VISIONS 2030

Visions of the Role of Walking and Cycling in 2030

**Funding:** National (United Kingdom)

**Duration:** Oct 2008 - Mar 2012

**Status:** Complete with results

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**Background & policy context:**

Walking and cycling can make a considerable contribution to sustainable transport goals, building healthier and more sociable communities and contributing to traffic reduction and lower carbon emissions. The amount of walking and cycling in Britain has declined over the long term and research suggests that there are major obstacles to prevent people from using these modes.

There have been many national and local initiatives to promote walking and cycling but without a long term vision and consistent strategy it is difficult to see how a significant change may be achieved. The time is now right to examine the means by which such a fundamental change both in the quantity of walking and cycling, and in the quality of the experience can be achieved, which goes well beyond continuation of existing trends.

**Objectives:**

This research seeks to examine ways in which more people might be encouraged to walk and cycle in the future, what steps are needed to support this potential increase in walking and cycling and how to improve the experience for those who already use these modes.

The work develops innovative methodologies using visualisation software to help users understand how futures might appear, using modelling techniques which examine narrative and storylines to understand how different futures might be attained, and using a range of social research methods to explore how different futures might affect individual lifestyles and society.

The project will offer a range of tools that can enable them to construct their own versions of the future, and to weave their own stories in and out of expert visions, thus opening up the possibility of a richer and expanded public engagement with the visioning process. This permits a shift from the narrow focus of people’s current day decision-making and behavioural and lifestyle choices to a greater focus on the process through which people make decisions and the contextual factors which inform how people choose to live their everyday lives.

The value of this project, and the innovative methodologies it adopts, such as the new approach to modelling, is that in this way it opens up the possibilities of a greater understanding of how walking and cycling could change in the future.

**Methodology:**

The project draws extensively on a range of stakeholder groups such as central government departments, walking and cycling organisations, city and local authorities, from whom the project partners have already received a number of letters in support of this application. The work involves a series of expert workshops to develop visions of alternative futures and also draws in various ways on the experiences of different user groups of the public to ensure that the visions developed are grounded in real experiences.

The workshops and other participation events are being used to establish trend-breaking views of the future and the key attributes of future conditions which will generate these visions.

The project will undertake impact assessments to consider the likely costs and benefits of these visions and the potential effects on a persons' lifestyle.
It is recognised that the project brings substantive research challenges and risk. However, the combination of proposed innovatory research methods and tools, and the expertise of the collaborative project team, including the extensive involvement of experts and the public, will realise new ideas and possibilities which will be of direct use in both national and local strategies within the UK and overseas. The tools developed from this research will continue to be of practical use to the user community after the end of the project and we will explore the potential to make these tools web based where they could be used by policy makers and stakeholders as a basis for future planning exercises.

Parent Programmes:
EPSRC - The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (various projects)

Institute type: Research agency
Funding type: Public (national/regional/local)

Partners:
United Kingdom:
University of Leeds - Institute for Transport Studies (ITS) (Coordinator); University of Oxford; University of Salford; University of East Anglia; University of Manchester

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Key Results:
This project sought to design and elaborate on a range of urban futures for the year 2030 in which walking and cycling play a much larger role than at present as urban transport modes in the UK. Initial work involved widespread consultation with stakeholders about how walking and cycling futures might look and operate. After much deliberation three independent futures were designed:

- European Best Practice (where walking and cycling account for around 45% of trips),
- Car-free Public Transport (a major change in the values and nature of society to create urban areas where walking and cycling account for around 60% of urban trips and public transport a further 35%), and
- Localised Energy Efficient future (a response to an external series of events resulting in serious long term fuel shortages – in this instance walking and cycling account for around 80% of urban trips).

To help people to understand how the different futures may look we used innovative software to develop a series of computer based visualisations/animations for each vision showing elements of an imaginary urban area with a population of around 200,000 people. An extensive descriptive narrative for each vision which outlined how each future operated was also developed. We undertook an extensive series of public response surveys (utilising a wide variety of techniques from questionnaires through to ‘imagining sessions’ with children to a range of different kinds of public displays) to try to understand how people may respond to our proposed futures, how they may wish to change them and how the futures will impact on their lifestyles.

Significant findings emerged from the data generated from these surveys. Exploring general attitudes to active travel amongst different social groups we found that: respondents saw existing active travel infrastructure to be poorly provided for in UK cities and, where provided, rarely respected by other road users; provision of such infrastructure is patchy and inconsistent; long travel distances and complex household routines thwart intentions to walk and cycle, as do concerns regarding safety from motor vehicles (for cyclists) and fear of crime (for pedestrians). Looking at questions of urban design and the degree to which the built environment can facilitate or hinder active travel we found: considerable hostility from both cyclists and pedestrians to the concept of shared space, with modal segregation strongly favoured; especially for

STRIA Roadmaps: Smart mobility and services
Transport mode: Road transport
Transport sectors: Passenger transport
**Geo-spatial type:** Urban