

A RACE TO NET ZERO – Part 4

A guide to cutting your carbon footprint by using public transport

What is the largest source of climate pollution in the UK? The answer may shock you - with transport accounting for over a third of annual emissions, and private transport being one of the greatest sources of greenhouse gases, it is the biggest known contributor to pollution. Globally, the transport sector accounts for around a quarter of CO2 emissions.

Reducing the volume of traffic could help to avoid the catastrophic effects of climate change, therefore a radical re-think is necessary for the way we choose to travel. In fact, the British Government released a report addressing the decarbonisation of transport as part of its national climate crisis strategy. The report discloses the hopes to reduce car use and transform the UK into a hub for green technology in order to effect change.

But what can we do, as individuals, to slash emissions from transport?

Public transport is a fantastic solution. Not only is it often **cheaper and faster**, but it also drastically **reduces your carbon footprint**. Since many people are able to ride in the same vehicle, the carbon emissions per head is largely reduced. Taking a train instead of a car for medium length distances can cut your emissions but up to 80%, as rail systems, producing the lowest carbon footprint of all public transport, offer a much greener alternative.

Buses offer a lifeline for many in the UK, linking thousands of people to jobs, schools and shops every single day that they run. Currently in the UK, we offer free bus travel for people over the age of 65, eligible veterans, police officers and transport workers. Taking a bus emits over half the greenhouse gases of a single occupancy car journey, making it a much more environmentally friendly option in comparison. It is possible for the emissions to reduce further with more cities implementing plans for electric and hydrogen buses. And with many cities implementing bus lanes, your journey will most likely be a lot quicker than if you were travelling by car due to the traffic-less lanes. On the other hand, the majority of cities across the UK have introduced cycle lanes, so why not cut out carbon emissions entirely and improve your fitness at the same time?

Public transport can also be significantly more economical, as you don't have to pay for petrol, parking, maintenance, or cleaning. The only cost involved is your fare, which is more often than not, very reasonable. And think about all the money you'll be saving in the long run...

Especially in areas like London where congestion charges are implemented. Through using Public transport in these areas, you're saving yourself the daily congestion charge too. These congestion charges have been put in place in order to reduce air and noise pollution, as well as easing traffic throughout the city. Air pollution is dangerous as it can create breathing problems if the gases are breathed in, these gases tend to be nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and carbon monoxide. So by choosing public transport, you'll be saving money and decreasing various pollution levels, effectively improving the health of many.

In cities like Cardiff, they have introduced a ban on cars driving through the city centre, in an attempt to reduce carbon emissions in the city and through traffic. For many cities in the UK, this is becoming a popular decision as it encourages the use of public transport and improves the air quality in the area.

Additionally, it falls into the umbrella of active transport, as some mode of physical exercise is usually involved to access bus stops and stations, and gives people on average half their weekly recommended exercise, according to Greener Journeys, so hitting your daily steps goal is a whole load easier than we all thought.

What about flying?

Domestic flights undoubtedly produce the most carbon emissions of all transport, and **offsetting your emissions** when choosing to fly can seem like an impossible task. One of the easiest options is to offset directly with the airline when you're booking your flight. The majority of airlines offer an extra fee on top of your total flight cost which is donated to a **carbon offset scheme**, though the way in which they work differ from airline to airline. Research the scheme that the airline directs you towards, so you know exactly where your donation will be going. The environmental group, Ethical Consumer suggests that energy efficiency projects are a better option than forestry as they directly reduce fossil fuels, as well as recommending wind and solar over biomass.

The more flight connections you make, the higher your carbon footprint as taking off and landing are the most fuel intensive part of the journey. So by **avoiding connecting flights**, you will be reducing your carbon footprint. If travelling internationally, you could also consider trains or boats which present a lower-carbon solution to flying. However, there is a way of **working out your carbon savings**. Have you ever wanted to know how much carbon would be saved if you took a train instead of flying? There are various calculators you can use to show you the carbon emissions that you are reducing. We found one that does the job, perfectly. LNER have made a calculator that does exactly that. All you need to do is enter the locations of where you're travelling from and to or enter the mileage of the journey, and it will work it out for you. The results will shock you as travelling by train really produces less carbon emissions than you think. <https://www.lner.co.uk/tickets-savings/the-best-way-to-travel/carbon-calculator/>

Public transport is a much more efficient way of travelling, compared to driving a car. Considering the many factors of improved air quality, quicker journey times but also the huge money saving aspect, it makes sense that we all start choosing public transport. Climb aboard public transport for a greener, more sustainable, future.