

GLA Transport Committee call for evidence: Walkability of London's pavements

Written evidence from London TravelWatch

About London TravelWatch

London TravelWatch is the official independent transport watchdog set up to advocate for all people travelling in and around capital. We are sponsored and funded by the London Assembly, which is part of the Greater London Authority, and is independent from transport operators.

London TravelWatch promotes integrated transport policies and presses for better journeys for everyone, with higher standards of quality, performance and accessibility. We work directly with users, other transport user groups as well as transport operators, providers, regulators and local authorities. In turn, transport operators consult us on proposed changes to services or closures of lines or stations.

We cover all forms of Transport for London (TfL) services, National Rail services in and around London, and those who walk, wheel or cycle in the capital.

London TravelWatch strongly believes that the views of those with different lived experiences are critical to understanding the issues in transport, and so our response in this submission also includes their evidence and research.

Overview

Streets are integral to travelling around London. 6.7 million trips were made by walking or wheeling in 2023¹, and it is “the most frequently used mode of travel in London, accounting for an estimated 39% of all trips by London residents.”² It is often an important part of a longer journeys – such as from a person’s home to the bus stop, between the bus and the train station, and from the station to their destination. Having walkable streets is a core part of the transport network.

Recent research from London TravelWatch³ echoes this, finding that two-thirds of people walk regularly. However, people do not all experience or use streets in the same way. Our research found that while three in five Londoners are satisfied with

¹ [Travel in London 2024: Annual Overview](#), TfL, 2024

² [Travel in London 2024: Annual Overview](#), TfL, 2024

³ Street Spaces, London TravelWatch, 2025. London TravelWatch commissioned Yonder Consulting earlier this year to conduct research to understand more about what people need from their streets and how improvements should be prioritised. It consisted of an online survey of 1,000 Londoners and supplementary interviews with relevant stakeholders.

their overall experience of walking and wheeling in London, older people, parents and people with physical conditions are more likely to be dissatisfied.

The problems and barriers people face when using London's streets can result in a negative experience for those travelling. Over half of respondents (53%) agreed that walking or wheeling in London can sometimes feel overwhelming or stressful, something women and disabled people were more likely to agree with.

And a poor quality streetscape can not only make people's journeys harder and more unpleasant, it can also make it difficult for some to travel at all. 42% of the people in our research said they had to change their walking or wheeling route in London in the last month due to an issue they encountered along the way, such as a missing dropped kerb or an obstacle on the pavement.

As will be discussed throughout our submission, we believe that there are significant issues on many of London's streets, which will affect all Londoners at one time or other, along with more serious barriers that particularly impact some groups of people.

Walking and wheeling is a core part of the city's transport future investment, with our respondents seeing only the Underground and Buses as more of a priority for improving transport modes. It is therefore crucial that urgent and sustained efforts are made across the capital to improve the walkability of London's pavements so that they can be made accessible for everyone to use safely and with confidence.

Questions

1. How do street clutter, pavement quality and facilities affect pedestrians' safety, comfort, and willingness to walk in London?

As part of London TravelWatch's recent research on street space, we asked Londoners what prevents them from walking and wheeling more often. The top three reasons were crowded pavements (29%), cluttered streets (22%) and obstacles on the pavement (21%). Other common factors include not enough public toilets (21%), high traffic volumes or fast-moving vehicles (20%) and uneven pavements (18%). There is a clear need to address these issues if we want to encourage and support people to walk or wheel in London more often.

Indeed, a substantial proportion of those we surveyed feel that London's streets don't work for everyone, with for example only 38% agreeing that streets are accessible for disabled people.⁴

To turn to the specific examples in this question:

⁴ Street Spaces, London TravelWatch, 2025

Street clutter

Street clutter is a significant issue and can cover a variety of obstacles including - but not limited to - advertising (A) boards, outdoor dining areas, street furniture such as bins and bollards, and parked or abandoned bicycles, e-bikes and e-scooters. While some features can offer benefits to people, they can also make it harder for people to move around the streets, particularly in crowded areas, and present a tripping hazard.

When London TravelWatch asked Londoners about their walking/wheeling journeys in the capital over the past month, two of the most common walking and wheeling experiences involved crowded pavements or a lack of space to pass (experienced by 45% of respondents), and obstacles on the pavement (experienced by 40% of respondents).⁵

Street clutter can be a particular barrier to certain groups of people, such as older people and disabled people. For example, while 21% of all Londoners in our survey said that obstacles on the pavement stopped them walking/wheeling more often, this increased to 33% of people with any physical condition and 30% of people aged 65+.

This issue has been similarly found and discussed by other organisations:

- Research for Guide Dogs' Streets Ahead Campaign, which focuses on making streets and outdoor public places more accessible for people living with a visual impairment, found that 97% of people with a vision impairment have problems with street clutter littered across the pavement.⁶
- Research into walking and wheeling by the disabled-led organisation Transport for All revealed that almost two-thirds (65%) had experienced the impact of street clutter. They highlight that the consequence of dealing with these obstructions means little option but to either go into the road, with the risk from traffic, or to find another route, making journeys even longer.⁷
- In their Reducing Street Clutter in Central London report, the Centre for London also noted the problem of transient clutter for people with visual impairments, which can disrupt their memorised 'map' of their environment that many use to navigate.⁸

Pavement quality

One of the biggest causes of dissatisfaction in London TravelWatch's research was poor pavement conditions, with nearly 1 in 3 (30%) respondents saying they were dissatisfied with pavement quality in London. Survey respondents told us that "Pavements are bumpy, some kerbs are steep, some kerbs don't even exist" and that

⁵ Street Spaces, London TravelWatch, 2025

⁶ [Streets Ahead Campaign](#), Guide Dogs

⁷ [Walking and Wheeling](#), Transport for All

⁸ [Reducing Street Clutter in Central London](#), Centre for London, 2023

“Several pavements are cracked, broken or otherwise damaged.” Alarmingly, another respondent said that the “appalling” pavements meant that she was nearly tipped out of her wheelchair.⁹

Experiences of poor pavements are particularly concerning as pavement quality is ranked as one of the top three most important factors which contribute to making London’s streets work well, selected by 40% of our respondents. It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that improving pavement quality was top of Londoner’s priorities for street investment in our survey.

- Transport for All found that the most commonly reported barrier to walking and wheeling is the quality of pavements, which can render routes inaccessible, painful or even dangerous. More than three quarters (77%) of those they surveyed experienced poor surfaces including bumps, potholes, tree roots, broken tiles and narrow width. Half of respondents experienced missing dropped kerbs, and where they do exist, they were frequently broken, too steep to manage or obstructed.¹⁰
- RNIB have said that 71% of blind and partially sighted people reported cracked, uneven or otherwise poor-quality pavement as a barrier to pedestrian journeys.¹¹
- The impact of these poor conditions was highlighted in research by Living Streets, the UK charity for everyday walking. It found that for some groups – particularly older people and disabled people – the quality of pavements can act as a major deterrent to walking. They found that 31% of older adults (aged 65+) are prevented from walking more or at all on their local streets because of cracked and uneven pavements.¹²

Facilities

When moving around the streets of London, it is important that there are facilities to support people on their journey. This can include things like seating and rest space, shelter from the elements and public and accessible toilets. Access to such facilities can be particularly important for older people and disabled people, though they benefit all Londoners. Having enough places to sit and rest and accessible public toilets were the fourth and seventh most important factors in contributing to making London’s streets work well, with 33% and 29% of respondents choosing them respectively.

However, there is again clearly room to improve on this issue, particularly when it comes to making streets more accessible. London TravelWatch’s research found that people with a physical condition are twice as likely to disagree that there are enough places to stop, rest or shelter when walking or wheeling around the city (44%

⁹ Street Spaces, London TravelWatch, 2025

¹⁰ [Walking and Wheeling](#), Transport for All

¹¹ [In My Way – Navigating pedestrian journeys with sight loss](#), RNIB, 2025

¹² [Pedestrian slips, trips and falls](#), Living Streets, 2023

compared to 22% of people without a physical condition). Public toilet accessibility drew the most dissatisfaction in our surveying, with 49% of all respondents dissatisfied with them. This was again higher for those aged over 65 (63%) and disabled people (58%).¹³

These findings chime with those of Transport for All's research, which showed 37% of respondents said that a lack of public facilities, such as accessible toilets, water fountains, and seating, was a barrier to walking and wheeling. These facilities, even if technically available, can also be difficult to locate.¹⁴

Given their importance and the current levels of dissatisfaction, it is again perhaps unsurprising that providing better facilities, including public toilets and places to sit and rest, were the second highest priority for improving streets amongst our respondents.¹⁵

The impact on safety, comfort and willingness to walk

Everyone is affected when a pavement is made difficult or uncomfortable to use, whether caused by street clutter or poor pavement quality, or poor or non-existent facilities. In places, these issues seem to be growing. Pavements are being used for more functions, for example outdoor dining (which became increasingly popular during the pandemic), with a rise in dockless e-bikes (often left on pavements) and a growth in EV charging points.¹⁶ And while there can be some benefits to these, they can also make streets harder to use and navigate, and exacerbate existing street clutter. When combined with too few public facilities, these are very real barriers to making walking or wheeling an enjoyable or, at the very least safe, experience for all Londoners.

What may be difficult or inconvenient for some to do on London's pavements is a barrier to many others, and a barrier which may not be overcome easily – or at all. In London TravelWatch's research 41% of those with a physical condition and 35% of those with a mental condition disagreed that London's streets are accessible for disabled people and people with mobility impairments.¹⁷

The number of obstacles and faults on a pavement can place a mental strain on those who are most affected. As RNIB have said, "Persistently encountering these barriers can be exhausting, causing anxiety and making everyday journeys even more challenging." The physical impact can also be severe. 11% of those who told RNIB that they had been injured by a street obstacle in the previous three months

¹³ Street Spaces, London TravelWatch, 2025

¹⁴ [Walking and Wheeling](#), Transport for All

¹⁵ Street Spaces, London TravelWatch, 2025

¹⁶ [How can we de-clutter London's Streets?](#), Centre for London, October 2023

¹⁷ Street Spaces, London TravelWatch, 2025

said they had injuries serious enough to need hospital treatment, including for broken bones and broken teeth.¹⁸

Given all of this, it is sadly not surprising - but still disheartening - to read that disabled people take 30% fewer walking trips per year than non-disabled people.¹⁹

Personal security and safety, both actual and perceived, is also an important part of feeling comfortable travelling, and with people moving about the city 24/7 streets should work for people at any time. However, while London TravelWatch found two in three people feel safe walking or wheeling during the day, this falls to just over one in three people when walking alone at night, with concerns especially pronounced among women and disabled people. Measures to improve this, such as more street lighting, should also be considered to improve streets holistically.

2. What are TfL and the boroughs doing to reduce street clutter and improve pavement conditions in London?

London TravelWatch believes that London's streets can and should be more pedestrian friendly, for the benefit of all people who walk and wheel around the city, particularly older people, Disabled, blind and partially sighted people.

Whilst TfL and the boroughs will be best able to provide fuller details of their work to reduce street clutter and improve pavement conditions, we welcome efforts by TfL and the boroughs to reduce street clutter and improve pavement conditions in London.

It is positive that better streets are a core part of the Mayor's Transport Strategy²⁰, with a range of workstreams underway to deliver these outcomes, including reducing the speed limit to 20mph on many roads, Local Implementation Plan funding for boroughs to make improvements such as upgrading pedestrian crossings, schemes like School Streets and TfL's Safer Junctions programme. However, the real test will be whether this work results in real improvements for people on the ground.

We are also pleased to see that some boroughs have been proactive in recognising the need for improved pavement spaces. For example, in 2020 City of London Corporation approved a ban on A-boards 'to ensure clear and accessible pavements', to improve the user experience 'of people walking, those with sight and mobility impairments, people wheeling prams and using mobility aids.' The Corporation argued that 'maintaining clear and accessible pavements has particular

¹⁸ [New RNIB report revealing the unnecessary and dangerous barriers on our streets](#), RNIB, September 2025

¹⁹ [Walking and Wheeling](#), Transport for All

²⁰ [Delivering the Mayor's Transport Strategy 2023/24](#), TfL, July 2024

importance to creating “inclusive environments”, which enable people to navigate their surroundings independently and safely.’²¹

London TravelWatch had been lobbying the Corporation to introduce this ban for some years and so was supportive of the approach, although this needs to be accompanied by effective levels of enforcement. Hackney and parts of Westminster are examples of other boroughs where bans have been introduced.

There are also other ongoing efforts to improve pavement conditions, such as:

- London Borough of Hounslow has recently launched a borough wide initiative - known as the Pavement Pledge - to deliver 20 separate footway improvement schemes across the borough by early 2026.²²
- The City of London Corporation’s Transport Strategy Delivery Plan covers a series of street improvements to be delivered by 2031 which will give more space and priority to people walking and wheeling. Schemes include pavement widening, raised tables to make it easier to cross the street and public realm improvements such as planting and new seating.²³

3. How effective have measures to improve walkability been, and what challenges remain in managing street clutter across London?

4. How have issues with street clutter, pavement quality and facilities contributed to the lack of progress towards TfL’s target to increase the number of walking trips by more than 1 million per day by 2024?

London TravelWatch believes that TfL and the boroughs are better placed to respond to these questions, which we have chosen to answer together as they speak to an assessment of the progress – or lack of – to improving walkability.

However, we have reviewed the walking data provided by TfL,²⁴ which relates to the Walking Action Plan target to increase the number of walking trips to 7.5 million trips per day by 2024. Though the full data for that year is not yet publicly available, existing data disappointingly shows almost no increase in walking numbers in recent years, with the same number of trips (6.7 million) in five of the last six years, including the latest figures from 2023. Given the current slow progress towards meeting the 7.5 million target, it seems unlikely that it will have been reached in 2024.

²¹ [Streets & Walkways Sub Committee Advertising Board Update](#), City of London Corporation, July 2024

²² [Smoother steps coming: Hounslow Council invests £2m to improve pavements](#), London Borough of Hounslow, July 2025

²³ [Transport Strategy Delivery Plan 2025/26 – 2030/31](#), City of London Corporation, April 2025

²⁴ [Travel in London 2024](#), TfL, December 2024

And so, clearly big challenges remain, perhaps even including at locations where measures designed to improve and increase walkability have already been introduced. This raises several questions:

- a. What evaluation has been made in locations where measures have been introduced with the aim of improving walkability?
 - i. Has it shown that these measures have improved walkability?
 - ii. If it has shown that they haven't improved walkability, have the reasons why been identified? Can they be simply rectified?
- b. How many locations needing measures to improve walkability are yet to receive them? And when will they receive these measures?
- c. Even where measures have been introduced to remove street clutter, how much ongoing enforcement is there to ensure that the good intent of a policy does benefit those walking and wheeling?
- d. How have the authorities adapted to new challenges? For instance, the expansion of micromobility, while offering many benefits, has also led to problems on pavements. The most prominent example of this is some dockless e-bikes being regularly left inappropriately across the pavement, blocking routes and making them hard for people to navigate.

While streets are a core part of travel and supporting delivery of the Mayor's Transport Strategy, they are often overlooked. At present it does not seem that TfL will meet all the targets in the Mayor's Transport Strategy to deliver the desired outcomes in the healthy streets workstream. TfL's Healthy Streets Survey also revealed that people's expectations for streets across all Healthy Streets Indicators exceeded their experiences, highlighting a gap between what people think of the street they are on and what they would expect it to be like.

As we have seen, the result is that people walking and wheeling can have a poor experience from a multitude of problems that can occur on the street. There is clearly more that needs to be done to improve the street space for the travelling public.

5. What improvements could be made to walking and wheeling routes to make them more attractive and accessible?

We believe improving public spaces by providing high quality street infrastructure and associated infrastructure such as seating and toilets will encourage more walking and wheeling, and create a better environment for those already doing so. It is also vital any street space is accessible, such as having good quality level paving, tactile paving and dropped kerbs where needed.

However, at a time when TfL and local authority funding is stretched and resources are limited, measures should be focused on the areas that would make the biggest difference to people on the streets. To help understand the public's priorities for street investment, London TravelWatch asked Londoners to allocate a funding pot to

different areas of the streets, to reflect what they think should be prioritised. The top three priorities were:

- Improving pavement quality, such as repairing cracked and uneven pavements and widening paths.
- Providing better facilities, including expanding accessible public toilet provision and more places to sit and rest.
- Making streets safer and more accessible, for example providing street lighting, step-free access to areas and lowering speed limits

These all chime with key areas that people perceive as important to creating walkable streets, which would help address key causes of dissatisfaction and inaccessibility.

Other organisations have found similar findings, suggesting clear solutions which should form the basis of any strategy to improve the walkability of London's pavements:

- In the Department for Transport's 2021 National Travel Attitudes Study, 74% of respondents said that "Well-maintained pavements (even, clean, uncluttered, well-lit)" would encourage them to walk more.²⁵
- Guide Dogs say that "A clearer high street, where obstacles like A-boards and cafe furniture are placed consistently, leaving plenty of room for pedestrians to walk past, not only makes it safer for people with sight loss, but also a nicer, more inviting place for all shoppers."²⁶
- Living Streets have reported that 48% of older adults say they would walk more if pavements were better maintained.²⁷

While these were key areas identified, there are other actions that can also contribute to a better walking and wheeling environment:

- Expanding green and shaded spaces. This can include planting more trees and adding weather protection
- Reducing traffic and congestion in pedestrian areas
- Installing more pedestrian crossings to make it easier and safer to cross streets
- Supporting cycling and active travel, such as more space outside stations and more cycle lanes
- Improving signage and navigation, including maps and wayfinding to key destinations. This is particularly important for digitally excluded and disadvantaged people who may not be able to access information on a smart phone.

²⁵ [National Travel Attitudes Study: Wave 5](#), Department for Transport, May 2021

²⁶ [Streets Ahead Campaign](#), Guide Dogs

²⁷ [Pedestrian slips, trips and falls](#), Living Streets, 2023

Alongside installing and improving these measures on London's streets, it is also important that they are maintained and enforced once in place. For example, enforcing bans and restrictions on obstacles like A-boards to keep streets clear of unnecessary clutter, making sure public toilets are clean and functioning and enforcing rules to stop illegal cycling and e-scootering on pavements.

When making any improvements to London's streets, the emphasis should be on designing streets in a way that works for disabled people, older adults, families and people with additional items (one in four Londoners use items such as buggies or trolleys on at least some of their journeys). If done right, this would not only improve accessibility but also make the streets better for everyone.

To help get it right, this should be done through close collaboration with people with lived experience and specialist organisations, for example co-designing public spaces with a diverse range of Londoners.