**Context**

After introductions (sharing main interests and experience around transport) a collective discussion focussed first on Cycling, and then on Roads, as these were seen by most members as the most important, time-critical and well aligned issues at the previous meeting. Many member’s interests straddled the two themes so all were able to participate in both.

These are some of the main points and suggestions that were made.

**Cycling**

* WC CETG report suggestions relating to cycling had been collated by AN which can be found [here](https://mcusercontent.com/c8584d0144b13778a4daf8eee/files/9e346cae-2ace-4512-ae97-68166dc24a18/Task_Group_Report_Cycling_Excerpts.pdf).
* NM emphasized that the report isn’t an exhaustive ‘one-time only’ opportunity – agreed recommendations can be added ongoing.
* It was felt that many councillors didn’t understand the need for bikes, and didn’t cycle themselves. Training for councillors on better appreciating cycling and cyclist’s needs would be very beneficial.
* Suggestion to invite one of the Transport Councillors/Officers to a meeting.
* In addition, it’s vital that the insight and experience of cycling is applied in the planning of individual routes going forward – routes are often inappropriate and unsafe.
* Good planning of cycle routes is not supported by current process and culture. The Sustainable Transport team, being disjointed from Highways, struggle to get full active travel recommendations included into already established road plans quickly enough.
* The map of potential town cycle routes on the WC website is no longer being actioned. NM and DK (in Chippenham / Wootton Bassett groups) have created their own map of optimum potential routes, and surveyed local people with aim of inclusion into Neighbourhood plans. This is a good route into funding. TM will possibly do same for Calne. DK shared [this link](https://www.ecorwb.org/cycle-group) about what has been done in RWB.
* Government messaging seems to be discouraging planning of paths shared with pedestrians - seen as unpopular / dangerous. NM says this will be a problem for WC budgets.
* LO said in many places there isn’t space to expand roads/paths to fit another lane.
* Some cycle lanes hastily added are making it more dangerous for all road-users. JS gave example in Devizes.
* Group feels segregated paths are preferable to integrating where this is possible, but a pragmatic approach needed to establish more viable routes as soon as possible.
* Suggestion to ask WC to consider repurposing disused rail lines for a network of safe, separate routes (AN cited example in Trowbridge on Network Rail land).
* Many barriers exist in the community around cycling: Cycling is somewhat stigmatised and seen as a nuisance. Car drivers and cyclists seen as opposing groups.
* People are out of the habit of cycling and are nervous to try. JB particularly interested in promoting the all-round benefits (leisure, transport, fitness) – we should promote positive experiences and try to listen and understand reservations.
* Related barriers are: dangers of sharing roads with cars/lorries; bikes not seen to serve as many purposes as cars; bike security.
* Need to address the cultural dominance of cars. In Netherlands / many Scandinavian countries, everything cycle-friendly, and it’s proudly part of the culture. This was not always the case and has built up relatively quickly with conducive leadership.
* A growing range of bike types and bike modifications are suited to different needs (e.g. tandem, tricycle for rider with balance issues, large storage for shopping trips/ deliveries, child-seats and trailers). DK has a collection of images designed to promote and raise awareness.
* E-bikes, mopeds and scooters should be championed as much as push bikes as great options for clean travel. Recent advances mean these are rapidly emerging. JG can share some further info on ‘micromobility’.
* Covid recovery fund (£2bn committed) is limited but is an opportunity to ‘lift off’ cycling and begin to cut through barriers.
* Local planning policy is already prioritising cycling, but solutions cannot be piecemeal – WC need to make big shifts, make routes interconnected, safe and useful and be serious about reducing car-borne traffic.
* WC are most likely to introduce progressive plans if/when funding has been secured. The CE TG report shows different sources of funding are out there.
* DK added that private sector stakeholders can be approached to sponsor schemes. There are plenty of examples. We should collectively urge WC to be proactive and resourceful on this, given it is an urgent priority.
* WCA should also advocate for the redirection of funds away from unsustainable projects (new roads) into cycling (and other active transport & public transport) infrastructure.
* NM said main upcoming opportunities to target decision-making were:
  + Local Plan Review
  + Review of Local Transport Strategy - No 4.

**ACTION:**

We were asked (as individuals or in groups) to reflect on our personal and/or local perspective on cycling (barriers, opportunities, what are the priorities) and provide a one-page summary. The topic group can then collate themes and further develop our recommendations.

**Roads**

* HIF bid award of £75mn for a road around the Eastern side of Chippenham through the Marden river valley and joining the A350 at each end is a current focus of campaigning (A36/A350 Corridor Alliance / [CAUSE](https://www.causewiltshire.com/)). This will feed a minimum of 7,500 new houses, and attract more outward motorway commuting. The road is being described by WC as a relief road that will ease traffic congestion and air pollution in the town centre.
* A350 Melksham bypass also currently being contested.
* These projects reflect entrenched planning culture and are justified on supposed benefits that contravene WC’s stated intentions around Climate Emergency (i.e. carbon reduction and building sustainable locally resilient communities).
* JW intends to go through the online footage from the WC CE TG report debate to extract all the inconsistencies in the arguments of some Councillors, and against WC policy documents.
* Covid pandemic has brought significant shifts in lifestyle / travel / working habits – less commuting, more local, active travel. This should be changing the road-building agenda.
* The motoring lobby has a huge ongoing influence, and road building brings in money.
* When we can’t persuade through existing processes – need direct and/or legal action. [Transport Action Network](https://transportactionnetwork.org.uk/roads/) is a good reference on previous legal challenges.
* Air pollution and our health needs to be brought in to arguments as well as environmental impacts. Covid puts this more sharply into focus.
* Climate change denial is still at the heart of the promotion of schemes and too many prominent councillor’s arguments (and tweets - Cllr Wayman!), stimulate continued public trust in the status quo. Economic arguments presented are often misleading and aren’t weighed in the context of climate change mitigation.
* Some Councils are providing inspiring models – BANES are very progressive. Could we connect with Bath XR to work out how to influence WC to follow?
* Western Gateway Sub-National Transport Body includes BANES and Bristol, and will be forming a unified strategic transport strategy. This could extract greener commitments from WC, and we could try to influence this.

**Future Meetings**

* Agreed that meetings should be 1.5 hours (not 2) in evenings.
* Instead of concurrent breakout rooms, most were in favour of putting in staggered joining times for those interested only in Cycling or Roads (or other issues/EV). Those interested in all can stay throughout.
* Bill is looking for someone else to facilitate the group - please let him know if you can do so.