

Future of Transport Scenarios

A Campaign for Better Transport paper for *Tomorrow's England*
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A starting point might be that the UK is one of the most car-dependent countries in Europe, in that we do more car mileage than any other European country except Norway. We have seen motoring costs fall in real terms while public transport fares have risen.

So there are a number of scenarios available before you start thinking about climate change.

Current trends continue

In this scenario:

- people carry on driving, journey lengths continue to increase
- there is some move towards low emission vehicles but this is balanced by a continued increase in the size and weight of vehicles, and in their luxury (air conditioning etc)
- Government rail spending continues and the railways improve and more people use them, but this does not dent car or air travel, which increase too
- There is some road building (the main motorways are widened etc) but not enough to keep pace with congestion, which increases, adding to unreliability and therefore costs
- Cycling remains a fringe activity
- New development remains car-based, with plentiful parking
- Road pricing is always ten years away

A pro-car scenario

In this scenario:

- a large new road building programme is started, possibly funded by tolls
- fuel taxes are significantly reduced, so the real cost of motoring falls further
- big new multi-storey or underground car parks are built in and around town centres with lower parking costs
- funding for public transport is cut: rail lines close, buses are withdrawn, fares rise, bus lanes are removed
- road humps and speed cameras are strongly discouraged: traffic police are reintroduced but average speeds go up
- the Government puts its faith in technical improvements to deal with pollution etc, and funds research into alternative fuels

Oil prices spike

In this scenario:

- oil prices rise sharply, or at least fluctuate rapidly
- public transport and cycling enjoy a renaissance but the trains can't cope with the extra people and goods and become increasingly crowded and unreliable

- the market reacts: new low-emission vehicles and small cars appear
- car-dependent developments like out of town shopping centres become increasingly tatty – and the fringe housing estates built round the car become the slums for low income families
- emergency park and ride services are created by some councils and companies run works buses to get their employees to work;
- Home working becomes more popular

Congestion bites

In this scenario:

- Congestion gets significantly worse
- Road pricing is introduced on a widespread basis: people have to pay by the mile, though with variations by time of day and type of road
- The same technology is also used to monitor and control the speed of vehicles
- High tech smartcards allow seamless use of roads and public transport
- Real time information is standard
- The revenue from road pricing is spent on road building and public transport
- Rural areas do well out of this, urban areas less so, since it's cheaper to drive in uncongested areas
- A lot more freight goes by rail, but there's still quite a lot of road freight
- The internet takes off and home working and home shopping become widespread. Traffic patterns change, but there are loads of white vans