



BWA response to the Bristol Transport Strategy Consultation 2018

Summary

Bristol Walking Alliance (BWA) welcomes the overall approach described in the Bristol Transport Strategy 2018 consultation document.

We are pleased to see that walking is getting better recognition as a travel mode in its own right and not just an afterthought to other modes. However, the document is short on illustrations of how the strategy might be put into practice.

Lack of Ambition

Although the Bristol Transport Strategy (BTS) is to be welcomed, it is hardly inspiring. Compared to proposals for walking and cycling coming from other urban areas such as London and Manchester, or experience from European cities such as Copenhagen and Oslo, it lacks concrete ambition. The only ambitious element, for Mass Rapid Transit, cannot have any impact for many years. We would hope that Bristol can step up their game by being more ambitious in delivering sustainable travel options as a matter of urgency. The Strategy would benefit from greater emphasis on priorities, sequencing and specific plans.

Making short-term improvements

BWA believes that moving to more sustainable travel, including walking, cycling and better public transport, is the quickest way to improve the transport network in our area. Though proposals for Mass Rapid Transit may turn out to be viable in the long-term, any funds raised through parking levies, congestion charges or tax increases should be spent on making immediate improvements. People are not likely to support such funding unless they can see tangible results in the short term.

In the following sections, we respond to the document in more detail.

The Role of Walking

In the Forewords and introductory sections, the importance of walking as a mode of transport should be acknowledged. Some points worth noting from *Who walks to Work? Bristol City Council 2011 Census Topic Report*, November 2014, are:

- Almost a fifth (19.3%) of Bristol residents walk to work.
- Walking to work increased by 40% between 2001 and 2011.
- The proportion of people who walk to work in Bristol is higher than all the other Core Cities in England.
- More women than men commute to work on foot in Bristol (21.9% of female workers compared to 15.4% of male workers).

- The proportion of people who walk to work does not vary greatly between those with no qualifications and those with a degree or higher
- Although walking to work does not vary greatly between different ethnic groups, people who are White have slightly lower proportions than other ethnic groups.

These patterns suggest walking is more egalitarian than cycling, as White professional males are currently more likely to cycle to work than other groups (*Who cycles to Work? Bristol City Council 2011 Census Topic Report*, July 2014).

Given the importance of ‘health in all policies’ the introduction should include reference to the health benefits of walking and other active travel modes. For example, physical activity reduces the risk of coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity and some cancers. Suitable references are:

Department of Health. *Start Active, Stay Active. A report on physical activity for health from the four home countries*. Chief Medical Officers. London, 2011.

Lee I-M, Shiroma EJ, Lobelo F, Puska P, Blair SN, Katzmarzyk PT. Effect of physical inactivity on major non-communicable diseases worldwide: an analysis of burden of disease and life expectancy. *Lancet* 2012;330.

In the section on equality (p26) the importance of walking as a mode of transport for people living in the most deprived areas should be highlighted in the text and not just in the table. Cycling is highlighted here as a ‘lifeline’ but no specific mention is made of the importance of safe walking routes.

Outcomes

Outcome #2: On and off street parking managed efficiently to encourage use of sustainable transport and tackle congestion, while providing options that support the city’s 24 hour economy.

There is no mention here of parking on pavements which blocks and damages the footway, and is dangerous for pedestrians especially the young, old and disabled. The Department for Transport is currently considering how to make it easier for local authorities to ban pavement parking. The Deliver and Enable statements for Outcome #2 should include: “A city-wide ban on pavement parking similar to that which already exists in London.”

Outcome #4: Public transport to be visibly integrated, convenient and reliable to enable people to move around the city in a more efficient way.

Walking should be included here, with the following additional bullet point: “Improving interchanges for people on foot, such as provision of wayfinding and seating at waiting areas.”

Outcome #5: Walking to be safe, pleasant, accessible and the first choice for local journeys and combined with public transport for longer journeys.

We wholeheartedly agree with this as a goal. Bristol already has 50% more people who walk to work than other English core cities. With a relatively compact city centre, and nearby inner suburbs, it is ideally placed to increase the role of walking as a commuting travel mode.

In the high streets and town centres that are further from the city centre, walking should also be seen as the first choice for local journeys, but many such areas are currently made unhealthy and unpleasant by proximity to radial routes dominated by polluting cars.

We welcome the opportunity to work with Bristol City Council on improving the pedestrian environment. Please include the following additional point on Page 50: "Work closely with organisations that support and encourage walking."

Accessible local journeys depend on being able to cross roads safely. Please add the following point on page 50: "Deliver & Enable safe, convenient and accessible crossing points for pedestrians."

Outcome #11: More efficient transport corridors to move the largest number of people in the space available.

This section pays scant attention to the needs of pedestrians despite the fact that more people walk along these corridors than cycle. It is reasonable to consider a walking commute of up to two miles and this should be encouraged by enhancing the pedestrian infrastructure along the main transport corridors.

Please include the following text for an additional corridor: "A4 connecting to A37 from the Temple area to South Fringe: The development of Temple Quarter offers an opportunity to improve the pedestrian route over Bath Road bridge and then along the Wells Road through Totterdown and Knowle to Hengrove and connecting with the A4174 ring road. This is a key route between the southern fringe and Temple Meads railway station."

The following additional bullet point should be added to the list of improvements: "Enhanced walking routes to provide direct, continuous and safe walking routes along key corridors."

It would be helpful if the BTS could include an illustration of what a pedestrian friendly transport corridor would look like. We would anticipate that it would include, for example, continuous pavements across minor junctions.

Outcome #12: Supported and enhanced local centres and high streets, recognising that they provide key services and facilities, and can also be transport corridors and destination points for visitors.

Outcome #13: Reduce impact of motorised traffic on local centres creating better public spaces that are more accessible by walking, cycling and reliable public transport.

In the introductory paragraph on local centres (p64) please add the A37 Wells Road to read: "The A37 Wells Road serves the local centres of Totterdown and Knowle and is a key transport corridor between south Bristol and the Temple area."

Also, on this introductory page, the following sentence should be included to highlight the need for pedestrian crossings: "It is important that residents of all ages and abilities can cross the road safely, directly and without delay."

Following on from this, p66 should include an additional point: "Deliver and Enable improvements to road crossings to enhance pedestrian safety and convenience and make local centre more attractive to residents and visitors."

Outcome #14: Key facilities and services increasingly accessible to all citizens without the need to rely on a car.

Outcome #15: Safer places to live by working with citizens to design and deliver measures to improve movement and liveability in our neighbourhoods.

Walking as a means of travelling to and from schools has reduced dramatically over the last two decades. This must be reversed if children are to be helped to combat obesity and if road traffic congestion is to be reduced. But to do so will require not just persuasion, but also measures to deter the proliferation of cars giving lifts to the school gates. To support the aim of supporting children to walk to school, the following point should be added to p67: “Deliver and Enable improvements to footways and road crossings to improve pedestrian safety and enable residents of all ages and abilities to access their neighbourhood, including safe routes to school.”

In many neighbourhoods, footways are obstructed by bins, A-boards and even parked cars. The following point should be added to p67: “Deliver and Enable measures to ensure that footways are safe and convenient for pedestrians and free from impediments such as pavement parking and street clutter.”

This section of the BTS would benefit from a case study of a liveable neighbourhood scheme.

The Proposed Walking Actions

On page 49, the BTS Consultation document proposes undertaking at least ten ‘actions’ in pursuit of Outcome #5. Again, we welcome this list as a great starting point for making improvements.

However, the list seems to be mainly aspirational. There is very little guidance as to how these aspirations are to be met. We can have little confidence that they will be taken seriously until more specific goals are in place.

Action 5, to ‘Count walking’, is important. BWA has asked for this to be given more attention several times in our consultation responses to date. We therefore applaud its inclusion in the strategy. It should allow better targeting of walking hotspots, provide evidence for walking infrastructure improvements, and be a means of evaluating the desired increase in walking as a mode of travel.

On page 50, the influence of the built environment on pedestrians is highlighted. This leads to two further goals:

- To separate pedestrians and bikes wherever possible and fix known areas of conflict
- To ensure new developments are permeable and accessible to all users

The first of these, in particular, is a welcome, if belated, recognition of a problem – recent implementation of shared use space, especially in the city centre, has made some pedestrians feel less safe in what should be pleasant, well-used areas.

Implementation plan

We have a number of specific points in relation to the tables:

P74. Outcome #5. Please change ‘Walking Alliance’ to ‘Bristol Walking Alliance’.

P78. Promote equality. What to measure. Add: “For each neighbourhood, provision of inclusive walking infrastructure including dropped curbs, formal and informal crossing points, walking routes to local employment and services, and safe routes to school.”

P78. Promote equality. Data source. Add: “Data collected when pedestrian improvements are delivered”. These could include improvements to footways, crossings, and public spaces.

P78. Create healthy places. What to measure. Add: “Percentage of children travelling to school by active modes.” For this, walking and cycling should be measured separately.

P78. Create healthy places. Data source. Include a neighbourhood walkability question in the Quality of Life questionnaire.

Measuring success

The document proposes a set of measures by which the success of the strategy could be measured. Many of these measures relate either to motor vehicle travel, or to commuting behaviour. We hope the action to ‘Count walking’ will provide additional measures that can contribute towards success. In particular, we would like to see measures to encourage travelling to work and to school by sustainable modes, and for travel to events by sustainable modes.

Explicit measures of improved air quality along transport corridors and near schools should be included in the criteria.

Quality of Life surveys should include specific questions about ease of walking, especially for those groups, such as the elderly, disabled, and parents and guardians of the young, who currently find the walking environment to be hostile.

More specific measures to improve the walking experience

BWA has been engaging with various initiatives to improve the walking experience. For example, we have been consulted in the initial stages of creating the Bristol Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). In our latest submission, we set out the kinds of infrastructure improvements we believe should be considered for various walking zones, routes and other walking-centric areas. These measures include some specific suggestions that go beyond the general actions listed in the consultation document. In particular:

- continuous pavements (or similar pedestrian priority) across side turnings
- wider pavements in well-used places
- car exclusion zones around schools, enforced during morning and afternoon pick-up times
- addressing a single large barrier or missing link on pedestrian routes (e.g. Gaol Ferry Bridge, a new King Street Bridge)

The BTS could have been used to make such specific measures more explicit. We hope that such measures can be explored in more detail in the proposed Bristol Walking Strategy document on which the BTS states work will start in early 2019. We would prefer it if this were to be a **Bristol Walking Plan** – yet another strategy document at the high level of the current BTS would be a huge disappointment.

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