

Transport that works for Leeds North West



Alex Sobel
for Leeds North West



Alex Sobel MP

Four Principles for the Future of Transport



As an MP, few issues have dominated conversations with my constituents as much as transport.

We are a city on the move; with new investment in a wide range of industries coming forward including major coups such as the imminent arrival of Channel 4.

With that comes the urgent need to address our creaking infrastructure. But we cannot do that with a 'top down' approach. This issue needs an ongoing conversation and real consultation and, if nothing else, I hope the principles set out here will spark this.

The purpose of this document is not to engage in a city planning exercise. Nor is it an expert blueprint for a perfect transport system (although I have not, unlike Mr Gove, had enough of experts). I am not a traffic engineer, nor am I a highways officer or a local authority decision maker.

My role as your Member of Parliament is to evaluate the best outcome for my constituents and advocate on their behalf. It is also my job to identify problems, propose solutions and campaign for change.

And change is needed.

Leeds is the largest major city in Europe without a mass transit system. Main roads are at capacity and trust in public transport providers is exceedingly low.

We are in the midst of a climate emergency which must be the number one priority at every level of Government.

We are a growing city region that is attracting investment and new jobs. There is an increased level of housing development right across our area.

Without proper investment in infrastructure and a sound strategy to underpin it, our transport network could easily get worse and in some cases fail altogether.

If a modern city region were a human body, its transport network would be its veins and arteries. A healthy city, much like a healthy body, cannot survive for long with congestion and poor circulation.

The status quo is not an option.

The easiest path for any politician to focus on rejecting unpopular transport proposals on an individual basis, never pushing forward to create solutions that will benefit the area or its people as a whole.

For some politicians it is much easier to kill ideas than it is to create or further them. But I am not that kind of politician.

The real challenge is to evaluate and decide which projects and ideas to support and which to reject on a citywide level, what type of cost/benefit analysis is done and by what standards a proposal should be judged.

Therefore, we need to consider how our core principles can be applied to a modern environmental transport strategy.

I was elected as a Labour MP and am guided by Labour values of social justice, environmentalism and public ownership.



In my view, it is only by sticking to those principles and creating a bottom up approach to tackling this largest of all challenges, that we will achieve the best for our city, country and planet.

This is why I have created four guiding principles for any proposals about the future of our transport infrastructure. The principles, listed below and detailed across this document should have equal weighting and be considered to be of utmost importance.

Signed

Alex Sobel

MP for Leeds North West

All future transport proposals should...

Promote public transport, cycling and walking.

Improve the local economy.

Promote environmental sustainability.

Benefit public health both physical and mental.

Promoting public transport, cycling and walking

- Public transport provides numerous social, economic, and health benefits to communities. Unless impossible, it should always be favoured over proposals which encourage private transport, in particular cars.
- Public transport should always be run in the public interest and not for profit. We must end the disaster of bus deregulation and bring our railways back into public ownership. We must also look to co-operatives.
- Public transport allows for social justice principles to be applied. These principles should include fair pricing and access for vulnerable people. It is important to ask whether any public transport option that is under consideration is available to all and if not how to expand its provision.
- Public transport moves more people per unit than private cars. This has a major environmental benefits, particularly when the transport in question is low on emissions.
- Public transport should be regular and flow at roughly the same rate during the day, and sustain a night time schedule that reflects the changing demands of living in a modern city. This means providing enough units as well as ensuring that public transport is not impeded by other traffic.
- Public transport must be functional, reliable and affordable to encourage modal shift, unlocking those who would otherwise take private transportation. This benefits the other three principles outlined in this document.



Improving the local economy



- We must prioritise access over mobility. This means the best system is the one that ensure that the maximum number of people have access to opportunities and amenities, rather than a few having a faster but inaccessible system to reach them.
- It is important, for example, to ensure there are plenty of employment opportunities throughout the city rather than basing everything in the centre. It is also better that people do not have to drive five miles to do their weekly shop and can instead do so locally.
- People need opportunities. A thriving local economy will provide us with fulfilling and rewarding work as well as keep our local businesses and high streets healthy. Transport is a key part of this. Businesses need good infrastructure in order to attract customers and staff and provide logistical routes for goods and services.
- Investors, be they private or public, see transport infrastructure as a key part of their decision to invest in the region. More spending leads to greater numbers of jobs and an improved local economy.

Promoting environmental sustainability



- Any modern transport strategy must have the environment at its heart. The UK must meet and exceed its carbon reduction targets. Transport now accounts for 26% of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions (this compares to 25% for energy).

- Leeds, like many UK cities, is facing a clean air crisis. Many areas miss EU/UK NO₂ standards. The World Health Organisation argue that there is no safe level of NO₂ or Particulate Matter in the air. Failure to address this problem will increase the rate of cardiac and respiratory problems as well as early death. The mortality rate attributed to poor air quality equates to around one person, per constituency, per week.

- Environmental outcomes can be difficult to quantify but the following examples may be considered as part of a holistic approach to sustainable transport; cleaner vehicles, public transport, bringing assets closer (requiring fewer consumer miles), the protection of local green spaces or the furthering of pedestrian and cycle modes.

- We must have a co-ordinated, national approach to drastically reducing net carbon emission from aviation. This is currently contrary to Government policy.

Benefitting public health, physical and mental

- Public transport reduces driving, which improves air quality and has copious benefits to public health. This has the added benefit of reducing the burden on the NHS caused by preventable pollution-related conditions.
- Cycling must be encouraged and catered for as much as possible. It benefits both the cyclist (research has found that cycling to work can cut a rider's risk of developing heart disease or cancer in half) as well as the general population as this mode does not produce any emissions.
- Walking is a simple, effective way of reducing obesity and related diseases. Leeds North West has an above average rate of type 2 diabetes (5.6%). Our transport strategy must ensure walking to work is a pleasant and feasible commuter option for as many people as possible.
- Smooth, reliable commutes have a direct influence on mental wellbeing. Reducing the anxiety of not getting to work or appointments is a tangible benefit to public health. This reduction may also mean that people can leave for work later, gaining better sleep and more leisure time with loved ones.
- Improving access to green spaces that improve mental wellbeing - providing access to parks or the countryside for example.



% of residents in Leeds North West with...

Depression 8.7%

Obesity 7.3%

Asthma 5.6%

Lung Disease 1.4%

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