



## Response to *Integrated National Transport Strategy* open call for evidence

### Introduction

This response is from the [Faculty of Public Health \(FPH\)](#), as developed by the [Transport Special Interest Group](#). The FPH, as part of the medical Royal College arrangements, is the standard-setting body for public health in the UK and professional home for over 5,000 members of the public health workforce. We advocate on key public health issues and have a strong mandate and responsibility to ensure that the essential functions, standards and resources of a robust public health system are maintained.

Our role is to improve the health and wellbeing of local communities and national populations. The FPH [vision](#) includes as a priority: 'Promote policies and programmes that improve the health and wellbeing of people and communities and tackle health inequalities'. Transport policies have wide impacts on health and health inequalities. The FPH Transport Special Interest Group (SIG) is responsible for leading the Faculty's response on issues relating to transport systems, with the aim of promoting transport policies which function to improve health and reduce health inequalities.

### Summary

This document outlines the Faculty of Public Health's (FPH) recommendations for England's Integrated National Transport Strategy, emphasizing the crucial role of transport in public health. It highlights the significant health and environmental impacts of current transport systems, including air and noise pollution, congestion, and road injuries. The FPH advocates for a shift away from car dependency towards a system that prioritizes:

- **Active Transport:**
  - Enhancing walkability and cyclability through infrastructure improvements, such as dedicated lanes, improved lighting, and green spaces.
  - Prioritizing pedestrian and cyclist safety, particularly for vulnerable groups.
  - Empowering communities to implement low-traffic neighbourhoods.
- **Public Transport:**
  - Investing in a comprehensive, reliable, affordable, accessible, and safe public transport network.
  - Improving service frequency, speed, and connectivity.
  - Addressing the needs of all users, including people with disabilities and those from disadvantaged communities.
- **Reducing Car Dependency:**

- Investing in alternatives to car use, such as public transport and active travel.
- Implementing effective congestion charging schemes in conjunction with improved public transport and cycling infrastructure.
- Discouraging the growth of individually owned autonomous vehicles.
- **Reducing Aviation:**
  - Prioritizing the development of high-speed rail and sleeper services as alternatives to air travel.

The FPH emphasizes the need for a systems-based approach to transport planning, considering the social, economic, and environmental impacts of all transport decisions. This includes:

- **Prioritizing health and equity:** Addressing the disproportionate impact of transport issues on low-income groups, women, and minority groups.
- **Investing in sustainable solutions:** Prioritizing funding for active travel and public transport.
- **Conducting thorough cost-benefit analyses:** Considering the full range of social, economic, and environmental impacts.

## Background

Transport significantly impacts population's health. It provides access to education, employment, healthcare, leisure, social connections, and healthy food options, all essential for well-being. However, motorised transport also contributes to environmental damage, congestion, and health risks including pollution and road injuries. The transport sector is the largest source of carbon emissions in the UK. Busy roads create barriers for pedestrians, reducing access to services and impacting community cohesion. Congestion decreases productivity and increases mental stress. Car crashes cause numerous casualties, particularly among younger populations.

Sustainable transport should be viewed as a crucial social asset for enhancing productivity, population health, and sustainability, rather than solely as an expenditure. The transport system should be designed to maximize benefits and minimize harm.

## Strategic Objectives

The Faculty of Public Health (FPH) recommends the following strategic objectives for England's Integrated National Transport Strategy:

### 1. Creating Better Transport Options:

#### Active Transport

Local neighbourhoods should be designed to be walkable and cyclable, fostering social interaction and encouraging these modes of transport. Pedestrians and cyclists should have priority on local streets.

This requires significant environmental and infrastructure improvements, including:

- **Road space reallocation:** Prioritizing space for walking and cycling.
- **Enhanced green and blue infrastructure:** Incorporating more green spaces and water features.

- **Improved lighting:** Ensuring adequate and safe lighting, especially in areas frequented by women and children.
- **Safety measures:** Implementing measures to enhance safety for all users, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups.

Research demonstrates that people are more likely to walk and cycle longer distances in attractive, green environments, leading to improved health and well-being.

Communities should have the right to determine the level of traffic within their neighbourhoods, with the option of implementing low-traffic neighbourhoods and living streets. Implementation of low-traffic neighbourhoods, was supported by the public, has been shown to reduce 50% road casualties, crime levels, and encouraged active travel.

Evidence clearly indicates that environmental and infrastructure improvements are crucial for making walking and cycling more enjoyable. These improvements should include reallocating road space to prioritize active travel.

Interventions focused solely on changing travel behaviour without accompanying environmental or infrastructure changes have limited impact. Conversely, interventions that combine infrastructure improvements with behavioural and social programmes, such as e-bike initiatives and cycle-sharing schemes, have demonstrated greater success.

## Public Transport

### Benefits of a Comprehensive Public Transport System

A comprehensive, reliable, affordable, accessible, and safe public transport system is fundamental to public health. It provides essential access to employment, education, retail, leisure activities, family and friends, healthcare, and other services.

Key health benefits of public transport include:

- **Increased physical activity:** Walking or cycling to and from public transport stops promotes physical activity. Studies have shown that bus pass holders are more physically active and less likely to be obese.
- **Reduced social isolation:** Public transport use, particularly for older adults, is associated with reduced social isolation and loneliness. It also fosters a greater sense of independence for young people.
- **Environmental and social benefits:** Public transport significantly reduces air and noise pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, traffic congestion, and the number of road traffic collisions per passenger compared to private car use.
- **Support for modal shift:** Reliable public transport is essential to encourage a shift away from car use for longer journeys.

### Addressing Inequities

Limited public transport options can force people to rely on cars, especially those with low incomes, women, and minority groups. This contributes to transport poverty and health inequalities.

- **Rural areas:** Often have less comprehensive and frequent service options.
- **Urban areas:** Some urban areas also experience limited service coverage or frequency.
- **Accessibility:** Disabled individuals may face significant barriers to accessing public transport due to inadequate accessibility.
- **Affordability:** The cost of public transport can be a significant barrier for low-income individuals.

- **Safety:** Women and minority groups may feel unsafe using public transport, particularly at night, due to concerns about harassment and security.

A comprehensive network with integrated ticketing is crucial to support "trip chaining" – where individuals travel to multiple destinations on a single journey

### **FPH Recommendations: The Role and Mode of Public Transport**

Public transport must be:

- **Available:** Accessible to all residents.
- **Reliable:** Operate with consistent frequency and punctuality.
- **Affordable:** Accessible to individuals from all socioeconomic backgrounds.
- **Accessible:** Usable by all, including people with disabilities.
- **Safe:** Ensure the safety and security of all passengers.

Public transport should provide a comprehensive network with:

- **Frequent services:** Connecting residential areas with key destinations.
- **Fast and efficient travel times:** Offering a competitive alternative to driving.
- **Seamless integration:** Ensure seamless connections between bus and rail services, and with walking and cycling routes.
- **Walkable and cyclable access:** Ensure walkable and cyclable routes to all stops and stations. This should be a mandatory requirement for all new developments.

The core of this system should be a high-frequency, high-quality network of trains, trams, and express bus services, serving stations within walking distance of their surroundings. Major stations should provide convenient transfer opportunities between regional express services and local feeder services. Where scheduled services are not feasible, demand-responsive services should be implemented to address the needs of passengers who may have difficulty reaching bus stops due to disabilities, heavy luggage, or security concerns.

A comprehensive local bus network is essential, with regular services and stops located close to all neighbourhoods, shops, workplaces, healthcare facilities, and community centres. This network should include options for scheduled services, semi-scheduled services (operating on request), and semi-fixed routes to adapt to varying demand.

The entire public transport system should operate as an interconnected network with through-ticketing and zonal fares to facilitate seamless travel and encourage multimodal transportation. Timetables and fares should be integrated to simplify travel planning and encourage the use of public transport.

These networks should be designed with both radial and orbital routes to ensure good connectivity between different areas and between the bus network and the rapid transit system. This approach promotes local opportunities and recognizes the need for "trip chaining" – where individuals need to make multiple stops on a single journey, such as picking up children from childcare or collecting groceries.

Every region in the UK should have access to a public transport system that meets at least the same standards as the London region, while acknowledging that the London system still has areas for improvement, particularly in terms of affordability and accessibility for multi-stop journeys and orbital routes.

The decline in bus services must be reversed. Poor bus services have a detrimental impact on social networks, making life more difficult for older people, people with low incomes, and young people. They also limit the availability of care services. Studies have shown that the social costs associated with declining bus services outweigh any potential savings.

There is substantial evidence demonstrating the benefits of bus passes for both older adults and young people, including maintaining social networks, reducing reliance on driving, and improving access to healthcare appointments and other essential services. These benefits justify the continued spend. The available concessionary schemes should be expanded to include low-income populations who could face significant issues with affordability of public transport.

## 2. Reducing Car Dependency and Congestion

Car dependency and traffic congestion has significant detrimental effects on our well-being. It contributes to:

- **Environmental damage:** Increased air and noise pollution, and higher carbon emissions.
- **Health risks:** Worsened air quality impacts our physical health, while noise pollution and the stress of congestion can negatively affect mental well-being.
- **Safety concerns:** Increased traffic leads to higher risks of road injuries.
- **Reduced physical activity:** Domination of motor vehicles, especially in places with little active travel infrastructure, discourages walking and cycling due to safety concerns, contributing to sedentary lifestyles.
- **Economic losses:** Increased travel times due to congestion reduce productivity and have significant economic costs.

Many people rely on cars due to a lack of viable alternatives. Inadequate public transport, cycling infrastructure, and walkability options often leave car ownership as the only feasible choice. This car dependency exacerbates the negative impacts of transport, including congestion, pollution, and road injuries. It also places people in "forced car ownership" causing financial pressure to low-income households.

Furthermore, this disproportionately affects women and children, who are often secondary users within households with a single car. This limited access to transportation can restrict their opportunities for education, employment, healthcare, and leisure activities.

Simply building more roads is not a sustainable solution to congestion, instead it induces more demand and causes further congestion. Instead, efforts should focus on:

- **Improving alternatives to car use:** Prioritizing investments in public transport, cycling infrastructure, and pedestrian-friendly environments.
- **Speed reductions:** Speed limit reductions have been shown to reduce collisions and the severity of injuries. Wales, Scotland and many local authorities in England have, or are working towards, a reduced limit of 20mph in residential streets. Evidence shows these have reduced casualties and that once implemented they have strong public support. Other benefits include reducing emissions and encouraging physical activity.
- **Implementing effective congestion reduction measures:**
  - Congestion charging has proven effective in cities like Singapore, London, Oslo, and Stockholm, particularly when combined with improvements in public transport and cycling infrastructure.
  - Implementing congestion charging without corresponding improvements in public transport options has limited effectiveness and create inequalities by penalising those who have no access to public transport and have to travel to work.

## The Role of Electric and Autonomous Vehicles

While electric vehicles offer environmental benefits by reducing carbon emissions, they do not address the core issues of congestion and car dependency.

Individually owned autonomous vehicles may not significantly reduce car ownership and could potentially exacerbate congestion. Furthermore, heavier electric and autonomous vehicles may contribute to increased particulate pollution and are heavier so cause more serious injuries if in collision with pedestrians or cyclists.

The focus of future transportation should be on:

- **Promoting active travel:** Encouraging walking and cycling through improved infrastructure and safety measures.
- **Investing in and improving public transport:** Creating a robust and accessible public transport system.

Autonomous vehicles be considered in the context of shared, on-demand services as part of an integrated public transport system.

### 3. Reducing aviation and improve international high-speed rail

Due to the significant carbon emission, high-speed rail and high-speed sleeper services should be developed instead of expanding current or building new airports.

### 4. Revamping Funding and Finance:

Sustainable transport should be considered as an investment in economic growth, population health, and sustainability, instead of expenditure.

The costs and benefits of transport plans and developments should be evaluated at a network level rather than in isolation. Network-wide improvements in sustainable modes of transport (such as public transport, cycling, and walking) are more likely to effectively address congestion than individual, isolated projects.

Conduct of cost-benefit analyses should fully account for the health and environmental impacts of transport projects. For example, analysis should include the negative effects of community severance, which costs at least 1.6% of GDP. On the other hand, land value benefits of rail schemes should also be considered, which are well established.

Funding priorities should shift towards promoting active travel and public transport. Currently, a significant portion of transport funding is allocated to road infrastructure. However, investing in walking, cycling, and public transport is more cost-effective. Studies have demonstrated that the social costs associated with declining bus services outweigh the potential savings. Furthermore, investments in rail infrastructure have been shown to effectively reduce congestion. A public finance system prioritizing preventative measures should consider these factors.

There is substantial evidence that railway investments stimulate economic growth. The recent success of the Elizabeth Line in London serves as an example, demonstrating its capacity to generate employment and development opportunities.

## Key Considerations:

- **Health Inequalities:** Address the disproportionate impact of transport issues on low-income groups, women, and minority groups.
- **Community Impact:** Minimize the negative impacts of transport infrastructure on communities, such as severance and air pollution.
- **Sustainability:** Prioritize climate change mitigation and adaptation in all transport planning and investment decisions.

## Conclusion

The FPH strongly recommends that England's Integrated National Transport Strategy prioritize public health and well-being. This requires a fundamental shift towards a more sustainable and equitable transport system that:

- Maximizes the benefits of sustainable transport: Provides access to essential services, promotes social inclusion, and supports healthy lifestyles.
- Minimizes the harms of private motorised transport: Reduces air and noise pollution, congestion, and road traffic injuries.
- Addresses health inequalities: Ensures equitable access to transportation for all, regardless of socioeconomic status, gender, or ethnicity.

By prioritizing active travel, investing in high-quality public transport, and implementing effective congestion reduction measures, the government can create a transport system that enhances the health and well-being of all citizens while contributing to a more sustainable and equitable future.

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