

Exercise 3

Read the article about ways of reducing cars in cities, and then complete the notes.

Car-free cities

Robert Curry investigates

Getting cars out of cities has become a target for countries around the world. The number of cars on our roads has risen rapidly in recent years, causing traffic jams and an increase in pollution, and contributing to global warming. I decided to look into what has been done and what I could do personally.

One study, carried out at Lund University in Sweden, found that 75% of the methods introduced to cut car use were put in place by local city governments. The most successful cities have created policies which govern what people can or can't do, while also encouraging people to change their behaviour where possible.

One strategy that has an obvious impact on drivers is removing parking places. Over ten years ago, urban designer Alison Lee was involved in a project in Melbourne, Australia, which did just this. Despite complaints from some traders and residents, it has been a success. My city council recently proposed the same thing and it made me think about what I could do. I realised there are plenty of alternatives to driving. Renting an e-bike was one thing I did to see how well I could manage without my car. Elsewhere, creating car-free zones has led to a reduction of city-centre traffic. In Barcelona, Spain, there are areas in the city that can only be accessed by residents and emergency services in vehicles, along with bicycles and those on foot.

Charging drivers to enter parts of a city is another approach. In London, UK, traffic in the centre has been reduced by around 33% since this began in 2003. Other cities have done the same, but although this has clearly led to significant reductions in car use, traffic problems cannot be avoided completely while city design continues to favour car use. One answer is better public transport, which some cities have already provided. Another option I was interested in is sharing a car, which I've now been doing for a while with friends who live in my area.

A large medical centre in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, reported a 20–25% reduction in employee car journeys by introducing parking charges outside the workplace. But we know people need encouragement as well as rules. One widely explored idea is making a personal travel plan. I wasn't entirely sure what this meant, so I decided to give it a go. Basically, it involves getting personalised advice on the best ways to avoid car use in the city, and I found it really helpful.

Mobile phone technology offers another way to limit car use. When I was living in Bologna, Italy, I came across an example of this. It involved downloading an app that records environmentally friendly trips around the city. I did this and found it really motivating. Initial results showed that 73% of people used their car less, although the number of car trips or distances travelled by car were not recorded, so the overall effectiveness of this app is unclear.

Question 8

Policies that have been introduced to reduce car use:

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