

Making transport sustainable

A guide for teachers and youth leaders

Timings
One hour +

Settings
Schools
and youth
groups

Age
Approx. 11 to
14 years*

**Curriculum
links**
Citizenship,
English and
Geography

A comprehensive resource to help young people explore issues around transport and the need for sustainable options. Includes an empowering activity for young people to have their voices heard.

Introduction

Our transport system isn't working as it should. Many people lack access to regular public transport or decent cycle paths, particularly outside of our largest towns and cities. Meanwhile, left with no other option, more people are getting in their cars, making our roads more congested.

This is a hazard to our health and our environment. Road transport contributes a third of all the UK's carbon emissions and is a major source of poor air quality. This means transport is contributing to climate change and increasing health problems, such as asthma.

Lack of access to transport, health risks and environmental hazards affect everyone. But young people are particularly impacted. Poor transport links leave young people isolated. Road traffic is a major barrier for children and young people to feel safe whilst travelling alone. Young people are most vulnerable to poor air quality – from asthma to effects on mental and cognitive health. And young people will see more of the effects of climate change over their lifetime.

But it doesn't have to be this way! Improving public transport and active travel (walking and cycling) can reduce the environmental and health impacts whilst making transport available to everyone.

As young people are significantly impacted, we want to make sure their voices are heard. They have a right to understand the problem, explore the solutions and take action to make their own and their communities' transport options more sustainable. This resource empowers them to take action by influencing decision makers with solutions they have found.

***Please adapt these activities to meet the needs of the young people you work with.**

What you'll need

- ▶ This guide
- ▶ **Sustainable transport presentation 11 to 14 years**
- ▶ Example letter on page 9
- ▶ Challenges and solutions worksheet on page 10
- ▶ Paper and coloured pens or pencils
- ▶ Map of the local area (hand drawn or printed copy)

Learning outcomes

Young people will:

- ▶ Understand the impacts of our current transport system
- ▶ Identify ways to make transport fairer for people and the planet
- ▶ Use persuasive techniques to influence decision makers

Next steps

Greenpeace would love to hear about your activities. Get in touch and tell us what you've been doing by emailing:
getactive.uk@greenpeace.org

You could also book a Greenpeace Speaker to talk to your school or youth group (virtually or in person). Find out more here:
www.act.gp/speakers

Check out more educational resources. Find them at:
www.act.gp/resources

What to do

ENGAGE: IGNITE INTEREST IN THE ISSUE

You'll need: sustainable transport presentation

Based on these images, what do you think today's lesson might be about? Share your ideas!



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1. What's today's lesson about?

Display the photos. Young people infer what the session may be about today. Share ideas.

What are we going to learn?

You will...

- 1 **Understand** the impacts of our current transport system
- 2 **Identify** ways to make transport fairer for both people and the planet
- 3 **Use** persuasive techniques to influence decision makers



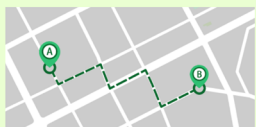
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2. What are we going to learn?

Introduce the learning objectives.

Transport in our lives

What does transport mean to you?



Transport moves people or goods from one place to another.

In the last month, where did you go and what transport did you use?

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3. Transport in our lives

Ask young people the question: what does transport mean to you? Share ideas.

Discuss the young people's own experience of transport. In the last month, where did you go and what transport did you use?



EXPLORE: DELVE INTO THE ISSUE

You'll need: sustainable transport presentation

Good transport is essential

We all need transport. It is an essential part of life for all of us — important for shopping, seeing friends, going to school and work.



4. Good transport is essential

Use the slide to show we all need transport.

UK transport system facts

Let's find out about the UK's transport system. **Stand up** if you think a statement is **true** or **remain seated** if you think it is **false**.

1. Britain has enough roads that they could wrap around Earth almost 6 times.
False - There are 247,000 miles of roads. These could wrap around Earth almost 10 times.
2. Gases released by petrol and diesel cars have no effect on air quality.
False - These gases make air quality worse which leads to health problems, like asthma.
3. The number of people cycling in the UK is increasing.
True - During some of 2020, there were less cars on the road and three times as many people were cycling.
4. Road transport - cars, vans and lorries - is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the UK.
True - Road transport contributes a third of all the UK's carbon emissions.

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5 & 6. UK transport system facts

Display the statements. Young people stand if true, stay seated if false. Ask young people to explain their thoughts and discuss the answers. Are they surprised or shocked by anything?

What do the facts tell us?

Many people **lack access** to regular public transport, particularly outside of our largest towns and cities.

Many people want to walk or cycle but may **need help** to do this.

Left with no other option, more people are getting in their cars, **making our roads more congested**.



We need to **invest in more sustainable methods** of transport to help people to make less car journeys.

More and more cars on the roads are **negatively impacting people and our planet**.

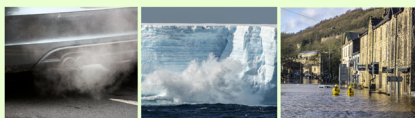
7. What do the facts tell us?

Ask young people the question: what do the facts tell us? Discuss ideas. Display the summary.

Transport and the environment

What are the effects of cars on the environment?

Use the information you've learnt, your own knowledge and the photos below.



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8. Transport and the environment

Pose the question: what are the effects of cars on the environment? Encourage young people in pairs or groups to answer this question. Share ideas. You could give young people the [Climate Emergency information sheet](#). Then young people can independently learn about the effects of transport on the environment.

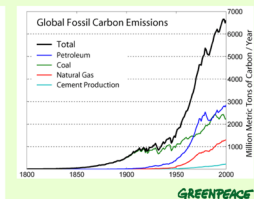
How do cars increase climate change?

Climate Change is caused by **burning fossil fuels** (coal, oil and gas).

When burnt, the fossil fuels release a gas called **carbon dioxide (CO2)** which causes global warming.

Many cars need fossil fuels to work. When a car is switched on, it **releases greenhouse gases**.

The **more cars** being used the **more polluting gases** are being released into the air.



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9. How do cars increase climate change?

Use the slide to show how cars exacerbate climate change.

People and transport

Let's think about some other effects transport choices have by meeting three people.

Sam's journey to school isn't safe. There are places without pavements on very busy roads. They are driven to school each day by their family.

Nial wants to join a local sports team on a Saturday but there are no buses near his house and he doesn't feel safe cycling. Nial's family doesn't own a car so they can't drive him there.

Hansa has moved house. She now lives on a busy road. Cars are often stopped waiting at the traffic lights. Hansa has asthma. Since moving house Hansa's asthma has got worse.

10. People and transport

Explain we will think about how the current transport system is affecting people. Introduce the three people and read their stories aloud.

How might current transport be affecting Sam, Nial and Hansa?

- Sam feels lonely as they cannot socialise with their friends.
- Walking to school would help Sam be more independent.
- Walking daily would be good exercise.
- Active travel, like walking, could help Sam concentrate at school.

- Nial might feel bored.
- Nial feels lonely because he can't join a club.
- Nial might find it hard to do other activities - like seeing friends or visiting the doctors.

- Hansa's asthma may stop her doing activities she enjoys.
- Hansa feels unwell frequently.
- Hansa might be more isolated from her friends.

11. How might current transport be affecting Sam, Nial and Hansa?

Ask young people the question on the slide. Discuss as pairs or a group. Share ideas and write them down. Display some of the effects. You may wish to further the discussion by asking the questions: are some people effected more than others? Who are they and why?

Optional extension: Young people could explore how our transport system affects people worldwide due to the impacts of climate change.

Myth busting

Myth: Building new roads will help people get around quicker and reduce traffic by adding more space for cars.

Truth: New roads encourage more people to drive. People travel further and make more trips because a new road exists. The traffic on the roads becomes worse!

New roads mean more traffic and more greenhouse gas emissions.

And cars take up far more space than buses or bikes!

12. Myth Busting

Use the slide to show that building more roads doesn't solve the problem of making our roads less congested.

What's the solution?

We need **less cars on the roads**.

We need to make it **easier and safer** for people to use sustainable transport.

Sustainable transport means ways of travelling which are **safe and have a low impact on the environment**.

Can you name any types of sustainable transport?

13. What's the solution?

Ask young people the question: what's the solution? Use the slide to show we need more sustainable transport choices to help tackle the problems caused by a dependence on cars.

Define sustainable transport. Ask young people if they can name any forms of sustainable transport. Prompt young people to think about what makes these transport options sustainable. Examples of sustainable transport are walking, cycling, buses and trains.

You may wish to extend the conversation by asking why these transport options are fairer?

Positive solutions worldwide

Many places around the world are already making transport more sustainable.

Bogota, the capital of Colombia

Bogota is one of many places worldwide.

Bogota has:

- a 300km network of wide-protected bicycle lanes,
- a network of pedestrian boulevards,
- a city wide rapid-transit bus network (which sees buses come every 30 seconds at peak times),
- limited car access during rush hour,
- and six massive park and ride facilities.

This is all in the last 25 years!

14. Positive solutions worldwide

Use this slide to show how sustainable transport schemes are already happening around the world.

Positive solutions in the UK

Transport is being made more sustainable in the UK too.

Scottish borders

Five years ago, the Borders Railway line from Edinburgh to Tweedbank was reopened after 40 years.

Many small towns and villages, which had been reliant on cars, now had a train service.

In just three years after it's reopening, more than 4 million journeys were made.

Instead of having to commute by car, people now have a choice!

15 & 16. Positive solutions in the UK

Use these slides to show some UK schemes that are making places less car dependent.

Optional extension: Young people could research more places in the UK and around the world which are making transport systems more sustainable. The blog [11 places that prioritise people over cars](#) is a great place to start.

Fairer and more sustainable transport

Read the statements giving some of the reasons why sustainable travel options are better for people and the planet.

- Are there any more reasons?
- In your opinion, which do you think are most important?

Better air quality reduces health problems, like asthma, for people.	Sustainable transport reduces greenhouse gas emissions. This reduces the effects of climate change.	People can take part in activities, like visiting friends, using sustainable transport.
Active travel, like walking and cycling, are good forms of physical exercise.	Fewer cars on the roads makes walking and cycling safer.	More people can access jobs, schools and colleges using sustainable transport. This is fairer for everyone.

17. Fairer and more sustainable transport


Ask young people to read the statements on the slide. In pairs or groups ask young people to discuss the questions. They may wish to rank them as a group in order of importance. Share ideas as a whole class or group.

EMPOWER: GIVE YOUNG PEOPLE THE CONFIDENCE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE


You'll need: sustainable transport presentation, challenges and solutions worksheet and a map of the local area (optional)

How can you help?

Make **personal changes** in your everyday life.
More....



Influence decision makers, like parents and carers, your head teacher, local councillors and Members of Parliament.



18. How can you help?


Introduce young people to two of the different ways they can help.

1. Make personal changes in our everyday lives
2. Influence decision makers

Explain we can all make personal changes, like walking, cycling and using public transport more, to help. However, if we influence decision makers we can encourage more people to make changes and make walking, cycling and public transport easier and safer for everyone.

Optional extension: You may wish to explore personal changes more by asking the question: how can you walk, cycle or use public transport more in your own life? Write ideas down.

Who makes decisions about transport?



Parents and Carers
Help plan sustainable journeys and travel with you.

Headteachers
Make sustainable travel easier and safer at school.

Local Councillors
Help make changes to local issues.

Members of Parliament (MPs)
Make new laws and discuss important issues for the country.

↑
Their job is to represent the people in their local area. This means you!

19 & 20. Who makes decisions about transport?

Use these slides to show why influencing decision makers can make a big difference to transport options.

Influencing decision makers to make transport better

You will...

1. **Map** a journey you make regularly.
2. **Identify** ways to make your journey more sustainable.
3. **Share** your solutions with a decision maker and ask for change to happen.



What is a journey you make regularly? Share ideas.

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21. Influencing decision makers to make transport better

Inform young people of their task today. Begin the task by asking young people to think of a journey they make often. You may wish to give examples like going to school, visiting a friend's house or going to the local shops. Discuss their ideas.

You might want young people to think of a journey that they all make as a group.

Mapping your journey

Draw the route you take on your map



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22. Mapping your journey

Model mapping a route. You may wish to use a satellite image, road map or encourage young people to draw their own maps of the area.

This activity could be set as an independent learning activity for young people to do at home.

Your journey

- What transport do you currently use?
- What transport would be better to use for people and planet?

There might be challenges on your route. These are things which make it difficult to walk, cycle or use public transport.

Is there anything that makes it difficult to use sustainable transport?



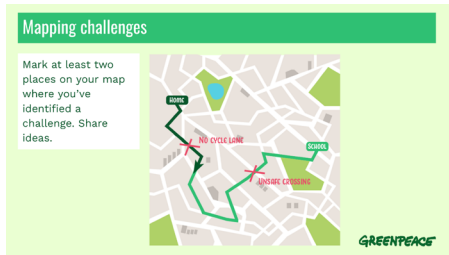
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23. Your journey

Discuss the first two questions on the slide as a group. Explain that on a route there may be challenges to using sustainable transport. Tell the young people that even if they currently use sustainable transport there could still be things which make it difficult.

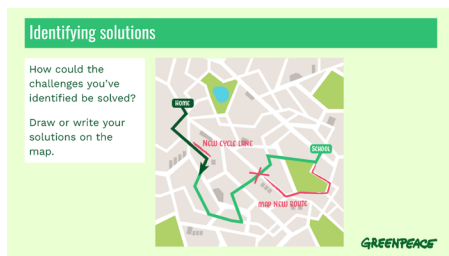
Ask young people to discuss the last question in pairs or groups. Share ideas. Share the challenges column (on the challenges and solutions worksheet) with the young people.

Optional extension: Young people could travel their mapped route and take photos, write or draw the challenges. This could be done as a whole group activity within a session or set as homework.



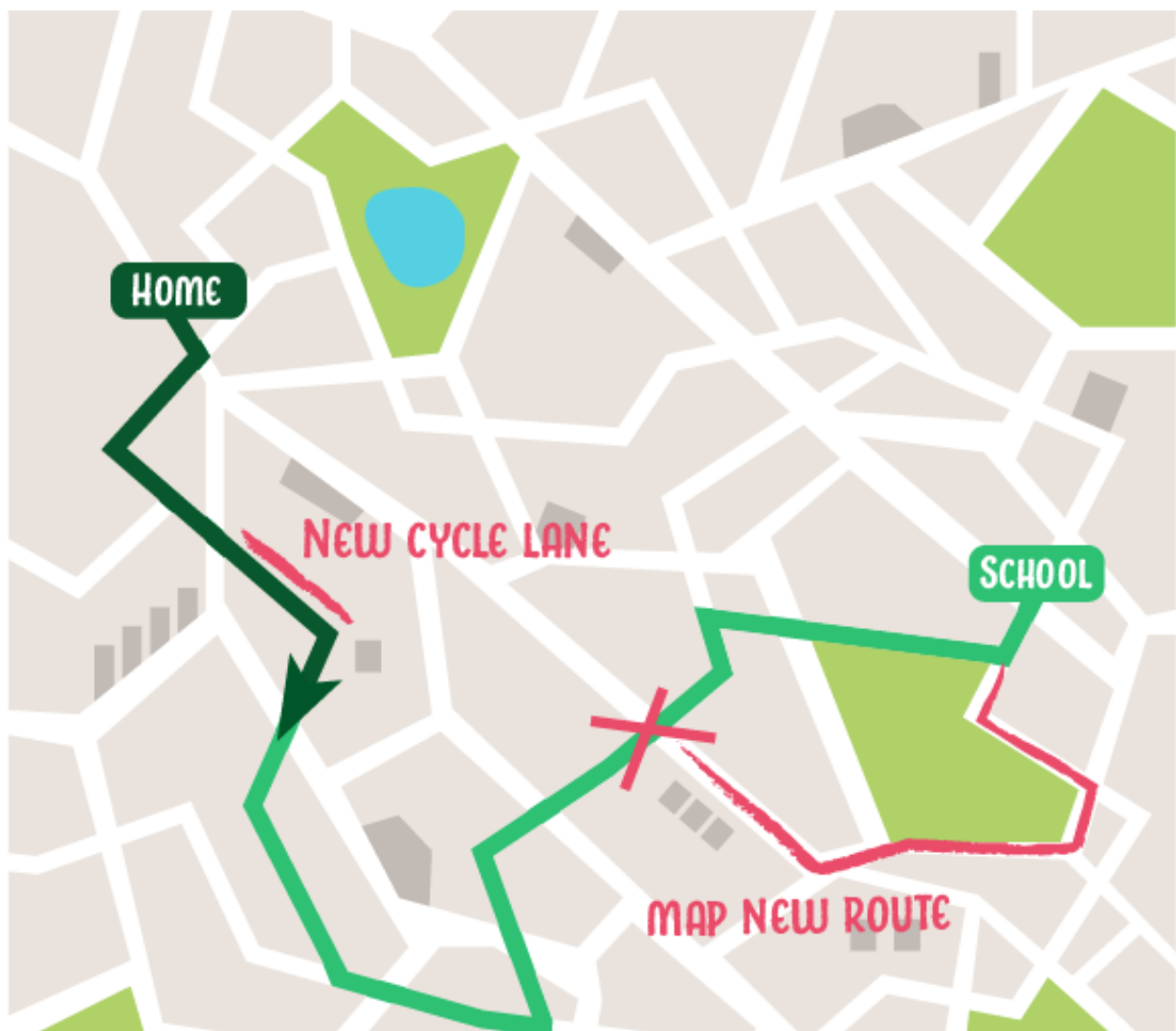
24. Mapping challenges

Model marking at least two places on your map where you feel there are challenges. Ask the young people to do the same on their own maps. Share ideas.



25. Identifying solutions

Pose the question: how could the challenges you've identified be solved? You may wish to give the young people the challenges and solutions worksheet to help them. Ask young people to draw or write the solutions on their map.



ACT: TAKE ACTION ON THE ISSUE

You'll need: sustainable transport presentation and completed map. Depending on the activity chosen, you'll need the example letter or a large piece of plain paper

Contacting your decision maker	
What is the problem?	What is the effect?
What are we asking them to do?	
Make a new cycle lane.	Make buses cheaper and easier to use in your local area.
Visit your school and listen to your concerns.	Help make a walking group to travel to school.

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26. Contacting your decision maker

Explain to young people that now we've identified the challenges and solutions we are going to contact decision makers. They can help make changes so our transport is more sustainable.

Discuss as a group the challenge they've identified and its effects. Then discuss the solution (what we will be asking them to do). Use the ideas under the question: what are we asking them to do? on the slide as prompts. Encourage young people to look at the solutions they identified on their maps.

You may wish to model writing down an idea under each question and ask young people to do the same.

Persuade them	
Write a persuasive letter	Make a persuasive poster
Plan a conversation	

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27. Persuade them

Tell young people there are different ways to persuade decision makers. Follow the information on the next page depending on the method you choose to contact them.

Share your actions with Greenpeace!	
<p>At Greenpeace we love to hear about what you are doing to make transport safer, greener and fairer for everyone. Share your letters, maps and posters with us!</p> <p>Ask an adult to send them to getactive.uk@greenpeace.org</p>	

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28. Share your actions with Greenpeace!

Greenpeace would love to hear from you about the actions young people take after using this resource. Get in touch and tell us what you've been doing by emailing getactive.uk@greenpeace.org

Persuading decision makers

Writing a persuasive letter

Writing a persuasive letter to a local decision maker can be a powerful way to get your concern's heard and ask for something to be done about them.

Remind young people of the features of persuasive writing. Model the layout of a formal letter. You may wish to use the 'Example letter' to help.

Young people will write a formal letter to the headteacher, local councillor or MP outlining the problem they have identified, the effects this has and what can be done to make sustainable transport safer and easier in their local area.

Encourage young people to include photos and drawings with the letter. It is a great way to explain ideas and get the decision makers attention.

Creating a persuasive poster

Young people can create a poster showing the things the decision maker can do to improve their transport choices. Either send these to the local decision maker or display them around the school or youth group and ask the decision maker to come and visit. Displaying the posters will help the local community see the benefits of sustainable transport too.

Plan a conversation

A conversation can be a great way to encourage a decision maker of the benefits of sustainable transport and what they can do to help. Young people could use the resource [Let's talk about it](#) to help them plan an inspiring conversation.

Sending it to the local decision maker

To find out who your MP is type your postcode into: www.theyworkforyou.com

To find out who your local councillor is type your postcode into: www.gov.uk/find-your-local-councillors



Questions that may arise

Here are some common misconceptions that may arise during the session.

1. Young people may ask why buses and trains are more sustainable than cars.

The answer: Trains and buses are more sustainable because they usually use less fuel to carry many more passengers which makes them more efficient.

2. Young people may ask why having electric cars on the roads won't solve the problem.

The answer: Electric cars do have a lower environmental impact compared to cars running on fossil fuels. However, they are still not as efficient as walking and cycling due to sourcing of materials. And electric buses are more efficient than cars. Any form of traffic still makes roads less safe for walking and cycling.



An example of a letter you could write

1 Example Road
Travelingham
South Transport
AB1 2CD

5th February 2021

Dear Ms Patel,

I live in Travelingham and I am 13 years old. I am writing to urge you to invest more money to improve the cycle lanes in my local area. Making active transport more accessible is a vital step towards tackling climate change and making a transport system that is fair for everyone.

Did you know that thousands of people across the UK cannot do everyday activities – like shopping, socialising or visiting a doctor – without owning a car? For example, more than a million people in the UK live at least a mile from a bus stop with a regular service. The result is too many cars are on our roads: this, I believe, is a serious issue!

Cars create greenhouse gases. In fact, road transport is responsible for a third of all the UK's carbon emissions. As a result of these gases, climate change is exacerbated. Climate change will have catastrophic effects globally, devastating both people and our planet. Moreover, greenhouse gases increase air pollution. This can worsen health problems particularly in children. Clearly, we must decrease the number of cars on our roads to keep people and our planet healthy!

I'd love to participate in more social activities, like going to the local sports centre with my friends. However, buses are so infrequent I'm not able to get there for the time clubs start. I'd like to cycle, but without cycle lanes I don't feel safe. If my family owned a car I could get there. However, is it fair that I miss out on opportunities because we don't have one? Surely not owning a car should be rewarded as it is better for both people and the planet?

Some people say that we should build more roads to reduce traffic. But new roads don't make it easier to travel if you don't own a car. All new roads do is create more traffic which leads to more greenhouse gases and an unfairer transport system! Instead, we need to improve walking, cycling and public transport. That's why I am imploring you to create more cycle lanes in my town so everyone can travel safely using sustainable transport. I've made a map to show you where I think cycle lanes should be made so people can make journeys safely.

Many of my friends at school feel the same way as I do. Therefore, I would encourage you to visit my school and listen to our concerns. Thank you for helping to improve cycling and public transport in my local area. I look forward to hearing from you about when you can come and visit us.

Yours,

Alex

Challenges and Solutions

The table shows some challenges you may encounter when trying to use sustainable transport and some suggested solutions.

Challenges	Solutions
Pavements Narrow pavement No pavement Broken or damaged surface Missing street lights	Ask a local councillor or MP to help improve the pavements. Ask a parent or carer to help plan an alternative route with well maintained and safe pavements.
Crossing roads Missing safe places to cross the road	Ask your local councillor or MP for more pedestrian crossings. Ask a parent or carer to help plan an alternative route with safe places to cross. Ask your headteacher to create a school street.
Cycling No cycle lane None or not enough bike racks Unsafe cycle lanes (e.g. suddenly finish or no barriers from traffic)	Ask your local councillor or MP to make more cycle lanes, bike racks or a Low Traffic Neighbourhood. Ask a parent or carer to help plan an alternative route with cycle lanes. Ask your headteacher to create more space for storing bikes.
Buses No bus stop Bus stop is too far away Buses don't come regularly enough Bus is too expensive	Ask your local councillor or MP to improve the local bus service. Ask a parent or carer to help plan an alternative route.

School Streets

A School Street is a road outside a school with a temporary restriction on motorised traffic at school drop-off and pick-up times. The restriction applies to school traffic and through traffic. The result is a safer, healthier and pleasanter environment for everyone. To find out more look at this website: www.schoolstreets.org.uk

Low Traffic Neighbourhoods

A low traffic neighbourhood is an area which is closed off to through-traffic – so you can drive to it but can't drive through it. This stops people using residential roads as shortcuts and makes it safer and easier to walk and cycle. To find out more read [this blog](#).

