



York Citizens' Transport Forum Report from November/December 2021 Forum meetings

York's Citizens' Transport Forum met for its fourth session in November/December 2021. The meetings were designed to provide comments on York Civic Trust's proposed Transport Strategy for York. Annex A provides a background to the Forum and the arrangements for this round of meetings. Annex B includes excerpts from the draft strategy which were discussed. The slides presented for discussion are available separately. Since the principal output of the meetings was to offer advice on the Trust's planned strategy document, this report is not being circulated more widely. It is anticipated that the Trust's Transport Strategy for York will be published in February 2022. In doing so the Trust will take account of the comments outlined below.

Of the original membership, 50 expressed interest in participating, and it proved possible to accommodate all but two in four meetings; two of these were face to face and two on Zoom. In practice 40 members were able to participate. They were divided into eight groups, with two groups in each meeting. All four meetings considered the questions of objectives, targets, strategy, first steps and requirements for implementation. The Trust's six modal strategies were allocated to specific meetings for consideration. One meeting each considered the strategies for walking, cycling, public transport and freight. Two considered those for managing the road network and managing car use.

A draft of this report was circulated to participants. Ten responses were received, and reflected in this final version.

1 Objectives

All eight groups fully supported the proposed objectives, which were based on earlier Forum recommendations. Two groups proposed adding perception of safety. One noted that the objective of economic recovery might be expanded to cover economic growth. There was some discussion of the proposed order of priority. One group each suggested that carbon reduction, health, safety, equality of access and heritage should be ranked more highly. On balance it is probably more appropriate not to propose an order of priority.

2 Targets

All groups expressed some doubts about the proposed targets. Half questioned whether they were ambitious enough, while half doubted whether they were achievable. One group suggested that the targets should be set for earlier dates. Generally there was uncertainty as to how they had been determined. Greater clarity is needed on this. Specific points on the outcome targets (from one group each except where noted) included:

- concern that the first congestion target might have inappropriate consequences and might be better omitted (four groups)
- a feeling that the bus reliability target was better as a measure of congestion, but that aiming for 98% rather than 100% might be more realistic
- an additional target for particulates was needed, probably based on PM_{2.5}
- the carbon target should be more challenging; the government had already specified a 70% reduction by 2035 (two groups)
- the casualty target should be more challenging, and aim for zero deaths
- the target for perception of cycling as safe should be higher than 50%
- the 20 minute access target should be for reaching all facilities
- the cycling target should be expressed in terms of gender balance and also consider different age cohorts and children; it should not lead to a reduction in cycling (two groups).

Specific points on the intermediate outcome targets included:

- the vehicle targets should be for electric vehicles, not more generally low emission
- the vehicle targets should be for use (in veh-km) not ownership
- the targets for freight should be more challenging
- the car use targets were appropriate, and would help deliver all the others; though one group noted that a more demanding carbon target would require higher modal ones
- the 80% growth in cycling by 2027 might be challenging

More generally there was a sense that all of these indicators needed to be monitored regularly to assess performance, and that they were in many ways interlinked.

3 Overall strategy

All groups agreed on the six elements of the strategy and on the order in which they were presented. There was a feeling that it would be better to stress the role of the “carrots” in encouraging change, and to pursue the “sticks” as necessary where change could not otherwise be achieved. It was generally agreed that the Council’s hierarchy was appropriate, but that the Council needed to adhere to it.

4 First steps

The list of proposed measures to develop specific strategies and to promote better information exchange was broadly accepted. There was strong support for the provision of interactive maps to encourage citizens to identify problems. However, it was suggested that it would be better to determine priorities based on an assessment of potential benefits rather than just using a head count of numbers of mentions of a given problem. It would also be important to be seen to be delivering based on the response to the maps, to avoid disappointment and disillusion. It would strengthen the Council’s position to be able to say “you said ... we did”.

It was felt that it would help to be able to use the specific proposed measures for the first two years as case studies of what could be achieved. Some groups argued that the Trust might be bolder in what it advocated in the first two years. One group suggested that Freight Delivery and Servicing Plans could be brought forward to the first two year period.

5 Specific strategies

5.1 Reducing travel

Most of the Trust's proposals under this heading were considered under First Steps above, so it was decided not to allocate them to groups for further discussion. However, a series of comments arose during consideration of other modal strategies:

- the development of Travel Plans could encourage a dialogue between individuals, organisations and the Council in the development of the strategy
- in particular, employers might learn from one another in comparing their Travel Plans; so might schools
- employers should be encouraged to adopt flexible working hours and workplaces
- hubs for working from home should be provided in each community
- the supplementary planning guidance on the design of new communities was essential
- however, the 10 minute threshold for walking distance to bus stops should be reconsidered; this seemed too far.

5.2 Improving Walking

There was general support for the measures recommended. Specific points covered included:

- volunteers could be involved in surveying pavement quality
- pedestrians needed more space, particularly in the city centre; the provision of pavement cafés should be reconsidered
- more dropped kerbs are needed for those in wheelchairs
- appropriate access must be provided for disabled drivers; this issue must be resolved urgently (this was raised by four groups)
- a ban on pavement parking was welcomed (by four groups) but doubts were raised on the ability to enforce such bans
- the concept of "blended crossings" needs explanation.

5.3 Improving cycling

There was general support for the measures recommended. Specific points covered included:

- simply selecting the top five problems from the interactive map might not be sufficient; a longer list should be considered, with action focused on those which represented best value for money (this will apply to walking and public transport also)
- more emphasis should be placed on the deterrent to cycling from the lack of continuous cycle routes and of protection from other traffic
- cycle parking tends to be randomly provided and poorly signed; more is needed, both in the city centre and local centres, while avoiding clutter; parking also needs to be more secure
- cyclists and pedestrians need to be kept separate in busy areas
- better signs and markings are needed for cycle routes

- villages need cycle access to local centres and facilities as well as the city centre
- the cycle hire service should be extended throughout the city
- there were mixed views on the merits of e-scooters.

5.4 Improving Public Transport

While there was general support for the measures proposed, several other suggestions were made:

- nothing was said about taxis; free taxis might offer an alternative for disabled access
- little was said about rail or stations; this includes bus-rail interchange
- the role of demand-responsive transport should be considered
- it was agreed that all buses should serve the station, but there was some concern over resulting congestion
- the audit of bus stops should include consideration of whether they are in the best location and have adequate access; volunteers could contribute to this
- real time information should be provided at more bus stops, and the system required better maintenance
- an hourly bus service in the evening was inadequate; the timing of the last bus was also important
- there was a case for a new bus only bridge between Tower St and Piccadilly to replace or relieve Coppergate
- the principle of park and ride sites being open 24 hours a day was welcomed, and could benefit overnight tourists, but care would be needed to ensure personal security
- the park and ride charge should be redesigned as a charge per vehicle rather than per person; however, the implications for other users of these services would need to be addressed; there was a case for raising evening parking charges in the city centre
- the revision of fares should focus on affordability; the cost of bus travel was a deterrent to many
- one possibility would be continental-style tickets which allowed travel on any mode within a designated time period (e.g. 90 minutes)
- improvements in bus services should precede further marketing.

5.5 Managing the road network

While there was general support for the measures proposed, several other suggestions were made:

- there needed to be a new approach to the allocation of road space, which matched the Council's hierarchy of users
- parking should be banned in advisory cycle lanes
- 20mph limits should be imposed on all residential roads within the Outer Ring Road; with 30mph on all other roads
- traffic should be diverted to the Outer Ring Road before it was upgraded (but see below); doing so after dualling would risk the road attracting additional traffic

- one group questioned whether diverting traffic to the Outer Ring Road would increase vehicle-km and carbon emissions
- it was not considered appropriate to aim for the Outer Ring Road to be congestion-free; this would attract more traffic
- the role of the Inner Ring Road needed to be reconsidered
- however, there were some doubts about the impact of banning through traffic on Ouse Bridge
- three groups suggested omitting the proposal to enforce the 10mph limit in the city centre, as being potentially unenforceable
- the impact on tradespeople needed to be considered in any road closures; though evidence suggested that many businesses benefit
- more emphasis was needed on road maintenance.

However, three groups questioned the underlying assumption that the Outer Ring Road should be upgraded; there was concern that it would simply attract more traffic.

5.6 Managing freight

There was general support for the measures recommended. Specific points covered included:

- the role of rail and water needed to be considered
- cargo bikes might disrupt pedestrians in the city centre, but should be used more widely throughout York; they could be promoted for tradespeople
- more loading bays would help tackle the problem of pavement parking
- it was unclear whether 7.5T and 3T weight limits would lead to additional vehicle movements; more analysis was needed on this
- however, vehicles under 3T might be permitted in the footstreets after 1030
- the possibility of a hydrogen fuel cell supply point somewhere in York should be considered; this could well prove valuable for cars also.

5.7 Managing car use

While there was general support for the measures proposed, several other suggestions were made:

- four groups stressed that a switch to electric vehicles would not tackle congestion and would still result in some pollution; one added that it still promoted car use; another that EVs would not be affordable for many
- there was widespread support for the idea of car-free days as exemplars of what could be achieved
- there was no mention of car sharing or car clubs
- parking management was seen as essential; parking supply should be reduced and charges raised; though one group raised the equity implications of charging
- one group suggested charging more for larger cars
- the need for more multistorey car parks was questioned
- there were doubts about the feasibility of a workplace parking levy and its implications for business

- there was strong support for a study of road pricing, so that the Council could determine how to use it; any study should look at a range of charging options, the equity implications, the potential revenue generation and possible uses of that revenue.

6 Key requirements for implementation

There was general agreement that the five requirements proposed were essential if the Council was to implement its strategy effectively. Several specific comments were made, as listed below. Some additional requirements were also proposed.

6.1 Engagement

All groups argued that a hearts and minds approach was essential. People needed to understand the need for change, particularly related to carbon reduction, but also congestion, pollution and public health. They needed an explanation of what was being done and why. Several groups were critical of the Council's Our Big Conversation, which was seen as selective in its coverage and occasionally gave the impression of officers seeking a preferred response. There was a general sense that the Council needed to do better in its engagement programme, and enter into a dialogue with the community rather than simply seeking responses to pre-prepared questions. There was some discussion on how a measure would be judged as acceptable. It would be difficult to satisfy everyone, but support by the majority, many of whom were often silent on such matters, should be considered as sufficient. Other comments made were the need to engage with visitors and the potential benefits of ward-based engagement.

6.2 Effectiveness

There was little further discussion of this topic. However, it was agreed that it was important to demonstrate effectiveness. This could be done by analysis, but exemplars on the ground were more effective.

6.3 Affordability

Groups generally were aware of, and concerned by, the continuing cuts in local government funding, and stressed the importance of seeking other sources. Several mentioned the funding available from government for specific initiatives. They were concerned that this was a silo approach, and that the funds needed to be bid for, which placed further demands on staff resources. However, it was important that the Council had a strategy, so that it was in a position to bid when appropriate, and could demonstrate that the schemes to be funded were part of a wider strategy. Several groups stressed the importance of demonstrating value for money, and questioned whether some Council-funded projects met that test. One group suggested instead allocating a fixed percentage of the budget to cycling. Few additional sources of funding were mentioned, but it was suggested that private sector funding might be sought during development.

6.4 Governance

There was still some uncertainty as to what the Council was responsible for; greater clarity was needed on this. Some groups wanted to see the bus services returned to direct Council

control. It was suggested that plans for devolution might give the Council, or a new Mayor, greater powers, and that we should plan for that. While covered under resources (below), there was a concern that North Yorkshire Police did not reflect the Council's priorities, particularly for enforcement action.

6.5 Staffing and resources

There was widespread concern at the cuts in Council staffing and the resulting loss of expertise. Several groups stressed the need for up-skilling, and it was suggested that collaboration with other authorities, such as WYCA, might help. Failing that, it would be necessary to place greater reliance on consultants. There was, however, a feeling that staff resources were not always used efficiently, and that there needed to be a move away from devoting staff time to explaining why solutions could not be found. It was also suggested that volunteers might be involved, for example in the collection of data. There is a particular need for more enforcement staff.

6.6 Other requirements

Most groups reiterated the Forum's previous recommendation that the Council needed to be bold in its approach to transport. People who care about the future of the city want to see change and are frustrated by the lack of progress. This requires leadership, and a political champion. It also needs more effective and positive leadership at a senior professional level. Related to this, the Council needs to make more rapid progress, in actually implementing the many schemes under consideration. Evidence suggests that people will accept change when they see it, and that it is necessary to take the flak from opponents during implementation, so that progress can be made. This approach will be essential in the management of the change which is now urgently needed.

Annex A Briefing notes

The background to the meeting

Many of you were able to join is for the third round of meetings of the Citizens' Transport Forum in May, following which we submitted your report as input to the Council's first stage engagement on its planned Local Transport Plan. You will know from that event that York Civic Trust was invited, in January, to advise on the content of the next Local Transport Plan, and that we subsequently provided a review of the 2011 Local Transport Plan and proposals for strategies on walking, cycling, public transport, reducing travel, managing car use and managing the road network. Since that meeting we have done further work: identifying case studies of good practice in the UK and continental Europe, developing a strategy on freight, and advising on ways of combining policy measures and analysing their impacts.

We had expected that by now the Council would be in a position to present the results of that analysis, and that we would be convening the Forum again to consider the options presented. The aim was to have been to incorporate the results into a draft Local Transport Plan, to be published for consultation in January 2022. Unfortunately, it appears that there has been some slippage in the Council's programme, and we have therefore decided, given the extent of the work that we have done, that we should publish our own *Transport Strategy for York* in January 2022 for detailed discussion and feedback.

In our drafts to date we have drawn heavily on the Forum's previous discussions and recommendations. We have planned these Forum meetings to seek your input to our final recommendations. In particular we would like to seek your views on:

- whether you still support our proposed objectives, targets and strategy
- what should be done in the next two years
- what further should be done by 2027 (by which time the outer ring road upgrade can be expected to be complete)
- what might be considered for the subsequent decade
- what the key requirements will be for implementing such a strategy.

We will discuss these in two Discussion Sessions.

Session 1: objectives, targets, overall strategy and first steps

For this 20 minute discussion session, the questions for discussion will be:

- 1. Are you still in agreement with the objectives which the Forum set a year ago?**
- 2. Are the targets for achieving those objectives appropriate?**
- 3. Is the strategy (as discussed in previous Forum meetings) still appropriate?**
- 4. Do you consider our proposed first steps for the next two years sensible?**

As background to that discussion, we have sent you as a separate attachment relevant excerpts from the first draft of our *Transport Strategy for York*. This is still an internal draft for discussion, so we would be grateful if you did not disseminate it more widely. But please do let us have any detailed comments after the meeting.

Session 2: proposed measures, timetable and requirements for implementation

In the second, 40 minute, discussion session, we will allocate two of our seven strategy areas to each group. We are sending you with this briefing note our eight page compendium of our proposals under the seven headings of public transport, walking, cycling, reducing travel, car use, the road network and freight. We will allocate these to groups on the day, and will summarise them in introductory slides. We would then like you discuss:

- 1. How much should be implemented in the next two years?**
- 2. What more should be in place by the time of the outer ring road upgrade?**
- 3. What should be done in the following decade (including any proposals which you have which are not in our compendium)?**
- 4. What are the key requirements for implementing these measures?**

Our plan is to allocate 15 minutes to questions 1-3 for each allocated strategy in turn, and the final 10 minutes to question 4. We have not provided any specific background on question 4, but the types of concern which the Forum has raised in previous discussions have included:

- the need for political will and commitment
- the need to generate wide ranging public support
- the skills available
- the powers available to the Council and any new Mayoral Combined Authority
- the finance required and potential alternative sources of funding.

The next steps

On previous occasions we have drafted a report of your conclusions and circulated it for comment and additional suggestions. On this occasion we have already started drafting our *Transport Strategy for York*, and will reflect the Forum's views from this set of meetings in the final draft. The full report will run to some 50 well-illustrated pages, but we will also prepare an executive summary of some four pages. We would be delighted if Forum members felt able to review parts or all of the report during December.

Annex B Excerpts from first draft sections of *A Transport Strategy for York*

4 What do we want York to be like?

How can we make a better place for the residents and visitors alike? Can we create a city of the future while respecting its heritage?

We asked our Citizens' Transport Forum this question in early 2020, and again after the first lockdown. They want York to be a city which benefits from improvements to its environment, celebrates its heritage, ensures that all its citizens enjoy a healthy, rewarding lifestyle and achieves the economic vitality necessary to support all of these. We offer this as a basis for developing a new Local Transport Plan.

The question then is what the Plan needs to achieve if it is to contribute to that vision. At its first meeting the Forum argued that the key objectives are:

1. to make the transport system more efficient by reducing congestion;
2. to improve the environment by making transport less polluting;
3. to contribute to the climate by reducing carbon emissions.

These reflected the problems which were considered most serious in surveys which we conducted in 2019. More recently the Council's surveys have shown that over 80% of residents want to see them all addressed.

Experience during lockdown led the second Forum meeting to highlight three further emerging needs:

4. to help promote public health, by encouraging active travel;
5. to enhance safety and personal security;
6. to support economic recovery and growth.

In parallel, the Plan needs:

7. to support equality of access, so that no-one is debarred from travelling;
8. to help make York a more liveable city; and
9. to protect its heritage and public space.

We offer these nine objectives as the basis for the new Local Transport Plan to improve the network and ensure residents see visible differences. We have used them in our analysis of current and future trends and in our strategy proposals which follow.

7 What targets should we set ourselves?

Based on the current trends (in Section 5) and the need for action (Section 6) we have proposed a series of targets for achievement. As suggested in Section 3, the targets are for 2027 and 2037. By 2027 the outer ring road upgrade should be complete. By 2037 the developments in the Local Plan should be complete.

Our first set of targets relates to our nine objectives in Section 4. We have not as yet proposed targets for public health, the economy, liveability or public space and heritage, all of which are rather harder to quantify. Our proposals are shown in Table 1. We explain them in order below.

For congestion, we propose two indicators: junctions which regularly experience queues and bus services which run on time. Both should be helped significantly by the outer ring road upgrade.

For pollution, we focus on Nitrogen Dioxide, as measured by the Council's monitoring sites. Ideally we would also measure particulates. These reductions will be secured by improving vehicles and reducing traffic levels and queues.

For carbon the Council aims to be carbon neutral by 2030. This determines the levels of reduction in carbon emissions from transport which will be needed. This will result partly from switching to electric vehicles and partly by changing travel behaviour.

For safety we propose target reductions in casualties. But perceptions of safety are also important. We propose targets for the percentage of people dissatisfied with pavement quality and the percentage who consider York a safe place to cycle.

We offer three targets for access: the proportion of residents within 20 minutes of all facilities on foot, by bike or bus, the proportion living in areas with poor public transport provision, and the proportion of cyclists who are female.

Of these, the carbon reduction targets are the most critical. Perhaps half will result from a switch to electric vehicles. The rest will need to come from changes in behaviour. By 2027 the amount of travel (in person-km) will need to fall by 10%. Car use will need to fall by 20%. Further reductions will be needed by 2037. Table 2 indicates the implications for each mode of travel. We have also suggested some targets for zero emission cars and commercial vehicles.

9 What should our strategy be?

The targets in Section 7 are challenging, but we need where possible to achieve them by improving the alternatives to current patterns of travel and encouraging change. Only if those fail should we be coercing people to stop travelling as they do now. This suggests a sequence of approaches.

1) Providing alternatives to travel, or to having to make longer journeys. If people can work from home, or reach shops, schools and leisure locally, the impacts of their journeys will be less.

2) Improving active travel, both on foot and by bike. This can make access easier, attract people away from cars and improve health.

3) Improving public transport. This will help make it easier for people to travel, reduce isolation and again attract people from cars.

4) Changing the way in which the road network is managed. Reallocating road space will support walking cycling and buses. Diverting traffic away from residential areas and public space will improve liveability and public realm. Reducing speeds and queues will also make roads safer and less polluted.

5) Changing freight operation. Providing better facilities will make freight more efficient. Reducing vehicle sizes and switching to electric vehicles will make it less disruptive and polluting.

6) Modifying car use. In part this can be achieved by encouraging people to switch to shorter journeys or improved alternatives. In part it will come from changes in the road network. But if further reductions are needed, the principal tools will have to be parking controls and charges, and potentially directly charging for car use.

The diagram indicates how each of these can contribute directly to our objectives. But the first four also themselves affect car use. These secondary impacts are also shown.

10 What should we aim to achieve in the first two years?

As we have seen, the Council's carbon target is challenging, and changes to the way we travel need to start immediately. As the Citizens' Transport Forum said in June 2021: *"The lack of action over the last year is disappointing; the Council needs to provide more active leadership and offer practical solutions rather than broad ambitions."*

With this in mind, we identify below a set of actions which could be taken now. Some are involve developing a detailed programme of action over the life of the Local Transport Plan. Some involve improving the information flow between users, providers and the Council. Others are actions on the ground which will demonstrate what can be achieved. Work on all of them can, and should, start now while the Council is finalising its Local Transport Plan.

Developing detailed plans of action

The Council needs to identify priorities for action in each of its transport networks.

Walking ranks highest in the Council's hierarchy of users. Yet there is no strategic plan which identifies where the needs for action are greatest. We recommend that the Council develops a strategic walking network. It should ensure that all significant origins and destinations are served by direct walking links. It should remedy situations where pedestrians are diverted from their direct route or delayed when crossing. It should assess quality of provision is assessed using the well-respected Pedestrian Environment Review System (PERS).

For **cycling** there is a cycle routes map and a priority list of actions. But many cycle routes lack continuity. There is ample evidence that inconsistent provision and sections which appear unsafe deter would-be cyclists. The priority list needs to be revised to focus on continuity and safety. It should give priority to those journeys where short distance car travel is highest.

For **buses** there is a well-established network of services. But evidence indicates that some areas and journeys poorly served. Many more now have a poor service in the evenings and on Sundays. The Council needs to reassess its bus routes and frequencies based on the accessibility that they provide. The TRACC Basemap provides an excellent basis for doing so.

For **roads** planning has focused on **movement**. But roads are also **places** where people live, shop and socialise. The Council needs to review its road network to ensure that each has the appropriate balance between movement and place. We suggest reviewing the roads which have the highest traffic flows using London's Healthy Streets assessment tool.

For **new developments** the Council should develop a Supplementary Planning Document for its Local Plan. This should demonstrate how all proposed new developments will contribute to our transport objectives. We would like to see all such developments designed so that all activities are within 20 minutes on foot, bike or bus. In this way, cars should be used for no more than 40% of journeys.

Providing better information

The Citizens' Transport Forum has stressed the importance of winning hearts and minds in the bid to change travel behaviour. This needs to be a key element in the Council's carbon strategy. We recommend that the Council immediately launches a campaign to stress the benefits of travelling less and making less use of cars.

To reinforce this campaign, we recommend reintroducing the targeted behavioural plans which the Council ran until 2014. Evidence suggests that Personal, School and Workplace Travel Plans can reduce car use by up to 10%. However, they need to be sustained. The failure to do so may help explain the reductions in cycling and bus use in recent years.

At the same time, the public can help the Council by using interactive maps to identify locations where they find travelling difficult. York Cycling Campaign's Safe Streets York initiative, from May to September 2020, attracted 764 comments to its Commonplace map, widely distributed around the city. Experience suggests that the Commonplace map offers an invaluable resource for users to highlight concerns, and we strongly recommend the Council to adopt it for pedestrians, bus users and car drivers as well.

Taking immediate action

Early action on the ground needs to be highly visible; have an immediate impact; command a high level of public support; be clearly affordable; demonstrate what can be achieved and raise the public profile of transport. [We will complete the rest of this section based on Forum members' comments in the Session 2 discussions.]