

# The Road & Traffic FAQs



# Road and Traffic FAQs

'FAQs' stands for Frequently Asked Questions and that's what this guide's about: answering your questions! Ever wondered how you could spend less time in traffic jams on your way to work, or wished you didn't have to drive your kids to school? Maybe you've heard about car clubs or home zones but don't know what they mean. What about how you could make your street safer and more pleasant to live in?

If you want to know more, just read on. Look at what's in store below and jump straight to whatever looks interesting to you. Good luck!

What's in store...

## 1. Your streets?

How do you view and use your streets? Take a fresh look at your local roads and imagine how things might look!

## 2. Actions at Home

We all want to get healthy, save money and relax more. Following even a few of the ideas here will help.

- Making less short car trips
- Walking to school
- I need a car, but only sometimes: what can I do?

## 3. Actions at Work

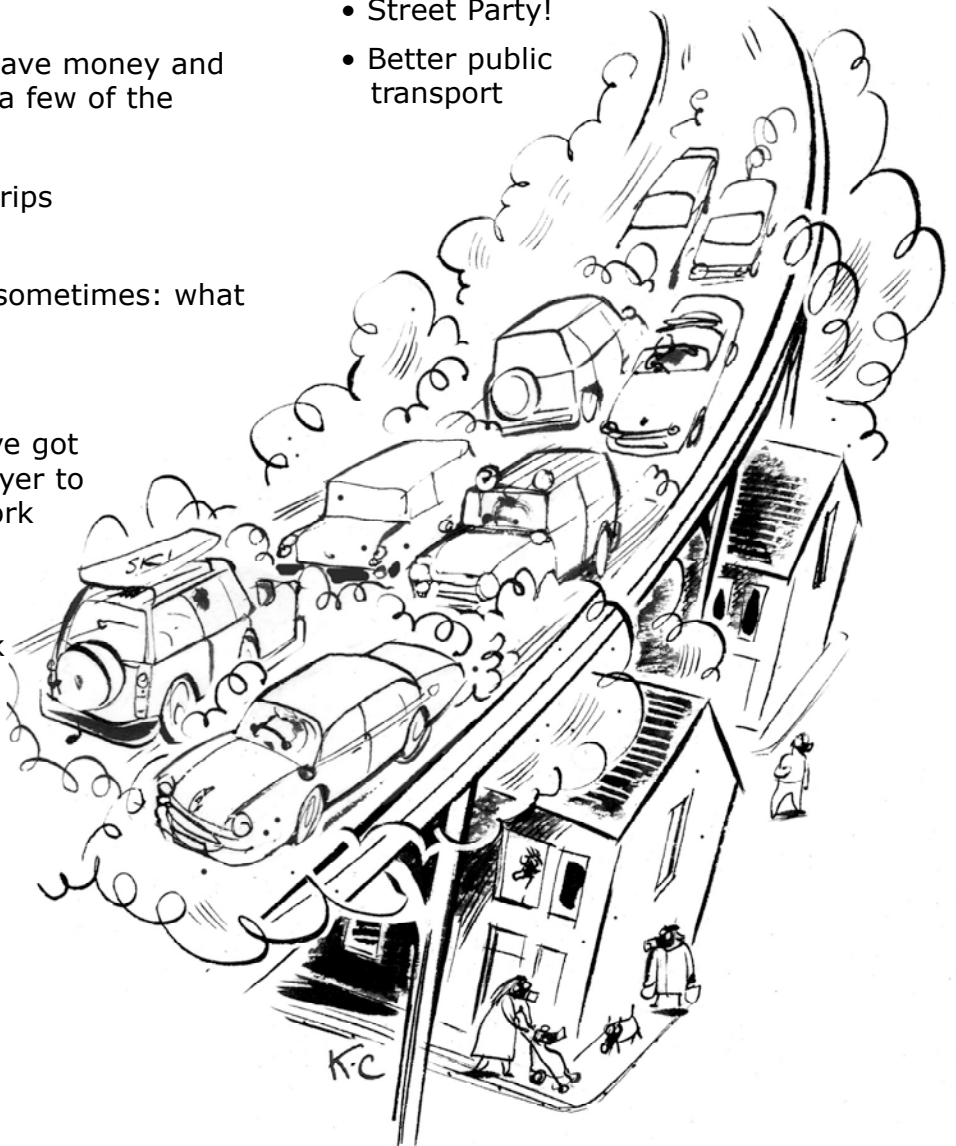
Tired of the commute? We've got tips for you, and your employer to help make the journey to work cheaper, healthier and more pleasant for everyone.

- I have to drive to work – what can I do?
- Workplace Travel Plans

## 4. Actions for your neighbourhood

After reading about the changes taking place in other streets and neighbourhoods you might want to see the same in your local area. Here are some ideas, advice and pointers that could help make your streets a better place to live.

- Community Street Audits
- Streets designed for people
- Street Party!
- Better public transport



# 1. Your Streets?

## How do you view your street?

Just for a moment, think about the street that you live on. How do you see your street, what do you think about it? Is it a place where you can relax, chat to your neighbours and spend some enjoyable time? Or do you see your street as a place ruled by the car where you spend as little time as possible?

In the past, streets were social areas where people met, talked, played and traded with their neighbours. In the last few decades, cars have become more and more common and the way we see and use our streets has changed. Cars now come first, and they make walking, cycling and socialising difficult.

## A better street?

Imagine how a street designed for people might look and feel. Cars would still be a part of our streets, but people would come first. Traffic speeds could be slashed on local roads to make them safer for children to play. There could be more grass and trees, creating a better living space for the people there. Walking or cycling around could be made easier and safer while better public transport could cut the need for so many cars. On residential streets the traditional divide between pavement and road could be broken to open the whole street up for everyone to use.

## Improving your streets

You and your neighbours can make your streets a better place to live and work. This FAQ-sheet will give you some ideas and actions to create better neighbourhoods for you and a better environment for everyone. Some of these ideas you can use in your home and with your family or friends, others are for your place of work and some are for the whole community and can involve local authorities or schools.

**It's up to you to pick and choose!**

### A Home Zone success.

From this...



To this!



Photos courtesy of Sustrans

## 2. Actions at Home

Think about when and why you use your car. Many people need their cars, but we can all reduce the number of trips we make and improve our health and neighbourhoods at the same time.

### How can I make less short car trips?

Cars pollute our atmosphere most when on short trips. The car's engine never gets a chance to warm up. This makes it run less efficiently and use up more fuel, especially on busy roads with lots of stopping and starting. Here are a few tips for reducing the short trips you make:

- Combine your journeys –if you're out picking up the kids or coming back from work try to do the shopping at the same time.
- Use public transport wherever possible – find out about your local services. Having the bus and train timetable at home means you can easily check when to go and saves a long wait at the bus stop. If you're worried about time think about how much you lose stuck in traffic jams, parking and walking to your destination.
- Choose local services – often you can find the products or services you want by shopping locally. Buy in bulk if you can. Using local businesses boosts the local economy and makes you feel part of your community.
- Walk the dog close by – find out about the walks and dog friendly places you don't need a car to get to. If you have a favourite spot that you must drive to maybe you can miss out once or twice a week or combine your journey with another purpose.
- Organise the household – a more organised household doesn't mean it's run like the army but does mean less trips to the shops and more time for relaxing!



### Connected Communities

Social and active communities are well connected. If a large or busy road cuts through an area it can drive a wedge through those links. More traffic, longer journeys or extra roads can make journeys by foot seem much harder. People are less likely to walk and more likely to use their cars, if they have one.

This effect is called 'community severance'. When people stop using local services it's difficult to meet your neighbours and become part of local life. Children are stopped from playing outside. The elderly and some disabled people can find crossing roads difficult so they stay indoors more and meet less people. This makes them the most affected groups.

Well-designed roads, built with the community in mind, can reduce community severance. Crossings where people want to cross are needed but good signposting, proper lighting, green spaces and smooth pavements are also important. You can improve community connections in your local area. Find others who agree and read the 'Streets designed for People' section below for help.

## **I need to drive the kids to school!**

Maybe you feel you don't have enough time to walk your children to school or that strangers or the traffic make it too dangerous for your kids to walk or cycle alone. When deciding what to do remember walking to school has very positive effects on you and your children.

- Road Safety – when walking young kids to school you can teach them a good sense of road safety and pedestrian skills that will keep them safe in the future.
- Quality time – walking might be a chance to spend some quality time with your children. There will be learning opportunities along the way that would never have happened during a car ride.
- Mental readiness – teachers find pupils who walk to school more alert and ready to settle down when in the classroom. The walk has woken them up and the exercise has helped them feel good.
- Independence – the walk to school is an important time when children develop good social skills and responsibility outside the control of parents and the school.
- Health – walking is great exercise! The walk to school can reduce fat and prevent obesity, build up a child's immune system against common bugs and strengthen their bones. Walking at a young age encourages a healthy lifestyle in later life. The other health benefit is cleaner air. Pollution levels are two to three times higher inside cars compared with on the pavement.
- Cost – cars cost money; walking is free!



**sustrans**  
JOIN THE MOVEMENT

**Safe Routes to School**

Information service: 0117 915 1000  
schools@sustrans.org.uk  
www.saferoutestoschools.org.uk  
www.the-evidence.org.uk

## **I need a car, but only sometimes: what can I do?**

You could consider a journey share or car club ...

### **Journey Share**

A shared car journey is much better for the environment and much cheaper for you. During special events like conferences or festivals there's often lots of people looking for a lift or travelling in near-empty cars. Ask around for a lift or extra passengers and if you help to organise events why not suggest a car-share to all the participants.

If you make a regular journey you could use a car-sharing website to find people offering a lift or looking for a space.

Try **[www.nationalcarshare.co.uk](http://www.nationalcarshare.co.uk)** for starters.

### **Car Clubs**

In car clubs members share the use of a car owned by the club. When somebody wants to use the car they can book in advance and pay by the hour. If you only need a car occasionally car clubs can be much cheaper than owning and looking after your own. Some car clubs are commercial businesses but others are informal agreements between neighbours. A car shared between even two or three people will save you tonnes of cash!

Carplus is a UK charity promoting responsible car use. They can provide you with links to car sharing schemes and local car clubs as well as advice and information sheets to help you set up your own.



**carplus**  
rethinking car use

Suite C17, Joseph's Well, Hanover Walk, Leeds LS3 1AB  
Phone: 0113 234 9299

**[www.carplus.org.uk](http://www.carplus.org.uk)**

## 3. Actions at Work

### I have to drive to work – what can I do?

Is the drive to work a daily chore? With a little imagination and willingness from your company and colleagues a Workplace Travel Plan for your workplace can improve your health, the local streets, your work and the environment.

### What's a Workplace Travel Plan?

It's a plan to improve the way you get to work. Because every workplace is different, every plan will be different. We've included a few ideas below but for your plan to be successful employers must first find out how their workers travel and why they don't choose more environmentally friendly options. Only when you know what the problems are can you try to fix them.

- **Public transport** – Advertising the public transport timetables at work is a cheap way to get more people onto buses and trains. Some people use



their cars because they don't realise there's an alternative.

- **Get cycle friendly** – people are more likely to cycle if they can leave their bike in a safe area while they work. Providing a secure cycle store, or even just an area in a warehouse especially for bikes, is the most important step. Some people might like a shower when they arrive, especially if they're not used to cycling!
- **Flexi-time** – if work starts at 9am but the buses arrive at 9.15 let people know they can still use them!
- **Car parking** – if there's free car parking available people will keep using their cars. Companies can prioritise their parking spaces for those who really need a car and offer a cash sum to others who give up their space.
- **New routes** - Is there a new bus route or bus stop that would help you and others get to work? Your company, and maybe others in the area, could ask the bus companies to change.

### More help here...

- Travel Plans: An Overview has an introduction to Travel Plans and explains what advantages there are to business in Scotland  
[www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2002/10/15454/11007](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2002/10/15454/11007)
- A quick and friendly 'how to' on setting up a travel plan, the free Green Commuting Handbook - [www.resourceconservation.mb.ca/gci/TDM](http://www.resourceconservation.mb.ca/gci/TDM)
- For a more detailed 'how to' on setting up an effective travel plan see the free Travel plan resource pack for employers from the Department for Transport - [www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/travelplans/work/resourcempackemployers](http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/travelplans/work/resourcempackemployers)
- The National Business Travel Network enables companies already familiar with travel planning to share best practice and their experiences with other businesses. Phone 020 7613 0743 or visit [www.nbtn.org.uk](http://www.nbtn.org.uk)

## 4. Actions for your Neighbourhood

### I want... a Street Party!

Ever thought of having a Street Party? Imagine one day a year where the traffic's stopped, you can eat, listen to music, chat and have fun meeting your neighbours on the street. Street parties are celebrations of car free days and as a bonus might be a great way to raise some money and support for improvements to your local neighbourhood.

Have a look at the Streets Alive! website for help and advice on organising your own party.



### More help here...

- Living Streets Scotland can provide help and advice to individuals and communities looking to improve their neighbourhoods, local streets and public spaces.
- A 'Place Check' is similar to a street audit. The website has lots of advice and ready made forms and action plans to help you place check and improve your neighbourhood - [www.placecheck.info](http://www.placecheck.info)
- A free 'Walkability Checklist' with example questions to think about when doing your street audit is available from the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Centre [www.walkinginfo.org/cps/checklist.cfm](http://www.walkinginfo.org/cps/checklist.cfm)

### Community Street Audits

This is a chance for you and members of your community to see streets in a new light. The idea is to look at the streets from a pedestrian point of view and find ways to make walking in your neighbourhood safer and more enjoyable.

Street Audits involve small groups walking through local streets while noting down examples of things you like (the good stuff) and things you'd like changed (the bad stuff). This works best if the people in the group are a mixed bunch, maybe including residents, local traders, cyclists, parents and people with impaired mobility.

Questions to ask include: Are the pavements smooth and free of obstacles? Do you feel safe? Are the crossings where you want them? Is there space to rest or relax? Is the traffic driving too fast? Are the streets well lit? Is walking or cycling safe and enjoyable?

Street audits create ideas and demonstrate support from the local community for neighbourhood improvements. This support can be used to ask and pressure your local authority (local council) into spending its cash on the community's ideas.

**LIVING STREETS  
SCOTLAND**

[www.livingstreetsscotland.org.uk](http://www.livingstreetsscotland.org.uk)  
[www.livingstreets.org.uk](http://www.livingstreets.org.uk)  
coordinator@livingstreetsscotland.org.uk  
Phone: 01259 219235

Living Streets Scotland can give help and advice to individuals and communities looking to improve their neighbourhoods, local streets and public spaces.

# Streets designed for People

People in residential areas have the opportunity to 'reclaim' their streets from cars. You can, with time, effort and community support, restore your local area to a place where people are safe, relaxed and socially active. Home Zones are streets designed so that pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles share the space equally. Home Zones make a neighbourhood more 'liveable'.

## How do Home Zones work?

Traditionally traffic is 'calmed' through the use of speed humps. These are however viewed as an obstacle by drivers, and hated by most! Home zones use other ways to slow the traffic. Communities can plan a lack of priority into their streets, this leads to 'uncertainty' in the decisions that car drivers make, forcing them to slow down.

Still not convinced? Here's some design examples that slow the traffic and improve the look and feel of the streets:



Street furniture like benches and play areas



Raised platforms, narrowed road or signs that mark the beginning of residential streets.



Reduced sight lines using trees or planters.



Alternative road materials like cobbles, bricks or coloured tarmac.





Breaking down the traditional separation between pavement and road.



Subtle obstacles or chicanes with parking spaces or changing road colours.



Alternative road materials and 'planters' built out into the road will slow the traffic.

Cars still use the street but, through the design, drivers are forced to be more considerate of the road's other users. With vehicles travelling at low speeds, all users are able to establish eye contact and negotiate with one another.



Widened pavements with lots of greenery and better lighting.



Space for street activities like cafes or play areas.





## How do I create a Home Zone?

Some councils are willing to help communities create Home Zones and hopefully more will be in the future. Get a group of local residents together and approach your local councillor with your ideas. Projects like Home Zones need lots of time and community involvement. If the residents and local businesses are enthusiastic about the plans councils will be more willing to help.

## There's not enough money to create a Home Zone!

Sometimes there's just not enough cash to transform your neighbourhood into a Home Zone. If the council say they've no money for Home Zones that doesn't mean you can't improve your streets with some of the stuff that would go into a full Home Zone.

Small changes like a few plant boxes, a cycle lane or designated parking bays can make a big difference to the look, feel and safety of your street.

The sustainable transport charity Sustrans runs a project called 'DIY Streets'. This project is designed to help communities re-design their streets, in an affordable way, to make them safer and more attractive places to live.



National Cycle Network Centre  
2 Cathedral Square, College Green  
Bristol BS1 5DD

Tel: 0845 113 00 65  
Email: [info@sustrans.org.uk](mailto:info@sustrans.org.uk)  
Web: [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)

Sustrans' Livable Neighbourhoods project use community involvement and sustainable transport planning to put into action practical urban design projects in the UK

## More information here...

- TRANSform Scotland and the Home Zones for Scotland Network - [www.transformscotland.org.uk/campaigns/homezones/homezones.html](http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/campaigns/homezones/homezones.html)
- Information on Home Zones, with an online forum and rough prices for street improvements: [www.homezones.org](http://www.homezones.org)
- Lessons learnt from earlier Home Zones: [www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/homezones/cfos/](http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/homezones/cfos/)

## Better public transport

Better bus and train services allow more people to give up their cars. You can help, the first step is use public transport! High passenger numbers show the transport companies there are people out there who want more services. Pick up a timetable or print one off the Internet and stick it up at home so you always know when to go.

Is there something that would make your trip easier? Maybe better shelters, easier access, more services that run on time, night time services or combined bus and train tickets? You could contact the company and your local council<sup>o</sup>r with your suggestion. Get a group together, if there's lots of people all calling for the same thing it's more likely to happen.

### Reducing Scotland's Traffic

Scotland's National Transport Strategy published in December 2006 aims to return traffic to 2001 levels by 2021.

This is a welcome commitment and should provide the government with incentives to increase its public transport spending and provides communities with an argument against developments that will increase car journeys.

[www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Transport](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Transport)

## TRANSform Scotland

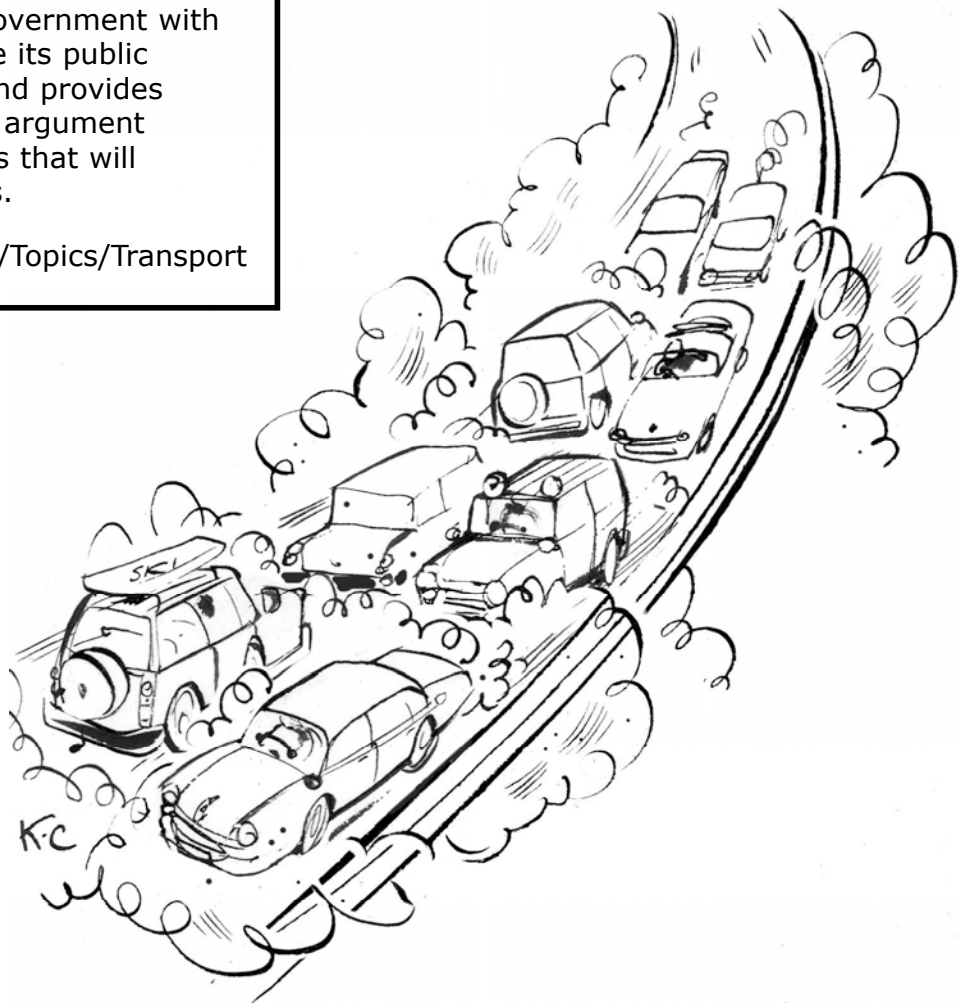
*the campaign for sustainable transport*

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TRANSform Scotland is the national sustainable transport alliance. We campaign for a more sensible transport system, one less dependent on unsustainable modes such as the car, the plane and road freight, and more reliant on sustainable modes like walking, cycling, public transport and freight by rail or sea.



## The last word

Hopefully this FAQ-sheet has been useful. You should now feel more willing to speak to and work with the people, authorities and companies that affect you and your community's life. Go for it!

If you have more questions about incineration in Scotland get in touch with Friends of the Earth Scotland. Our contact details are below.

We would also like to hear your feedback or comments to help us improve in the future.



**Friends of  
the Earth  
Scotland**

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