

## **How important is traffic management to the vitality of a CBD?**

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Traffic management is essential to the success and survival of a CBD. Traffic controls the accessibility of the CBD therefore controlling the business levels and general appeal of the area which can have a snowballing effect with the whole CBD being affected in time. Traffic management has the potential to improve the flow of traffic on the roads whilst also benefiting the town economically, socially and environmentally through bringing more business to the area and reducing emissions per vehicle.

The CBD of any area thrives on accessibility, it is essential that customers and businesses can gain easy and efficient access. An efficient traffic system will make the CBD far more appealing for shopping and potential business investment for obvious reasons. A poor traffic system with congestion and high traffic volumes will economically effect the CBD in that there will be less customers which will cause businesses to suffer and even close. For example in Grantham Comet and Allied carpets have been forced to shut because of such high traffic volumes in the high street therefore lowering the appeal and therefore success of the stores.

It is not only businesses that suffer because people will enter the CBD for leisure and social reasons for example the Angel Centre in Tonbridge. Traffic must also be controlled in CBDs for safety as well which is the reason for increased pedestrian crossings. The area in the early 90s was forced to build new roads to combat the traffic problem and therefore stimulate the use of the Angel Centre. In the last 5 years Tonbridge has introduced traffic calming on the North and South side of the CBD, for example speed humps and chicanes, as part of their traffic management scheme. Retail distribution problems has led certain larger stores, for example Waitrose, to demand improvements to the current traffic management due to late deliveries affecting the efficiency of the store. Traffic management is also very important to the environment of the area for example where there is constant congestion traffic emissions will be high and therefore causing greater air pollution.

To combat the problems of traffic management many schemes have been introduced. In many cities parking proves to be a major factor in traffic problems with people parking on main streets and on curbs causing increased congestion and greater emissions from cars. Congestion charges have also been introduced in places like London which forces people to pay when they wish to enter the CBD therefore encouraging the use of public transport which reduces traffic and benefit's the area environmentally as well as economically. The area once again becomes attractive to investment whilst public transport raises funds to improve efficiency. Bus routes have also been introduced in CBDs for example the bus lanes linking Tunbridge Wells CBD and Tonbridge CBD. Park and Ride schemes have also been very effective such as the one in Maidstone which encourages people to park their vehicles outside of the CBD and then get a bus into the CBD. Parking in the CBD may be high and availability of spaces may be low therefore the scheme is attractive to customers. The scheme reduces traffic in the CBD making it safer and more environmentally healthy. There is also restricted access to certain parts of the CBD at peak hours which means only buses and taxis have access for example in Tunbridge Wells. One way systems have also proved very effective in particular in Barcelona and other major cities. Restraints on vehicle use have been used in several

cities in both industrial and developing countries. The most popular restraint measures are schemes that limit use of vehicles on specific days according to their registration plate number. These have been introduced in many cities including Athens, Bogotá, Lagos, Manila, Mexico City, Santiago, São Paulo and Seoul, for both congestion and environmental reasons.

Traffic management measures have been shown to improve traffic conditions and reduce emissions therefore showing its importance to CBD's success and survival.