

The UK Transport policy menu: Roads, roads, and a dash of multi-modalism

Adrian Davis FFPH
Prof of Transport & Health
Transport Research Institute
Edinburgh Napier University

Four main challenges to achieving large scale behaviour change in the way the public travel

1. The first is that of a policy disconnect. This is that the over-riding policy for the past 30 years plus has been to build more road space – often termed '*predict and provide*'
2. Whether the claims by Govt to support *demand management* are rhetoric or reality. We ask this given the schism between *predict and provide* on the one hand and *demand management* on the other, with successive governments apparently supporting these two opposing policies concurrently.
3. Whether any conflicts are deliberate or simply outcomes of good intentions that are constantly pitted against external pressures.
4. Whether *demand management* and voluntary travel behaviour change programmes can work effectively in a country where such a policy conflict appears to exist at the national government level.

POLICY DISCONNECT? TRANSPORT POLICY FROM THE LATE 20TH CENTURY

- Over-arching policies of societal public health & environmental sustainability (“let’s reduce our car use”) asked to co-exist with a policy of predict and provide (“let’s increase our car use”)
- Roads for Prosperity White Paper (1989) announced ‘largest roads programme since Romans’, with a backdrop of govt road traffic forecasts of motor traffic growth of between 83 & 142% by 2025.
- In opposition - as a response to this was the New Realism which, in essence, provided the intellectual underpinning for a policy reversal.
- Labour’s 10 Year Plan (2000) announced 58 schemes, most of which were to be new roads. Govt also shifted its position and stated that it was not its objective to reduce traffic growth. More telling still was its lack of commitment to road pricing as a demand management tool.

The importance of SACTRA (& Phil Goodwin)...

- Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment (SACTRA) report (1994) concluded that new roads generate extra motorised traffic by as much as 20% in the long term over and above that predicted in the scheme traffic forecast modelling
- Additional traffic growth creates a vicious spiral of increasing private motorised travel. More road space equals more car use equals less public transport use and so fares go up, frequency goes down with the result that more people transfer to cars and the new equilibrium point is a lower level of service in both cars and public transport.
- As Goodwin has noted, but with a sting in the tail, *“further studies have found that the evidence has been consistent, recurrent, unchallenged by serious countervailing evidence, but repeatedly forgotten”*

Coalition Government (2010-2015)

- Road building schemes have become more commonplace as part of the Government's transport agenda, not least after the 2008 economic 'crash' with the mantra that road building is an effective way to increase economic activity.
- This period also witnessed continued support for sustainable transport. This was most clearly reflected in the Local Sustainable Transport Fund in England with variations in Scotland & Wales

Sustainable Travel Towns study (2004-2009)

- Peterborough, Darlington, and Worcester.
- An independent review (Sloman et al., 2010) reported that taking all three towns together, the total number of trips per head made by residents reduced slightly.
- Car trips per person reduced and trips but more sustainable modes increased. The figures showed a similar overall pattern, but marked differences in detail, from town to town.
- Car driver trips by residents fell by 9% per person, and car driver distance by 5% - 7%, according to aggregated household survey results for the three towns. This compares with a fall of about 1% in medium-sized urban areas over the same period, based on NTS data.
- Walking, cycling and public transport by contrast all grew substantially in each town against a backdrop of decline nationally in similar towns.
- Such a successful project might have given a government enough fortitude to steer much greater funding streams towards many other towns... Sustainable transport policies therefore appear to be accompanied more by rhetoric than real substance.

The economic myth of roads are good for the economy

- Leitch report (1977) and a Government Economic service report, Parkinson, 1981, both provide official confirmation of the lack of evidence in favour of road construction serving job creation and increased output in the manufacturing sector.
- *"At the national and regional levels, therefore, all the evidence points to the conclusion that improvements to the trunk road system can only have a limited effect on industrial location and growth"* Leitch
- Seven Bridge: a study could find no impact on economic growth and regional development (Cleary & Thomas, 1973). In studying the impact of the Severn Bridge and its associated motorways, the authors concluded that:
- *"..there has been no significant relocation of manufacturing establishments as a consequence of the Bridge" p. 98*

What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth

- Reviewed around 2,300 evaluations of the local economic impact of transport projects from the UK and other OECD countries but found only 17 robust studies of the effect of road schemes on the local economy (Overman, 2015).
- Main findings included that roads can positively impact local employment, but that effects were not always positive, and a majority of evaluations showed no (or mixed) effects on employment. Of six studies that reported employment effects, two found a positive impact, three found no impact, and one found mixed results.
- CPRE (2017) evidence for the economic benefits of UK road building included over 80 road schemes with post-opening project evaluations gathered by Highways England found that evidence for economic benefits from road schemes was weak, absent, or even negative:
- 25 road schemes were promoted on the basis they would benefit the local economy, but only 6 had evidence of any economic effects; for those six schemes, there was no evidence that economic effects were directly attributable to the road scheme, were genuinely additional, and were not displacement of economic activity from elsewhere;
- Where a road scheme was justified on the basis that it would support regeneration of an area with a struggling economy, it was common for economic development following completion of the road scheme to be slower than expected, or not to materialise at all.

What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth

- Reviewed around 2,300 evaluations of the local economic impact of transport projects from the UK and other OECD countries but found only 17 robust studies of the effect of road schemes on the local economy (Overman, 2015).
- Main findings included that roads can positively impact local employment, but that effects were not always positive, and a majority of evaluations showed no (or mixed) effects on employment. Of six studies that reported employment effects, two found a positive impact, three found no impact, and one found mixed results.
- CPRE (2017) evidence for the economic benefits of UK road building included over 80 road schemes with post-opening project evaluations gathered by Highways England found that evidence for economic benefits from road schemes was weak, absent, or even negative:
- 25 road schemes were promoted on the basis they would benefit the local economy, but only 6 had evidence of any economic effects; for those six schemes, there was no evidence that economic effects were directly attributable to the road scheme, were genuinely additional, and were not displacement of economic activity from elsewhere;
- Where a road scheme was justified on the basis that it would support regeneration of an area with a struggling economy, it was common for economic development following completion of the road scheme to be slower than expected, or not to materialise at all.

What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth

- Reviewed around 2,300 evaluations of the local economic impact of transport projects from the UK and other OECD countries but found only 17 robust studies of the effect of road schemes on the local economy (Overman, 2015).
- Main findings included that roads can positively impact local employment, but that effects were not always positive, and a majority of evaluations showed no (or mixed) effects on employment. Of six studies that reported employment effects, two found a positive impact, three found no impact, and one found mixed results.
- CPRE (2017) evidence for the economic benefits of UK road building included over 80 road schemes with post-opening project evaluations gathered by Highways England found that evidence for economic benefits from road schemes was weak, absent, or even negative:
- 25 road schemes were promoted on the basis they would benefit the local economy, but only 6 had evidence of any economic effects; for those six schemes, there was no evidence that economic effects were directly attributable to the road scheme, were genuinely additional, and were not displacement of economic activity from elsewhere;
- Where a road scheme was justified on the basis that it would support regeneration of an area with a struggling economy, it was common for economic development following completion of the road scheme to be slower than expected, or not to materialise at all.

What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth

- Reviewed around 2,300 evaluations of the local economic impact of transport projects from the UK and other OECD countries but found only 17 robust studies of the effect of road schemes on the local economy (Overman, 2015).
- Main findings included that roads can positively impact local employment, but that effects were not always positive, and a majority of evaluations showed no (or mixed) effects on employment. Of six studies that reported employment effects, two found a positive impact, three found no impact, and one found mixed results.
- CPRE (2017) evidence for the economic benefits of UK road building included over 80 road schemes with post-opening project evaluations gathered by Highways England found that evidence for economic benefits from road schemes was weak, absent, or even negative:
- 25 road schemes were promoted on the basis they would benefit the local economy, but only 6 had evidence of any economic effects; for those six schemes, there was no evidence that economic effects were directly attributable to the road scheme, were genuinely additional, and were not displacement of economic activity from elsewhere.
- Where a road scheme was justified on the basis that it would support regeneration of an area with a struggling economy, it was common for economic development following completion of the road scheme to be slower than expected, or not to materialise at all.

What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth

- Reviewed around 2,300 evaluations of the local economic impact of transport projects from the UK and other OECD countries but found only 17 robust studies of the effect of road schemes on the local economy (Overman, 2015).
- Main findings included that roads can positively impact local employment, but that effects were not always positive, and a majority of evaluations showed no (or mixed) effects on employment. Of six studies that reported employment effects, two found a positive impact, three found no impact, and one found mixed results.
- CPRE (2017) evidence for the economic benefits of UK road building included over 80 road schemes with post-opening project evaluations gathered by Highways England found that evidence for economic benefits from road schemes was weak, absent, or even negative:
- 25 road schemes were promoted on the basis they would benefit the local economy, but only 6 had evidence of any economic effects; for those six schemes, there was no evidence that economic effects were directly attributable to the road scheme, were genuinely additional, and were not displacement of economic activity from elsewhere;
- Where a road scheme was justified on the basis that it would support regeneration of an area with a struggling economy, it was common for economic development following completion of the road scheme to be slower than expected, or not to materialise at all.

Can pro-health & environment voluntary travel behaviour change be achieved given the structured dominance of *predict and provide* at the top of the policy stream?

- It may be technically possible for individualistic, voluntary, downstream behaviour change to occur in transport, unsupported by upstream policy changes.
- Downstream, individual travel behaviour change is significantly less open to behavioural free will than many other behaviour changes such as, for example, breast feeding, condom use, or recycling.
- **So, how do we move forward? One of the ingredients in the early 1990s was public consciousness about environmental issues.**
- Policy change can occur, recent history tells us, where evidence is supported by successful advocacy, that is, advocacy that succeeds in garnering public support to the extent that politicians self-interest is threatened by this switch in public support.
- Sceptics may surmise that those who call for a social movement are whistling in the wind because there is no support for change beyond a small minority. Yet population surveys e.g. that demonstrated considerable support for low urban speed limits and cycling policies respectively, and surprisingly high willingness to either change behaviours or take direct action to support.
- There may be considerable latent public support for change away from car-dominant environments that is suppressed for a variety of reasons: a generally hostile, pro-car media; despair that car cultures are so embedded that nothing can change; or an assumption that while they personally may support such a change, most people do not.

Can pro-health & environment voluntary travel behaviour change be achieved given the structured dominance of *predict and provide* at the top of the policy stream?

- It may be technically possible for individualistic, voluntary, downstream behaviour change to occur in transport, unsupported by upstream policy changes.
- Downstream, individual travel behaviour change is significantly less open to behavioural free will than many other behaviour changes such as, for example, breast feeding, condom use, or recycling.
- So, how do we move forward? One of the ingredients in the early 1990s was public consciousness about environmental issues.
- Policy change can occur, recent history tells us, where evidence is supported by successful advocacy, that is, advocacy that succeeds in garnering public support to the extent that politicians self-interest is threatened by this switch in public support.
- Sceptics may surmise that those who call for a social movement are whistling in the wind because there is no support for change beyond a small minority. Yet population surveys e.g. that demonstrated considerable support for low urban speed limits and cycling policies respectively, and surprisingly high willingness to either change behaviours or take direct action to support.
- There may be considerable latent public support for change away from car-dominant environments that is suppressed for a variety of reasons: a generally hostile, pro-car media; despair that car cultures are so embedded that nothing can change; or an assumption that while they personally may support such a change, most people do not.

Can pro-health & environment voluntary travel behaviour change be achieved given the structured dominance of *predict and provide* at the top of the policy stream?

- It may be technically possible for individualistic, voluntary, downstream behaviour change to occur in transport, unsupported by upstream policy changes.
- Downstream, individual travel behaviour change is significantly less open to behavioural free will than many other behaviour changes such as, for example, breast feeding, condom use, or recycling.
- So, how do we move forward? One of the ingredients in the early 1990s was public consciousness about environmental issues.
- Policy change can occur, recent history tells us, where evidence is supported by successful advocacy, that is, advocacy that succeeds in garnering public support to the extent that politicians self-interest is threatened by this switch in public support.
- Sceptics may surmise that those who call for a social movement are whistling in the wind because there is no support for change beyond a small minority. Yet population surveys e.g. that demonstrated considerable support for low urban speed limits and cycling policies respectively, and surprisingly high willingness to either change behaviours or take direct action to support.
- There may be considerable latent public support for change away from car-dominant environments that is suppressed for a variety of reasons: a generally hostile, pro-car media; despair that car cultures are so embedded that nothing can change; or an assumption that while they personally may support such a change, most people do not.

Can pro-health & environment voluntary travel behaviour change be achieved given the structured dominance of *predict and provide* at the top of the policy stream?

- It may be technically possible for individualistic, voluntary, downstream behaviour change to occur in transport, unsupported by upstream policy changes.
- Downstream, individual travel behaviour change is significantly less open to behavioural free will than many other behaviour changes such as, for example, breast feeding, condom use, or recycling.
- So, how do we move forward? One of the ingredients in the early 1990s was public consciousness about environmental issues.
- Policy change can occur, recent history tells us, where evidence is supported by successful advocacy, that is, advocacy that succeeds in garnering public support to the extent that politicians self-interest is threatened by this switch in public support.
- Sceptics may surmise that those who call for a social movement are whistling in the wind because there is no support for change beyond a small minority. Yet population surveys e.g. that demonstrated considerable support for low urban speed limits and cycling policies respectively, and surprisingly high willingness to either change behaviours or take direct action to support.
- There may be considerable latent public support for change away from car-dominant environments that is suppressed for a variety of reasons: a generally hostile, pro-car media; despair that car cultures are so embedded that nothing can change; or an assumption that while they personally may support such a change, most people do not.

Why ignore or bury good news... The conspiracy theory

- The strong inter-relationship between the roads lobby and Government across a range of transport objectives raises the suspicion that Government objectives are shaped and influenced by powerful vested interests.
- In transport, commercial lobbyists are accused of influencing the maintenance of a car oriented transport system including road building (Hamer, 1987) and specific issues such as road safety (Roberts, Wentz, & Edwards, 2006).
- It is not unusual for senior Dept Transport officials to move to senior posts within organisations promoting road building.

Can pro-health & environment voluntary travel behaviour change be achieved given the structured dominance of *predict and provide* at the top of the policy stream?

- It may be technically possible for individualistic, voluntary, downstream behaviour change to occur in transport, unsupported by upstream policy changes.
- Downstream, individual travel behaviour change is significantly less open to behavioural free will than many other behaviour changes such as, for example, breast feeding, condom use, or recycling.
- So, how do we move forward? One of the ingredients in the early 1990s was public consciousness about environmental issues.
- Policy change can occur, recent history tells us, where evidence is supported by successful advocacy, that is, advocacy that succeeds in garnering public support to the extent that politicians self-interest is threatened by this switch in public support.
- Sceptics may surmise that those who call for a social movement are whistling in the wind because there is no support for change beyond a small minority. Yet population surveys e.g. that demonstrated considerable support for low urban speed limits and cycling policies respectively, and surprisingly high willingness to either change behaviours or take direct action to support.
- There may be considerable latent public support for change away from car-dominant environments that is suppressed for a variety of reasons: a generally hostile, pro-car media; despair that car cultures are so embedded that nothing can change; or an assumption that while they personally may support such a change, most people do not.

Can pro-health & environment voluntary travel behaviour change be achieved given the structured dominance of *predict and provide* at the top of the policy stream?

- It may be technically possible for individualistic, voluntary, downstream behaviour change to occur in transport, unsupported by upstream policy changes.
- **Downstream, individual travel behaviour change is significantly less open to behavioural free will than many other behaviour changes such as, for example, breast feeding, condom use, or recycling.**
- So, how do we move forward? One of the ingredients in the early 1990s was public consciousness about environmental issues.
- Policy change can occur, recent history tells us, where evidence is supported by successful advocacy, that is, advocacy that succeeds in garnering public support to the extent that politicians self-interest is threatened by this switch in public support.
- Sceptics may surmise that those who call for a social movement are whistling in the wind because there is no support for change beyond a small minority. Yet population surveys e.g. that demonstrated considerable support for low urban speed limits and cycling policies respectively, and surprisingly high willingness to either change behaviours or take direct action to support.
- There may be considerable latent public support for change away from car-dominant environments that is suppressed for a variety of reasons: a generally hostile, pro-car media; despair that car cultures are so embedded that nothing can change; or an assumption that while they personally may support such a change, most people do not.

Can pro-health & environment voluntary travel behaviour change be achieved given the structured dominance of *predict and provide* at the top of the policy stream?

- It may be technically possible for individualistic, voluntary, downstream behaviour change to occur in transport, unsupported by upstream policy changes.
- Downstream, individual travel behaviour change is significantly less open to behavioural free will than many other behaviour changes such as, for example, breast feeding, condom use, or recycling.
- **So, how do we move forward? One of the ingredients in the early 1990s was public consciousness about environmental issues.**
- Policy change can occur, recent history tells us, where evidence is supported by successful advocacy, that is, advocacy that succeeds in garnering public support to the extent that politicians self-interest is threatened by this switch in public support.
- Sceptics may surmise that those who call for a social movement are whistling in the wind because there is no support for change beyond a small minority. Yet population surveys e.g. that demonstrated considerable support for low urban speed limits and cycling policies respectively, and surprisingly high willingness to either change behaviours or take direct action to support.
- There may be considerable latent public support for change away from car-dominant environments that is suppressed for a variety of reasons: a generally hostile, pro-car media; despair that car cultures are so embedded that nothing can change; or an assumption that while they personally may support such a change, most people do not.

Can pro-health & environment voluntary travel behaviour change be achieved given the structured dominance of *predict and provide* at the top of the policy stream?

- It may be technically possible for individualistic, voluntary, downstream behaviour change to occur in transport, unsupported by upstream policy changes.
- Downstream, individual travel behaviour change is significantly less open to behavioural free will than many other behaviour changes such as, for example, breast feeding, condom use, or recycling.
- So, how do we move forward? One of the ingredients in the early 1990s was public consciousness about environmental issues.
- Policy change can occur, recent history tells us, where evidence is supported by successful advocacy, that is, advocacy that succeeds in garnering public support to the extent that politicians self-interest is threatened by this switch in public support.
- Sceptics may surmise that those who call for a social movement are whistling in the wind because there is no support for change beyond a small minority. Yet population surveys e.g. that demonstrated considerable support for low urban speed limits and cycling policies respectively, and surprisingly high willingness to either change behaviours or take direct action to support.
- There may be considerable latent public support for change away from car-dominant environments that is suppressed for a variety of reasons: a generally hostile, pro-car media; despair that car cultures are so embedded that nothing can change; or an assumption that while they personally may support such a change, most people do not.

Can pro-health & environment voluntary travel behaviour change be achieved given the structured dominance of *predict and provide* at the top of the policy stream?

- It may be technically possible for individualistic, voluntary, downstream behaviour change to occur in transport, unsupported by upstream policy changes.
- Downstream, individual travel behaviour change is significantly less open to behavioural free will than many other behaviour changes such as, for example, breast feeding, condom use, or recycling.
- So, how do we move forward? One of the ingredients in the early 1990s was public consciousness about environmental issues.
- Policy change can occur, recent history tells us, where evidence is supported by successful advocacy, that is, advocacy that succeeds in garnering public support to the extent that politicians self-interest is threatened by this switch in public support.
- Sceptics may surmise that those who call for a social movement are whistling in the wind because there is no support for change beyond a small minority. Yet population surveys e.g. that demonstrated considerable support for low urban speed limits and cycling policies respectively, and surprisingly high willingness to either change behaviours or take direct action to support.
- There may be considerable latent public support for change away from car-dominant environments that is suppressed for a variety of reasons: a generally hostile, pro-car media; despair that car cultures are so embedded that nothing can change; or an assumption that while they personally may support such a change, most people do not.

Can pro-health & environment voluntary travel behaviour change be achieved given the structured dominance of *predict and provide* at the top of the policy stream?

- It may be technically possible for individualistic, voluntary, downstream behaviour change to occur in transport, unsupported by upstream policy changes.
- Downstream, individual travel behaviour change is significantly less open to behavioural free will than many other behaviour changes such as, for example, breast feeding, condom use, or recycling.
- So, how do we move forward? One of the ingredients in the early 1990s was public consciousness about environmental issues.
- Policy change can occur, recent history tells us, where evidence is supported by successful advocacy, that is, advocacy that succeeds in garnering public support to the extent that politicians self-interest is threatened by this switch in public support.
- Sceptics may surmise that those who call for a social movement are whistling in the wind because there is no support for change beyond a small minority. Yet population surveys e.g. that demonstrated considerable support for low urban speed limits and cycling policies respectively, and surprisingly high willingness to either change behaviours or take direct action to support.
- There may be considerable latent public support for change away from car-dominant environments that is suppressed for a variety of reasons: a generally hostile, pro-car media; despair that car cultures are so embedded that nothing can change; or an assumption that while they personally may support such a change, most people do not.

Thanks for your time

a.davis@napier.ac.uk