Key Policy Recommendations (continued)

The Role of Land-use Planning

SAs are now responsible for writing a spatial development strategy (SDS) for their area. This provides an opportunity to align their strategic transport and land-use planning policies, to ensure that new housing and other developments are concentrated in areas with good public transport accessibility (or ensuring that this comes with any new development), and that new homes are within a short walk of key destinations (schools, shops, healthcare etc).

The government has created a Connectivity Tool, which can assess whether developments (or proposed sites) are likely to support good connections or to entrench car-dependence. Local authorities should use this data, not only to assess individual development proposals but also the effectiveness of their transport and planning policies to reduce car dependence.

The Connectivity Tool can also help local authorities to secure funding from developers for sustainable transport improvements, as these will boost the value of their developments. The benefits are mutually re-inforcing: concentrating housing around public transport helps ensure a regular service, which in turn allows those developments to be attractively designed without lots of car parking space. This makes walking and cycling easier and more attractive.

Demand Management and Raising Funds

Demand for transport (particularly road transport) can also be reduced by enhancing digital connectivity, and by promoting vehicle scrappage schemes which allow people to swap older or dirtier vehicles for public transport or active travel alternatives, e.g. a season ticket or a new electrically-assisted pedal cycle. Similarly, people can be encouraged to swap car parking spaces on narrow streets for the right to take part in well-run car-club schemes.

Finally, sustainable transport funding can also be freed up by cancelling road schemes that won't be needed in a low traffic future, and through road user charging or parking charges / levies, tourist taxes or levies on local businesses. It is vital though to show that this money is being spent on solutions that benefit the local economy, environment and people's quality of life.

Photo of pedestrianised street, Leicester Square © Eustaquio Santimano, Flickr, Creative Commons license

Low Traffic Future is an alliance set up by Transport Action Network in 2022. Our aim is to build a movement of individuals and organisations to press for action and reduce our dependence on private motor vehicles.

By transforming how we plan our roads, streets and transport networks, we want to give people real choices in how they go about their daily lives.

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Sign up at our the website lowtrafficfuture.org.uk

Local Transport Plans

A summary guide for councillors and campaigners

Local Action for a Low Traffic Future

For a full version of this guide, visit our website

It's time to talk about the future

Why Do We Need a Low Traffic Future?

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

It is a world with cleaner air, safer streets, excellent public transport and great walking and cycling provision. It would be good for our health, our communities, our economy and our environment. Compare this with the costs of the UK's current 'High Traffic Present':

- **Congestion:** This is estimated to cost the UK economy £11 billion a year.
- **Air pollution:** Pollution is estimated to hasten around 30,000 deaths annually in the UK, at an economic cost of £27bn or more.
- **Noise pollution:** The estimated health, societal, amenity and lost productivity costs of noise in England add up to around £14-20bn annually.
- **Road danger:** The cost of road deaths and injuries in 2024 was estimated to be £54.8bn.
- **Physical inactivity:** Inactivity-related ill health costs the UK around £7.4bn annually.
- **Greenhouse gas emissions:** Transport is now the largest emitting sector of the UK economy. Increases in road traffic (particularly vans) and in vehicle size ('car-spreading') have offset the benefits of more fuel-efficient engines, while also increasing congestion, road safety and road maintenance costs.

Local Transport Plans

'Strategic authorities' (SAs, including all existing and proposed new combined authorities) are, or soon will be, responsible for writing a Local Transport Plan (LTP). LTPs will cover the whole of England except London, and must set out the relevant SA's long-term (10-20 year) strategy for improving transport in their area. SAs must separately prepare shorter-term delivery plans and progress reports, linked to the outcomes that the Government expects them to deliver. The Government's 2026 guidance on LTPs explains these outcomes and other key requirements - e.g. LTPs should (and in some cases must):

- Set out the SA's plans for improving bus services, reflecting its Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and its bus network accessibility plan. The BSIP must say whether the SA intends to pursue bus franchising or seek improvements through enhanced partnership arrangements.
- Include an active travel strategy, reflecting relevant Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) and Rights of Way Improvement Plans (RoWIPs).
- Cover the SA's policies on rail and metro, electric vehicles, car-sharing, highway maintenance and freight.
- Address accessibility, safety and personal security for all transport users, reflecting the SA's equality duties.
- Show how the LTP integrates with the SA's spatial planning policies.
- Include assessments of the LTP's carbon, wider environmental and health impacts.

Key Policy Recommendations

Active Travel and Safe Streets

Active travel strategies, and the walking, cycling and rights of way plans they are based on, should include:

- Comprehensive plans for safe, convenient and attractive walking and cycling networks that are accessible for people of all ages and abilities. Wheelchair users need level surfaces or well-located dropped kerbs, while tactile paving is vital for visually impaired people.
- Installing protected cycle lanes alongside (or parallel to) faster and busier main roads, especially through junctions, with safe, convenient and fully accessible crossing-points (including bridges and tunnels) as needed to ensure well-connected active travel networks.
- Reducing traffic volumes and speeds on quieter streets and lanes, so that everyone, including children, can walk and cycle safely on them. Measures can include pedestrianised or pedestrian-priority areas, 'low traffic neighbourhoods', 'school streets' and 'quiet lanes'.
- Providing routes free of motor traffic (e.g. through parks or open countryside) - these can provide vital additional connections.
- Offering cycle training and other initiatives to boost active travel among people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities. These can include providing access to e-bikes, non-standard pedal cycles and/or public hire-bikes.
- Ensuring that pavements, cycle tracks and other active travel routes are well signed, lit and with good surfaces that are well maintained (especially in winter) and kept free of parked cars, vegetation and other obstacles, to ensure safety particularly for cycle users and older or disabled people.

Public, Shared and Community Transport

The SA's policies and plans for public transport should include:

- Its aspirations to improve rail and (where relevant) 'metro' services - and any proposals to take over running these services.
- Its plans to improve bus services and the accessibility of bus travel - including new buses, improved bus stops and bus priority schemes.
- Whether it intends to adopt bus franchising or stick with enhanced partnership arrangements (this must be stated in its Bus Service Improvement Plan), and if it plans to set up its own bus company.
- Support for community transport services (often volunteer-run) e.g. school or hospital transport, dial-a-ride and similar services.
- Promoting shared transport, e.g. car clubs in residential areas, ride-sharing arrangements for people travelling to the same destinations, public cycle (and scooter) hire schemes, and opportunities for people to try cargo-bikes or non-standard pedal cycles (e.g. for disabled people).
- Ensuring better integration of all transport, including timetables and ticketing, by creating 'mobility hubs' and by providing accessible and reliable 'real-time' information online (e.g. via mobility apps), on-board services and at stations, stops and interchanges.

Freight

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

- Creating rail-freight termini, to allow shipment of goods by rail.
- Setting up trans-shipment depots, where goods can be transferred either from rail or from large lorries onto smaller urban delivery vehicles (preferably electric), whose size and weight is better suited to towns and cities than HGVs.
- Harness the potential of cargo-bikes to provide faster delivery options to shops, homes and businesses and to reduce road danger.

Rural Transport

There is a widespread but incorrect view that the solutions outlined here only apply in urban areas. Whilst cars will be needed for a greater proportion of rural trips than urban ones, having a range of transport options is vital for maintaining balanced and vibrant rural communities, tackling social exclusion and supporting local tourism.

The 'Mini-Switzerland' project in Derbyshire's Hope Valley is seeking to showcase the benefits of integrating regular hourly bus services with rail connections to nearby cities. Rural active travel networks can also provide invaluable community connections. These and other solutions are crucial for the independence of younger or less well-off people, and anyone who cannot drive.