Greener Transport Solutions
Pathways to Net Zero
Roundtable discussion series | April 2022
Session 5: Behaviour Change – Meeting Note
Monday 4 April, via Zoom

Connect

Participants

- Professor Jillian Anable, Chair in Transport and Energy, Institute for Transport Studies, University of Leeds (Chair)
- Claire Haigh, Chief Executive, Greener Transport Solutions
- Rory Sutherland, Vice-Chairman, Ogilvy
- Pete Dyson, Principal Behavioural Scientist, Department for Transport
- Professor Peter Jones, UCL
- Anna Rothnie, Principal Transport Planner, Mott MacDonald
- Professor Greg Marsden, Institute for Transport, Leeds
- Jacob Ainscough. Senior Researcher, environmental governance and ecological economic, Lancaster University
- Justin Gibbons, Work Research
- Leo Murray, Director of Innovation, Possible
- Ian Wright, Head of Innovation and Partnerships, Transport Focus
- Jools Townsend, Chief Executive, Community Rail Network
- Roger Geffen, Campaigns and Policy Director, Cycling UK
- Dawn Badminton-Capps, Director for England, Bus Users UK
- Xavier Brice, Sustrans
- Helena Bennett, Green Alliance
- Gavin Devine, Park Street Partners
- Professor David Metz
- Dr Roger Sexton
- Silviya Barratt CBE
- Alison Edwards, Head of Policy, CPT
- Flora Ogilvie, Consultant in Public Health, Transport Climate Change Policy, Behaviour Change and Impacts, Transport Scotland
- Edward Forrester, Mott Macdonald

The meeting was held under Chatham House rules, meaning all remarks made in this summary note are **non-attributable.**

Summary of meeting discussion

Opening remarks

In the introductory discussion, it was discussed how the term 'behavioural change' was deceptively simple, especially when it came to furthering transport decarbonisation.

One speaker felt the phrase sparked outrage and frustration when people were not doing what was seen the 'right thing'. The emphasis of the debate often fell on modal switching away from car use and became the main jumping point off point for the discussion.

Interventions were seen in isolation, such as individual low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) or railway stations. Behaviour changes to reach net zero would not be achieved by focusing on single interventions that only addressed the tiniest aspects of car use.

Changes needed to be taken beyond the transport sector to facilitate mind changes across all aspects of life, alongside tackling inconsistent policy approaches.

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It was important to be honest about which interventions and behavioural changes would succeed, which included why evidence of more positive decisions and lifestyles were not collected to enhance perceptions of them.

The focus of the webinars was to build on the work of the Greener Transport Solutions' manifesto for transport decarbonisation.

A speaker also noted that there was a need to reduce traffic on the UK's roads by a quarter by 2030. Central government should be focusing on traffic reduction and behaviour change measures to reduce emissions from transport.

The UK had operated under the assumption since the 1950s that the private car was the main mode of transport, but this needed to change to achieve decarbonisation. Whitehall had sent the wrong message to consumers and motorists with the recent cut in Fuel Duty announced in the Spring Statement.

Transport metrics and demand management on the railways

At this point in the session, the meeting opened to contributions from other speakers.

Worked needed to be done to improve the metric used around transport because they were disproportionately focused on speed and not productivity. The speaker used the example of HS2 were the journeys made frequently by a few were prioritised over journeys made infrequently by larger numbers.

Bad yield managements on the railways meant that the busiest trains on the West Coast Main Line were the first off-peak train of the day. They advocated creating an app that would allocate seating to passengers based on their time of arrival at a station and available trains. This would in turn free up seats on later trains.

A speaker criticised spending £80bn on HS2 when they claimed that an app would provide a cheaper and more effective solution. The railway companies were resistant to other solutions because they were worried about a loss of retail sales at stations.

The metrics used for travel journeys were designed for freight and not passengers, which meant they needed to be overhauled.

Supporting choices for different groups

The needs of different groups in behavioural change need to be considered, because continuing to use a petrol car in the medium-term in some instances might be a good solution.

The speaker explained that people needed to be allowed to make "messier decisions" by using other means to encourage choices, including how information was present. For example, variations to the Tube map would allow people to use disperse across different routes.

It was important to make better use of the existing infrastructure, including encouraging people to time shift their journeys to later in the day and travelling on uncrowded roads or trains.

A lot of business travel was essentially performative to show commitment to those you were working with. This had reduced because of the pandemic for both personal and business affairs.

Sometimes the best travel decision was removing the need for the person in question to travel at all through use of video conferencing software like Zoom. It was important to accelerate the adoption of such technology in the new normal of the post-pandemic world.

People were often reluctant to take up new technology before there was a surge in uptake. The example would be no-one who owned a mobile phone or multi-channel television had seen people return to the old models of transport. A shift to electric cars could be another example of this "ratchet effect", with those who bought them not returning to petrol cars.

The hub and spoke model of public transport meant that the value of being closest to a node on the structure was transferred to landowners.

Summing up, the speaker said the problem with owning a car meant that those with them became reluctant to use other forms of transport.

Choice architecture for behavioural change

Another attendee wondered what choice architecture was needed to help drive decisions towards transport decarbonisation.

Cars being readily available outside homes meant that people were pre-disposed to use them. An example of encouraging better use of buses outside Charing Cross Station alongside Tube times would persuade more people to use them.

Another psychological game changer had been the creation of the Uber map allowing users to see how far away their car was, thereby allowing them to enjoy their time before it arrived to collect them more.

A speaker put forward the question of how best to push back against car-dominated culture.

Another attendee cautioned against putting too much emphasis on individual transport choices

Population living in built-up areas and car ownership

Over 80% of the UK's population lived in urban areas and many young people did not need a car because they lived in a city. This speaker explained how being car-free had suited their lifestyle and had saved them a lot of money.

It was imperative to remove the emphasis on car ownership, which would improve living spaces, embrace the digital world and reducing your carbon footprint.

They wondered who was selling a lifestyle free from cars and why there was not a campaign group of those who came together to promote this. Transport was an emotive issue and very open to positive messaging.

This speaker was proud of their car-free lifestyle and felt conversations needed to be had around shaping a car-free movement to different groups.

They suggested that one option could be a car-free railcard to provide discounted train travel for those who did not used motor vehicles.

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An attendee reflected that the car remained a popular mode of transport because of the choice it afforded individuals in where and when they could travel. Faster public transport links would afford people more choices and thereby increasing modal shift, because people had become habituated high degrees of choice.

Later in the session, a speaker advocated legislation to solve the problem of fragmentation of the bus market.

The session rounded off with all speakers discussing the best angle of entry for instilling the necessary behavioural changes needed to further the drive towards net zero in transport.

<u>Remarks raised by participants in the chat during the event</u>

All remarks are <u>**unattributable**</u> in-line with Chatham House rules.

- *Some people should be able to travel more, there is "suppressed demand" at the individual level (people who can't drive, can't afford cars/public transport, no public transport)*
- *Rush hours have gone but we may get 'rush days' e.g., Tues/Wednesday. Governments (RTAs) must have power to spread 'at-office days' throughout week.*
- *The answer to the question of DfT and video conferencing is in silos: DfT's remit doesn't include telecoms - that rests with DCMS - whereas in Finland there is a Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications which can look at these together*
- *Even allowing for charging hassles EVs are a far better product than their ICE equivalent. Most journeys are <35 miles in length so the enroute hassle factor is vastly exaggerated. Provided you have a home charge point. A ratchet indeed.*
- *I suspect the e-bike is also a one-way ratchet technology. When someone who thinks "cycling isn't for people like me" get on an e-bike, the "e-bike smile" spreads across their face, and they discover that cycling is for them too!*
- *I think choice architecture is very important. Does it also factor in diversity? Speed of journey may not be important to a woman, but safety is likely to be. And what are the different reasons for choosing different forms of transport? Does diversity play a role?*
- *The Quorn/ chicken analogy suggests to me another H which is very prominent in transport - Habit*
- *Many researchers, eg social practice theorists and social psychologists propose that we need to go beyond 'nudging'. In transport, we need to recognise that mode is not a matter of free and conscious choice, and if we put too much emphasis on individuals making different choices it can be disempowering. We instead need to recruit people socially, break down barriers at a local level, and build a sense of positivity, ownership and empowerment towards sustainable modes.*
- *Quorn want more people to like their product. Grant Shapps does not want to tell people that we need to travel less - I think it would be helpful to reflect on clashes between movements. I feel he is more in the Gerald Ratner model of leadership on this...*
- *The car-free society - maybe something for FIT to fund? Anna and others, would you like to come up with a proposal?*
- *Agree that car-free can be a positive and beneficial lifestyle choice (speaking from experience) and also it can be a concept we can use to encourage small changes, participation and involvement in sustainable travel, e.g., locally led car-free days.*
- *Public transport IS NOT, in Britain, a comprehensive system. And it is marketed by the operators for their commercial ends, not by governments.*
- *I'm currently being peer pressured by friends to by a car (in Australia). "It will give you so much more freedom."*

- *As someone who has been car-free for c30 years, my heart is 100% with Anna. But my head wonders if the absolutism of "car free" could put some people off cutting down (rather than eliminating" their car use? When I went vegetarian, I didn't initially decide I'd go 100% vegetarian, I merely said I'd cut down on meat. But then 3 months went by, during which I didn't eat meat, so I realised I'd gone vegetarian, and have stuck with it, also for c30 years!*
- *This is something that we're aspiring to do at Transport Scotland as part of our car-use reduction commitment - our challenge is how we do this without alienating people - creating a pro car vs anti-car as has been seen in relation to a lot of local level initiatives*
- *The interesting thing with Veganism was that it became non-binary - people could be 'almost Vegan' for a few days a week for instance, 1% are Vegan but about 40% identified as Vegan*
- *Analogy with smoking where any smoking campaigners deliberately chose not to pick smokers vs anti-smokers, but instead to pitch the tobacco industry as the 'opponent'*
- *As we heard in the roundtable on planning, some housing developments build in car dependence, so people there would find it difficult to give up cars/cut their car use*
- *Our experience at Sustrans is that It's hard to avoid inflaming pro/anti-car feelings and backlash when promoting car-free.*
- *This point about veganism is spot on, and important when it comes to cars. Flexitarianism (in terms of diet) has become relatively commonplace; being vegan is vanishingly rare. Taking a similar attitude to car use would be more likely to be impactful, I would have thought. And - crucially - politically realistic; no mainstream political party is about to come out as being (or even remotely appearing to be) anti-car.*
- *I'd love to submit something for FIT - if anyone else wants to have a separate convo about this and get involved let me know :) will read through and note all your comments as keen to get feedback on the idea to build it up*
- *If we want people go car-free, then we need much better and cheaper public transport.*
- *Living car-free doesn't have to mean not driving. Car hire and car clubs can provide almost the same level of freedom as owning a car without the car being the default mode with an artificially low marginal cost. Big problem is that car club/hire would be much more attractive if there were just one national provide, giving people access to vehicles everywhere and for one-way rental (so that cars are used efficiently).*
- *But it will require some skilful comms to get that idea over to the wider public.*
- *Some bus operators have gone for luxury - see e.g., the 36 Leeds-Harrogate-Ripon, leather seats etc*
- *I've been running, on a voluntary basis, a community-led green travel project in some car-dependent semi-rural communities where we have been quite upfront about the fact that we're aiming to reduce traffic and support greater use of the alternatives. We've been stood on streets chatting to people, carrying out online surveys, and running participatory mapping workshops. Not a single person has questioned why we're working to cut car use or reacted negatively - because we're taking a participatory approach, showing we're listening, and we want to work with local people to make our communities and local transport better for everyone.*
- *From the participatory work I'm aware of the problem isn't that people don't agree with the benefits of less car at the aggregate level, but that doesn't necessarily translate into individual behaviour change - issue of lots of people thinking that their specific travel needs are 'exceptional' and still require car*
- *Legislation on smoking came from a place of protecting hospitality workers from passive smoking - potential to look at parallels on groups e.g. children that we want to 'protect' from harms of cars*
- *The Dutch motorway network is very dense and very efficient*

- *Engaging people as I've described is not enough - it's a foundation for change. In the local engagement project I've mentioned, we are now acting on people's views to remove barriers, e.g., better integration between bus operators and buses and trains, addressing problems with active travel routes, publicising bus routes to access green spaces where 95% of visitors come by car. In community rail, our members also do lots of work to help people 'try the train', to improve travel skills/confidence/familiarity. Some evidence that this is effective in changing actual behaviours. Our members also have a strong focus on encouraging use of rail for longer leisure journeys, where we can make greater/swifter carbon savings.*
- *Massive, long-term investment in the bus industry is key to reducing carbon emissions. We need complementary demand management measures: NO further increases in road capacity (i.e., cancel capacity RIS2 investments) and road pricing to increase the marginal cost of driving.*
- *Buses need to be co-ordinated with each other, not in competition with each other*
- *Technology will help for sure - but to your earlier points transport technology is focused on making journeys faster and more efficient and more convenient (more being the operative word) and there is little more convenient than the private car as we have structured our places and daily services around them (outside of major city centres). So, I don't see tech alone as driving the change we need to see by 2030 (though it is vital)*
- *Better inter-suburban public transport. Better transport to Hospitals, Universities, Stadiums. Much better public transport needed in tourist areas.*
- *New Zealand also reduced fuel prices - just to be clear.*
- *The C-charge is that the behaviour change effect itself happened overnight*
- *Cornwall is clearly already trying to improve its bus services - and make them cheaper. But the three is not much integration with trains.*
- *Pressure on individuals to change is a clear delay tactic from fossil fuel industries*
- *The individual carbon footprint was a great invention to shift responsibility*
- *Carbon rationing would be much more effective than carbon pricing, and more equitable. But we must communicate the fact that the climate emergency IS an emergency, requiring emergency measures.*
- *One very quick emergency measure would be to reduce speed limits: 60mph on motorways and dual carriageways, 50mph on unrestricted roads. This would reduce carbon emissions and road deaths and injuries.*
- *Another benefit of deliberative / participatory methodologies with regards to transport is that is encourages holistic thinking across modes. Conceiving of sustainable transport as a whole system seems important to enabling and encouraging more people to use it. Citizen's assemblies of course are not the only method available to us that bring people together and enable them to make their voices heard. A lot of sustainable development research talks about the need to shift power to the grassroots if we're to achieve the level of change (systemic and behavioural) we need to tackle the climate crisis.*
- *Agree we don't need free public transport, but we need a fare system that does not penalise interchanging (which is an essential feature of a comprehensive and useful public transport system).*