

Breaking down barriers to walking in London

a joint paper by London Councils,
Living Streets and Walk London



Pic: Living Streets

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↘ introduction

There is a tendency to consider walking and cycling together in transport strategies. Both need a greater priority as part of an integrated approach which promotes sustainability, activity and mobility. But walking has not always received the same priority as cycling even though it is something that almost everybody can do easily. Measures to increase cycling should continue to be supported but walking requires a greater specific focus in strategy and implementation as part of a holistic approach to highways management, transport planning and urban design, in the Mayor's revised transport strategy. There are a number of reasons why this should happen:

↘ walking makes financial sense for London

Many of the measures needed to encourage walking are relatively low cost to implement and could be introduced fairly quickly. In many parts of London, particularly central areas, the public transport system and highway network are operating at (and sometimes beyond) capacity and further enhancements will be extremely costly. A greater impact on increasing capacity could be achieved by focusing more resources on walking infrastructure, thereby encouraging a significant increase in the proportion of people walking. This is particularly important in the context of the limited resources available for transport generally. In addition, as set out below, encouraging walking provides a number of benefits which could lead to reduced costs for other parts of the economy. For example, increasing physical activity could lead to savings for the NHS due to increased health and fitness.

Giving greater priority to pedestrians by investing in the public realm provides wider benefits by improving the attractiveness of an area as a place to live, work or visit. Research for the Commission on Architecture and the Built Environment has shown that good urban design benefits businesses through increased prestige and a happier workforce with reduced absenteeism and staff turnover. Other research by the Central London Partnership found that “the existing

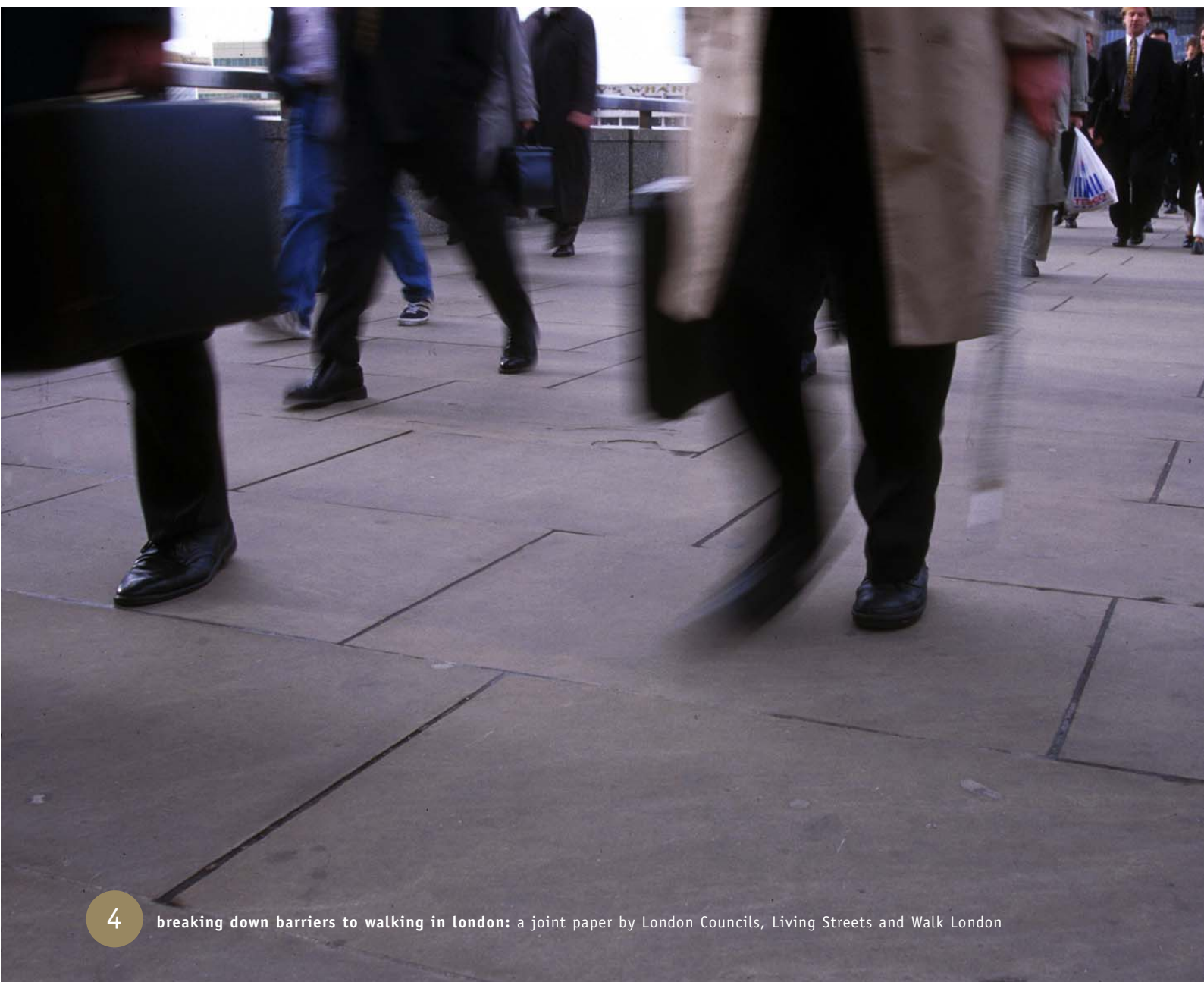
or potential streetscape is an inherent part of a tenant’s decision to locate in an area and is an important facet of continued economic success”. The same research also found that the tourism sector “is particularly sensitive to perceived changes in ‘location attractiveness’” and that the “quality of the streetscape is critical in attracting visitors to London”. In this respect, there is a clear need for a debate to be initiated with a view to fostering a more focused and coherent approach to walking and the public realm in London. Any strategic document to stem from such a debate should emphasise the value for money (VfM) benefits of the increased involvement of local people in the planning and maintenance of the capital’s streets and public realm.

Reallocating roadspace with respect to both walking and cycling will also be an important way of promoting continued modal shift to sustainable transport modes in London. Critically, it has been shown that reallocating roadspace to pedestrians can also help the retail sector. A review of the literature by TfL in 2002 found that pedestrian schemes have a positive impact on a town centre’s vitality and viability. Looking at individual case studies of town centres in the UK, the research found that their retail demand ranking had remained high or improved after such schemes.

↘ walking is already part of many journeys in London

The latest figures available show that walking accounted for 31% of all weekday trips in London in 2006/07 (London Travel Report 2007, TfL) making it the second most popular mode after driving which accounts for 39%. It is considered that walking is undercounted at present (as a proportion of all journeys made in London) – so its modal share is

likely to be even higher than the official statistics suggest. Walking is also a significant element of journeys by other modes, for example, most public transport journeys will involve walking to or from a station or bus stop and even those who drive may have to complete their journey on foot if they are unable to park very close to their destination.



↘ walking offers many benefits to individuals and London as a whole

Encouraging walking has a number of benefits, including:

- Increasing social inclusion – walking is the cheapest mode of transport and many measures which encourage walking will also benefit those who find it difficult to access other modes of transport.
- Increasing physical activity and improved health.
- Increasing personal security – increased numbers of people walking will increase the level of informal surveillance on the streets, making people feel safer and thus encouraging more people to walk.
- Encouraging use of local shops and services, thus supporting local economies. Research by TfL and Living Streets has found that people who walk to their local shopping centre spend more than those who travel by car or bus.
- Enhancing community life – people who walk rather than drive for short local journeys are more likely to interact with other local people and take an interest in the environment of their local area.
- Reducing the reliance on motorised transport hence reducing noise pollution and emissions, leading to improved air quality and reduced contribution to climate change.
- Contributing to an enhanced public realm - reducing the space required for motorised traffic provides opportunities to create a more attractive streetscape and public realm.

↳ london could lead the way in becoming a walkable city

Walking is already a more significant transport mode in London than elsewhere in the UK where it only accounts for around a quarter of all trips, so London should be leading the way in terms of providing a safe and convenient pedestrian environment. Giving greater priority and increased funding to measures which support walking would recognise the important role it already plays in London, and ensure that more people are encouraged to walk for short journeys rather than driving or using overcrowded public transport. Voluntary groups have a key role to play in the review and audit of walking conditions, thus ensuring that there is an emphasis on the most significant local barriers to walking.

The previous Mayor launched a Walking Plan for London in 2004 aimed at making London “one of the world’s most walking friendly cities by 2015”. TfL’s transport vision document (“Transport 2025: Transport Vision for a growing world city”) sets a target to increase the number of walking trips per person by 10% by 2015. With the publication of a new Mayor’s Transport Strategy (MTS) there is an opportunity to further develop the strategy aimed at achieving this to ensure that London becomes a truly walkable city. In particular, there is currently a vacuum when it comes to planning guidance for the walkability of the urban realm, and the new MTS should propose measures to remedy this.



Pic: Living Streets

the Olympics provide an opportunity which should not be missed

The Transport Plan for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games includes the development of an 'Active Spectator programme' to encourage spectators to walk and cycle to the venues. It is also intended that this programme will help to raise awareness about the benefits of walking and cycling as a mode of transport, and increase the number of walking and cycling journeys across London as a whole.

We believe that there is now an opportunity for a significant investment in improving walking in London as a lasting legacy of the London 2012 Games. This is the case for all areas of the city where visitors are likely to spend time, not just by formal

Games venues. It is important that walking is addressed in its own right as part of the plans for the Games and that provision for pedestrians is not just focused on developing shared use facilities which are designed primarily around the needs of cyclists. Achieving a true walking legacy from the London 2012 Games will require careful consideration of what works best for pedestrians. If this is done successfully, making walking the natural choice for short journeys in London could be the health legacy of the Games.



↘ barriers to increasing walking

Although walking already accounts for a significant share of all journeys in London, there is the potential for more trips in London to be made entirely by walking. The LATS 2001 survey identified that 23% of bus journeys and over 32% of car trips were less than a mile (1.6km) in length. Some of these journeys will need to be converted to walking trips if the target of a 10% increase in the walking trips per person by 2015 is to be achieved. It is therefore important to consider what the barriers are which deter people from walking and how these might be addressed.

The following section considers in more detail some of the key barriers to walking and provides recommendations as to what could be done to address these with particular reference to what should be included in the next Mayor's Transport Strategy.

Barrier 1 – Giving walking sufficient priority institutionally

Walking can play an important role in achieving a range of policy priorities, for example, increased physical activity has significant health benefits and improvements to the walking environment can contribute to the regeneration of an area. This should mean that measures to improve walking are high on lots of different agendas but it can mean that everyone assumes that it is someone else's responsibility and it is not given the priority it deserves institutionally. Responsibility for walking is often delegated to a relatively junior member of the transport team in local authorities and there is a need for it to be given greater priority at a higher level in all the institutions involved, in particular in organisations such as the NHS, who should also have an interest.

There are already a range of walking related strategies, guidance, research reports and design guides available but these do not attract the attention they deserve. London needs a co-ordinated strategy for walking which goes much further than the current Walking Plan for London and MTS to ensure that the issue is given sufficient priority. With increasing attention now being given to the costs to society of health problems such as obesity there is a real opportunity to provide improvements to walking as part of a wider physical activity strategy.

Measures to encourage walking will need to include some large scale infrastructure improvements, but this will only be successful overall if attention is also paid to less high profile measures. For example, it will be essential that adequate funding is provided for maintenance to ensure that issues such as cracked paving stones, puddles caused by blocked drains and broken lights do not deter people from walking. The low profile for walking institutionally can mean that maintenance is not given a high priority when decisions are made on spending priorities. In addition, it will be important that successful programmes such as 'Walk to School' and 'Walking Works' are developed and maintained.



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Recommendation – TfL and the boroughs should work with the NHS to develop an Active Travel Strategy for London which incorporates the recommendations set out in this paper alongside other measures to encourage active travel. This would be the first such strategy in the world and should include clearly identified actions, both short-term and longer-term, and ongoing monitoring. As an extension of this, Primary Care Trusts, hospital trusts and boroughs should also work in partnership to deliver local objectives to encourage walking and mobility.

Barrier 2 – Obtaining integrated funding for walking improvements

A report published recently by TfL¹ considers the barriers to walking in terms of soft “image” factors and hard “infrastructure” factors, as summarised below:

Encouraging a significant increase in walking will require tackling both the image and the infrastructure barriers to walking in an integrated way using a combination of measures. This means, for example, that personalised travel planning should be introduced alongside physical improvements to pavements and road crossings to ensure that people are not encouraged to try walking but then deterred from taking it up on a regular basis due to the poor conditions available. Similarly, where significant investment is made in the pedestrian environment in an area, it may not result in the intended increase in walking unless accompanied by measures to promote walking locally. This has implications for the way in which TfL plans and delivers the allocation of Government funding and the influence this has on the way boroughs approach walking-related projects. Currently much of the funding which comes via TfL is provided in segregated programmes (e.g. walking, cycling, safety, training, publicity, buses and

	Image	Infrastructure
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> perceived distance perceived speed of walking/time it takes to walk convenience of car not knowing location not able/willing to rely on maps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lack of ‘at a glance’ consistent directional wayfinding information too few landmarks lack of information relating to time/distance on maps
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fear of attack (at night/in the dark) fear of abduction (children) fear of traffic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> poor lighting litter, graffiti poor maintenance of pavements lack of safe places to cross the road
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> habitual nature of most travel behaviour importance of time and using time efficiently walking is not seen as a mode in itself, but a means of accessing other modes practical and emotional benefits of car 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> bad weather pollution need to carry heavy objects need to ‘trip chain’

accessibility) with many varied constraints applied to each programme area. Providing greater flexibility would result in efficiency savings as measures introduced in an integrated way will complement each other, deliver better value for money and better address local issues and concerns.

Recommendation – TfL should provide greater flexibility within the LIP funding structure and ensure that funding is available in a way that allows boroughs to deliver pedestrian infrastructure improvements. This should include the opportunity to provide pedestrian improvements as part of wider area or corridor-based schemes which complement travel awareness campaigns.

Barrier 3 – Safety Concerns

Safety concerns relate to both road safety and personal safety. London has been relatively successful at reducing pedestrian casualties. Since the early 1990s there has been a steady reduction in pedestrian killed and seriously injured (KSI) casualties to 2005, but an increase of 6% was recorded in 2006, followed by a decrease of 1% in 2007². However, pedestrians still make up by far the largest proportion of all fatalities, accounting for 49% in 2007 (109 out of a total of 222) and there is a particular concern about child pedestrians with 57% of the child casualties, and all of the child fatalities (8 in total) in 2007 being pedestrians.

TfL and the boroughs should therefore continue to focus road safety improvements on measures which reduce pedestrian casualties. Particular attention should be paid to tackling the issues faced by groups most at risk, for example, some boroughs have introduced pedestrian skills training for young people moving to secondary school, having observed an increase in pedestrian casualties at this stage when many are making unsupervised pedestrian journeys for the first time and have not developed the necessary ‘street skills’ as they are used to being driven to school.

TfL acknowledges in its analysis of casualty data that there is a lack of robust information regarding pedestrian exposure, so it is not clear how the casualty figures relate to levels of walking in different parts of London or among different age groups. Without effective evidence on levels of walking, it is impossible to ascertain the extent to which improvements in pedestrian casualty statistics have resulted from improvements in road safety for pedestrians as opposed to from variations in walking rates. It is therefore important to have data on walking levels in order to be able to target road safety measures at the areas and types of road users that are more vulnerable. As walking is harder to measure there is a danger that it could lose out in terms of investment for road safety measures compared to other modes of transport whose usage is easier to measure. Coupled with this is the level of danger of road traffic that all pedestrians feel in varying degrees. This inevitably results in certain routes or crossings being less well used and therefore perceived as less necessary but the provision of better pedestrian infrastructure can result in much greater levels of use.

A comprehensive and ongoing monitoring regime is in place for vehicular traffic across London and a similar system should be introduced for walking. Several years ago the Central London Partnership, boroughs and TfL worked with manufacturers to develop camera and laser technology for measuring pedestrian numbers, with some success. TfL is now developing this further as a regional scheme. We believe it would be worth exploring whether this technology could be employed on a permanent basis at strategic locations around the capital, such as town centres, to track ambient levels of walking. Proxy measures should also be adopted. For example, in Melbourne, the ‘number of pavement tables’ is used as an indicator of the attractiveness of an area for visitors on foot and hence its walkability. In addition, the health service already measures walking as part of physical activity monitoring so it should be possible to make use of some of this data.

In some areas, particularly in Central London, the large volumes of pedestrians using particular routes can result in overcrowding on the pavements, leading some pedestrians to put themselves at risk by walking in the road. In some such areas, it may be appropriate to consider giving more space to pedestrians to reduce the opportunities for conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles, and the potential for casualties. It may also be appropriate and desirable to provide more space for cyclists but this must not be at the expense of existing pedestrian space.

In addition, people's perceptions of personal safety can act as a deterrent to walking with many people being deterred from making journeys, particularly at night, as they fear being attacked. A vicious cycle arises with people not walking as an area is perceived to be unsafe and having fewer people around making an area feel less safe. Such concerns can be addressed in a number of ways. Lighting is obviously particularly important but so is the general 'feel' of a place. For example, an area that feels uncared for with lots of litter and graffiti is unlikely to be attractive for pedestrians. Allowing for informal surveillance in the design of buildings and the activities encouraged in an area can not only help encourage walking but should also result in a more attractive public realm generally, for example, ensuring walking routes are overlooked will address pedestrian's concerns about personal safety and should also reduce anti-social behaviour in those areas.

Recommendation – In addition to a continued focus on road safety improvements which reduce pedestrian casualties, TfL and the boroughs should work with walking organisations to agree a consistent methodology for monitoring levels of walking that can be introduced across London.

Barrier 4 – Misperceptions of walking speeds and distances

People often perceive that it takes longer to walk somewhere than it does in reality, especially if they are unfamiliar with an area. TfL's research identified the main barriers to walking as being related to distance and time constraints and suggested that perceptions of the distance barrier are distorted by two factors: uncertainty over distances (it is possible that in central London distances are influenced by a mental map based on the classic Tube map, which "stretches" space in the central area); and misperceptions of walking speeds. So a lack of knowledge about how long it will take to walk and which route to take underlies the distance barrier.

It should be as easy to find your way around an area as a pedestrian as it is by car or public transport. This means ensuring that maps, signage and other relevant information, such as journey planners provide information that is appropriate for pedestrians. This should include an indication of the walking time. At the moment, a number of different systems are in operation which can sometimes lead to inconsistent or superfluous signage in a particular area. This can be confusing for pedestrians as well as adding to street clutter and detracting from the attractiveness of the public realm.

Recommendation – TfL and the boroughs should ensure that it is as easy to find your way around an area as a pedestrian as it is by car or public transport by providing information on walking routes on maps, signage and other relevant marketing, drawing on the experience of the Legible London pilots where appropriate. This should include measures to improve consistency in signage across London and to ensure that superfluous signs are removed where new signs are introduced.

Barrier 5 – Unattractive walking environment

In addition to safety concerns, other features of the local environment may act as a deterrent to walking for those with alternatives available to them or make the experience less pleasant for those who have to walk. These include air quality, pollution and noise when walking along busy roads, the unevenness of pavements and the inconvenience of routes where pedestrians are expected to detour or change level in order to cross roads. Some features such as unauthorised pavement parking, a lack of dropped kerbs and the presence of street clutter will act as particular deterrents for people with disabilities or those with children in pushchairs but improvements in these areas will benefit all those walking.

Conversely certain types of street furniture can encourage people to walk more – for example, street art can improve the attractiveness of the walking environment and benches and other places to sit or rest against are important for the elderly and those with mobility difficulties who may not be able to walk far without a break.

When developing improvements to the walking environment, it is important to consider the journeys that people currently make, or might reasonably be persuaded to make i.e. the focus should be on areas where a significant number of short journeys are made, such as around local shopping streets and town centres. These areas are often the places that currently suffer the most as a result of congestion and high traffic volumes so encouraging a modal shift to walking would help alleviate some of these problems as well as contributing towards a more attractive environment for all visitors.

In addition, many parts of the public transport system in Central and Inner London are already struggling to cope with existing passenger numbers, particularly in peak hours when many tubes and buses are extremely overcrowded. Encouraging people to walk, rather than get the tube for short journeys in Central London, would help alleviate some of this pressure. Such measures should be aimed both at

those who live and work in London and at encouraging more tourists to travel around London on foot.

Many local high streets serve a dual purpose as routes for through traffic and as destinations in their own right, with the first role tending to take precedence so that the needs of pedestrians are often only considered as an afterthought. This can mean that pedestrians are made to feel that they are inferior compared to those using other forms of transport. The recent LIP guidance set out the Key Walking Route approach which invited boroughs to bid for funding to address these issues. This funding stream is heavily oversubscribed, demonstrating the boroughs' keenness to create more attractive walking environments.

A recent publication (the LP Guide)³ sets out a similar approach to that of Key Walking Routes. This is known as 'Link and Place' and aims to encourage a more 'people-centred' understanding of the value of streets, based on the integration of all street needs and activities (and in particular movement and consumption), to successfully balance competing street demands. 'Link and Place' is based on a street assessment framework which enables prioritisation of needs to be determined across an entire street network and indicates which aspects of the street environment warrant higher attention and re-design. In this way streets are not only valued for their movement (or 'link') functions but also for their role as destinations in and of themselves. Nascent programmes such as 'Fitter for Walking' present an opportunity for planning authorities' recognition of the multiple ways that streets are valued to be accredited according to a predetermined standard.

All the potential barriers to walking on a particular route, such as difficult road crossings, steps, narrow alleyways etc., should be addressed to ensure that the maximum benefit is gained from any improvements. Wherever possible, provision should be made for the pedestrian route to be the shortest route between two points to ensure that people are



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not deterred from walking by the need to make a substantial detour to cross a busy road. Such detours can also have safety implications where pedestrians cross the road away from the crossing.

Walking routes need to be attractive as well as functional if they are to encourage people to choose walking as an alternative to driving or public transport. Any infrastructure improvements introduced should be well designed and create more attractive places that pedestrians want to visit. By including landscaping and public art as an integral part of such improvements they will contribute to an enhanced public realm more generally as well as creating a more pleasant environment for pedestrians. Similarly, where public realm improvements are planned they should be designed with the needs of pedestrians in mind. The planning decisions made by boroughs have a significant influence on the local environment and can play a key role in enhancing the walking environment by ensuring that the sorts of measures described here are introduced.

It is important to adopt a 'whole journey' approach which aims to fill the missing links and address all the potential barriers to walking on a particular route. Particular attention should be paid to the needs of those with mobility difficulties and to ensuring that direct crossings are provided. Railings, barriers and underpasses should only be installed where strictly necessary where at grade crossings are not feasible and the number of signalised junctions without a pedestrian phase should be reduced.

Recommendation – TfL and the boroughs should continue to support and expand the Key Walking Route approach and give priority to measures which improve access to local shops, schools and stations in Outer London and to routes which encourage people to use walking as an alternative to short public transport journeys in Inner and Central London.

Barrier 6 – Overcoming existing travel habits

The habitual nature of most travel behaviour can act as a significant barrier to walking for those who currently drive or use public transport for all or most of their journeys. People may be unfamiliar with alternatives to their regular mode of transport and may be deterred from walking, even for relatively short journeys, by the kind of 'image' factors set out in the table on page 9. There are now a number of examples of initiatives aimed at overcoming this issue. For example, the Walking Works campaign aims to work with employers and employees to promote walking and identify barriers to walking to work.

Travel habits are often formed early in life and in recent years there has been a lot of work undertaken on school travel planning in London, and concerted walking promotion activity through the Walk to School and Walk on Wednesday campaigns. The provision of safer routes to school and measures such as walking buses also help to address parents' safety concerns about children walking to school. Such initiatives have the benefit of getting the message home early of the benefits to the individual and the environment from walking, and should be actively encouraged and promoted.

In recent years, there has been increasing concern about the impact of people's lifestyles on their health and particularly about the rising levels of obesity with the associated costs to the NHS and society generally. Adopting more active travel habits means that people undertake increased levels of physical activity as part of their daily routine rather than it being an extra activity that they have to fit in. This means that people are more likely to maintain an active lifestyle on a long-term basis and has significant implications in terms of the resulting improvements to their health.

There are therefore strong links between transport choices and health outcomes and it is clear the health sector should have a key role to play in supporting and encouraging people to adopt active

travel habits. There are already examples of GPs referring patients to walking promotion programmes and such initiatives should be supported and developed more widely. It is understood that the Department of Health is developing a Physical Activity Plan to address the costs of inactivity to the NHS and the wider economy. It is essential that this plan addresses the role of active travel as well as participation in sport and fitness activities.

Recommendation – TfL should work with the NHS and other significant employers in London to create a ‘Land Miles’ scheme which rewards and supports employees and clients who chose to walk to work and while on business. TfL should also place a greater emphasis on walking promotion schemes generally.

Conclusion

This paper highlights what London Councils, Living Streets and Walk London believe to be the most significant barriers to walking in London and proposes some solutions that we would like the Mayor and TfL to work with us in partnership to implement. There are some existing examples of successful partnership projects delivering improvements to walking in London such as Walk London, and examples of successful schemes such as Walk to School and Walking Works. Much more could be achieved with further partnership working. Our recommendations for addressing the six key barriers to participation in walking are summarised on the following page:

Summary of Recommendations

Barrier 1 – Giving walking sufficient priority institutionally

Recommendation – TfL and the boroughs should work with the NHS to develop an Active Travel Strategy for London which incorporates the recommendations set out in this paper alongside other measures to encourage active travel. This would be the first such strategy in the world and should include clearly identified actions, both short-term and longer-term, and ongoing monitoring. As an extension of this, Primary Care Trusts, hospital trusts and boroughs should also work in partnership to deliver local objectives to encourage walking and mobility.

Barrier 2 – Obtaining integrated funding for walking improvements

Recommendation – TfL should provide greater flexibility within the LIP funding structure and ensure that funding is available in a way that allows boroughs to deliver pedestrian infrastructure improvements. This should include the opportunity to provide pedestrian improvements as part of wider area or corridor-based schemes which complement travel awareness campaigns.

Barrier 3 – Safety Concerns

Recommendation – In addition to a continued focus on road safety improvements which reduce pedestrian casualties, TfL and the boroughs should work with walking organisations to agree a consistent methodology for monitoring levels of walking that can be introduced across London.

Barrier 4 – Misperceptions of walking speeds and distances

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Barrier 5 – Unattractive walking environment

Recommendation – TfL and the boroughs should continue to support and expand the Key Walking Route approach and give priority to measures which improve access to local shops, schools and stations in Outer London and to routes which encourage people to use walking as an alternative to short public transport journeys in Inner and Central London.

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references

London Councils is committed to fighting for more resources for the capital and getting the best possible deal for London's 33 local authorities.

Living Streets is the national charity working for people friendly public spaces. We work wherever we can make a positive impact and where there is need in order to create streets for people.

Walk London is a Borough Partnership funded by Transport for London and led by the City of London to help make London one of the most Walkable Cities in the World by 2015.

1. Walking in London, Transport for London, May 2008
2. Towards the year 2010: monitoring casualties in Greater London, Transport for London, Issue 8, August 2008
3. Link and Place: A Guide to Street Planning and Design, P.Jones, N. Boujenko and S. Marshall, December 2007

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