A new Social Contract for Transport

Living Streets' response

August 2019

Introduction

We are Living Streets, the UK charity for everyday walking. We want to create a walking nation, free from congested roads and pollution, reducing the risk of preventable illnesses and social isolation and making walking the natural choice. We believe that a walking nation means progress for everyone. Our ambition is to get people of all generations to enjoy the benefits that this simple act brings and to ensure all our streets are fit for walking.

Living Streets welcomes this opportunity to respond this Scoping Report. Our response focuses on the good examples of reducing car mileage, the allocation of transport spending, the principle of a 'universal basic right' to live without a car and what this means in the context of climate change. We finish with some thoughts on new technologies and equity and appraisal.

Summary

- Walking is part of every journey and should be considered as part of an integrated transport system. Making it easier to walk, cycle and take public transport in our towns and cities creates places people want to live and work in, supporting their economic vitality.

- Living Streets supports a universal basic right for people to be able to live decently without a car, and ways in which walking and cycling can be promoted as healthy, clean alternatives to driving.

- A key outcome for a new social contract for transport should be to create safe, accessible and pleasant streets for walking through provision of a network of high-quality walking infrastructure.

- Connected and autonomous vehicle (CAV) technology is still in its infancy. It is vital that its development is guided by sensible and proportionate principles – embedding the road user hierarchy which places pedestrians at the top.

- Transport schemes should be appraised for their contribution to carbon reduction and other public policy goals, redefining what is meant by 'value for money'.

Evidence and experience

Living Streets is a member of the Walking and Cycling Alliance (WACA)[i] because the threats to people walking and cycling are largely the same, as are many measures required to reduce road danger. We work together to advocate for change that will help make walking and cycling the natural choices for shorter journeys. We have five clear goals:

- Every town and city is served by a core network of segregated cycle routes and networks of walkable routes to and within centres.

- Every community has access to green spaces and is connected by traffic-free cycling and walking networks for all.

- Every rail and bus stop is attractive for people travelling on foot or by bike, and has facilities that prioritise cycling and walking.

- Every child is able to walk and cycle to school in safety and with confidence, gaining essential life skills.

- Everybody has opportunities to take up walking and cycling, through programmes in schools, workplaces and local communities.

These are the core foundations of some of the happiest, healthiest towns and cities in the world, places like Copenhagen and Amsterdam where cycling and walking are simple, attractive and safe.

More broadly we are calling for a more challenging walking target in the next Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS). This target relates to the average number of walking *stages* per person as part of longer journeys (e.g. by public transport) – it underlines the fact that walking is a part of every journey and we should not be addressing modes (active or otherwise) in isolation but as part of an integrated transport system.

In 2018, The Guardian launched a series of articles as part of its Walking the City series[ii]. The series highlights car free days in Paris and Brussels, explores what makes a walkable city and welcomes new initiatives to create pedestrian friendly places. It put a spotlight on the city of Pontevedra in Spain which has done for walking what Groningen did for cycling. Both cities stopped cars from crossing the city centre and made it easier to walk, cycle or take public transport. In Pontevedra, within a month of election Mayor Miguel Anxo Fernández Lores had pedestrianised all 300,000 square metres of the medieval centre (a

move since extended to the city's 18th century streets). On street parking and surface car parks in the centre were replaced with underground car parks and the provision of additional surface car parking in the periphery:

"The benefits are numerous. On the same streets where 30 people died in traffic accidents from 1996 to 2006, only three died in the subsequent 10 years, and none since 2009. CO2 emissions are down 70%, nearly three-quarters of what were car journeys are now made on foot or by bicycle, and, while other towns in the region are shrinking, central Pontevedra has gained 12,000 new inhabitants." (ibid.)

In both Pontevedra and Groningen leadership was key, something that is evident in the UK where the leadership shown in some UK cities through Cycling and Walking Commissioners – particularly London and Manchester – has led to significant change.

Businesses have not been harmed in Pontevedra and Groningen. Far from it. Both cities are home to young populations and are thriving – demonstrating the importance of creating spaces that people want to live and work in. Living Streets' Pedestrian Pound report[iii] bears out these conclusions, finding that shoppers on foot can spend up to six times more than those who arrive by car, and that businesses, residents, developers and visitors all benefit from investment in the public realm and walkability.

In the UK, workplace parking levies – first adopted in Nottingham in 2012, and proposed in other parts of the UK, are one possible measure to reduce car mileage and promote other modes of transport. They provide the means to fund vital infrastructure improvements for buses, cycling and walking and are a fair way of supporting action to cut chronic congestion and unacceptable levels of air pollution in our cities. A modest charge can give workers with cars alternative commuting options and make companies think more seriously about transport requirements and office location.

Nationally, funding for cycling and walking need to be prioritized given the major benefits to health, air quality and road traffic levels that result. Together with WACA we are calling for:

- Government funding in the second CWIS to amount to 5% of total transport spending in 2020/21, rising to 10% by 2024/25). Based on figures for 2016/17 transport spending in England excluding London, this would amount to £17 per person annually (for walking and cycling together) in 2020/1, rising to £34 per person in 2024/5.

- Dedicated revenue funding as part of this for a school active travel fund so all primary and secondary school children have access to walking and cycling programmes.

- Encouragement of local authorities to spend around 15% of local transport infrastructure funding' on active travel. The Spending Review is an opportunity to set out how the government intends to encourage and enable local authorities to spend at least 15% of local transport infrastructure funding on active travel.

- Ring fenced funding for the delivery of LCWIPs and the continuation of accessible funds such as the Transforming Cities Fund, the Access Fund, and Highways England's designated funds. This should be accompanied by funding for revenue-based projects to broaden the number and diversity of people walking and cycling.

The most successful schemes that increase walking and cycling include a mix of capital and revenue funding as highlighted above. A sensible start would be a 70% capital / 30% revenue split whilst new infrastructure is put in place to ensure revenue programmes can increase awareness and use.

Principles

Pontevedra and Groningen demonstrate that individuals' right to travel should not be conflated with certain privileged modes of travel. Living Streets supports the idea of a 'universal basic right' for people to be able to live decently without a car, and ways in which walking and cycling can be promoted as healthy, clean alternatives to driving. In 2016-17, 20% of households in England (excluding London) did not have access to a car[iv].

However, when viewed across the urban-rural divide, 33% of people in 'urban conurbations' do not have a car, followed by 21% in 'urban city – town', 14% in 'rural town – fringe', and 6% 'rural village, hamlet and isolated dwelling' (ibid.). This suggests that at least in the short term (and in the context of an Environmental State of Emergency) action should be focused in urban areas first. Nevertheless, car-free households in rural areas must not be forgotten. Public transport, in particular local authority, commercial or community run bus services provide a lifeline to many villages.

Methods

In order to treat walking as a serious transport mode it is essential to address the barriers that people perceive to walking, and as discussed above, to include walking stages as part of longer journeys by public transport. This can be achieved by mapping walking networks (e.g. the output of a walkability model, discussed below) onto public transport network maps. The advantage is that these can capture where infrastructure requirements are needed to improve accessibility. Similarly, amalgamating walking and cycling networks enables areas of potential conflict between modes to be identified and designed out of the network.

Currently, the implementation of the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) is taking place through the preparation of the first Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs). This began in October 2017 and the first plans are due for completion in November 2019. There are at least 38 local authorities on the programme. Most of the local authorities in the first tranche should have finished their LCWIPs by now. However, only a handful of authorities have finished their plans and put them out for consultation. The whole programme has slipped. There are a number of reasons for this, but staff resourcing within local authorities has played a large part. The auditing sections especially have taken time;

in the case of the Walking Route Audit Tool, even auditing within the Core Walking Zone can be overwhelming given that every street with a pavement is potentially a walking route.

Guidance from the Department for Transport (DfT) is not overly prescriptive and has been deliberately structured to allow for regional variation. The walking element of the guidance is weaker than the cycling portion, in part because of a lack of predictive, GIS-based tools for walking and a lack of walking data. The Walking Route Audit Tool is inherently retrospective – it looks at infrastructure that is already there. A predictive walking tool, such as the walkability model developed by Dr Ashley Dhanani[v] or the use of an International Walking Standard[vi], would allow LAs to identify a core walking network of routes to focus on and reinforce thinking of walking as a form of transport.

Local Authorities are not used to thinking of walking in network terms. We have previously noted that an approach that relies solely on identifying Core Walking Zones (CWZs) and major trip generators within a 400m radius will inevitably lead to a piecemeal network unless thought is given to how they all knit together. Deloitte are currently evaluating all the cycling and walking tools. Resulting infrastructure improvements recommended in LCWIPs (or their future equivalent) would also need to go hand in hand with investment in behaviour change programmes. A key outcome for a new social contract for transport should be to create safe, accessible and pleasant streets for walking through provision of a network of high-quality walking infrastructure.

New technology

Connected and autonomous vehicles (AVs) could result in huge changes to how we use transport. However, the technology on which they are built is still in its infancy and it is vital that its development is guided by sensible and proportionate principles. It is critical that the principles adopted by the Government in the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) and the CWIS Safety Review , such as promoting a mode shift towards walking and cycling, and reinforcing the road user hierarchy with pedestrians at the top, should be embedded into the future legislative approach to autonomous vehicles.

It has been suggested that connectivity is key to wider benefits driving automation may bring (e.g. reducing congestion and improving safety); congestion would be reduced through shared travel where mobility is viewed as a service (see how AVs are being promoted below). The Government is also running trials for platooning, where two or more lorries operate in convoy, using connectivity and automated technology to maintain a set, close distance between each other. Full automation for part of the journey is only likely to work where there are fewer variables e.g. on a motorway. The benefits given for supporting AV of reducing congestion are a long way off being achieved and could add to existing problems of too much traffic and erode the quality of walking journeys.

Equity and appraisal

Introducing a new Social Contract for Transport, based on a universal basic right for people to be able to live decently without a car, has implications for appraisal and evaluation. In a recent paper[vii] Lisa Hopkinson and Lynn Sloman make the case that transport bodies 'need some way of assessing which individual schemes can best meet carbon and other public policy goals, including value for money'. Current cost benefit analysis has a built-in bias towards road schemes and the cost of carbon emissions is underestimated. Consideration should be given to the impact of car-centric transport planning on people with disabilities, families with young children and older people. Children are particularly at risk from air pollution and intergenerational equity should be considered[viii]. Investing in behaviour change programmes focused on ensuring more children walk to school instils positive habits around exercise and physical activity from an early age. It also reduces vehicle movements and air pollution at the school gates and should therefore be a priority.

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[i] See our joint manifesto https://www.sustrans.org.uk/media/3693/moving-the-nation_walkingandcyclingalliance_manifesto_2018.pdf

[ii] See https://www.theguardian.com/cities/series/walking-the-city

[iii] See https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/media/3890/pedestrian-pound-2018.pdf

[iv] Department for Transport. 2016. Table NTS9902, National Travel Survey 2016: England

[v] http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1542310/1/8_Walkability_Models.pdf

[vi] http://www.measuring-walking.org/international-walking-data-standard

[vii] https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/insight/getting-department-transport-right-track

[viii] See https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-air-pollution/health-matters-air-pollution