



York Civic Trust

A Strategy for Reducing Travel in York
Summary Paper
April 2021

This is a summary of our report *A Strategy for Reducing Travel*. It is one of seven modal strategy documents, written in the context of our earlier report *Towards a Transport Strategy for York*, and is prepared as input to York's new Local Transport Plan, LPT4. We consider how best to reduce the amount of travel.

Travel enables people to carry out many of their daily activities and has a societal function in allowing people to mix and in overcoming loneliness. Nevertheless, it is in the main access which people seek, rather than travel for its own sake, and if access can be achieved either without travelling or by travelling shorter distances, then the costs of travel are reduced.

Travel patterns are already changing. Since the 1990s we have made fewer trips, spent less time travelling and travelled shorter distances. Commuter journeys have fallen, while online shopping and van traffic have increased rapidly. These changes vary widely according to age, gender and location. While they are well documented at a national level, there is little information specifically on the changes in travel habits of York's residents.

If we can encourage and support York residents to work, learn and shop from home more often, more people will walk and cycle, and we can limit the need for motorised travel. Reducing journey lengths will have a similar effect. This will increase efficiency, reduce air pollution and carbon emissions, and improve public health, road safety and liveability. There may also be benefits for the wider environment, public realm, heritage and the economy.

We propose four specific targets to be achieved by 2027, and by 2037 when the Local Plan should be complete. They are: increasing the proportion of work and shopping conducted online to 35% and 45% (25% and 35% by 2027) respectively; reducing person-kilometres travelled by 20% (10%); increasing the proportion of residents within 20 minutes' travel on foot and cycle to local facilities, and by bus to the centre to 95% (80%); and achieving a modal share in new communities for journeys made by bus, cycle or on foot of at least 60% (50%).

We have reviewed some 28 different initiatives as ways of achieving these targets, under three headings: alternatives to travel through greater use of communications technology;

land use planning to provide a mix of activities closer to people's homes and workplaces; and prompting people to change their travel habits through behavioural and motivational approaches. A fourth involving more efficient logistics is considered in a companion report.

We recommend that the Council provides targeted support for low-income households to enable them to sustain access to broadband and to procure sufficient IT equipment to support online work and study. Where properties have limited accommodation for working and studying from home, the Council should consider providing communication hubs to support the community. There is also a case more generally for providing delivery hubs with lockers, to reduce the costs and disruption of missed online deliveries.

Each community should ideally have a local centre within 20 minutes' walk or cycle ride, with a full mix of local retail, service, social and leisure facilities to support residents who are working or studying from home, and to reduce journey lengths for such activities. In many cases these centres already exist, and the focus should be on procuring and supporting a full range of services. Where they do not, the Council should aim to identify suitable locations, include and protect the sites in the Local Plan, and facilitate their development.

We recommend that new developments are planned to achieve a settlement scale of at least 15,000 people each, and are located so that the city centre can be reached by bus within 20 minutes, and suburban centres on foot or by cycle within 20 minutes. They should be designed to a minimum average of 50 dwellings per hectare, with a community centre, primary school and appropriate health, leisure and retail services. The community should have its own dedicated public transport and active travel routes linking it to the city centre and other local centres, and to a secondary school and strategic sports facilities, with all dwellings within 10 minutes' walk of a bus stop. They should be designed to give priority access for walking and cycling, with limited access for cars, parking provided on the fringes and a delivery hub, rather than expecting commercial vehicles to service every dwelling.

All these initiatives should be supported by a new city-wide awareness programme, to alert residents to the benefits of reduced travel, and by the use of personal and workplace travel plans to reinforce these messages.

The main barriers to achieving these measures lie in the planning system. Our proposals would need to be reflected in the next iteration of the Local Plan. Planning professionals will need to be aware of the case for appropriate changes, and developers should be encouraged to respond positively to the new approaches to community development and repurposing. Since developers will need to sustain these changes over time, there is a need for an additional resource for monitoring and planning enforcement. Resources are also needed to support the wider take-up of communication technologies.

Our strategies for reducing travel and for managing car use are largely complementary. The strategies for public transport, walking and cycling need to deliver our 20-minute city goal. The strategies on managing the road network and on freight need to ensure that new and existing communities are not dominated by traffic.