



**TRANSFORMING
TRANSPORT RESEARCH
INTO POLICY
AND PRACTICE
BRIEFING NOTE**

**Key findings from a project engaging
transport researchers with policy-makers
and practitioners**

Supported by

EPSRC

Engineering and Physical Sciences
Research Council

Key Actions:

Summary

This briefing note sets out the key lessons learned from 10 high-impact thematic events involving over 350 leading stakeholders engaged in transport research, policy and practice in the UK

- 1 Strengthen links between academics and policy-makers to:
 - Ensure that full academic impact is rapidly achieved
 - Meet the increased demand for evidence-based policy making
- 2 Generate engagements, either virtually or in person, such as high-impact seminars organised jointly by academics and policy-makers.

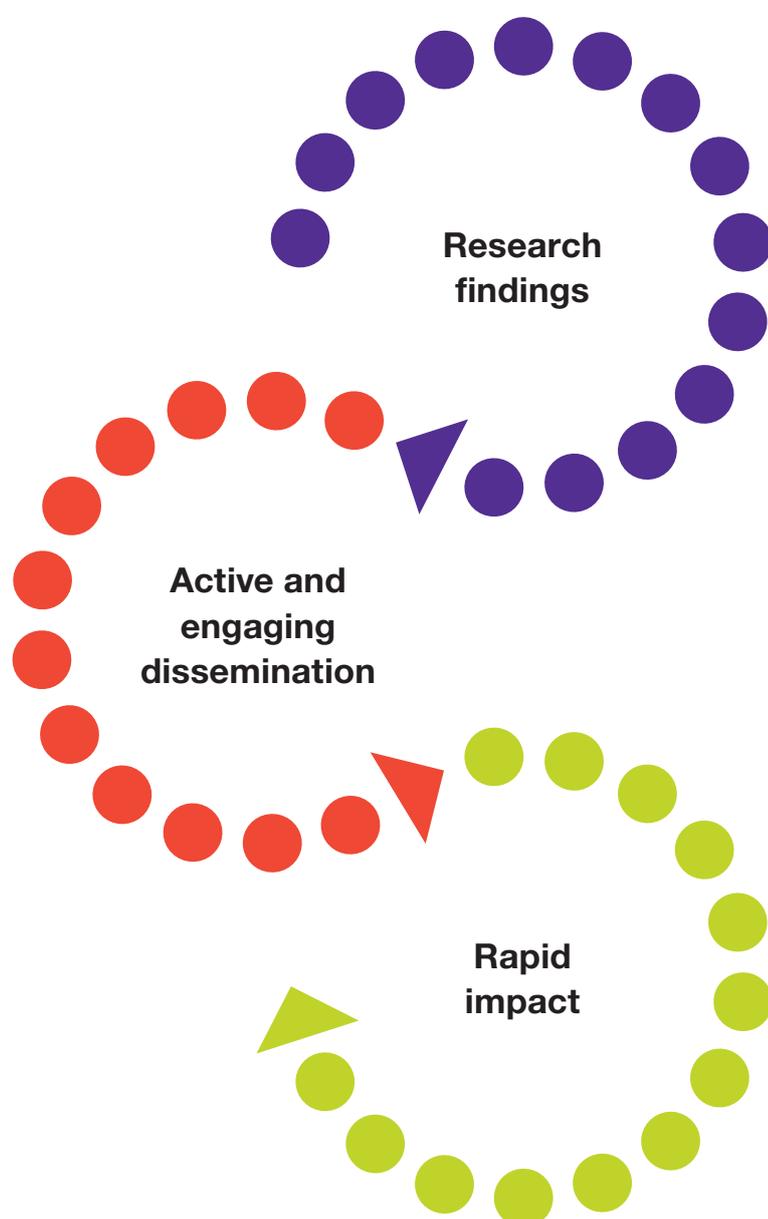
These are effective ways of strengthening links.
- 3 Prioritise future dialogue between academics, policy-makers and practitioners, focusing on:
 - Cross-sectoral and multi-level collaboration
 - Climate change, well-being, active travel and behaviour change

1 Strengthen links between academics and policy-makers

Enhancing the evidence base by establishing better links with academics was highlighted by policy-makers and practitioners.

Why is there a need?

- Policy-makers value the **knowledge, credibility and neutrality** brought by academics, as well as their capacity to emphasise important societal issues.
- Policy-makers, practitioners and industry benefit from a rapid uptake of academic research findings.
- Key messages from research need to be communicated using **accessible and engaging language**.



2

Generate engagements: how to increase relationship-building between academics and policy-makers?

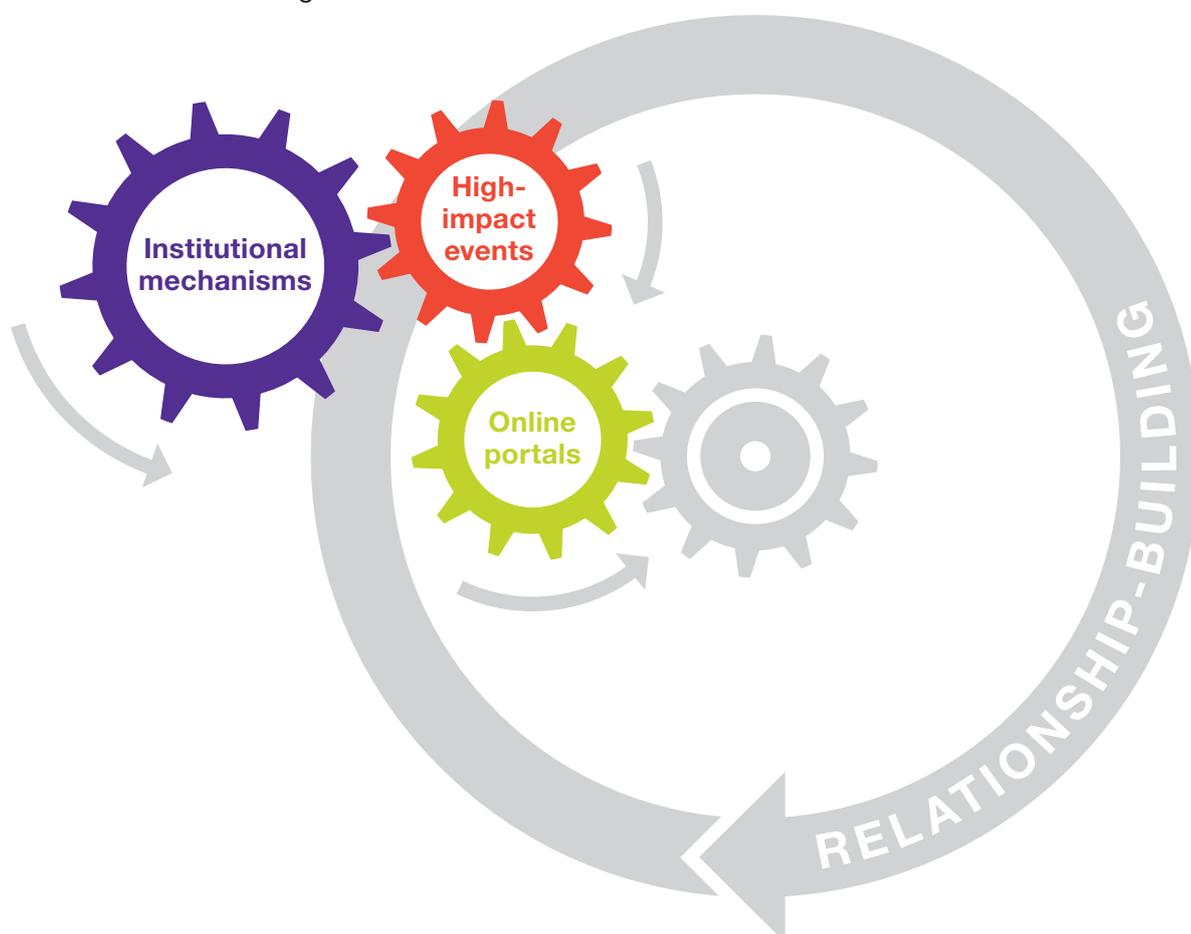
- Establish **institutional mechanisms** and appropriate **communication channels** (both face-to-face and virtual) to support regular interactions, and on-going engagements between policy-makers and academics.
- Establish **online portals** summarising relevant academic transport research for transport practitioners and policy-makers.
- Make greater use of **high-impact events**, such as seminars, which are an effective way to link academics and policy-makers, and help establish new contacts as well as maintain existing ones.

“[The seminar] deepened my appreciation

of the expertise in academia which

Government should make better use of”

Participant of a high-impact seminar



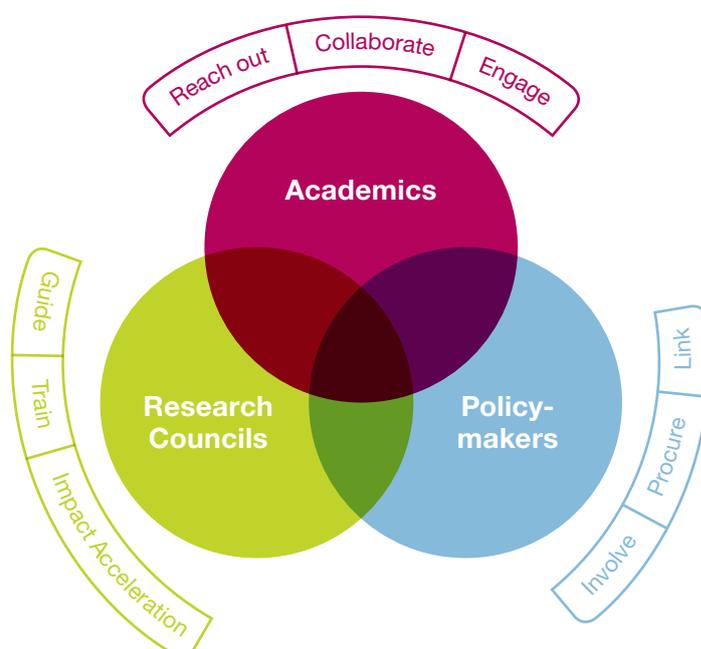
To bridge the gaps between academia and policy making...

Academics should:

- Organise **events/activities** in collaboration and consultation with policy-makers, ideally in close proximity to government offices to guarantee a high attendance from influential stakeholders.
- Be trained in **public and policy engagement**, to make **research findings more accessible** to a non-academic audience by:
 - Addressing practical concerns and focusing on policy implications.
 - Providing short briefing notes which summarise key research findings.
 - Delivering short and targeted presentations focusing on the results (not the theory or methods), in a way which is ‘thought provoking and engaging’ and provides new insights and perspectives.

Policy-makers should:

- Actively **involve academics and other external stakeholders** in policy discussion/development, by:
 - Organising events involving academics, external stakeholders and colleagues from other public institutions.
 - Ensuring cross-disciplinarity.
- Ensure that government **research procurement** processes encourage greater representation of academia in consortium.
- Strengthen links between **Chief Scientific Advisers** and academics.



Research Councils should:

- Produce **guidelines and training courses** for academics to assist them in better disseminating the results of their research to policymakers.
- Further **collaborate across research councils** (e.g. EPSRC and ESRC) to encourage joint cross-disciplinary impact acceleration events.
- Design the **Impact Acceleration Awards** so that they encourage events which involve multiple universities. Policy makers are often more comfortable dealing with academics from across the higher education sector, rather than being seen to favour dialogue with one particular university.

3

Prioritise future dialogue between academia, policy-makers and practitioners, focusing on:



Cross-sectoral, multi-level collaboration

- Links between key actors across sectors and levels of governance should be increased to overcome silos and lack of cross-sectoral collaboration; for instance between different government departments.

Climate change, well-being, active travel and behaviour change

- **Climate change** – was identified as one of the key global drivers for transport policy across modes.
- **Well-being** – should be given a much higher priority in policy-making.
- **Active travel** – research and investment in walking and the public realm should be increased substantially.
- **Behaviour change** – current policies tend to be too focused just on technological interventions.

Background information

About the project

The aim of the project 'Transforming transport research into policy and practice' was twofold:

- 1 To ensure that significant research outputs are rapidly absorbed into policy making and practice.
- 2 To discuss how to create and maintain bridges between policy makers and academia.

Nine high-impact thematic seminars were organised in collaboration with policy makers.

These seminars culminated in a final event about transforming transport research into policy. The event included a panel discussion of senior stakeholders including Louise Ellman MP (Chair of the UK Parliament Transport Select Committee) and Prof Rod Smith (DfT's former Chief Scientific Adviser).

Eight briefing notes have been produced to summarise the events

(see <http://tinyurl.com/qf9I9ho>)

About the evaluation

The events were attended by 361 stakeholders in all, many of whom then responded to a feedback survey and/or participated in evaluation interviews. A large majority of event participants found them to be very useful. They valued the cross-disciplinary presentations, the facilitated discussions, and the networking opportunities

About this briefing note

This briefing combines the principal conclusions of the final event with the findings of the evaluation of the event series.



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TRANSFORMING TRANSPORT RESEARCH INTO POLICY AND PRACTICE BRIEFING NOTE

UCL Transport Institute has been established:

- To foster cross-disciplinary transport research at UCL
- To increase the policy impact of transport research

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