

A Safer Way: Consultation on Making Britain's Roads the Safest in the World ~ Response from Campaign for Better Transport

Key recommendations

- The road safety strategy can help to reduce both casualty figures, and achieve other "DaSTS" goals (including more active travel to increase physical activity, and reducing carbon by enabling a shift to other modes), and it is legitimate for the strategy to seek to do this
- The vision for the road safety strategy should be amended to "the world's safest roads for all road users"
- Spending on road safety is vital to the delivery of the strategy and DfT should not prioritise spending on new road schemes over road safety and sustainable transport
- There should be a 50mph default for rural single carriage way roads, and a default of 20mph for residential and other mixed use streets
- DfT should encourage moves to the Dutch approach to road design using user centred design principles

About Campaign for Better Transport

Campaign for Better Transport is the leading transport NGO. Our compelling arguments and ideas have won us the support of national decision-makers and local activists, enabling us to secure transport policies and programmes that improve people's lives and reduce environmental impact.

Our response

Campaign for Better Transport welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the Government's road safety strategy. Our interest in responding is the role of road safety in delivering better transport, where people have real choice in the mode of transport they use and where the negative impact of transport on the environment and communities is minimised. In this context, that means supporting walking and cycling by reducing the numbers of pedestrians and cyclists killed or injured and improving people's perceptions of the safety of walking and cycling, and in continuing to reduce the overall number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads. The road safety strategy can therefore play a significant role in helping central and local government develop and deliver a sustainable transport system and address the goals set out in "Delivering a Sustainable Transport System" (DaSTS). Pedestrian safety also affects willingness to use public transport, given that this is the most significant way that public transport is accessed.

Vision (consultation question 1)

Campaign for Better Transport therefore welcomes the overall vision for road safety of "making Britain's roads the safest in the world". Comparison with other leading countries on road safety should help encourage all levels of government (as well as other stakeholders) to focus on improving safety. However, the vision should more clearly recognise that all users should benefit, and should therefore be amended to "the world's safest roads for all road users".

Road safety targets and indicators (qs 3 & 4)

The target for pedestrians and cyclists of reducing casualties based on KSI per distance travelled is particularly welcome and should avoid perverse incentives whereby reductions in walking and cycling could achieve targets to reduce cyclist and pedestrian casualties.

In terms of indicators, perceptions of safety for pedestrians and cyclists are also important in helping to deliver the Department's overall goals under the DaSTS approach and an indicator that could represent this should be included. This might be a specific indicator reporting on perceptions, or alternatively an indicator on increases in overall number and length of walking and cycling trips should be included.

The Department should also include an indicator on the roll-out of 20mph limits and zones, which could help inform future policy on setting and enforcing speed limits (eg moving from the current situation of zones and limits on single streets or groups of streets, to larger area wide 20 mph limits to ultimately a default 20mph for built-up areas).

Additional factors affecting delivery: transport spending (q 5)

Although there are a range of policy interventions to support road safety which do not necessarily involve major spending decisions, local authorities will need to be able to commit significant budgets to delivering road safety improvements, particularly on measures to encourage and enable walking and cycling. In the light of very tight spending rounds in the foreseeable future, the DfT should not be committing itself to supporting new road projects and should instead seek to work with local authorities to deliver road safety improvements alongside other sustainable transport measures.

Policy changes, including speed limits (qs 6, 11 and 12)

Given consideration of a longer term strategy of 20 years, it is important not to rule out significant policy changes. In particular, the Government should introduce a 20mph default for residential streets; and 50mph default for single carriageway rural roads (with local authorities being able to introduce signed variation to 60mph on roads where appropriate and safe to do so). The introduction of a 40mph area-wide speed limit for national parks should also be considered. The Department's own analysis suggests that a 50mph default limit would provide major benefits of casualty savings, a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions and improvements in journey reliability (which is valued more by the public than overall journey time). 20mph in urban areas would also provide benefits in modal shift from cars to walking and cycling, which would bring benefits in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and health benefits through increases in physical activity.

Additional to changes in policy on speed limits, there should be changes to liability in the civil compensation system so that the driver would need to prove the casualty caused the collision in cases involving pedestrians and cyclists.

Highway design (qs 6,11 and 12)

The *Safer Way* consultation document tends towards an approach that separated out engineering from behaviour, with separate measures under each. An approach that brought these together through a more user centred design approach would be welcome. The Dutch "Sustainable Safety" concept on the functionality of the road, addressing the relative speed of different users, and making roads self-explanatory is an approach that brings together engineering and behaviour through good design, and the DfT should consider how this approach can be encouraged across the range of bodies involved in road safety.

"Shared space" concepts should be appropriate for many residential and urban areas using this approach. There is a need for independent and rigorous research as schemes are rolled out to learn how design can reduce speeds, enable more walking and cycling and meet the needs of various groups (including enabling children's play, social interaction and the needs of those with disabilities). DfT should avoid prescriptive guidance on shared space until there is a sufficient body of evidence on which to base recommendations.

Intelligent Speed Adaptation and other vehicle technology may also help a user centred approach through additional feedback for drivers on road conditions and speed limits.

Independent annual report (q 20)

The independent annual report on road safety is a welcome innovation. The report should include:

- Key learning points from investigation of deaths from road collisions, drawing on the model of other transport modes' accident investigation bodies
- Analysis of differences on casualty figures between health service data and police data
- Information on regional and local disparities in overall figures on KSIs and on progress against national targets and indicators, and analysis on reasons for those disparities with recommendations for action at a national, regional or local level

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