

A briefing from Sustrans, the charity making it easier for people to walk and cycle.

Protecting the walking and cycling budget

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Key points

- Overall active travel funding for the current parliamentary term is being reduced from £3.8 billion to £3 billion. This includes a cut of dedicated capital funding by **two thirds** to only £100 million for the next two years.
- These cuts set us on completely the wrong path. It is crucial that the Government does not row back on its active travel investment pledge, which was supported by the AA and Federation of Small Businesses.¹
- Transport is the UK's largest emitter of greenhouse gases.² Even if 100% of new vehicle sales were Ultra Low Emissions by 2030, mileage would need to be reduced by between 10% and 20% to keep global warming lower than 1.5°C.³ Active travel funding is therefore crucial to meeting our net zero goals.
- This cut means there is no way the Government can meet its own target that 50% of journeys in towns and cities should be walked or cycled by 2030.
- Walking, wheeling and cycling created an estimated £36.5 billion in 2021 in economic benefit and prevented 29,000 early deaths.⁴

The Second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy

In July 2022, the second cycling and walking investment strategy (CWIS2) was announced, laying out £3.8 billion of investment up to March 2025.⁵ On Thursday, the Transport Secretary reduced this to 'around £3 billion'.⁶ Even more seriously, he announced considerably reduced dedicated capital spending of only £100 million for the rest of the period.⁷ This equates to a drop in capital funding from £200 million in 2022/23 to only £50 million a year, at exactly the time we should be ramping up investment.

Maintaining investment in walking, wheeling and cycling is politically popular: people want greater investment in walking (56%) and cycling (53%) than driving (32%). 95% of people walk, with at least half of people walking more than five days a week. In 2018-19, 41% of short journeys in towns and cities were walked or cycled.⁸

¹ In 2022, they [wrote to the Secretary of State for Transport](#).

² Sustrans. 2020. [Our position on the climate crisis and transport](#).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Sustrans. [Walking and Cycling Index 2021](#). All other statistics are from this Index unless otherwise stated.

⁵ Department for Transport. 2022. [The second cycling and walking investment strategy \(CWIS2\)](#).

⁶ Secretary of State for Transport. [Transport Update \(UIN HCWS625\)](#).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Department for Transport. 2022. [CWIS2](#).

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This fund also provides capital spending on active travel in England over the next 2 years outside of London of just £1 per head per year, compared to £8.90 in London's funding settlement, £19 in Wales and £50 in Scotland.⁹

Walking, wheeling and cycling and net zero

We cannot afford for alternatives to car use to be underfunded if we are to achieve net zero, especially with the continued commitment to a 26% emissions reduction by 2030. Whilst other sectors have reduced their emissions dramatically since 1990 (for example, energy production by 62%), the domestic transport sector has only seen a drop of 3%.¹⁰ Independent modelling suggests if 50% of vehicle sales were electric by 2030, car mileage would still have to decrease by more than half.¹¹

We will have to reduce car use whilst transitioning to electric vehicles to avert the worst impacts of the Climate Crisis. This means we must make walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport cheaper, faster, safer, and more convenient than driving. **Every day, walking and cycling takes up to 14.6 million cars off the road**, saving 2.5 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.

Walking, wheeling and cycling and the economy

Walking, wheeling and cycling invigorate the high street. **People walking on average spend 40% more than those who drive.**¹² Walking and cycling improvements have been found to increase local retail spend by up to 30%.¹³ Active travel prevented 138,000 serious long-term health conditions and 29,000 early deaths. Physically active people take 27% fewer sick days each year than their colleagues. In all, **physical inactivity costs the NHS £1 billion a year.**¹⁴

Active travel and the cost-of-living crisis

The annual cost to run a car has reached £3,500.¹⁵ This is unaffordable for many people, putting them at risk of transport poverty. Desperate families are now having to choose between affording essential journeys, heating, or eating. Over a third of people on low incomes do not have access to a car.¹⁶ For many that do, it is becoming prohibitively expensive to run. **It is vital that we do more to help people on low incomes to walk, wheel or cycle to access the things they need.**

⁹ Department for Transport. 2022. [Transport for London – Long-term Funding Settlement](#); Welsh Government. 2022. [Active Travel Fund Grant](#). This was in 2022/23. Transport Scotland. [Developing an Active Nation](#).

¹⁰ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. 2018. [UK Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Final figures](#).

¹¹ Sustrans. 2020. [Our position on the climate crisis and transport](#).

¹² Transport for London. [Town Centres 2013](#).

¹³ Living Streets, 2018. [The Pedestrian Pound](#).

¹⁴ Department for Transport. 2014. [The economic benefits of walking and cycling](#).

¹⁵ NibleFins. 2022. [Average Cost to Run a Car UK 2022](#).

¹⁶ Department for Transport. [National Travel Survey 2021](#).