

Transport



The 'ftr' – not fit for purpose

What we stand for

- A transport system in York that enables everyone to access work, education, shopping and leisure facilities with the least negative impact on the environment and our health.
- Reductions in the levels of traffic and congestion in the city.
- A first-class integrated and accessible public transport system under democratic control.
- A year on year decrease in traffic levels in the city and transfer of transport users from the private car to buses, cycling and walking.
- Improvements in air quality in the city so that there are NO parts of the city that still need to be designated air quality management zones.
- Residential streets where people take priority over cars, with an improved quality of local community life.
- The promotion of cycling and walking as environmentally friendly alternatives combined with the promotion of health and safe, friendly communities.

What's happening now

Nationally, transport is still the fastest growing cause of global warming emissions. In York, overall peak traffic levels have continued to grow over the last four years and many of us experience severe congestion on main routes in and out of the city. Traffic is predicted to grow by 14% by 2011 on present trends.

Air quality & traffic levels

Government legislation to implement the EU Air Quality Directive made it a legal requirement since December 2005 for councils to take action to achieve safe air quality levels - the inner ring-road and connecting junctions in the city have been designated an 'air quality management area'. Within these, several locations still have traffic pollution levels that are unacceptably high yet no effective action is being taken. Additional areas are currently in danger of needing to be declared air quality management zones as congestion and pollution grow.

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This situation has been made worse by the number of new developments in the city, most of which have failed to constrain the amount of new traffic they generate (see *Planning*).

While the first Local Transport Plan was successful in limiting peak hour traffic growth, the second one has a target of limiting increase in traffic levels to 7% above 2006 levels by 2011, even though the consultation showed that people placed cutting congestion as a top priority for the city. Present trends suggest even this may be difficult given the number of new housing and other developments about to be built.

Buses

Bus service improvements have mostly focussed on main radial routes and improved council-provided facilities, such as real time indicators, shelters etc. However this has been at the expense of the less heavily used infrequent services where either the council subsidises them or they are cut and have been accompanied by steep increases in general fares.

Figures for the number of bus journeys have increased dramatically on some park and ride routes but there is little evidence that this represents a significant shift from car use to bus use, rather indicating new journeys or in some cases a shift from bike to bus as people take up jobs in more distant locations or prefer the bus for convenience, because of poor health etc...

Many bus services prove to be very difficult to run to time because of traffic congestion and the Council has been slow in implementing bus priority measures such as bus lanes, particularly where they are waiting for information about new developments in the area. The real-time bus information system which tell passengers exactly how late a particular bus is, is being implemented too slowly.

Worst of all, bus fares have risen many times over the last four years and are now extremely expensive. With a single child fare on First York buses being £1 there is little incentive for families (and others) to shift to bus use.

The latest initiative from First York has been the ftr buses on the no 4 route. Whilst the Council has spent £1.5m on road and bus stop improvements for this (including major resurfacing in the council leader's ward!), the new bus is very unpopular especially with the elderly and disabled. The self-service ticketing machines have proved extremely unreliable with the company being forced to bring in assistants on what were supposed to be driver only buses. The route is unsuitable for the size of vehicle, in spite of the modifications that have been made and the vehicle size makes it intimidating to cyclists. From an environmental point of view the ftr is simply a Euro IV bus and makes no difference to emissions levels compared to any modern diesel-engined bus.

Working through a 'Quality Partnership' the Council has had little or no influence on the policies adopted by the bus companies other than the route for the ftr and appears powerless to influence fare levels other than on the park and ride services that are under contract with the council.

Cycling and walking

The pedestrian priority 'foot-streets' in the city centre that were pioneered in 1987 have not been extended (in time or extent) despite calls to do so from traders in Fossgate. Their use quite legally by cars in the evening is dangerous with no strategy to compel vehicles to move at appropriately slow speeds.

Meanwhile, cycling levels in the city have fallen and the provision of new cycling facilities has been declining. The maintenance and expansion of cycle lanes and provision for cyclists has not been prioritised and is falling well behind other cities. The Council no longer has a Cycling Officer and failed to even bid for government funding to be one of the demonstration locations for cycle provision recently.

Other Council posts to promote traffic reduction and green travel plans for local businesses have also been cut, and the good work done by officers on safe routes to school has progressed slowly due to lack of staff. The city's cycle strategy has stalled because of the lack of political will and Transport Policy section staff cuts as disillusioned staff leave.

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Local Transport Plan

Despite submissions from many local individuals and campaigning groups including the Green Party, the city's latest Local Transport Plan submitted by the Lib Dems is timid and unimaginative in terms of sustainable travel and unlikely to make a great deal of impact in terms of traffic reduction. A large proportion of the funding will be spent on widening or creating roundabouts on the outer ring road rather than low cost measures to give priority to buses, walkers and cyclists. 'Congestion charging' or other similar measures were not considered, even though some initial work had been done in 2003 to look at options for the city. Work on a 'low emission zone' has been agreed but would be unlikely to come in until 2011. Given improvements in new vehicle engines this will probably have little impact on congestion by the time it is put in place.

What we will do

To keep York special and reduce traffic congestion and pollution requires an honest, determined and consistent transport policy. Reducing our reliance on oil and the car and tackling climate change require investment in alternatives, as well as gradual changes at every level.

We will emphasise the 'carrots' which make it easier for more people to use their cars less or even live without a car, but we will also immediately investigate the role that some form of congestion charging might play in helping people in York to reduce their traffic emissions and protect quality of life particularly in the historic city centre and other areas experiencing traffic growth.

Congestion charging in London has already successfully reduced traffic levels, and a number of authorities around the country are now trying out / investigating systems appropriate to their own locality. The government is floating the idea of a major national scheme in the long term. We would seek funding for appropriate feasibility studies with full consultation to find out what would work best in York. We would only consider schemes which ensure that any income would be allocated in full to public transport improvements. We believe that the scale of development being forced on the city in the next five years means that present measures will be inadequate to prevent worse pollution and congestion with the possibility of gridlock.

Buses

- High quality, reliable and cheap bus services to all areas are an essential part of a serious attempt to reduce car use. The Government's failure to give back local councils the power to regulate bus services causes great difficulty, but action can be taken.
- We do not believe that voluntary partnerships with the bus companies are working well enough. We would move forward on mechanisms such as Quality Contracts or bus franchising, which allow local authorities to control fare levels, routes, timetabling and frequency of service. We would also seek early opportunities to use some of the proposals in the Transport White Paper to be a pilot for greater council influence.
- In the meantime, we would support improvements to the main high frequency routes, but also emphasise the importance of the less highly used routes serving estates and outlying areas, off peak (evening and weekend) travel, allowing people to use buses for their leisure trips etc...
- Introduce more bus priority measures especially at key locations on the park and ride routes (eg the inner ring road), to make bus travel faster and more reliable than car travel.
- Work for more interchangeable ticketing between different bus companies and between buses and rail, as well as integrated day and week fares. We would prioritise seeking cheaper fares for children and family groups, which must be a key element in encouraging families to choose the bus.

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- Park and Ride: Question the appropriateness of any more park & ride sites for York. Eight park & ride sites may be too many for a city like York, effectively turning some of our suburbs into giant car parks. We would carry out a study to see whether some parking demand could be reduced by feeder bus routes from surrounding villages. This, and other traffic reduction measures, might be subsidised by a nominal parking fee at park and ride sites to deter unnecessary car journeys when local buses are available.

Cycling and walking

- We would reinstate the post of Cycling Officer and prioritise the creation of a joined-up, well-maintained and safe cycling network throughout the city.
- Re-establish a Cycle Forum as step towards setting up a Sustainable Transport Forum to actively involve all groups with an interest in transport issues including the elderly and disabled.
- Take measures to reduce cycle crime including the provision of safer lockable places to leave bicycles. Green councillors have supported the proposal to develop a central cycle base like the one in Leicester where secure parking, repairs and hire would be available.
- Continue to press for good cycle routes and covered secure cycle parking facilities at all schools, colleges, council premises and new developments.
- Encourage both adult and child cycling through training, cycle promotion schemes and first priority for road space. Reverse the increased charges for cycle training and promote this service as widely as possible.
- Set a minimum width of 1.2m for on-road cycle lanes to ensure safety for all who use them.
- Ensure key walking and cycling routes eg: New Walk / Sustrans via Millennium Bridge are given strategic route status for priority gritting, mud clearing and light maintenance.
- Support the expansion of deliveries by cycle wherever appropriate, eg: between city centre offices and the creation of special exemption permits for tricycle delivery and cycle rickshaws from the footstreet ban on cycles. Following the trial lifting of the cycle ban in central Cambridge we would support a similar limited, weekday, term time trial in York to open up cross city centre cycle routes away from the busy inner ring road. We believe most responsible cyclists can be trusted to cycle slowly with care, the irresponsible ones ignore the present ban anyway and can be charged with dangerous cycling with or without a ban.
- Support and develop a range of initiatives to encourage walking and cycling. These should include more walking route maps in public places, the use of zebra crossings and other safe crossing points wherever possible, and improvements to the quality of pavements. Street environment officers would be tasked to work with local people and police to identify and tackle problems such as overgrown hedges obstructing paths, locations of regular illegal pavement parking and pavement cycling.

Streets for people – tackling speed

- In residential areas streets should be for people rather than speeding cars. At 20 mph a collision with a child is far less likely to be fatal than at 30mph. We would launch a programme to progressively introduce a 20 mph limit for all residential streets across the city (only excluding trunk roads) designated by 20mph signs on lamp posts, not humps! 20mph residential limits are being introduced successfully in Portsmouth. Slower speeds

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make streets safer for everyone and encourage more people to leave their car at home for short local trips.

- We support the speed and casualty reduction strategy and would press for more police enforcement in areas where residents are concerned about instances of excessive speed, regardless of the actual accident record or *average* speed levels.
- City centre 'footstreets' would be designated and clearly signed a 10mph zone at all times.
- Alongside this we would support the introduction of traffic calming measures or Home Zones (10mph) in local areas when requested by the majority of residents.

Living without a car?

- Support policies and initiatives to make it easier for people to choose to live without a car, eg. kerbside recycling of all materials for everyone and improvements to the Council's bulky items collection service; promotion of home delivery services and local shops.
- Encourage the expansion of the City of York Car Club, which allows members to hire a car, parked in a nearby locality, for a few hours at a time as needed. Promote the use of the car club to local employers.
- Reinstatement of the post of Workplace Travel Plan Officer (with Yorkshire Forward or business sector funding) to work with local businesses and public sector employers developing Green Travel Plans (car sharing, pool cars, subsidised bus passes, covered secure cycle parking etc) and thus reduce traffic in the city.
- Prioritise work on Safe Routes to School and school safety zones, so that all schools and colleges in the city have an *active* and effective Green Travel Plan.

Rail, water and electricity

- Put pressure on the Strategic Rail Authority to re-assess the decision to postpone the opening of a new railway station at Haxby. We would want any such plan to be linked to a major programme of new walking and cycling routes to the station to reduce the parking and traffic generation effects this might otherwise have around the station.
- Investigate major funding bids for modern mass transit systems such as electric powered light rail / trolley bus / guided busway systems in the city's transport future. For example such a tram system might be developed linking the British Sugar A59 Park & Ride and York Central developments to the city centre and potentially extend to the Hospital and other major employment sites. New systems such as the Parry People Mover are small, light and potentially suitable for historic cities such as York, not needing an overhead power supply.
- Investigate and promote alternative ways of transporting goods deliveries into and around the city, including a transshipment depot for large loads to be transferred to electric and cycle delivery.
- Commission research into the viability of using the River Ouse as a means of delivering goods and for public transport.

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Green Party councillors have:

- Played a key role in the introduction of school safety zones in two schools in Fishergate ward.
- Secured road safety improvements in Fishergate ward in response to residents concerns (Cemetery Road and Broadway shops).
- Successfully campaigned to reinstate more frequent bus services in Fulford ward.
- Led a successful campaign to retain a regular bus service on Heslington Road following the introduction of the fr; and pressed for conductors to help the elderly and disabled and those who want help getting on and off.
- Brought a motion to Full Council calling for the introduction of quality bus contracts to give the council control over bus routes in the city and to challenge excessive fares increases.
- Pushed forward proposals for making school transport services more efficient.
- Persuaded officers to agree to trial solar lighting for bus shelters.
- Got improved lighting on the Millennium Bridge after council threats to 'give up' on repairs.
- Highlighted the inadequacies of the new Local Transport Plan and the failure of the Council to meet air quality targets in the city.
- Supported and promoted the new city Car Club and secured developers' agreement to help fund them in new developments via planning gain.
- Pressed for walking and cycling routes to local shops to be protected or developed in new developments.
- Kept up the pressure for a city centre cycle facility and promoted the 'Bike Rescue' recycling scheme.
- Raised the issue of cycle routes and facilities when new developments come forward for planning approval.