

Bristol Walking Alliance (BWA) believes that there are some important omissions in the list of Issues and opportunities for the Strategic Transport Plan 2025-2050 drawn up by the Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body.

We answer below the questions posed in the ‘Making the Right Choices’ consultation document.

1. Do you agree we have identified the key issues our region is facing? Are there other issues you think need to be addressed?

We agree with the ‘big issues’ identified in the consultation document as far as they go. However, we believe that the health and wellbeing of the population of the region is also a key issue which should be given equivalent priority.

Health is affected by immediate detrimental aspects, such as air quality, which is currently listed as a factor under Issue 1: Achieving Net Zero. However health effects go beyond the need to reduce carbon emissions. For example, electric vehicles may cut tail-pipe emissions but will have little effect on particulates from vehicle brakes and tyre wear.

Health and wellbeing will also be dramatically affected by climate change. We do not see that mitigating the effects of climate change on the population has received sufficient emphasis as an issue. For example, there is no mention of the effect on the reliability of the transport infrastructure due to increasingly extreme weather patterns, including flooding and drought.

Health will also benefit from more active travel.

2. Please rank the issues in order of what you consider to be the priority in our region.

1. Achieving Net Zero
2. Improving health and wellbeing
3. Levelling up the region
4. Enabling economic growth

3. Do you agree we have identified the right range of opportunities? Are there other opportunities you think we should consider?

Although we fully support active travel as one of the opportunities, it is phrased entirely in terms of cycling. Walking does not get a single mention. Though clearly not a long-distance travel mode in its own right, walking forms an essential part of almost every other travel mode. For example, the distance it is necessary to walk to access a bus service, or to switch between other travel modes at interchanges.

Walking is by far the most prevalent mode of travel within cities (see, for example, [Bristol Walking and Cycling Index 2021](#), Sustrans May 2022). It is also the prime mode for the development of Liveable Neighbourhoods (sometimes called 15-minute cities or 20-minute neighbourhoods), which try to address wellbeing and quality of life as well as local travel. This is quite different from the existing suggested opportunities of demand management and multimodal journeys.

We would therefore add Liveable Neighbourhoods as an additional opportunity.

4. Please rank the opportunities in order of your preferred priority.

1. AT. Active travel: Encouraging and enabling active travel
2. LN. Liveable Neighbourhoods: Enhancing wellbeing through locality of movement
3. M. Multi-modal: Enabling multi-modal journeys
4. R. Rail: Rail improvements for passengers and freight
5. BC. Bus and coach: Enhancing bus and coach services
6. DM. Demand management: Managing the demand for travel
7. AF. Alternative fuels: Promoting alternative fuels
8. RN. Road network: Improving the road network for all users

5. Please let us know any other views you have on the issues and opportunities we have outlined here.

We would stress the importance of walking as the 'glue' that connects public transport hubs with origins and destinations [1].

Walking is generally the most common transport mode to access and egress transit stops, and research has highlighted the significance of planning for an enhanced pedestrian environment in the larger catchment area, not limited to station-centric pedestrian infrastructure [2].

The 'first/last mile' of journeys using public transport is vital. If people cannot walk, wheel or cycle to the bus stop or train station as part of a coherent, direct, safe, comfortable and attractive route then they will either choose or be forced to use other forms of transport, such as the private car; increasing dependency on the more polluting and less space-efficient modes of transport [3].

Arup argue that walkability is a key factor for an integrated transport system: first/last mile connectivity supports public transport journeys, and is crucial in providing universal access to economic and social opportunities [4].

References

1. Hickman R & Vecia G. 2016. Discourses, travel behaviour and the 'last mile' in London. Built Environment, 2016;42:539-553. <https://doi.org/10.2148/benv.42.4.539>
2. Chidambara C. Walking the First/Last Mile to/from Transit: Placemaking a Key Determinant. *Urban Planning* 2019;4(2):183 DOI:[10.17645/up.v4i2.2017](https://doi.org/10.17645/up.v4i2.2017)
3. North Somerset Council. First and Last Mile Action Plan Active Travel Action Plans 2023-30.
4. Arup. [Cities Alive: Towards a walking world](#)

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