



**tfgb.org**

## TACKLING PARKING IN BRISTOL

It is well understood that increasing road capacity generates more traffic. A similar proposition about parking gets less airplay: If you can't park at your destination, you won't drive.

Our overarching aim to reduce car-dependence requires a modal shift in transport. Our plans for *mass transit*, *traffic management* and improved *bus services* make this possible by ensuring alternatives to car journeys are available, convenient, and affordable. As they take effect, living in Greater Bristol without owning a car will become more attractive to many.

One policy dilemma is that many of the benefits we foresee are best delivered after road traffic has been tamed. Liveable neighbourhoods and local traffic management can do some of that. But our city region's chronic congestion will continue to compromise bus services, for example, unless overall car use comes down.

Parking policy can have an important role here. Bristol has no coherent parking policy. It needs to evolve one that is consistent with overall transport strategy, and with key environmental goals. The elements of such a policy can be glimpsed in measures taken elsewhere that have brought demonstrable benefits. We need to agree which ones have priority, and – we would advocate – use some to nudge travellers toward the essential modal shift, rather than waiting for it to happen. That will take political commitment that lasts, and extensive discussion and consultation. But we can start by itemising some of the measures that could, and should, be considered as part of the overall strategy.

The important point is that our plans work together, or they will not work at all, and a parking plan must complement the three plans for traffic, rapid transit and bus services, and help deliver their benefits as fast as possible.

A parking plan that achieves this is likely to include some or all of the following:

- **Park&Ride expansion** (see TfGB's *Rapid Transit Plan*): To tap off suburban car commuters and city centre shoppers. An **M32 Park&Ride** is particularly crucial.
- **Residents (& Businesses) Only Parking Zones**: At the moment this inner city programme fails to reach much of North and East Bristol.
- **Workplace Parking Levy**: This is important to strengthen moves to open up the city centre to non car-users, and can generate revenue to fund public transport – as Nottingham has shown in conjunction with its tram system.
- **Restrict On-street parking**: Banning on-street parking on main roads is under-used. Compare London, where main bus routes are no-parking **Red Routes**. In general, cutting on-street parking increases road capacity, notably for sustainable users: the bus-passengers, pedestrians and cyclists who are spared narrow footways, on-footway parking, blocked sight lines and narrowed carriageways. In suburban shopping centres, retailers tend to believe they are dependent upon car-borne customers. But experience elsewhere (Bath and Hereford for example) suggests that semi-pedestrianised shopping streets have commercial benefits. As with other parking measures, perceived loss of amenity can block gains that outweigh the costs.
- **Development control guidance**: New low parking standards for both residential and commercial developments. Many existing developments induce financial dependence on car users – *We The Curious* (the former @Bristol) is a typical example: a centre now striving to meet its own climate emergency goals relies on revenue from its own multi-story car park. Numerous other entertainment, sports, leisure and cultural activity centres, as well as major public open spaces, offer off-road car parks. Operators expect their users to arrive by car, and make little other provision. When (or if) a Workplace Parking Levy is implemented, BCC's Planning Dept. can discuss with property owners their planning options for changed land-uses at sites and on floors of buildings, to mutual benefit.

- **Revise parking charges at retail centres:** WECA and the City Council need to ensure that parking charges at retail centres should be consistent. It serves good planning nothing if, for instance, out-of-town parking at Cribbs Causeway or Longwell Green is free, while parking in Bristol city centre usually has a price.
- **Temporary car-parking** should not be permitted on vacant development sites.

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