

Sustainable Transport Alliance

Bus Users
Campaign for Better Transport
Community Rail Network
Community Transport Association
CoMoUK
Cycling UK
Living Streets
Walk Wheel Cycle Trust

Introduction

We are an alliance of leading national NGOs striving to put people and their needs at the heart of an inclusive, integrated transport system and create a sustainable transport future, where nobody is left behind. We do this through working with communities and advising and influencing decision makers. See [our briefing](#) on what we do in support of the Government's transport priorities, and our core ask.

Between our organisations, we work across the UK, representing and supporting:

- **4,500+** community and voluntary groups and projects
- **61,000+** volunteers, officers and campaigners
- Wide-ranging research, development, innovation, community engagement, infrastructure and transport service initiatives.

This gives us a unique array of insight on the needs and opportunities for advancing inclusive, integrated, sustainable transport, to deliver greatest benefit to local communities.

While each of our organisations is submitting their own response to this inquiry, this combined high-level response highlights the common ground and links between our experiences and views.

We would be pleased to share our knowledge and experiences in more depth with the Committee, such as via a hearing bringing together our combined expertise.

1. What are the key features that make a transport system feel joined up to the user? How would 'integrated' transport look different to current services and networks?

A truly integrated, sustainable transport system offers people a viable, ideally preferable, alternative to private car use, supporting a shift away from car dependency, and therefore progress towards achieving Net Zero, tackling transport-related social exclusion, and improving public health.

Our experience makes clear that integrated transport goes far beyond physical interchange facilities (although these are crucial too): it means creating coherence across all aspects of considering, planning, making and completing journeys. Currently, disjointedness across modes is the norm, making journeys without a private car (which are mostly multi-modal, except for local walking and cycling) challenging, especially so for those without prior knowledge and confidence.

We broadly summarise the key features of a truly integrated, sustainable transport system as follows:

- a) Communities are involved, empowered and heeded in shaping place-based sustainable transport networks drawing on the full sustainable transport mix (public transport, active

travel, shared mobility, and community transport), and in overcoming local problems and barriers, ensuring diverse lived experience is understood and foregrounded;

- b) Sustainable transport operators, planners and authorities, and housing and planning professionals, work together, prioritising connectivity between sustainable modes (rather than private cars), and delivering positive outcomes for communities (above commercial gain);
- c) This joined-up working and community involvement ensures:
 - high-quality, accessible interchange facilities;
 - aligned timetabling and seamless connections; and
 - fully integrated, easy-to-use journey planning, ticketing, real-time information, and personal assistance for those who need it.

2. What stops effective integration happening now, and how can these barriers be overcome?

A broad range of intertwined challenges prevents and hinders effective integration across sustainable modes, spanning sectors, departments and scales of governance, decision-making and delivery. The forthcoming Integrated National Transport Strategy will need to take a holistic, bold, honest approach to tackling these issues together, given the interdependencies and deeply-embedded nature of current ways of thinking and doing.

Broadly speaking, these barriers and hindrances can be grouped as below. Please see the respective responses of the Sustainable Transport Alliance member organisations for further detail and perspectives related to particular modes and areas of work.

- a) **Car-orientated thinking and development** – this psychological, normative and political problem tends to underpin and exacerbate the other issues below. It also means that – despite evidence that the economic benefits of road-building and car journey time savings are overestimated and disbenefits underestimated – car-based transport tends to receive relatively unfettered public funding (via road building programmes and fuel duty freezes), while, for example, investment in rail is often branded ‘a burden on the taxpayer’, and developments paid for by rising fares levied from the user. *Bold, evidence-led political leadership (national, devolved and local) is needed to show the huge economic, social and environmental gains and imperative to shift away from car dependency, utilising the full sustainable transport mix.*
- b) **Lack of national strategy, leadership, coordination and funding across transport modes** – manifesting as fragmented governance, contracting arrangements and incentives across transport operators, short-term and competitive funding, and operations focused on commercial gain rather than socio-economic and environmental outcomes. *The INTS will need to seize on the opportunities of devolution and bus, rail and planning reform, to not only usher in coordination across transport (and related fields, as below), but ensure sustainability and socio-economic outcomes are front, left and centre, prioritising the accessibility and sustainability of whole journeys, and ensuring a place-based approach where local communities are engaged, empowered and benefited.*
- c) **Lack of joined-up strategy, decision-making and delivery across sectors and departments** – car-orientated thinking and development, and lack of attention to or coordination with socially-orientated, sustainable forms of mobility, within housing and planning especially, and other sectors such as health, tourism and entertainment, tends to lock in car dependency and widen transport inequalities. *This issue therefore cannot be addressed through transport policy alone: a cross-government, cross-sector approach is needed.*

3. What kinds of interventions and policy decisions are needed to provide joined-up transport, including in areas beyond transport such as planning?

Strong, clear national leadership is critical, working across departments and making clear the need for and benefits of shifting away from car dependency, underpinned by targets for modal shift and a clear pathway for achieving this, aligned with Net Zero targets and maximising socio-economic and public health outcomes¹. This should recognise the importance of involving local communities and the role of the community and voluntary sector.

Planning policy – ensure developers respond effectively to recent changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, including via updated planning practice guidance, embedding a vision-based approach to sustainable, inclusive transport that reduces car dependency. It should be ensured that new housing and commercial developments are explicitly planned around sustainable transport access, and that local plans and spatial frameworks embed sustainable connections from the outset. This includes aligning Local Transport Plans, Local Plans and Local Skills Improvement Plans through shared governance and common evidence bases.

Funding – ensure stable, long-term funding is available for sustainable transport, its delivery, development and integration, linked to socio-economic and decarbonisation outcomes. Consolidated, cross-mode funding pots should be available for local and combined authorities and community-led schemes, which require strong local engagement and supporting action to tackle car-dependency, transport-related exclusion, and the climate crisis, allowing local leaders and communities to develop the most inclusive and sustainable solutions for each place, including smaller towns and rural areas, utilising the full sustainable transport mix.

Rail and bus reform – use reform to ensure transport contracts, franchises and decision-making prioritises integration between sustainable modes, accessibility, social benefit and decarbonisation. This should include: ensuring timetable integration and interchange facilities, including developing rail and bus stations into ‘mobility hubs’²; data-sharing and collaborative working between transport operators; and ensuring involvement of local communities in creating joined-up networks.

Fares and ticketing – use devolution to accelerate the shift towards integrated ticketing across public transport modes, supporting rapid progress towards installing this across each nation and region. Ensure a strong focus on accessibility and affordability, and use national policy levers to aim towards the sustainable alternatives to the private car and domestic flights always being the cheaper option.

Other technical changes and specific policy improvements – ensure transport appraisals prioritise socio-economic and sustainability outcomes, supporting a shift away from car dependency. Establish strong standards for cross-modal facilities and user information, and enhance accessibility across public transport modes. Address barriers inhibiting the spread and success of shared mobility, community transport and other locally-led schemes and improvements, including mobility hubs, 20mph limits and safe walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure connecting into transport services, working towards widespread national coverage. Ensure autonomous vehicle policy is geared at integrated sustainable journeys and shift away from private car dependency.

¹ See the Sustainable Transport Alliance’s collated evidence report (2024) on the benefits of modal shift and recommending strong leadership and a clear pathway for change: <https://communityrail.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/CRN-Accelerating-Modal-shift-25.4.24.pdf>. See also the IPPR’s recent report Fairer is Faster, 2025, <https://www.ippr.org/articles/fairer-is-faster>

² See CoMoUK’s work on standards and guidance for mobility hubs: <https://www.como.org.uk/mobility-hubs/overview-and-benefits>. While approximately 250 mobility hubs are in development, there has been limited progress at existing stations, and there is a lack of a long-term pipeline.

4. How should transport integration and its benefits be measured and evaluated—including the impact on economic growth, decarbonisation and the Government’s other ‘missions’?

Transport integration must be evaluated not just on its operational efficiency but on crucial public benefits including decarbonisation, health and community connectivity. Across the Sustainable Transport Alliance partners, our experiences suggest that the ability of the transport sector to assess and understand the social value it delivers is underdeveloped; there is great scope to embed the government’s Social Value Model (with some signs of change underway within the rail industry and supply chain) and create alignment with all five of the government’s missions, to ensure the benefits of creating an integrated, sustainable, inclusive transport system are maximised.

We recommend a clear pathway is established that aligns with Net Zero targets and moves us towards equitable mobility, setting out how modal shift (and demand reduction) away from the private car and domestic flights will be achieved, reducing car dependency and transport-related social exclusion, and building integrated, sustainable, inclusive mobility across alternative modes. Progress should be tracked against such a pathway.

Community connectivity, inclusive mobility, social value and decarbonisation should be prioritised as outcomes, with tools and guidance developed to enable transport operators, planners and authorities to evaluate benefits and disbenefits of potential and completed schemes and changes. As much as possible, guidance and tools should be accessible to community groups, partnerships and town/parish councils, to aid transparency, local engagement, and community-led change. Government (at different levels) could also work the Sustainable Transport Alliance partners to monitor and further support the spread and success of community-led, place-based solutions, such as mobility hubs, community rail partnerships and groups, and community transport provision.

The opportunities of rail and bus reform should be used to develop technologies, data sharing and metrics for performance, reliability and journey time across modes *for entire journeys*, reducing the focus on single-mode journey time reductions as the dominant way to calculate economic benefit.

Transport operators should utilise, and be monitored and held to account using, data and insight from whole communities, potential passengers, and entire multi-modal journeys. To support modal shift, and inclusive mobility across modes, transport operations, planning and decision-making should draw on people’s experiences of entire journeys *and* the barriers inhibiting use of sustainable modes, not just the experiences of people *already using* a particular mode, for that part of their journey.

The goal of an integrated, sustainable and inclusive transport system must also be baked into Transport Appraisal Guidance, with an easy-to-use suite of tools for calculating the benefits of sustainable transport projects and enhancements for communities (people and places), now and into the future. This could align with the Government’s missions by asking how initiatives:

- i) Support access to work and inclusive economic development
- ii) Decarbonise transport, especially by reducing reliance on private cars and flights
- iii) Improve safety and confidence for the travelling public, and enhance street/public spaces
- iv) Break down barriers to opportunity, especially for young people
- v) Improve health and wellbeing, tackle loneliness and isolation

5. How should the cost of interventions needed to deliver transport integration be assessed and appraised? Will proposed changes to methodology in the Treasury’s

‘Green Book’, including the introduction of ‘place-based business cases’, change this?

The proposed shift toward place-based business cases in the Green Book is welcomed as an opportunity to appreciate and maximise the full value of integrated sustainable transport projects and enhancements, across modes, policy objectives, and nuances. “Place based business cases” are defined as those that “bring together the different projects that are needed to achieve the objectives of a particular place” and will “properly [assess] the complementarities between different projects”. This is necessary to create joined-up journeys, which cannot be evaluated by any one element. Mobility hubs are a prime example of infrastructure that delivers benefits across policy domains so are undervalued in traditional appraisal. The “objectives of a particular place” should be defined with local communities, using meaningful engagement. Work will be needed to embed this major change.

We also encourage use of Sustainable Transport Accessibility Levels (STALs), taking the opportunity to refine DfT’s new Connectivity Tool to include all sustainable transport modes and therefore to enable it to function with STALs. Unlike existing Public Transport Accessibility Levels, STALs would cover all modes of sustainable transport, assessing the combined availability of alternatives to private cars. They could be embedded in the new tool and used locally to pursue improvements.

Appraisals and assessments must also take into account the costs to health, wellbeing, safety and communities, and the existential risks to society, of car-based transport. Numerous studies have shown that policy-makers in the UK and elsewhere have under-estimated these ‘externalities’, with costs being shouldered by tax-payers including non-drivers.

6. Will integration in itself deliver other benefits such as wider transport options in more places, and behaviour changes such as mode shift? What other impacts could it have?

Across the Sustainable Transport Alliance, we strongly believe that integration of sustainable transport modes will deliver a raft of crucial benefits, including modal shift, increasing the mode share of active travel, public transport and shared and community mobility, while opening up access to opportunity and inclusive economic development. As indicated under question four, major benefits could be created in support of all five Government missions.

This is because, at present, a lack of integration poses a huge barrier to people accessing and using the alternatives to private car use. This is a big part of our motivation for working together as a Sustainable Transport Alliance, to help us better support communities, and advise authorities, operators and decision-makers, on overcoming these challenges.

Modal shift itself holds a vital key for unlocking extensive social, environmental and economic benefit. Last year, we worked as an Alliance to collate evidence on the benefits that can be created,³ including:

- the major carbon savings of even relatively modest shifts in behaviour;
- transformative impacts for physical and mental health and local environments, including building exercise into daily routines, reducing loneliness, increasing confidence and inclusive access to opportunity, and cutting air pollution and road casualties;
- boosting local business and economies, through the ‘pedestrian pound’,⁴ access to work, training and leisure, and the economic value of public health and environmental outcomes.

³ Sustainable Transport Alliance, Accelerating Modal Shift: Evidence on Carbon Savings and Co-benefits, 2024, <https://communityrail.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/CRN-Accelerating-Modal-shift-25.4.24.pdf>

⁴ See Living Streets’ research on the economic boost of improving pedestrian access and creating people-friendly streets and urban spaces: <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/policy-reports-and-research/pedestrian-pound/>

It should be noted that there is an environmental (and therefore social and economic) *imperative* for joining up modes to compete with private cars and achieve modal shift. Researchers argue that we can only achieve legally-binding Net Zero targets and tackle the existential threat of the climate emergency by rapidly decarbonising transport, and this can only be done through reducing private car use: electrification alone will not get us there.⁵ Recent IPPR research shows how a pathway can be adopted aligning with Net Zero targets, *and* delivering far greater gains in equitable mobility and access to opportunity than current policies.⁶

The Sustainable Transport Alliance has additionally collated evidence on the widespread popularity and enthusiasm within communities for measures that improve access to sustainable, healthy and inclusive mobility, with most people recognising the need to reduce how much we drive, and a large minority of drivers who would *prefer* to drive less.⁷

7. What is needed to ensure that integration is inclusive and meets the diverse needs of transport users? Will integration necessarily lead to better outcomes for accessibility?

The integration of transport modes should lead to better outcomes for accessibility. This is because the present lack of integration poses a common mobility barrier, in its own right and intersecting with perceived, psychological and cultural barriers such as poor awareness, confidence and skills. For example, someone who is nervous or reticent about using public transport may be immediately put off if they find it hard to access and understand fragmented journey planning tools and information, or to buy the correct and best value and affordable tickets. Our organisations' combined experience engaging communities, and target groups such as young people, older people, disabled people, low-income groups, and families, attests to this extensively.

While modal integration *should* lead to better outcomes for accessibility and society, it's crucial to seize the opportunity of the new INTS to put accessibility and inclusion at forefront of all transport planning, development, governance and operations. Placing social, socio-economic and environmental outcomes – in other words, people and communities, their needs, local places, and our shared future – front and centre of transport has not been the norm to date. This requires a major shift in transport appraisal, decision-making, funding and culture, to ensure our transport system is inclusive, meets diverse needs, and continually adapts to evolving needs. It's about not only the physical accessibility of infrastructure, but people's ability to access and draw value from all aspects of transport and travel, from considering a journey to completing the activity it serves.

The meaningful involvement of communities is paramount, to understand and put people's needs at the fore, and draw on diverse lived experience to ensure all aspects of planning and completing a journey are inclusive, welcoming, safe and practical. This involves developing trusting relationships and going to people where they are (no group should be seen as 'hard to reach'). It also involves supporting community-led solutions to ensure local needs are met, such as to develop integrated mobility facilities in smaller communities, and provide accessible transport outside of 'mainstream' public transport for those who cannot use the latter. The role of the community and voluntary sector,

⁵ Greener Transport Solutions point to an 'emerging consensus' among academics and experts: see 2022, Pathways to Net Zero report <https://greener-vision.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/PATHWAYS-TO-NET-ZERO-MARCH-2022-1.pdf>. Also see: Green Alliance, 2021, Not going the extra mile, https://greenalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Not_going_the_extra_mile.pdf; Transport for Quality of Life, 2021, The last chance saloon, <https://www.transportforqualityoflife.com/u/files/211214%20The%20last%20chance%20saloon%20to%20cut%20car%20mileage.pdf>.

⁶ IPPR, Fairer is Faster, 2025, <https://www.ippr.org/articles/fairer-is-faster>

⁷ See p5, Sustainable Transport Alliance, Accelerating Modal Shift: Evidence on Carbon Savings and Co-benefits, 2024, <https://communityrail.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/CRN-Accelerating-Modal-shift-25.4.24.pdf>

working with and advising transport professionals and authorities, and developing and delivering community-owned and -led solutions, is crucial.

Moving away from car-orientated thinking is also important for the sake of accessibility and inclusion. Often, assumptions and misapprehensions about reliance on private cars create inertia around giving greater priority to sustainable modes. In fact, groups who face greatest mobility challenges, including disabled people, low-income groups, and young people, are disproportionately reliant on public and community transport, and least likely to have a car.⁸ Many more are forced into transport poverty due to having to run a car.⁹ These groups stand to gain the most from integrated sustainable transport.

8. Will the meaning of integration vary across different kinds of areas and for different kinds of journeys? (such as rural and suburban areas, and inter-city journeys)

The key principles of joined-up journeys, and the importance and value of making journeys inclusive, sustainable and coherent from end-to-end, apply everywhere. The travelling public may have similar needs and expectations wherever they are and wherever they're going, especially to do with standards of journey planning and ticketing, reliability, real-time information, way-finding, access to assistance and support, and help when things go wrong. Of course, many journeys start and end in different types of location, connecting rural and urban spaces, so integration also means connecting these different places effectively, without a big slip in standards, or different knowledge sets needed, between them.

However, the way that integrated transport systems are developed at a local level should be in keeping with local needs, views, plans and ambitions, and different local contexts will warrant different sets of solutions. A place-based approach, putting people, their needs and our shared future at the forefront, and considering the full sustainable transport mix, is crucial.

It should also be noted that there are some communities and areas that have suffered especially from the depletion on rural bus services, historic railway closures, and rising traffic, pollution and car dependency. In these places, there is much to do, working with local people, to turn the tide. We caution against any tendency to be dismissive or lack ambition with regards to what can be achieved in more rural areas, and with other communities regarded as harder to serve and engage.

Our experience shows that, across the rural to urban spectrum, effective involvement and empowerment of local communities can generate innovation, creativity, and locally-led, community-owned, inclusive solutions drawing on a range of sustainable transport modes. However, change is needed, intertwined with ongoing devolution, to ensure that communities (community-based partnerships, campaign groups, charities, town and parish councils, as well as initiatives led by transport authorities) have the support and conditions they need to spearhead positive change.

9. What lessons can be drawn from attempts to integrate transport elsewhere in the UK and around the world? What examples should the Government seek to emulate?

⁸ NatCen, Access to Transport and Life Opportunities, 2019,

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d7f714ded915d522df7ada1/access_to_transport_report.pdf

⁹ Social Market Foundation, Getting the measure of transport poverty: Understanding and responding to the UK's hidden crisis, 2023, <https://www.smf.co.uk/publications/transport-poverty-hidden-crisis/>

Our organisations hold an extensive range of case studies and evidence on attempts to integrate transport in the UK, many bearing fruit and showing how positive change can be led from within communities, but often facing significant challenges. We must learn from these experiences to break down these barriers to change and allow innovation and transformation to be driven from the 'ground up'. See our respective organisations' responses to this inquiry, and also the list at the end of p5 in our [collated evidence report](#) of key sources we hold.

Sustainable Transport Alliance members have also put forward many positive international examples in our respective responses to this inquiry. We collectively propose that a key, underlying driver for the good practice in the UK and in other countries is a clear focus on and prioritisation of people and place, and social, socio-economic and environmental outcomes, with the understanding that economic gains will flow naturally from this. It is, perhaps, this fundamental shift in mindset, culture and policy, that is most important.

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