Woolwich
- 12 Rotherhithe Crossing to Peckham
- 13 Old Kent Road to New Cross Gate
- 14 Deptford to Oval
- 15 Oval to Streatham
- 16 Vauxhall to Clapham Common
- 17 Chelsea Embankment to Clapham Common
- 18 Pimlico to Putney
- 19 Clapham Common to Mortlake
- 20 Teddington to Twickenham
- 21 Hounslow to Heathrow
- 22 Shepherd's Bush to Southall
- 23 Fulham to Wembley
- 24 Kilburn to Edgware
- 25 Highgate to North Finchley

Strategic Cycle Connections

- Top potential connections
- High potential connections
- Medium potential connections
- Existing and planned Cycle Superhighways, Quietways and Mini-Holland routes
- Central London Grid area
- Town centres
- River & water features
- Parks

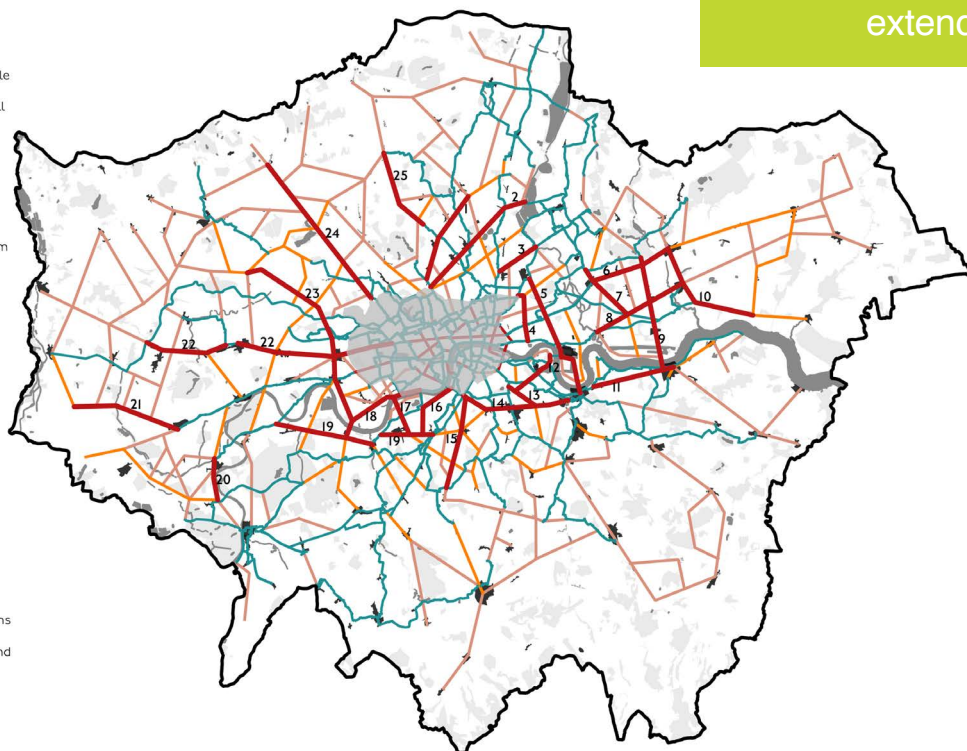




Photo © Sustrans

3. Transform the Rotherhithe Tunnel into a world-leading walking, wheeling and cycling connection

Why?

The Rotherhithe Tunnel was built in 1908, and was not designed to cope with modern levels of traffic¹¹. It is subject to sudden closures, permanent restrictions, and high levels of pollution. It costs over £90 million per year to maintain and repair¹², and is dangerous for walking and cycling. Refurbishing the tunnel to be fit for purpose could cost a staggering £178m¹³, which is more than the entire annual walking and cycling budget for London.

Instead of continuing to throw good money after bad into failing structures long past their use-by date, we could instead repurpose them to support lighter, lower-impact ways of moving around, such as walking, wheeling and cycling¹⁴. Furthermore, the Silvertown Tunnel in east London, which we oppose the construction of, is due to open in the next Mayoral term, which will provide a vehicle capacity more than three times the capacity of the current Rotherhithe Tunnel¹⁵. So closing it to general traffic will not significantly increase traffic on surrounding connections.

Instead of a dangerous, polluted and expensive tunnel, we could create a world-leading walking and cycling connection. There are no dedicated cycle crossings in London east of London Bridge, even though demand is huge. Tens of thousands of people per day would walk or cycle through the tunnel at such a location. And cargo cycle businesses would also use the connection, as they currently have no easy way to cross the river in east London¹⁶, which puts the most sustainable form of freight transport at a disadvantage compared to polluting forms.

Such a conversion would save money, improve connectivity, and boost our health.

How can the Mayor make this happen?

- A. Set out plans to align the opening of the Silvertown Tunnel in 2025 with the transformation of the Rotherhithe Tunnel to people walking, wheeling and cycling
- B. Connect the tunnel to the quality TfL Cycleway Network
- C. Introduce a wider strategy for London crossings, which would include reducing total traffic levels, and therefore saving the vast cost of maintaining bridges and tunnels

4. Transform 25% of parking spaces into thriving public assets by 2032

Why?

An area the size of 10 Hyde Parks is dedicated to car parking in London¹⁷. This is an inefficient use of space, and provides a near-free¹⁸ private benefit to people using public space.

The alternative uses for much of this space could be so much more beneficial, such as:

- Wider pavements - especially where minimum widths are not currently provided in busy areas;
- More crossings;
- Protected cycle tracks;
- More greening, such as streets trees and flower beds;
- Sustainable drainage schemes;
- Seating areas;
- Play equipment, particularly where these are lacking locally;
- Water fountains or public toilets;
- Dedicated parking spaces for Blue Badge holders; and,
- Cycle storage and hire provision.

These are required to create an efficient, growing, sustainable city. And these measures contribute to building community¹⁹, which, at a time of high loneliness in our city²⁰, is vital.

Blue Badge holders have a specific need for parking spaces to be able to access properties, so provision of these spaces is important to protect and expand.

Adapting to global warming

Greening and sustainable drainage are increasingly important to protect London's neighbourhoods from the impacts of global warming. They can help prevent two of London's top three risks from climate change: overheating and flooding²¹. Greening therefore needs to be a major part of reclaiming parking spaces for public use.

Permanent materials

To be cost-effective and environmentally sustainable, permanent solutions rather than temporary materials should be used from the outset where possible. These will be higher quality and more inspiring to local people, preventing the need to replace infrastructure and planting schemes after just a few years.

How can the Mayor make this happen?

- A. Use the Mayor's strategic and funding levers to require boroughs to transform 25% of parking spaces into public assets by 2032, preferably as part of wider improvements
- B. Ensure that 25% of the transformed space is used for greening
- C. Protect and expand Blue Badge parking provision



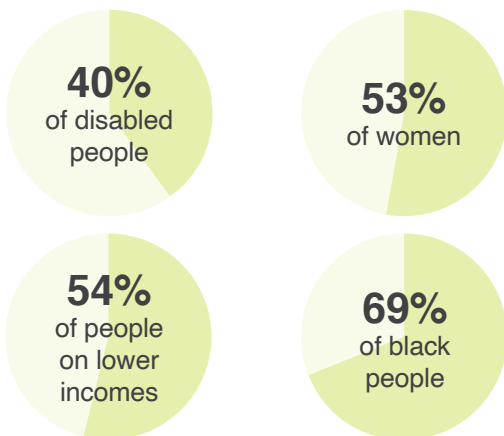
Parking spaces can be transformed into thriving public assets

5. Deliver cycling skills provision to London's diverse communities

Why?

London is not making sufficient progress on spreading the benefits of cycling to everyone. People that cycle in London are still more likely to be male, non-disabled, and on a higher income²².

But this is not reflective of who wants to cycle in London - of those that do not currently cycle, the following are open to starting²³:



Safety is the biggest barrier to cycling across all demographic groups. But underrepresented groups face additional barriers to the people already cycling more, such as:

- The affordability of buying and maintaining a cycle;
- Being able to cycle;
- Space for storing a cycle at home;
- Concerns about harassment; and,
- Not seeing 'people like me' cycling²⁴.

So people need targeted interventions to overcome these barriers, such as individual training and group rides with people from their community²⁵. Children in schools that haven't been given a cycle and training by their parents will need targeted support.

How can the Mayor make this happen?

Through the Local Implementation Plan process, ensure that every borough provides:

- A. Thousands more residential cycle storage spaces per year for people that have less private garden space
- B. Free training for underrepresented groups to become cycling instructors, such as women, people of colour, and people of different faiths
- C. Targeted individual and group cycle lessons for non-cycling children and/ or their parents
- D. Targeted free individual and group lessons and rides for underrepresented groups – 80% of all lessons should be for those groups
- E. An improved 'general' free cycle training and maintenance offer
- F. Access to free cycles to children and adults that would otherwise struggle with the cost of buying, renting or maintaining cycles
- G. At least one cycling hub with a store of insured and maintained bikes and non-standard cycles, available for community groups and Bikeability instructors to use
- H. Traffic-free spaces for people to learn and build confidence
- I. Community cycling activities to support all infrastructure schemes

Cycle Sisters successfully engages with over 500 Muslim women from diverse ethnic backgrounds every year through a combination of led social rides and targeted cycle training across 10 London boroughs. They support Muslim women to train as Bikeability Instructors and Ride Leaders, who act as role models, and provide tailored support to enable these under-represented groups to access cycling.



Photo © Cycle Sisters

6. Create sociable high streets

Why?


It is convenient, cheap, and great for our health to have shops and amenities close to where we live. Essential to this is creating spaces in and around our local shops, high streets and town centres where people want to spend time. The old, outdated model of people simply travelling to local shops and town centres, doing their shopping, and going home again is not a viable proposition for the future. With the opportunities to now buy online, the demand for a solely commercial proposition has passed.

The thriving high streets and town centres are now those that have traffic-free and traffic-restricted areas, wide pavements, greenery, seating, and a range of commercial, social and public activities. Visit Bromley, Hounslow and Kingston town centres and you'll see how sociable places are commercial successes. One study has calculated that retail footfall increases by 32% and retail turnover by 17% as a direct result of improvements to the pedestrian environment on high streets²⁶.

Investing in our high streets will create an economic success story and increase business activity and tax revenue, all while supporting community and the environment.

How can the Mayor make this happen?

- A. Create a Social High Streets fund to support local authorities wanting to transform their high streets, town centres, district centres and parades of shops into thriving social and commercial places
- B. Improve sustainable travel options to town centres, to include cycle routes, low traffic and accessible walking and wheeling routes, bus priority, cycle parking (including for non-standard cycles), cycle delivery rider facilities, and funding for cargo cycles for businesses
- C. Identify under-used car parks and fund their conversion for community, commercial and sustainable logistics uses
- D. Support local authorities wanting to trial different uses for vacant retail spaces, such as for cycle hubs and community or start-up businesses



Creating sociable high streets benefits the economy, improves our health, and generates tax revenue

7. Incorporate leisure cycling into London's Cycling Action Plan

Why?

A quarter of Londoners now cycle²⁷. But to bring the benefits of cycling to the three quarters that do not, London needs a comprehensive plan to inspire and enable new, nervous and inexperienced people to have a go and build confidence.

Many people thinking about taking up cycling do so because it is fun, and because it enables them to visit and experience new places. Children need safe places to learn, explore and gain skills. People who have had time away from cycling, or who have developed health conditions, need places where they can rediscover their confidence.

London already has 1,900 km of traffic-free 'green' routes, but these are not consolidated and promoted as part of a joyous cycling offer in London. Cities like Copenhagen, on the other hand, invest in and promote their 'Green Cycle Routes'²⁸ ('Grønne ruter') as a means of inspiring less confident cyclists to give it a try²⁹. Without a similar approach, London will struggle to meet its target of everyone travelling actively for 20 minutes per day.³⁰

London now has a Leisure Walking Plan and a Cycling Action plan, but cycling for leisure is not recognised as part of either. Current Transport for London policy does not link the Cycleway Network to well-used and well-loved leisure cycling routes. For example, accessible green spaces such as Victoria Park are already widely used by community cycling groups to train people to cycle for the first time³¹, but is not recognised as complementing the on-street network.

So, to inspire people to explore London more on their cycles, and to encourage tourists to walk and cycle to sites of interest, a high-profile information, cycle skills, and promotional campaign should be put in place to highlight the fun and enjoyment of exploring London by cycle.

How can the Mayor make this happen?

- A. Recognise that Leisure Cycling is an important part of meeting the targets in the Mayor's Transport Strategy³²
- B. Produce a specific chapter on Leisure Cycling in the Cycle Action Plan, which can also complement the Leisure Walking Plan
- C. Maintain, improve and promote London's extensive leisure cycling assets
- D. Differentiate between the standards and the Network required to get people from A to B, and those for traffic-free 'green' routes which may not need to be as direct and 'open all hours'
- E. Update the cycleway wayfinding guidance so that users can be helped to find both types of route
- F. Promote the Mayor's Access Control Guidance, which can help improve accessibility of green and traffic-free spaces



London's traffic-free spaces provide those new to cycling with a calm and inviting environment to learn



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