

Technical and financial changes for personal travel

There are two possible revolutions for personal travel. The first is more people switching from owning to hiring a vehicle when they need one. The second is self driving cars removing the need for a driver.

The average UK private car travels less than 8000 miles a year. This means it is only in use on the road for 11 days a year. For the remaining 354 days it is parked.

If we went over to hiring in a car when we need one the numbers of cars could fall by 80% and still leave unused vehicle capacity to allow for non use overnight, for areas of low demand and for maintenance of vehicles. This would have major consequences for car makers, for tax revenue from vehicle ownership, and for the need for parking.

In practice it is easy to see more city dwellers opting to rent not own, but it is less likely to catch on in rural areas where people depend on cars and where it is more difficult guaranteeing hire car availability when needed.

The move to self driving vehicles will also take time. Legislators are not yet persuaded that the technology of the automated vehicle hits acceptable safety standards, and fitting automated cars onto roads with cars with drivers poses problems. We will move to a world where the car increasingly drives itself but a person is needed to remain in charge.

Parking is a big issue. We need to make more off road parking provision all the time we run on our current car ownership model. We have insufficient road capacity, so we need to work to get parked vehicles off the highway.