

**Promoting walking and safety**  
**Matt Rodda speech to 'Streets Safe for Walking' Conference**

Good Morning.

I would first like to thank you for inviting me here today to speak to you on behalf of the Shadow Transport Team, and to open this important and timely conference on Streets Safe for Walking.

It is wonderful to be here with so many interested parties from across the sector and I'm very interested to listen to the other speakers here today.

It is clear to me that everyone here today is here because you are passionate and committed to encouraging walking and making our streets safe places for pedestrians.

And that is exactly what I want to talk to you about this morning.

Labour is passionate about walking. About imagining a new approach to walking. And about delivering a plan for walking that achieves a complete cultural shift.

Because I'm sure most people in this room know that the only way to deliver streets safe for walking is for us to be bold. To be ambitious. To aim for and deliver a complete change in the way we think about how we get from A to B.

And the role of Government is to lead on this.

The current government's Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) was based on good input by cycling and walking NGOs and was indeed welcomed by those and other experts in the field.

Their stated ambition was to make cycling and walking a natural choice for shorter journeys, or as part of longer journeys by 2040. An ambition, I'm sure, we can all agree on.

However, the Transport Department's own statistics show that the Government is set to miss their target to increase the number of people who regularly walk and cycle.

And that is because the strategy offered almost no investment and no meaningful policies or targets. The Government's plans have clearly not been ambitious enough to see a modal shift or a real embrace of the cycling and walking agenda. And the spend of £6 per head over the last 8 years has provided insufficient investment in cycling and walking.

Walking is barely increasing, and many people are scared to cycle, with nearly 60% telling the British social attitudes survey that they felt cycling was too dangerous, apparently because of the volume of traffic on the roads.

The strategy is failing because is not ambitious enough to achieve the complete change that is needed.

Labour believes there is an appetite for real and significant change; we want to completely rethink our transport system through encouraging cycling and walking.

The last Labour Government was a big supporter of cycling and walking, introducing Cycling England, and the next Labour government would want to go even further.

Indeed, we have two Labour Metro Mayors who are already going further. With Andy Burnham's political backing, the Greater Manchester "Beelines" approach led by Chris Boardman as Commissioner for Walking and Cycling is setting a terrific example. And here in London, it is great to see Sadiq Khan's Walking Action Plan giving walking the priority it needs and deserves, within a broader Healthy Streets approach that implies transformation of London's streets – and clearly has potential to be applied widely elsewhere too.

In our 2017 Manifesto, Labour pledged to increase spending on cycling and walking to £10 per head, to match the figure recommended by the All Party Parliamentary Group for Cycling.

We would deliver meaningful policies to encourage a modal shift to cycling and walking, by making active travel choices available.

It is high time this change happened, the advantages are overwhelming. There are quite simply so many benefits, both in improving our transport system and potentially through transforming people's health and enhancing our quality of life and the economic and social life of whole communities.

If in the process of getting people from A to B we can also bring broader benefits for our communities and the environment in an efficient and cost-effective way, why wouldn't any Government strive to achieve that?

People choosing to cycle or walk instead of drive would lower health costs; reduce traffic and congestion; make our towns and cities cleaner with less air pollution from vehicles; quieter with less noise pollution from road traffic; and would cause less climate damage from carbon emissions.

With these benefits, there has never been a greater cross-departmental appetite for active travel. And we must seize on that momentum to achieve the complete change that is needed.

And it starts with a clear vision of what we're trying to achieve – an ambition for everyone to get the benefits of being able to make local journeys by active travel.

Walking and cycling are the healthiest and most sustainable ways to travel, either for whole trips or as part of longer journeys on public transport.

A successful transport system has to be one which encourages and enables **more** people to walk and cycle **more often**.

There are lots of examples of good practice in the UK and across Europe that we can learn from. And as we are developing our future policy plans we have been and will be looking at them all.

I've already mentioned the Healthy Streets Approach, which recognises that 80% of Londoners' travel time is spent on the streets. Noise, air pollution, accessibility and lack of seating or shelter are barriers that prevent people from getting out and about.

The Healthy Streets Approach recognises that to encourage people to use cars less, and walk, cycle and use public transport more, you need to create streets that feel pleasant, safe and attractive.

It recognises the importance of place-making. Whether people feel like making trips on foot, or are able to, is highly dependent on having streets that people want to be in and walk in.

Places that are accessible to all; that have clean air; where people feel safe; that aren't too noisy; where streets are easy and safe to cross; that have places to stop and rest; that have shade and shelter; where people can relax and where there are things to see and do.

London has set itself the target of making its streets welcoming places for everyone to walk, spend time in and engage in community life. More people walking increases human interaction and enhances local communities and improves social cohesion and wellbeing. Walkers also spend more in the local economy – with research showing people walking spending on average 40% more in town centres over the course of a month than car drivers.

I'm sure this is what we **all** want for our communities.

And with its Walking Action Plan, Transport for London also has a bold vision for boosting walking.

A vision to take a new approach to supporting walking: how we plan, design, build and manage our streets to encourage walking, to integrate walking with public transport and to lead a cultural change.

This is a vision which **could and should** spread far beyond London, to **every** town, city and village.

We need to put people at the centre of the planning and design process, creating streets that are pleasant, safe and attractive, to improve the experience of walking and to encourage people to walk much more.

We need streets which are designed for walking, addressing overcrowding and cluttering and the condition of pavements.

According to the AA, over the 12 months ending on 31 May, over ten thousand injury claims were made by pedestrians to local authorities who paid out over two million pounds – money that undoubtedly could have been better spent of maintaining our pavements.

We need to invest in infrastructure to provide safe, clean and attractive environments for walking. Designing, building and managing our streets and our local transport systems so that active travel can be built into every journey.

We need streets that are accessible, comfortable and safe for all people to use throughout the day. That connect walkers to local destinations, promoting walking as an alternative to crowded public transport or private vehicle use.

We need to create opportunities for new walking trips, to and from the town centre, to high streets and services, to transport hubs, and to schools. With safe crossings, so that everybody can cross the road safely, directly and without delay. This is particularly important for people who naturally walk slower, such as parents with children, older people and people with disabilities.

And, we need to reduce the impact of traffic, to make local streets better places to walk and spend time.

To be successful in the long term, we need to develop policies which will deliver real and lasting culture change, promoting walking for all, creating a desire to walk, helping people to take action and then supporting them to make a long-term change.

We currently have the '12-year old test' for cycling routes – meaning that cycling routes 'should be safe for a sensible 12-year-old to use unaccompanied' - perhaps we should have an equivalent test for walking routes. Chris Boardman already applies a 'double buggy test' to Manchester walking routes, which is a good test, but it is not a safety test. Perhaps someone here has some bright ideas how we might frame the equivalent safety test for walking safety.

To do this we need to understand the barriers to walking: there are many, but some of the most often cited (after not having enough time) wherever people live are too much traffic, traffic travelling too fast, road danger concerns, having other ways of travelling that are easier, streets not being pedestrian friendly, or having a disability.

We need to remove these obstacles - if we are to increase walking and cycling.

And so, I want to move on, to talk more specifically about traffic and road safety.

Improving road safety is very important for encouraging active travel. Traffic danger deters walking in rural areas, as well as in towns and cities, deters parents from letting their children

walk unaccompanied to school, and it prevents walking by some older people and other people with mobility restrictions.

Recent research has shown that too many cars are the things parents find most annoying on as they walk their children to school, specifically too many cars around school gates, cars parking on the pavements, and too much traffic on the journey.

Initiatives to encourage walking to school and reduce the number of cars on the school run, are already being implemented in thousands of schools and have been well-monitored, showing that they can lead to over a 20% increase in walking to school and 30% reduction in car trips to the school gate. Ideally, these schemes should reach all school children

It is welcome that some local authorities are piloting other effective interventions such as school street closures (School Streets) prohibiting cars from the school gates at drop off and pick up times to improve safety and to encourage more families to walk to school.

Five people are killed on Britain's roads every day and over ten times that number seriously injured, many with life-changing injuries. I want to be clear, this is far too high. Labour would adopt a target zero approach, which I will return to later.

Pedestrians and cyclists, who are sometimes referred to as 'vulnerable road users' together represent nearly a third of the deaths and injuries, this is disproportionate to their presence on Britain's roads.

In December 2015, the Government set a target of zero road deaths on motorways and major roads. Yet 98% of our road network consists of local roads – an area that falls within my brief as shadow minister for local transport. And since 2010 there have been no equivalent targets for these roads.

Labour believes we need to go further than that. In our 2017 Manifesto we pledged to reset the UK's road safety vision and ambitiously strive for a transport network with zero deaths, reintroducing road-safety targets, setting out bold measures that will continuously improve safety standards'.

We believe a full set of road safety targets is essential.

For example, at the moment there are no targets to assess progress. This is even though the Government sets itself targets to meet in pretty much every other area of policy but not for reducing road deaths and injuries.

The Government scrapped road targets despite targets helping to reduce the number of people 'killed or seriously injured' by a third under the last Labour Government.

Targets focus awareness and attention, and ultimately, hold the Government to account. All the evidence points to them being an important factor in achieving real improvements in road safety, and a Labour Government would re-introduce them at the earliest opportunity.

And I'd also like to make clear that we will ensure that our targets on the way to achieving zero deaths will **encourage** walking and cycling whilst making those safer modes of travel – i.e. safety targets to reduce injuries and deaths **per walking and cycling trip** – rather than targets that can be met by discouraging vulnerable road users from using the roads.

I'm also concerned that since 2010, 21,000 police officers have been cut, this has led to a significant reduction in the number of police available to carry out enforcement.

In 2010 there were 3,500 police officers patrolling the UK's roads, but by 2017 this had fallen to just 2,600.

The link between the fall in the number of officers and the rise in the number of offences is clear.

Two years ago, the Transport Select Committee produced its Road Traffic Law Enforcement review, concluding that "as the number of traffic officers has fallen, so too has the number of road traffic offences detected."

It also concluded that the number of 'causing death offences' had not fallen, suggesting the reduction in overall offences recorded did not represent a reduction in offences being committed.

Having adequate numbers of police officers for enforcement is quite simply **an essential part** of any road safety strategy.

Speed reduction through 20 mph zones also has a very important part to play in improving road safety, particularly for children.

The twenty is plenty campaign highlighted that children's awareness of the dangers of traffic is much lower than that of adults. Children find it harder to judge how fast cars are moving and how far away they are, and children are more easily distracted and more likely to do things, such as dash into the road after a ball, that adults would not dream of doing.

And we know that if a pedestrian is struck by a vehicle at 20mph they have a 3% chance of death. Just 10mph faster it rises to 8%.

Speaking in a recent debate on road safety around schools my colleague, Karl Turner, who is the shadow minister for road safety pointed out that the latest data from the DfT showed that child pedestrian deaths went up by 36% in 2016 and were up slightly in 2017 too. This is deeply worrying.

All the evidence shows that areas that have implemented 20mph speed limits around schools have seen a reduction in casualties. And more than 20 urban authorities in the UK have a policy of setting 20mph as the default for all their streets, including main roads and high streets where many people live work, shop, and play.

We are making progress on introducing 20 mph zones, but it is clear that more needs to be done.

So, to conclude, increasing walking and cycling would significantly improve our transport system.

It could transform the health of many people.

And, bring new trade to local shops and high streets.

The advantages are clear and overwhelming.

But, in our car dependent culture a real change in behaviour is needed.

This can be done, and it is already happening in Britain, as well as in many other countries, with impressive work underway, such as that being carried out by the Mayors of London and Manchester.

However, a new national strategy needs to go further, to turn change into transformation and to take it to every town and city.

Labour, in Government would deliver this real change.

Thank you once again for inviting me here today.

I look forward to working with you in the future as part as a future Labour Government to achieve the highest possible road safety standards and to ensure that all our streets are safe for walking.

**Matt Rodda**

**8<sup>th</sup> November 2018**