



# Leicester COVID-19 Transport Recovery Plan

Creating space to travel safe

27 May 2020

# Foreword

We live in extraordinary times.

COVID-19 has taken a huge toll on our society. It has taken lives, separated families and communities, shocked our economy and halted everyday activities and interactions that we once took for granted.

At the time of writing, plans for a staged return to a relative normality are being prepared. Schools are being asked to prepare to welcome more children back through their doors and the retail sector is seeking solutions that will see transactions running through tills once more.

An uplift in this activity will doubtless present challenges for transportation everywhere, including here in Leicester.

First and foremost, we must plan for a recovery to prevent infection. Beyond this, we now have an unprecedented opportunity to change permanently people's everyday travel behaviour and encourage sustainable transport choices for the better, rather than returning to previous car dominated travel patterns with the associated problems of congestion, polluting vehicle emissions and poor air quality.

In addition to setting out measures for the safe operation of all our city transport services, our Transport Recovery Plan brings forward measures to better link key workers and others to their workplaces, create more space to move about safely in shopping areas and support active travel more generally for exercise.

Pop-up cycleways, such as the key worker corridor on Saffron Lane and Aylestone Road, have gained attention from beyond our city's boundary. We hope that by delivering and promoting interventions like this we will promote healthy travel choices that will resonate into a post-pandemic world, assist in tackling the climate emergency and air quality challenges as well as supporting a sustainable local economic recovery.

Here in our recovery plan we set out activities and objectives that fall within three high level principles:

**Safety** – everything we do will put safety first to adhere to Government advice, for example on social distancing. Also we will ensure safe design for any changes we make to our streets and transport services and we will promote



positive health outcomes such as reducing transport emissions which are known to shorten lives particularly amongst the most vulnerable.

**Sustainability** – our work will always seek to make a contribution to the climate emergency response and promote a sustainable and ethical local economy which supports employment and productivity.

**Social Equity** – we will aim to provide fair access to all in an inclusive city and lead by example, particularly recognising our duties under the Equalities Act.

We are also acutely aware that people want us to deliver **better places and visual improvements to our streetscape**. Whilst our work will always aim to deliver attractive measures over time, the necessity to deliver scale at pace means that initial interventions, such as using traffic cones to segregate modes, means that form follows function on the list of priorities.

By promoting these principles through this plan we hope to both promote good decision-making and effectively communicate the thinking behind our decision making, all of which will help the city to come back stronger than ever.

**Leicester City Mayor, Sir Peter Soulsby**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P Soulsby'.

**Deputy City Mayor Environment and Transportation,  
Cllr Adam Clarke**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam Clarke'.



# Reshaping transport in the COVID-19 recovery phase

The city is facing an unprecedented challenge to restart, and opportunity to reshape, its transport network and services to respond to the Government's COVID-19 Recovery Strategy. This historic moment in time sees many people continuing to work from home most likely for many more months to come. Those that need to travel have limited options with bus and rail capacity dramatically reduced and large numbers of city households without a car.

Alongside the need to work closely with our bus and rail operators to provide safe travel options for those that have to travel by public transport we have a unique opportunity to support cycling and walking in the city to provide sustainable healthy travel alternatives.

The potential to reallocate empty traffic lanes and repurpose/extend pavements for people to make essential and safe trips by bike and walking gives us the opportunity to deliver sustainable environmental, social, health and economic growth benefits. This will contribute significantly to the council's climate emergency and air quality priorities.

We have been working with the Department for Transport, other local authorities, transport operators, business, NHS, schools and the Local Resilience Forum to help inform and develop our transport recovery plans.

This document sets out our transport recovery plans for the coming two to three months. In doing so we will follow three principles of **Safety, Sustainability** and **Social Equity**. Our plan provides information on how we will deliver quick actions to encourage many more people to cycle and walk, work with bus and rail operators to provide safe spaces within available capacity for travel on public transport and how we plan to restart our car parking and park and ride services.

# Recent transport trends

We have been monitoring city transport trends since the start of the Government's lockdown on March 23 and the following graphs and narrative summarise trends to date.

## Traffic levels

Fell to about 50 % of its previous volumes with NO<sub>2</sub> emissions reducing by a similar amount. The graph below shows comparative data for 2019 and 2020 for Redhill Way and demonstrates this reduction. It also shows a gradual upturn in traffic levels to around 60% in recent weeks as lockdown measures are eased. This remains substantially below normal volumes and our Area Traffic Control service reports free flowing reduced levels of traffic generally across the city.



Total daily traffic counts at Red Hill Way

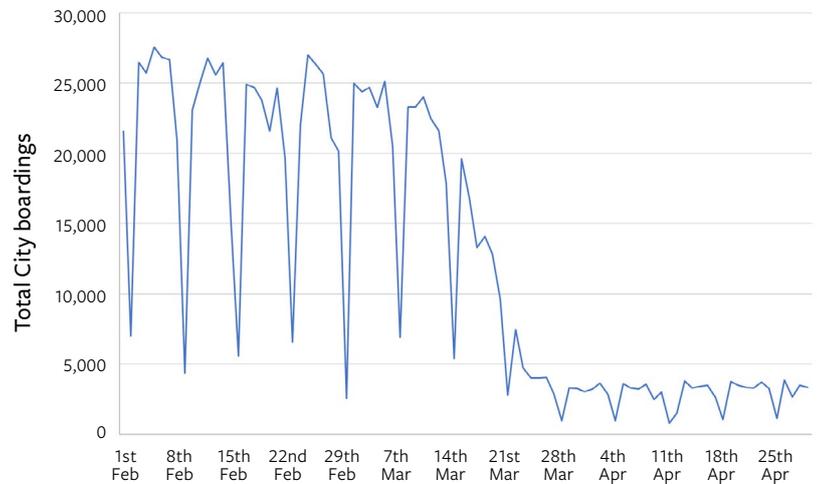


Week commencing 02/03/20 until 24/05/20 against previous year's figures (04/03/19 to 22/05/19)

# Bus patronage

Fell to around 17 % of normal levels according to bus operators. The graph opposite shows the fall in concessionary fare travellers which reflects this. Bus patronage has remained generally at similar low levels in recent weeks, reflecting Government advice not to travel on public transport unless necessary. This trend is broadly reflected in our experience of footfall at our two bus stations at Haymarket and St Margaret’s although recent days has seen some upturn at specific times of the day.

Total concessionary passenger boardings from 1st February to 30th April 2020 (City)



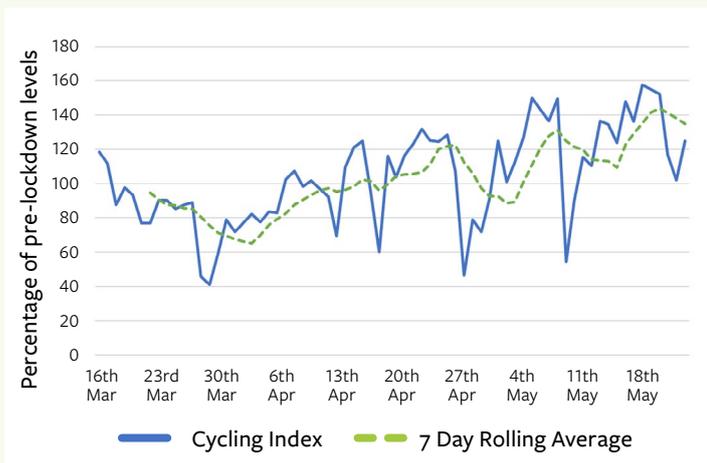
# Cycling and walking

An overall significant increase in activity measured on our counters following an initial drop, post lockdown as shown in the graphs below. These changes are not uniform however as whilst city centre counters (Welford Road and Belvoir Street for example) showed a decrease on pre-lockdown levels cycling has increased in outer areas of the city for example by 170 percent at Braunstone Park

and 195 percent at Riverside Way, with walking having doubled at New Parks Way and Great Central Way. This reflects the increase in recreational exercise activity and the near closure of the city centre to business. In the past week however observation has suggested a notable upturn in cycling and walking in the city centre as more people return to work.

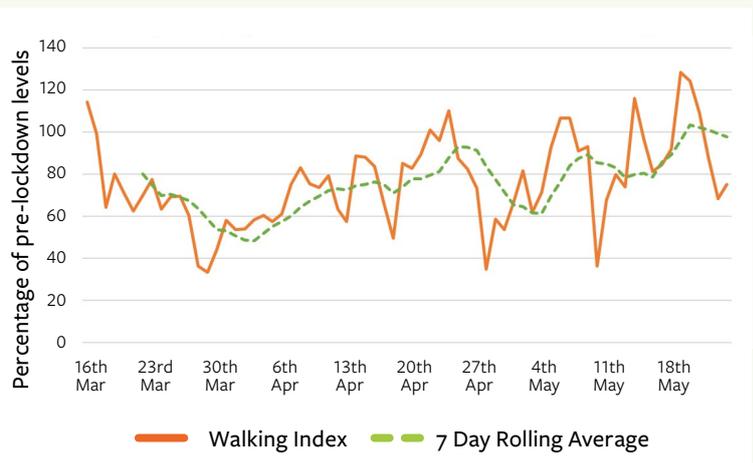
Cycling Index

(against first two weeks of March 2020 average)



Walking Index

(against first two weeks of March 2020 average)





# Transport trends in coming weeks

The Government's staged recovery plans will impact on transport trends as they are activated. Currently if the Government's conditions are satisfied a phased return for primary schools is anticipated from 1st June with non-essential shops planned to be reopened from 15th June. Hospitality and leisure facilities are currently planned to recommence potentially from 4th July.

Whilst we will see an increase in those needing to travel as these stages are activated a very significant proportion of the workforce will remain working from home for some time to come. Consequently planned changes to the city transport system must be readied by the beginning of June to encourage as many people as possible particularly travelling shorter distances to walk and cycle, increase capacity and maximise service efficiency in public transport for those that have no choice and recognise that some many people will continue to travel by car, particularly when travelling longer distances.



# Walking and cycling

A once in a lifetime opportunity exists to change our travel behaviour to walk and cycle more in our everyday lives. This could make a major contribution to health improvement in the city and support our air quality and climate emergency priority to reduce Co2 emissions. With 40% of urban journeys less than two miles we think many more people can walk or cycle around our city with the right support/space.

Whilst our city centre is now largely pedestrianised for walking and cycling and generally offers good space for people to circulate safely, many of our smaller shopping streets with independent traders have narrow pavements. Creating more space for people to visit these shopping areas will be important to keep them safe and support businesses to open when they are allowed.



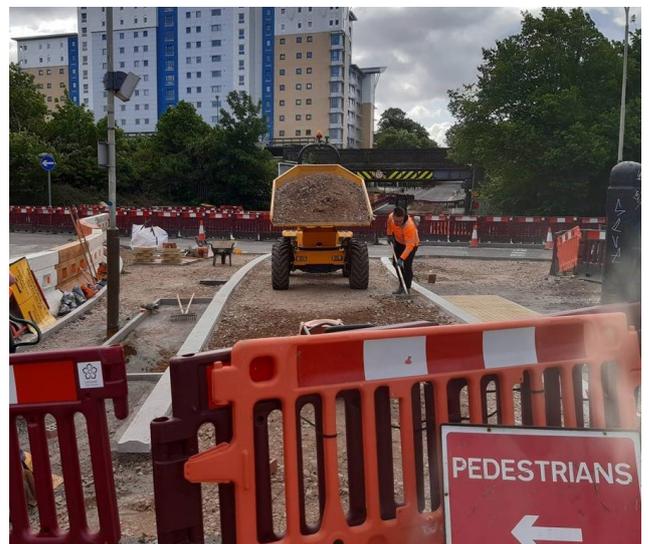
- For those that have to stay at home we want them to take regular exercise to keep healthy by walking and cycling.
- For those that need to go to work we want to encourage as many people as possible to walk and cycle.
- For those visiting our shopping centres we want to keep people safe by providing extra space where required to social distance.





## We will help people to cycle and walk by:

- Delivering a mile a week over the next ten weeks of new and extended pop-up cycleway and paths by reallocating road space and providing additional safe segregation measures on existing cycleways to better connect people to workplaces and other destinations.
- Initial schemes include routes on:
  - Saffron Lane/Aylestone Road key worker route – completed
  - London Road inbound – completed
  - Hinckley Road/Glenfield Road
  - Abbey Park Road - Belgrave Circle to Abbey Park
  - Links to Beaumont Leys
  - Additional radial route links tbc
  - Light segregation schemes on existing cycleways starting with Aylestone Road
- Building on the eight miles of permanent route improvements recently provided through our Connecting Leicester programme:
  - Accelerate completion of 1.2 miles of permanent segregated cycleway/path schemes already underway as part of the Transforming Cities initiative at Lancaster Road, Belgrave Gate and the inner ring road (St Georges Roundabout to Wharf Street).



- Extend the existing extensive city centre Pedestrian Priority Zone early by providing interim safe space pedestrianisation for cycling and walking of Haymarket and Churchgate following completion of the Mansfield Street bus link road in the summer. Permanent repaving will be phased thereafter.
- Extend the Pedestrian Priority Zone to the St Martin's/Grey Friars area to support retailing and bars/restaurants in that area.
- Introduce immediate traffic controls to support cycling and walking at Belvoir Street/Pocklington's Walk junction and Granby Street to support local shops.
- Developing a cycling and walking zone centred on Braunstone Gate with links into Bede Park, Mill Lane and Narborough Road.
- In local shopping areas widening narrow pavements where practical and providing good signage and information to help people keep a safe distance apart and support local businesses.
- Initial schemes include:
  - Queens Road
  - Belgrave Road
  - Narborough Road
  - Green Lane Road
  - Additional schemes will be confirmed following feasibility work

- Publishing our new Leicester Street Design Guide and aligning designs for permanent street improvements with transport recovery strategies.
- Continuing to provide free maintenance through local bike shops with over 400 bikes already fixed by 20th May.
- Continuing to make loan bikes available to key workers including NHS staff and care workers building on more than 200 already provided.

**ESSENTIAL WORKERS**

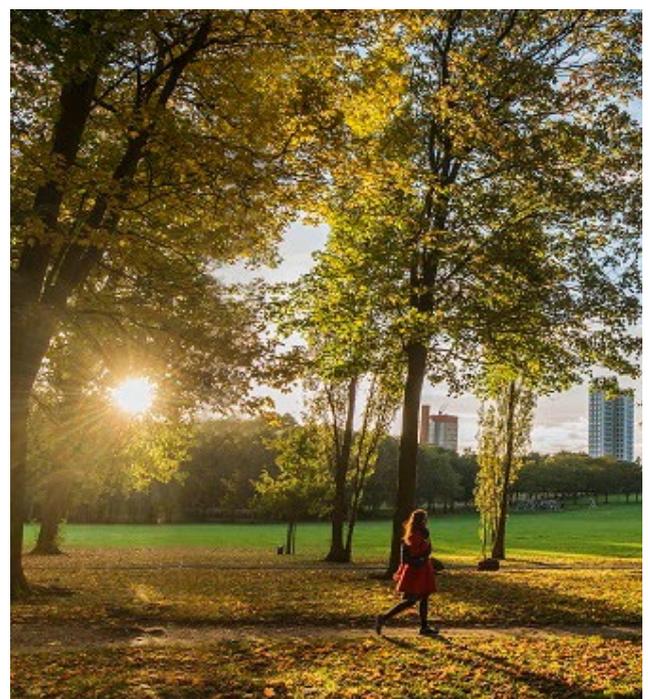


**DO YOU NEED A FREE BIKE LOAN TO CONTINUE WORKING?**

**TO APPLY: EMAIL [CYCLE-CITY@LEICESTER.GOV.UK](mailto:CYCLE-CITY@LEICESTER.GOV.UK) WITH **RIDE LEICESTER BIKE AID** AS THE HEADER**

**STATE YOUR REQUIRED SIZE: SMALL, MEDIUM OR LARGE AND YOUR GENDER**

**YOU WILL THEN BE CONTACTED BY ONE OF THE RIDE LEICESTER BIKE AID TEAM**





- Introducing our new Leicester Santander Bike Share scheme as soon as possible during the summer to provide additional safe and sustainable travel options in and around the city centre.
- Reopening city centre Bike Park from w/c 8th June.
- Supporting provision of safe and secure cycle parking at workplaces, transport hubs, city centre locations and district centres.
- Providing on-line maps of our commuter cycle routes and self-guided leisure walks and cycle rides. See [www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk](http://www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk)
- Reducing speeds to safe levels on roads to support cycling and walking for instance alongside new pop up routes.
- Accelerating delivery of ten 20mph zones including 253 additional streets to create safer neighbourhoods, building on more than 1199 streets already completed.
- Extending existing 20mph streets to cover the whole of the city centre.
- Considering proposals we have received from local neighbourhood groups with ideas to make their streets safer by reducing/eliminating traffic and other measures such as speed control. We will be reviewing these and invite other suggestions.
- Supporting schools as they plan to reopen to get their pupils walking and cycling and create safe space to travel to and arrive at school.



Walking and cycling connects us socially, makes us happier and improves mental wellbeing.

In Leicester, people who walk or cycle weekly are 16% less likely to report poor mental wellbeing compared to those who do not walk or cycle.

In Leicester, people who walk or cycle weekly are over 20% more likely to be a healthy weight compared to those who do not walk or cycle.

# Public transport

The number of people able to travel by bus and rail will be severely restricted for some time due to social distancing requirements. Despite services likely to be increased to around 80% of pre COVID-19 levels by June capacity is likely to be below 25%. However, for many this may be the only means to get to work, shop and make other essential trips and we want to ensure this can be done safely.



We will continue to work closely with bus operators to help people to use public transport safely by:

- Delivering practical measures advised by Government on travelling safely and socially distancing when on buses and at bus stations and stops.
- Providing good information with operators on bus services on-line and at stations and stops.
- Managing down the numbers of people using our bus stations for example by supporting early disembarkation and relocating some services on street as necessary.
- Restarting bus lane enforcement from 1st June to ensure bus services that are having to operate with very limited capacity can run smoothly.
- Introducing a red route to control unauthorised parking on London Road as soon as possible during the summer.
- Considering the early introduction of bus lanes to be provided as part of the Transforming Cities programme.

The council will work with East Midlands Rail to ensure safe access for people to Leicester Rail Station.





# Park and ride

To provide additional support for those travelling longer distances who would otherwise have to use a car, we are reopening available park and ride services from 1st June. This will provide more capacity on buses into the city and help free up central streets from traffic, making them safer to walk/cycle.

We will:

- Restart park and ride services at Enderby and Meynell's Gorse from 1st June and review options for alternatives to our Birstall service whilst this is operating as a COVID-19 testing centre.
- Introduce free travel for the recovery phase for NHS and care workers.
- Introduce a reduced price initially of £3 per day to reduce need for people to use change. We are working with the bus operator to accelerate the introduction of cashless payments and expect this to be introduced shortly. Concessionary travellers will be able to travel for free as usual with a pass.
- Promote the opportunity to park and cycle from our park and ride sites.
- Review options for additional park and cycle/walk sites nearer the city centre for introduction as soon as possible.

# Car use

The council recognises that many will have no choice but to use their cars to travel around the city and will need to use our roads and car parks to do so. We recognise that some 40% of city households don't have a car however and they will need our support to use alternative travel modes as set out in this plan.

For those that need to travel by car we will:

- Aim to keep traffic levels and speeds managed down to improve safety and minimise congestion and air pollution.
- Bring all car parks and on-street parking back into full operation by 1st June with continued free use for NHS and care workers with a council approved pass. Cashless payments will be encouraged.
- Newarke Street Car Park will be reopened with a new AutoPay system, which allows drivers to register online and then uses number plate recognition technology to confirm payment. The system removes the need for drivers to queue or handle payment machines.
- Continue to focus our traffic wardens on providing advice and guidance and support residents parking zones.

# Supporting business

Local businesses and employers will be supported to ensure they and their staff can access the transport services they need to operate safely and effectively.

We will support business by:

- Managing traffic levels to promote the efficient movement of goods and deliveries.
- Support innovative means to support business freight movement such as cargo bikes.
- Provide support and advice on employee travel planning and cycle parking.
- Encouraging travel to work to be staggered to avoid peaks in traffic.
- Providing additional space where practical in local shopping/business areas to support social distancing.



# Locking in sustainable transport behaviour change

Working closely with the travelling public, business, employers and transport operators, we firmly believe that as we emerge from lockdown and move through the recovery phases we can deliver lasting and sustainable

improvements to the way people travel about the city and take this unprecedented opportunity to develop a healthier, happier and more equitable city for the future.



Contact: [transport-strategyenquiries@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:transport-strategyenquiries@leicester.gov.uk)