

UK government to accelerate greener mobility with £2B package

As said during Boris Johnson lockdown relief speech, the UK government wants to boost greener mobility across the nation and encourage people to choose alternative ways to travel, such as walking and cycling, and relieve public transport congestion.

Following soaring levels of walking and cycling across the UK amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the initiatives will help push more people to choose alternatives to public transport when they need to commute, building healthier lifestyle and making sure the road, bus and rail networks are ready to respond to future increases in demand.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps announced that the government is strongly involved in boosting greener and active transport to enable more people to cycle and walk during their commute.

The £2B package will be used to improve infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians, introduce emergency bike lanes and streets to support the transport network, conduct trials of rental e-scooters, and work with tech companies to reduce crowding on public transport.

As part of a £250M emergency active travel fund – the first stage of the £2B investment – pop-up bike lanes with protected space for cycling, wider pavements, safer junctions, and cycle and bus-only corridors will be created in

England within weeks.

How will it work? The government will fund and work with local authorities across the country to help make it easier for people to use bikes to get around – including Greater Manchester, which wants to create 150 miles of protected cycle track, and Transport for London, which plans a “bike Tube” network above Underground lines. Councils will reallocate road space for the increased numbers of cyclists and pedestrians. In towns and cities, some streets could become bike and bus-only while others remain available for motorists. More side streets could be closed to through traffic, to create low-traffic neighbourhoods and reduce crowds while maintaining access for vehicles.

“During this crisis, millions of people have discovered cycling – whether for exercise or as a means of safe, socially-distanced transport. While there is no change to the ‘stay at home’ message today, when the country does get back to work we need those people to stay on their bikes and be joined by many more. Otherwise, with public transport’s capacity severely restricted at this time, our trains and buses could become overcrowded and our roads gridlocked – holding up emergency services, critical workers and vital supplies. We know cars will continue to remain vital for many, but as we look to the future we must build a better country with greener travel habits, cleaner air and healthier communities.” – Transport Secretary Grant Shapps

Additionally, vouchers will be issued for cycle repairs, to encourage people to get their old bikes out, and plans are being developed for greater availability of bike repair facilities. Many more people will be encouraged to sign up to the Cycle to Work scheme, which gives employees a discount on a new bike.

The government will be launching a campaign to encourage more people to look at alternative ways to travel, to walk or get on a bike for their commute instead of public transport.

The government will also conduct e-scooter trials starting next month to help encourage more people off public transport and onto greener alternatives. Initially set to take place in 4 Future Transport Zones, the trial of rental e-scooters – which will now be offered to all local areas across the country – will allow the government to assess the benefits of e-scooters as well as their impact on public space, with the potential to see rental options on UK roads as early as June.

“The West Midlands is proud to be leading the way on future transport development, and I am pleased the government has put its faith in us again with this new and innovative trial of e-scooters. This trial will help bring more flexibility, choice, and greener travel solutions for the region, at a time when we are facing a climate emergency and urging people to leave the car at home. We will also use the trial to look at the current transport challenges the coronavirus pandemic has presented us with and explore how e-scooters could be used to help tackle them. No region is better equipped than the West Midlands to test, review, and implement trials such as these at pace and scale, and that is testament to the hard work and innovation of those working in

our future transport sector.” – Andy Street, the Mayor of the West Midlands

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