

Mapping the landscape: Advocate thinking, public thinking, and communication opportunities for deepening understanding of transport mode shift

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Background

This report presents the findings from the first phase of a longer research project looking at how to reframe the public conversation about urban mobility and transport in Aotearoa New Zealand.¹ It builds on our initial work in [‘How to talk about urban mobility and transport shift: A short guide’](#). In this report, we outline how experts and the public currently talk and think about urban mobility and transport. We summarise the findings of our analysis of the differences and similarities between these two narratives and make some preliminary recommendations on ways to reframe the conversation.²

Why we need better narrative strategies for urban mobility and transport mode shift

For experts in urban mobility what matters at the broadest level is that we have a transport environment which keeps people moving around urban environments in healthy and enjoyable ways that build the planet's health. It is a vision many New Zealanders share. Significant transformation of our transport system is needed to achieve cities that operate in this way. Any transformation requires public understanding of the issues and their support for the changes required. Policy and physical changes without productive public understanding is difficult to implement and hard to maintain.

A significant barrier to building support for any transformation or systemic level change is the existing understandings people have about urban mobility and transport. The way in which transport and transport mode shift is framed or explained by advocates, researchers, politicians has a significant impact on these understandings – either by surfacing shallow thinking or drawing out deeper understandings. Building support for change means using effective framing and explanatory techniques to deepen people’s thinking. In Phase one of this project (the insights of which this paper reports on) we have researched how people think about transport – both the helpful and less helpful ways and how experts currently frame or explain, which gives us a solid understanding of the landscape as it currently is.

¹ This work was funded by Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency. We worked with a team headed by Kathryn King, Urban Mobility Manager.

² Suggested citation: Bell, S., Berentson-Shaw, J., & Elliott, M. (2021). *Mapping the landscape: Advocate thinking, public thinking, and communication opportunities for deepening understanding of transport mode shift*. The Workshop.

These insights can be used right now to change how advocates frame and communicate. They can also be used as a foundation to develop and then test new frames for explaining: investigating framing techniques that work to surface helpful thinking or support new understandings critical for evidence-led communications. This work will be the focus of the next phase of research.

What is standing in the way of change?

Many barriers prevent the adoption of policies to support transport mode shift. One significant barrier is people's understanding. If what the people think about our current transport system - how they understand the problems to have come about and what the solutions are - is too shallow or overly simplistic (e.g more roads are needed to cope with the problem of too many cars) it is hard to implement change. These mental models can hold many systems in place, they inform our interpersonal conversation, political discussions, and media and public narratives. Shallow understandings are very difficult to overcome by simply setting out facts and evidence, or telling compelling personal stories. Why? Because of three big things.

First, we have a fast thinking information processing system. Daniel Kahneman coined the term "thinking fast" to explain the many mental shortcuts we use to reduce the work of assessing the vast amount of both sensory and discursive information we are exposed to. This critical organising system:

- Uses mental shortcuts like confirmation, and normalcy bias, information from trusted friends to lighten the mental load. This often works to protect our existing beliefs and knowledge
- Encourages us to focus on the concrete (what we see, touch, smell and hear) and shy away from the abstract (unseen systems and structures, that impact our day-to-day lives) to understand the world.

Second, we live in an overwhelming and manipulated information environment. This means we are often overwhelmed by information and there is not time or energy to slow down and assess all the information we get. Sort the true for the untrue, helpful from unhelpful. We are also being exposed more often to false or manipulated information, from people who wish to maintain the current systems, who benefit from them. This information environment combined with fast thinking systems makes it hard to have productive conversations about more complex issues and deepen people's understandings.

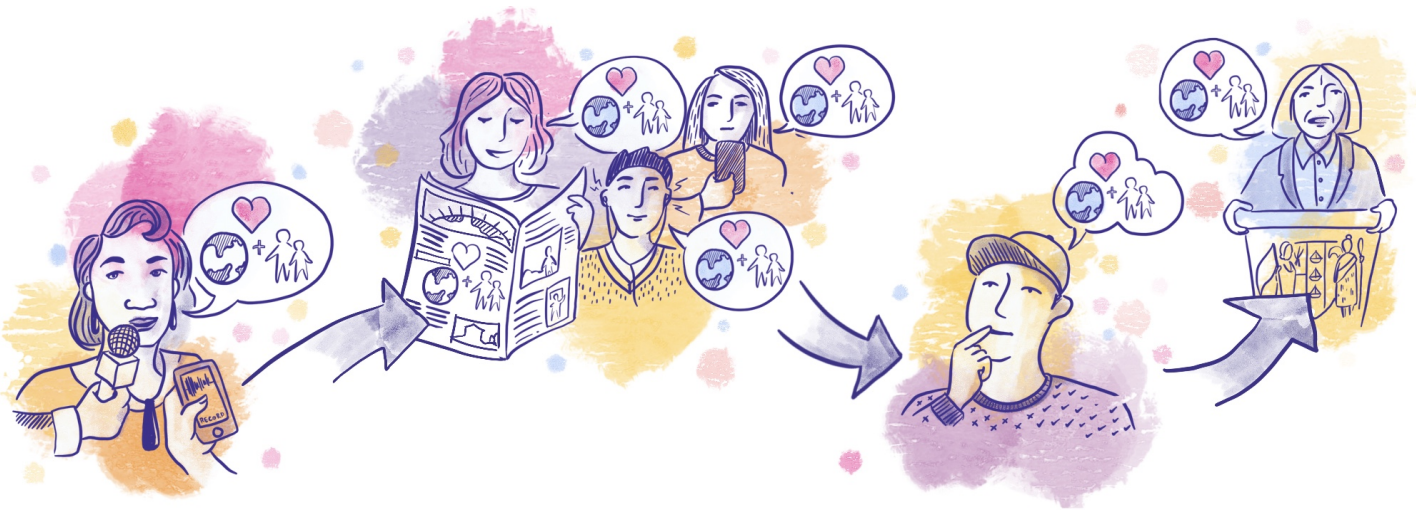
Finally, as knowledge holders and communicators we play our part with our default communication approaches.

- We assume people just need more good information so lead with facts and problems.
- Tell compelling personal (not systems) stories to try and engage emotion
- Draw on unhelpful thinking and narratives to try and tell new stories. This has the impact of reinforcing the unhelpful thinking.

To overcome these barriers and embed more productive thinking (new mental models) we can use research informed strategies and tools to communicate differently.

- We research how to frame and present issues in ways that deepens thinking in line with the best evidence
- We use these findings to inform how we talk and explain issues, to build new narratives
- People who hold knowledge can use these new narratives to deepen thinking, surface deeper understandings, and influence action.

Rebalancing public narratives and the mental models they inform has been proven to deepen people's understandings on complex issues. This change happens over time when effective communication strategies and tools are used across a field of practice.



Our approach

We have completed phase one of a programme of Aotearoa-specific research to understand how experts currently talk about and explain transport and transport mode shift, and how the public understands and thinks about transport and transport mode shift. This phase has produced important data insights including:

- the untranslated story of experts and advocates
- the dominant narratives that are used to explain transport and transport mode shift
- the helpful and unhelpful ways the public thinks about transport and transport mode shift
- the way experts and advocates currently explain transport and transport mode shift and the thinking it surfaces (helpful or unhelpful)
- potential framing techniques to test to deepen thinking in Aotearoa New Zealand.

We undertook three main research activities in this first phase of the research.

1. We interviewed 10 experts/knowledge holders in the field of urban mobility and transport, including disability advocates, transport engineers, public health researchers, cycling and urban mobility advocates, journalists, and politicians.
2. We examined public understanding of urban mobility and transport by interviewing 12 members of the general Aotearoa New Zealand public recruited by a research recruitment organisation. We analysed the understandings/mental models they held. Our analysis focused on mapping the differences or any shared understandings between the expert and public understandings as uncovered through their talk.
3. We undertook a media discourse analysis to understand how advocates and experts are currently telling the story of transport and urban mobility.

What did we find?

1. What is the untranslated story that advocates and experts want to tell?

Experts have a clear story to tell. They view the transport system as a means to better health and wellbeing for people and planet through improved urban mobility and a reduction in cars on our streets. One issue that advocates and experts face is the media's desire to present an oppositional frame of different viewpoints rather than communicating shared benefits of possible transport solutions. This means that experts need to focus clearly on not speaking through the oppositional frames as they attempt to counter this. We found four main themes in the advocate and expert story.

Equity and inclusion

- The need for all people to have inclusive and accessible transport options to move about the city came across strongly. One expert spoke of the current "unfriendliness" of the transport system towards people with disabilities. E.g.,
 - "I think what disabled people want isn't paternalism, we want equity. These systems should work for us the same way they work for other people."

Freedom and independence

- Advocates and experts understand the problem with car culture and bias, and car-centric city design leading to poor public transport which isolates people. They clearly articulate the solutions to the problem through enabling walking and cycling and better public transport, lower speed limits, reducing the number of car parks on city streets.

- There was an emphasis on the freedoms available to those moving around cities by walking or cycling, while acknowledging that those freedoms are not always available to people with disabilities. E.g.,
 - "I think if most of your destinations are walking distance and you've got good access to high quality public transport, you're pretty free. You know, walking is freedom, good quality public transport is freedom. If riding a bike is an option for you...I would say a bicycle is a freedom machine, door-to-door, whenever you want to go, no parking problems. It doesn't work for everyone I understand. But I'm convinced it can work for many, many more people for more of their trips."

Connections

- Advocates and experts emphasised the importance of all people being able to connect to the people and places that they want and need to. E.g.,
 - "All of those things are incredibly important to our health and sense of belonging. To how we connect with other people around us and what access we've got to fruit and vegetables and physical activity and our exposure to air pollution. So yes, it's a massively important interconnected system."

Care for the environment

- The urgent need to reduce emissions and act on climate change was clear across our advocates and experts, both in interviews and in how they talk in the media.
 - "Transport is contributing significantly to climate change. Not just climate change but it is all part of the whole global ecosystem collapse and bigger processes that are going on. That's where I think if we take a really narrow view and focus just on greenhouse gas emissions that could easily lead us down the path of 'let's just swap out our national fleet for electric'."

Transport's contribution to climate change and lack of action

Experts and advocates needed people to know that transport and our current transport system makes a significant contribution to carbon emissions and therefore climate change and so needs addressing. They emphasised the seriousness of the problem and the scale of the solutions needed. Advocates and experts also wanted people to know that lack of action was a very real and present danger and a risk to our wellbeing.

- "We use up the resources of the planet and turn that into pollution so that can't be good for the planet at the end of the day. My overall view on that, transport's contribution to climate change is that transport has and is making the planet sicker and accelerating climate change. But all the evidence I've seen is that the shift we would need to make for us to reverse or slow that change is so huge and obviously hasn't happened. I can't see us doing any great transformation...I think we need to do it in the next five minutes pretty much. Or it's too late."

2. What is the helpful and unhelpful thinking that already exists in the public

Unhelpful thinking

- The public thinks or understands that transport equals private vehicles and roads. This means that when they consider solutions to problems in the transport system they immediately think of cars, roads, car lanes and car parks – some of the ‘ingredients’ of the system. These are not what we want people to think more about.
- The public tends to think of transport in terms of ‘private ownership’. We call this the ‘transport individualism’ mental model. This extends to thinking primarily about losing their entitlement to car parks on public roads. ‘Transport individualism’ thinking is especially triggered when there are discussions about the removal of car parks.
- Related to transport individualism, the public tended to think strongly about individual choice, consumer preference and behaviour change as making the most difference to climate change action and reduce emissions in relation to transport mode shifts (e.g., choosing to buy an electric vehicle). This tends to shut out thinking about more effective structural changes needed to support mode shift.
- The public thinks or understands that if someone gains something – for example, if pedestrians and cyclists gain more space through the removal of car parks, then they lose out. This is the ‘zero sum’ mental model.
- The public holds a ‘cost’, affordability or inefficiency way of thinking about their choice of transport mode, particularly around public transport. They consider the inconvenience and upfront costs of using public transport but often fail to factor in the inconvenience and ongoing running costs of using a car.
- The public spoke about the freedom, convenience, ease and affordability that car use offers, which is a real experience especially for families, caregivers with children, those who need to make journeys with multiple destinations, and those that are not on convenient public transport routes. We call this the ‘car as freedom’ frame or a ‘convenience’ frame.
- The public were unable to clearly identify the people and organisations who are responsible for making decisions (agents) to solve problems in the transport system. There is a risk that this lack of understanding about agents leads to thinking that these problems cannot be solved by people (a ‘fatalism’ frame).

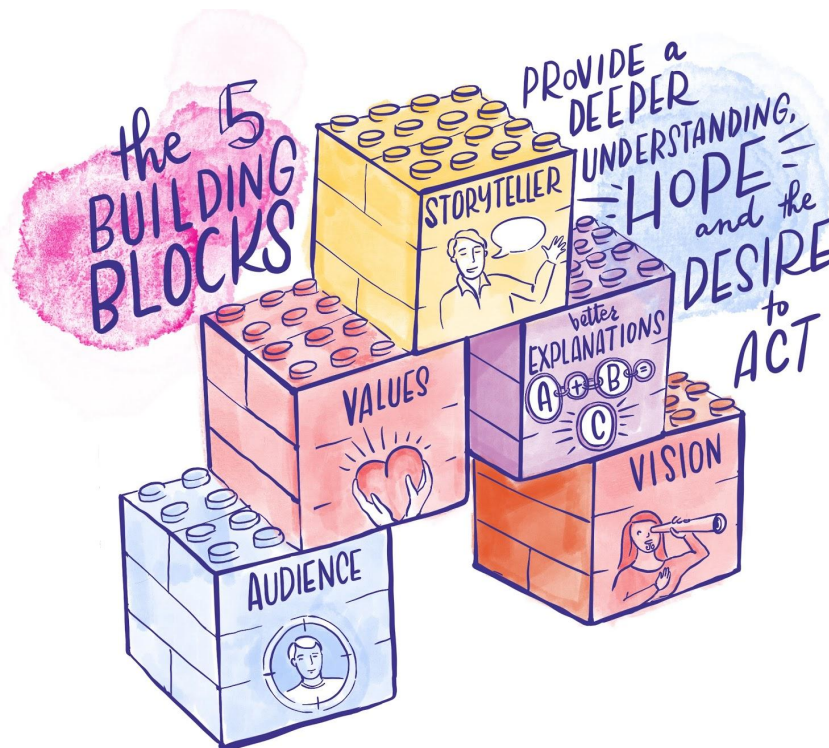
Helpful thinking

- The public already thinks helpfully about:
 - Caring for the environment and the need to reduce transport emissions although advocates and experts expressed much more urgency about climate change.

- The need for equitable access to transport for people with disabilities, caregivers with children, people with limited choices, communities with lower socio-economic status.
- What a good life might look like for all people across our cities such as the need for more green spaces.
- There was a similarity between advocates and the public in talking about the importance of connections and connectedness. For the public it often described the transport system as an end itself, rather than a means to greater social and physical connection.
- There was strong sentiment about the need to plan our cities and communities for the future around the needs of children and families.

3. How are advocates and experts currently telling their story in public

Experts and advocates may be clear on what they want the public to think about and understand. However, how they tell that story – their default communications – may not surface the type of thinking needed to build support for change. We analysed how experts and advocates currently communicate about the transport system and need for transport mode shift with the aim of seeing what type of thinking it is likely to surface. When looking at the way advocates and experts spoke publicly we analysed their communications through the lens of The Workshop’s 5 building blocks of narratives for change.



The five building blocks of narratives for change: evidence based tools and techniques for deepening thinking

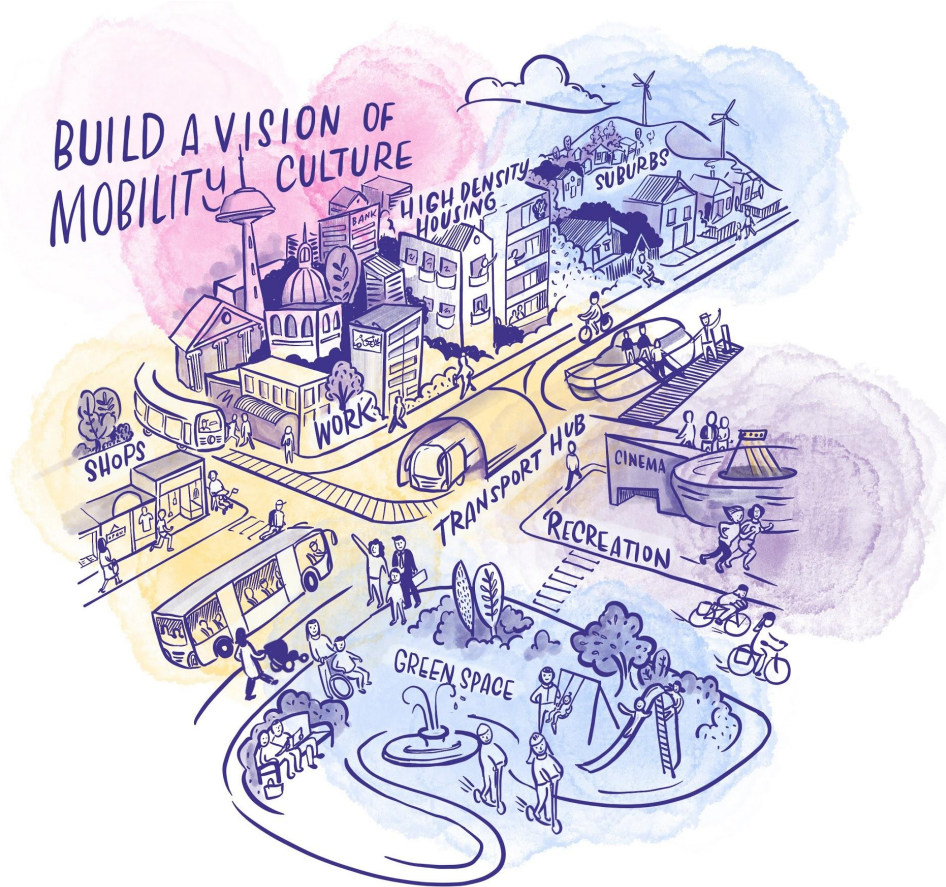
Know your audience

So many communications are aimed at the noisy few – the hardest to move, the least likely to understand. While we focus on these people, we amplify their message – we myth bust or negate, and don't tell our own story. So before thinking what we say, we think about who we are talking to. There are three main groups of people to consider – those already persuaded (our base), those firmly opposed and unlikely to be persuaded (opposition), and those who don't have a fixed view (persuadables or fence-sitters). Focus on finding effective ways to communicate with persuadable people.

- Advocates and experts often speak directly to the hard to persuade in their attempts to counter unhelpful thinking. This has the effect of reinforcing the unhelpful narratives and thinking through repetition. We call this talk through the oppositional frame. The better approach is to develop new frames and narratives to tell the story we want to. For example, in discussions about the removal of car parks outside businesses, experts and advocates tend to highlight the economic benefits to those businesses of foot traffic which surfaces thinking about mode shift and streetscape change as an issue of money, cost and economic loss. Instead advocates want to emphasise the benefits of opening our streets to children and families and so need to move away from engaging in the hard to persuade people's objections and myth-busting.
- Experts and advocates also spoke a lot to their base and particularly those who may share an identity around the transport mode they use, for example, cyclists. There was a tendency to appeal to identity-based in and out group thinking in this way. This type of communication doesn't work to broaden the base to include people who are interested in mode shift but their thinking and action is not there yet.

Lead with a concrete vision for a better world (vision-led stories)

We are asking people to go against embedded ways of thinking and seeing the world, and against their own brains in many cases. We need to provide them with a clear picture of a different world in which our evidence has been followed and changes have happened. We start with the 'cake', not the 'ingredients'.



- Advocates and experts predominantly lead with talking about transport system problems, problems with the lack of action on climate change to reduce emissions, and problems with inaction of agents in the transport system. This makes it difficult for the public's fast-thinking brains to see that change is possible as they recall these bad things more easily than the good (negativity bias) and think these problems will continue as is (normalcy bias).
- In interviews, experts were able to articulate a clear vision of what cities may look like if they are designed to be accessible and inclusive. It will be more effective for them to lead with this in their public talk.
- Expert's technical talk can sometimes emphasise the 'ingredients' of the transport system which doesn't help people to visualise the overall vision or 'cake'.

Connecting with what matters to people: Values

Values are core to effective communication about important and complex social issues because they lie at the heart of human motivations. Values are the 'why' of life – the things that are most important to us, or that

we aspire to. They inform our beliefs, our attitudes and our actions, but don't always align with them. Values inform how we come to believe certain things about urban mobility and the transport system. They influence what solutions we believe are needed ('more roads', 'more car park buildings'). People often talk about engaging with people's values to better communicate. However, people hold a very wide range of values, and often communicators misinterpret what values most people hold most dear. It's the values we hold about taking care of each other and the planet, about discovery and creativity and reaching our goals that motivate people to act on systems change for collective wellbeing.

Advocates and experts clearly expressed the following helpful values:

- Care for the environment with regard to emissions and climate change.
- Connection with nature with the need for more green spaces in cities, e.g., a city that is good for health and wellbeing has:
 - "...lots of space to walk around, there's nice space to go for a walk – green space, nice green space to go and sit and just sit in the sun and read or think or listen to music."
- Equity and inclusion, including people with disabilities. E.g.,
 - "Car dependency and unsafe neighbourhoods have disproportionately negative impacts on Māori, Pacific and other marginalised communities...At the same time, the potential benefits of reducing barriers to encourage more everyday physical activity are also much greater. Hence the need to prioritise investment in these communities, and work in partnership."
- Self-direction and freedom, especially the importance of that offered by walking and cycling.

They also used the following unhelpful values:

- A key problem we identified is the reliance on economic framing when talking about possible solutions to transport problems and climate change. This includes talk about mitigating the financial impact on different industries when taking action on climate change. Talking about money, cost-effectiveness and efficiency tap into extrinsic values that we recommend advocates and experts avoid in their communications. E.g.,
 - "The Commission's draft advice sets out an achievable blueprint for New Zealand to become a prosperous, low-emissions economy. The report demonstrates we have the tools we need to achieve our target, but calls on us to accelerate our work. As a Government we are committed to picking up the pace and focusing much more on decarbonisation and reducing emissions rather than overly relying on forestry."
- They also spoke extensively about the safety issues facing people who choose walking and cycling, and people with disabilities. Focusing on this may be unhelpful as it triggers fear in the public. E.g.,
 - "Comfort and safety inside vehicles increasingly come at the expense of everyone else, something not easily captured by Streetview surveys. The larger your car, the more likely it is to hurt or kill someone else, and our steadily enlarging fleet of big-arse vehicles is raising the stakes."

Provide better explanations

To surface better understandings for people about transport issues, we also need to move away from simply describing the things we already know and provide better explanations for how the problem happens, what the impacts are, and the solutions. In strategic communication, a good explanation works with people's fast-thinking brains and is an invitation for people to slow their thinking down. There are effective explanatory tools and simplifying models that communicators can utilise. These include frames, metaphors and explanatory chains.



Frames

Advocates and experts frequently used the following helpful and unhelpful frames:

- There was use of a connection frame to talk about the overarching purpose of our transport system, e.g.,
 - "It's important that our communities are connected and resilient. This should help us move towards a sharing economy rather than a consumer-driven one, and encourage us to work with our neighbours on things like transport, i.e. community ride-share."
- They introduced a freedom and independence frame in relation to walking and cycling. We anticipate this to be a useful frame to 'slide' the public into helpful thinking about mode shift. E.g.,
 - "People in the car industry have worked for years on making sure cars represent "freedom" and "fun" and are a key part of masculine identity. It's a strong story. So people working to improve our urban spaces, our planet's health and people's health are going to have to counter this, both by making it harder to drive cars in cities and helping men to understand that there are fun, freeing, and healthier alternatives to driving."

- They identified the transport individualism frame that the public holds as a problem and used a frame of the commons and public good to reframe the use of public space away from roads and car parks. This frame elicits intrinsic values such as equality. E.g.,
 - “You know, the people who advocate for car parks are not thinking communally about the community effects or impacts of climate change or community impacts of not being able to get around the city. Or taking up space that prevents separated infrastructure for cycling or walking or scooting...the streets need to be about people...immediately, within the CBD where people are living their lives and working their lives. They have to be prioritising people and they have to be prioritising people who are walking and cycling.”
- There is a risk of triggering an ‘us versus them’ frame when talking about users of particular modes of transport, for example, pitting cyclists against car users.

Metaphors

- When talking about agents in the transport system, language similar to “people working on transport are in silos and don’t cooperate” was used which can trigger unhelpful thinking about hard structures that cannot be changed to reduce emissions in any meaningful way – a fatalism frame.
- Both experts and the public discussed driving a car as being a ‘rite of passage’ for young people.
- Other lesser used metaphors included being ‘tethered’ to car use (hard to detach); ‘levers’, ‘silver-bullet’, ‘carrot and stick’, or ‘low-hanging fruit’ solutions in terms of emissions reductions (may make the problem seem much less complex and simpler to solve than it really is); ‘fighting’ for active transport options (a war metaphor that triggers unhelpful ‘us versus them’ thinking); ‘hierarchies’ (which implies differing levels of importance instead of equality) of whose lives are valued in transport planning.

Explanatory chains

- Most often our experts and advocates lead their story and talk by describing the problems in our current transport system or the lack of action on climate change.
- They clearly identify the causes of problems in our transport system but often limit their talk to describing the issue frequently, not linking from causes to impacts then to solutions consistently to help the public better understand.
- Experts also described solutions such as more joined-up planning between agencies responsible for solving problems in parts of the system.
- Many advocated for social and experiential proof of solutions such as temporary bike lanes, although we would caution against using the word ‘temporary’ to describe these as this plants the expectation that these are not a permanent solution when the change advocates want is a permanent mode shift.
- Advocates and experts need more effective explanatory chains to be developed to help in their work.

Agents

- Experts and advocates often didn't name specific agents and their roles in the transport system to help the public understand who can and needs to take action to bring about solutions. We found in our interviews with the public that they had a difference in understanding who these people and organisations are within the transport system.
- Alternatively, when experts did name agents, they often emphasised the lack of cooperation between them which isn't helpful.

Storytellers

The messengers who convey messages about urban mobility and mode shift also matter. Research on messengers and trust is complex, but findings suggest we should use:

- a wide range of messengers
- messengers who are well qualified to comment on the context of the message
- unexpected messengers who may align with persuadable people's values, e.g., former National MP Chester Burrows on justice reform
- intergenerational messengers, e.g., young people or children talking to their parents and grandparents.

Perceived expertise matters more than actual expertise.

We spoke to a range of advocates, knowledge holders and experts in this research including disability advocates, transport engineers, public health researchers, cycling and urban mobility advocates, journalists, and politicians. We will need to specifically test to see who might be trusted to talk about urban mode shift amongst the persuadable group.

Our recommendations: What does this mean for how we talk about urban mobility and transport?

Mode shift is about moving people away from using cars. Using cars as a primary mode of transport is currently a dominant mental model. So everytime you communicate, you need to find ways to surface a different vision of cities that have primarily moved away from cars. Every time you talk in ways that make people think about cars and roads at all, you reinforce the unhelpful frame of cars. You also miss a chance to encourage more helpful thinking. You are asking people to not think of an elephant while you are still talking about the elephant. We are working to create a whole new way of thinking and talking about transport and moving around in our cities where cars are not the main feature.

This section is a map based on the research we have carried out into the way the public thinks about transport in cities, how that thinking may prevent them (or engage them in) supporting the changes in transport and cities that will make the biggest difference to people's lives and wellbeing. It details the way that current communications and stories about transport systems, including advocate communications, surface different thinking and action.

In this map you will find:

- Seven things you can do to avoid surfacing unhelpful public thinking about transport
- Examples of what that thinking might sound like, and
- Some explanations of why people may think like this
- Some ideas on how you can navigate around unhelpful public thinking with different language and communication strategies

The recommendations set out are preliminary and are those which we have good reason to be confident will be helpful and will not change with further testing. These are the findings which align broadly with what we have found in previous research across a range of topics.

In the next part of the research (see 'Next steps' below) we will test which strategies work to surface more helpful public thinking and build support for the transport changes we need to make in our cities.

Seven things you can do right now with your communications about transport mode shift

Avoid talking about (you say)...	Because people think...	Why do they think this?	Keep/start talking about...
<p>Leading with problems with the transport system, problems with the lack of action on climate change to reduce emissions, and problems with inaction by agents in the transport system. E.g., "Transport is a massive source of carbon emissions. Cars and roads are the problem".</p>	<p>"All of these problems are too big and too hard. Why should I bother changing anything about my transport choices when it won't fix anything."</p> <p>"Well, that is too hard to do anything about. We need and rely on cars and climate change is probably not as bad as they say anyway."</p>	<p><i>The public's fast-thinking brains take shortcuts that make it difficult for them to see systems and structural changes and to think that change is possible. They recall bad things much more easily than good (negativity bias) and think the situation we have now will continue (normalcy bias). The public also has a mental model about climate change and large-scale problems that has them thinking the problem is overstated or insurmountable (fatalism). You reinforce these mental models when your stories and talk are problem-led.</i></p>	<p>Start with a hopeful vision about cities with inclusive and accessible ways of moving around that are good for the health and wellbeing of people and the planet. Describe the better future that we want for people, communities and our cities in concrete terms to help people believe that change is possible. You can still talk about the problems and people responsible for making change but it is more effective to start with the positive vision.</p>
<p>Roads, cars, transport, reducing congestion, e.g., "We need a transport system that reduces car congestion".</p> <p>"We need to make more space on our roads for</p>	<p>"If there is too much congestion and slow travel times, what we need is more roads and more car parks."</p>	<p><i>The public has a strong mental model in which they think about transport primarily in terms of cars and roads. This means they find it hard to conceptualise other modes of</i></p>	<p>We are not certain on what to replace 'roads' with but suggest you start talking about opening the streets for everyone – we think this will help the public to</p>

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<p>cars.”</p>		<p><i>transport, other solutions outside of roading. They also think of transport very much as a private good and find it hard to think of transport and roads as something that is a collective or shared common good that should work for all modes of transport.</i></p>	<p>understand that streets are for people and walking and cycling, not just cars. E.g., “We are opening streets for people to more easily walk and cycle to work”.</p>
<p>Removing road lanes and car parks, e.g., “We are trialling taking car parks away from this road outside these businesses”.</p> <p>“We must have fewer cars in our city.”</p>	<p>“I rely on a car, without it what will I do? They can’t take my car park just because a few people want to ride their bikes! Why should they get an expensive bike lane?”</p>	<p><i>The public holds a mental model that a personal loss to them is a personal gain another group gets that they don’t. E.g., pedestrians and cyclists gain more space at the loss of their car park. This is an unhelpful way of thinking because there are collective benefits we want people to focus on.</i></p>	<p>To surface thinking about the collective benefits of changing streets, talk instead about opening the streets for everyone – this makes the public think that they are gaining something. It will also connect them to the public good aspects of public spaces. E.g., “We are opening streets outside these shops for families with children to walk and cycle to”.</p>
<p>Money, cost effectiveness, efficiency, e.g., “If we make these changes to the transport system, it will save billions of dollars and many hours wasted on travel each year”.</p>	<p>“Transport is all about maximising efficiency and saving time and money.”</p>	<p><i>The public has a mental model about transport based on thinking that the primary goal of the transport system is an economic one – saving or gaining money. Talking about money, efficiency and resources engages the ‘economic’ frame, surfacing thinking that what matters most about being able to</i></p>	<p>Keep talking about the freedom and independence changes will bring about for people, such as the freedom to explore and the independence that walking, cycling and using public transport allows. Talk about these benefits on their own terms – without talking</p>

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		<i>move freely in cities is about how much it costs and how much time it takes.</i>	about any of the negatives related to other transport modes. This connects to intrinsic self-direction values. E.g., "We enjoy the freedoms that moving around our city on our bikes anywhere we want to go brings us". The focus is the freedom that bike riding brings, not the benefits of reducing traffic congestion.
Loss/gain to business profits from changes to streets and streetscapes, e.g., removing car parks. "Research shows that cycle lanes and car park removal bring more business."	"All my customers come in cars. There's no other practical way for people to frequent my business. I'll lose money."	<i>The public has a strong mental model in which they think about transport primarily in terms of cars and roads. Also, when we talk about money, it surfaces thinking about individual loss and gain and suppresses thinking about the collective benefits of mode shift.</i>	It's unclear at this stage how to talk to business owners, but we suggest that emphasizing the benefits of opening our streets to children, families, and people in communities that businesses are a part of, will be helpful. Showing that other business owners support opening our streets is another area for exploration.
Any communications that identify people solely in relation to the mode of transport they use, e.g., "Cyclists need this infrastructure", "Drivers need to get out of their cars", "Pedestrians need more space".	"Someone, probably a cyclist in lycra, is here to take something away from me. We just need to stop these expensive waste-of-money cycleways for a few cyclists."	<i>The public think of themselves as belonging to a particular 'in-group' – car drivers or cyclists – so this way of talking easily triggers oppositional 'us versus them' thinking.</i>	Start talking about the social and physical connections that inclusive and accessible walking, cycling and public transport enable for all people. This helps the public to focus on communal and equality

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<p>Also avoid pitting different transport users against each other using battle or war metaphors, e.g., cyclists “fighting” for road space, a “battle for the city”.</p>			<p>values and moves them away from individualistic thinking towards collective thinking. E.g., “We all want more options to connect easily to the people and places in our city”.</p>
<p>Personal preference, behaviour change, or individual choice, e.g., “People who drive cars need to choose to use public transport or ride bikes”.</p>	<p>“All these problems with our transport system would just be solved if people buy an EV or chose to walk a bit more. We don't need to change much at all, and if we do then it's all too hard.”</p>	<p><i>The public have a strong mental model about personal choice and individual responsibility. This surfaces thinking that solutions to problems like transport emissions or congestion are primarily around personal behaviours and choice. It prevents people from seeing where changes can be made that would make the most difference to the options that people have available to them – structural and systems changes.</i></p>	<p>Start talking about the need to change the things that will make the most difference such as opening our streets, changing our transport laws, improving public transport options, and subsidising e-bikes to make more options available for more people.</p>

Key principles for your communications about transport mode shift

Please refer to [‘How to talk about urban mobility and transport shift: A short guide’](#) for a general checklist for your communications.

1. Stop leading with problems and start with a hopeful vision

Articulate the better world we want. Flip the problem to a hopeful vision about cities with inclusive and accessible ways of moving around that are good for the health and wellbeing of people and the planet. Check that your vision is not the removal of something bad. Use concrete language and talk about people’s lives not processes or policies.

2. Stop talking about roads and cars

People find it hard to conceptualise other modes of transport and other solutions outside of roading as they have a strong mental model in which they think about transport primarily in terms of cars and roads.

3. Stop talking about the economic or efficiency losses of car congestion

Talking about money, efficiency and resources engages the ‘economic’ frame for people, surfacing thinking that what matters most about being able to move freely in cities is about how much it costs and how much time it takes.

4. Stop talking about the losses/gains to businesses from changes to streets and streetscapes

This surfaces thinking about individual loss and gain rather than thinking about the collective benefits of opening our streets to children, families and people in communities that businesses are a part of.

5. Stop talking about people by their mode of transport

People can default to thinking of themselves as ‘in-group’ and ‘out-groups’ – I am a car driver, you are a cyclist – and talking about people by their mode of transport can trigger oppositional ‘us versus them’ thinking.

6. Stop talking about individual behaviours and choices

This surfaces thinking that solutions to problems like transport emissions or congestion are primarily around personal behaviours and choice. It prevents people from seeing where changes can be made that would make the most difference to the options that people have available to them in transport – structural and systems changes.

7. Talk more about changing the things that make the most difference

Start talking about the need to change the things that will make the most difference such as opening our streets, changing our transport laws, improving public transport options, and subsidising e-bikes to make more options available for more people.

Next steps

Phase 2: Testing and report on effective narrative strategies

In the next phase of this research, we will draw on the findings of this initial phase to generate a series of messages and specific techniques that we then test for effectiveness. Specifically, we are looking for messages that move the public to more productive ways of thinking about the causes of connection and mobility issues in our cities, the need for changes in how we design our transport policies, how we build our transport systems, and how to support these changes. Implementation of the findings is key and the next phase will work with experts and advocates to help them understand and embed the effective messages and techniques we find.

We are specifically testing different ways to frame and talk about the three main ideas of opening our streets for everyone, transport being about connections, and the freedom offered by alternative modes of transport – using The Workshop’s 5 building blocks.

Initial narrative strategies to test

- Narrative strategies that use the values of equity and inclusivity to build cities with streets that are inclusive and accessible for everyone. There was already a similarity in helpful thinking about equity between experts and the public and we anticipate this will shift thinking away from a transport individualism frame towards more inclusive, communal thinking.
- Narrative strategies that draw on the frame of the ‘freedom’ that walking, cycling and public transport can give. People already hold this frame about cars so we will test what it looks like to ‘slide’ people across to thinking this way about active transport modes.
- Narrative strategies that draw on the frame of ‘connections’, both physical and social, so people think helpfully about inclusive and accessible transport solutions.
- Because of the strong sentiment in public interviews about the need to plan our cities and communities for the future around the needs of children and families we will test whether strategies around naming children and families are helpful.
- Metaphors to help the public understand that:
 - There are people and organisations (agents) who are working together to come up with good solutions. This may be something like a ‘transport ground crew’.
 - The transport system is an enabling ‘tool’ to help people to get to where they need to by walking, cycling and public transport.
- Ways to build these narrative strategies into effective explanatory chains that provide upstream explanations about connected, easily accessible cities to surface helpful thinking.