
Responding to Leeds City Council's Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy

Summary Response: Ideas and Suggestions for Raising the Ambition

Our Future Leeds



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Overview

Leeds City Council has recently published their draft [Transport Strategy](#) - a strategy designed to transform Leeds into '**a city where you don't need a car**'.

The Council are encouraging members of the public to take part in a consultation to help shape the strategy. Consultation is open until Friday 26th March 2021, and you can have your say by going to the [Commonplace website](#).

The strategy will shape our city for decades to come, so it is vital that Leeds City Council hear from as many people as possible.

This document sets out Our Future Leeds' response to the draft strategy, and we'd love it if you made use of any or all of our ideas when making your own submission.

We have made this document so that groups and individuals across Leeds can develop ideas as they respond to the consultation. Feel free to cut and paste and share - and better still, come to Our Future Leeds meetings and help us build a movement to create a zero carbon, socially just, nature friendly Leeds by the 2030s.

We have found that the options for responding and commenting to the consultation through Commonplace are somewhat restrictive, so we would also encourage you to write your response and send it directly via email to the following Leeds City Council contacts:

- **Cllr Peter Carlill**, *Lead Member for Active Travel and Sustainable Transport*: peter.carlill@leeds.gov.uk
- **Cllr Helen Hayden**, *Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development*: helen.hayden@leeds.gov.uk
- **Paul Foster**, *Transport Projects Manager*: paul.foster@leeds.gov.uk

Please note this summary document is underpinned by a more detailed response which we will be submitting to the consultation from Our Future Leeds. You can read our full response on [our website](#).

Introduction

The draft Transport Strategy offers Leeds an exciting and realistic opportunity to rise to the challenges of tackling the climate emergency. We greatly welcome this ambitious and timely proposal, and look forward to mobilising our network to support its implementation.

However, while we recognise, acknowledge and share the strategy's ambition, the scale and urgency of the challenge ahead means that this ambition needs to be raised.

Addressing transport in Leeds is vitally important, but the strategy must be tied to bold, city-wide changes that reach beyond a sole focus on transport, and importantly link to wider changes in the economy and how we live in Leeds.

The climate emergency is also about tackling inequality in our city. We know, for example, that the poorest and most marginalised in Leeds - and globally - are the least responsible for carbon emissions. This is why principles of justice and fairness, and a deep understanding of current social inequities, must be at the heart of all strategies and policies for tackling the climate emergency at local, regional and national levels.

A Look at the Strategy's Key Areas

We don't have all the answers, but what follows are some of our ideas and suggestions on the Transport Strategy's key areas that we feel will tackle the climate emergency and create a fairer, greener Leeds.

Decarbonising Transport

When it comes to decarbonising transport in Leeds, the proposed Transport Strategy has bold targets. However, its proposed 30% reduction in car use by 2030 falls short of where we need to be.

We need to aim higher - for over 50% reduction in car use by 2025, rising to 70% by 2030, if we are to meet the climate targets we've signed up to as a city.

But what does it mean to meet our car reduction targets?

Firstly, we need to change the form and function of the primary road network in Leeds. This means making cycling, walking and public transport the quickest and safest options available, en masse, across the whole metropolitan area.

We can achieve this by reallocating road space away from private cars in neighbourhoods, on primary roads and motorways which would free up space for other modes of transport.

This change would complement and build on the recently rolled-out Active Travel Neighbourhoods which, through the addition of physical measures (such as planters and altered road priorities), have sought to reduce speeding, improve road safety and reduce pollution across Leeds. We recognise these schemes have caused a lot of controversy and, if not implemented carefully and thoughtfully, can impact the most disadvantaged in our city the hardest. This is why they must be tied to really clear communication, a proper consultation with residents, and most importantly a package of better non-car options which make it easy to switch.

By 2025, we envisage a city centre predominantly free of cars, especially non electric vehicles, with adequate access still provided for those with mobility issues, and served by a transformed and affordable bus service and safe walking routes. This would be a really bold move fitting of the climate emergency, and a commitment to social justice.

We believe Leeds city centre can be a forward-looking place which works for people, not cars. It can create new opportunities for leisure and recreation, with new cafes spilling onto streets and new public spaces.

What's more, COVID-19 has made change even more urgent, and a huge opportunity to rethink the city centre. Evidence suggesting that air pollution increases the likelihood of suffering severe impacts from COVID-19. Any recovery from the pandemic must include steps to create cleaner air.

Creating Healthier Streets, Spaces, and Communities

There are so many benefits we would feel in our neighbourhoods if a real priority was given to walking, cycling, and public transport. For first steps, we propose extending 20mph speed limits to all road types (apart from A roads), vehicles not allowed within a defined safety zone of school entrances. We suggest schools should have 'park and stride' facilities and safe walk-

ing/cycling routes with more flexible drop offs for working parents and key workers.

However, there are many more opportunities for improving our neighbourhoods and making spaces more liveable. One such approach would be the introduction of '15 minute neighbourhoods', where our city planners move towards a more decentralised and devolved approach, transforming urban spaces into more connected and self-sufficient neighbourhoods. This would mean fewer cars, improved services and more jobs.

We recognise how central travel by foot is to reducing car use, and this is intimately bound up in considerations of how different people use our shared space. Considerations of gender, ability, and discrimination in our neighbourhoods recognises that simple but vital measures can make a huge difference to supporting people to give up their cars. These include: feeling safe at bus stops and on buses, dropped kerbs and pavements which are free from obstructions, and a transport network which is not solely focused on travel in and out of the centre. In Vienna, for example, simple improvements to the pedestrian experience have led to an impressive 60% of all journeys in the city being made on foot.

Enhancing Public Transport

We desperately need a bold vision when it comes to reimagining Leeds' public transport, which is why we call for a free, fully electric and public-owned bus service.

We envisage this service as part of a Bus Rapid Transport system designed to improve capacity and priority for buses across Leeds.

A fleet of accessible micro and on-demand community buses, which connect in-part with new integrated transport hubs, would transform how we use public transport as a better option than getting in our cars. As a first step towards this, we encourage Leeds City Council to support and promote a rapid shift to refranchised buses, which will set routes, prices and times for all current private operators.

As an example of how things can be done differently using the latest technology, Birmingham have adopted the application 'Whim', which was adapted from the Europe-wide 'Mobility as a Service' model, and enables the people of Birmingham to easily plan, book and pay for multiple types of mobility services. An integrated platform like this is sorely needed in Leeds.

In addition, Park & Ride needs to play a role in discouraging car use, not just acting as large out of town car parks for city centre access. We hope to see the Park and Ride service become part of an integrated transport system that gives ready access to all parts of Leeds, not just the city centre, and is linked to new walking and cycling routes.

If we really want Leeds to be a city where you don't need to own a car (and remembering that [cars are currently parked for 97% of the time!](#)), then we must have easy access to cars for those times when there really are no other suitable options.

Leeds is very poorly served by Car Club operators, especially from companies not solely focused on making a profit. Many other towns and cities in the UK already benefit from providers such as [Co-Wheels](#), a social enterprise car club which prioritises electric and hybrid vehicles, so why not in Leeds?

We envisage a fully electric car club vehicle being available within a few streets of where everyone lives, at prices which are affordable.

Rail should also play a vital part in how we move away from the private car. We would like to see a bolder plan for a renewed network of suburban rail halts/stations across Leeds - especially in places like Wortley and Kirkstall, for example - rather than just serving retail centres and the airport.

Greater cycling infrastructure and facilities are also essential, with far better, safer and covered cycle storage needed in the city centre, at bus and train stations, and district hubs. Rent-an-E-bike services, as well as cycle repair and service centres, should also be supported.

Integration is key, with integrated travel tickets which include public transport options and the ability to multi-trip, expanding the range of non-car options available and making integrating walking and cycling with bus and rail travel easy.

Reimagining the City Centre

When it comes to reimagining what Leeds city centre could be like, we propose bigger and bolder early moves.

For instance, we would like to see pedestrianisation extend by a certain number of streets each year from 2022, with the addition of more trees, bushes, grassy areas, and outside cafes, as well as performance and public art in the city centre.

We suggest that selected streets in the centre are made available only to electric vehicles, further encouraging drivers to switch away from petrol or diesel cars (as in [Oxford](#), for example), and side streets are closed off year by year.

We propose closing the city centre to all vehicles - except emergency vehicles, and for those who need their car because of disabilities, for example.

We also encourage a bold approach to the A58m/A64m. To meet car reduction targets, within five years this needs to be geared down in operation and turned into a city centre linear park and active travel corridor. Other cities, including Madrid, Seoul and New York have all taken this approach.

Parking is another big factor, and we call for the closure of many city centre car parks (except, of course, for those serving hospitals and other frontline services) in order to restrict the flow of cars in the central area. No new car parks should be established, and street parking entirely phased out.

To create a liveable and vibrant centre, we encourage growth in local hospitality, retail and recreation, the creation of new sustainable and affordable places to live, and an overall greening of the city centre, with parks to be re-landscaped.

The Strategy's Targets

Below we outline some reflections on some of the particular targets set out in the draft Transport Strategy.

Affordability

Affordability is fundamental to any transport system, and we want to ensure that no one in Leeds is priced out of being able to get around the city.

This is why we call for affordable integrated tickets to cover all everyday journeys as an incentive to leaving cars behind. We would also like to see the implementation of low cost car clubs, and assistance and support provided to help communities set up their own car pooling/sharing.

Reductions in car use

We are calling for a 50% decline in car use by 2025, and a 70% reduction within a decade, with a goal being to keep non-electric vehicles outside the outer ring road and a largely car free city centre.

To support this reduction, we propose non-residents are incentivised not to drive within the outer ring road using a variety of other cheap or free travel options, including Park and Rides, and integrated travel options coming on stream through the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. Car sharing currently makes up a very low (under 1%) proportion of journeys into the city. We believe the ambition should be much greater for car sharing to make up at least 10% of journeys.

These reductions in car use will lead to much lower levels of congestion, as well as drastically lower emissions and much cleaner air for our citizens.

Cycling

The proposed Leeds cycle network is an important step forward. However, its proposed target of a 400% increase in cycling - to reach just 4% overall use - is unambitious. With the new cycle strategy, and growth in e-bikes, we believe a target of well over 10% should be our aim.

To make this happen we need a network which makes cycling a quicker and safer option. Important steps could be the promotion and normalisation of e-bikes through free or very low cost rental schemes, as well as the provision of abundant bike storage facilities and repair schemes.

Target for Meeting the Climate Emergency

To meet our adopted climate targets, Leeds as a whole needs to reduce emissions by at least 13% every year.

The Transport Strategy in its current draft provides no indication that implementation will enable Leeds to meet our climate targets. It is vital that any strategy demonstrates clearly how it contributes to the deep and transformative carbon reductions we must see across the city over the next decade.

Our proposals would achieve a much greater reduction in emissions. With Leeds Bradford Airport expansion now approved, we all need to redouble our efforts to achieve net zero emissions by 2030.

Have your say!

This document is intended to provide a useful contribution to the Transport Strategy development process, based on Our Future Leeds' aim of tackling the climate emergency through building a zero carbon, socially just, nature-friendly Leeds by the 2030s.

Whilst we don't claim to have all the answers, we hope that the ideas and suggestions are helpful when making submissions to the council's consultation on the draft strategy before the deadline of **Friday 26th March 2021**.

[Have your say!](#)

