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Speed Limit Reduction proposals by Birmingham City Council. Response of Birmingham Friends of the Earth, Nov 2023

Birmingham Friends of the Earth welcomes and supports the proposed reduction of 40mph speed limits to 30mph , for safety reasons, and also because slower traffic will have environmental benefits.

1. 40mph encourages frequent acceleration and braking, as vehicles interact with traffic lights and other junctions. 30mph will produce smoother driving, with lower emissions of particulates and less carbon dioxide. To make this less aggressive driving style predominant requires a rule for everyone, i.e., 30mph speed limit.
2. The 30mph limit sends an important message that the car is no longer king but must share the roads. The effect on driving times will be negligible, including for goods traffic. Slower speed reduces traffic danger and noise, which in turn makes people confident to walk and cycle and use powered 2 wheelers for short distances, instead of driving. It supports non car ownership. These modes produce much lower emissions and less noise and danger.
3. However, we are concerned about how the new speed limits will be communicated to drivers. If you want behaviour change, then you must communicate. We suggest temporary signs or banners, say for 6 months, which say that the speed limit is 30 mph.
4. In future, 30mph roads should be de-engineered to take out features that cause drivers to speed up. The slower speeds would release road space, allowing for a re-allocation of space to create bus lanes, cycle lanes, trams, loading bays and build outs for buses. These modes will then be more competitive, so encouraging the modal shift envisaged in the Birmingham Transport Plan and the Route to Zero carbon reduction strategy.