

Call for evidence to inform Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS 2) from All Party Group for Cycling and Walking

16th July 2021

Evidence submitted by Dr Llinos Brown on behalf of the TRANSAS team including Professor Greg Marsden, Professor Jillian Anable (University of Leeds) and Professor Iain Docherty (University of Stirling).

Background

Our evidence is provided as part of the COVID-19 Transport, Travel and Social Adaptation Study (TRANSAS) which has been funded by the UK Research Councils, Transport Scotland, Department for Transport, Transport for the North, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, University of Leeds and ClimateXChange. Our research is supported by two further major UKRI from investments the Centre for Research on Energy Demand Solutions and the DecarboN8 network. Our data comes from four sources:

- A longitudinal panel survey with over 6200 responses in June and October 2020 with a third wave of data collection underway. The sample is representative of populations in 10 sites covering cities and surrounding towns. There is an urban bias (London, Bristol, Greater Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle, Lancashire, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Ayrshire)
- Two sets of interviews with 100 members of the public conducted in July 2020 and February/March 2021
- Three sets of 18 interviews with policy and sector experts from local, regional and national government, transport operators and network providers (May 2020, November 2020, June 2021)
- A study of how Leeds City Centre employers and property owners and developers are responding to the changes in behaviour (April/May 2021)

Further details of our work and can be found at <https://covid19transas.org/>

In this evidence we highlight some of the key findings related to the public and political acceptability and behaviour change questions set in the call for evidence by the APPGCW.

APPGCW Question - The extensive and widely reported opposition to schemes such as low-traffic neighbourhoods emphasises that interventions promoting walking and cycling are often controversial. How can consensus be built both nationally and locally to support the action required?

We do acknowledge the widely reported opposition to schemes such as low-traffic neighbourhoods. However, findings from the TRANSAS survey show nearly 50% of our sample support additional investments in walking and cycling infrastructure (Figure 1). This demonstrates that **there is support for these schemes, but this is not being widely reported**.

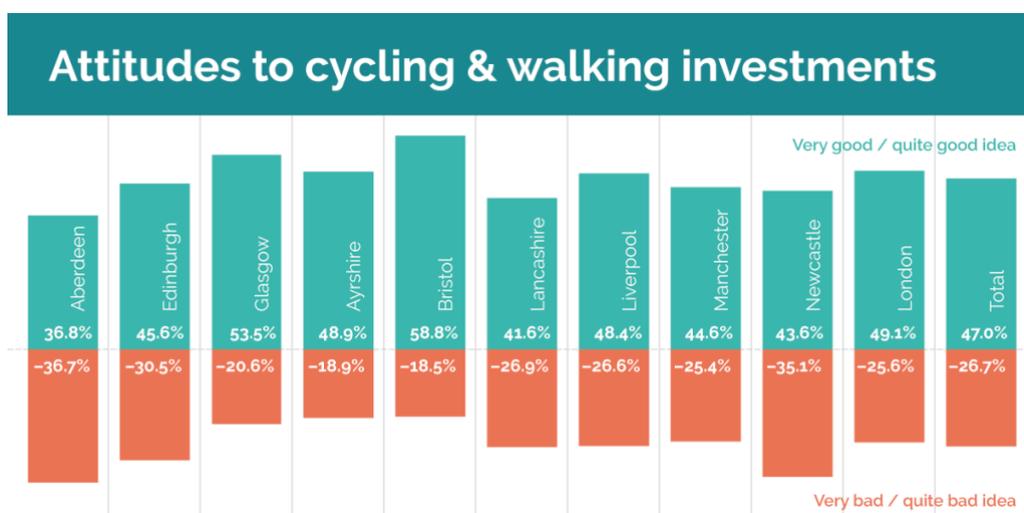


Figure 1: TRANSAS panel survey results - Attitudes to cycling and walking investments (n=6209)

Our qualitative interview findings show people have enjoyed walking and cycling more during the pandemic (Figure 2), with many reporting improvements in their health and wellbeing. Any future active travel infrastructure developments would benefit from the **promotion of health and well-being impacts of such schemes and changes to infrastructure**.

'I'm really enjoying it, and obviously it's a form of exercise as well...'

'...we've really enjoyed going out as a family on our bikes...'

'The cycling and the fitness, yeah. It's a positive experience and enjoyable.'

Figure 2: Quotes from qualitative interviews when participants were asked about cycling during the pandemic

Qualitative interviews findings also show people trust information that has been backed by science. During the interviews we asked participant what they thought about a 20% reduction in car KMs. We acknowledge this does not directly respond to changes in infrastructure but findings show people

would be more supportive of a reduction if it was backed by science (Figure 3). Where changes in infrastructure is being introduced to benefit communities or local people, **we encourage the use of data to show residents and local people the benefits** for example any changes in current air quality levels, and the anticipated improvements. It is essential this information is communicated in an easy to interpret way, while also highlighting any negative impacts of the current infrastructure e.g. the impact poor air quality can have.

'if that is backed by science and they've got facts then yes, I would go with it'

'for me, it's just regular updates, you're doing this, and this is, this is helping this, and here's the evidence to prove it sort of thing. But I'd be, I'd be happy with that'

Figure 3: Responses to a question asking about opinions towards a 20% reduction commitment in car KMs

APPGCW Question - The pandemic has shown how flexible people's travel behaviour is in certain circumstances. What combination of schemes and policies will provide the basis for a substantial and lasting shift towards active travel?

Walking and cycling rates have increased in the pandemic ¹. Our findings support this, and show **walking is the only mode of transport that people are doing more regularly** than they did pre-COVID. 56% of our respondents are walking three times a week or more, up from 36% pre-pandemic (Figure 4). We noted similar regular (3 times a week or more) cycling rates during the pandemic as pre-pandemic (approx. 5% of our sample) with a slight drop in October. It is important to note that although cycling rates in our sample stayed fairly constant during the pandemic, 50% of people who reported cycling to work some of the time (n=482) in October 2020, reported doing this **LESS** than they did in October 2019. Yet cycling rates in Figure 4 stayed similar. Suggesting regular cyclists who reduced the amount they cycled have been replaced by people who did not cycle as much previously.

¹ Department for Transport (2021) National Travel Attitudes Study: Wave 4 (Final) Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/956170/national-travel-attitudes-study-wave-4-final.pdf Accessed 16th July 2021

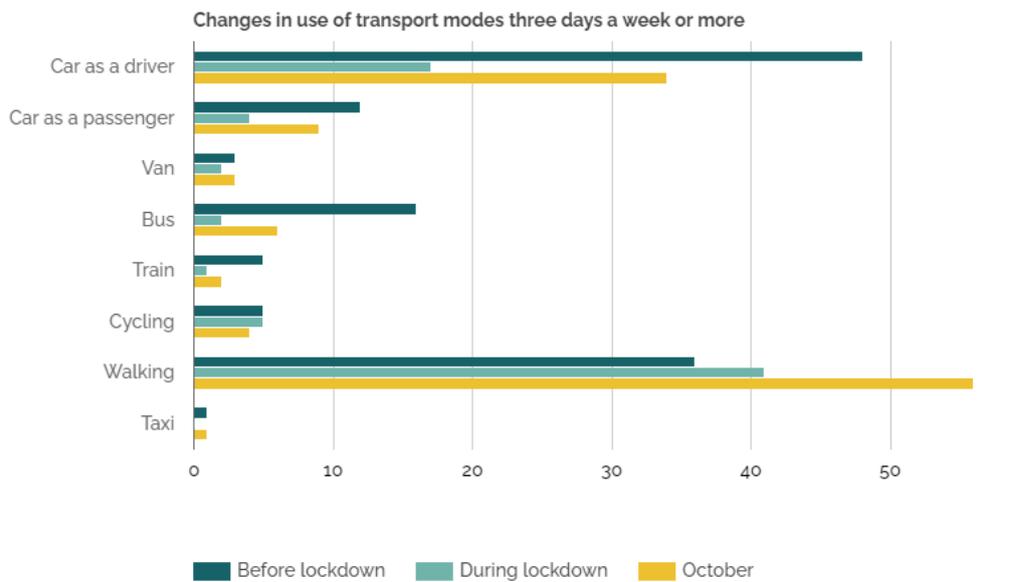


Figure 4: TRANSAS panel survey results- Changes in use of transport mode three days a week or more. Before (n=9362) During (n=9362) October (n=6209)

It is perhaps too early to determine whether schemes implemented during the pandemic have had an impact on walking and cycling rates, for example emergency infrastructure. Our survey sample (n=6209) show only **47% of people had noticed new cycle lanes, pavement widening or pedestrianisation schemes put in during the pandemic**. The interview data showed of the people who answered a question about pop-up infrastructure (n=82) **only 20% reported seeing any in their local area**. A lot of the focus of emergency infrastructure has been to facilitate alternative means of travel for the commute, however with the increase in working from home, some people are yet to return to the commute and take advantage of any new infrastructure. Thus, the true impact and evaluation of the success of these scheme is yet to be seen.

Most of the increase in cycling rates seen during COVID has been for leisure (as reported in the interviews) but this is not a bad thing as this presents other opportunities for modal switch outside of the commute. Our interview findings show 16% of our sample (n=101) used their bikes as means of transport (commuting, shopping, visiting friends/family, running errands) during the pandemic. Most of these people, 15 out of 16 people, had a bike and used it occasionally pre-pandemic. These findings, and wider interview findings suggest that people who use their bike as a means of transport during the pandemic were more likely to have access to be a bike and be occasional leisure cyclist's pre-pandemic. As people gain more confidence cycling, fitness levels improve, people become more familiar with riding on the road network, enjoyment levels rise and some people transition to using a bike for other journeys for example social events or conducting smaller top-up shops. From this, confidence, fitness, and enjoyment levels continue to increase, and a small proportion of people will

transition to cycling for a commute. Figure 5, illustrates this transition to different types of cyclists and reasons for cycling.

Each of the different types of cyclist (different levels on the pyramid) has different needs and requirements, and require a different combination of schemes and policies to lead to a substantial lasting shift to increased cycling. Any future CWIS 2 needs to acknowledge differences in levels of cyclists and abilities.

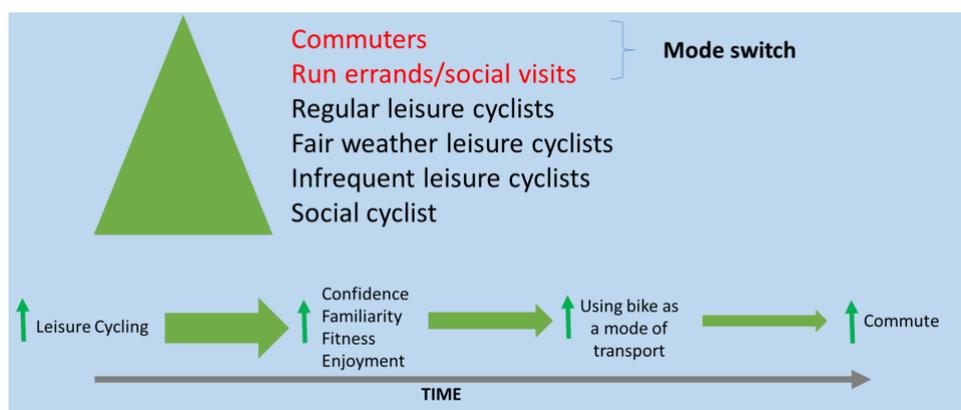


Figure 5: Transition from infrequent cyclist to cyclists where a mode-switch occurs

Schemes and Policies

During our qualitative interviews we asked people what would encourage them to cycle more in the future, or consider cycling in the future, and a similar question was asked for walking. Here is an overview of the findings:

- **Encourage workplaces to promote and encourage staff to conduct active travel** for the commute and business travel. Workplace offer numerous benefits to staff for driving to work for example a car allowance, or parking spaces, but often there are no direct benefits to cycling or walking to work. Here are some suggested schemes and policies from the TRANSAS team built on findings from the interviews:
 - Promotion of the **UK Government Cycle to Work** – the return to work provides an opportunity to relaunch the Cycle to Work scheme and encourage more employees to take up the scheme. Promoting the requirement that ‘50% of the cycle’s use must be for commute purposes’² could encourage greater uptake of the scheme. Some people we interviewed thought they were not eligible for the scheme as they did not think they would be able to cycle to work all the time.
 - Increase the allowance for UK Government Cycle to Work scheme to enable the purchase of electric bikes, mobility bikes and e-cargo bikes. Currently the scheme can be over £1000 if the Financial Conduct Authority authorisation is obtained, however

² Department for Transport. (2019) Cycle to Work Scheme: Guidance for Employers. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/845725/cycle-to-work-guidance.pdf Accessed: 8th July 2021

many workplaces limit the amount to £3000 which does not enable the purchase of many e-mobility bikes or e-cargo bikes. This limits people who need to take children to school pre-work or bring equipment with them to work.

- Providing active travel facilities in the workplace – lockers, showers, changing facilities, secure bike storage.
 - Encourage workplaces to continue flexible work hours to facilitate the extra time it may take to commute by active travel modes and/or facilitate the use of active travel modes for school runs around work. Our findings suggest workplaces have been more flexible during the pandemic. Policies and incentives should be created to encourage workplaces to continue this flexible working approach.
 - Encourage workplaces to have a fleet of e-bikes for staff to conduct local business travel.
- **Greater availability of bikes, trikes, e-bikes, e-trikes, and e-cargo bikes as part of a mobility as a service (MaaS) schemes.** Results from our interviews show places which have e-bikes as part of local MaaS had greater public awareness of e-bikes and their potential uses. One of the barriers to cycling identified in our interviews was the inability to carry items and children on a bike. E-cargo bikes enable this to happen, but many people do not have access to these, or space to store them. Additionally many infrequent cyclists reported not having access to bikes, and some non-cyclists reported not being able to afford a bike or have storage for a bike within their home. MaaS help address these barriers.
 - **Segregated cycle lanes** – our interviews identify a major barrier to cycling more is the safety on the roads, and inadequate connectivity of cycling infrastructure. Several interviewees reported reducing the amount they cycled or changing the routes they undertook when the roads got busier after the first lockdown. The pandemic and the emergency infrastructure demonstrated that when routes were safer and there was a reduction in cars on the road, there was an increase in walking and cycling. If this is replicated longer term, people will cycle and walk more.
 - **Improvements in widening of pavements and improved lighting** – several interviewees reported inadequate lighting on walking routes, which make them feel unsafe while walking alone in evenings and nights. Several people also reported overgrown routes and pavements not being cleared during bad weather, when the road network is. Ensuring routes for walking are maintained well and having accessible infrastructure e.g. dropped kerbs and wide pavements, is essential for increasing active travel for all.
 - **Active Travel groups** - Most people we interviewed reported many benefits from undertaking active travel during the pandemic however there were some who's mental health has suffered. Some reported increased anxiety levels which has led to panic attacks when leaving the home. Adjusting to the pandemic will be a lot harder for some than others. Active travel groups, with options of one-to-one sessions could be set up which provide supportive safe

spaces to assist people who have experienced increased anxiety re-adjust to being outside the home and undertaking more active travel as restrictions ease

- **Education on active travel potential and safe routes** – Several interviews reported a lack of understanding of how long journeys by active travel can take. With some reporting being surprised at how little extra time it takes to walk or cycle somewhere compared with driving a car. Additionally, some interviewees reported not knowing the safest way to travel by bike, highlighting the way they travel by car might not be the safest way to travel by bike

To finish, the quote below (Figure 6) highlights the current dilemma's faced by people who are cycling more during the pandemic and weighing up the options for a modal switch away from the car.

'...riding a bike is more dangerous than being in a car, but then it is more healthy for you in the long run and cheaper. There are benefits and negatives to both.'

Figure 6: Quote from wave 2 interviews

Future Work

The TRANSAS quantitative panel survey is continuing for an additional 3 waves, with a survey going live in July 2021, Nov 2021 (TBC), and May 2022 (TBC). This enables us to track over time changes in attitudes and behaviours.