

University of Oxford – Local transport strategy 2024-2029

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Vision

For our staff and students to have access to a safe, inclusive, affordable and sustainable local transport system benefitting the collegiate University, local communities, businesses and visitors by reducing car dependency and enabling healthier, fairer and more sustainable ways to travel.

1. Introduction

Executive Summary

This strategy strongly supports walking, cycling and public transport. With fewer private car trips on Oxford roads, public transport services can flow more freely and be more reliable further enhancing the attractiveness of alternatives to using a motor vehicle for journeys in and around the city. Importantly, this also helps those in the wider collegiate University that must rely on private or fleet vehicles (e.g. for reasons of disability, for transporting equipment or heavy loads) to travel more efficiently. Implementation of the strategy will be supported by approximately £2m of funding derived from the revenue raised from University car parking permit charges over the next five years.

Local policy context

Being able to move in and around Oxford in an efficient and a sustainable manner is crucial to the efficient operation of the collegiate University and to ensure that our staff and students have their daily needs met. Enabling options to travel in active ways such as walking, cycling and wheeling (wheeling is an equivalent alternative to foot/pedestrian-based mobility and includes wheeled mobilities such as manual self- or assistant-propelled wheelchairs, powered wheelchairs and mobility scooters) is an important means of supporting University and college staff and students to stay healthy. If people cannot actively travel to their destination, the public transport infrastructure across the city must be an efficient and affordable option for people so that they are not forced to rely upon private or fleet vehicles unless necessary. The University supports staff and students with disabilities who need a parking permit and will continue to take the travel needs of people with disabilities into account, including users of wheelchairs, people with visual and mobility impairments and those with hidden disabilities. Any measures introduced to manage the demand to travel by car will not restrict access to parking for those with disabilities and caring responsibilities.

A modal shift towards walking, cycling, wheeling and public transport will help reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on our roads, reduce carbon emissions and improve local air quality. It will require a combination of 'hard' major infrastructure and connectivity improvements alongside 'soft' behavioural change measures and a partnership approach between large local employers, local authorities and residents and within the collegiate University.

Oxford's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan¹ identifies that cycling and walking conditions, provision and routes are often extremely poor. Due to the tight nature of the street structure, there is limited potential to increase space on the roads (for example to provide bus priority or segregated cycleways) and so the space available must be managed carefully to optimise capacity whilst also enhancing the sense of place.

For these reasons, the University will continue to work collaboratively with Oxfordshire County Council to develop the proposed core transport schemes set out in the Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan 2022-2050² (LTCP) and Central Oxfordshire Travel Plan³ (COTP). We will encourage a collegiate University approach to working with OCC.

1. https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.oxfordshire.gov.uk%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Ffile%2FRoads-and-transport%2FOxfordLCWIP_202v1.1.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK

2. <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/roads-and-transport-connecting-oxfordshire/LocalTransportandConnectivityPlan.pdf>
3. <https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/documents/s66951/CMDTDS230907R04%20Annex%201%20-%20Central%20Oxfordshire%20Travel%20Plan%20Final%20Version.pdf>

2. Challenges

The following key local transport challenges have been identified:

Deaths, serious injuries and poor health outcomes

Horrifically, in recent years University and college staff and students have been amongst those killed and seriously injured on Oxfordshire's roads. Road collisions and injuries are on the increase across Oxfordshire. In 2022 there were 24 people killed and 283 serious injuries on Oxfordshire's roads⁴. An integrated approach is required to reduce death and injury in alignment with the Vision Zero principle described in section 3 below. Encouraging a change in travel mode choice represents a big challenge despite physical inactivity being associated with 1 in 6 deaths in the UK and is estimated to cost the UK £7.4 billion annually⁵.

Decarbonisation

Delivering a net-zero transport system is a critical part of contributing to UK targets and addressing the climate emergency. Transport is the largest sector in the UK's greenhouse gas emissions, and unlike other sectors, has not decarbonised significantly⁶. The city of Oxford, as with many urban areas throughout the United Kingdom, is subject to poor air quality, particularly in areas with high levels of road traffic. The transport sector in Oxford continues to be by far the largest contributor (68%) to total NOx emissions⁷.

Car dependency

Car dependency in and around Oxford is a persistent problem. A continued rise in car use across the UK is reflected within Oxfordshire with a 36% increase in vehicle miles since 1993⁸. This is having negative impacts for the collegiate University and its staff and students by disrupting business travel, commuting journeys, and creating places that have become less welcoming for our staff, students and visitors.

Recruitment and retention

Staff travel surveys indicate that more than 60% of University staff now live outside the Oxford ring road. The cost of commuting, both in time and financially, for staff undertaking these often lengthy and unreliable commutes is frequently raised by departments as a barrier to recruitment and retention. Staff living in rural areas have specific challenges and currently have fewer alternatives to the private car.

4. <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/road-safety/road-casualties>

5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-applying-all-our-health/physical-activity-applying-all-our-health>

6. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65c0cf2e70428200137521cd/2022-final-emissions-statistics-one-page-summary.pdf>
7. <https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/805/air-quality-action-plan-2021-2025>
8. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/road-traffic-statistics-tra>

3. Vision, Principles, Priorities & Outcomes

The following principles, priorities and associated outcomes underpin the University's transport vision, which is:

Vision

For our staff and students to have access to a safe, inclusive, affordable and sustainable local transport system benefitting local communities, businesses and visitors by reducing car dependency and enabling healthier, fairer and more sustainable ways to travel.

Principles

In order to achieve this vision, together with the associated outcomes listed below, the University will be guided by the following principles in its approach to decision making, responding to consultations and evaluating the success or otherwise of local and national transport policies and schemes:

- 1) **Vision Zero** - a whole safe system approach to road safety rooted in the belief that every traffic death is a result of human failure. Vision Zero aims to create a comprehensive and holistic approach to making streets, roads, and roadsides safer. This ensures Vision Zero is not just a technical solution but also encourages a cultural and behavioural shift towards a more human-based, compassionate, and inclusive approach to road safety.

Reason - Whilst there has been a long-term downward trend in reported road collisions and injuries both nationally and in Oxfordshire, between 2017 and 2021, 128 people were killed on Oxfordshire roads, with 1127 seriously injured. During the COVID-19 pandemic there was a reduction in road collisions, but the 2022 trend is an upward one⁴. Therefore, to improve road safety for all road users in Oxfordshire the University will adopt a Vision Zero approach that ensures that our need to travel does not compromise the well-being of ourselves or others.

Examples – New infrastructure, new modes of transport and new mobility services must be safe and secure by design.

- 2) **Experimental** – an experimental, data-led and iterative approach to designing and implementing transport policies and schemes.

Reason – despite careful planning and modelling, the impact and effect of new transport policies and schemes are often unknown. Therefore, the University will support an experimental approach to the implementation of local and national transport policies and schemes allowing for the collection of observational data, an opportunity for the community to experience and provide feedback and an opportunity for changes to be made prior to permanent adoption.

Examples – the use of Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders for implementing the core transport schemes contained in the LTCP.

3) Partnership – a community-based approach to policies and schemes working in partnership with other stakeholders.

Reason – The University of Oxford has a duty to support the community in which it lives, and to work in partnership so that, together, we set collective ambitions for all our people. Therefore, the University will have conversations with colleges, voluntary groups, the police, the health service, local MPs, councillors, social services, local schools and community groups about transport related issues of mutual concern.

Examples – The University is represented at a host of partnership working groups, which collectively help to ensure that the University can work with, co-operate and communicate with a range of other stakeholders across the city such as the Oxford Strategic Partnership convened by Oxford City Council and the Local Economic Partnership (OxLep). The University engages with Colleges in the Estate Bursars' Committee / Domestic Bursars' Joint Travel and Transport Subcommittee.

Priorities and Outcomes

Priority 1 – Reducing road related deaths and serious injuries in and around Oxford

Outcomes – Fewer and less severe road traffic collisions involving our staff, students and visitors; Active travel modes preferred.

Priority 2 – Decarbonisation of vehicles

Outcomes – Help deliver University's net zero carbon targets, improve local air quality, decarbonise the University's vehicle fleet and reduce its mileage where possible

Priority 3 – Reducing car dependency

Outcomes – Faster, more reliable and affordable public transport, prioritise active travel modes, improve recruitment and retention of University staff

4. Achievements

The University has already taken steps towards achieving the transport vision, including:

Vision Zero Campaign

Since early 2022, following the deaths of two members of the University community, both of whom were killed in traffic collisions while cycling, the University has been in full support of Oxfordshire County Council's Vision Zero campaign – a commitment to zero road deaths and serious injuries by 2050. The University continues to build a network of resources to ensure a safe and sustainable journey for all Oxford staff and students. Adding to our previously available supports of free bicycle safety checks and cycle training through local bike groups, the University has launched added resources such as:

- Vision Zero events - including the opportunity to 'exchange places' with an HGV driver to experience the blind spots first hand and learn how to stay safe. These events have provided hundreds of staff and students with information and practical supports for sustainable travel.
- A walking and cycling charter (see Annexe A).
- Registered as a Construction Logistics and Community Safety (CLOCS) Champion.
- Implemented CLOCS national standards on University construction sites to reduce the risk of collision between construction vehicles and the community.
- Assisted Thames Valley Police (TVP) road safety operations in Oxford targeting cyclists without lights and close passes by drivers whilst providing TVP with material to hand out to University staff and students with details on how to obtain subsidised bike lights from the University.

Demand management

In 2021, the University re-introduced car parking permit charges (following a temporary suspension during the pandemic) together with a revised car parking permit application process with new permit types to support staff with disabilities, caring responsibilities and flexible working arrangements.

Shared transport

The University and its divisions and departments continue to spend approximately £500k a year on shared transport initiatives making services such as the Begbroke Science Park shuttle and the Science Transit Shuttle services available to staff and students.

Benefit schemes

The University provides staff salary sacrifice schemes enabling participants to benefit from tax efficient access to bicycles and zero emission and ultra-low emission vehicles. The University also provides discounted public transport season tickets in partnership with bus and rail operators alongside interest free loans for such tickets.

5. Commitments

The University will implement and work towards the following commitments during the period of this transport strategy:

We will:

- Work in partnership with Oxford Brookes University, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and local authorities to explore collaborative approaches to providing express bus services from park and ride sites direct to the city centre and hospital sites;
- Support Oxfordshire County Council in achieving their Vision Zero target of reducing road fatalities or life changing injuries by 50% by 2030;
- Prioritise the safety of vulnerable road users in all development projects pursued by the University;
- Enable University Safety Office to effectively manage University occupational road transport risks;
- Provide road safety equipment, mobile bicycle mechanic services and free cycle training for our staff and students;

- Require our capital projects main contractors and supply chains to meet the CLOCS standards for construction vehicle safety;
- Specify fleet operator driver and vehicle standards requirements in relevant non-capital project procurement contracts subject to identifying adequate resources for monitoring compliance;
- Install electric vehicle charge points for fleet vehicles in accordance with demand;
- Adjust car parking permit charges to at least maintain equivalence to the cost of using public transport and, if required, establish new charges or sources of revenue to offset the effect of a workplace parking levy;
- Support staff and students with disabilities and/or caring commitments who need a parking permit;
- Consult with colleges and encourage a collegiate University approach to local transport challenges.

We will work towards

- Electrifying 100% of the University's vehicle fleet in line with the University's commitment to reach net zero carbon by 2035;
- Providing corporate membership and convenient access to shared vehicles via car clubs and bicycle rental schemes;
- Reducing the level of traffic to our sites by increasing freight consolidation for deliveries;
- Reducing commuter parking, prioritising parking for those with disabilities and caring responsibilities, to make better provision for cyclists and pedestrians;
- Developing proposals and work with partners to deliver large scale infrastructure projects that improve public transport and walking and cycling connectivity between sites used by the University and colleges;
- Developing and implementing 'soft' behavioural change travel measures in collaboration with departments and Colleges;
- Assisting development partners to adopt mixed-use development strategies for urban (re)development projects in and around Oxford to reduce car dependency and create compact, liveable communities.

6. Implementation, monitoring and review

The commitments set out in this Strategy will be funded and delivered through income from staff parking permit charges, which raise over £400,000 a year.

Progress towards the achievement of the commitments will be monitored and reviewed by Transport Planning Working Group and reported via the Environmental Sustainability Annual Report.

Annexe A



VISION ZERO WORKING GROUP

University of Oxford walking and cycling charter

We believe that:

- Walking and cycling provide our staff and students with a healthy, convenient and cheap way to travel; and
- If more people walk and cycle this will reduce car dependency, reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality in the city.

We want:

- To make travelling on Oxford's roads and streets safe for everyone – especially for pedestrians and cyclists;
- People to be able to travel to work safely, directly and easily using a convenient, connected cycle network; and
- Our roads and public spaces to prioritise people and make walking and cycling the safe, natural choice for most everyday journeys.

We will:

- Provide safety equipment, mobile bicycle mechanic services and free cycle training for our staff and students;
- Include a commitment to traffic reduction and freight consolidation in our University transport strategy;
- Engage with staff and students to promote the hierarchy of road users in the Highway Code;
- Require our capital projects main contractors and supply chains to meet the CLOCS standards for construction vehicle safety <https://www.clocs.org.uk>;
- Specify fleet operator driver and vehicle standards requirements in relevant non-capital project procurement contracts subject to identifying adequate resources for monitoring compliance; and
- Prioritise the safety of vulnerable road users in all development projects pursued by the University.

We expect:

- Oxfordshire County Council to deliver their Vision Zero commitment to eliminate deaths and serious injuries from road traffic collisions in Oxford, with a 25% cut by 2026, a 50% cut by 2030 and full elimination by 2050; and
- Thames Valley Police to take more action on 'close passes' to cyclists and enforce 20mph speed limits in addition to existing activities such as drink/drug driving, non-wearing of seatbelts and mobile phone and distraction offences.