



# URBAN TRANSPORT GROUP

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Consultation Response

## **Urban Transport Group Response to the Draft Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy Consultation**

Department for Transport

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Urban Transport Group (UTG) represents the seven largest city region strategic transport bodies<sup>1</sup> in England, which, between them, serve over twenty million people in Greater Manchester, London, the Liverpool City Region, the North East Combined Authority area, the Sheffield City Region, the West Midlands conurbation and West Yorkshire. Nottingham City Council, the West of England Partnership and Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) are associate members of the UTG. Our members plan, procure, provide and promote public transport in some of Britain's largest city regions, with the aim of delivering integrated public transport networks accessible to all.
- 1.2. We welcome the introduction of the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy which sets out ambitious targets for cycling and aims to halt the decline in walking. We hope that this can help support Local Transport Authorities to plan ahead with greater confidence of the policy context.
- 1.3. We also welcome the emphasis on devolution. There is a growing recognition that many public investment decisions are best taken below the national level and that some challenges to infrastructure investment require local solutions. Devolving funding and decision making to the right geography can lead to more efficient outcomes. Local Transport Authorities have a good understanding of local needs and bottlenecks to development, meaning that they are in an advantageous position to make informed decisions.
- 1.4. However, it is important to understand that many of the funding streams available to local transport authorities, such as the Local Growth Fund, are already part allocated for the next few years, including to many walking and cycling projects. This could limit the amount of additional funding that might be available for schemes and impact on what can be achieved.
- 1.5. We understand that some of our members are providing their own evidence to this consultation and we have worked closely together on this consultation. In this response, we have focussed on issues of common concern to city region transport authorities.
- 1.6. Transport for London has only recently become a full member of the UTG and this response does not necessarily represent its views.

## 2. Response

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

#### *General*

- 2.1. We welcome the introduction of a national strategy for cycling and walking which can help to set the national policy context up to 2025. It is pleasing to see the government setting an ambition to double the level of cycling alongside safety improvements, and to halt the decline in walking. It is now important that DfT follow through on their commitment to "help local bodies that are serious about increasing cycling and walking in local areas".

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<sup>1</sup> With the exception of Transport for London, these bodies were formally known as Passenger Transport Executives (PTEs) and the UTG was previously known as the Passenger Transport Executive Group. In recent years, some PTEs have been abolished with their functions transferred onto successor bodies, such as Combined Authorities. The new name for our group reflects these changes.



- 2.2. Whilst we welcome the ambition, it is important to find a balance between centrally imposed targets and enabling Local Transport Authorities to put forwards the best solutions for their areas. In some places, nationally imposed targets may become arbitrary, so we would encourage government to find the balance between promoting a cycling and walking culture and setting targets that might not be of benefit to all places.
- 2.3. The focus on safety is welcomed. If we are to encourage more people to walk and cycle, it is important to improve both the actual and perceived safety of walking and cycling, removing barriers to participation.

### *Funding*

- 2.4. We view the announcement of highways maintenance funding being used for cycling and walking schemes as a positive development. Maintaining all parts of the road and surrounding space is important if we are to encourage people to travel safely and efficiently.
- 2.5. In order to achieve the ambitious targets set out in the CWIS, Local Transport Authorities must have access to adequate revenue and capital funding streams. This is particularly important for cycling and walking schemes which have benefited from revenue funded schemes through the Local Sustainable Transport Fund. Ensuring people have the skills and confidence to cycle is important if we are going to maximise the impact of capital infrastructure projects. For this reason we welcome the £50 million funding for Bikeability.

### *Devolution*

- 2.6. The devolution of powers in areas including housing and transport provides local areas with the opportunity to develop more joined-up, long-term plans. This is a welcome development and will enable the large amounts of local knowledge and expertise to draw up new plans for local areas.
- 2.7. At the same time, DfT support will still play a large role in encouraging an increase in cycling and walking levels. We would be interested in understanding further how this will work and how this relationship will develop.
- 2.8. With respect to the role of Transport for the North, Midlands Connect, and other sub national bodies, we support their introduction and their strategic role in shaping long-distance flows. While we believe they can play a role in cycling and walking, these modes are by nature most suited to short-distance local flows, meaning that Local Transport Authorities must continue to play a central role.

### *Information sharing*

- 2.9. We have previously called for the creation of a national body to share best practice and offer support to Local Transport Authorities. The creation of the Expert Committee could provide an opportunity to develop such a structure.
- 2.10. With the movement away from competitive funding towards local funding, new opportunities for information sharing may emerge. There are already a number of groups, such as our own Going up a Gear group which enable this function, but there is a clear role for DfT in helping to share best practice in areas of development, bidding and implementation.



- 2.11. DfT can also play a role in helping to make the case for investment in cycling and walking, sharing information on the benefits of cycling and walking schemes and best practice schemes.

***Local Cycling and Walking Investment plan***

- 2.12. We understand the rationale behind the introduction of Local Cycling and Walking Investment plans as a way of providing a focus for cycling and walking. Whilst the introduction of a targeted investment plan might help to develop future plans, many areas already have cycling and walking plans that are integrated as part of a Local Transport Plan and other strategies.
- 2.13. There is a danger that moving cycling and walking from integrated strategies into separate strategies could risk marginalising them. With the movement towards local funding mechanisms, it may not be conducive to separate out cycling and walking strategies from the main local strategy documents.

**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**

- 2.14. We do not feel that it is our position to comment on specific schemes, although any of our members might wish to cover this in their responses.
- 2.15. However, we would reiterate that DfT needs to ensure that the promotion of cycling and walking remains a priority across government. To achieve the ambitious goals set out in the CWIS, the aims of DfT must be matched in other departments' plans and objectives across Whitehall. It will be important to break down the barriers between different departments of government to allow for a consistent long term approach to cycling and walking

**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**

- 2.16. We do not feel that it is our position to comment on specific schemes, although any of our members might wish to cover this in their responses.
- 2.17. We have a hub on our website containing a wealth of information on the benefits of cycling and examples of how successful schemes have been implemented. We would suggest that this could be of interest in answering this question  
<http://www.urbantransportgroup.org/resources/cycling>.

**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**

- 2.18. We do not feel that it is our position to comment on specific schemes, although some of our members might wish to cover this in their responses.



- 2.19. It is part of our members core function to try and engage all people into integrated transport networks. Whilst we are not providing evidence for this question, it is likely that the responses of our members will cover views on how this can be achieved.
- 2.20. We have a hub on our website containing a wealth of information on the benefits of cycling and examples of how successful schemes have been implemented. We would suggest that this could be of interest in answering this question  
<http://www.urbantransportgroup.org/resources/cycling>.

**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**

- 2.21. DfT has an important role to play in continuing to make the case for walking and cycling, and ensuring that other government departments understand their potential benefits. There is strong evidence that cycling and walking interventions deliver high value for money across a number of government departments, including transport, health, environment and education. However, if they are to become more mainstream modes of transport, cycling and walking need continued political support at a national level to drive this change.
- 2.22. It is important to break down silos between different departments of government, allowing for policies and funding, in areas including health and education to be aligned. DfT needs to ensure that business plan objectives are recognised and valued across Whitehall. To achieve the ambitious goals of the CWIS, the approach needs to be consistent over a long period of time, allowing for relationships to develop and for national and local commitments to align.
- 2.23. DfT can play a particular role in helping to support local authorities in gaining and maintaining the required skills to achieve this. The Expert Committee could have a privileged position as an independent national body for cycling and walking, and could play a major role in helping to achieve objectives
- 2.24. Of particular interest are skills around monitoring and evaluation schemes to help build up the evidence base for cycling and walking. With a movement away from ring fenced funding, there will be an increased focus on ensuring that cycling and walking schemes stack up against other forms of transport. This places a greater emphasis on having a robust evidence base.