



Bristol Walking Alliance

campaigning to improve Bristol's walking environment

50 Ways to Better Walking

“Walking to be safe, pleasant, accessible and the first choice for local journeys and combined with public transport for longer journeys.”

Bristol Transport Strategy, 2019

2nd edition
October 2024

Walking is important as a sustainable mode of transport that is good for our health and well-being. Now is the time to commit to investing in specific measures that enable and encourage walking in Bristol.

We use 'walking' and 'pedestrian' to include all people moving at walking speed, including those who use wheelchairs, mobility scooters or other aids to movement.

This second edition of 50 Ways to Better Walking, while keeping the overall format and most of the proposed actions from the first edition, has removed some duplication and better aligned the actions with current ambitions.

We are grateful to executive members of Bristol Walking Alliance and Let's Walk Bedminster for funding the publication of this booklet.

To join BWA

Visit our website: <https://bristolwalkingalliance.org.uk/>
or Email: enquiries@bristolwalkingalliance.org.uk

Membership is free and is open to organisations and individuals who support the aims of BWA. Members receive an e-bulletin with updates of BWA activities and other related issues.

Who are we?

Bristol Walking Alliance (BWA) is a consortium of organisations and individuals campaigning to improve the walking environment. We want to create an environment for pedestrians that is welcoming, safe, and convenient for all. When we use the term 'walking' we include those who use wheelchairs, mobility scooters or other aids.

Why do we propose a plan for walking?

Walking is an important mode of travel that promotes health and wellbeing. Enabling walking for short journeys can reduce our carbon footprint and help address the climate and ecological emergencies.

Who needs to act?

BWA proposes measures that require policy commitments and funding from central, regional and local government as well as support from businesses, the voluntary sector and communities.

What needs to be done?

The measures we propose provide more detail for the walking-related actions outlined in the Bristol Transport Strategy, 2019:

1. **Identify and enhance walking routes**
2. **Adopt design standards that are inclusive**
3. **Develop walkable communities**
4. **Connect walking to public transport**
5. **Count, monitor, and share information about walking**
6. **Reduce obstructions to walking and implement enforcement measures**
7. **Make walking safe**
8. **Make walking pleasant and comfortable**
9. **Provide walking information**
10. **Support walking through travel planning and enabling behaviour change**

1. Identify and improve walking routes

It may seem that there are plenty of pavements and walking routes in urban areas. However, they are often alongside busy roads, repeatedly interrupted by road junctions, or simply not adequate for the number of people using them. In Bristol, wayfinding is not always easy. It may require crossing Bristol's waterways, using pedestrian underpasses or crossing major roads. Pedestrians are often held up at light-controlled pedestrian crossings where priority is given to motor vehicles. To increase the proportion of journeys made on foot, pedestrian routes need to be direct, easy to follow and with no unnecessary interruptions.

"Identify and enhance the network of walking routes across the city."
Bristol Transport Strategy, 2019

"On all streets it should be easy for people of all ages and abilities to find a safe place to cross without having to go out of their way."
Healthy Streets Indicators, 2017

Ways to better walking

- Identify and promote key walking routes into and around the city centre, and between and within neighbourhoods, using clear, consistent signage
- Incorporate 'pedestrian priority' design features at side-road junctions as part of road improvements e.g. continuous pavements, raised tables, road markings, road narrowing
- Provide safe, convenient pedestrian crossing points along key routes and at least every 400m along main roads
- Adjust the timing of light-controlled crossings to minimise pedestrian delays
- Conduct an audit of pedestrian underpasses across the city; identify and repair problems including drainage
- Audit and upgrade pedestrian routes across the Feeder Canal, River Avon, River Avon New Cut and the Floating Harbour

2. Adopt design standards that are inclusive

“Local authorities are responsible for the design of their streets. It is for them to ensure any pedestrian environment scheme, including a shared space, is inclusive and that they meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.” The Inclusive Transport Strategy: Achieving Equal Access for Disabled People, Department for Transport, 2018

The walking environment must allow for all ages and abilities. Narrow pavements, steps, steep ramps and other barriers can make it impossible for some people to access their neighbourhoods, public spaces, and the services to which they are entitled.

“Instead of our streets becoming more accessible, they remain a daily obstacle course for those who are blind or partially sighted.”
Who Put that there? RNIB, 2015

Ways to better walking:

- Adopt and publicise clear and inclusive design standards for the pedestrian environment
- Ensure footways are wide enough to provide safe and convenient access for people using wheelchairs, mobility scooters and walking aids, and people with pushchairs
- Audit walking routes, providing dropped kerbs where they are missing, alternatives to steps where possible, and handrails where there are steps
- Work with visually impaired people to audit pedestrian routes and crossings, ensuring compliance with national guidance for audible beeps, rotating cones and tactile paving
- Work with equalities groups when developing transport schemes and making changes, including temporary changes, that affect the pedestrian environment
- Undertake a programme of work to ensure train stations and transport interchanges are fully accessible

3. Develop walkable communities

Liveable Neighbourhood schemes aim to reduce motorised through-traffic and car dependency. The Healthy Streets approach is based on 10 indicators: everyone feels welcome; easy to cross; shade and shelter; places to stop and rest; not too noisy; people choose to walk and cycle; people feel safe; things to see and do; people feel relaxed; clean air.

The lack of toilets facilities can be a barrier to going out for some people, and the provision of fully accessible toilets is an important aspect of a walkable community.

“There are many benefits associated with the reduction of through traffic and the giving back of space to pedestrians. These benefits include better air quality, more social connection, more exercise, better health outcomes, reduced car usage and increased pedestrian safety.” How do we recover from COVID-19 and create a better future for all in Bristol? Bristol’s Citizens’ Assembly, June 2021.

Ways to better walking

- Develop and implement Liveable Neighbourhood schemes in consultation with local people
- Make use of the Healthy Streets approach in the design of transport schemes
- Implement School Street measures to restrict motor vehicles during school drop-off and pick-up times
- Enable and encourage residents to report street maintenance issues including lighting, drainage, and potholes
- Require improvement of the pedestrian environment in the planning process for new developments
- Audit and improve the provision of fully accessible toilets for public use in areas of high pedestrian footfall

4. Connect walking to public transport

Walking has been described as the ‘glue’ that holds the other modes of transport together. Most journeys begin and end with an element of walking.

“Everyone in the city is able to access a transport link within a 10-minute walk of their home.” Bristol One City Plan, 2023

For people making longer journeys, and for those who are unable to walk more than a short distance, it is important that walking can be combined with frequent, integrated and easily accessible public transport.

“Improve walking links to rail stations and bus stops.” Bristol Transport Strategy, 2019

“There is potential to improve the quality and availability of interchanges, as well as perceived reliability.” Joint Local Transport Plan 4 2020-2036

Ways to better walking

- Ensure everyone is within a 10-minute walk of a frequent public transport service
- Ensure bus stops are appropriately spaced and located to meet the needs of pedestrians, are well lit, have seating and shelters wherever practicable, and provide accurate real-time bus information
- Provide clear signage for people walking to and from public transport interchanges
- Provide walking maps and information at public transport interchanges

5. Count, monitor and share information about walking

Walking is often subsumed in the terms ‘sustainable transport’, ‘active travel’ or ‘walking and cycling’. But walking is a distinct and important mode of transport. It is the most common mode of active travel and studies show that investments in walking can deliver high returns. It is important to collect good quality data about walking to assess accurately where funds should be targeted.

“Publish a clear and concise breakdown of how the transport budget is formed and what organisations contribute to it and how it is spent.” How do we recover from COVID-19 and create a better future for all in Bristol? Bristol’s Citizens’ Assembly, June 2021

Monitoring pedestrian use of footways, crossings, bridges and public spaces can help in developing schemes for walking routes, high street improvements and the public realm more generally. Walking investments should be separately assessed and funded.

“Count, monitor, and share information about walking, exploring the use of new technologies.” Bristol Transport Strategy, 2019

Ways to better walking

- Identify walking as a separate mode of transport in travel reports, policy documents and transport planning; do not conflate ‘walking and cycling’ or subsume walking in ‘active transport’
- Monitor and count pedestrian movements with the aim of improving the provision, standard and safety of pedestrian routes
- Include questions about walking in travel surveys, planning consultations and quality of life questionnaires
- Set ambitious targets to increase walking and report progress on an annual basis
- Designate and monitor separate budgets for walking

6. Reduce obstructions to walking and implement enforcement measures

“Enhance enforcement measures for issues that make walking difficult or unpleasant. These include bins on footpaths, parking on footpaths and access points, overhanging vegetation, street clutter, litter and dog fouling.” Bristol Transport Strategy 2019

Some barriers may not be permanent but restrict pedestrian access to pavements and public spaces. These include bins, vegetation, scaffolding, temporary works, A-boards and fly-tipping. E-scooter and bicycle parking, and electrical vehicle (EV) chargers should be placed on the road. Badly parked motor vehicles block access points and dropped kerbs, and make some pavements unusable.

Ways to better walking:

- Use existing enforcement powers to prevent parking on pavements and seek a London-style ban
- Monitor and improve enforcement of controls against footway obstructions including bins, A-boards, scaffolding, fly-tipping, e-scooters and overgrown hedges
- Clarify and publicise the responsible organisations and enforcement processes in relation to footway obstructions e.g. Bristol Waste, Avon and Somerset Police, Bristol City Council
- Monitor complaints received, and actions taken, in relation to nuisance parking including on pavements, double yellow lines, and across dropped kerbs
- Re-purpose parking bays to remove pavement obstructions e.g. on-street bin collection points, electric scooter parking hubs, electric vehicle charging
- Position street furniture such as benches, signs and lampposts, to maximise the useable footway width and remove redundant street furniture

7. Make walking safe

“Key issues include footpath design and repairs, lighting, safe crossings, reducing conflict with other road users, air and noise pollution.” Bristol Transport Strategy, 2019

A priority for encouraging a wider range of people to walk is to ensure walking is, and feels, safe and healthy for people of all ages and abilities. This includes addressing infrastructure issues such as uneven surfaces or faulty lighting, and safe places to cross the road. It requires walking routes to have sufficient oversight, enforcing road safety measures, and reducing the health impacts of air pollution.

“Support the provision of safe crossings and speed reduction in appropriate locations.” West of England Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan 2020-2036

Many pedestrians feel unsafe when required to share pedestrian space with faster vehicles including bicycles and e-scooters.

Ways to better walking

- Segregate pedestrians from bicycles and e-scooters on key walking routes
- Enable pedestrians to report collisions and near misses with bicycles and e-scooters, and produce annual summaries
- Adopt a ‘Vision Zero’ safe systems approach to road safety using street design in transport schemes with the aim of eliminating all deaths and serious injuries
- Ensure key walking routes are well-lit with sufficient oversight, and prioritise ‘active frontage’ in planning applications
- Implement a citywide programme to replace pedestrian underpasses with street level crossings
- Set and enforce tight limits on air pollution across the city

8. Make walking pleasant and comfortable

The Healthy Streets approach includes indicators for streets that are pleasant and welcoming. These include shade and shelter, planting and public art, which should be incorporated in new developments and included in adaptations to existing streets when possible. Access to nature and green space is important for physical and mental health. Parks and green spaces should be linked to each other, and to where people live, by further greening of pedestrian routes.

Weather-related issues—such as icy pavements, slippery leaves and large puddles - can make walking unpleasant or even dangerous.

“Create and maximise green space, greenery and pocket parks in existing neighbourhoods, ensuring that transport infrastructure repairs, maintenance and new transport schemes must improve the amount and quality of green space available where possible by using the Highways Maintenance budget.” Bristol’s Citizens’ Assembly, June 2021

“People are more likely to use our streets when their journey is interesting and stimulating, with attractive views, buildings, planting and street art.” Healthy Streets Indicators, 2017

Ways to better walking

- Protect and plant street trees, and provide and maintain other green infrastructure e.g. parklets
- Deal promptly with seasonal and weather-related problems affecting the pedestrian environment including flooded underpasses, puddles, icy pavements and slippery leaves
- Develop and maintain a network of ‘green’ pedestrian routes across the city
- Work with communities, developers and businesses to improve streetscapes by providing benches, lighting, interpretation boards, and public art as appropriate

9. Provide walking information

Visitors to the city, and locals who are unfamiliar with an area, should be able to access and understand walking routes through on-street information, maps and signage with estimated walking times to destination.

“Bristol Legible City projects include direction signs, on street information panels with city and area maps, printed walking maps, visitor information, identity and arts projects. These projects communicate the city consistently and effectively to visitors and residents alike.” Bristol Legible City

“Provide walking information including maps and Bristol Legible City wayfinding.” Bristol Transport Strategy, 2019

Ways to better walking

- Supply walking information including maps for residents and visitors to the city at public transport interchanges, on the TravelWest website, and through Visit Bristol
- Provide maps and walking information at key venues such as libraries, museums, council offices and community buildings
- Include walking destinations and timings on information panels at key points in the city centre and in neighbourhoods, building on the work of Bristol Legible City

10. Support walking through travel planning and enabling behaviour change

Although walking is a familiar, inexpensive and healthy mode of transport, it is often neglected in transport planning. Most journeys begin and end with an element of walking. Public sector organisations, businesses, schools and other bodies can all play their part in promoting and supporting walking to address an over-reliance on motorised transport. A designated walking commissioner and support for local, national and international initiatives can all contribute to enabling behaviour change.

Active Travel England plans to place greater emphasis on walking and wheeling (such as using a wheelchair, mobility scooter or pushchair) than previously as it believes that this is where the largest increases in rates of participation are likely to be made.” National Audit Office, June 2023

“Support walking through travel planning and enabling behaviour change. Encourage and help make walking the easy transport choice for businesses, schools, communities and local high streets.” Bristol Transport Strategy, 2019“

Ways to better walking

- Use research evidence to identify groups for whom barriers to walking exist and to explore how they can be removed
- Encourage and support public bodies, businesses, schools and other relevant organisations to include walking routes, distances and times in workplace travel plans
- Promote and support walking initiatives in the city including Walk to Work, Walk to School, Bristol WalkFest, and walking groups that support walking for health and active travel
- Appoint a ‘walking commissioner’ to raise the profile of walking and champion improvements to the pedestrian environment

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Identify and improve walking routes

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Adopt design standards that are inclusive

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12. Undertake a programme of work to ensure train stations and transport interchanges are fully accessible

Develop walkable communities

13. Develop and implement Liveable Neighbourhood schemes in consultation with local people

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14. Make use of the Healthy Streets approach in the design of transport schemes
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Connect walking to public transport

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25. Include questions about walking in travel surveys, planning consultations and quality of life questionnaires

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30. Clarify and publicise the responsible organisations and enforcement processes in relation to footway obstructions e.g. Bristol Waste, Avon and Somerset Police, Bristol City Council

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37. Ensure key walking routes are well-lit with sufficient oversight, and prioritise 'active frontage' in planning applications

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Support walking through travel planning and enabling behaviour change

47. Use research evidence to identify groups for whom barriers to walking exist and to explore how they can be removed

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49. Promote and support walking initiatives in the city including Walk to Work, Walk to School, Bristol WalkFest, and walking groups that support walking for health and active travel

50. Appoint a 'walking commissioner' to raise the profile of walking and champion improvements to the walking environment

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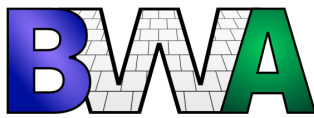
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