Transforming mobility

Ensuring disabled people are represented as places seek to transform how people get around

Transforming mobility

To find out more, please contact Tim Burns:
tim.burns@sustrans.org.uk

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. www.sustrans.org.uk

Sustrans is a registered charity, number 326550 in England and Wales and number SC039263 in Scotland.

Transport for All

Transport for All is the disabled-led group breaking down barriers and transforming the transport system so disabled people can make the journeys we want, with freedom, dignity, ease and confidence. We work with our members to campaign for change, influencing governments, industry and the public. www.transportforall.org.uk

Transport for All is a registered charity, no. 1063733.

The Motability Foundation

The Motability Foundation is an independent charity that invests in support, transport programmes and research which are critical to giving disabled people in the UK the ability to get around. It oversees the delivery of the Motability Scheme and helps those most in need to access it. It also works with the public and private sectors, and disabled people and groups to create and advocate for inclusive mobility. www.motability.org.uk

Motability is a Registered Charity, no. 299745 (England and Wales) SC050642 (Scotland).

Language

Disabled people

For brevity, we use the term 'disabled people' to include people living with a physical or mental health condition, which has a long-term, substantial effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. By long-term we mean 12 months or more. This is the definition used within the Equality Act 2010; however, it's not necessarily how all disabled people identify.

Walking and wheeling

We recognise that some people who use wheeled mobility aids, for example a wheelchair or a mobility scooter, may not identify with the term walking and may prefer to use the term wheeling. We use the terms walking and wheeling together to ensure we are as inclusive as possible.

Contents

Summary

The UK is facing difficult economic, health and environmental challenges. Transport can play a unique positive role. But this means the way we get about in the future is likely to be different.

In response across the UK, more 'transformative' plans are emerging in local areas to respond to these challenges. If successful they are likely to mean:

- More journeys by public transport

- More walking, wheeling and cycling trips

- Reduced car use, especially in urban areas and an electric revolution in vehicles

- More public space in cities, towns and neighbourhoods for people to dwell, socialise, play and access nature

However, mobility in the UK is neither fair nor sustainable. Disabled people already experience greater barriers to mobility including cost, accessibility and safety. It's therefore essential that any plan to transform mobility seeks to work with disabled people to ensure their needs are met.

Transforming Mobility is a research project led by Sustrans, in partnership with Transport for All, and funded by the Motability Foundation. It aims to understand how disabled people can be better represented as places become more ambitious in transforming mobility.

We believe that when disabled people are better represented, the outcomes are better for everyone, and places are more likely to be successful in transforming how we get around.

Our approach is focused on user research and engagement. Sustrans and Transport for All explored transport trends from leading places in the UK and in Belgium alongside disabled people and decision makers. We found that while many disabled people support these proposals, they also have concerns.

What is even more striking is the current situation. We found 53% of disabled people think the government is not doing enough to help disabled people be active and access nature, while 48% think the government is not doing enough to ensure transport is affordable. Half of disabled people (48%) think both national government and their local authority are not doing enough to ensure accessibility is a priority.

Our report therefore sets out five big ideas emerging in the UK and likely to be taken up more broadly in the next 5–10 years. Through the project disabled people have made recommendations around these ideas that seek to ensure disabled people are better represented and outcomes meet their needs.

Idea 1: Balance street space

Local authorities should balance the use of street space for walking and wheeling, cycling, public transport, cars, and social activities by implementing Streetspace Allocation Frameworks alongside Traffic Circulation Plans.

- A Streetspace Allocation Framework maps viable, safe and attractive networks for different types of transport across a town, city or region. It separates the primary routes for each type between different streets to reduce conflict, while making sure that they integrate with one another.

- Street Space Allocation Frameworks should increase space for walking and wheeling, cycling, bus and tram networks to improve access, reliability and safety for users. To do so, space must be taken away on some streets from cars whilst preserving access, especially for disabled people who are dependent on a vehicle. One successful approach to this is to implement circulation plans which seek to reduce through-traffic across central areas of cities or towns.

- 65% of disabled people support local councils developing a framework for how streets should be used for different types of transport to have their own dedicated networks and avoid conflict. 58% of disabled people support taking steps to decrease car use across urban areas to reduce congestion, speed up buses, and make places more pleasant to walk, wheel and cycle in.

Idea 2: Make it easier to walk, wheel or cycle to the bus, train or tram

Local authorities should develop networks of mobility hubs that connect walking, wheeling and cycling with buses, trains and trams, and provide places for communities to play and socialise.

A mobility hub is a place where different types of transport come together, to increase transport choice and make journeys more convenient and seamless for people. For example, a bus stop next to a train station with cycle parking along a cycle route. Mobility hubs should also aim to improve the public space and provide other services, for example publicly available toilets and a cafe.

Mobility hubs should be accessible and consider the needs of disabled people. They should be located where people come together and lots of trips start or end, for example hospitals, local high streets, universities and shopping centres, and be a short walk or wheel from where most people live.

81% of disabled people support providing a better experience when changing between different types of transport.

Idea 3: Prioritise people crossing side roads

Governments should give local authorities the power to roll out side road zebra crossings across the UK.

The Highway Code changed in 2022 to give people crossing or waiting to cross priority over people driving and cycling turning into or out of a side road in England, Scotland and Wales. However, no evidence exists to suggest this has changed behaviour and people still need to wait for vehicles or take their chances crossing.

Side road zebra crossings are a cheap, quick solution that give people waiting to cross side roads priority over cars and cycles. It's like a zebra crossing with painted white zebra strips across a junction but without the flashing lights and zig-zag approach makings. This makes them cheap and quick to implement at side-road junctions. Side road crossings are used in many countries across Europe. Where tested

in the UK, they led to 65% more drivers giving way and give people – especially disabled people – the priority and space they need to cross.

72% of disabled people support giving greater priority and investments for low-cost solutions, such as side road crossings, or step-free access when crossing roads.

Idea 4: Manage parking to free up public space

Local authorities should take steps to reduce car parking to free up public space and declutter pavements

Reducing unnecessary car parking can free up space across cities and towns. This can be used for bus lanes, cycle lanes, pocket parks and planting schemes that reduce flood risk. It also provides an opportunity to move street clutter such as cycles, e-scooters, bins and outdoor dining off pavements to improve access.

Many places across the UK and beyond are taking steps to do just this. Any review of parking must engage with disabled people to ensure sufficient and well-designed disabled parking capacity is provided at appropriate locations to meet local need.

47% of disabled people support while 22% oppose reducing on-street visitor parking spaces (excluding disabled parking bays) to free up space for more pedestrian friendly areas and green spaces.

Idea 5: Access panels to inform local transport policy

All local transport authorities should set up a group of paid disabled people who review and shape transport policy and projects, known as an access panel.

If disabled people are not part of a process to develop policy or deliver transport schemes, outcomes are much less likely to reflect their needs. Access panels can overcome this.

Local authorities should set up paid access panels to review and improve policy and practice for disabled people. An access panel is a formal group of disabled residents, reflecting a range of impairments and health conditions. They review and shape transport policy and projects in their local area. Access panels should be supported by a national network that provides support, training and acts to share practice. A model for this already exists in Scotland which can be built upon.

65% of disabled people support giving funding to local councils to create access panels to inform and shape transport plans and projects.

Karina, Oxford

I'm Karina, and I live in Marston in Oxford.

In my day, it's definitely true that in terms of planning, everything revolves around my prosthetic leg, and certainly in terms of getting around town.

I kind of have good leg days and bad leg days. I think people see individuals wearing prosthetic legs and think, "oh look, they can walk, that's fine." Some days you can't even get the leg on, say if it's really hot, your leg will swell up and your socket's not really going to fit. So, it's massively variable. On good days, it's pretty good. I can stand around for quite a while.

Walking is limited because it takes it quite a lot of energy, so I kind of ration my walking energy. I plan out my day depending on what I need to do and what I want to do, to make sure I have enough walking stamina.

I try to go for a walk out in nature every day, because that's part of my, just what I need, in terms of mental health. And I just like it, and it's good for physio.

I'm an artist, so I go to creative meet ups, which might be in different places in the town, might go and, you know, go and get something from a hardware shop. So, so then it's sort of random journeys, but I'm going to be honest, I mostly drive and then park in the disabled spots.

What's stressful is if you've got a meeting or a deadline and you go to where you think there's going to be disabled parking and you can't park, so obviously that can cause an issue.

When you've got two legs or, you know, full abilities, you can park further away and kind of run or something. But it's not like I can suddenly move faster to make up time.

I think it's good to get disabled people involved at the beginning of a planning phase of

anything that involves people moving around, mostly because I think when you're able bodied, having been very able bodied, you honestly have no idea a lot of these problems exist until someone says.

I think it gives an opportunity for people to be heard and to feel heard, because I think for a lot of disabled people, it does feel a bit like you're struggling just to do daily life and everyone's zooming around doing their stuff (what appears to be) relatively easily.

And actually, if we're setting up the environment to make it easy for disabled people to move around, we're also setting up to make it easy for everyone when they get older or become mobility-impaired to move around. So, I think it actually really is for everyone.

Introduction

The need to transform mobility

Local transport is set to change fundamentally. The UK is facing economic; health and environmental challenges and transport can play a unique positive role.

Local authorities and national governments are taking steps to improve the way we travel. The way we get about in the future is likely to be different and across the UK, plans are emerging to respond to these challenges and transform mobility.

However, mobility in the UK is neither fair nor sustainable, especially for disabled people. Disabled people already experience greater barriers to mobility, including cost, accessibility and safety.
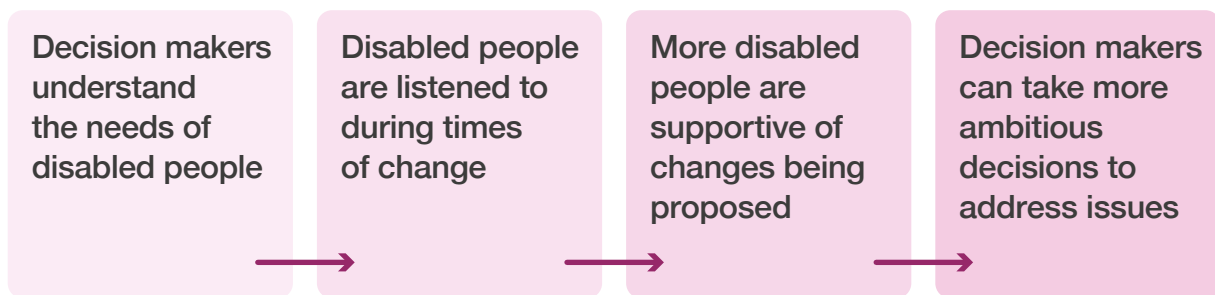
As the UK transforms mobility we must do more to ensure the needs of disabled people are embedded. Everyone should have the freedom to travel and access the things they need to live well.

The Transforming Mobility Project

Transforming Mobility is a research project led by Sustrans, in partnership with Transport for All, and funded by the Motability Foundation. It aims to understand how disabled people can be better represented as places become more ambitious in transforming mobility.

Disabled people support the need for transport to improve health, the economy and the environment. However disabled people do not always have the options to do so. We must find ways to ensure disabled people have easy options to travel that align with these wider societal goals.

We believe that when disabled people are better represented, the outcomes are better for everyone, and cities are more likely to be successful in transforming how we get around.

Decision makers understand the needs of disabled people	→	Disabled people are listened to during times of change	→	More disabled people are supportive of changes being proposed	→	Decision makers can take more ambitious decisions to address issues

Our approach is focused on user research and engagement with disabled people. This included:

- a review of the evidence and policies of local authorities,
- an independent, representative UK-wide survey conducted by More in Common,
- eight workshops in areas leading these changes, and
- a 3-day site visit to Ghent and Leuven in Belgium with disabled people and decision makers.

This approach allowed Sustrans and Transport for All to explore big ideas that could change mobility across the UK with disabled people. Many of these ideas have been implemented elsewhere and are being increasingly considered here. Where these changes have taken place, they have not always taken the needs of disabled people into account. It's therefore unsurprising that while many disabled people support these proposals, they also have concerns.

Our report therefore sets out five big ideas being trialled in the UK and likely to be taken up more broadly in the next 5-10 years. Our recommendations around these ideas seek to ensure that disabled people are better represented within them and outcomes meet their needs.

We hope these ideas will enable local authorities and national governments to become more ambitious in transport delivery that seeks to ensure disabled people's views are recognised, whilst helping to meet the challenges of economic instability, climate change and transport inequity.

We would like to thank all the disabled people who participated in this research and to officers and decision makers from our partner authorities in Oxfordshire County, Oxford City, Edinburgh, Birmingham, Bath and North East Somerset, Ghent and Leuven.

Joe, Edinburgh

Hello. My name is Joe. I came from Hong Kong. I moved here in 2022. I am completely blind – I can't even sense the light.

In Hong Kong, I worked in the organisation for the blind. I have got a degree in computer studies, so, apart from doing the braille translation, I also did some accessible technology.

I also helped give advice to the government about the pavement design.

I like walking around independently like a sighted person, but not all the time I can manage it, because, for example, on some pavements, the dropped kerb is not very obvious.

And also, the installing of the traffic lights is not standard. Some traffic lights are quite near the wall, but some are installed quite near the road, so usually I need to ask a pedestrian when I want to cross the road.

Make it all standard, then blind people can find it easier to find the traffic light.

The other thing I think should be improved is that not all the traffic lights have the beeping sound in Edinburgh.

Also, the beeping sound is very short, because it's not consistent with the green man.

I think the beeping sound is useful because it can help me to cross the road in a straight direction.

Some traffic lights are damaged for a long time, and no people come to repair it. They should do some indication to let blind people report the problem.

For example, to make some braille, on the traffic light, then blind people can make a phone call to the government department to ask for the repair.

Sometimes I will join my friends to do hiking or going up on the hills. I also like cycling and I would join tandem cycling twice a month.

In the evening, I've also joined a ukulele course. I will go there by taking a bus. Some buses, there is still no audio announcement – that means, to tell me what is the next bus stop – so I need to ask the bus driver.

I know how to use the mobile apps, such as Lothian Bus, but the bus app is still not very good. So, I hope they can design it more accessible and more powerful for blind people to use.

Apart from the buses, I think the tram should be improved. Sometimes, it may open on the left door, sometimes it may open on the right door, depending on the tram stop, but blind people may not know.

The train also has the same problem like the tram. There's no instruction to let me know.

I think when the council or the organisations have meetings, they should ask some blind people to join in the meeting to give advice, or do testing by looking for some blind people to do it.

I think there should be equality in the society, to do the things like sighted people. It can help the blind people to have more confidence to go outside.

What is transforming mobility likely to look like?

The reasons why we need to transform mobility are widely known. Many of these underpin national and local transport strategies and plans across the UK.

Table 1: Drivers and solutions for transforming mobility

Driver	Societal challenge	Solution
Health	Increase physical activity	Increase active travel and public transport
	Improve mental wellbeing	Increase active travel and wider transport choice to ensure people can access the places they need to live well
	Improve road safety	Reduce the volume and speed of motor vehicles
Environment	Mitigate climate change	Transition to electric vehicles Modal shift – replace car trips with active travel and public transport use
	Cleaner air	Transition to electric vehicles Modal shift – replace car trips with active travel and public transport use
Economic	Increase access to education, skills, work and community	Increase transport choice to ensure people can access the places they need to live well
	Reduce traffic congestion	Modal shift - replace car trips with active travel and public transport use

Added up these transformations are likely to mean:

- More journeys by public transport

- More walking, wheeling and cycling trips

- Reduced car use, especially in urban areas and an electric revolution in vehicles

- More public space in cities, towns and neighbourhoods for people to dwell, socialise, play and access nature

These transformative changes must reduce car dependency, but be achieved in ways that increase choice, particularly for groups who currently are constrained by their transport options.

The National Travel Survey shows disabled people take 25% fewer trips than non-disabled people in England.[1] Research has shown that disabled people often experience greater barriers to mobility and find existing transport much more challenging than non-disabled people in the UK.[2]

For example 41% of disabled people often experience problems reaching their destination during typical walking or wheeling journeys due to accessibility.[3] This can limit transport choice, reduce access and increase social isolation. 71% of disabled people said they would like to use more environmentally friendly types of transport more but often do not have a choice.[4]

This project surveyed disabled people across the UK and added to this evidence base. We found less than half of disabled people who travel by buses, trains or cycling view these types of transport positively and walking and wheeling is rated negatively by one in five disabled people. While driving or being driven overall was seen more positively,

1   National Travel Survey, 2025. Disability, accessibility and blue badge statistics, England, 2023 to 2024

2   Transport for All, 2023. Are we there yet? www.transportforall.org.uk/news/are-we-there-yet-barriers-to-transport-for-disabled-people-in-2023

3   Sustrans 2023. Disabled Citizens Inquiry. www.sustrans.org.uk/media/11708/sustrans-disabled-citizens-inquiry-full-report.pdf

4   Transport for All, 2023. Are we there yet? www.transportforall.org.uk/news/are-we-there-yet-barriers-to-transport-for-disabled-people-in-2023

many disabled people cannot drive or do not have access to a car. In 2023, 29% of disabled adults lived in households without access to a car, compared with 16% of non-disabled adults in England.[5]

We found that 48% of disabled people do not think their local authority is not doing enough to ensure accessibility is a priority, regardless of other objectives, such as the climate and the economy, and 54% think their local authority is not doing enough to give disabled people a say in improving transport in their local area.

Furthermore 48% of disabled people think their local authority is not doing enough to help disabled people access work, education and other opportunities, whilst 50% believe this is the case for national government.

There is a clear need to improve mobility for disabled people. To be successful this means these transformations must represent the needs of disabled people:

Transformation 1: Improve and increase the number of journeys by public transport

Last year I bought a wheelchair accessible vehicle, that's transformed my experience of getting out and about because I had an estate car before. I'd prefer to take public transport but it's not convenient, it's not accessible and it's more expensive, so why would I? So when they're thinking about getting rid of cars they need to think about that. For non-disabled people cars are more convenient, but for disabled people, they're much, much more convenient. This rubs against cities trying to move away from car use.

Participant, Birmingham

---

5 www.gov.uk/government/statistics/disability-accessibility-and-blue-badge-scheme-statistics-2023-to-2024/disability-accessibility-and-blue-badge-statistics-england-2023-to-2024, 4.6 Car access (DIS0405)

During 2022, one in ten bus routes in Great Britain were cut[6] and new analysis suggests up to half of local registered bus routes in England have been cut since 2010.[7] Affordability, reliability, and service coverage are shared concerns in most parts of the UK, but approaches vary at a local or regional level.

Train reliability is worsening across the UK. Annual cancellation scores have been increasing year on year since 2014, reaching a peak of 3.8% of trains cancelled in the 2022-23 financial year.[8] Punctuality of trains has not improved over the same period, with no evidence to suggest significant improvements are coming.[9]

Public transport is critical for many people, including disabled people who do not own or use a car. People in households without access to a car make five times more bus trips than those with access.[10]

The UK Government recognises the need to improve public transport and is seeking to reform rail and bus services. In England, this will include giving local authorities more control over local buses, through franchising and municipal ownership.[11]

---

6 The Guardian, 2022. Almost one in 10 local bus services axed. www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/jan/24/almost-one-10-local-bus-services-axed-last-year-great-britain

7 The Independent, 2023. Map bus routes cut. www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/map-bus-routes-cut-labour-b2388980.html

8 Office of Rail and Road, Passenger rail performance January to March 2023, (PDF). https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/media/2203/passenger-performance-jan-mar-2023.pdf

9 Office of Rail and Road, Table 3138 - Train punctuality at recorded station stops by operator (periodic). https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/performance/passenger-rail-performance/table-3138-train-punctuality-at-recorded-station-stops-by-operator-periodic/

10 GOV.UK, Annual Bus Statistics: year ending March 2022 (revised). www.gov.uk/government/statistics/annual-bus-statistics-year-ending-march-2022/annual-bus-statistics-year-ending-march-2022

11 Transport Secretary sets the wheels in motion on "biggest overhaul to buses in a generation" - GOV.UK www.gov.uk/government/news/transport-secretary-sets-the-wheels-in-motion-on-biggest-overhaul-to-buses-in-a-generation

Scotland nationalised its rail operator in 2022 and the UK Government wants to follow suit in England establishing Great British Railways which will bring railways back into public ownership. It's hoped this will improve affordability, reliability and integration across Britain.[12]

Our survey found public transport is widely seen negatively by most disabled people who use public transport. Only 42% of disabled people felt trains were good on cost, whilst 30% felt negatively about the cost of travel by train. Disabled people who travel by bus felt buses underperform on a variety of factors including reliability – 19%, ability to travel at a convenience time – 19%, availability – 18%, and cost – 18%.

Disabled people support public transport reform. Our survey found 69% of disabled people support giving local councils the powers to have greater control over buses. As reforms to public transport take place, we therefore need to ensure that disabled people benefit, with greater public transport choice, accessibility and independence. 78% of disabled people support a public commitment to improve the design of trains, buses and trams from public transport providers.

12 Future of Great British Railways - GOV.UK
www.gov.uk/government/speeches/future-of-great-british-railways

Case study: Greater Manchester Beelines

Greater Manchester brought buses back under local control for the first time in almost 40 years in September 2023. This is part of the Bee Network – which aims to create a London-style public transport network, joining up bus travel with Metrolink trams, trains, cycleways and walkways.

Results from a year later showed nearly seven million more journeys have been made on the city region's buses compared with the previous year, an increase of 5%. According to the Mayor Andy Burnham, bus services are now cleaner, cheaper and more reliable including more night services and free travel for 16- to 18-year-olds. Increased patronage and local control are helping to ensure more investment back into services.

Accessibility is a priority for the Bee Network and one of the six customer commitments that underpin and inform each decision relating to transport services and infrastructure.

Transformation 2: Increase the number of journeys walked, wheeled or cycled

For me, it's so basic an ask to make the pavements level and dropped on both sides – I can get down but can't always get back up. Cobble is so pretty, but a day in Oxford is exhausting. In cobbled cities I would just get an Uber which adds to the problem.

Participant, Oxford

Currently there is a target of 50% of short journeys being walked, wheeled or cycled in England, however actual figures are far short of this. Other UK nations are also striving to increase walking, wheeling and cycling.

Walking and wheeling can be inaccessible, not joined up with buses, trams and trains or unsafe, especially at night. Cycling networks are fragmented and most people do not want to share road space with motor vehicles whilst cycling.

Our survey found disabled people think walking and wheeling perform particularly poorly on several areas. Among disabled people who walk, or wheel, 21% had negative views around both safety and accessibility, while 23% had negative views on the comfort of journeys.

Conversely disabled people were much more positive about the cost and convenience of being about to walk or wheel whenever they needed. Data from Sustrans' Walking and Cycling Index in the UK from 2023 found that 50% of disabled people want to walk or wheel more and 37% of disabled people want to cycle more.

Increasingly, local and national governments across the UK recognise the importance of walking, wheeling and cycling for our health, the environment and economy. Investment and support for walking, wheeling and cycling is likely to increase in the future. Walking, wheeling and cycling also underpin and go hand in hand with public transport and driving.

> Cycling is expensive for disabled people, and getting up a hill in Edinburgh is hard. Storage of [adapted cycles] is difficult, especially if you're in a flat.
>
> **Participant, Edinburgh**

It is well known that places which are good for walking, wheeling and cycling are attractive for residents, visitors and businesses, but they must also be inclusive.

Case study: Cycling increases across London

In London cycling has risen by 26% from 2019 to 2024 bucking the trend seen in other places following the pandemic.[13] The increase in people cycling across the capital has gone hand in hand with improvements to cycling infrastructure to separate people cycling from vehicles. The strategic cycle network in London is now over 400km long, up from 90km in 2016 and now longer than the London Underground. Cycling design standards in London and beyond have also improved over the past five to ten years. This means most newer cycle infrastructure is now built to accessible standards, including for non-standard cycles.

This has taken pressure off packed rail, tube, bus networks and reduced congestion. What is even more remarkable is that the cost of building cycling infrastructure is a fraction of the cost of introducing rail or tube improvements in the capital. The outcomes from London clearly show potential for cycling elsewhere as other towns and cities become more ambitious.

Transformation 3: Reduce trips by car, but ensure access by car is still possible for people that depend on one

It's about getting the message out there – I keep saying about traffic filters it's not about stopping people driving but freeing up the roads for people who do need it, easily and when they want to, rather than sitting in a traffic queue with people who don't need to.

Participant, Oxford

13 New TfL data shows cycling journeys in London are up by 26 per cent compared to 2019 levels - Transport for London https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2024/november/new-tfl-data-shows-cycling-journeys-in-london-are-up-by-26-per-cent-compared-to-2019-levels

Currently across the UK the car is the most used type of transport for journeys. This is a result of largely designing villages, towns and cities around the car for many years, a practice that continues across many new housing developments to this day.

Changing our relationship with the car is deeply contentious. We must help people to drive less and ensure people are not left behind who have no other option but to drive. This includes disabled people who face greater barriers to using other types of transport.

At the same time designing places around the car has excluded many people, including disabled people who cannot drive or do not have access to a car. Many groups including disabled people and young people who are less likely to drive often take less trips overall and evidence suggests may have more challenges accessing work, education and other services.

Travel by car is popular amongst disabled people. Our survey found driving or being driven performed best amongst travel modes on most journey metrics, for example convenience, access to information to plan and during journeys, accessibility, availability, journey comfort, journey safety, journey time and reliability. The only weakness of car travel is the cost to purchase, use and maintain one.

In 2023, 40% of disabled adults aged 17 or over in England did not have a full driving licence. This is compared to 22% of non-disabled adults.[14] Disabled people are far less likely to drive or own a car. However, those that do are often highly dependent on their cars as a mobility aid, and many disabled people are dependent upon others including carers and taxis for travel.

Many cities, towns and neighbourhoods are trying to balance the way streets and public space is used, to increase transport choice and create places where people want to live and spend time and businesses want to invest. This means ensuring types of transport have complete, reliable and safe networks but that they also better integrate to increase transport choice.

14 www.gov.uk/government/statistics/disability-accessibility-and-blue-badge-scheme-statistics-2023-to-2024/disability-accessibility-and-blue-badge-statistics-england-2023-to-2024

Case study: Leuven

In 2016 Leuven introduced a traffic circulation plan that stopped 'through car traffic' traveling across the centre of the city and out the other side within the ring road. Private motor vehicles entering the city centre would have to go back out to the ring road to travel to another part of the city centre but could still access most destinations aside from a central pedestrianised zone.

This contributed to an increase in bus journeys of 12% and cycling trips by 32% in the first year of operation.[15] By reducing traffic congestion, the circulation plan improved the quality of life for residents, allowing them to enjoy quieter and more pedestrian-friendly streets.

It also has meant that journeys that still require a car to reach the city centre, including for disabled people, are typically faster as a result of less congestion.

Transformation 4: More public space in cities, towns and neighbourhoods for people to dwell, socialise, play and access nature

I like when you go to Europe and in a lot of parks they have those tables with four seats around them and you see old men playing chess together. That would be good, having seating where you face each other so you can socialise and meet people.

Participant, Birmingham

---

15 EU Urban Mobility Observatory, 2019. Cycling in Leuven increases by 32% following its ban on through traffic https://urban-mobility-observatory.transport.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/cycling-leuven-increases-32-following-its-ban-through-traffic-2019-08-19_en

Local leaders are also recognising that our streets and public space are not just for transport but also places to dwell, enjoy and socialise or play.

Public space is important as it can attract people and businesses to live, visit or invest in a place. Public space can help to increase access to nature, whether that's a small pocket park, a wildlife corridor or accessible canal or river.

Public space is also a useful tool to help mitigate the impacts of climate change. Greening schemes can reduce the temperature of our towns and cities in summer and protect places from flooding by providing natural drainage. The impact of climate change and access to nature disproportionately affect people from disadvantaged backgrounds, including many disabled people.

Case study: Sheffield Grey to Green

Grey to Green[16] is an award-winning scheme that has transformed a large urban road into a green public space that encourages cycling and walking in inner-city Sheffield.

Grey to Green provides a sustainable urban drainage solution within the city to reduce the impact of flooding which has affected the area previously causing significant damage and cost. The project has significantly increased biodiversity and improved surface water management.

At the same time is has helped to re-connect the area with the rest of the city centre. This project has been connected to new office, residential and retail developments in the area. It provides a new linear green space for visitors, residents and workers alike to enjoy.

16 www.greytogreen.org.uk

Hazel, West Midlands

My name is Hazel. I live in Chelmsley Wood and I am a borough councillor.

On a day-to-day basis, my travel will vary. As a councillor, I'll go on the buses here into my ward, especially in Kingshurst, and then I'll go out and about.

I've had a long-time diagnosis of chronic pain for about five years. I can sometimes feel absolutely fine, and the next thing I know, I've fallen over or I've injured myself. Each day is different. Some days, I have really good days. Other days I don't.

On my bad days I might just hop on a bus just outside of mine, but sometimes I'll be waiting about 20, 30 minutes. And at that point you think, "oh, do I just walk it?" But actually, I found that I'm having to navigate obstacles when I leave my own home. Sometimes neighbours are quite inconsiderate in the way that they park, so I'm having to then navigate to get out of my own home in the first place.

And then once I've done that, it's the state of the footpath. So, if I'm feeling able to, I can walk to the bus interchange, but the

paths can be very uneven. At the bus interchange, I've waited up to 90 minutes. That doesn't just affect me—it affects everyone at the stop. I've ended up doing casework there while we all wait.

I find, especially if I've had a few days where the bus services are so bad and I know that I have to get to a certain place, I might wake up and go, "oh, I need a doctor's appointment", and then at that point, I'm like, "forget it, I'll just get a taxi", because I don't even trust the bus service, or I'm exhausted. And that can be expensive. So, it's not just planning for your trip mentally, but financially as well.

I think it can leave you really, really nervous about it actually. "How is my journey going to be today?" or "I've got this planned, that planned, but actually is it going to go right?"

And if it does go right, are there going to be any issues at all? And if so, how are they handled?

One thing missing is accountability. I've complained about services including buses and trains as I use both and the difference between each company is very obvious and also concerning; nothing really has changed. I've done that in a personal capacity, and sometimes I've been affected and someone else has to, for example an elderly resident of mine

The mental additional burden, I didn't have this before. These are some brand-new experiences for me.

So, I find that actually, when I have those issues from the bus companies or from the train companies, because of things they could put in place to avoid that situation, I find that you become less and less trusting of public transport. All those issues coming together can create an additional anxiety that I didn't have previously.

Five big ideas to put disabled people at the heart of transforming mobility

> That's key isn't it, getting people involved at the beginning – what do you want and need – and listening to do things with them, not to them.
>
> **Participant, Oxford**

Below we present five ideas to ensure disabled people are better represented as national government and local authorities seek to transform mobility.

Central to all of these is the representation of disabled people. Any initiative that involved disabled people was widely supported by disabled people. Our survey found that 63% of disabled people think it's important that local authorities hold both in-person and virtual engagement events with the disabled community, while 68% support councils publishing and reporting against targets relating to accessibility that could incentivise performance.

Idea 1: Balance street space

> Driving has become a lot more difficult, and sometimes I don't leave the house at all otherwise I'm just stuck in traffic due to roadworks or LTNs. It feels like my options are further limited.
>
> **Participant, Oxford**

Local authorities should balance the use of street space for walking and wheeling, cycling, public transport, cars, and social activities by implementing Streetspace Allocation Frameworks alongside Traffic Circulation Plans

The opportunity

All local authorities should have a long-term vision for transport networks that are attractive, reliable, safe, and accessible and contribute to growing their economies, helping everyone live well for longer and decarbonising the transport system. However, current provision is far from ideal.

Currently, walking and wheeling, cycling and bus networks tend to be broken. For example, inaccessible crossings for people walking and wheeling, cycle paths suddenly stopping halfway along a road, or neighbourhoods not having access to a bus route, especially outside of normal working hours. This leads to gaps in provision, delays and barriers to access, making people more reliant on a car, if they can access one. At the same time, our towns and cities suffer from congestion and other negative impacts of too many cars.

A vital part of this vision is to identify where each transport network or activity can go and allocate space or 'streets' accordingly.

Too often, streets prioritise cars alone but this hinders other users from using this space and causes congestion.

Local authorities often try to improve the situation without addressing the key issue: a lack of space. Many people will recognise a busy local street that has been updated over many years to serve buses, cars, people cycling, people walking and wheeling, possibly a tram route,

as well as being lined with shops, bars and cafes. A street that tries to serve too many different forms of transport alongside other needs can often end up serving no one. This results in conflict between users, which can be exacerbated for disabled people.

> I used to use the bus frequently but I finally caved last year and got an adapted car, which I didn't want to go to the expense of, but I felt like bus wasn't manageable for numbers of reasons; distance to bus stops, how well I'm feeling that day, but I feel like ultimately, having a baby added a whole other level of difficulty. Not just the physical disability but adding a pram to that it's a whole other level and layer of negotiations… it wiped out the bus completely. It's often forgotten about – you have a disability but then you have your normal life; your children, your shopping.
>
> **Participant, Online**

How a Streetspace Allocation Framework can help

A Streetspace Allocation Framework avoids this pressure by prioritising what should go where across a whole town or city to reduce conflict along individual streets, for example separating bus and car corridors. Oxford Road in Manchester provides a useful example of this where cars have been excluded. This has created a safer environment for people cycling and more reliable and faster bus journeys. Cars use adjacent routes for access to the city where buses are less frequent.

A Streetspace Allocation Framework should also recognise where streets serve a social function, for example high streets, public squares and outside of schools. Every road should still be safe and accessible to get around, but a framework like this can identify priorities for the use of space allowing a place to invest appropriately.

Our survey found 65% of disabled people support local councils developing a framework for how streets should be used for different types of transport to have their own dedicated networks and avoid conflict.

This practice has been commonplace for many years in Belgium and has been approved recently in Edinburgh where it's known as their Future Streets Framework. Glasgow also has a Streetspace Allocation Framework.

Case study: Edinburgh's Future Streets

The City of Edinburgh Council's Street Allocation Framework is part of its Future Streets strategy, which aims to create a more connected and welcoming urban environment. The City of Edinburgh Council has developed a plan for different transport networks across the city as well as streets which must have a social function such as shopping areas.

Edinburgh's Street Allocation Framework provides principles for designing future street projects, balancing demands for space, and prioritising sustainable transport options like walking and wheeling, cycling, and public transport while still accommodating general traffic.

Delivering a Streetspace Allocation Framework will fill in gaps around bus and cycling networks. Whilst most places provide pavements for walking and wheeling, they are not always accessible due to, for example, poor quality surfaces, obstructions including parked cars and clutter, a lack of dropped kerbs, and missing or inaccessible crossing points.

There's a dropped kerb on my block but at the bottom it has a 2-inch cliff and now I cannot get up. One big bugbear is people's hedges. So many people let them grow out onto the pavement and on a lot of pavements you can't get a wheelchair down because of them, even though it's wide enough.

Participant, Edinburgh

The importance of traffic circulation plans

> Someone said to me, you live in the city, you have to accept congestion. So, we need to show people you don't have to accept congestion.
>
> **Participant, Oxford**

The most successful Streetspace Allocation Frameworks have been implemented alongside a Traffic Circulation Plan. These involve planning how traffic moves around an urban centre or region. To create space for other forms of transport, traffic should circulate primarily on roads designed for higher volumes of private motor vehicles.

Our survey found 58% of disabled people support taking steps to decrease car use across urban areas to reduce congestion, speed up buses, and make places more pleasant to walk, wheel and cycle in. While most disabled people support Traffic Circulation Plans, it's essential that they ensure disabled people who rely on cars do not face barriers to making the journeys they want with freedom, dignity, ease and confidence.

> The communication around it – we're taking this away, but we're giving you this output – green spaces. You'll lose the freedom of using your car every day, and it won't be perfect, but we all want to breathe better air.
>
> **Participant, Oxford**

Case study: Ghent Circulation Plan

Ghent implemented its traffic circulation plan overnight in 2017. The circulation plan acts like a large low traffic neighbourhood by reducing through traffic in the central parts of the city. Within the ring road, neighbourhoods are divided up into five areas and a largely pedestrianised central zone. This means cars must exit back onto the ring road to travel to a different area. Buses, trams and people cycling can still cross the city directly, although on many streets cycling is banned during shopping hours. The circulation plan helps to reduce the impact of cars but also ensures buses are more reliable and improves safety for walking, wheeling and cycling.

The plan has meant the proportion of journeys by bus have increased from 9% to 14% and cycling journeys from 22% to 35% between 2012 and 2018. At the same time, journeys by car have declined from 55% to 39%. People who drive in Ghent also benefit from the Circulation Plan, because congestion is almost absent from the area. Whilst journey distance might be slightly longer, journey times have typically decreased because of less congestion.

Cities in the UK including Oxford, Birmingham and Edinburgh are proposing various forms of traffic circulation plans to reduce through-traffic across central parts of their cities, for example through the provision of bus gates which reduce car travel on certain roads to speed up buses and ensure they are more reliable.

Local authorities should seek to implement streetspace allocation frameworks including traffic circulation plans. However, it's critical that they do so in ways that do not create barriers for disabled people. This will require a balance between the needs of disabled people who rely on cars for mobility, with the need to improve other transport choices for other disabled people.

Case study: Oxford Traffic Filters

Traffic levels and congestion in and around Oxford are high. Oxfordshire County Council's aim is to reduce congestion by trialling camera-operated traffic filters on six roads in the city to help lower the number of private car journeys.

The traffic filters are designed to work together with other measures to reduce traffic, make bus journeys faster, allow for new and improved bus routes, make walking, wheeling and cycling safer, reduce local air pollution and improve the health and wellbeing of communities.

The Oxford traffic filters trail will limit through-traffic on six roads when travelling by car during set days and hours. In response to public consultation and regular engagement with the IMPACT Group (formerly known as the Inclusive Transport and Movement Focus Group), Oxfordshire County Council made some changes to the scheme, including additional permits and adjustments to timings of two of the filters.

What disabled people told us they want from Street Allocation Frameworks and Traffic Circulation Plans:

1. Increased ease of mobility and transport choices, especially in more deprived areas or areas suffering from poor transport options.

2. More buses, routes, and faster public transport alongside safe and accessible walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure. Transport services should be integrated and seamless.

3. Confidence – the provision of real time information about circulation plans and Street Allocation Frameworks so that people are able to plan and perform journeys, including for accessibility.

4. Plans and schemes that account for the needs of people who live outside of the town or city centre and may have reduced transport choices. Street Allocation Frameworks should also recognise cross boundary travel patterns and behaviours through authorities working together in partnership.

5. Clear and consistent signage across cities so people know where they can and can't go by different forms of transport including car access and disabled parking.

6. Clear, transparent and open communication around circulation plans, including why they are being implemented, showing people how circulation plans will benefit them. Be honest around issues and listen to concerns.

> We're talking about honesty – it's not going to be perfect for everyone but being honest about what's happening and why. You won't always get what you want but overall, it will be better for everyone.
>
> **Participant, Oxford**

Idea 2: Make it easier to walk, wheel or cycle to the bus, train or tram

Local authorities should develop networks of mobility hubs that connect walking, wheeling and cycling with buses, trains and trams, and provide places for communities to play and socialise.

The opportunity

> I chose bus as my primary mode of transport because that's what's closest to me location-wise...I don't live close enough to a train station, so bus is mine because of convenience. But in Oxford, bus timetables are more aspirational than accurate. The amount of time I spend... an hour, an hour and a half, because buses are full because they're running late, but it's what I have to do because of lack of options.
>
> **Participant, Online**

Walking, wheeling and cycling is ideal for short to medium journeys, but less so for longer ones. At the same time, public transport rarely stops right outside your house. It's therefore essential to join walking, wheeling and cycling together with public transport to make journeys

safe, reliable and convenient. Considering cars carefully can also help reduce the length of car trips, through solutions like park and ride services and parking provision at train stations.

How mobility hubs can help

A mobility hub is a place where different types of transport come together, to increase transport choice. Mobility hubs make it easier and more convenient to connect journeys in the same place, especially those which use more than one type of transport. That might be wheeling to the bus stop and catching a bus into town or getting off the train before picking up a hire cycle to the office.

A mobility hub should also provide other services that people need, such as public space, retail, free and accessible toilets, waiting areas and journey information. Mobility hubs should be accessible and fully consider the needs of disabled people.

Case study: Stockport Interchange

Stockport's modern and attractive mobility hub[17] contains a new 2-acre park, new walking, wheeling and cycling links to the railway station and the town centre.

The new interchange features 18 bus stands which allow for 164 departures an hour, making it an integral part of the Bee Network – Greater Manchester's vision for an integrated transport system. It has also been designed with future tram integration in mind.

A town, city or region should have a network of mobility hubs provided, located at locations where people come together and lots of trips start or end. Ideally everyone should be able to walk or wheel to their nearest mobility hub.

A network should include larger mobility hubs typically connected to train and bus stations, medium sized hubs outside places like hospitals, shopping centres and universities, alongside smaller hubs

17 www.stockport.gov.uk/transport-interchange

scattered across neighbourhoods nearby where people live which also provide public space for social benefit.

> ## Case study: West of England Mobility Hubs
>
> The West of England Combined Authority is trialling mobility hubs across the region to bring together walking, wheeling and cycling with public transport. They are also exploring how to include new forms of transport within them such as e-scooters, e-cargo bikes, and demand responsive bus services.
>
> The Combined Authority hopes these hubs will make it easier for people to switch between different types of transport, making journeys easier while at the same time providing an opportunity to improve public spaces in a way which meets local community and business needs.
>
> Mobility hubs will have a consistent and recognisable appearance, but each hub will be unique to meet the needs of the local community.

CoMoUK, the charity focusing on shared transport have developed an accreditation scheme for mobility hubs.[18] This helps to ensure that hubs meet quality standards and include accessibility criteria.

How do we ensure mobility hubs benefit disabled people

Many disabled people are reliant on public transport journeys. This means that a network of mobility hubs can improve convenience and make these journeys easier, but only if they are accessible.

Our survey found that 81% of disabled people support providing a better experience when changing between trains, buses and other types of transport. While 78% of disabled people support a public commitment to improve the design of public transport to support disabled people to travel independently.

---

18 https://cdn.prod.website-files. com/6102564995f71c83fba14d54/64b7aa9b42421ae3cbef8eaa_CoMoUK%20 Mobility%20Hub%20Accreditation%202022_v02.pdf

It's therefore essential that mobility hubs are accessible. Mobility hubs should consider how people move around the hub, boarding and alighting accessibility, interior access, safety and support features, sensory and cognitive accessibility, external features.

Finally, it's also important that mobility hubs are staffed and that staff are trained. 79% of disabled people support compulsory training for all public facing staff members to support disabled people.

What disabled people told us they want from mobility hubs:

1. Mobility hubs, including the area outside of the hubs, should be safe, clean and accessible. This includes level platforms for trams and trains and step-free access, with appropriate, well maintained lift capacity, high contrast spaces that are easy to navigate for visually impaired people, and good acoustics to avoid echo. Departures and arrivals should be presented in multiple formats – big, digital screens and clear audio announcements, with hearing loops as standard.

2. A level of consistency is key. For example, the presentation of information such as wayfinding or real time service information, or where to find the accessible carriage and ramp so you don't need to guess where to get on.

3. Clear and accessible wayfinding – accessible maps i.e. Braille or raised surface floorplans. Different coloured 'paths' and tactile guides lead you from one type to the other (i.e. the red path goes to the bus, blue goes to trains). Signposting towards the most accessible routes to key local destinations such as the city centre would also be beneficial.

4. Facilities should include changing places toilet facilities and quiet, safe spaces that can be used by people needing rest or an escape from sensory overwhelm, as well as wheelchair hire within larger mobility hubs to help people with mobility impairments transfer between types. Accessible cycle hire would be beneficial for some people.

5. Mobility hubs should be well-staffed and have appropriately trained– staff on different impairment types and how to support disabled people, and they should be proactive in offering support. Wherever possible, staff should be available, but if they are not available, there should be a way to get in contact to speak to someone 24/7.

6. To ensure seamless use of mobility hubs and public transport more broadly, there should be one system in place for ticketing across different types of transport that's easy to understand. Our survey found 63% of disabled people support public transport, hire cycles and e-scooters to be accessed and paid for through a contactless card or travelcard. This should include the ability to purchase discounted tickets on a machine or app without needing a member of staff, but there also needs to be the option to purchase from staffed ticket offices or on-board so that no one is excluded.

7. There should be a safe drop off zone for cars and public transport close to the hub. Cycle and car parking should be provided for those who need it, with accessible bays, safe, accessible entry and simple ways to pay including for shared cycles and scooters. There should be slow speed limits around hubs for all types of transport, including motor vehicles, cycles and e-scooters.

Case study: Ghent and Leuven Cycle Parks

In Ghent and Leuven, large multi-story, covered cycle parks are commonplace across the city centre and at large institutions like universities, libraries or shopping centres. Providing good quality cycle parking across the city reduces clutter from cycles parked on the street. Cycle parks are often more secure, accessible and include space for non-standard cycles. Cycle parks act as mobility hubs and are often found alongside train and bus stations or as a place to park your cycle before walking to your destination.

Idea 3: Prioritise people crossing side roads

Governments should give local authorities the power to roll out side road zebra crossings across the country

The opportunity

The Highway Code changed in 2022 to give people crossing or waiting to cross priority over people driving and cycling turning into or out of a side road in England, Scotland and Wales.

Specifically, it stated people driving should 'give way to pedestrians crossing or waiting to cross a road into which or from which you are turning. If they have started to cross, they have priority, so give way'.

However, little evidence exists to suggest this has changed behaviour and people still need to wait for vehicles or take their chances crossing. Research from Scotland found only half of drivers say they were aware of the changes introduced in 2022, including at side road crossings. And in less than half of interactions were people driving observed to give priority to people walking across side roads (including those already crossing, and those waiting to cross).[19]

How side road zebra crossings can help

> The highway code in and of itself isn't enough, the zebra markings at side roads are a good addition.
>
> **Participant, Oxford**

One low-cost method found across Europe are side road zebra crossings across the entrance to side streets. They are like a normal zebra crossing with painted white zebra strips across a junction but without the flashing lights or zig-zag approach markings. Side road zebras are a cheap, quick solution that give people waiting to cross side roads priority over cars and cycles.

19 Cycling Scotland, 2024. Scottish road users' awareness of Highway Code rules relating to vulnerable road users.
www.transport.gov.scot/media/hugg3ckh/scottish-road-users-awareness-of-highway-code-rules-relating-to-vulnerable-road-users.pdf

It's a current requirement within the UK, however, for zebra crossings to have Belisha beacons and zig-zag approach markings. These make the crossing more visible to drivers, especially at night or in adverse weather conditions. However, on side roads where vehicles are turning and speeds are far lower, there is less need for Belisha beacons and zig-zag markings.

Many other European countries have adopted side road zebras that work well. Reducing the need for beacons and zig-zag markings makes them cheap and quick to roll out at side road junctions.

The UK and devolved governments should amend legislation to introduce, test and roll out side road zebras across the UK, starting with high footfall areas – side roads alongside busier urban roads and on the journey to school.

Case study: Greater Manchester side road zebra trials

Greater Manchester tested zebra markings on side roads and found that they lead to drivers giving way 65% more than where there is no marking.[20] The city-region asked for regulations to be amended to allow mass trials of side road zebra crossings, but so far, this has not happened.

The results of this two-year trial also concluded that there is universal understanding, amongst all road users, of what zebra markings mean when used on side road junctions.

Side road zebras would primarily be used in low traffic areas. Side roads with higher traffic levels should have signalised crossings. If authorised by government, Greater Manchester could create hundreds of side road zebra crossings within 12 months, primarily in the areas where Greater Manchester's active travel Bee Network is being delivered.

---

20 https://beeactive.tfgm.com/walking/side-road-zebras

How do we ensure side road zebras benefit disabled people

Side road zebras are a simple solution to give people walking and wheeling the priority and space they need to cross. This is especially the case for disabled people who may take longer or find it harder to cross a road.

Transport for All[21] found recently that inadequate or hazardous crossings were a barrier to walking or wheeling for 44% of disabled people. This could be because no formal crossing exists, its design is dangerous, or it's not accessible. Our survey found 72% of disabled people support giving greater priority and investment for low-cost solutions, such as zebra crossings at side roads, or step-free access when crossing roads.

It's essential that where required complementary measures are made including drop kerbs, tactile paving and the powers for local authorities to tackle pavement parking as well as parking across side road crossing points. Local authorities should also review if more streets would benefit from signal controlled crossings which are the preference and very beneficial for many people with a visual impairment.

What disabled people want from side road zebra crossings:

1. A consistent approach – to agree a fixed design and roll out quickly so that new behaviours and social-norms set in quickly and all road users, including guide dogs, understand that people walking or wheeling have priority.

2. Accessibility – for example dropped kerbs at each junction, tactile paving, colour contrast of kerbing and pavement. Maintenance of all these aspects is important.

3. Visibility - the need for drivers to see and give way to people when waiting to cross by improving junction design where necessary and tackling inconsiderate parking across side road crossings.

---

21 Are we there yet? Barriers to transport for disabled people 2023 | Transport For All. www.transportforall.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Are-we-there-yet_Highlights_PDF-web-compressed-more-compressed.pdf

4. To give local authorities powers to tackle pavement parking following similar changes in Scotland that also get in the way of crossing points.

5. Give greater priority to installing new and improving other road crossings, for example extending crossing times to ensure all users have time to cross the road or exploring the use of technology that allows pedestrians to be given priority over vehicles at 'traffic light' crossings. This is when a pedestrian pushes the button, and the signals instantly go to amber and red for road traffic and then green for people walking and wheeling.

Idea 4: Manage parking to free up public space and keep pavements clear

Local authorities should audit car parking provision and take steps to free up public space and declutter pavements

The opportunity

> Yes please, ban pavement parking and blockages on the paths. It's a menace. Pavements get completely blocked by people treating them as car parks!
>
> **Participant, Online**

Gradually over time more and more streets and land have become car parks. The centre of Manchester, for example, has 28% of land given to roads of which 8% is dedicated for parking. In comparison only 5% of land is green space.[22] Between 2013 and 2023, there was a growth of over 31% in licensed cars in Greater Manchester, a trend replicated across other UK cities but one that cannot continue as there simply isn't space. This has also gone hand in hand with an increase in the provision of car parks across the region and land used for this purpose.

---

22 Clean Cities Campaign, 2024. Manchester Unpaved. https://cleancitiescampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/CC_Manchester_Unpaved.pdf

Car parks reduce land available for other uses including bus, tram and cycle lanes, or for public space, such as traffic free squares, parks and housing.

On-street parking additionally puts more pressure on pavement space as things that could be stored on the carriageway, such as electric vehicle charging, cycles, e-scooters, trees, bins and outdoor dining and instead found on the pavement. This clutters pavements, often making them inaccessible for disabled people.

How removing parking can free up public space and declutter pavements

Reducing unnecessary on-street parking can free up space across cities and towns.

Where this is on-street parking it can be used for bus lanes, cycle lanes and to create more public space. It also provides an opportunity to move street clutter such as cycles, e-scooters, bins and outdoor dining off pavements and onto the carriageway to improve access.

London Borough of Lambeth's Kerbside Strategy

Lambeth's Kerbside Strategy[23] aims to transform 25% of kerbside space into spaces for people. Currently, 94% of Lambeth's kerbside is used to manage parking, but only 40% of households own a car. Freeing up this space can enable accessible and active travel, such as moving cycle and e-scooter parking, outdoor dining, and tree planting off the pavement and onto the kerbside or create bus and cycle lanes.

Off street parking should also be considered. Too many cities still have an abundance of land given over to car parking. Visitor car parking should be kept to a minimum and located in underground or multi-story car parks to reduce land pressure and free up space for other uses, especially public space, green space and affordable housing.

---

23 London Borough of Lambeth, 2023. The Lambeth Kerbside Strategy. www.lambeth.gov.uk/streets-roads-transport/lambeth-kerbside-strategy

Of course, this needs to be done carefully ensuring that people dependent on vehicles have access to other options to travel.

Many cities and places across the UK and beyond are taking steps to do just this. We need to ensure that when parking is reduced, sufficient disabled parking provision still exists. This tends to focus on visitor parking especially in areas where residential car ownership is low.

Case study: Ghent – uncovering the River Reep

In Ghent the River Reep was covered up by a boulevard including a central car park built over the river. In 2018 authorities finished a project to successfully uncover the Reep, removing the car park and creating a public space for people alongside the river.

Another project in Ghent removed a central car park. This created a flowery grass area and an orchard with a wheelchair accessible picnic bench and a play area for children.

How do we ensure removing parking can benefit disabled people

Local authorities should audit existing parking provision and reduce it, accordingly, allocating the space for other uses. Any audit must engage with disabled people to ensure sufficient and well-designed disabled parking capacity is provided at appropriate locations to meet local need and maintain access for disabled people.

In a survey of over 500 disabled people, Transport for All[24] found that a lack of suitable parking spaces for disabled people was a barrier for 38% of respondents, and disabled people with larger (often wheelchair accessible) vehicles face issues finding a space big enough, especially in the absence of Blue Badge parking bays.

Our survey found that 47% of disabled people support (while 22% oppose) reducing on-street visitor parking spaces, excluding disabled

---

24 Are we there yet? Barriers to transport for disabled people 2023 | Transport For All. Page 59. www.transportforall.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Are-we-there-yet_Highlights_PDF-web-compressed-more-compressed.pdf

parking bays to free up space for more pedestrian friendly areas and green spaces. And 58% of disabled people support the provision of dedicated cycle and e-scooter parking provision with necessary enforcement action to reduce pavement clutter of cycles and scooters.

Access to public and especially green space is also important for disabled people. This could be through the provision of a pocket park or planting scheme within a neighbourhood, or a larger green created by removing a former car parking area.

It's essential that the provision of green space is accessible. Sustrans found through the Disabled Citizens Inquiry that 82% of disabled people would find removing physical barriers, from off-road walking and wheeling routes, useful for them to walk or wheel more.

> There's a place near me that's a nature reserve now which is really lovely and I like going there and being able to access nature, but the path to get there can be really boggy and I can't go in my wheelchair. So I go and I can get in one side but I'm not able to go through because the path going out is always too muddy for my chair. It's like they've done all of this work but you can't get to or from it.
>
> **Participant, Birmingham**

What disabled people tell us they want from removing parking to free up public space and declutter pavements:

1. Disabled parking provision to be improved, for example its design, accessibility and location. While ensuring the removal of on-street parking supports disabled people to use other forms of transport including walking and wheeling, cycling and buses.

2. To tie the removal of on-street parking to reducing pavement clutter. This should include locating potential obstacles on the kerbside instead of the pavement, including bins, trees, electric vehicle charge points, cycle paths and cycle/e-scooter parking, outdoor dining, pocket parks and landscaping including public seating.

3. More access to green space and local space where people can meet and socialise. This should include accessible routes to public space and fully accessible green space – step free, paths, and accessible seating.

4. Enforcement should be provided where necessary to ensure pavements are clutter free and obstacles caused by businesses, such as outdoor dining and A-boards are removed.

5. Steps to ensure all feel welcome, comfortable and safe in public space. For example, shelter to cover seating and areas where people gather have good lighting, exit routes and are overlooked from neighbouring buildings to support perceptions of safety, especially at night.

Idea 5: Access panels to inform local transport policy

All local transport authorities should set up a group of paid disabled people who review and shape transport policy and projects, known as an access panel.

> As long as there's a few [disabled people] that would be enough. Still seems to be a shock to people to see disabled people out and about. You can't know what you haven't experienced. I don't know what [other participant] has experienced the same way he doesn't know what I have.
>
> **Participant, Oxford**

The opportunity

All too often local authority plans for mobility and transport are made behind closed doors. Disabled people are often left out of conversations about how local transport is planned and delivered, despite being among the groups most reliant on it. Plans are also frequently presented in formats that exclude many, especially disabled people, whether due to inaccessible language or poor design.

This means when disabled people do find out about changes to transport and their areas it can make them feel fearful and concerned about how the plans will impact their ability to travel and access the things they need to live well.

67% of disabled people are aware to some extent of the future local transport plans for their area, with only 33% being rather familiar with them. Among those who are aware, only 43% were satisfied that local transport plans would meet their needs. This lack of awareness and engagement with the disabled community leads to services that don't reflect all real-world barriers and misses the opportunity to design transport that works for everyone.

For many disabled people, inaccessible transport limits not only how they get around, but whether they can. It's critical that disabled people are involved from the beginning and throughout the whole process, helping to shape policies, plans and projects, so that they work for everyone. It's essential that accessibility is embedded at the core of plans, rather than being seen as a nice-to-have addition or tick-box exercise. Our survey found that 73% of disabled people support government creating clear national guidance or standards to ensure accessibility is part of all transport schemes and services with enforcement where necessary.

> More consultation is needed – people's lived experiences need to be valued more. Too much emphasis on people without lived experience – making changes later costs more, get it right the first time around.
>
> **Online Participant**

How access panels can help local transport policy and practice meet disabled people's needs

It's important to involve disabled people in whatever you do in transport and ensure that it's not just an additional extra but an integrated part of everything.

Oxford Participant

Disabled people are under-represented in the transport sector, from policymakers to decision makers. 68% of disabled people think it's important to take steps to encourage more disabled people into councillor and officer roles that affect transport policy. Changing this is vital but likely to take a long time. More immediate steps should also be taken simultaneously to ensure the lived experience and needs of disabled people are considered more fully.

Part of the solution is a network of paid access panels. These panels bring together local disabled residents with a range of impairments and health conditions within each local transport authority to help inform transport plans.

65% of disabled people support giving funding to local councils to create access panels to inform and shape transport plans and projects. Encouragingly 52% of disabled people would likely participate in a paid access panel to inform and shape transport plans and projects.

This should be supported by the authority. 70% of disabled people support having a transport officer dedicated for inclusion and accessibility for their local authority. A key part of any access panel is to go out and visit sites with disabled people both before and after schemes are implemented to instil continuous learning. 74% of disabled people think it's important that councils and decision makers accompany disabled people on journeys to understand barriers encountered and journey experiences.

As is the case in Scotland we recommend each access panel being part of a national network that would create a powerful system for shared learning, collaboration and improvement, while still allowing

each panel to respond to local needs. This network would allow areas to share what works, maintain consistency, avoid repeating mistakes, and build a stronger collective voice to influence national policy. Our survey also found that 70% of disabled people support having national accessible transport commissioners in each UK nation to oversee transport accessibility and hold government and service providers to account. And 71% support the provision of inspectors to test transport schemes for their accessibility.

Access panels help ensure that local transport plans work in practice, not just on paper. That could mean reviewing early-stage plans for a new bus route or testing a new street layout before and while it's being built. Access panels should be also involved post implementation, to monitor progress, provide feedback and support long term change.

Access panel members should always be offered compensation for time and expertise. However, there can be concerns around payments affecting benefits or showing the participant as being fit to work. Therefore, flexibility in how members are compensated is essential, to remove what could be a barrier to participation. A paid model reflects the value of lived experience and helps create more inclusive systems.

Finally for access panels to work it is essential that their work is communicated with the wider disabled community to ensure greater understanding, transparency and support. 71% of disabled people think it's important that local authorities communicate outcomes from engagement and access panels to the wider disabled community. This must be done in a way that is accessible, provided in various formats and using clear language.

> **Case study: The Scotland Access Panel Network**
>
> Access panels are well-established across Scotland,[25] with groups active in almost every local authority area. Disability Equality Scotland is the umbrella body for access panels across Scotland and provides funding support to all registered groups. The Access Panel Grant (APG) fund is a small pot of money to support Access Panels to improve accessibility in their local area.
>
> Access panels can claim their grant allowance to support with running costs such as meeting room hire, volunteer expenses, and to purchase equipment and software packages. However, currently volunteers are not paid for their time. In addition, Disability Equality Scotland will soon launch an e-learning training course for volunteers, to help support and upskill them.

What disabled people tell us they want from local access panels

1. To have people who are more likely to represent their lived experience and needs playing a role in the development, implementation and evaluation of policy and practice relating to transport and mobility.

2. For each panel to have an officer secretariat who leads accessibility across transport, with a clear role and responsibilities.

3. For panels to report directly to designers, planners, engineers and importantly decision makers to make places more accessible. This could be by feeding into training for designers and planners to embed accessibility and inclusivity, or through attending site visits to assess work.

4. Review and feedback on projects on an ongoing basis and receive a response about how this has been taken on board. This needs to be a two-way conversation.

---

25 https://accesspanel.scot

5. For the secretariat to publicly share activities from the access panel and the impact it's having through a range of accessible formats to engage with the wider community. This must include proactive efforts to engage with disabled people meaningfully in a way that is most suitable for them; whether through targeted outreach, facilitated discussions, online workshops or co-design processes, so that their insights can help shape plans, and not just react to them once they've been decided.

6. Offer payment and support to panel members (with flexibility in its form) which is fair, reasonable and is in line with minimum living wage as a minimum. Panel members should have the opportunity to access training or to upskill as part of their role.