

Guide to the Streetspace programme - why Streetspace and why now?

The coronavirus pandemic has had a profound change on how we live our lives. More of us are working from home than ever before, and we're staying much more in our local areas to. Many are still working outside their homes, making essential vehicle journeys to deliver our shopping, care for ill or infirm people, or carry out the trades we all need.

Coronavirus is a respiratory illness, and poor air quality is linked to people's ability to overcome the disease. Private vehicle use is one of the biggest contributors to air pollution. Although we have seen a significant improvement in air quality over the past four years, there are still 119,000 people living in areas where air quality is poor. The pandemic is also affecting people's mental health, and being active can help people improve their mood and feel healthier.

With social distancing measures in place on public transport, people who can switch how they travel are turning to two options – their own vehicles or walking and cycling. It's understandable many people are turning to their cars, and that means the level of traffic is now at levels before the pandemic. There are even some signs it is higher than this time last year.

The best solution to enable people to get around more easily and efficiently is by encouraging, and supporting, more walking, cycling, scooting and rolling. In turn this leaves road space for trips people must make by private vehicle or public transport, as well as for all-important deliveries and business traffic.

Walking and cycling are great ways to get around the local area for most people. It just requires a bike, a lock, a helmet if you choose to use one, and a waterproof jacket for rainy days. Two-thirds of car journeys in London are less than three miles, distances that can be cycled by most and walked by many. We know for some journeys people will need to drive, whether they're doing a big supermarket shop or transporting bulky items.

Many people say not everyone can cycle, or do not want to. It is true many people cannot cycle, but it's far less than people may think. We know one of the reasons people do not want to walk or cycle is because of volume and speed of traffic, and the lack of protected infrastructure. Streetspace, by providing segregated cycle lanes or measures to reduce traffic in neighbourhoods, can help people feel safer to walk and cycle more, or to take it up.

What we are doing

As part of our response to the pandemic we and London's boroughs are making changes to our streets to make it safer and easier to walk, cycle, roll or scoot. This takes the form of new cycle lanes, low traffic neighbourhoods, school streets, pavement widening and the Central London plan.

These changes are temporary and low-cost, using temporary, emergency or experimental traffic orders. In May the Government encouraged all highways

authorities to make transformative changes to our streets to enable more walking and cycling journeys. This is done without the formal consultation people expect for changes like this, but rather on a trial basis that allows us to gather data and learning on their impact.

The benefit of these changes being temporary is we can modify, adapt or remove them. Our monitoring data, as well as feedback from local people and businesses, informs us if changes need to be made. We have already seen changes made to schemes, whether to loading and parking bays or junctions, following it being introduced.

We will ask people for their views and suggestions for improvements, and survey local businesses to understand their needs. We will monitor the impacts, on congestion, road danger, bus journeys and access for older and disabled people.

We are also here to provide support. We will tell you about the cycle training available, community walking and cycling grants, or our programme with schools.