To:	Management of Place
From:	Adrian Davis
Date:	19th February 2019
Subject:	Essential Evidence on a page: No 182 Sustainable Travel Towns: An evaluation of the longer term impacts

Top line: City-wide sustainable travel interventions in three English towns led to increases in cycling and walking, sustained five year post project, while car use declined.

Interventions addressing a large number of people who are at a relatively small risk of injury and illness may be more effective than interventions addressing small numbers at high risk. This is an important consideration in areas of public policy and as such has been applied to areas of transport planning including road safety.[1] Similarly, there is strong evidence that whole town or city interventions which may contain many intervention types are more effective than solely localised interventions at increasing levels of active travel and reducing car use.[2]

In 2004, three towns - Darlington, Peterborough and Worcester – jointly received £10 million funding from the Department for Transport for the implementation of large-scale 'smarter choice' programmes over a five year period, as part of the 'Sustainable Travel Towns' (STT) demonstration project. All three programmes put in place a range of initiatives aiming to encourage more use of non-car options – in particular, bus use, cycling and walking – and to discourage single-occupancy car use. The strategies adopted by the three towns included the development of a strong brand identity; travel awareness campaigns; public transport promotion; cycling and walking promotion; school and workplace travel planning; and large-scale personal travel planning work.

An evaluation was conducted of the impacts of the STT project.[3] This included analysis of national data sets about local travel – in particular, Census data, National Road Traffic Estimates (NRTE) data and DfT figures on bus use. Darlington had a strong programme of walking and cycling promotion, which was conducted in partnership with substantial infrastructure improvements as part of the Cycling Demonstration Town activity**.** Walking featured in general travel awareness, school and workplace activities, and specifically in active travel promotions run by the public health team, including the give-away of 10,000 pedometers. Peterborough's Travelchoice team established enhanced working relationships with their planning colleagues. One legacy was that Development Control and Planning officers continued to stipulate robust requirements of developers in relation to sustainable travel. In Worcester, funding focused most on infrastructure upgrading walking/cycling links across the river, around the university, and local corridors.

The evaluation, with post project data to 2014, concluded that STT was successful in reducing travel by car and increasing the use of other modes, from a comparison with trends in other medium-sized urban areas. There was a 26-30% increase in cycle trips per head. Overall, in the three towns, there was a reduction in total traffic levels in the order of 2%, together with a reduction of 7-10% in the number of car driver trips per resident. A cost-benefit analysis, considering congestion benefits only, produced a Benefit to Cost Ratio of 4.5:1 (over 4:1 is stated as 'very high value for money' by the DfT).

[1] See https://travelwest.info/project/ee-109-prevention-paradox-population-strategies-applied-transport
[2] Sloman, L. et al, 2018. Impact of the Local Sustainable Transport Fund
[3] Cairns, S., Jones, M. 2016. *Sustainable travel towns: An evaluation of the longer term impacts – Main report.* Report for the Department for Transport, PPR776, ISBN: 978-1-910377-58-1.