

The role of cross-sector collaboration in reducing the need to travel

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1. INTRODUCTION

The transport sector contributes around 25% of urban carbon emissions, but is the sector that has reduced its emissions least, over time – and has faced major difficulties in trying to do so. Most European cities are committed to achieving a (net) zero carbon transport objective by 2050 or earlier, often with intermediate targets, expressed either as a percentage reduction in emissions from a base year, or as a limit on total carbon emissions. The recent EU Mission Platform on Climate Neutral and Smart Cities, and the associated Net Zero Cities initiative, is encouraging leading cities to be net zero by 2030².

While many cities bring a strong political commitment to carbon reduction, in practice cities are struggling to fully meet their targets. In debates on carbon reduction, there is often a strong focus on technological solutions, but simulation studies show that such technologies will not deliver zero carbon within the agreed time frames.

It is now widely accepted, by various international agencies, that a successful zero carbon mitigation plan will require an appropriate mix of measures based on three strategies³:

1. 'Avoid': reducing total travel, by shortening trip lengths through the localisation of facilities, or substituting digital communication for physical travel.
2. 'Shift': modal shift from car to public transport and active travel, through a combination of 'carrots' (e.g. modal improvements) and 'sticks' (e.g. parking restrictions).

3. 'Improve': switch from fossil fuel to electric vehicle propulsion, and use transport networks more efficiently.

Traditionally, cities have focused mainly on introducing 'Shift' policy measures, as this is the area where they have most control and experience; but they are increasingly looking at 'Improve' measure, working with energy suppliers and distributors to support the electrification of the vehicle fleet. What has been largely neglected, until now, has been the widespread application of 'Avoid' Measures, and the engagement with other sectors of the economy that this would require.

The potential range of contributions that each of the three strategies can make to achieving zero transport carbon is likely to be: 'Avoid': 15 - 25%; 'Shift': 20 - 50% and 'Improve': 40 - 65%. Although 'Avoid' is likely to make the smallest contribution, it is the new tool in the city's armoury that can help it 'get over the line'.

2. CHALLENGES

The basic challenge which cities face is that most travel is a 'derived demand': the underlying drivers of that demand result from business decisions taken by other sectors of the economy. While the transport sector is given the responsibility to provide sufficient capacity and deal with externalities, such as carbon and road safety, it has little influence over when, where or how many trips are made.

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² See <https://netzerocities.eu>

³ For example, see the SUMP Topic Guide on '[Guidelines on the Decarbonisation of Urban](#)

Traditionally, the trip-generating sectors have had little dialogue with transport professionals, and have generally made their business and service delivery decisions without considering the wider transport consequences. For example:

- Health: authorities that locate a new hospital in an out-of-town location, where state-of-the-art facilities can be provided at less cost; but one that is poorly served by public transport and inaccessible by active travel modes.
- Education: governments that remove national restrictions on sending children to the nearest suitable school, giving parents free choice; but resulting in longer trips to school and less use of active travel modes – with more reliance on car travel.
- Retail: locating a new shopping centre adjacent to a motorway junction, ensuring a large catchment area for wealthier car-owning households but excluding people relying on access by public transport or active modes of travel.

This historical lack of focus on 'Avoid' measures can be attributed to three main factors:

1. Shorter trips can be encouraged by land use policies that, for example, promote '15 minute neighbourhoods'⁴, but these policies potentially take decades to achieve significant changes in land use patterns.
2. It has been seen as being politically difficult to advocate reductions in travel consumption – although equivalent consumption reduction is increasingly being promoted in the energy and water sectors, for example.
3. There has been little incentive for trip-generating sectors to take into account the transport implications of their decisions.

This third constraining factor is changing with the new emphasis on carbon reduction across all sectors.

3. SOLUTIONS

3.1 Incentives for cross-sector collaboration

Many government departments and private sector organisations have made commitments to become carbon (net) neutral, including many leading global private sector

companies, through their membership of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development⁵.

A Greenhouse Gas accounting protocol has been developed to measure the carbon emissions of organisations, grouped into Scopes 1, 2 and 3, each increasing in its range of coverage⁶. Scope 3 includes many types of transport emissions, including freight, commuting and business travel; since organisations are committed to tackle these carbon emissions, it provides a real opportunity for city authorities to work constructively – and proactively – with these trip-generating sectors.

In England, the National Health Service (NHS) has adopted a Scope 3-Plus policy, which covers all transport emissions associated with its activities, including that arising from patient and visitor travel (see Figure 1).

Local Trusts are developing action plans to reduce transport carbon emissions. In the case of Greater Manchester, there is a commitment to net zero carbon by 2038; for transport this includes a mix of 'Avoid', 'Shift' and 'Improve' measures⁷.

The UK Confederation of British Industry has recently reminded its members of their commitments to address transport carbon emission, not only for their freight-related activities, but also for employee commuting and business travel⁸.

3.2 Examples of successful reorganisations: health and social services

As part of the SUMP-PLUS project, partner Transport for Greater Manchester has been collaborating with local councils, and the Health and Social Care sectors within Greater Manchester.

Figure 2 shows the results of an Ethical Home Care review of the home care delivery services commissioned by Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council's Social Care Services. Before the reorganisation, 15 service providers visited homes all over the Borough, necessitating the carers to have a driving licence and to own a car. This was causing problems in recruiting younger people and women, and was resulting in increasing fuel mileage and parking costs.

Following the reorganisation, the number of care provider organisations was reduced to 10, each with its own local catchment area. This helped to ease the recruitment problem, and led to sharp falls in distance travelled and a large shift

⁴ For a description, see: https://www.c40knowledgehub.org/s/topic/0T01Q000000UEx5WAG/spotlight-on-15minute-cities?language=en_US

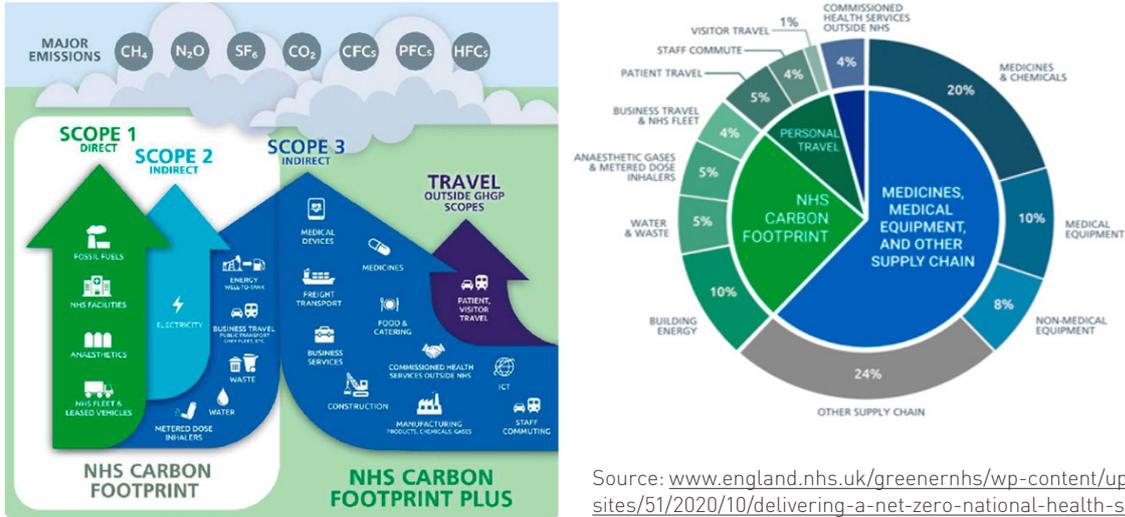
⁵ <https://www.wbcsd.org/Pathways/Transport-Mobility>

⁶ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/09/scope-emissions-climate-greenhouse-business/>

⁷ [gm-green-plan-2022-final-v1.pdf](https://www.gmintegratedcare.org.uk/gm-green-plan-2022-final-v1.pdf) ([gmintegratedcare.org.uk](https://www.gmintegratedcare.org.uk))

⁸ <https://www.cbi.org.uk/media/6558/cbi-kpmg-greener-miles-2021.pdf>

Figure 1: The carbon footprint of the English National Health Service⁸



Source: www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs/wp-content/uploads/sites/51/2020/10/delivering-a-net-zero-national-health-service.pdf

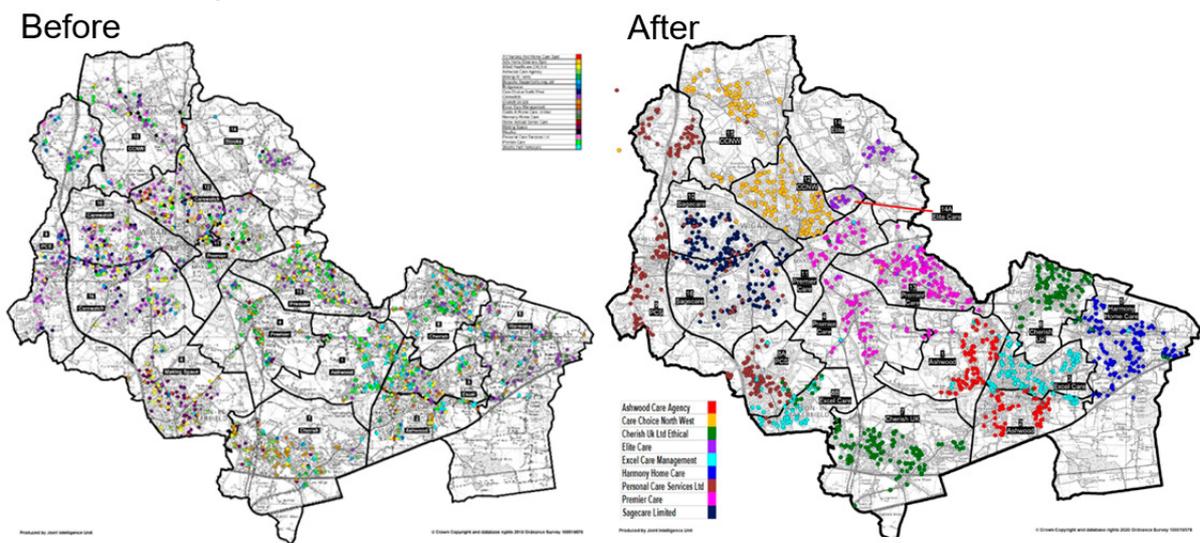
from car to active travel. Carers spent much less time travelling between visits, were able to spend more of their time with patients and establish themselves within a local community: travel was avoided, while enhancing social care outcomes.

A second example is provided in Figure 3. Supporting strategic aims to deliver care more locally, Manchester Royal Eye Hospital set up three treatment centres in residential areas for patients requiring thrice-weekly injections to treat macular degeneration; as an alternative to travelling

to the city centre. For many patients, this meant shorter journeys to receive treatment – in some cases the journey to the new site was also more convenient to be made via public transport modes. It is estimated a 50% reduction on emissions from outpatient travel was achieved by adopting this operating model.

In both cases, these reorganisations both benefit the organisation involved – through offering better and more efficient services – and contribute to carbon reduction by reducing the need to travel.

Figure 2: Reorganisation of home care social visits in Wigan



⁸ [https://www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs/wp-content/uploads/sites/51/2020/10/delivering-a-net-zero-national-health-service.pdf](http://www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs/wp-content/uploads/sites/51/2020/10/delivering-a-net-zero-national-health-service.pdf)

Figure 3: Community care settings for Macular Degeneration Treatment



However, the shared goal of transport decarbonisation, and the adoption of Scope 3 accounting by many public and private sector organisations provides a unique opportunity for collaboration and close links between transport and the various trip-generating sectors. This goes beyond simply supporting efforts to decarbonize fleets or encourage employee mode shift, to influence overall levels of travel demand, by supporting localization of service delivery and encouraging some substitution of digital for physical travel.

Here, we are looking for 'win-win' situations: reducing overall travel demand, while also improving the quality and efficiency of their customer/employee service delivery by organisations. It is also important to challenge the political reluctance to talk about 'reducing the need to travel' – there is no such equivocation with regard to energy use, for example.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

If cities are to be successful in cutting their transport carbon emissions in line with their stated targets, then they will need to add 'Avoid' measures to the 'Shift' and 'Improve' measures that they are currently focusing on. In particular, by working with the major trip-generating sectors. Historically, this has been problematic, as it has been difficult to engage meaningfully with other sectors, as transport impacts were largely seen by them as externalities and the responsibility of transport planners and providers.

In practical terms, this requires setting up mechanisms to formally engage with the other trip-generating sectors. This has been achieved in SUMP-PLUS by establishing 'City Integrator' working groups (see Policy Brief 4 on Stakeholder Engagement).

But, examples of the successful implementation of cross-sector 'Avoid' measure are scarce, so we recommend drawing together what evidence there is from across Europe and encouraging and financially supporting new trials.



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