

West Midlands Mayoral Elections 2021 - Vision Zero Manifesto

A manifesto proposal by...



Better Streets for B14
Kings Heath Low Traffic Neighbourhoods



Introduction

Mayoral Elections 2021: Vision Zero – A future where no one is killed or seriously injured on the roads in the West Midlands.

The Vision Zero goal - that no one should be killed or seriously injured on our roads - is closely linked to wider policies to reduce traffic, improve air quality, reduce climate changing emissions, create active neighbourhoods and ensure economically vibrant city centres as well as town centres and high streets. These policies can work together to dramatically improve the quality of life for those who live, work in and visit the region.

At present reducing danger on the roads in the West Midlands is guided by the 2019 Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) Regional Road Safety Strategy. At a time when other UK cities are setting targets to reduce fatal and serious road casualties to zero by as early as 2040, this strategy only commits to "reduce casualties by 40% by 2028" from the 2015-17 average. This represents a real failure of ambition and commits the region to high levels of death and serious injury on its roads for the foreseeable future.

An altogether bolder and more radical approach is needed especially if the region is serious about putting walking and cycling and healthy active communities to the forefront.

We ask all Mayoral candidates to support Vision Zero, to commit to setting a target for ending fatal and serious road casualties (along with interim targets) and to pledge to:

1. Create safe city centres and safe town centres and high streets across the West Midlands; these are where a large proportion of injuries to people walking and cycling occur.
2. Lower speeds. Moving to a default 20mph speed limit across the West Midlands and using this to ensure that roads, streets and neighbourhoods are safe for all.
3. Vigorous enforcement. Focusing on the "high harm" offences; increased speed enforcement and promoting widespread third-party reporting of driving offences.
4. Less traffic. Reducing traffic volumes is a key part of Vision Zero; the West Midlands should commit to significant reductions in both the mode share and total volume of motor vehicle journeys by the end of the next Mayoral term.
5. Safe neighbourhoods. To combat the numbers of casualties on neighbourhood streets and as a part of the programme of traffic reduction, the West Midlands needs a comprehensive programme of delivery of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods to remove through traffic.

Reducing Danger on our Roads

Progress in the West Midlands

Understanding the trends for the numbers of people killed and seriously injured on the roads in the West Midlands has been made more difficult by the changes in reporting of serious injuries since 2016. For fatalities, the trend was one of significant decline from 2000 to 2010 but there has been little sustained progress since then. For fatal and serious injuries, data (adjusted to take account of the changes in reporting) only exists from 2013 onwards.

It is difficult to identify any sustained progress in reducing the numbers of people killed and seriously injured since 2013. Amongst those walking and cycling, the numbers killed and seriously injured in 2019 are largely unchanged from 2013. Those walking and cycling consistently make up almost half of all fatal and serious injuries.

The picture in the West Midlands fits that seen across the rest of Great Britain. Recent research by PACTS¹ has shown that while safety has improved for those inside vehicles, progress has been slower for those on the outside. Almost all of those who are injured while walking and cycling are struck by users of cars, lorries, vans and motorcycles.

Figure 1 - <https://roadtraffic.dft.gov.uk/custom-downloads/road-accidents>
 Figure 2 - DfT - RAS30043 - Adjusted data used as "Since 2016, changes in severity reporting systems for a large number of police forces mean that serious injury figures are not comparable with earlier years. Adjustments to account for the change in Great Britain have been produced."

Figure 3 - DfT - RAS30043

(1) <https://www.pacts.org.uk/2020/11/pacts-report-what-kills-most-on-the-roads/>

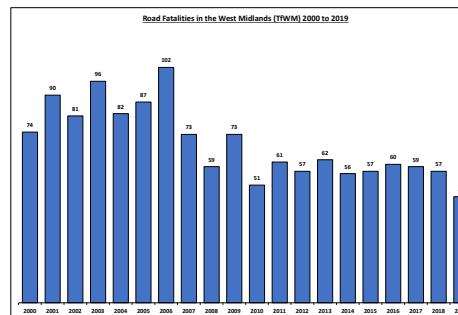


Fig 1) Road Fatalities
 West Midlands 2000 - 2019 (TfWM)

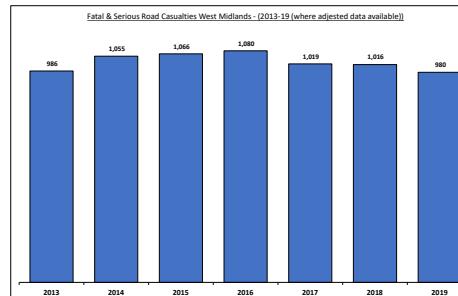
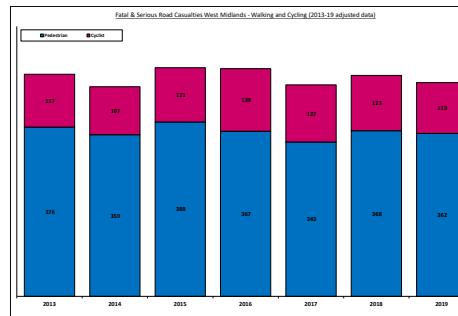


Fig 2) Fatal and Serious Road Casualties
 West Midlands 2013 - 2019

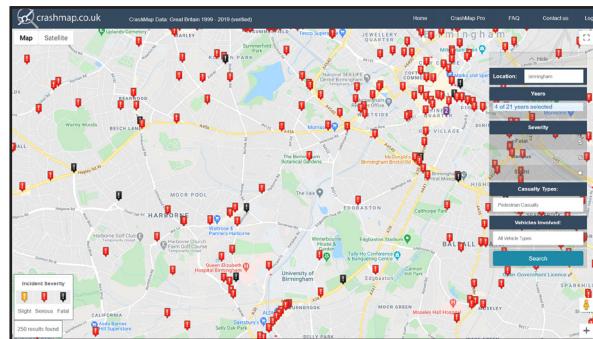


3) Fatal and Serious Road Casualties
 West Midlands - Walking and Cycling
 2013 - 2019

Where People Walking, Cycling and Motorcycles are most at Risk

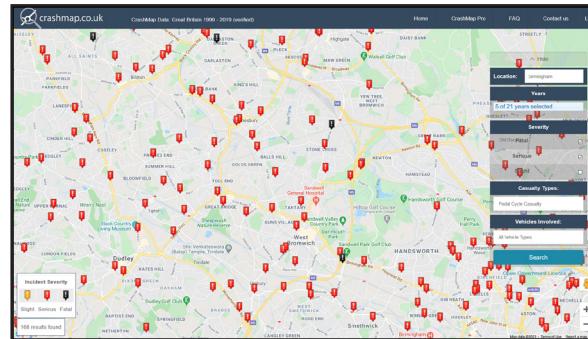
Main roads carry a large proportion of traffic but are where people are more likely to be injured; they need to be made safe for all users. Focusing action on these strategic routes to make them safe can have a disproportionate impact in reducing serious injuries:

Fig 4) Serious and Fatal **Pedestrian Casualties 2016 to 2019**



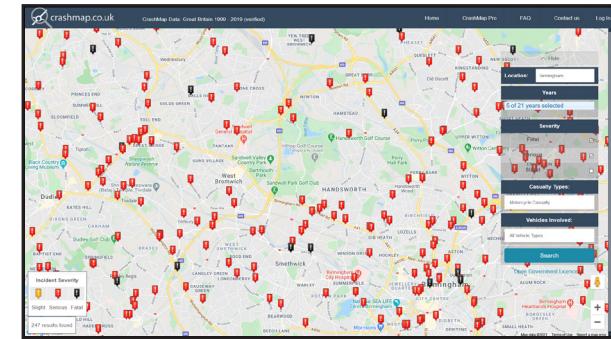
- Serious and fatal pedestrian injuries often occur in town centres and high streets where people and vehicles mix.
- Pedestrians are especially exposed to danger from motor vehicles owing to the need to cross the road.
- The proportion of injuries occurring on Unclassified roads has risen from an average of 49% of all pedestrian fatal and serious injuries in 2000 to 2004 to 56% between 2015 and 2019.

Fig 5) Serious and Fatal **Cycling Casualties 2015 to 2019**



- Serious and fatal cycling casualties are divided almost equally between main roads ('A' and 'B') and Unclassified roads.
- The significance of the main road and arterial routes can be clearly seen in the map below.

Fig 6) Serious and Fatal **Motorcycle Casualties 2015 to 2019**



- Together the 'A' and 'B' roads are responsible for 51% of serious and fatal injuries to motorcycle riders.
- On average, just under half (46%) of serious and fatal injuries to motorcycle riders occur on Unclassified roads.

Recent Research on Road Danger

Recent research has identified the need to focus on two other important sources of danger.

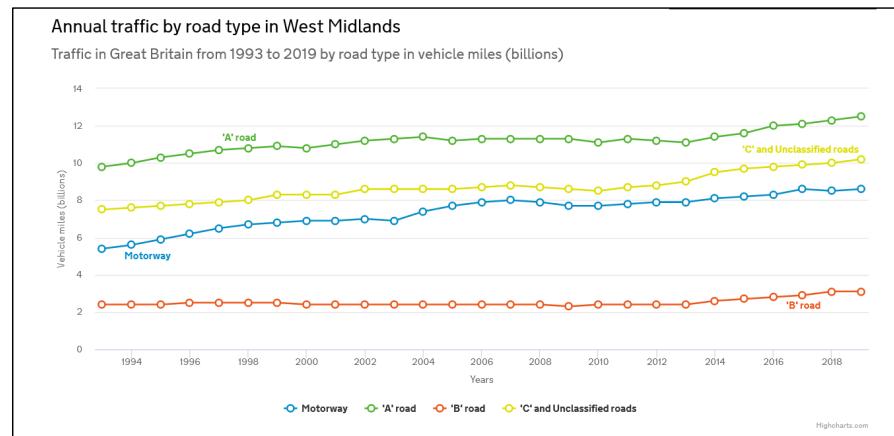
Working Vehicles

Research by UCL Centre for Transport Studies² shows that across Great Britain around 1 in 3 road deaths, 1 in 5 seriously injured casualties and 1 in 4 casualties of all severities involve someone driving for work. The study estimates that 39% of killed pedestrians were hit by a working driver. The risk that working drivers pose is also highlighted by the increase in the volume of Light Goods Vehicles (LGVs) in recent years. DfT data on road traffic by road and vehicle type³ shows (Table TRA8905b) that volumes of Light Commercial Vehicle traffic (vehicle kms) increased by 52% between 2001 and 2019 across the TfWM area.

Neighbourhood Roads

Traffic is increasingly able to navigate routes through residential areas and neighbourhood streets owing to the huge take-up of Sat-Nav technology. Since 2009, rates of mileage growth across the West Midlands on 'B' roads (+29%) and 'C' and Unclassified roads (+20%) have been higher than those on major roads ('A' +13% and 'M' +12%)⁴

For pedestrians and cyclists, on average more than half (54%) of all serious and fatal casualties occurred on Unclassified roads in the years 2015 to 2019 (<https://roadtraffic.dft.gov.uk/custom-downloads>). These need to become safe places for people and the communities they live in.



(2) <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/civil-environmental-geomatic-engineering/news/2020/dec/injury-risk-significantly-higher-when-driving-work>

(3) https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/916305/tra8905.ods

(4) <https://roadtraffic.dft.gov.uk/regions/10>

Lessons from the Lockdown

There have been a number of lessons from the pandemic that touch on reducing road danger.

Town Centres and High Streets

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of the West Midland's town centres and other important local and suburban centres. This is likely to continue as the pandemic recedes and some people carry on spending more time working from home and shopping locally. Making these safe and attractive for walked and cycled journeys from surrounding residential areas is key.

Speeding

With less traffic, the numbers of road casualties have fallen. West Midlands Police saw a dramatic decline in the average number of reported road casualties per month from 605 in January and February 2020 to 253 reported casualties on average between March and June 2020.

BUT the severity of the injuries appears to have increased especially amongst those who walk and cycle. In London, Transport for London had already stated that inappropriate speed is a factor in up to 37% of collisions resulting death or serious injury. TfL has also estimated

that the rise in the severity of road casualties over the spring/summer 2020 (during the first lockdown) stemmed from an increase in average traffic speeds, as traffic levels and congestion fell, coupled with an increase in 'non-regular' drivers.



(5) content.tfl.gov.uk/vision-zero-action-plan.pdf (3.1)

(6) <https://tfl.gov.uk/cdn/static/cms/documents/board-20201209-agenda-papers-public-amended.pdf> (Travel in London 13 Road danger and the pandemic)

Mayoral Elections 2021: Key Vision Zero Pledges

So, what does the West Midlands need to do to once again start to see a sustained decline in fatal and serious injuries on its roads? We want the Mayoral candidates in the West Midlands to focus on safe town centres, high streets and neighbourhood roads, to tackle speeding, to reduce traffic and ensure robust enforcement. The good news is that what is needed to make roads across the West Midlands safe has a very close fit with other important issues. **What works to reduce danger on our roads also makes our air cleaner, reduces CO2 emissions and enables more people to be active by walking and cycling.**

We are calling for a shift in the balance between vehicles and people that will deliver safe roads and reduce casualties especially amongst those who are not protected inside a motor vehicle. We ask all candidates in the 2021 Mayoral elections to endorse the following pledges:

1. Safe and healthy high streets and town centres. The West Midlands must redouble its efforts to create safe town centres and high streets. A dedicated Town Centre programme needs to link local economic vitality with a Vision Zero focus on low speeds, reducing capacity for private motor vehicles, safe crossings and junctions and protected cycling lanes on main roads. This programme should be linked to public transport use (as we emerge from the pandemic) and attractive environments for those on foot.

2. Safe speeds offers the opportunity to reduce the numbers killed and seriously injured on our roads by almost two-fifths. West Midlands needs:

- **A 20mph default speed limit in built up areas.** This requires TfWM to use funding to prompt the remaining Local Authorities to adopt default 20mph limits. Of the seven Local Authorities which make up TfWM, to date only the Cities of Birmingham and Coventry have taken up widespread 20mph limits. It is time for the Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and the City of Wolverhampton now to bring in 20mph limits. Town centres and high streets should be a particular focus with consideration given to advisory 15mph limits where the numbers of pedestrians and people cycling are especially high.
- In other areas, adopt maximums of: 20mph in village centres; 40mph on minor roads; and 50mph speed limits on other single carriageway roads.
- **Safe working vehicles** with a comprehensive package of measures including a West Midlands standard for working vehicles by 2025; a key requirement will be mandatory speed limiters on all working vehicles.

Mayoral Elections 2021: Key Vision Zero Pledges

3. Vigorous enforcement. In partnership with the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner, the West Midlands should commit to:

- Harm reduction, with priority offences (speeding, drink/drug driving, careless driving, mobile phone use and uninsured vehicles) accounting for at least two-thirds of officer detected offences;
- Increased speed enforcement, particularly of 20mph limits;
- Transparency with quarterly road crime statistics published; and
- Promote third-party reporting of driving offences and demonstrate best practice, including providing feedback to those submitting footage.

4. Less traffic. Traffic reduction must be acknowledged as a key tool in the Vision Zero armoury; there are established links between traffic volumes reduction and declines in the numbers of people injured on the roads⁷. By the end of the next Mayoral term, the West Midlands will have reduced both the total number of journeys by motor vehicle and reduced the mode share of driven journeys from the current levels of more than 60% to a level of 45% or less.

The West Midlands Movement for Growth Strategic Transport Plan forecasts a 34% increase in the number of car kilometres travelled across the region over the next 20 years. This appears incompatible

with any strategy to reduce road casualties as well as the June 2019 declaration of a Climate Emergency by the West Midlands Combined Authority.

5. Safe neighbourhoods. To combat the numbers of casualties on neighbourhood streets, the West Midlands needs a comprehensive programme of delivery of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods to remove through traffic. These have been proven to reduce road danger⁸. Priorities can be identified based on levels of population density, deprivation, car ownership, volumes of through traffic, the numbers of schools, the numbers of people injured on the roads and the presence of children and older people. Development of LTNs can be supported by the roll out of School Streets and increasing the use of controlled parking zones across the city.

(7) <https://actionvisionzero.org/what-to-campaign-for/less-traffic/>

(8) <https://findingspress.org/article/18330-the-impact-of-introducing-low-traffic-neighbourhoods-on-road-traffic-injuries>

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