

To: Transport & Health Policy Makers, & Practitioners
From: Prof Adrian Davis, TRI, Edinburgh Napier University
Date: 24th February 2023
Subject: Essential Evidence 4 Scotland No.64 Low Traffic Neighbourhoods

Top Line: Low Traffic Neighbourhoods are one solution to reduce car use and release suppressed demand for active travel. They are popular with resident car owners.

The Scottish Government set the target to reduce car kilometres travelled by 20% by 2030. It will also support the National Transport Strategy priorities of equality, economy and health and wellbeing; the Public Health priorities; NHS Sustainability priorities and National Performance Framework Outcomes.¹ Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) use bollards, planters, and cameras to remove through traffic from neighbourhoods while retaining motor vehicle access to all homes. Such measures suit minor urban streets, where most people live (c. 90% and similar across demographic/socioeconomic groups). LTNs sit within a suite of measures to reduce car use or mitigate its consequences. These include protected cycle tracks and bus priority lanes, clean air zones, and 20 mph speed limits.²

The London Borough of Waltham Forest has implemented LTNs since 2015. A longitudinal survey found that after implementation, residents increased their walking and cycling relative to people living elsewhere in Outer London (by 115 minutes for walking and 20 minutes for cycling after 3 years). Analyses of vehicle ownership data found that, relative to a control group, levels of car or van ownership decreased by 7% after three years. These effects were several times larger than in areas that only received interventions such as cycle tracks. Additional research found no increase in emergency service response times, an 18% reduction in street crime after 3 years, and a 75% reduction in injury risk in a traffic collision inside LTNs.

In London, where the greatest concentration of LTNs are located, 47 per cent of Londoners support LTNs, and 16 per cent oppose them – while 37 per cent don't have a strong opinion or just don't know about them. More people support LTNs than oppose them: this is true for men and women and across all age groups, educational backgrounds and party allegiances – though levels of support and opposition vary. People who own a car are more likely to support the introduction of LTNs than people who don't. People who live in low-traffic neighbourhoods are more likely to be supportive of them – which suggests that people tend to like them once they have become familiar. However, many Londoners are not convinced that low-traffic neighbourhoods reduce overall traffic. 42 per cent think they displace cars elsewhere, although 32 per cent think they reduce the overall number of cars on the road; 25 per cent don't know.³ Despite vocal minority groups generating loud opposition² this is at odds with the evidence base.

Researchers also note that there seems to be an implicit assumption by the UK government that opposition to LTNs will dissipate over time and that the benefits will be appreciated as people switch from cars to active travel and public transport.⁴ This type of 'traffic evaporation' may occur over time, but cannot be guaranteed. However, earlier work addressing headline warnings of 'traffic chaos' arising from road space reallocation schemes are in contrast to typical comments from those implementing schemes e.g. 'a lot of the [motorised] traffic seems to have disappeared'.⁵

¹ Public Health Scotland, 2020 Scottish Government target for 20% reduction in car kilometres by 2030: implications for health and health inequalities, Edinburgh: PHS. [Scottish Government target for 20% reduction in car kilometres by 2030: implications for health and health inequalities - Publications - Public Health Scotland](#)

² Lavery, A., Goodman, A., Aldred, R. 2021 Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and population health, British Medical Journal, 372 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n443>

³ Bosetti, N. et al, 2022 Street Shift: the future of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods in London. Centre for London. [CFL-StreetShift-LTNs-Final.pdf \(centreforlondon.org\)](#)

⁴ Dudley, J., Bannister, D., Schwanan, T. 2022 Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and the Paradox of UK Government Control of the Active Travel Agenda, *The Political Quarterly*, 93(4) <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.13198>

⁵ Cairns, S., Atkins, M., Goodwin, P. 2002 Disappearing traffic? The story so far, *Municipal Engineer*, 151 [ME-12772 13..22 \(nacto.org\)](#)