

12 July 2018

## **Modal shift and encouraging active travel**

### **Purpose of report**

For direction.

### **Summary**

This reports allows members to see the key results and messages of our modal shift survey. Members' comments on the results will shape a final publication which will be released over the summer. The aim of the publication is to highlight council good practice as well as identifying the barriers that prevent them doing more.

### **Recommendation**

That the board note the key messages of the modal shift survey and raise any issues that they believe should be included in the final publication.

### **Action**

Officers will prepare a final draft of the modal shift publication based on member feedback.

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## **Modal shift and encouraging active travel**

### **Background**

1. In this year's work programme we committed to representing the interests of member councils on the issues of congestion and air quality. A key factor in improving both of these issues is moving more journeys towards sustainable modes of transport. Modal shift is also a key way in which the Government can practise demand management for road space. Given continuing growth in congestion and public air quality concerns we have made modal shift a key policy of our approaches to both issues and recognise that making sustainable transport a more attractive choice whether through price or convenience can be a key part of a policy to reduce demand on congested roads.
2. For that reason the board has undertaken to refresh the LGA's policy approaches towards encouraging sustainable transport and modal shift, underpinned by a survey of member councils.
3. In 2014 when the Government published its walking and cycling strategy we surveyed our members on their approaches to walking and cycling. We released the details as part of our response to the draft strategy. We have widened the scope of this year's survey to capture more information on modal shift in general as well as keeping some questions the same. This will allow us to track how councils have been able to implement measures in the strategy as well as their approach to encouraging modal shift. We have also asked about the barriers they face in doing more.
4. The survey will inform a publication which will highlight council good practice as well as identify the barriers that prevent them doing more. It will highlight the policy context and the funding regime for modal shift, and include up-to-date case studies of what councils are doing and refresh our policy asks in this area.
5. Officers intend to examine how modal shift interacts with our other work on future transport technology. Modal shift often involves integrating different modes and this is done most easily when different networks are integrated through connected technology. We intend for our ongoing work on future transport to complement this agenda.

### **Issues**

6. The results of the survey are available in draft form and not yet ready to be published. The final report of the survey results is expected to be published by late July. They have been included as a confidential appendix for the consideration of the board.
7. We know from the survey and our work on other transport issues that one of the main issues that authorities face is the fragmented start-stop nature of funding in this area. We intend to examine the current funding framework and a call for more funding certainty will form a key part of our policy asks in this area.

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8. Local authorities' transport budgets should enjoy the same long term funding certainty that Highways England and Network Rail are given by the Government. Both have five year funding programmes which allow them to make long term commitments to strategic projects. All local authorities need the same level of commitment in order to plan the same kind of strategic projects to encourage long term behavioural changes.
9. The sector would also benefit from considerable simplification of the transport funding regime. Currently funding is provided on a competitive basis by a number of different funders in a variety of different funding regimes. Competitive bidding takes considerable upfront investment from authorities with no guarantee of results. Given the wide variety of schemes with different geographies and criteria it can be difficult for authorities to design schemes that tackle locally identified problems. Some funding comes directly to councils, whilst other transport funding goes to Local Enterprise Partnerships. We welcome the Government's commitment to simplify transport funding for areas with devolution deals but all authorities need a simplified regime in order to take local decisions on how to best encourage modal shift.
10. We have also highlighted the nature of bus funding which means that subsidised concessionary fares are increasingly underfunded and lead to councils being forced to cut subsidised routes in order to meet the rising costs.
11. Currently the Government provides the Bus Service Operator Grant as a fuel duty rebate. This goes directly against policy objectives by acting as a disincentive to reduce fuel usage. It also provides an equal subsidy to routes that are currently commercially viable compared to those that are not. We have argued that this rebate should be devolved so it can be targeted effectively by local authorities. We are aware that the Government intends to review the grant in the coming months.
12. Whilst there have been reductions in spending in recent years the Government still invests substantial public funding on public and shared transport. However, given the fragmented regime of subsidies and short-term approach to funding, it does not provide the efficient and comprehensive network that could be provided if similar levels of expenditure were directed at providing a place based network. Given the knowledge and expertise of councils, backed by sub-regional and regional partnerships, such as LEPs, combined authorities and Sub-National Transport Bodies, there has never been a better time to place local government in control of the public transport network.
13. This was the rationale behind the Government's Total transport pilots that ran between 2015-2017. The initiative, which was the idea of councils, was designed to explore ways that the public sector could coordinate their public transport expenditure to deliver better outcomes. The results of this research have not been released. However from the feedback given from authorities involved the trial struggled with a lack of buy-in from all

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public sector bodies. It is therefore proposed that it is worth the Government repeating the trial with a more focused number of participants and greater involvement of Department of Transport and other departments.

14. In addition to the survey, feedback from councils has identified that the Government-backed bikeability courses are quickly using up the funding made available centrally without necessarily all children being able to access these courses for free. Members may wish to consider whether given the immense ongoing benefits, especially in reducing lifetime healthcare costs, the Government should commit to fund bikeability for all children who want to access it.

### **Implications for Wales**

15. This policy is an area of devolved responsibility.

### **Financial Implications**

16. None

### **Next steps**

17. It is intended that the final publication will examine all elements of active and sustainable travel, presenting case studies on encouraging travel by bus, light rail, heavy rail, car club, bike, e-bike and walking. Board members may wish to comment on specific issues and opportunities that we should examine as part of this work.
18. Officers also intend to examine how modal shift can be encouraged through new technology as part of our future transport in particular what role mobility as a service and other big data applications will have on public transport usage.
19. A draft of the publication, will be produced for lead member comment by the end of July. A final publication date will be set in discussion with the LGA's communications team in order to maximise impact.