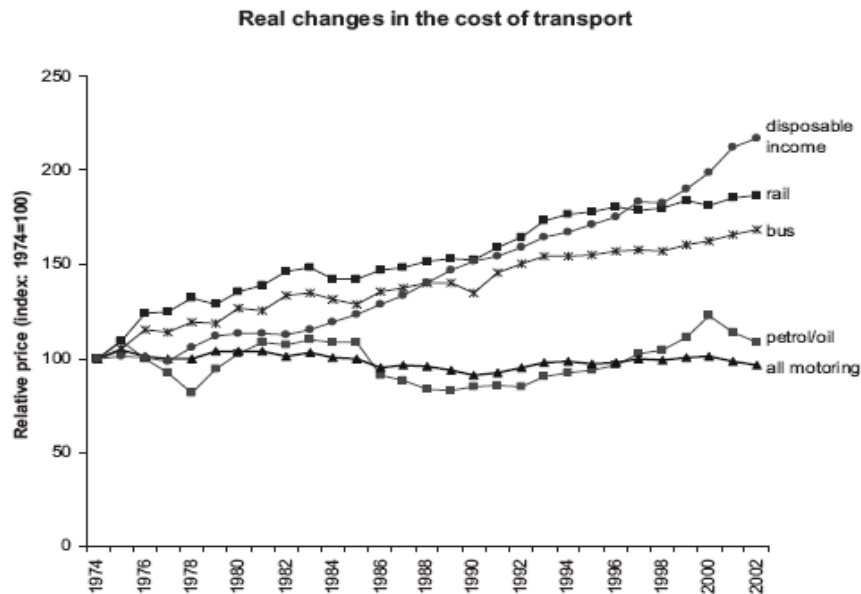




The big lies about motoring, roads and climate change

LIE: Labour is waging a 'war against the motorist'

FACT: This couldn't be further from the truth. The costs of motoring have actually plummeted to below 1980 levels, in real terms, whilst the costs of public transport have risen in line with earnings. Since Labour came to power, the cost of motoring has fallen by 6% in real terms, whilst the costs of buses have gone up by 16% and trains by 7% (Department for Transport, 2005).



Source: DEFRA, national indicator T4

Taken from the Tenth Report of the Environmental Audit Committee, August 2004

LIE: Fuel prices are higher under Labour

FACT: In real terms, petrol is still at least 10% cheaper than in 2000 – despite recent oil price rises (DTI, Quarterly Energy Prices, June 2004). Tax on fuel has not been increased for 5 years since the Labour government scrapped the Conservative government Fuel Duty Escalator (introduced in 1993 as an eco-tax to raise the price of fuel above inflation, to deal with climate change) in April 2000. This has led to a 13% reduction in fuel tax in real terms between 2001-4 (HM Treasury 2004). In 2004 by not increasing fuel duty in line with inflation, it cost the country £290 million in lost revenue, and this is predicted to reach a shortfall of £3 billion by 2010 (University of West of England 2005). Since the fuel protests of 2000, the Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) on most HGVs has been halved (Institute of Environmental Policy 2004). Farmers and truckers continue to get subsidised fuel.

LIE: The UK pays more fuel tax than any other country

FACT: In December 2004, Germany was paying 74.8% tax on its fuel, France was paying 73.1% and Britain 71.8%, placing the UK third in the EU, behind France and Germany. (Source: Fuel Taxation briefing note 55, Institute of Fiscal Studies, June 2005).

LIE: Labour is tackling traffic growth

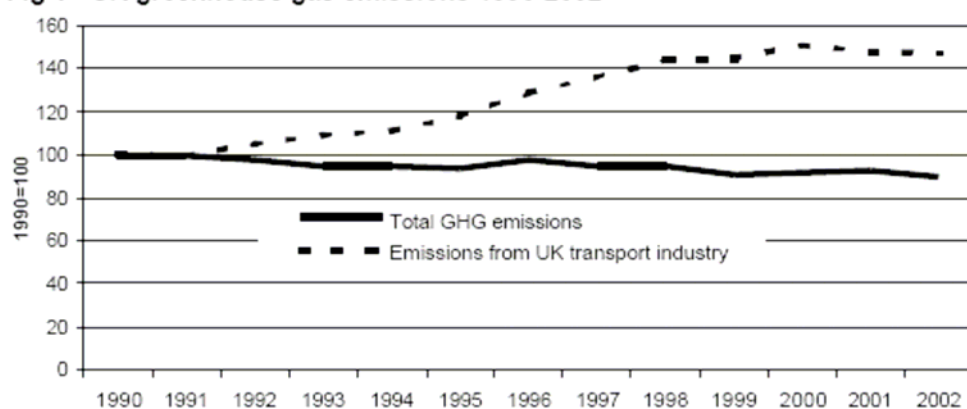
FACT: Traffic has continued to grow under Labour, by about 2% every year. In the 2004 White Paper, the traffic predictions showed that Labour are planning for 40% traffic growth by 2025.

LIE: Vehicles are getting cleaner, cutting CO2 emissions

FACT: Newer cars produce less air pollution than older ones thanks to technologies like catalytic converters. While they may improve air quality, those technologies do little to reduce CO2 emissions that cause climate change. The motorist lobby deliberately play on this confusion between air quality and climate change. Even though new vehicles are becoming cleaner, and this is to be welcomed, technological advances could never keep up with the traffic growth expected. To rely on technology to create the necessary cuts would be fatal, and it is imperative we change our travel behaviour.

Transport is the most critical area to target for climate change. CO2 emissions from transport rose 47% from 1990 to 2002, whilst overall UK emissions fell 10%. Transport is the only source of emissions to be rising, whilst other sources are in decline, therefore transport's share of emissions is increasing. Transport as a whole causes almost 25% of CO2 emissions, with 80% of them coming from road transport. CO2 emissions from road transport now account for 18% of the UK total. Private car emissions rose 6% from 1990-2002, whilst the freight haulage industry share rose by a staggering 48%. Aviation's share is currently only 5.3% of the UK total, but is the fastest growing source, with an 85% rise between 1990 and 2002.

Fig 1 - UK greenhouse gas emissions 1990-2002



Source of graph and data: Environmental Accounts 2005, Office of National Statistics

LIE: It's just a bit of motorway widening, nothing serious

FACT: There are currently over 200 road schemes approved, with many more waiting in the wings. £10 billion is set aside on trunk roads, with over £1.7 billion set aside for local roads. Many schemes threaten countryside and wildlife sites. This level of road building represents an abandonment of previous government pledges to tackle runaway traffic growth and emissions. The planned motorway widening schemes are enormous, with the M1 widening costing over £3.5 billion alone. One section of the M1 widening goes through Tinsley in Sheffield, which suffers already from illegal pollution levels. There are over 50 community anti-road groups. Contact Road Block for your nearest campaign. We also produce fortnightly e-bulletins. Sign up at www.roadblock.org.uk

LIE: Road user charging is another way to squeeze the poor motorist

FACT: As seen above, motorists have **not** been paying their way for a long time. Road user charging represents a way that motorists and lorries could start paying for the damage they do, and will encourage people to reconsider their journeys. Any scheme must raise extra money to pay for better public transport, so people get something in return, and traffic is actually reduced. Research by Imperial College has shown that unless money is raised by road user charging, then traffic will actually increase even more than doing nothing, by spreading the 'rush-hour' through the day, and pushing traffic onto rural roads. At the moment the 'motorist lobby' are arguing that any future road charging scheme must not raise any more money from the 'poor motorist', even though that would only make the situation worse.