

Health impacts of the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway: a natural experimental study

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Plain English summary

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What was the problem?

A shift towards more active lifestyles could be a 'best buy' for improving public health. Local authorities have a role to play in achieving this. For example, they can make it easier for people to walk or cycle as part of everyday journeys such as going to work. But it can be hard to study the effects of changing transport systems. This means that there is little good evidence to guide investment.

What did we do?

The Cambridgeshire Guided Busway is a new bus network with a high-quality off-road path for walking and cycling. It was opened in 2011 and is the longest of its kind in the world. We took the opportunity to find out more about how people travelled to work and how this changed as a result of the busway.

What did we find?

How people travelled to work depended on many different factors, ranging from childcare to parking. We studied these and took account of them in our research. We showed that, over time, people living closer to the busway were more likely to increase their cycling, and less likely to use their car, for commuting than those living further away. These changes could help to increase their overall physical activity and improve their health and well-being over time.

What does this mean?

We need to see whether or not similar results will be found in other places. In the meantime, our findings provide new evidence that changing transport systems can help to improve people's health.

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This report

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