

----- MEMBER IN THE SPOTLIGHT – TRANSPORT FOR LONDON -----

Walking in London

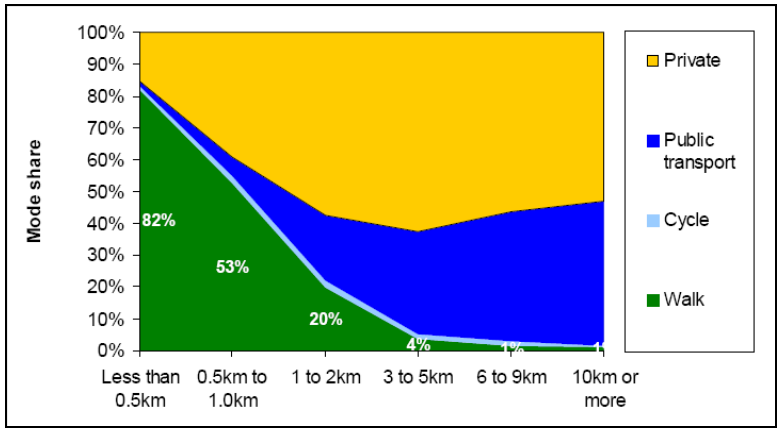
London – Talking about walking

What makes you healthier, saves on petrol and bus fares, and doesn't need wheels? Yes, we are talking about walking! More and more cities in Europe are rediscovering the oldest transport mode on Earth as part of the solution to tackle congestion on the road and on the public transport system, to revitalise city areas affected by high traffic volumes, and to improve citizens' health and quality of life.

London is a forerunner in this issue. Why? Transport for London (TfL) has already started a few years ago to proactively promote walking, and investigate walking facilities and barriers. TfL has created a walking team and is investing a lot of man power and budget into the issue, and is doing all this in an integrated approach.

Data shows: there is a huge potential for more walking

In London, 39% of trips are between 0.5 and 2km. This is a reasonable distance for walking, being up to around 30 minutes. However, the walk share is only 29%, while half of the trips are made by car, and 13% by bus ('Walking in London' Report). The extent to which people walk is closely linked to trip length. The chart below shows that even for trips between 0.5 and 1km nearly half are made by non-walk modes, thereof 39% by private transport (mainly car).



Source: LATS (cited in 'Walking in London' report)

Peak hour congestion is a problem on the roads but also on the underground. Short car trips cause unnecessary air pollutant and CO2 emissions. Thus, the aim is to convert short, motorised trips in inner/outer London, and short tube trips in central London to journeys on foot. The target is to increase the walk share for all trips from 21% to 22%. This doesn't sound much but means a significant increase in absolute terms: from 5.7m trips per day to 7m by 2025.

The Walking Plan and the Transport Vision

'A walking friendly city is a city where people select walking as their preferred choice of travel for health and to relax and one which exhibits a high degree of 'walkability'. Walkability may in turn be defined as the extent to which walking is readily available to the consumer as a safe, connected, accessible and pleasant activity.' These definitions are taken from the Walking Plan for London (published as 'Making London a

walkable city' in 2004). The plan includes the following measures to promote walking in London: Home Zones, area improvements based on Streets-for-People, a London Walking website, awareness campaigns and encouraging walking for short trips.

Following the walking plan, in 2006, 'Transport 2025: Transport vision for a growing world city was published. This document sets the concrete target to increase the number of walking trips per person by 10% by 2015. Measures identified to achieve this include: new crossings, better pedestrian signals, improving the street scene, better signage and lighting, building informal crossings such as islands and refuges, replacing subways and footbridges with surface level crossings.

London's new Mayor Boris Johnson (elected in 2008) will publish a draft for a new transport strategy for London in May 2009. Promoting walking will continue to have high priority. 'We at TfL are going to do everything in our power to make walking through this city as attractive and enjoyable as possible', the Mayor stated last year. The Mayor has set a goal to 'Make Walking Count' and new policy, projects and programmes are currently being devised to fit under this initiative and help to improve and encourage walking in London.

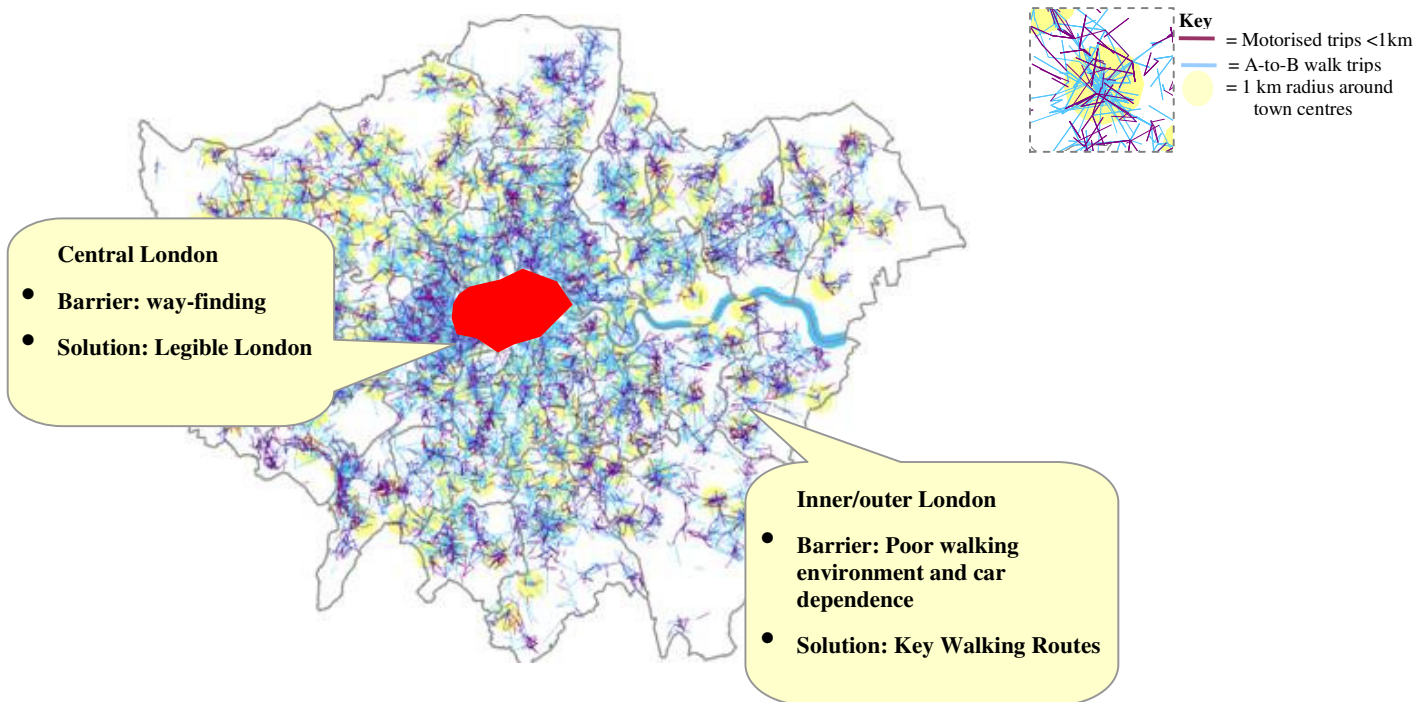
Aims and activities of TfL's Walking Team

Within the framework of new transport strategy, the TfL walking team aims are

- more short journeys on foot,
- more longer trips using walking & public transport,
- revitalisation of urban space to increase enjoyment of walking.

The main activities of the team include improvements of the infrastructure for all users including disabled people, walking audits, removing barriers for disabled people, marketing measures (with focus on saving time and money by walking, and an increasing emphasis on the health benefits), and working with property developers to provide a walking friendly environment.

Different barriers to walking have been identified: In the centre, the main barrier is information (or a lack of appropriate way-finding); in inner/outer London, the main barrier is the walking environment, which can be perceived as poor in many cases, and car dependency.



To address these barriers 3 priorities have been identified:

- Key Walking Routes,
- Legible London: a new integrated way-finding system,
- An international benchmarking project.

Key Walking Routes and walking audits

The 'Key Walking Routes' follow an integrated approach. The measures (e.g. widening footways removal of street clutter, reducing traffic speed, improving personal security) may seem rather conventional but it is new for London to think of walking routes in a holistic way. Often in the past walking improvements have been implemented as one off point treatments. As part of this new approach some standards have been adopted: bus stops shall be accessible for wheelchair users; signalised pedestrian crossings shall be equipped for disabled people.

One way to identify Key Walking Routes is by conducting walking audits. TfL uses the Pedestrian Environment Review System (PERS), a quantitative assessment of pedestrian facilities. So far, 80 audits for 194km or 35% of TfL roads are complete. Scores are given for the routes, links, formal and informal crossings, public transport interchanges, and public spaces. Scores are weighted and combined, and clear recommendations for how to improve the score/the quality are given. These walking audits are labour-intensive and are completed by one team at the Transport Research

Laboratory. Having a dedicated team to conduct the audits ensures that the results are comparable across sites and the auditors are familiar with the current best practice. An example for such an audit report can be found in London's profile in the member section of the Polis website (see below).

Legible London – the new way-finding system



The aim of 'Legible London' is to improve people's confidence in finding their way on foot, thus encouraging walking instead of using the underground for short trips, as it is becoming increasingly congested during peak hours. Today, many people use the London underground map for orientation which is one reason for getting lost. Surveys show that many people would walk more often if information was provided for pedestrians.

Today, there are several existing way-finding systems in London. Thirty-two systems have been identified within the central Congestion Charging Zone alone, which merely adds to pedestrian confusion.

TfL is working towards providing one consistent integrated system. Legible London aims to provide clear information to pedestrians when they need it (at each decision point) to give them the confidence to walk. It currently focuses on street signage, but development of mapping systems using web based and mobile phone technology is also being explored.

Consultation with disabled people has been an important aspect in developing the design. A prototype has been developed and installed near to Oxford Street and there will be further testing in 3 pilot areas in 2009. Evaluation will be complete by spring 2010. (More information can be obtained from <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/microsites/legible-london/default.aspx>).

International benchmarking

London is taking part in an international benchmarking project with Walk21. (More information on Walk21 and this project can be found on the Walk21 website at <http://www.walk21.com/evolving/measuringwalking.asp>).

The aim is to develop a standardised set of measures of walking and people's views of walking. There will be a pilot in London in May 2009 followed by testing of the pilot in the project partner cities of Copenhagen, New York and Barcelona. The results will be discussed at Walk21 conference in New York in October. A benchmarking session will also be provided to give advice and assistance to cities interested in measuring walking and an online tool will be developed after the event for other cities to use.

The idea is to help cities support more walking because a survey by Walk21 in 2006 identified that the single biggest barrier stopping politicians, governments and cities investing in projects which encourage more walking is a lack of knowledge and supporting evidence on how to make walking count. Other volunteers for further testing of the tool are welcome!

Other programmes

Other programmes are currently being developed and include flexible walking routes, a new walking steering group and an update of the current Walking Plan, a new brand identity for walking, and walking innovations, as well as further guidance on how to make the most of walking through property development. More details will be provided in due course.

There is a range of related publications available in London's profile in the members section on the Polis website: "Meet the Team" document, a flyer for pedestrian training, guidance for planners on designing walking schemes, the 'Improving walkability' guide, a guide on measuring pedestrian activities, the 2004 walking plan for London, an example for one of the PERS audits, and a summary of the TfL streetscape guidance (<http://www.polis-online.org/index.php?id=181>). The complete TfL streetscape guidance can be downloaded here <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/businessandpartners/publications/4858.aspx>.

Sources:

LATS (London Area Transport Survey), 2001, TfL.
Making London a Walkable City – The Walking Plan for London, 2004, TfL.
Transport 2025: Transport vision for a growing world city, 2006, TfL.
Walking in London. Report. May 2008.
Way to Go. GLA. 2008

Pictures: TfL