

# PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSION ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: OPEN CALL FOR EVIDENCE

Are you responding on behalf of (please tick one)

- Private individual
- Private sector organisation
- Academic institution
- Public sector organisation
- Third sector organisation
- MP or political organisation
- Other (please write in) \_\_\_\_\_

## Contact details

Please provide your contact details.

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Organisation: *pteg* (Passenger Transport Executive Group). We represent the six Passenger Transport Executives (PTEs) strategic bodies serving the largest city regions outside London, covering over 11 million people. The PTEs plan, procure, provide and promote integrated transport networks. *pteg* is also a wider professional network for Britain's largest urban transport authorities.

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If responding on behalf of an organisation, please indicate its primary area of work

- Health and social care
- Education
- Sports and physical activity/ leisure and recreation
- Urban planning and design/ architecture
- Transport
- Local/ city/ town council
- National politics
- Consultancy - please write in: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other – please describe \_\_\_\_\_

**Q1 How can we encourage more people to be physically active, on a regular basis?**

We are interested in suggestions across all policy areas, including those not traditionally associated with 'physical activity'.

- 1.1 Transport is among the key issues determining whether a person leads a healthy lifestyle. Walking, cycling and public transport offer an alternative to the sedentary lifestyles that cars encourage.**
- 1.2 Public transport, cycling and walking are amongst the cheapest, most accessible and effective ways of encouraging physical activity. It is something that people are able to easily incorporate into their daily routines, meaning they are more likely to keep up the habit.**
- 1.3 The role of public transport in promoting physical activity can often go unrecognised, however, walking to the bus stop, or cycling to the station gets people moving in a way that taking two steps to the car in the drive cannot. Public transport does not usually provide a door-to-door service, meaning that a walking or cycling trip at either end will normally be required.**
- 1.4 An American study<sup>1</sup> found that people who use public transport spend a median of 19 minutes daily walking to and from public transport. Some 29% of people achieved the required 30 minutes or more daily physical activity solely by walking to and from public transport. People in low income households, minority groups and high-density urban areas were particularly likely to spend 30 minutes or more walking to and from public transport.**
- 1.5 Similar results have been observed in the UK. A study by Mindlab<sup>2</sup> found that walking as part of a return trip by bus provided up to half the recommended daily level of exercise. Study participants walked an average of 1.3km (taking around 15 minutes) when taking a return journey by bus, 2.5 times more than when taking the same journey by car.**
- 1.6 Research has also been conducted into the impact free bus travel has on levels of physical activity with the results showing that free travel results in more trips and more active travel:
  - Research by Imperial College London<sup>3</sup> found that people with a bus pass are more likely to walk frequently and take more 'active travel' journeys.**
  - A longitudinal study<sup>4</sup> of 9000 people in England found that free bus passes for older people had increased their public transport use and that older people who used public transport had reduced odds of being obese compared with those who did not. It found that those who used public transport, or took****

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<sup>1</sup> Besser, L.M. and Dannenberg, A.L. (2005) 'Walking to Public Transit: Steps to help meet physical activity recommendations' in American Journal of Preventative Medicine 29 (4) pp. 273-280.

<sup>2</sup> Research commissioned by Greener Journeys and conducted by Dr David Lewis of Mindlab International (2011)

<sup>3</sup> Coronini-Cronberg, S. et al (2012) The impact of free older persons' bus pass on active travel and regular walking in England

<sup>4</sup> Webb, E., Netuveli, G. and Millett, C. (2011) Free bus passes, use of public transport and obesity among older people in England

advantage of free bus travel, were 25% less likely to be obese in 2008 than those who did not.

1.7 In the UK, many short trips are currently undertaken by car. If these trips were replaced with walking, cycling or public transport we would have the opportunity to get more people to reach recommended physical activity levels in a way that is easily incorporated into daily life.

**Q2** What fundamental policy changes need to be made to increase the levels of physical activity across the UK?

We are interested in suggestions across all policy areas, including those not traditionally associated with 'physical activity'. You may also wish to consider how different populations within the UK can effectively be reached through policy change.

1.8 We welcome the increased investment and priority given to cycling and walking from national and local government in recent years (e.g. through the Local Sustainable Transport Fund and the Cycle City Ambition Grants). However, achieving a step change in cycling levels requires sustained, long-term investment and leadership.

1.9 Research commissioned by *pteg* from Sustrans<sup>5</sup> found that the greatest potential for increasing cycling in the UK can be found in the city regions, particularly given that close to 50% of all journeys in those areas are relatively local in nature.

1.10 To promote a significant shift towards cycling, the report recommends a short term focus on high impact 'quick wins' in areas with the most potential for change (e.g. key corridors, schools and workplaces) plus substantial investment in the longer term to produce more comprehensive mode shift.

1.11 In PTE areas alone, the report found that an area wide approach similar to that piloted in the Cycling Demonstration Town programme (where funding was at least £10 per head of population per year) could generate 96 million additional cycle trips per year from an investment of £337 million over three years. The value of this travel behaviour change is estimated at around £716 million over ten years, including significant benefits for the health sector.

1.12 Alongside support for cycling and walking, investment in public transport – particularly the bus - also supports physical activity. By catching the bus, commuters achieve half of the recommended 30 minutes of daily exercise<sup>6</sup>. Bus services also deliver multiple economic, social and environmental benefits. Despite this, the bus has been one of the biggest losers of recent years from decisions on transport funding. The cross-sectoral benefits of the bus must be properly recognised in spending decisions and the bus allocated a greater share of available funding.

1.13 Investment in walking, cycling and public transport should come from the health, as well as the transport, sector in recognition of the public health benefits these interventions bring.

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<sup>5</sup> *pteg* (2011) 'Cycling in the city regions: Delivering a step change' <http://pteg.net/resources/types/reports/cycling-city-regions-delivering-step-change>

<sup>6</sup> Research commissioned by Greener Journeys and conducted by Dr David Lewis of Mindlab International (2011)

1.14 We would like a portion of the ring-fenced budget for public health held by local Directors of Public Health to go towards active travel. Investments in walking and cycling have been shown to have very high benefit to cost ratios (at least 3:1 and up to as much as 10:1) with two thirds of this monetary benefit due to health care cost savings thanks to increased physical activity levels<sup>7</sup>.

1.15 We would also like to see PTEs and transport representatives form part of Health and Wellbeing Boards to help identify local needs and solutions. At the same time, local Directors of Public Health should be strategic partners in the design and preparation of Local Transport Plans and other local transport strategies. If transport and health stakeholders were to become more involved in each other's local policy making processes, a more joined up approach to boosting active travel would result.

**Q3** What existing best practice is being delivered in or across sport, health, transport, urban planning and education which addresses the issue of physical inactivity? How and why are these examples successful?

You may wish to consider factors such skills, attitudes to risk and change, rules such as procurement, incentives and the degree of integration with existing or other services.

You may also choose to consider initiatives from outside these sectors which have led to an increase in physical activity (as a direct or indirect impact).

1.16 Members of the *pteg* network are delivering a wide range of initiatives to encourage physical activity through transport. A few examples are described below.

1.17 Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) has started delivering its 12 year strategy for cycling. An initial £20 million Cycle City Ambition Grant will deliver a major new network of cycle routes; 'Cycle and Ride' facilities at selected railway stations and Metrolink stops; and an ambitious programme of cycling promotion and education. This first phase is anticipated to bring annual health benefits of £7.3 million. TfGM's approach represents good practice as it is based on a long-term vision for cycling and because it recognises that infrastructure improvement must be combined with behavioural change and promotional activity.

1.18 Merseytravel, as part of Travelwise, is taking active travel into the heart of communities, including through free cycle training for all adults in Merseyside, free bike maintenance and community outreach events. Merseytravel is also responsible for Merseyrail. Merseyrail stations have been among the first to offer bike hire, allowing passengers to quickly and easily complete their train journey by bike. There are also hundreds of secure storage facilities and bikes travel free on trains. Merseytravel's approach represents good practice because it reaches out to communities who may not previously have thought cycling was 'for them'. It also seeks to integrate cycling with other transport modes making for active door-to-door journeys.

1.19 Nexus, as part of the Tyne and Wear LTP team, is targeting commuters in four key employment areas as well as schools for their 'Go Smarter' programme aimed at making journeys healthier, cheaper and greener.

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<sup>7</sup> Davis, A (2010) Value for money: An economic assessment of investing in walking and cycling

Research suggests that targeting areas with the most potential for change (such as schools and workplaces) delivers high impact 'quick wins'<sup>8</sup>.

**Q4** What are some examples of initiatives that have failed and why have they been unsuccessful or not lasted?

1.20 To successfully encourage people to use active travel modes for a greater proportion of their journeys, we must ensure that these modes fulfil four key criteria. Active travel options must be:

- Available – public transport, cycling and walking routes must be within easy reach of where people live and connect them to the places they want to go at the times they need to travel. People also need information about the transport options that are available to enable them to make the best choice for their journey.
- Accessible – vehicles and infrastructure (e.g. interchanges, footpaths and cycle lanes) must be designed to ensure everyone is able to use them without unreasonable difficulty.
- Affordable – walking is free, but people may need assistance to buy bikes and equipment. Furthermore, people should not be 'priced out' of using public transport because of high fares.
- Acceptable – people should feel that walking, cycling and public transport are 'for them' – modes that meet their needs and are comfortable, safe and convenient. This could, for example, require marketing activities such as cycling taster events, special offers on travel tickets or promotional materials highlighting health benefits.

1.21 The most successful initiatives employ packages of measures that address these aspects, combining capital expenditure on things like vehicles, cycle hubs or footpath improvements with revenue expenditure on softer measures such as travel training, behaviour change and promotional activities.

**Q5** In a world with limited financial resources what are the most cost-effective approaches and how can existing resources be realigned to have the greatest impact?

1.22 As described in our answers to questions one and two, investment in public transport, walking and cycling deliver excellent benefit to cost ratios and offer people opportunities to be physically active in a way that is easily incorporated into their daily lives.

1.23 The most successful and cost-effective approaches address the availability, accessibility, affordability and acceptability of active travel modes. More specifically, our research has shown that<sup>9</sup>:

- Active travel packages combining behavioural and environmental/infrastructure measures are highly effective.
- High levels of mode shift can be achieved by focusing activity on key destinations and trip generators (e.g. schools, workplaces and public transport interchanges). Targeting people at points of transition can also be effective – people are more open to changing their established modes of travel when they move house, for example.
- Coordinated investment in cycling, walking and public transport can increase the use of each by promoting less car dependent lifestyles.

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<sup>8</sup> *pteg* (2011) 'Cycling in the city regions: Delivering a step change' <http://pteg.net/resources/types/reports/cycling-city-regions-delivering-step-change>

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*

Evidence suggests, for example, that cycling can play a significant role in making rail travel more attractive and accessible.

- 1.24 Investment in walking, cycling and public transport not only brings benefits for the health sector. These modes connect people to opportunities to work, play, learn and to stay healthy and happy. They can contribute to a range of policy goals from increasing employment to helping older people to stay independent. Despite these wide ranging benefits to other sectors, the transport sector continues to bear the vast majority of the costs.
- 1.25 With the current squeeze on spending, the transport sector is becoming less able to meet these costs and there has never been a better time for agencies across sectors to pool resources and expertise. We advocate a 'Total Transport' approach<sup>10</sup>, finding ways to work efficiently and collaboratively across policy divides to enable transport to maintain and expand its role in connecting people to opportunity and keeping them fit, healthy and independent, thereby saving money for the public purse.
- Q6** How can young people be encouraged to take part in more physical activity?
- We are interested in ideas and examples which cover before, during and after school, as well as time in weekends and holidays.
- 1.26 Young people are more likely to take part in physical activity if it is something they can fit into their daily lives. Cycling and walking are among the cheapest, most accessible and most effective ways of doing this. We would like to see Bikeability cycle training form part of the physical education curriculum so that all children (including those who do not thrive in competitive sport) are equipped with the skills and opportunities to be active in their daily lives.
- 1.27 Young people also need access to the information they need to make smarter travel choices. PTEs work in schools to promote cycling, walking and public transport options and to help children and their parents plan journeys.
- 1.28 After the age of 16, the car becomes the key competitor for meeting young people's independent travel needs. By laying the groundwork early on, encouraging children to see public transport, cycling and walking as normal and to value these modes, we can hope that young people continue to use them into adulthood.
- 1.29 We also need to look at ways in which cycling, walking and public transport can connect young people to positive, healthy activities outside of school. Our research suggests<sup>11</sup>, for example, that high bus fares prevent parents from allowing their children to participate in such activities, leading them to 'ration' their children's journeys. One way to tackle this would be to introduce capped daily bus fares that enable young people to make as many journeys as they like for one flat fare (e.g. £1 for an all day ticket).

**Q6** If there are any relevant papers that have been generated by, or useful to your organisation in adopting innovations, please attach them as part of your response, or give links in the box below

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<sup>10</sup> pteg (2011) Total Transport: Working across sectors to achieve better outcomes'  
<http://pteg.net/resources/types/reports/total-transport-working-across-sectors-achieve-better-outcomes>

<sup>11</sup> pteg (2012) Moving on: Working towards a better public transport offer for young people in tough times  
<http://pteg.net/resources/types/reports/moving-working-towards-better-public-transport-offer-young-people-tough>

- 1.30 *pteg* (2011) ‘Total Transport; Working across sectors to achieve better outcomes’ highlights the essential role of public transport, walking and cycling in achieving key health, social care and employment policy goals. It calls for collaborative, cross sector funding and delivery of transport interventions. <http://pteg.net/resources/types/reports/total-transport-working-across-sectors-achieve-better-outcomes>
- 1.31 *pteg* (2013) ‘The Case for the Urban Bus – The Economic and Social Value of Bus Networks in the Metropolitan Areas’ presents a detailed evaluation of the benefits of investing in the urban bus, including the contribution of bus networks to health and wellbeing. <http://pteg.net/resources/types/reports/case-urban-bus-economic-and-social-value-bus-networks-metropolitan-areas>
- 1.32 *pteg* (2011) ‘Cycling in the city regions: Delivering a step change’ explores the potential impact of a step change in measures to support cycling in the city regions <http://pteg.net/resources/types/reports/cycling-city-regions-delivering-step-change>. and <http://pteg.net/resources/types/reports/cycling-city-regions-technical-report>
- 1.33 The ‘Public health’ hub on our website (<http://pteg.net/resources/public-health>) has a health and transport evidence base section (<http://pteg.net/resources/public-health/health-and-transport-evidence-base>) and good practice examples on making the connections between transport and health (<http://pteg.net/resources/public-health/good-practice-examples>).
- 1.34 The ‘Cycling’ hub on our website (<http://pteg.net/resources/cycling>) includes key sources of information on the evidence base for investing in cycling (<http://pteg.net/resources/cycling/cycling-policy-and-evidence-base-key-websites>).

Q7 Any further comments?

- 1.35 We are grateful for the opportunity to respond to this consultation and would be happy to provide more information or assistance if required.