

# Public perspectives on transport and health



## A report on THINK's Public Agenda Setting Workshops 2023

### Introduction

THINK held a series of workshops in January 2023 that brought together interested members of the public who heard about the opportunity to take part via the Health and Care Research Wales Public Involvement platform.

The workshops were designed to gather perspectives to help inform strategic decisions about where THINK should invest time and resources, and how THINK's work could reach a wider public audience.



# A message from **THINK Co-Director** **Charles Musselwhite**



Dear participants of the THINK Public Agenda Setting Workshop,

Many thanks for your time and insightful contributions to the workshops back in January. I hear that some really good discussions took place about space sharing, a lack of joined up approaches to transport provision and the needs of transport users who might need extra support.

Unfortunately I could not take part myself but rest assured that your facilitator and THINK Project Officer Amy Nicholass kept me informed of your contributions and these have been discussed on various occasions since, in order to inform THINK's work. In fact, I am pleased to announce that as a result of your suggestions to explore the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in transport management we are at the early stages of developing a research idea in collaboration with the Department of Computer Sciences the Aberystwyth Business School based on the role of AI, sensors and technology to improve walkability.

The THINK team is currently planning future events and opportunities for the public to contribute to our work, so do keep your eyes open for a chance to work with us again soon.

Charles Musselwhite, THINK Co Director.

# A Summary of THINK's Public Agenda Setting Workshops 2023

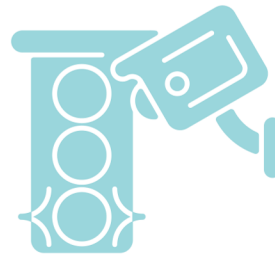


This is a short version of what the members of the public who took part in the workshops shared with us.

There were 7 participants in total, 4 male, 3 female from cities and more rural areas of Wales and England.

## a) Priorities (in no particular order)

- Reduce the cost of Public Transport as much as possible
- Have more public transport services in areas where there are only a few services
- Better and more segregated bicycle lanes
- More areas made traffic free in city centres
- Monitoring and enforcement for safe space sharing
- Accessibility for all



## b) Challenges (in no particular order)

- Weather
- Public transport: access to bus and train
- Pollution problem
- Space sharing
- Lack of information
- Negative image of buses
- Private car ownership



There are already good examples of positive things happening in parts of the UK and in other countries that make it cheaper, easier, safer and more appealing to walk, cycle or use public transport which should be used as inspiration to spread these ideas.

A diverse set of ideas for future research has emerged, to address the challenges listed from using Artificial Intelligence, to assessing the impacts of free public transport and the benefits/ dis-benefits to the population of cycling for tackling climate change.

There are many opportunities for practitioners working in transport and health to improve their communication with the public by learning from the experiences of the public via surveys in transport planning apps, and regular, respectful, pro active contact with the public providing them with opportunities to contribute to ideas, plus messaging via TV dramas and podcasts.





# Task 1: Exploring priorities and challenges

In the first task we asked people in the online workshop to tell us the most important things to them about transport in relation to health.

We put the responses into different themes which you can see in the boxes below, listed in no particular order.

## Priorities

Theme	Most important things
<b>Reduce cost of Public Transport as much as possible</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make public transport much cheaper or free to protect environment and the economy.</li> <li>• Success in France and Spain to give free/ cheap public transport.</li> <li>• People spend more time in city centre, spending more money in cafes etc.</li> <li>• More public transport leads to less pollution and more walking to bus stop and roads less busy for emergency services and other buses etc.</li> <li>• Cyclists are safer as fewer cars if people use public transport.</li> <li>• Transport for Wales should be radical to set an example in the UK and will have a greater impact than the basic income trial.</li> <li>• There should be a fixed cost for however far you are travelling as there is elsewhere.</li> <li>• Make public transport a similar cost of a postage stamp.</li> <li>• Excellent to have free bus travel for people over a certain age but work out whether it best serves people's needs, as lots of wealthier pensioners but poorer young people. Spread out the subsidy to more people.</li> </ul>
<b>Have more public transport services in areas where there are only a few services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For example in rural areas, especially late evening and early morning.</li> <li>• Pay bus drivers more so keep more bus drivers for routes. At the moment bus drivers get paid more for truck driving so there aren't enough of them.</li> <li>• Better information – Welsh government and agencies make easily accessible online information about all forms of transport people might be using, rail and bus eg like CityMapper in London which doesn't work in Wales.</li> <li>• Availability of public transport along useful routes people actually want to use (routes that go to lots of places make journeys too long, especially in rural areas). How do we serve everyone's need – like the fast and slow train routes?</li> </ul>
<b>Better and more segregated bicycle lanes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not just beside the road but 'roads for bikes'.</li> <li>• Cycling lanes around and over Copenhagen in Denmark are great.</li> <li>• Should insist any new development has bike lanes completely separate from traffic as important as social housing.</li> <li>• Cycle lanes of useful routes that people actually want to use.</li> </ul>



## Priorities

Theme	Key priorities suggested
<b>More areas made traffic free in city centres</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covid-19 travel restrictions provided examples of these which helped pedestrians and reduced pollution in heavy traffic areas.</li> </ul>
<b>Monitoring and enforcement for safe space sharing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could use Artificial Intelligence for monitoring what speed car and cyclists are going to be able to enforce the respect element of space sharing.</li> <li>• Politicians make decisions but the effort to evaluate the decisions when put into action is too little.</li> <li>• More data is needed on incidents involving different types of transport and made available more clearly.</li> <li>• Can we dip into emergency care data for health service to give indication of what transport casualties end up with them? – not all end up in hospital though.</li> <li>• Regulation of e-scooters and e-bikes to make sure not fatal accidents</li> <li>• Traffic police in city centres to control monitoring and enforcement for everyone in equal way (more power than traffic wardens who are easily threatened).</li> </ul>
<b>Accessibility for all</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can we implement solutions to make everywhere accessible for all and fund them.</li> <li>• Appointments for hospital should check with patients if they need transport and if no obvious bus route, the hospital provides hospital transport.</li> <li>• Improve how people learn about services especially community transport and multiple ways to book services not just phone etc.</li> <li>• Improve safety and public transport - bus shelters are not that safe or attractive for people using the bus and do not display real time smart information. Reduces the stress of passengers when they are well informed, need to be comfortable shelters to deal with the UK weather and need to be well lit as currently dangerous.</li> <li>• Clashes between those using buggies and wheelchairs on public transport. If using public transport for shopping with lots of bags – need somewhere to put this so can carry these. Not enough storage areas and not great when there is an emergency stop as baggage all moves around.</li> </ul>

## Challenges

Theme	Key challenges suggested
<b>Weather</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Going to work and leaving in the dark in winter feels unsafe and might be dangerous if cycling and walking and less ability to see.</li> <li>• If cold and raining less likely to feel good being wet going to work.</li> <li>• With climate change it might be too warm to walk or cycle in the summer soon.</li> </ul>
<b>Public transport: access to bus and train</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since pandemic more people conscious are aware of being in same indoor space as others and concerned about getting cold/ flu/ Covid and concerned about the impacts of infectious diseases/ viruses.</li> <li>• Better services, more frequent, more reliable (need to recruit more people as drivers), more equality and opps for those excluded who don't have a car. Invest in buses even though budgets tight.</li> <li>• Does it consider the needs of those with additional learning need or mobility needs? Or other health conditions – i.e. needing toilets to be open 24 hours of Crohn's Disease sufferers.</li> <li>• Lack of connectivity between places. It takes along time to plan a journey, if want to go anywhere other than city centre have to go to city centre then outwards bus from there which add time to the day (can spend longer travelling than at your destination).</li> <li>• Public transport is an arena where people with any physical health issues that are not obvious to others, or with mental health issues can be a challenge as society and is judgemental and harsh and lack of acceptance which makes it unpleasant environment.</li> <li>• Disabled toilet use judgement – those that are not obviously disabled visibly should still be able to feel comfortable to use them. (i.e. Crohn's disease or autism)</li> <li>• Issues with paying for bus tickets with bank card without being able to put in a pin. Causes concerns and stress for next time.</li> </ul>
<b>Pollution problem</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mechanisms for achieving better public health can be narrated as contentious in the media and are often perceived as infringing on people's individual rights e.g., reducing space in cities and towns allocated to car use, reorganising streets for other modes and reducing traffic speeds</li> <li>• Public health and transport are both used politically to influence and divide the electorate and media outlets thrive on public debate making it difficult to communicate evidence to the public</li> <li>• Avoiding people feeling 'done to' or people feeling they cannot make a difference</li> <li>• Culture of transportation e.g., influence of social status on choice of travel mode</li> </ul>

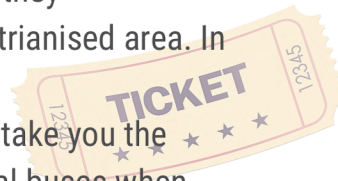
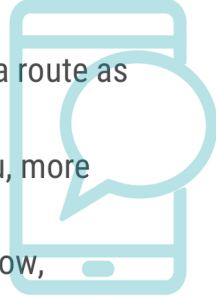
<b>Theme</b> <b>Challenges</b>	<b>Key challenges suggested</b>
<b>Space sharing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal security issues vs reducing carbon emissions</li> <li>• Pavements are often of bad quality</li> <li>• Cyclists on the pavement and cyclists who don't stop for pedestrians at crossings (especially in Cardiff) and cause issues for pushchair users</li> <li>• Fast e-bikes not observing pedestrians</li> <li>• Use of e-scooters is dangerous for pedestrians</li> <li>• Aggressive use of park trails by cyclists</li> <li>• Some cycle lanes don't join up despite lots of money spent on them</li> <li>• Parking on pavements getting worse so no space for pushchairs, wheelchair users and children walking to school forced into the road</li> <li>• Lack of enforcement for poor transport behaviour like parking in wrong place and e-scooter users where illegal</li> <li>• Delivery cyclists not following the rules, especially where supposed to be pedestrianised areas.</li> <li>• Could use Artificial Intelligence for monitoring what speed car and cyclists are going to be able to enforce the respect element of space sharing.</li> </ul>
<b>Lack of information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of ease to access information from local authorities to get extra support and not much use when get the support.</li> </ul>
<b>Negative image of buses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need something to alter the image of buses with professional people.</li> <li>• Negative perception and what it represents – if seen on buses you are a pensioner or you have failed at life or an outcast. Not the same in other countries where professionals use the buses.</li> </ul>
<b>Private car ownership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People have cars to have opportunity to use it but mostly stored on the street wasting money spend on the expensive car loans and fuel etc.</li> <li>• A car is a huge/bad investment of money so car club would be useful.</li> <li>• Will be challenges with second hand cars that are electric as so expensive to keep in good condition.</li> <li>• Discrimination (more penalties) against car users even if the cars are needed to address caring or mobility needs.</li> <li>• Expensive</li> </ul>



## Activity 2: Lie of the land

The second workshop activity was designed to broaden our understanding of what people are doing now to tackle the challenges in transport and health that were raised in the first activity. Below are listed, in no particular order, the activities that the participants suggested are already taking place.

- Online information has improved for buses – welcome a map view where buses are on a route as well as providing the time to arrive. Not just Cardiff. Stagecoach do it.
- People are walking more since Covid- 19 travel restrictions. Weekly walk for Age Cymru, more enthusiasm for walking as a past time and a means to get from A to B.
- Some cities have integrated online travel planning apps like London, Manchester, Glasgow, Edinburgh where all modes are shown including journey planning and routes.
- Coaches, buses and HGVs have speed restrictors in them and can we introduce these on certain roads with cars too?
- In Cardiff there is now a two hour limit on free parking in suburban car parks which has freed up space for people just calling in to do shopping.
- Increase in coffee shops in suburban areas gives people something to walk to and from especially during Covid- 19 travel restrictions.
- Pedestrianisation of certain areas has raised the quality of the environment in that area but this needs to be weighed up with the experience of visitors to the areas and how are they accommodated via alternative routes to come to the area and walk to the pedestrianised area. In Manchester have park and ride to take a tram to pedestrian area.
- For the Cardiff bus, if paying for travel you can change buses and one ticket will take you the whole way. Can get day travel ticket. Shouldn't have to pay for two tickets in local buses when change from one to the other. Extensive across Europe to buy one ticket for a day and doesn't matter how many times you change and Singapore introduced this. This can increase the use of public transport.
- Movement for safer spaces to store bikes especially when cycling to city centre as bike thefts are a problem. Groups in Cardiff promoting bike storage, eg in local café.
- More cycling lanes.
- Repair Cafes help you to repair a bike which is really good.
- In the news the move for trying to be greener especially in younger generations with use of alternative means of transport rather than private car and plane.
- Community Transport is available but not advertised.
- Has been an effort to encourage the use of cycling e.g. more cycle parking etc. In London have a free bike scheme. Lots of walking and cycling lanes painted in cities but seems superficial and pointless.
- Hiring of scooters and e-bikes but under-used.
- Subsidies for some age groups but shouldn't be restricted to those groups.



## Activity 3: Getting from here to there

The third activity was designed to get participants to share ideas of what they would like to see **research concentrating its efforts on** to address the challenges and priorities above.

Below, we have summarised the ideas from all the workshops and presented them in no particular order.

1. The **impact of free public transport on health and happiness** of individuals and economy. E.g. Estonia, or Spain which has free trains in urban areas or pay ten Euros for a card (and reimbursed when use 10 times) extended for whole of 2023. Germany reduced their train costs and then raised again.
2. **The value of using AI and introducing AI on all physical transport systems** like cycling, e-scooters, motorbikes, cars.
3. **Consequences of escalating aggressive behaviour between different road users** – how do we break this cycle and make this a more pleasant experience? Australia is more joined up in their thinking and cycling in dedicated cycle ways and less people on the roads.
4. **The benefits/dis-benefits to the population from more cycling to tackle climate change.**
5. **How to carry out quality evaluation of transport intervention policy ideas.**
6. **Talk to the end users** – contact people and find out what would make them use public transport. Go to local clubs and talk to people.
7. **Examine public transport culture in different cities around the world**, what councils have done to get a better image for public transport and where have they overcome a negative association of public transport?
8. **Cost effective routes – what is and isn't feasible?**
9. **Trams in the UK** – big cities using these especially abroad. Vienna pay a daily fee.
10. **How to make car share viable in the UK?** Not in the press anymore – is this due to Covid-19?
11. **What populations find it hard to use public transport and how can we help?**
12. **Local businesses provide bus ticket bus users with a discount in a local shop. Ask if local businesses would support this?**
13. **Would supermarkets fund bus services to their sites from residential areas?**





## Activity 4: Improving communication with the public

In this activity we wanted to find out where people are likely to get their information from when they are thinking about topics to do with transport and health, how communication from transport and health practitioners can be improved and what the success of THINK could look like.

**The following were the ways in which our 7 participants were most likely to get new trusted information with word of mouth from family being the most popular (participants were asked to choose their top 3 methods):**

- Word of mouth via family
- Word of mouth via friends
- Friends/ family/ neighbours social media groups (Facebook, WhatsApp, Signal etc)
- National newspapers
- Leaflets/ posters in local facilities (like doctors surgery, religious centre, corner shop, libraries, sports centres, co-working spaces).
- Website of known and trusted organisations
- News via smart phone
- News via the internet on desktop/laptop
- Not for profit organisations



**Out of a list of 8 types of social media, below are the types of social media where trusted information is most likely to be looked for by our 7 participants.**

WhatsApp was the most popular, followed by Facebook (for contacts and specific groups), then Twitter, then Instagram and Signal.





## Activity 4: Improving communication with the public

**What ways could professional practitioners working in transport and health communicate better with the public besides improving written and online communications?**

- Transport for Wales app: discount for using the app like supermarkets use. Can run surveys in the app – faster than the radio and better than the newspaper. Make the TfW app useful: use as a touch point for the public like feedback complaints about stations etc so quicker than filling in a form and better to spend money on the app than money on public relations team. Then have instant access to data/ information like how busy the bus is and where people get on the bus etc.
- Dramas and podcasts - connecting art and science to get wider audiences, doing a play on these.
- In dramas on TV the working class and less successful characters use buses and the middle class and successful characters use cars. How can we address these stereotypes?
- Learn from experiences of others e.g. the public involvement group could be core membership who are linked in networks, you can use these groups and have a core membership engaged with regularly and use them to disseminate information and to build trust with them over time. Once have a mass of information and trusted relationship with population it becomes an exponential rise in awareness and they become ambassadors and trusted source to share the information. Need to engage regularly and receive respectful information. Not just every 6 months and say 'this is what we have done'.

**How do you think we could measure the positive impact of our work? E.g. what would a successful THINK look like from your perspective?**

- More buses.
- Increase in the population using buses.
- Noticeable perception of change of the image of public transport and who uses it.
- More interdisciplinary discussions within the major groups rather than reports gathering dust.
- If one thing makes a difference to someone's decision making it will be a success.
- Sensible planning of road works so that public transport can get where its going to go. Lots of train strikes means it's easier to drive a car.
- Number of people using public transport goes up.
- Number of people using the TfW app and using public transport because its free, indicating public transport is spreading across Wales
- Framework for transport for next five years for each region on Wales – what is being done in THINK can be used by local authorities.
- Number of people using bikes and walking goes up, number of bikes in Wales and number of bikes stops and number of repair shops. How many garages in Wales – should have same number for bikes, or number of tyres sold.
- How many bike safer storage units available locally for bikes and in the next few years showing local authorities have dedicated funding to this.
- Time for commuting, a certain day of year (first day of Jan eg) how much time does it take and has this reduced if less people driving? Using Google maybe?
- Better transport connectivity within Wales



# Next steps for THINK

After the Public Agenda Setting workshop took place the THINK team have reflected on the contributions from the workshops and have been working on the following ideas:

- THINK is doing a 'systems mapping exercise' with groups of people to draw the connections between policy, culture, infrastructure, economics etc that could enable accessible walking and cycling for everyone. The public will be invited to take part in one of these events to build on the map.
- Enabling the THINK members (approx. 150 people representing different organisations) to improve their skills for involving the public in the work they do via training in Co-Production and Citizen Involvement and workshops at the annual THINK conference in the autumn.
- THINK is developing a relationship with the Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies to investigate if it possible to collaborate on research or education opportunities related to the role of TV drama in promoting unhelpful transport stereotypes.
- THINK is working with the Department of Computer Sciences and Aberystwyth University Business School to develop a research idea about the role of AI, sensors and technology to make walking safer.
- THINK is developing a virtual reality scenario idea to use at public roadshows to research how people can share road space more considerately and safely.
- THINK will record and add additional episodes to the THINK Community Transport Podcast series - one about setting up community car shares and one about health centres working with community transport to enable appointments to be booked at suitable times  
<https://think.aber.ac.uk/think-podcast/>
- We have a THINK working group investigating how to standardise the way that councils make a decision about whether there are enough services/facilities to meet residents' needs within a suitable walking distance when it comes to new housing developments and existing settlements.
- THINK is using its podcast on community transport to spread the word about the success of Bus Buddies in Pembrokeshire and how this approach of providing public transport support from time of booking to return home helps more people use public transport.  
<https://think.aber.ac.uk/think-podcast/>





## Thank you again to all those participants who provided their valuable insights for the THINK Public Agenda Setting Workshop



THINK has been created to bring together people working in transport and health from policy, practice and academia, developing skills, experience and knowledge, generating new practice-orientated research and getting research into practice.

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THINK is a collaboration between:



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