

Smart Cities – the who’s, what’s, where’s?

The term ‘smarter moving cities’ has been circulating for a while now but, while we in the world of travel behaviour change can comprehend its meaning, what does a ‘smarter moving’ city mean to your average city-dweller?

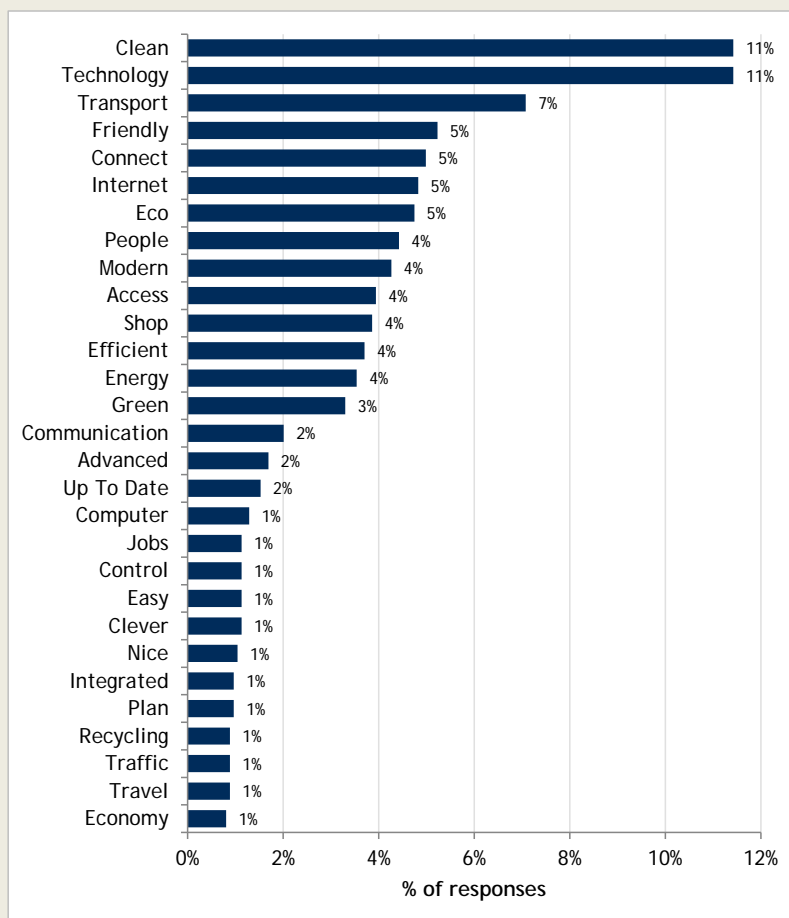
To help answer this, it’s important to start by understanding what people really want from their cities, or in other words, what they think makes a city ‘smart’.

Steer Davies Gleave recently commissioned a survey through our research partner, Research Now, which unveiled some fascinating insights which we’ve summarised below.

What makes a city ‘smart’?

Without giving any hint as to what we mean by the term, we asked survey respondents the simple question “What makes a city ‘smart’?”

Figure 1: words* used to describe what makes a city ‘smart’



*words used by at least 1% of respondents

So what should ‘smart cities’ aim to be?

We then provided respondents with a list of six different ‘umbrella’ aims for a smart city which they were asked to rank in order of personal priority.

At the top of the list is *a pleasant place to live, work and socialise*, followed by, *a healthy, vibrant economy*. From a behavioural change point of view it is reasonable to consider transport and technology as intrinsic to achieving both of these core aims. Interestingly, sustainability sits at the bottom of the list, yet despite it dropping off people’s personal agendas it remains an important consideration when city-scaping. While the effects of climate change continue to remain so visible, most truly smart cities will strive to be as sustainable as possible.

Figure 2: xxx

Rank	Aim
1	Pleasant place to live, work and socialise
2	Healthy, vibrant economy
3	Efficient transport so everyone can move around relatively easily
4	Availability of the latest technology such as super-fast broadband
5	Sustainable with smallest possible carbon footprint

Which is the smartest city?

To understand our respondents idea of a model ‘smart city’, we asked them to vote for which they thought was the smartest in the UK. The top three were London, Manchester and Edinburgh. However, a key influence here is the population size of these cities as respondents will have had a natural tendency to vote for somewhere they know, or have adopted as their chosen home.

Instead we should look at the numbers of votes per 1,000 population (normalised votes – see figure 3). The ranking changes significantly so that the top three cities are Oxford, York and Bath.

Oxford and Cambridge have an obvious association with being ‘smart’ because of the universities while York is frequently lauded as a pleasing places to visit, reinforcing the finding identified earlier that one thing people are looking for is somewhere that is pleasant.

Figure 3: the cities voted the ‘smartest’

Votes	Normalised votes
London	Oxford
Manchester	York
Edinburgh	Bath
Birmingham	Cambridge
Liverpool	Brighton

What's the 'smartest' mode of transport?

Respondents played a game of word association linking adjectives to types of transport. Two figures summarise the results of this question: Figure 4 shows which modes were most and least likely to be thought of as smart, while Figure 5 shows the top three adjectives associated with each mode.

Figure 4: extent to which transport modes are considered "smart"

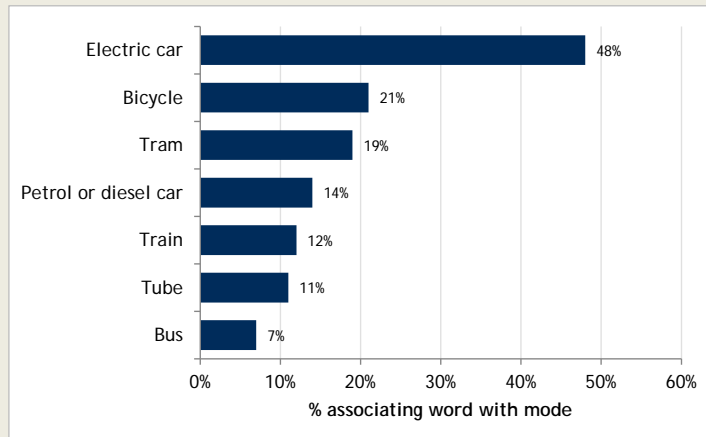


Figure 5: top three adjectives associated with each mode

	Bicycle	Bus	Electric car	Petrol or Diesel car	Train	Tram	Tube
1	Healthy	Slow	Modern	Expensive	Expensive	Efficient	Efficient
2	Slow	Expensive	Smart	Reliable	Efficient	Modern	Expensive
3	Sustainable	Efficient	Sustainable	Enjoyable	Enjoyable	Sustainable	Reliable

Priorities for improving cities

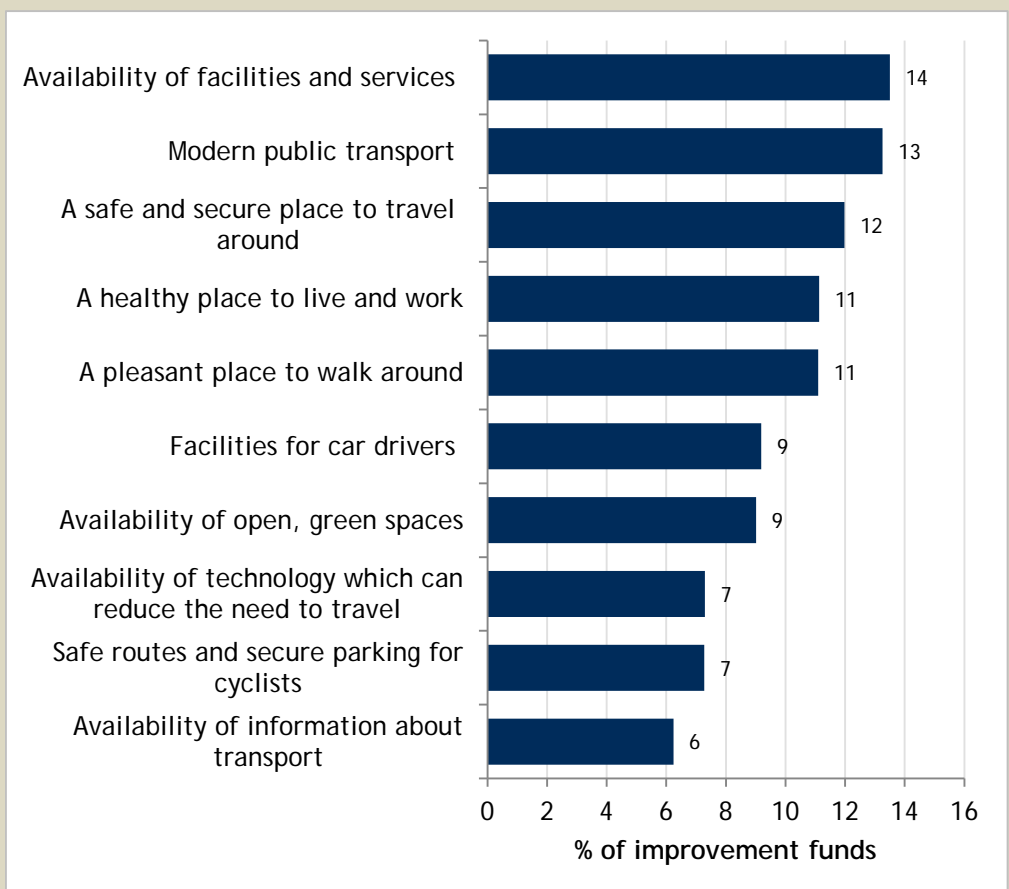
People were also asked to indicate how they would wish their nearest major town or city to be improved and interestingly, out of ten possible areas, the top three were:

- 1) Availability of facilities and services including shops, places to eat and drink, sports and entertainment facilities
- 2) Modern public transport providing a realistic alternative to car
- 3) A safe and secure place to travel around.

The first of these highlights the paradox of the high street: there is a desire for shops and facilities in our cities, but at the same time the rate of shopping on-line continues to rise. However, another finding, that 69% “prefer to meet people face-to-face than using technology such as video-conferencing” reminds us of the inherently social nature of people. So, going back to our earlier point, what people really want is a pleasant all-round experience, therefore designing attractive retail hubs with good, broad services looks like the way forward.

From a transport planners point of view though, it is re-assuring to see that modern public transport is right up there in terms of what people want to see investment in. On the other hand, facilities for cars is some way down the list and below that for pedestrians. These are perhaps the most important findings from a behavioural change point of view as we can safely suggest that respondents believed that a smarter moving city is one where car use is unnecessary. Throwing further light on this issue, 46% agreed (and 27% disagreed) that “cars should be kept out of town centres so they are more pleasant for pedestrians”. So the majority prefer car free town centres, although it is still noticeable that a significant minority remain wedded to car, but this is likely because public transport is not always up to scratch.

Figure 6 – priorities for making cities smarter



Taking into account all of our findings and the insight they have afforded us, what are the implications for somewhere looking to become a smarter moving city? There will never be a one-size fits all solution, in part because of existing infrastructure and services that we must accommodate in any future plans we intend to develop, and because of the relatively short term nature of funding which means that any change is inevitably going to be gradual. Nevertheless, our view is that this doesn't preclude having a long term vision which can form a backdrop to individual schemes and policies. In developing a vision, the findings of this survey should be kept in mind: most people are looking for cities to be largely traffic-free, with car being unnecessary due to modern public transport, and attractive facilities for walking and cycling. This will enable the creation of business and retail districts which are pleasant places to be, and which will give retailers a fighting chance to compete against the web. Within this context, transport and information technology need to play their part in enabling the vision.

Smarter Moving Cities Survey: technical details

Conducted by: Research Now

Method: on-line panel survey

Sample: 1,500 panellists from the Research Now panel

Sample profile: demographically representative of UK population in terms of age, gender, region, occupation type, Smarter Travel Segmentation

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