

Personal travel

I was surprised by the way several contributors misread yesterday's post. It was a piece about how technology and changing lifestyles might affect personal transport in the future. It was not an attack upon personal choice or on the motorist. Use of a car is essential for most people today to get them to work or their children to school or to go to the shops. It is only in large cities like London where public transport offers a frequent and flexible service that more people find it practical to do without owning a car.

The government does need to do more to improve road safety and reduce congestion. I have sought to show how these twin aims can be mutually reinforcing and need not be in conflict in the way some suggest.

Short term and relatively cheap options include permitting and encouraging more off road parking, optimising phasing on traffic lights, creating segregated right hand turning lanes, and creating more pavements and cycleways away from main vehicle carriageways.

Dearer options include bypasses, more bridges over railway lines and rivers which act as barriers cutting road capacity especially into towns and cities.

The highways authorities need to offer safer and better solutions for school set down and pick up instead of encouraging parking on busy roads close to schools at peak times of day. They need to use more roundabouts and fewer light sets. They should require replacement and new utility pipes and cables to be laid away from the main highway in accessible conduits to stop the need to dig up the road for maintenance and replacement.

The government is asking each Highways authority to identify and improve a local strategic road network. This is a good initiative with money for suitable improvement projects.