



# Newcastle City Council Movement Strategy Response November 2024

We are the Newcastle Cycling Campaign. We are a constituted group of over 1000 members, both individual and families, who campaign for a safe, segregated, connected cycling network in Newcastle.

We would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on your Movement Strategy. We attended the launch event and have held a member's meeting to discuss our response further. In responding, we are representing the views of our many members, but have encouraged them to respond individually as we know you are keen to hear a wide range of voices.

## Be Blunt About the Issues

This strategy outlines plans to improve transport in Newcastle for the next twenty years until 2045. As such it is crucial that the challenges facing the city are made clear as well as the actions and associated targets that Newcastle council need to achieve to ensure the long term success of the city.

Our first comment is therefore the lack of supporting evidence and subsequent discussion about the challenges facing the city, what this means for the people who live, work, study and visit here and what are both the positive and negative impacts transport has on our city. The statistics included have little context and we think it would be helpful to have more detail about the modelling for the future. It is also important to use this to more explicitly make the case for the transport changes needed both from the perspective of relieving pressure on the finite road network but also through the lenses of the benefits to the economy, public health, education and welfare.

Any transport strategy should identify the negative externalities of the status quo,



discuss the need for change and mostly importantly, describe and sell the future these actions will lead us to. Whilst we appreciate the attempt to keep the consultation pack brief in order to aid accessibility and improve response rate, we do think that in order to have a meaningful consultation the full scale of these challenges need to be discussed, and a tangible vision for the future of our city described.

What we'd like to see, and what we believe is critical going forward, is a clear picture explaining clearly the challenges we face and demonstrating how your actions will transform our city. What does the evidence show it will look like in 2045? What are the legal and social issues that need to be addressed? How will these priorities solve the problems you have identified?

## Lead the Narrative

Following on from this, we are also concerned that without this conversation, this consultation is leaving residents to fill in the gaps. We believe that few people may know what they will want or need from a transport system in 20 years' time or appreciate that alternative futures are possible. While consultation is important, alone it cannot direct strategy. The council's role is to see the bigger picture, stay informed by the data and to lead the way in framing this future. Leadership is essential to keep these issues in the public eye and must be accompanied by regular and transparent updates to ensure that meaningful change actually takes place.

It's critical to the success of this strategy to communicate both the vision and also the objective of creating a transport system that is fair and that prioritises the most vulnerable. Ensuring that the future success of our city can be shared by everyone should be a key message.

## Prove you Can Deliver

Finally we'd like to see mention of processes internal to the council. Operational effectiveness is key to the success of any strategy. As well as identifying what you need to do, you also need to say how you will do it. What needs to change to make sure this happens? While there have been a number of excellent strategies and plans produced over the past decade, little has changed and a worrying number of planned and funded



schemes have either been removed or have not taken place at all. Similarly other schemes have gone ahead, even when in direct contradiction to the council's policies.

We would like to see this addressed openly and transparently as part of any final strategy to ensure the success of the Implementation Plan. A meaningful strategy will include clear objectives, a definition of what success looks like and a plan for monitoring and evaluation.

We would like to see the council report back regularly to the people it has consulted and keep them informed of progress in an open forum. Whilst full council and cabinet meeting minutes and reports are available online, this information needs to be sought out and requires a degree of persistence. We would like to see this process made easier and information made more readily and regularly available.



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## Vision

***Our proposed vision is to create a transport network that is sustainable, inclusive and efficient, supporting the health and wellbeing of all residents and visitors. The proposed vision is to build an inclusive, sustainable, healthy and thriving Newcastle.”***

We love this and whole heartedly agree.



## Priorities

### Are there any other priorities you think should be included?

The existing options are:

- Improving Public Transport
- Improving walking and wheeling opportunities
- Expanding cycling infrastructure (such as cycle lanes, bike storage or cycle crossing facilities)
- Expanding electric vehicle infrastructure (such as installing more public electric charge points)
- Improving air quality
- Improving safety for all road users
- Improving accessibility for disabled people
- Reducing traffic congestion

These priorities aren't actually discussed in the consultation document. We think they don't go far enough and aren't clear enough in what they aim to achieve, particularly when priorities compete.

With all this in mind our suggestions for other priorities to be included are:

- Reducing the need to travel, particularly by less sustainable means.
- Enabling car free lifestyles particularly with the expansion of shared mobility schemes such as car clubs.
- The liveability of streets and neighbourhoods.
- The safe and independent movement of children.
- Achieving Net Zero transport emissions.
- Vision Zero target and accompanying strategy of zero deaths and serious injuries on our city's roads.

We would also like to add that the final priority of "Reducing traffic congestion" should make it clear that people walking, wheeling and cycling are also considered to be traffic. With this in mind we believe the reduction of congestion outside schools by enabling the safe and swift movement pupils when arriving at and leaving school is hugely important



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meaning actions will be focused on widening and reducing the stages of crossings, widening pavements and increasing the space available at key bus stops.

We would also like to see associated targets which each of these priorities, identification of Key Performance Indicators and how they will be measured.



## Principles and Actions

In addition to the principles suggested we would like to include:

**Child centred city:** ensuring the transport network is mapped from the viewpoint of a child, is safe, connected, accessible and enables independent movement.

**Net Zero Newcastle:** Focusing on low-emission travel and climate resilience.

The council's own net zero target of 2030 is unlikely to be met. The consultation document points out that transport contributes 33% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and the launch presentation identified that emissions from the transport sector have largely remained static since 1990.

What isn't mentioned is that numerous studies have concluded that the **only** way to reduce transport emissions is to **reduce the need to travel**. The council's own Net Zero Action Plan identified that "A sustainable transport model is one that reduces travel demand, particularly motorised modes, by reducing the need to travel, number of trips and trip lengths."

A Net Zero Newcastle principle needs to include the principle of reducing the need to travel, as per the Net Zero Action Plan. It also needs to aim to actually achieve Net Zero.

## Comments on Actions

### 1 Making our transport system climate resilient.

We'll make sure our transport network can handle challenges from climate change by:

- Proactively maintaining roads and using materials that can withstand extreme weather.



- **Implementing sustainable urban drainage systems and green infrastructure to reduce flooding**
- **Designing streets that provide shade and shelter.**
- **Creating a network of streets and spaces that collectively introduce blue and green infrastructure**

This suggests that roads will remain as the most important feature of the transport system. All aspects of transport need to be both resilient and climate-resilient, i.e. train and metro tracks, footpaths and cycleways, **not just roads.**

Footpaths and cycleways in particular are often already ignored when dealing with ordinary weather such as ice and snow and underpasses regularly flood in extreme rain.

Proactively maintaining footpaths and cycleways is critical to ensure that any network reaches its full potential and is meets the needs of all users, not just the fit and able bodied.

## **2 Promoting low emission vehicles.**

**We'll support the use of low-emission vehicles by:**

- **Increasing the number of electric vehicle (EV) charge points.”**
- **Setting an example with the council's fleet and travel policies**
- **Reviewing parking fees to encourage sustainable alternatives to the private car**
- **Ensuring freight and delivery services use ultra-low emission vehicles.**

Again, this feels like an assumption of car dependency. Is there any intention of providing charging for ebikes for example?

Also we would like to know how and where will this take place? We feel strongly that there is conversation that needs to be had about how to deal with EV charging in areas that don't have available off-street parking to ensure it doesn't negatively impact other users, streets and neighbourhoods. Space in our city is a premium resource and should be treated as such.

We presume that “reviewing parking fees” means **increasing** parking charges in council run parking areas. We ask how this will tackle on street parking and public parking in areas not owned by the council? Will there be other actions such as a





workplace parking levy? Could this additional revenue be ringfenced to support sustainable travel?

### 3 Encouraging alternatives to driving.

We'll support sustainable alternatives like walking, cycling and public transport by:

- Investing in public transport schemes to improve the reliability of buses, such as bus lanes, smart traffic signals and red routes.
- Investing in walking and cycling schemes, such as high-quality secure bike parking, network signage, upgrading junctions to protect vulnerable road users and changing some priorities to support active travel.

Firstly the wording shouldn't be "encouraging", but **enabling** and accepting responsibility for the council's role in giving this choice.

When investing to improve the reliability of buses we believe there needs to be a clear hierarchy to ensure space **must be reallocated from motor vehicles**, not walking, wheeling and cycling. Sustainable forms of transport should not be competing against each other for space. We have already had a situation where a protected cycle lane on Gosforth High Street was removed and replaced with a bus lane. At peak time, the value of the safety of families wanting to cycle along Gosforth High Street was less than 2 minutes of time saved for a bus user. In light of this there needs to be a clear indication of how priorities themselves will be ranked.

Walking and cycling schemes are described in several actions and say different things. In order to avoid duplication we will discuss them all at the end of our response.



## **Sustainable growth:** Supporting businesses and providing access to opportunities like jobs and education.

It's important to make clear that by supporting **local** businesses we simultaneously create better served centres, reduce the need to travel and strengthen community hubs. This not only impacts travel but public health, wellbeing and welfare.

### Comments on Actions

#### 1 Improving access to opportunities

We'll help people access jobs, education, green spaces and services by:

- **Creating a high-quality walking and cycling network connecting neighbourhoods and shopping areas.**
- **Working with large employers to promote active travel and public transport**
- **Advocating for reduced public transport fares for those in need.**
- **Advocating for better public transport to hard-to-reach employment areas**

Our comments on the quality walking and cycling network will be discussed at the end of our response.

**Promoting** active travel and public transport is simply not enough. Where there are substantial amounts of free parking there is no real motivation for behaviour to change. Where there are not large amounts of parking, safe reliable routes for walking and cycling, and frequent and reliable public transport are critical and are the biggest enabler of mode shift. Working with large employers should include both carrots (supporting them with a connected and well maintained walking and cycling network) and sticks (workplace parking levy).

#### 2 Enhancing Newcastle's public spaces

We'll improve Newcastle's public spaces by:

- **Working with partners to invest in shopping areas and business districts to attract businesses and visitors.**
- **Introducing more place making destinations**



- **Publishing guidelines for designing streets with a focus on accessibility.**
- **Ensuring parking doesn't dominate public spaces, prioritising alternative uses like cycle parking and green spaces, while still providing enough disabled parking**

Without specifically stating that you only want to attract businesses that can be accessed sustainably this is simply an economic action, not a transport one, and certainly not one that supports the transport strategy. This should include enforcing changes to any design that inhibits accessibility, and investing in changes to shopping areas and business districts to encourage non-car travel, for example a campaign to promote car free travel to Newcastle City Centre.

At the same time place shouldn't be just about destinations but also where we live, our communities and our neighbourhoods. Again without being specific this is also an action that could simply increase travel and undermine the vision. Done the right way, our communities will thrive.

We would also like to mention that there is no need to publish guidelines for designing streets with a focus on accessibility: this has already been done. Adopt existing guidelines where they are available.

Finally, ensuring parking doesn't dominate public space is a great initiative, but it's not only parking that detracts from public spaces but large amounts of through traffic. The movement of motor vehicles must not take priority over place and destination.

### **3 Ensuring sustainable growth.**

**We'll focus on sustainability in housing and employment growth by:**

- **Using development powers to improve infrastructure around new developments, such as better bus services, cycling paths and footpaths.**
- **Promoting car-free lifestyles and reducing car ownership.**
- **Managing traffic during construction to keep areas safe and accessible for walking and cycling.**
- **Reviewing some of our roadside space (where parking often occurs) to provide other opportunities such as low-emission vehicle bays, bike parking, seats and shelters.**



- **Advocating for better bus services with increased reliability and coverage**
- **Reviewing vehicle access in high pedestrian or cycling areas**

Excellent ambition to improve infrastructure around new developments, but these must connect to the wider network.

As we said earlier, promotion is not sufficient, the goal must be to **enable** car-free lifestyles. Promoting on its own will make little difference until the infrastructure exists to support it. The statement “Reducing car ownership” is doing a lot of heavy lifting here. Surely this is a principle guiding the actions, not an action? Is it within the power of the council to directly reduce car ownership or is this a hoped for consequence of the enabling actions?

We agree that managing traffic during construction is particularly critical where pinch points exist for walking and cycling when access is severed by major roads, railway lines etc. We can think of two examples where underpasses have been closed for years at a time with no alternative solutions are in place. Identifying these locations proactively would help with planning when the situation arises.

Rather than reviewing “some of our roadside space” (it is unclear whether this is road space or pavement space), as in other areas this should be developed into a kerbside strategy to ensure that our public space isn’t dominated by private motor vehicles. We would also like to see developed a process for residents to apply for: a 20mph limit in their street, apply to reallocate road space for secure cycle storage, planters and public space, as well as play streets and access only restrictions.

Reviewing vehicle access in high pedestrians or cycling areas sounds great but by definition requires an area to be busy before it is reviewed. Predict and provide can also work for the movement of people walking, wheeling and cycling. What spaces (for example local shopping areas) could be improved and could become busy pedestrian or cycling areas by reviewing motor vehicle access?

Whilst considering this it’s also essential that LTN 1/20 standards are applied to ensure that people cycling aren’t forced onto long detours when there are many examples in other cities showing that streets thrive where there is space for both.



## **Healthier, active and safe:** Promoting health and well-being through safe and active travel.

Promoting isn't enough. You have to commit to **enabling** health and wellbeing through safe and active travel.

As for safe, this needs a real target of Vision Zero and ensuring that you are putting in place systems that enable you to prevent the deaths and injuries on our cities roads.

### **1 Making streets safer.**

**We'll prioritise safety, especially for vulnerable users, by:**

- **Implementing schemes to reduce collisions in high-risk areas.**
- **Ensuring all street investments improve safety and access.**
- **Providing training and education programmes to encourage safer behaviours, focusing on schools and under-represented groups**
- **Working with schools to reduce traffic, improve air quality and increase active travel.**

Road users such as those walking, wheeling and cycling aren't inherently vulnerable but are made vulnerable when they are endangered by motor vehicle traffic. Road danger needs to be reduced everywhere with interventions such as lower speed limits. Reducing collisions isn't enough. There is no acceptable minimum number of collisions.

Whilst ensuring all street investment improve safety and access, we're concerned that as some schemes are difficult and controversial this action allows those schemes to effectively be avoided. Instead we think the action should **prioritise investment where safety and access needs to be improved.**

We would also like to see embedded in the ongoing program of road maintenance that infrastructure that does not meet current council and national standards e.g. painted cycle lanes, are not simply reinstalled, but instead upgraded at this point to avoid duplication.

The aim to provide training and education needs to be more explicit about who will be trained and when. It needs to be very clear that traditional road safety training places the emphasis on those in danger to keep themselves safe, rather



than targeting those causing the danger and is not appropriate.

Lastly there should be an ambition for every School to have a School Street and/or reduced speed limits and safe, direct crossings, safe cycling routes to school to enable, as stated earlier, the improvement of the safe, swift flow of pedestrian and cycling traffic from schools. From the School Streets evaluation report, existing and future School Street schemes should be also be enforced with cameras to ensure success.

## **2 Encouraging daily physical activity.**

**We'll make it easier for people to stay active by:**

- **Connecting communities, schools and shopping areas with a network of walking and cycling routes in low-traffic areas.**
- **Providing services like car clubs, bike and scooter hire.**
- **Investing in infrastructure that makes it easier to walk, cycle and use public transport.**

We're not sure how car clubs and scooter hire will make it easier for people to stay active. Surely these interventions are about enabling car-free lifestyles? In this respect we agree that they give the flexibility to live without a private vehicle.

We are also supportive of a bike hire scheme. However it is essential that this is integrated with the wider public transport network, ideally with an integrated interface such as Pop. There must also be clear docking stations, strictly enforced in busy areas and which take space from motor vehicle parking rather than pedestrian space.

## **3 Prioritising clean air.**

**We'll improve air quality by:**

- **Reducing motor traffic.**
- **Increasing the use of electric vehicles or other technologies that reduce pollution.**

Simply saying you will reduce motor traffic is a bold statement with little



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indication of how it will be achieved. Yes changes such as those mentioned will enable people to choose alternatives to private vehicles but unless road space is reallocated, it is unlikely to have a meaningful impact on the amount of motor traffic in the city. This could be done for bus lanes and/or cycle lanes or by restricting through routes in residential neighbourhoods.

Air pollution is still above WHO guidelines in many areas of the city. Waiting for drivers to make the switch to electric vehicles isn't an effective strategy to manage a problem that exists today.



## **Inclusive, connected and efficient:** Ensuring the transport network benefits all residents and visitors.

Should the transport network benefit an individual driving a 4l SUV as much as it does a child travelling to school on foot? Surely you need to actively discourage some types of movement? We suggest including the statement “while giving priority to the most vulnerable users according to the transport hierarchy.”

It’s also important to clarify that this principle also means **not prioritising** motor traffic and storage of motor vehicles on residential streets because connection begins in our communities and neighbourhoods.

### **1 Designing for all.**

**We’ll ensure our streets and spaces are accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities, the elderly and children by:**

- **Improving physical access with features like step-free access, wide footways and disabled parking spaces.**
- **Prioritising pedestrians, with crossings where needed and emphasising their priority at side roads.**
- **Prioritising parking for people that need it most.**

Safe, segregated cycle infrastructure also improves access along with removing motor vehicle traffic. Removing barriers to cycling such as bollards, gates etc is also essential to ensuring cycling is accessible to everyone particularly thinking of the types of non standard cycles such as trikes, recumbent cycles etc that are also often used as mobility aids.

For pedestrians this includes removing street clutter as well as maintenance as stated earlier. Lack of gritting on pavements is a huge barrier to walking in the winter and a very real risk.

Parking should not be considered as simply being for motor vehicles. It must also include parking for non-motor vehicles such as secure, accessible parking for adapted and non-standard cycles.





## 2 Improving local connections.

We'll enhance connections from residential areas to services and schools by:

- Improving spaces around public transport stations and stops.
- Prioritising buses and cycles on main roads and ensuring efficient movement of goods.
- Working with transport operators to improve bus and Metro services
- Removing barriers to walking, cycling and public transport with new crossings, junction improvements and traffic reduction measures
- Implementing traffic reduction schemes in neighbourhoods

We'd like to suggest the amendment of Improving spaces around "And connections to" public transport stations and stops. It's critical that segregated cycle routes reach public transport hubs in order to facilitate a connected transport network.

We also want to make it clear that prioritisation of cycles on main roads is not sufficient unless it is by creating segregated infrastructure. Bus lanes are not safe cycling infrastructure.

We support all motor traffic reduction away from the strategic network.

## 3 Reducing private vehicle use.

We'll reduce the reliance on private vehicles by:

- Working with neighbouring areas to promote regional freight and construction consolidation.
- Developing strategies with neighbouring authorities to manage traffic demand
- Supporting better digital connectivity to reduce the need for travel and encourage new transport services.
- Reviewing road network functions to prioritise the movement of people and goods over cars, considering the needs of disabled people who rely on cars

We're confused about the first action as this doesn't appear to refer to private vehicle use at all and we're not sure how consolidating freight will impact this.

However, we can see that working with neighbouring authorities may have some



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benefits such as park and ride schemes. However, it is also essential that the council adopts “stick” approaches to manage private motor vehicle use in the city centre such as reducing parking increasing parking charges and/or CAZ charges for private vehicles.



## Summary of Cycling Actions

- Investing in walking and cycling schemes, such as high-quality secure bike parking, network signage, upgrading junctions to protect vulnerable road users and changing some priorities to support active travel.
- Creating a high-quality walking and cycling network connecting neighbourhoods and shopping areas.
- Using development powers to improve infrastructure around new developments, such as better bus services, cycling paths and footpaths.
- Reviewing vehicle access in high pedestrian or cycling areas.
- Connecting communities, schools and shopping areas with a network of walking and cycling routes in low-traffic areas.
- Prioritising buses and cycles on main roads and ensuring efficient movement of goods.
- Removing barriers to walking, cycling and public transport with new crossings, junction improvements and traffic reduction measures.
- Implementing traffic reduction schemes in neighbourhoods.

The actions quoted here for cycling are disjointed and make it difficult to see and overarching plan for cycling in Newcastle although individually they are all welcome.

We want to see a city-wide network of safe, segregated routes that connects neighbourhoods, services, schools, green spaces and transport hubs that will enable cycling in our city to become a real choice for everyone.

We also want to see through traffic removed from residential streets to enable safe walking, wheeling and cycling from every front door and the reintroduction of the Play Streets scheme. We also want to see a process by which residents can apply to repurpose roadspace to support placemaking where we live and not just at destinations.



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We want to see publication of selection criteria for School Streets that enables schools and parents to assess and apply for a School Street intervention.

We want secure on-street cycle storage to be an option for residents to ensure that storage is not a barrier to cycling, and secure storage in our shopping and leisure areas to support sustainable travel for work and leisure.

We support all actions with these objectives.