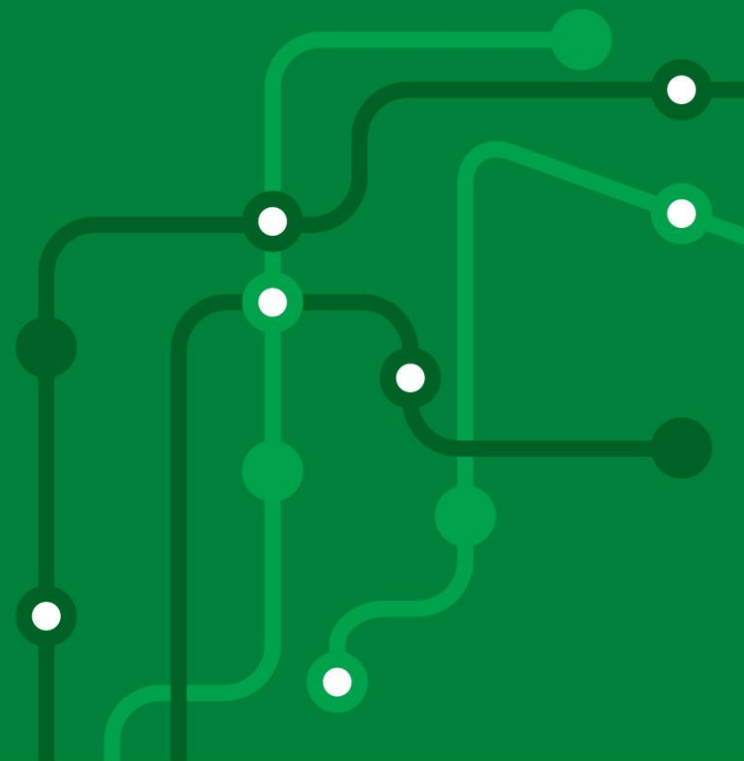


Transport **North East**

North East Active Travel Strategy – consultation summary report June 2023



Moving to a green, healthy, dynamic
and thriving North East.

Background

The North East Active Travel Strategy aims to encourage more active travel – walking, wheeling and cycling – across the North East and sets out proposals to help people travel actively more often.

Developed on behalf of the North East Joint Transport Committee, the strategy focuses on measures to help active travel become the natural first choice for short, everyday travel and combine it with public transport for longer journeys. The Strategy aims to achieve over half of all short journeys being made by active travel by 2035. This will be good news for the environment, public health and the economy.

Consultation with the public and stakeholder groups was an important and valued step in developing this strategy. The consultation helped us to shape the final document, ensuring it addressed the needs of our communities, and provided a transparent and open process.

How we told you about the consultation

The Active Travel Strategy consultation ran from 4th January to 5th March. To reach out to as many people and stakeholder groups as possible, a multi-channel approach was used, including:

- Frequent social media posts on the Transport North East media channels, including Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn;
- Partner communications – working with local authorities to encourage residents and organisations to have their say on the proposals. Local authorities shared messaging on social platforms, across public spaces, libraries where possible and consultation platforms;
- Posters and flyers distributed to local authorities for display in public spaces including libraries;
- Print advertising in regional newspapers;
- Digital advertising through Facebook;
- Media activity;
- Information and an online survey available via www.transportnortheast.gov.uk;
- A dedicated consultation telephone hotline and email address in operation throughout the consultation;
- Four online stakeholder consultation events which included a Q&A session – held on a variety of different days/times, including evenings and weekends;
- A total of nine drop-in public engagement events across all North East local authorities;
- E-mail communication with interested groups;
- Stakeholder forum sessions;
- Individual meetings with stakeholder groups.

An audio version of the strategy was produced and published on the consultation page on the Transport North East (TNE) website. The strategy was also available in alternative formats upon request. The TNE consultation guidelines were followed throughout the consultation process.

Your response

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As part of the consultation, we asked the public and stakeholder groups their views on the strategy's:

- Key aims
- Targets
- Commitment statements
- Intervention list

A total of 4,056 pieces of engagement were received as part of the consultation. The majority responded by completing the online surveys, but feedback was also received via email, on social media and by comment card submissions at our in-person engagement events.

To summarise, we received:

Public engagement response:

- 2,863 responses to the online survey;
- 393 comment cards;
- 1 piece of verbal feedback submitted over the phone
- 676 social media comments.

Stakeholder engagement response:

- 43 responses to the survey from organisations;
- 23 stakeholder responses received via email.
- 8 one to one sessions with stakeholder groups

We also received 58 registrations for engagement events which were open to both members of the public and other stakeholders.

Response Themes

Every piece of feedback was read and reviewed by the team, and the below table summarises the main themes from the feedback, along with our response. The table only includes topics that are within the scope of the strategy.

Table 1 – consultation insights from both members of the public and other stakeholders

Response theme	Insights	Response
Overall support for the strategy	<p>The majority of consultation respondents expressed support for the strategy, including the key aim, commitment statements and intervention list.</p> <p>More respondents expressed support for the headline target than did not. For those who disagreed with the headline, this was often divided between those who felt the target was too ambitious and those who felt it was not ambitious enough.</p>	<p>Emphasis on the health, social, environmental and economic benefits of active travel has been retained. Some of the data included in the strategy has been updated to reflect more recent trends.</p> <p>The strategy encourages people to consider switching more short car journeys for active travel where possible and we have given examples of options for travelling</p>

	<p>Some stakeholder groups were particularly positive, welcoming the aims and ambitions of the strategy.</p> <p>Respondents expressed support for the target but felt that half of short journeys actively travelled was the easier figure to understand compared to a 45% increase.</p>	<p>sustainably by referencing how active travel could fit into everyday journeys.</p> <p>Throughout the strategy we have prioritised the target of half of short journeys actively travelled. We have switched emphasis away from the 45% increase figure in the target and instead are referring to 'over half of short journeys actively travelled' instead. It has been made clearer that the 45% uplift figure is contextual so that readers can understand the scale of our ambition.</p>
<p>Accessibility and connectivity</p>	<p>People highlighted general problems in accessing or utilising high quality segregated active travel infrastructure and accessing equipment on the grounds of cost. It also included issues for some people combining active travel with public transport for longer journeys. They understood these as key barriers to active travel.</p> <p>Those living rurally raised particular barriers in addition to those raised in Chapter 4, such as the distances they need to travel to amenities, higher speeds on roads, and public transport connectivity for longer journeys.</p> <p>The need for endpoint facilities such as showers or lockers and safe places to store cycles came through strongly.</p> <p>Stakeholder groups suggested places to rest alongside walking routes and public toilet facilities as key to supporting active travel, as well as ensuring that routes are well maintained to avoid trips and falls.</p>	<p>We understand that for some people (e.g., people with limited mobility) and places (e.g., rural areas) active travel may not always be the appropriate travel choice. This strategy focusses on short journeys that could realistically be taken by active travel.</p> <p>The commitment to active travel friendly places has been strengthened in the 'Where do we want to be?' chapter, with a greater focus on improving the user experience of streets for those walking, wheeling or cycling.</p> <p>A greater emphasis on maintenance and management of existing infrastructure has been included in the strategy.</p> <p>The commitment statements now include a commitment to support secure cycle parking at mobility hubs, interchanges, and in city, town and neighbourhood centres.</p> <p>In chapter 4 there is strengthened reference to</p>

	<p>Some respondents also highlighted external issues such as the weather or hills where they lived as key barriers for them, especially if they mentioned having limited mobility.</p>	<p>perceptions of danger from road vehicles as a key barrier for people cycling. There is also added detail to the risk of falls on poorly maintained paths and more detail about the challenges of street clutter such as overhanging vegetation and tree roots, particularly for people with disabilities.</p> <p>Inclusivity was built into the strategy from the planning phase, and the consultation helped to reinforce messaging in the strategy around accessibility, ensuring this remained at the forefront of sustainable travel schemes and interventions that were evolving as part of the strategy.</p> <p>We have included stronger emphasis on cycle and e-bike hire schemes needing to be accessible and affordable in the 'Where do we want to be?' and the 'How do we get there?' chapters.</p>
<p>Opportunity Cost and alternative ways to spend public funding</p>	<p>Some people told us that they felt funding allocated to active travel could be better used for improving public transport or on health care during a cost of living crisis.</p> <p>Others had concerns about the allocation of space between cars and those actively travelling.</p>	<p>We acknowledge that the cost of living crisis is having a significant impact for people in our region. We expect that increasing active travel will have a positive impact on individuals and the economy, but wider societal policies are needed to address the cost of living crisis which is outside the scope of a transport strategy.</p> <p>The strategy includes a list of proposed schemes that are not currently funded. All proposals would need to meet bid criteria before being assessed for value for money and benefit to the public when funding allocation decisions are made.</p>

		<p>We have strengthened the commitment to active travel friendly places. We are committed to improving the experience of all users of the region's transport network, particularly for those walking, wheeling or cycling.</p>
<p>Partnership Working</p>	<p>There was a strong agreement that the strategy needs to work closely with a range of other sectors and stakeholders to achieve the strategy's aims. For example, stakeholders suggested working with bodies such as highway authorities, Nexus, public health, employers, community groups, police forces and educational institutions.</p> <p>Also, stakeholder groups highlighted the importance of the tourism sector as an important partnership opportunity to promote active travel.</p>	<p>Strengthened reference to encouraging and working with community groups, tourism sector, and community safety in key commitments.</p> <p>A commitment to work in partnership with the police to support a safe active travel network has been included in the strategy.</p>
<p>General Feedback</p>	<p>Some other general issues were highlighted during the consultation process.</p> <p>For example, some felt that the strategy contained too much transport planning specific language and others mentioned that they understood the term 'walking' to be an organised activity rather than an everyday travel option. This was also the case for 'cycling' with some feeling this was a sporting activity that needed specific equipment and clothing rather than an everyday means of getting around.</p> <p>We also heard from stakeholders that it would be helpful to include more best practice examples and case studies of interventions/ schemes that have worked well from across our region.</p>	<p>We have reviewed the strategy document and where language or terminology was not clear or user friendly, amendments were made to the text. We also strengthened definitions and offered examples of walking to clarify that this primarily referred to everyday walking.</p> <p>We added further best practice examples from stakeholders in our region and from elsewhere that will help us work towards our target. For example, in the 'Where do we want to be?' chapter we have added an example of community groups supporting people to travel actively</p> <p>The relationships between central government, Transport North East and local authorities were also clarified</p>

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		<p>and information on the region's December 2022 devolution deal and what the deal means for active travel has now been included in the introduction. We have provided Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) for our seven Local Authorities as of May 2023.</p> <p>We have referred to potential plans and forthcoming policy documents from central government such as Manual for Streets 3 to make sure street design and expected substantial housing growth is supported by good public and sustainable transport.</p> <p>We have offered greater focus on everyday travel journeys for walking and cycling and strengthened examples of everyday short journeys travelled actively.</p>
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The North East Joint Transport Committee approved the strategy at its meeting on 20 June 2023.