

## LEP Watch update

March 2016

The LEP watch project monitors spend on transport projects by Local Economic Partnerships, bodies set up to spend public money on economic development in their areas. In 2013, we published a report jointly with CPRE looking at the first round of LEP transport plans, and in 2014, we published an update to include the new City Growth Deals.

In 2015 we made Freedom of Information (FoI) requests to the LEPs, seeking updated information on funding allocated in bids to transport projects and the type of projects funded. We have received the figures requested from 36 LEPs, giving us a picture of local transport spending across most of the country. The full FOI responses received are available on request and can also be seen on the WhatDoTheyKnow website.

In total, the LEPs proposed £3424.74M of funding for 444 schemes. We analysed these by mode, using the following categories:

BUS	schemes that add to or improve bus facilities
CYCLING	schemes that add to or improve cycling facilities
METRO/TRAM	schemes that add to or improve metro/tram facilities
MIXED	schemes with multiple modes that include some new road capacity
MIXED - SUSTAINABLE	schemes with multiple modes that only include improvements to sustainable transport
RAIL	schemes that add to or improve rail facilities
ROAD - MAINTENANCE	schemes that only repair or replace existing structures or traffic management systems, with no new capacity added
ROAD - NEW CAPACITY	schemes that add capacity to the road network for private motor traffic
WALKING/ PUBLIC REALM	schemes that improve public spaces and/or facilities for walking

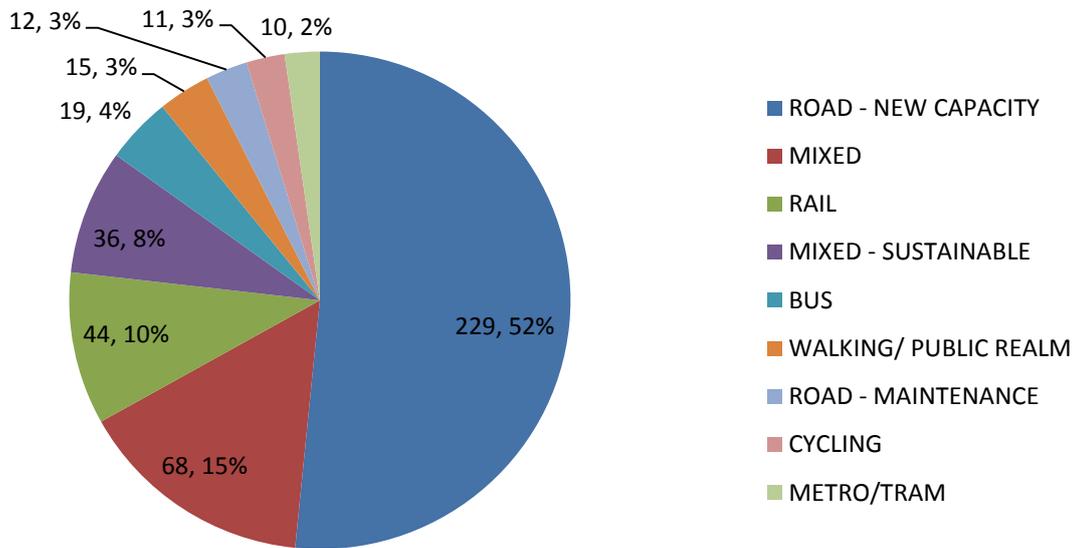
Number of schemes by mode:

ROAD - NEW CAPACITY	229
MIXED	68
RAIL	44
MIXED - SUSTAINABLE	36
BUS	19
WALKING/ PUBLIC REALM	15
ROAD - MAINTENANCE	12
CYCLING	11
METRO/TRAM	10

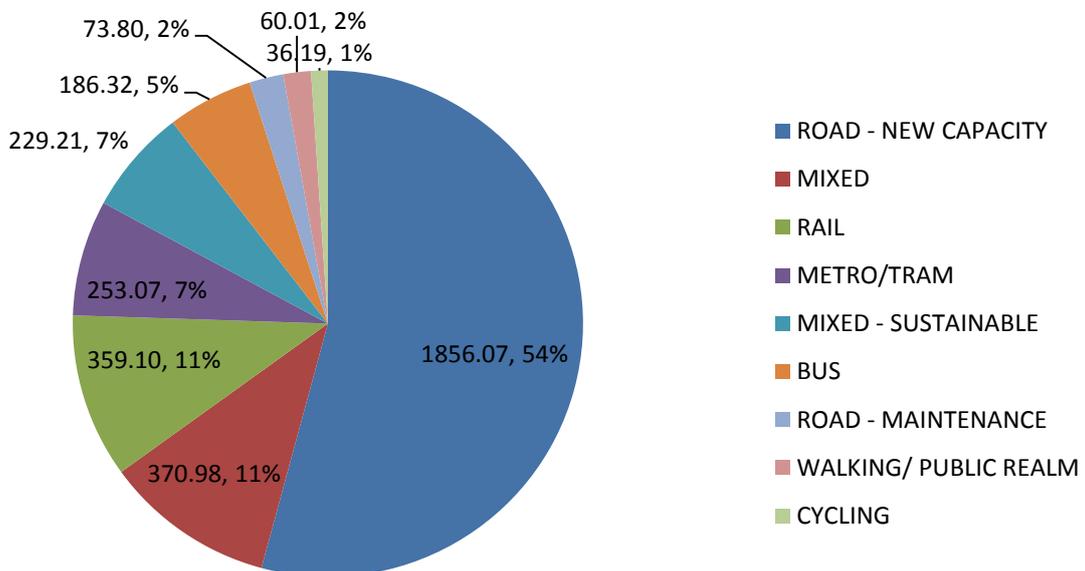
Scheme spend by mode:

ROAD - NEW CAPACITY	£1856.07M
MIXED	370.98
RAIL	359.10
METRO/TRAM	253.07
MIXED - SUSTAINABLE	229.21
BUS	186.32
ROAD - MAINTENANCE	73.80
WALKING/ PUBLIC REALM	60.01
CYCLING	36.19

## 2015 number of LEP planned projects by scheme type



## 2015 spend on LEP planned projects by mode (£m)



About half the funding & projects were for new roads, with the other half for mixed schemes, public transport and sustainable modes. Taking out mixed schemes that include new roads, we find that sustainable modes (public transport and active travel) add up to around 30% of schemes and 33% of spend so while we would like to see more than a third, that is encouraging.

Only two LEPs (Dorset and Northamptonshire, both relatively small) had no funds allocated for non-road schemes, and among these, Northamptonshire's plans include a smart bus corridor. Some of the LEPs that

we criticised in earlier reports, for example Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, have this time proposed a range of sustainable schemes including station improvements, cycle routes and a new coach station.

#### Key findings:

- LEP spending continues to prioritise road at the expense of sustainable modes
  - Just over 50% of the projects and project spend is allocated for new road capacity
  - When mixed schemes with some new roads are included, that rises to 67%
  - Within road schemes, maintenance of existing roads is the poor relation, with just 3% of schemes and 2% of spend.
- All sustainable modes (public transport and active travel) add up to around 30% of schemes and 33% of spend
  - Cycling gets the smallest slice of spend, attracting just 1% of the allocated funds.
- Priorities vary significantly between LEPs
  - Dorset and Northamptonshire are spending all their money on road schemes
  - North Yorkshire is top of the list for spend on road maintenance
  - Cornwall, Greater Birmingham and West Yorkshire are leading on railway projects including station improvements.
  - Metro/tram investment is concentrated in the West Midlands.
  - Birmingham, Humberside and Peterborough are the biggest spenders on walking & public realm schemes.

#### Future LEP funding

The Government is inviting Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to bid for a share of a further £1.8bn Local Growth funding but there is no specific allocation within this for transport. With the advent of devolution deals, including some transport powers, it remains to be seen how much of a role LEPs will play in future years.

There also remain concerns over their transparency. As the National Audit Office reported recently, *“LEPs’ role has expanded rapidly and significantly but they are not as transparent to the public as we would expect, especially given they are now responsible for significant amounts of taxpayers’ money. While the Department has adopted a ‘light touch’ approach to overseeing Growth Deals, it is important that this doesn’t become ‘no touch’. The Department needs to do more to assure itself that the mechanisms it is relying on ensure value for money are, in fact, effective.”* Amyas Morse, head of the National Audit Office, 23 March 2016

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Bridget Fox

Campaign for Better Transport

Campaign for Better Transport’s vision is a country where communities have affordable transport that improves quality of life and protects the environment. Achieving our vision requires substantial changes to UK transport policy which we aim to achieve by providing well-researched, practical solutions that gain support from both decision-makers and the public.

16 Waterside, 44-48 Wharf Road, London N1 7UX

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