

COMMENTS BY TRANSPORT AND HEALTH SCIENCE GROUP ON CYCLING AND WALKING INVESTMENT STRATEGY OF DfT – CONSULTATION MAY 2016

THSG is pleased to see a Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy but considers that the levels of investment, about £1.20 per capita per year are wholly inadequate. There have been various calls for investment of £10 per capita per year. We think that may also be an inadequate figure. Denmark and the Netherlands spend £24 per capita per year. Opinion surveys suggest that 75% of respondents would favour even more than this, £26 per capita per year.

We have previously pointed out how road investment predicated on the reduction of congestion is a complete waste of money as it merely unveils an unmeetable suppressed demand for relocation leading to congestion returning to previous levels over a matter of a few years. Whilst not all road investment is predicated on reduced congestion, there would still be scope for significant sums of money to be moved towards walking and cycling.

Given the impact that walking and cycling investment can have on reducing obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and osteoporosis and improving mental health, and given the substantial role assigned to prevention in bridging the gap between funding and demand in the NHS, it is financially imprudent to invest as little as is proposed in this strategy. Obesity costs the nation around £1 bn and over 40,000 people die from premature cardiovascular disease every year.

Given the impact that a shift from the car to foot or cycle for shorter journeys can have on traffic levels an investment in walking and cycling, if accompanied by measures to reallocate roads space concomitantly with reduced demand, could impact on congestion in a way that much more expensive proposed road investments would not.

Mechanisms to capture health, congestion and environmental benefits could fund this investment. The average benefit:cost ratio of a traffic free cycling route is 26:1. A financial system which cannot find a way to finance this has lost touch with reality.

We endorse the recommendations of the Faculty of Public Health for such increased investment to be linked to

- A comprehensive cross-government plan for implementation, monitoring and evaluation of an appropriately funded strategy to include:
 - Restraint of urban motor traffic
 - Active promotion of the benefits of active travel
 - More well-marked and well-designed cycle lanes, and advanced stop lines
 - More cycle training for local residents
 - More employers to encourage cycle-to-work schemes – for it to become the norm rather than remain an exception
 - More schools to encourage every child and young person to learn to ride a bike with confidence so that they can build a habit of a lifetime
 - Increased provision for sustainable travel such as cycle storage facilities in planning approvals

- Incentivise businesses to offer more cycle storage facilities
 - More 20mph speed limits in residential areas to encourage cycling and walking and to improve safety on the roads (NB THSG would go further than this and would propose that except on designated throughways vehicular rights should be abolished except for access and certain specified exceptions described in Health on the Move 2.
 - 25% increase in cycle lanes and cycle rack. The lack of secure cycling storage and well-designed cycle lanes in cities are often a major deterrent for many people to take up cycling. (NB Rather than an artificial figure of 25% we would prefer to specify the need for a specific safe cycle provision along or parallel to each A or B road or other major through route)
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- High level and visible political support for the strategy
 - Meaningful partnership with key agencies including Sustrans, the Active Travel Consortium, TfL and others
 - A system of independent governance to challenge and support the strategy.

Question 1 The Government would be interested to hear views on the approach and actions set out in section 8 of this strategy

All the measures proposed would form part of a sensible strategy if properly funded but will make little impact at the levels of funding proposed.

Para 8.13 The ring-fenced money for cycling provided to Highways England should tackle specific issues. Cycling and walking are features of all highway schemes and Highway Authorities should be dealing with cycling and walking in an integrated way in all schemes, including maintenance schemes.

Para 8.14 It is not clear whether the existing level of funding for bikeability is sufficient to meet demand. It is recommended that an investigation is carried out concerning the level of unmet demand for bikeability training and any shortfall in funding provision be made good in order to fully satisfy demand.

Para 8.18 Suggesting that the government will merely 'continue to explore opportunities for promoting cycling and walking in franchise specifications for rail operators' is very weak. We believe that the train/cycle combination should be promoted as a distinct transport mode capable of competing with the car for speed and convenience. It should be a centrepiece of transport strategy not a peripheral issue.

Question 2 The Government would be interested to hear views on the potential roles of national government departments, local government, other public bodies, businesses and the voluntary sector in delivering the strategy and what arrangements could best support partnership working between them

Promoting cycling and walking is something that is every LA/HA/LEP is expected to do. This should be made clear.

Question 3 The Government would be interested to hear suggestions and evidence of innovative projects and programmes which could be developed to deliver the objectives outlined in Section 4

London has traditionally high levels of walking and public transport use and could act as a pathfinder for the rest of England and the UK. As devolution progresses, other devolved cities should be rewarded for their progress on the promotion of active travel, as indeed should smaller cities and towns. However London benefits from a comprehensive transport system and substantial levels of investment and it is unlikely the same benefits can be achieved without this.

Question 4 The Government would be interested to hear your views on how to increase cycling and walking in typically under-represented groups (for example women, older people, or those from black, Asian or minority ethnic backgrounds)

Question 5 The Government would be interested to hear views on what type of assistance Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships would find beneficial to support development of ambitious and high standard Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans

1. Money
2. More powers to insist on active travel plans from developers
3. Benefit capture powers
4. The removal of through vehicular rights from minor residential roads as described in more specific detail in Health on the Move 2
5. An end to the relentless attack on local government
6. An end to the complete neglect of public health by a Treasury which seems content to strip the lead off the roof in order to make buckets to catch the rain.
7. Recognition of (a) Edmund Burke's call for reform to be early and effective and hold both public and private power to account (b) Disraeli's call for health to be the first concern of Government (c) Joseph Chamberlain's commitment to local government (d) Harold Macmillan's commitment to Keynesian economic policies