

Thursday 7th May 2020

Interest in walking and cycling increases as exercise is encouraged and people switch from public transport

Implications for transport sector, as four in five people who are walking and cycling more, expect to continue this change after COVID-19 travel restrictions are lifted.

Increasing demand for wider pavements and new cycleways is likely to continue, even after travel restrictions are lifted, reports SYSTRA Ltd in a new representative research study of 1,500 UK residents. Many people are choosing to walk and cycle as part of their daily exercise 'allowance' and are swapping to active travel for other daily journeys during the current lockdown. Roughly four in five (80%) of them expect to continue this change.

One in five people expect to use public transport less once restrictions are lifted, and whilst 'fear of getting ill' is the main reason given, one in seven people say it is because they have found a new way to travel.

- Of those whose walking for leisure/exercise has increased (36%), 81% think they will continue this change
- Of those whose cycling for leisure/exercise has increased (9%), 74% think they will continue this change

The research study also reveals a wider shift in working patterns as 1 in 6 (17%) of UK full or part time workers believe they will work from home more once COVID-19 travel restrictions are lifted. This is primarily to save the commute time and cost, and to provide a better work-life balance. This predicted change in working location is the reason behind a quarter (24%) of the predicted reduction in public transport use. In addition, two-thirds (67%) believe virtual meetings will replace some or all business trips or meetings, further reducing the need to travel.

Paul Osborne, SYSTRA's Cycling Lead notes, *"Many pavements are less than 2 metres wide and pedestrians and cyclists are struggling with social distancing. Road traffic levels have fallen significantly, so there is an obvious opportunity to share road space more equitably, and possibly make these changes permanent. Our research shows that active travel will increase, even after travel restrictions are lifted."*

About SYSTRA:

SYSTRA keeps the world moving through connecting people and places. By enabling mobility, our work strengthens communities, increases social inclusion and improves people's access to employment, education and leisure opportunities. Our specialist social and market research team undertake evidence-based transport research to provide consumer and stakeholder insights, supporting policy developments and developing transport solutions that enhance movement, places and the quality of people's lives.

For more information please visit: <https://www.systra.co.uk/en/newsroom-37/latest-thinking/article/a-world-less-travelled>

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Notes to Editor:

1. The survey took place between Wednesday 8th and Tuesday 14th April 2020 with a representative sample of 1,514 UK adults.
2. The survey covered the following regions: London, South East (excluding London), South West, West Midlands, East Midlands, Yorkshire and Humberside, North West, North East, East, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.
3. SYSTRA is undertaking further behavioural modelling to understand the wider impacts of the Covid-19 for UK cities & regions.
4. In the UK, SYSTRA provides Transport Planning Consultancy and Rail and Urban Transport engineering services. We work with our clients to think through complex issues concerning the location and movement of people, goods and services – as well as helping them maximise the potential of their own businesses. We have been providing Transport Consultancy services in the UK for over 50 years and have an excellent reputation for the provision of high quality, robust and independent advice to our clients. SYSTRA is a UK registered subsidiary of SYSTRA Group.
5. In 2019, SYTRA doubled the size of its UK & Ireland operations through the acquisition of TSP Projects, a multidisciplinary engineering firm formed in 1987 with a rich heritage in rail. The combined company provides clients with a complete end-to-end service spanning every aspect of rail projects, as well as specialist understanding of mobility and complex infrastructure. We deliver expertise across the full project lifecycle, from strategic advisory and design to systems integration, programme/construction management, testing & commissioning, and asset management. This expertise will be delivered through a significantly expanded UK footprint, providing clients with a highly localised service.
6. SYSTRA led [BP's Future of Transport Study](#) published October, 2019.
7. For more information on forthcoming announcements visit our web site www.systra.co.uk

