Connecting communities

The socially inclusive transport strategy
for the North of England

April 2023

**TRANSPORT FOR THE
NORTH**

Contents

Transport and the social inclusion challenge in the North

This strategy sets out our response to this urgent social challenge. This includes defining how we will act with Local Authorities and other key stakeholders to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the transport system in areas that have some of the greatest unmet needs anywhere in England. It also sets out the broader policy agenda necessary for significant progress of this issue, including how the North can seize on the opportunity provided by the transition to a decarbonised transport system, and ensure a fair and just transition.
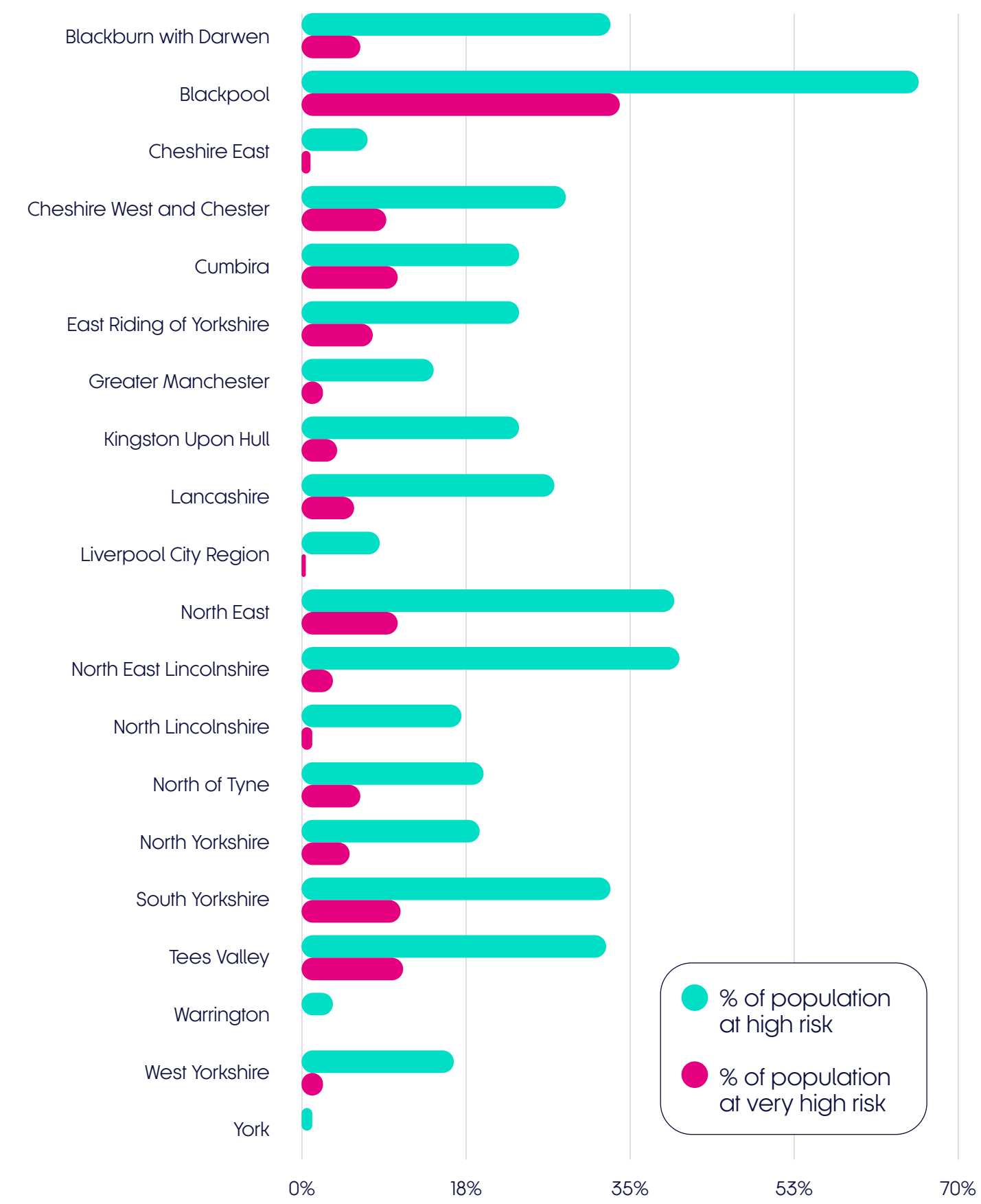
For the first time, this strategy also provides a clear means of assessing if improvements are being delivered at the scale and pace necessary. Our ambition is that, by 2050, investment and reform in the transport system across the North will:

1 **Reduce the number of people living in areas with a high risk of transport-related social exclusion (TRSE) by 1,000,000**

2 **Reduce the number of people living in areas with a very high risk of transport-related social exclusion (TRSE) by 370,000.**

This is based on the 2019 baseline of risk set out in our research report and data tool. This draws on in-depth analysis of access to key destinations and the vulnerability of the population to social exclusion across all local areas of England.

Transport is vital social infrastructure, providing access to work and education opportunities, key services, community life, leisure, and recreation. And while digital service access is growing, the needs and aspirations of people across the North of England remain linked to the ability to travel. Because of this, poor access to transport contributes to poverty and deprivation, inequalities in health and wellbeing, and social isolation.

In 2019, TfN's Strategic Transport Plan committed to "improving inclusivity, health, and access to opportunities for all", and to achieving inclusive and sustainable economic growth.[1] Following from this, in 2022 we published Transport-Related Social Exclusion in the North of England – a report bringing together new data analysis and wide-ranging research with communities across the North.[2]

Our research shows that 3.3 million people in the North live in areas where there is a high risk of social exclusion because of transport issues. This risk is higher in the North than the rest of

England, with 21% of the population of the North living in areas with a high risk, compared with 16% of those in the rest of England. This additional risk is present across our diverse areas, with major cities, towns, and many rural communities in the North all facing higher risk than otherwise similar areas in the rest of England.[3]

As well as geographical differences, our research shows that people with disabilities and long-term health conditions, people on low incomes and in insecure work, and carers are much more likely to be socially excluded by transport issues. These populations face more constraints on already limited transport choices, and more consequences when the transport system fails to work in the way that it should. Because of this, achieving a more equal, efficient, and effective transport system for all requires action across all areas, even those where the overall risk is low.[4]

Socially Inclusive Transport Strategy

Percent of residents living in areas with a high and very high risk of TRSE by Local Transport Authority

Categories (top to bottom): Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Cumbira, East Riding of Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, Kingston Upon Hull, Lancashire, Liverpool City Region, North East, North East Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire, North of Tyne, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, Tees Valley, Warrington, West Yorkshire, York

X-axis: 0% — 18% — 35% — 53% — 70%

Legend:
- % of population at high risk
- % of population at very high risk

Number of residents living in areas with a high and very high risk of TRSE by Local Transport Authority

Categories (top to bottom): Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Cumbira, East Riding of Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, Kingston Upon Hull, Lancashire, Liverpool City Region, North East, North East Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire, North of Tyne, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, Tees Valley, Warrington, West Yorkshire, York

X-axis: 0% — 125,000 — 250,000 — 375,000 — 500,000

Legend:
- % of population at high risk
- % of population at very high risk

The causes of TRSE

A societal context of

Poverty, multiple deprivation, poor health, and income inequality.
Inequalities relating to disability, gender, caring, ethnicity, and LGBTQ identities.

Alongside a transport system that features

Car-dominated environments with poor conditions for active travel.
Fragmented, infrequent, and unreliable public transport services. High costs of public transport, particularly for multi-mode and cross-boundary trips.
Inequalities in access to information, engagement, and consultations.

The combination of which leads to

Poor levels of access to opportunities, key services, and community life for many of those relying on public transport and active travel.

Alongside

High levels of car dependency, including forced car ownership.

Which results in social exclusion through

Limited access to opportunities, key services, and community life for those reliant on public transport and active travel.

Alongside the wider impacts of

Using the transport system for key journeys causing significant stress and anxiety.
The money spent on transport causing significant financial hardship.
The time spent travelling for key journeys crowding out leisure & recreation.

Which reinforces and leads back to

Poverty, multiple deprivation, poor health, and income inequality.
Inequalities relating to disability, gender, caring, ethnicity, and LGBTQ identities.
Transport and spatial planning decisions that prioritise car use.

TRSE in different areas

TRSE has a common set of causes, but it can be experienced very differently in urban and rural environments. Our evidence highlights the following key differences:

Major and minor conurbations:

→ Public transport can meet many key needs, but the network is often fragmented between different modes and operators, and some neighbourhoods still receive a poor service.

→ Active travel is often difficult due to close proximity to roads with high traffic volumes and speeds. Crossing points can feel dangerous and inconvenient, and most roads lack dedicated cycling infrastructure.

→ There are pockets of forced car ownership, particularly for communities on the outskirts of cities, where the public transport network does not fully reach.

→ Poverty is widespread, meaning affordability is a major barrier to meeting key transport needs, even where there are frequent and reliable services.

Urban city and town

→ Communities are often very reliant on a single mode of public transport or on a single service, and face fragmentation when travelling across areas and operators.

→ Neighbourhoods and local centres have often been designed around car use, with a poor environment for walking, cycling, and wheeling.

→ Car dependency is more widespread than in larger cities, particularly for those that regularly travel to other cities and towns, or take journeys between neighbourhoods.

→ There are significant areas of poverty and deprivation in suburbs and central neighbourhoods, which often coincide with areas of relatively poor transport provision.
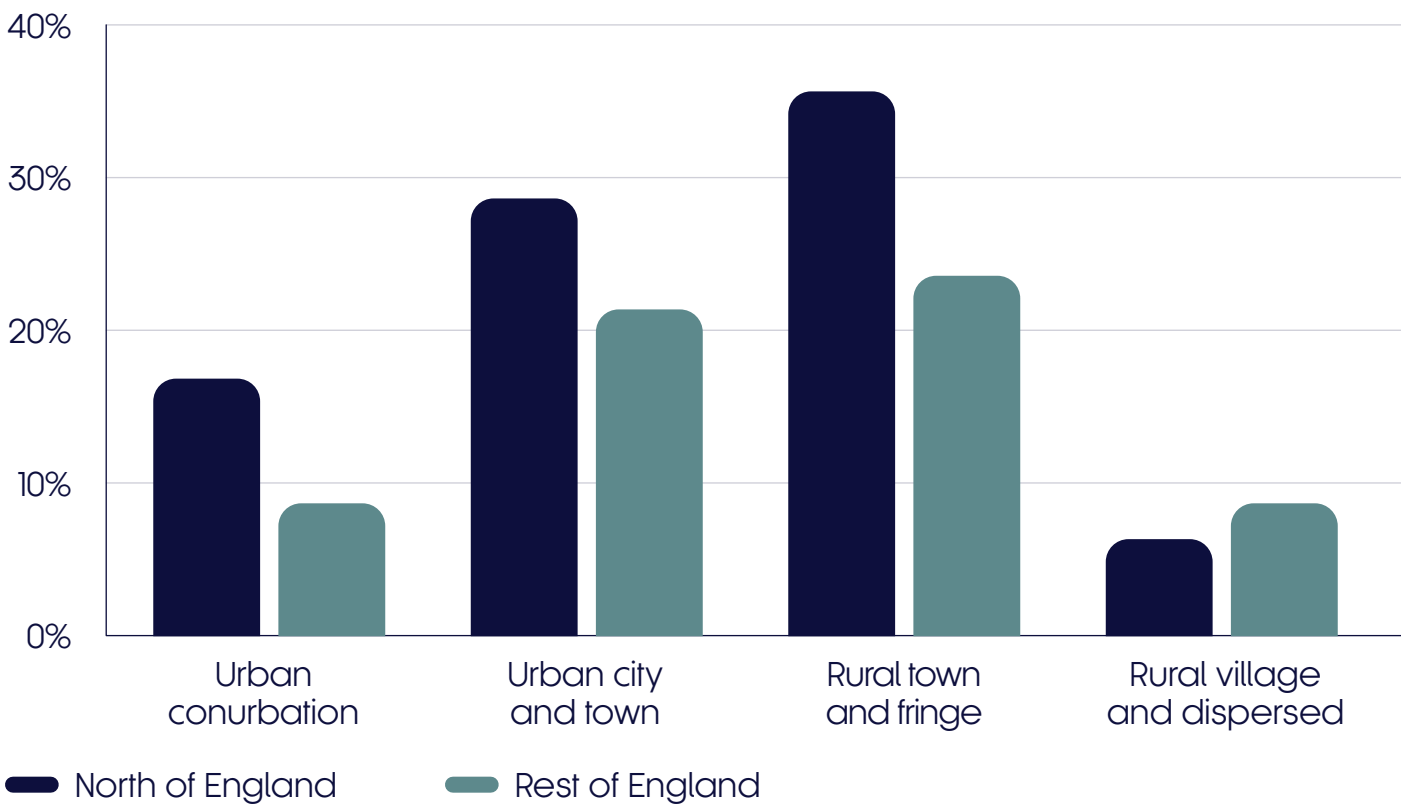
Rural town and fringe

→ Public transport is often not a viable option for one or more key journeys, and areas on the urban fringes can be excluded from routes closer to the centre.

→ Key services and amenities are often concentrated in out-of-town centres, which are largely inaccessible by active travel with the infrastructure available.

→ There is widespread car dependency and forced car ownership to access opportunities, key services, and community life, and a lack of choice.

→ Poverty and deprivation are less common on average than in major urban centres, but can be deep and highly entrenched in the communities and areas affected.
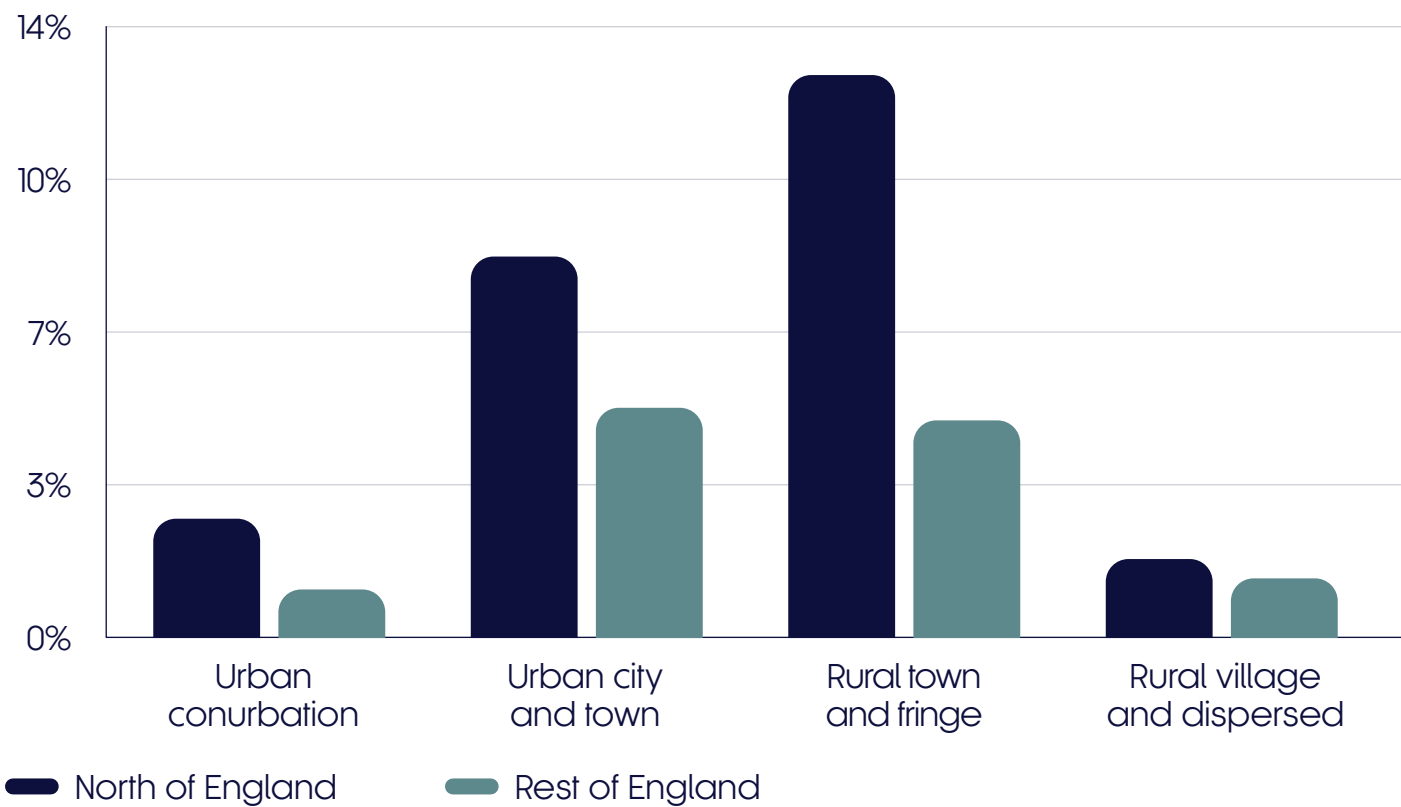
Rural villages and dispersed communities:

→ Public transport can be entirely absent for much of the day, and often meets few if any of the key travel needs of those in the most rural areas.

→ A combination of a lack of pavements and national speed rural roads means walking and cycling is very difficult, even over short distances between communities.

→ Very high levels of car dependency and forced car ownership, and a lack of independence if car use is not possible – including for many elderly and young people, and many disabled people.

→ Poverty is uncommon, but vulnerability linked to age, social isolation and digital exclusion can be widespread, and resilience to transportation disruption is low.

Population at high risk of TRSE by area type

Legend:
- **North of England** ■ (dark navy)
- **Rest of England** ■ (teal)

Approximate values (North of England / Rest of England):
- Urban conurbation: ~16% / ~8%
- Urban city and town: ~28% / ~21%
- Rural town and fringe: ~35% / ~23%
- Rural village and dispersed: ~6% / ~8%

Population at very high risk of TRSE by area type

Legend:
- **North of England** ■ (dark navy)
- **Rest of England** ■ (teal)

Approximate values (North of England / Rest of England):
- Urban conurbation: ~2.3% / ~1%
- Urban city and town: ~8.5% / ~5%
- Rural town and fringe: ~13% / ~4.5%
- Rural village and dispersed: ~1.5% / ~1.2%

Our data shows that, across the North, the risk of TRSE is highest in rural towns and fringe areas. Here, 35% of people live in areas with a high risk of social exclusion because of transport issues. It is also in these areas where there is the largest divide between the North and the rest of England, with 23% of those in rural towns and fringe areas elsewhere in England being at high risk. Our research demonstrates that many of these communities have seen a perfect storm of fragmentation and decline in local public transport, high levels of car dependency and forced car ownership, alongside entrenched poverty and deprivation.

The risk of TRSE is also elevated in urban cities and towns, which includes many urban areas outside of major conurbations. Here, also, there is a significant gap between the North and the rest of England – with many smaller cities and larger towns across the North facing worse transport links and higher levels of poverty and deprivation than similar areas elsewhere in England. Urban conurbations in the North, while typically having the best transport connections of any area type, also face relatively higher risk than those elsewhere in England.

On average, rural villages and dispersed communities face the lowest levels of risk of TRSE, and these areas of the North are also most comparable to areas of the rest of England. However, while the overall risk is low, the individuals and households affected by TRSE in these areas can face among the largest challenges – particularly if they have limited access to car travel, and have high transport needs linked to health, disability, or caring responsibilities. It is also in these areas where the solutions to TRSE – particularly public transport provision and reduced car dependency – can be most difficult to achieve.

TRSE for different populations and communities

As well as varying across different area types, our research shows that some population groups are much more likely to face social exclusion because of issues with the transport system.[5] In general, this reflects the fact that these populations face a combination of:

1. **Greater constraints on their transport choices**

2. **Greater consequences from poor quality transport**

3. **Greater need to travel, particularly outside of peak commute times and routes**

Three population groups are particularly likely to be affected by TRSE:

People with disabilities and long-term health conditions:

→ **Constraints:** The transport choices of people with disabilities and long-term health conditions are more likely to be limited by poorly designed transport infrastructure, by cost, and by exposure to anti-social behaviour and discrimination. These populations are also less likely to have access to private transport.

→ **Consequences:** People with disabilities and long term-health conditions face a greater than average risk of poverty, unemployment, and social isolation, meaning transport issues can have greater consequences than for the population as a whole. Alongside this, these populations are more likely to face digital exclusion, and through this have fewer alternatives to travel.

→ **Needs:** People with disabilities and long-term health conditions are more likely to have additional transport needs, including regularly accessing healthcare or support services. Accessing these services can often require trips between neighbourhoods and to out-of-town facilities, which are often poorly served by public transport.

People with caring responsibilities:

→ **Constraints:** Fulfilling caring responsibilities can require travelling with young children or accompanying those with additional accessibility needs. This can reduce the ability to switch and substitute journeys due to accessibility and time constraints, and result in greater cost constraints.

→ **Consequences:** Caring responsibilities can create additional time pressures, cost pressures, and stress. This means that transport issues are more likely to impact wellbeing, crowd-out time and resources for travel for leisure and recreation, and result in financial stress and poverty.

→ **Needs:** Caring responsibilities can create a need to regularly travel between neighbourhoods and across boundaries, and to services located in out-of-town centres. These location types are often poorly served by public transport and active travel routes, compared with routes serving commuter corridors.

People on low incomes and in insecure work:

→ **Constraints:** People on low incomes and in insecure work face greater affordability constraints on using the transport options available. These populations are also more likely to be 'locked in' to one transport mode, and on average have much lower levels of access to private transport.

→ **Consequences:** People on low incomes and in insecure work are more likely to lose earnings when they face delays and disruption. These populations are also much more likely to be trapped in a cycle of poverty and debt as a result of losing income, and can face greater barriers to accessing work.

→ **Needs:** People on low incomes and in insecure work are more likely to travel for shift work, to peripheral industrial and service sites, and to travel for multiple part-time jobs. Consequently, these populations can face higher costs, greater fragmentation, and poorer reliability when using public transport, as well as forced car ownership.

Alongside these three key groups, our research shows that, on average, other socioeconomic and demographic groups also face a greater risk of TRSE. This includes women, ethnic minority communities, younger people – particularly those transitioning from full time education into work, older people – particularly where mobility and health issues limit access to private transport, and LGBTQ+ people.

In part, this reflects that fact these population groups are more likely to be in one or more of the three key groups set out previously. For example:

→ Women, ethnic minorities, and younger people are more likely to be on low incomes or in insecure work.

→ Older people and ethnic minorities are more likely to have long-term health conditions or one or more disabilities.

→ Women and older people are more likely to have significant unpaid caring responsibilities for others within and outside their household.

Alongside this, these groups can be more exposed to discrimination and harassment in transport spaces, which can act as a significant constraint on how and when they are able to travel. They are also more likely to have transport needs that fall outside of the best-served commuter routes, which have historically been given less emphasis in transport planning and investment. Further detail on these constraints, consequences, and needs is set out in our research report - Transport-Related Social Exclusion in the North of England.

Shared experiences of transport and social exclusion

As well as measuring the risk of TRSE across the North, our research examined the lived experience of TRSE. The examples below illustrate TRSE in different circumstances, based on the experiences of multiple participants in our research.

Rob

Rob is in his early 20s, and lives in a small town in the North East. He has struggled to hold down regular work since leaving school, and while he has a driving licence, he cannot afford to own and run a car. Since COVID-19 restrictions eased, he has been looking for work in hotels and restaurants, most of which are a few miles away on the coast. While he has found a few vacancies, with the bus services available in his town it is impossible for him to make it in time for early morning shifts, and this is proving a major barrier to him finding work. He has lost work before after bus cancellations caused him to repeatedly run late for his shifts, and knows that with the insecure work available to him, there is a risk he could end up paying the bus fare only to find there is no work available if he is late.

Lakshmi

Lakshmi lives in a suburb of a city in Yorkshire, with her partner and two-year-old son. She is the main carer for her mother, who lives on the other side of the city. Her partner commutes in their car, so she balances her caring responsibilities using public transport most of the time. Her mother's house is only a few miles away, but getting there requires a bus to the city centre and then a tram out, with a typical wait of 20 minutes in between. It should only be a five-minute walk to the bus stop, but there are more and more cars parked on the pavement, and it can take a long time to safely cross the main road to her stop when she has the pushchair. Because of this, she often ends up leaving 15 minutes before the bus is due, to avoid missing her connection. This extra time really adds up, and she has recently had to give up her part time job to make these journeys work. She also has to buy two return tickets to complete the journey – one for the tram and another for the bus – which with the drop in her income is putting major pressure on her finances.

Mahomed

Mahomed lives in a town in the North West, and works on an industrial estate on the outskirts of the town. He starts work at 7AM, and with the public transport options in the area he has no option but to drive to work. His car recently failed an MOT, and while he was able to borrow a car from a friend while his car was off the road, the cost of the repairs have caused him major financial hardship. He had to cut down on his food shop and fall behind on bill payments to get his car back on the road, and knows he will have to do the same again when his car insurance is up for renewal. He can walk to see friends and family nearby, and only really uses his car for travelling to work, but it is almost impossible for him to lead an active social and community life with the money he has left after paying for his car.

June

June has lived all of her life in a rural village in the North West, and is in her 80s. Her husband has recently had to enter residential care after being diagnosed with dementia, and as her eyesight has worsened, she has reluctantly given up driving. She uses a community transport service to visit her husband, and has her shopping delivered, but she feels increasingly isolated from friends in the area. The bus service in her village only operates one return journey to the nearby town per day, and there are no connecting services out to other areas that she can use and still get the return bus home. She can afford to take a taxi some of the time, and uses these for hospital appointments, but her fixed income means this is not an option for most trips she would like to take. She is also finding the walk to the bus stop in her village increasingly difficult, as part of this involves crossing an unlit rural road with national speed limit, and no pavement on one side. Because of this, she does not feel able to use the bus during winter months.

Katie

Katie lives in a suburb of a city in Yorkshire. She has a progressive health condition which limits her mobility, and has recently started using a wheelchair. Katie moved to her neighbourhood because it was close to local shops and the train station, but she feels increasingly isolated. Cars parked on the pavement, increasing amounts of traffic on the roads, and a lack of safe pedestrian crossings in her area means that she is unable to access local services – even though the distance itself is manageable. Her local rail station is wheelchair accessible, but many of the stations she would like to travel to are not, and the requirement to book assistance in advance restricts her from using rail at short notice. She has also faced anti-social behaviour from other passengers when travelling by rail, particularly when she has attempted to use the designated wheelchair space at busy times, and the lack of staff available while travelling makes her feel vulnerable. This stress and anxiety add to her feelings of isolation.

Oliver

Oliver lives with his parents in a large village in the North East. He is neuro-diverse, and the quality support he requires to succeed in his A-Levels is only available at a central city college 10 miles away. There is regular rail service from the village to the city, but crowding common on this commuter service and the level of noise from announcements and other passengers causes him significant stress. He has developed coping strategies for this, but this requires a great deal of effort, which affects his energy and wellbeing throughout the day. Changes to the train schedule and short-notice cancellations exacerbate these impacts, particularly where this leads to further overcrowding in the central city station. The accumulated stress has so far prevented him from finding good job opportunities and attending interviews, and with his final exams fast approaching he is concerned he will fall into unemployment. His parents are shift workers, and while they give him lifts to meet friends in their car where they can, he often feels unable to face the train to the city at the weekend after coping with the experience all week – and ends up missing out.

Our vision for a socially inclusive transport system

TfN's vision is for a transport system that meets the needs of the diverse places and populations of the North – reducing inequalities and enhancing social inclusion.

Underlying this vision are eight principles, that draw together key elements of the evidence base published in **Transport-related social exclusion in the North of England.**

1 **The role of car access:** Having unconstrained access to a car should not be a prerequisite for social inclusion; including accessing opportunities, key services, and community life. Safe, convenient, reliable, and affordable alternatives should be available across the diverse areas of the North.

2 **Diverse travel patterns:** The transport system should function equally well for those travelling outside of peak periods and major commuter routes as for those who fit these conventional travel patterns.

3 **Integration:** Transport information and ticketing should be integrated across administrative boundaries and modes of transport, such that those taking multi-modal journeys across boundaries do not face excessive costs and complexity.

4 **Equality of access:** Public transport and active travel infrastructure should be fully accessible to those with disabilities and limited mobility. This accessibility should be fundamental to the design of infrastructure, and offer equality of access.

5 **Technology:** The introduction and use of transport technology should be inclusive of those with limited or no access to the internet and to banking services. This includes limited or no access to technology because of income, age, and disability.

6 **Local and digital access:** Transport, spatial planning, and digital connectivity policies should combine to expand local access to services, opportunities, and community life, and thereby reduce the impacts of limited access to transport on social inclusion.

7 **Affordability:** The level of transport use necessary to access opportunities, key services and community life should be affordable to those on low incomes, those out of work, and those unable to access work and social welfare.

8 **Safety:** Journeys across all elements of the transport system should be safe and be perceived to be safe, particularly for women, older people, LGBTQ people, ethnic minority communities, and people with disabilities. This encompasses road danger, harassment, discrimination, anti-social behaviour, and crime.

Our ambition for 2050

Our ambition is that, by 2050, investment and reform of the transport system will:

1 Reduce the number of people in the North living in areas with a high risk of TRSE by 1,000,000.

2 Reduce the number of people in the North living in areas with a very high risk of TRSE by 370,000.

This is compared to a 2019 baseline, in which 3.3 million people in the North lived in areas with a high risk of TRSE, and 810,000 people lived in areas with a very high level of risk.

These ambitions are not arbitrary – they represent four determinations:

1 That the proportion of the population at high or very high risk of TRSE in the North should be no higher than the rest of England, across our diverse area types.

2 That the size of the population at high or very high risk of TRSE should not increase as the total size of the population increases.

3 That no area type should see an increase in the proportion of the population at a high or very high risk of TRSE.

4 That the decarbonisation of the transport system and the introduction of new transport technologies should reduce inequality and improve inclusion.

Achieving these ambitions requires transformational investment in transport in the North, aligned to the policy impact and outcome framework set out in this strategy.
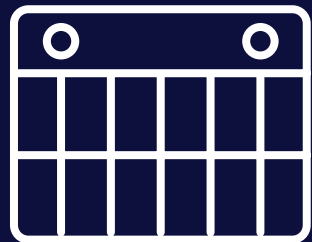
Measuring TRSE in the North

TfN's TRSE **data tool** provides a rigorous means of estimating the risk of social exclusion resulting from transport issues across local areas of England. This is based on analysis of the following factors:

1   **Accessibility:** The level of access to jobs, education, healthcare, and basic services by car and public transport, and the accessibility gap between car and public transport. Drawing on DfT Journey time Statistics, this includes analysis of the level of access, the number of destinations that are accessible, and journey times.

2   **Vulnerability:** How vulnerable the population is to social exclusion, based on the combination of socioeconomic and demographic indicators. Drawing on the English Indices of Deprivation, this considers how vulnerable the population of an area is to poor access to jobs, education, healthcare, and basic services.

This tool places areas into five TRSE Risk Categories.[6] Areas in categories three and above are at a high risk of TRSE, as they have both below average accessibility and above average vulnerability. Areas in category five have very high risk of TRSE, as they are in both the bottom 30% for accessibility and the highest 30% for vulnerability.

Future reporting

Updates to the TRSE risk tool are dependent on the publication of DfT Journey Time Statistics and the English Indices of Deprivation. Based on previous publication timelines, we will report on the ambitions set out in this strategy as follows:

→   A full update and strategy refresh every four years, following the publication of DfT Journey Time Statistics and the English Indices of Deprivation. This will next take place in 2024.

→   An annual interim update following the publication of DfT Journey Time Statistics, with the most recent data from the English Indices of Deprivation. This will next take place in 2025.
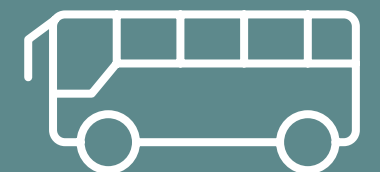
Challenges in achieving an inclusive transport system

The sections to follow set out how we will act to achieve our vision for an inclusive transport system, and the broader set of policies and interventions required for this. These actions and policies reflect the evidence published in our research report and data tool, and have also been shaped by the following challenges:

→ **Addressing car dependency:** Reducing current levels of car dependency and forced car ownership is a necessary step in achieving an inclusive transport system. However, current levels of car dependency can also mean that TfN and partners may face controversy and resistance in seeking to make progress on this issue. Improving the quality and availability of alternatives to car use, particularly for residents with needs linked to disability and caring responsibilities, is vital to this.

→ **Collaborating effectively:** There is a need for significant collaboration across boundaries and organisations to achieve an inclusive transport system. This includes collaboration between TfN, Local Transport Authorities, National Highways, Network Rail, transport operators, national government, community and third sector organisations, and planning authorities. Legal, bureaucratic, and resource barriers limit this, and the use of competitive funding for transport schemes can create disincentives for cooperation.

→ **Expanding impact appraisal and planning:** Social inclusion and equality considerations are often secondary in transport decision-making, when compared to factors such as journey time savings and economic benefits. Alongside this, average or assumed users often only represent a small segment of the population. The emphasis on these factors is entrenched in practice and in policy, and results in fundamentally different decisions to what would be the case if equivalent emphasis were placed on social inclusion.

→ **Ensuring a fair transition to a zero-carbon transport system:** The rapid decarbonisation of the North's transport system presents significant risks and opportunities for social inclusion. Broadly, approaches that prioritise private electric vehicles without significant modal shift to public transport and active travel are likely to increase inequalities and social exclusion. By contrast, approaches that prioritise high quality alternatives to private car use are likely to reduce inequalities and exclusion.

→ **Making technological change work for all:** There are a number of developing technological innovations in personal mobility – including technology to better-enable car sharing and the development of autonomous vehicles. While there is potential for these technologies to enhance social inclusion, the needs of populations impacted by TRSE must be designed in from the start. Without this, technological advancement pursued on an entirely commercial basis can widen transport inequalities.

→ **Equalising access to power and decision-making:** There is a significant overlap between the populations groups that are most exposed to TRSE and those that have historically had limited access to power and decision-making. This includes people with disabilities, women, LGBTQ people, people on low incomes and in insecure work, and ethnic minorities. These inequalities reinforce a context in which decisions can be disproportionately shaped by and for relatively advantaged demographic and socioeconomic groups.

→ **Devolving and connecting funding:** Transport investment is often fragmented and competitive, with Local Authorities competing for funding that can be specific to particular modes of transport or forms of investment. This funding model penalises areas with fewer resources, and limits the ability to efficiently target investment to deliver long-term improvements for excluded populations. Devolution of funding and decision-making and reducing budget silos is complementary to reducing TRSE, and is necessary for significant progress on this issue.

→ **Recovering from COVID-19:** There is increasing evidence that economic and societal impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately fell on population groups that are also affected by TRSE. Alongside this, public transport services have recovered more slowly in the aftermath of the pandemic than has been the case for car use, and the pandemic has placed significant pressures on budgets at all levels of government. COVID-19 has therefore increased the scale of the TRSE challenge, and reduced the resources available to address it.

These challenges are significant, but they are not insurmountable. The sections to follow set out how we will act with our partners and other stakeholders to achieve an inclusive transport system, and the broader policies necessary to our ambition for 2050.

How TfN will act on social inclusion

TfN sets the regional transport vision for the North, and provides statutory advice on planning and priorities for large scale transport investments. We develop evidence, provide expertise and support Local Transport Authorities and other transport stakeholders to achieve a thriving North of England, where world class transport supports sustainable economic growth, excellent quality of life, and opportunities for all.

To confront the social inclusion challenge in the North of England, TfN will take actions under four themes:

Theme One: Provide regional leadership

We will coordinate action and raise the profile of transport-related social exclusion across the North and nationally. To do this, we will:

1.1	Develop minimum transport service standards. These standards will define the level of service necessary in different elements of the transport system to deliver on our ambition for 2050 across different place and population contexts.	2023/24
1.2	Integrate regional policy and strategy on social inclusion and decarbonisation. This will include identifying the societal risks and opportunities presented by the transition to a carbon-free transport system.	2023/24
1.3	Integrate social inclusion into TfN's 2024 Strategic Transport Plan, alongside economic and environmental ambitions. The STP sets the overall transport vision for the North.	2023/24
1.4	Develop an evidence-based pathway for reducing TRSE across the North which delivers on our ambition for 2050. This will include interim targets for different area types, and analysis of the consequences of different rates of change.	2024/25
1.5	Develop investment options to achieve our ambition for 2050, linked to the minimum service standards in 1.1. This will include analysis of investment options across TfN's Future Travel Scenarios.	2024/25

Theme Two: Build and share evidence

We will continue to develop and share rigorous evidence on the causes, consequences, extent, and distribution of TRSE in the North and across England. To do this, we will:

2.1	Conduct research on the impacts of cost-of-living pressures on areas and communities impacted by TRSE. This will update our evidence base so that it fully represents the challenges posed by inflation and declining real wage levels.	2023/24
2.2	Validate and refine our TRSE data tool. This will ensure that our TRSE data tool, and the Risk Categories used in our ambition for 2050, are robust and fully capture the nuances and different dimensions of TRSE across the North.	2023/24
2.3	Identify the key drivers of change in the risk of TRSE. This will include statistical analysis of changes in our TRSE data tool from 2015 to 2019, and from 2019 to 2023 – identifying key changes in accessibility and vulnerability.	2023/24
2.4	Develop a car dependency tool. This will include the ability to estimate the level of forced car ownership in the North, which is not directly measurable with the current TRSE risk tool. Where possible, it will also include the impacts of the electric-vehicle transition on the costs of car access and use.	2023/24
2.5	Conduct research on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery on TRSE. This will update our evidence base on the legacies of the pandemic, including changes seen in working patterns and public transport provision.	2024/25
2.6	Conduct further research on the nature of TRSE in dispersed rural areas. This reflects the fact that measuring TRSE is particularly complex in dispersed rural areas, and will ensure that we fully represent rural factors in our TRSE data tool.	2024/25
2.7	Develop a TRSE exposure tool. This will use the results of the 2021 Census and our TRSE data tool to estimate the size of the population exposed to TRSE at this point in time; supplementing our work to understand the risk of TRSE.	2024/25

Theme Three: Support our partners and other sub-national transport bodies

We will support our partners in achieving more equal, effective, and inclusive transport systems, aligned with our regional ambition and partners' priorities. To do this, we will:

3.1	Support the development of Local Transport Plans. This will ensure the best available data and evidence on social inclusion informs Local Transport Plans across the North - complementing and enhancing local research and intelligence.	2023/24
3.2	Support the development of other local plans and strategies. Where requested by partners or other sub-national transport bodies, this will include supplying data, evidence, and advice on TRSE to inform transport, planning, skills, and health strategies.	Ongoing
3.3	Provide data and bespoke mapping to support funding bids and other investment decisions, where there is a clear connection to transport-related social exclusion.	Ongoing
3.4	Develop a TRSE evidence checklist. This will provide a light-touch way of engaging with the evidence on transport and social exclusion, and ensure that inclusion considerations are built into scheme and investment cases from an early stage.	2024/25
3.5	Establish a regional social inclusion stakeholder group to identify opportunities for collaboration and support. This will also be used to highlight progress in delivering investments that align to the policy and outcome framework set out in this Strategy.	2024/25

Theme four: Enhance business cases for major road and rail schemes

We will ensure that investment in strategic rail and major roads delivers improvements for areas and communities affected by TRSE. To do this, we will:

4.1	Develop TfN's Analytical Framework so that it is able to forecast changes in TRSE from a range of major road and strategic rail investments. This will provide greater alignment in analytical capability across economic, social, and environment impacts.	Ongoing
4.2	Undertake place-based analysis and distributional impact analysis for Northern Powerhouse Rail. This will identify how different investment options impact on communities and areas affected by TRSE and other forms of socioeconomic inequality.	2023/24
4.3	Develop a severance tool to rigorously identify where major road and rail infrastructure poses barriers to active travel separates communities. This will build on the methodology developed in 2022 for TfN's Transport, Health, and Wellbeing research project.	2023/24
4.4	Expand the depth and level of detail on TRSE in TfN's Future Travel Scenarios. These scenarios provide a reference case to evaluate different strategies and policies, and reduce uncertainty over the broader context of transport investment decisions.	2023/24
4.5	Develop a broader impact costing tool to estimate the social, environmental, and economic consequences of various levels of road transport, public transport, and active travel use. This will build on TfN's existing wider impacts calculator.	2024/25
4.6	Develop a tool to support place-based analysis for the Strategic and Major Roads Networks. This will develop from the approach in place for Norther Powerhouse Rail in 4.2.	2024/25

Our work so far

The commitments in this Strategy build on the following areas of TfN's work:

→ **Strategic Transport Plan for the North of England:** The STP sets out our vision for the North's transport system, and is statutory advice to government. Our 2019 STP committed that "Economic growth in the North should be as inclusive as possible, avoiding transport poverty where the transport network limits access opportunities in communities. Investment in the strategic transport network should enable better access to key opportunities, including employment, health, social activities, and education, regardless of an individual's age, income level, location, and mobility".[7]

→ **Active Travel Policy Position:** An inclusive transport system in the North requires significant improvements in conditions for walking, cycling, and wheeling. Car-dominated environments, community severance, and high levels of car-dependence contribute to social exclusion through limiting access to opportunities, key services, and community life, limiting access to public transport, and increasing the inequality. Our Active Travel Policy Position sets out a number of actions that support our partners to achieve their objectives, and to work with national government to enable active travel.[8]

→ **Transport Decarbonisation Strategy:** The extent of car-dependency inherent to the transport system in the North is both a major source of carbon and a significant contributor to TRSE. Our Transport Decarbonisation Strategy sets out a trajectory to achieve close to zero carbon emissions from surface transport in the North by 2045, and the level of policy commitment needed to achieve this. This includes policy recommendations to enable modal shift through investment in public transport and active travel, alongside the transition to electric vehicles.[9]

→ **Clean Mobility Visions:** Clean Mobility Visions provides evidence-based and contextualised policies that enable modal shift away from private car use, and visualises the carbon and wider health and accessibility benefits of doing so. Alongside long-term investment in strategic public transport links, this includes a range of more immediate interventions to transform car-focused spaces – such as low traffic neighbourhoods, school streets, and managing levels of car parking.[10]

→ **Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Framework:** Our Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Framework provides robust evidence on charging demand and requirements, and a regional route map towards an effective and inclusive network. Through this, it reduces investment uncertainty in EV infrastructure and provides a means to make better assessments of the social and spatial considerations associated with EV charging infrastructure, including those impacting non-EV users.[11]

→ **Analytical Framework Development:** Limitations in social impact analysis and the relative weight given to social and economic impacts in transport appraisal have contributed to the inequalities evident in the North's transport system. Our Analytical Framework consists of a set of models and analytical tools that analyse and appraise the impact of transport investments. This expands on DfT's Transport Analysis Guidance, and includes impacts on land use and decarbonisation.

→ **Transport and Health Policy Position:** There is a significant overlap between the causes of TRSE and the impacts of the transport system on health and wellbeing. In 2022, we analysed these health and wellbeing impacts in the North, and developed a policy position to act on our findings. This policy commits to a vision for zero deaths and serious injuries on the major roads network, to expanding tools to measure severance, and to developing a broader impacts costing tool.

→ **Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review (NPIER):** TRSE is fundamentally connected with economic conditions, including access to high-quality employment and the extent of poverty and multiple deprivation. The 2023 NPIER expands on the 2016 analysis by including the foundational economy, and by expanding the level of detail in the analysis of where different sectors of the economy are concentrated. This complements and expands the evidence base on the causes of social exclusion.

→ **Major Roads Report:** The gap between what is accessible to those dependent on active travel and public transport and those with unconstrained access to private transport is central to TRSE. The 'predict and provide' approach to road planning is a significant contributory factor to this. Our Major Roads Report sets out the North's vision for the major roads network as part of a multi-modal transport system. This includes an initial appraisal process to explore alternatives to road expansion, actions to reduce negative externalities from road transport, and better integration with local networks.[12]

→ **Strategic Rail:** Rail plays a key part in the integrated and flexible transport network required to reduce levels of TRSE in the North. As part of the development of the 2024 STP, we are developing a rail policy that supports access to key destinations, ensures rail services reflect changing travel habits following the COVID-19 pandemic, and improves integration. Alongside this, we contribute to business cases in areas poorly served by rail, in which inclusion is an explicit aim, and are working with the Great British Railways Transition Team, Network Rail, and DfT on local integration.[13]

→ **Future Travel Scenarios:** TfN has adopted a scenario planning approach to futureproof decision-making and holistically represent our vision for the North. Our Future Travel Scenarios are used as 'reference case' to test different strategies and policies. This ensures our strategies address interdependencies with other sectors, and recognise the balance between economic performance, decarbonisation, and social inclusion.[14]

The wider transport and social inclusion policy agenda

As well as our existing research, policy, and strategy work, the commitments in this Strategy also sit within a wider policy context. The key elements of this are:

→ **Equality Act 2010:** The population groups most impacted by TRSE are closely aligned with the Protected Characteristics in the Equality Act 2010. This includes disability, sexual orientation, sex, and race. The Act prohibits direct and indirect discrimination, and a duty to make adjustments. These provisions are relevant to many of the physical aspects of TRSE, including the design of transport infrastructure, and may also apply to inequalities of access to key destinations for different population groups.[15]

→ **Levelling Up White Paper:** The Levelling Up White Paper sets out how the Government will work to "end the geographical inequality which is such a striking feature of the UK". This included funding announcements across infrastructure, skills, and health, linked to a set of 'missions' across transport, skills, housing and health and wellbeing. Delivery of the Levelling Up missions could significantly reduce TRSE through improved connectivity, and improved provision of local services that reduce the need to travel.[16]

→ **The Inclusive Transport Strategy:** The Inclusive Transport Strategy "sets out the Government's plans to make our transport system more inclusive, and to make travel easier for disabled people". This includes an "ambition for disabled people to have the same access to transport as everyone else, and to be able to travel confidently, easily and without extra cost". People with disabilities are the population group most impacted by TRSE, and the full delivery of the Inclusive Transport Strategy will reduce TRSE in the North.[17]

→ **Inclusive mobility:** DfT's inclusive mobility guide provides "best practice on access to pedestrian and transport infrastructure" for people with disabilities, and draws on the Inclusive Transport Strategy. Given the extent of exposure to TRSE among people with disabilities and the link of this exposure to the design of transport infrastructure, the full implementation of this guidance in new developments would contribute to reductions in TRSE.[18]

→ **Gear Change:** A bold vision for cycling and walking: Enabling active travel can provide simple and low cost access to key destinations, and through this improve social inclusion. DfT's Gear Change strategy sets out the need for a "step-change in cycling and walking" to realise the benefits that active travel can generate for public health and climate change. Gear Change includes inclusive design principles, the full implementation of which will benefits for populations affected by TRSE in the North.[19]

→ **National Bus Strategy for England:** Widespread declines in bus services alongside above-inflation in fares is a major driving factor of TRSE. DfT's National Bus Strategy for England provides funding commitments and strategic direction for bus services, and highlights how these link to other government priorities. This Strategy highlights many of the key drivers of TRSE in the North, including fragmentation between operators, inequalities in levels of services between areas and times of day, and the complete loss of services in some rural communities.[20]

→ **Bus Service Improvement Plans:** Linked to the National Bus Strategy for England, Local Transport Authorities have developed Bus Service Improvement Plans. These plans set out how LTAs and bus operators will deliver "a fully integrated service with simple, multi-modal tickets, more bus priority measures, the same high-quality information for all passengers in more places, and better turn-up-and-go frequencies". In 2022, DfT awarded funding of £1.1 billion for 31 BSIPs in England. Eight LTAs in the North received some level of funding, and ten had no part of their BSIP funded.[21]

→ **Future of Transport: Rural strategy:** The lack of frequent and reliable public transport options in rural communities causes high levels of car dependency, including forced car ownership, and limited or no access to opportunities, key services, and community life for many. In 2021, 17 rural areas – including three in the North – received funding from the Rural Mobility Fund to support the development of business cases to improve rural bus services. In 2021, the DfT undertook a call for evidence on the Future of Transport: Rural Strategy to enable technological innovation in rural transport.[22]

→ **The Green Book:** Revisions to the appraisal methodology and process set out in The Green Book were undertaken "in response to concerns that the government's appraisal guidance may mitigate against investment in poorer parts of the UK". The revisions did not fundamentally change the core methodology, but have led to a greater emphasis on strategic context. Given the link between TRSE local social, demographic and economic contexts, this greater emphasis on strategic context provides significant opportunity for schemes and investment to address TRSE.[23]

Policy impact and outcome framework

This strategy commits TfN to providing regional leadership, building evidence, supporting our partners, and enhancing business cases in pursuit of our vision and ambition. However, the majority of the broader actions and investments necessary to deliver this are outside of our remit as a sub-national transport body. Reflecting this, the policy impact and outcome framework below sets out what else is necessary to deliver our vision and ambition for 2050.

The framework set out here spans public transport, road transport, active transport, and planning and process. Each provides a key impact and the policy outcomes to deliver that impact. We intend that this supports our partners and other stakeholders in developing policies that deliver meaningful progress on TRSE – providing a framework to which policies can be developed and aligned, and metrics to monitor progress.

Public transport impacts and outcomes

Impact: Public transport services that provide a safe, reliable, and affordable means of accessing opportunities, key services, and community life.

PT1	Improvements in the frequency and coverage of local public transport services, which at a minimum reverse the significant declines in accessibility seen across many areas of the North in the last decade.	TRSE Data tool: Accessibility metric
PT2	Greater public transport connectivity between deprived communities and peripheral employment and service locations, including industrial areas and out of town centres currently designed around car access. This includes providing viable and attractive options for shift workers and carers who are required to travel before and after peak times.	TRSE Data tool: Accessibility metric
PT3	Proportionally greater improvements in public transport connectivity in those areas of the North where there is a higher risk of transport-related social exclusion, such that the gap between areas reduces over time.	TRSE Data tool: Accessibility metric
PT4	Greater connectivity between neighbourhoods and communities, particularly through the expansion of orbital public transport routes. This should address the significant imbalance that is common between routes serving commuter journeys from suburban areas to urban centres, and those serving journeys between neighbourhoods.	TfN Analytical Framework: To be developed in 2023/24
PT5	Managing road space and planning policies to give greater priority to public transport. This is both to improve the reliability and viability of services in congested areas, and to address the significant gap between car and public transport accessibility common across the North.	Review of national and partner plans and strategies for public transport priority
PT6	Integrating ticketing, fares, and routing across modes of public transport, and removing the significant additional costs faced by those travelling across local boundaries. Ease of interchange between modes, both in terms of timetabling and the location of access of points, is also necessary for progress in this area.	Review of national and partner plans and strategies for public transport integration.

PT7	Integrating ticketing, fares, and routing across modes of public transport, and removing the significant additional costs faced by those travelling across local boundaries. Ease of interchange between modes, both in terms of timetabling and the location of access of points, is also necessary for progress in this area.	TfN rail station accessibility analysis DfT Inclusive Transport Strategy metrics
PT8	Addressing the significant affordability challenges present for those on low incomes and in insecure work, carers, young people, and families when using public transport. This should end the vicious cycle evident between poor access to opportunities with the transport options available and low income and insecure work.	National statistics on public transport costs and income levels by population group
PT9	Maintaining and improving ways to pay for public transport and access public transport information that do not require a smartphone with internet access, and which remain open to those without access to banking services. This includes transferability between different public transport modes, and to developing transport technologies.	Review of national and partner plans and strategies for payment and information accessibility
PT10	Addressing the safety concerns and disproportionate exposure to harassment and discrimination in public transport spaces faced by women, LGBTQ people, ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities.	Not currently measurable: Options to be examined in 2023/24
PT11	Active travel infrastructure that is integrated with public transport access points, and that enables access to public transport for those walking, cycling, and wheeling.	Not currently measurable: Options to be examined in 2023/24
PT12	Integrating and enabling community transport provision alongside conventional public transport services. This is particularly relevant to those with additional accessibility requirements and travel needs that are difficult to serve with conventional public transport service.	Review of national and partner plans and strategies for community transport integration

Road transport impacts and outcomes

Impact: Maintaining high quality road links, while reducing levels of forced car ownership and the externalities associated with car-dominated environments.

RT1	Reduced severance effects for those walking, cycling, and wheeling associated with high traffic volumes and speeds, and with environments and infrastructure designed around car use.	TfN severance tool: To be developed in 2023/24
RT2	Pricing of travel options that more closely reflects the direct and the wider costs of those options on society as a whole; including on health and wellbeing, local economies, and carbon emissions.	TfN wider impacts costing tool: To be developed in 2023/24
RT3	Reduced severance effects and safety impacts associated with underpasses and pedestrian bridges, including addressing the disproportionate negative impacts of such infrastructure on women, people with disabilities, and older people.	TfN severance tool: To be developed in 2023/24
RT4	Provision of on-street and off-street car parking and electric vehicle charging infrastructure that is compatible with high quality active travel and public transport.	Review of national and partner plans and strategies for parking management
RT5	Modal shift away from private car use and towards public transport, shared mobility services, and active travel - particularly for short and medium length journeys.	National Travel Survey mode share statistics
RT6	Reduced levels of forced car ownership, and improved choice for communities and areas with high levels of car dependency.	TfN car dependency tool: To be developed in 2023/24

Active transport impacts and outcomes

Impact: Active travel infrastructure that provides direct, safe, and convenient access to key local destinations.

AT1	Reduced severance effects for those walking, cycling, and wheeling associated with high traffic volumes and speeds, poor quality street environments, and with environments and infrastructure designed around car use.	National Travel Survey mode share statistics TfN severance tool: To be developed in 2023/24
AT2	Proportionally greater improvements in active travel connectivity in those areas of the North where there is a higher risk of transport-related social exclusion, such that the gap between areas reduces over time.	National Travel Survey mode share statistics
AT3	Equality of access to new and existing active travel infrastructure for those with disabilities and limited physical mobility; including high quality provision for those using mobility aids and adapted bicycles.	Not currently measurable: Options to be examined in 2023/24
AT4	Improved pavement conditions; providing an accessible, safe, and convenient experience for all potential users. This includes expanding the provision and quality of pavements in rural areas, and reducing pavement clutter.	Review of national and partner plans and strategies for pavement parking and pavement standards
AT5	Increased proportion of children and young people travelling actively to access education, alongside a reduced proportion of trips taking place by car.	National Travel Survey commuter statistics
AT6	Increased proportion of commuters travelling actively to their workplace.	National Travel Survey commuter statistics
AT7	Proportionally greater increases in the level of active travel undertaken by people with disabilities and ethnic minorities, such that demographic and socioeconomic gaps in levels of uptake are significantly reduced.	National Travel Survey commuter statistics
AT8	Improved access to bikes and e-bikes, including to adapted bikes and e-bikes that are appropriate for a range of accessibility needs. This includes safe and convenient storage.	Review of national and partner plans and strategies for pavement parking and pavement standards

Planning and process impacts and outcomes

Impact: Planning and policy processes that reduce socioeconomic and demographic inequalities, and improve access to power and decision-making among population groups that are exposed to TRSE.

PP1	Increasing participation in consultations among population groups that are exposed to TRSE. This should empower these populations to exert equal influence on consultation and planning processes, including co-designing solutions to TRSE.	Review of national and partner plans and strategies for consultation engagement
PP2	Fully implementing a vision and validate approach to transport planning, policy, and strategy, with social inclusion and the needs of specific place and population contexts a key part of that vision.	Review of Local Transport Plans
PP3	Increasing the level of engagement with community groups in the planning and development of transport schemes. This includes community and third sector organisation that are directly focused on this issue, such as community rail and community transport organisations.	Research engagement with community groups
PP4	Expanding the quantity and quality of distributional impact assessment of transport interventions, including metrics of social inclusion.	Review of changes in DIA methodology and guidance, and application to major road and rail schemes
PP5	Greater localisation of transport investment decisions and the reduction of budgetary silos, such that investment can be targeted to areas and communities where there is greatest need and where there is greatest scope for benefit.	Review of national legislative changes and evidence of local devolution
PP6	Reform to transport investment appraisal process to give greater balance between social inclusion impacts and journey time savings, particularly where these impacts fall on different population groups.	Review of national appraisal changes and engagement with DfT

Footnotes

[1] Strategic Transport Plan: Pg. 23

[2] Transport-related social exclusion in the North of England

[3] Transport-related social exclusion in the North of England: Pg. 79

[4] Transport-related social exclusion in the North of England: Pg. 57

[5] Transport-related social exclusion in the North of England: Pg. 57

[6] Transport-related social exclusion in the North of England: Pg. 72

[7] Strategic Transport Plan: Pg. 23

[8] Policy position statement: Active travel

[9] Transport decarbonisation strategy

[10] Clean Mobility Visions

[11] Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Framework

[12] Major Roads Report

[13] Long Term Rail Strategy

[14] Future Travel Scenarios

[15] Equality Act 2010

[16] Levelling Up the United Kingdom

[17] The Inclusive Transport Strategy: Achieving Equal Access for Disabled People

[18] Inclusive Mobility. A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure

[19] Gear change: a bold vision for cycling and walking

[20] Bus Back Better: National Bus Strategy for England

[21] Bus service improvement plans: guidance to local authorities and bus operators

[22] Future of Transport: rural strategy

[23] The Green Book Review 2020: Findings and Response

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